

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

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It had been a hard day. Goldfur slumped against the wall once the cabin door had swished shut behind hir and sighed heavily. “The one day I thought I could take it easy and enjoy my work, and instead all hell breaks loose,” shi muttered, scratching at an itch behind hir right ear. Shi moved forward into the cabin, unsure of whether to just flump down on the bed or treat himself to a hot shower to ease hir tension away.

A few seconds debate with himself led to hir stripping off hir now overly confining uniform, which shi dumped unceremoniously on the floor, and heading into the bathroom to get the shower warmed up, closing the door behind hir. “Oh, I’d *so* love a bath right now,” shi lamented as shi waited for the water to reach the correct temperature. Hir left shoulder ached from where shi’d accidentally slipped over on a patch of oil and fallen, hir right handpaw had been stepped on by a clumsy workmate, and shi had a pounding headache to boot.

Steam rose up as the water started running hot, and the golden-furred chakat stepped into the shower cubicle, just large enough to take a taur, and pulled the door closed. Shi spent a minute or so just letting the hot water sluice over hir body, turning himself around to make sure shi got saturated from head to toe, before reaching for a big bottle of fur shampoo and lathering himself up. As shi worked the shampoo into hir fur, Goldfur wished that the cubicle had been made large enough to hold hir mate as well; shi loved having him ease hir tired muscles with his gentle fingers while they washed.

As shi mused, shi heard Garrek’s voice over the rushing water. “Honey, I’m home!” he called. *Hmm, he must be happy about something*, Goldfur thought, hearing a definite note of vivacity in his voice. Presently shi heard the bathroom door open and saw a blurred face peer through. “How was your day?”

“On the level of a Stephen King horror if he’d turned his hand to engineering,” shi replied, grabbing a bottle of hair shampoo and quickly working it into hir long golden hair. “I’ll tell you when I get out, okay?”

“Sure thing. I’ll have a hot drink waiting for you.”

“Thanks, sweetie.”

The face disappeared and the door closed again. *Lucky him*, shi thought. He’d been working in a different part of the ship when one of the ship’s shuttles had decided to try shaking itself apart during a routine maintenance.

Goldfur finished up hir shower, flicking on the fur drier for a few minutes to dry himself, then stepped out into the much cooler air of the bathroom. Shi shuddered briefly, then reached into the vanity unit to pull out a brush, wanting to get himself looking neat before shi went out into the cabin.

A mug of tea and a couple of biscuits were sitting on the kitchen table when shi walked in, still topless, and shi gratefully picked it up and took a long sip. ‘Mmm, that’s better,’ shi murmured, sitting down with hir tail curling around hir feet and peering across the table at Garrek. “Thanks, love. I can always count on you for a good mug of tea after a hard day.”

“My pleasure, fair lady.” The foxtaur smiled and made a small sweeping bow. “Now, perhaps you’d like to tell me what happened today? I know there was quite a kafuffle going on in one of the docking bays this afternoon. Were you involved?”

“In a manner of speaking.” Goldfur took another sip of hir tea and began telling hir mate how hir day had started with a routine repair to a malfunctioning power relay, progressing through to a door somehow warped by something heavy falling against it, an elevator getting jammed between floors (still a common occurrence even in this day and age) and the final blow of the shuttle going haywire. “The engines were half dismantled for their annual maintenance, and some idiot fluffing around in the cockpit accidentally started them up. Bits were flying everywhere, sending people running for cover. Thankfully someone managed to shut them down about a minute later, but you

wouldn't believe the damage caused by that moment's carelessness. Most likely we'll have to get a new set from the shuttle manufacturers – these ones are almost beyond repair.”

Garrek nodded slowly, sipping from his mug before replying. “So you had a pretty full-on day, then?” he said, his eyes shining with amusement at his understatement.

“Yes, you could say that.” Goldfur dunked one of his biscuits into his tea and nibbled it thoughtfully. “Not how I was expecting to spend my birthday. Now that I think about it, barely anyone said ‘Happy Birthday’ to me – I think only four people did, and one of them was you.”

“Maybe no-one else knew it was your birthday?” offered Garrek.

“Mmm. I guess it *does* have a bright side; I don't have to put up with being asked ‘How old are you now?’ from every person I meet.”

The foxtaur chuckled quietly. “True. The bane of any lady, I should imagine. You're either too old, or young enough to be someone's daughter.”

Goldfur poked his tongue out. “Don't remind me.” Shi sipped from his mug again then changed the subject. “So how went *your* day?”

A carefully neutral expression was suddenly plastered over Garrek's face. “Oh, it was fairly normal. Nothing as exciting as what happened to you.” A tiny glint in his eyes told Goldfur that he was hiding something.

“Uh-huh. Right.” Shi waited a few seconds then asked, “Okay, spill it, unless you want to be the victim of feline curiosity. Remember, I know where you sleep.”

“Of course you do – with you!” Garrek answered back with a grin. He made a sudden dash away from the table, leaving Goldfur with his jaw hanging open before Shi gave chase. Fast as Shi was, Shi wasn't quite fast enough to prevent Garrek from escaping into their bedroom and locking the door behind him.

“Hey! What's the big idea!” called the perplexed chakat, banging on the door. Shi could hear signs of intense activity inside the room, which further intrigued him.

The noises inside stopped, then a few seconds later the door opened to reveal Garrek looking slightly rushed. “Okay, you can come in now.” The foxtaur stepped aside to allow Goldfur entrance.

Nothing seemed to be different in the room. Except for a large box sitting on the bed. It was plainly wrapped, with a bow and card attached to the lid. Goldfur padded over to the bed and picked up the card, opening it to read the contents. *To the mate of my heart, a bouquet of roses. Like our love, they will last forever.* His curiosity thoroughly aroused, Shi now extended a claw and cut the wrapping away from the box, before removing the lid.

“Oh, Garrek!” Shi mused, reaching into the box and removing what at first glance appeared to be a rose. Unlike normal roses, however, these had been delicately wrought out of steel. The amount of detail was exquisite, right down to the thorns and beads of ‘dew’ on the petals. They even had colour and fragrance somehow infused into them. There were a dozen in all, each one slightly different. Shi spent a few moments examining them closely, before placing them back in the box and turning to Garrek and throwing his arms around him. “Mmm, thank you, love! Those have got to be the most original gift anyone's ever given me.”

Garrek chuckled and kissed Goldfur on the nose. “That's what I was aiming for.” He lightly caressed his back with his hands, scratching at the joint between lower and upper bodies. “Someone in Engineering had experience with decorative metalwork, so I asked him if he'd make these for me.”

“They must have taken him ages!” exclaimed Goldfur, shooting a look back at the box. “I really must thank him.”

“If you wish,” his mate murmured. “The roses aren't the only gift either,” he added, making it sound as if it was an afterthought.

Goldfur peered at Garrek curiously. “Oh? What do you mean?”

He didn't reply. Instead he bent his head and engaged Goldfur's lips in a gentle, passionate kiss. “Mmm,” Shi responded, relaxing into it. His arms hugged him closer, and his hands stroked down his back, down to where his body sections joined. “Were you thinking what I'm thinking?”

“Mmm, maybe,” Garrek replied vaguely. “Why don’t we climb onto the bed and find out?”

“Sounds good to me, love.” Goldfur pulled away and slipped onto the bed, after first moving the box of roses onto the floor. Hir foxtaur mate followed momentarily, a big smile on his face. “Lie down, sweetie, and let me give you an all-over massage you’ll love.”

Goldfur chuckled. “If I didn’t know better, I’d say you were trying to soften me up.” Slowly shi lay down on the bed, stretching hirself out comfortably on hir tummies. The end of hir tail flicked to and fro as shi glanced back at Garrek.

Smiling widely, Garrek gently pushed Goldfur back down and laid his hands on hir shoulders, gently squeezing and kneading the taut muscles there. ‘Ohh, that’s good,’ murmured the chakat, putting hir head on hir hands and letting hir body’s muscles be tamed by Garrek’s wonderful fingers.

Garrek began humming a tune softly under his breath as he worked, something akin to a lullaby, but far more interesting. Every now and then he’d sing a few words, then go back to humming again. His hands eased the tension in Goldfur’s shoulders slowly, until they felt pliable under his fingertips. He then moved his attentions elsewhere, lightly running his hands over hir back and beginning to knead tense spots scattered over hir upper and lower backs.

Ohh, this is heavenly! Goldfur thought as hir mate worked all the sore spots out of hir. Shi found hirself almost drifting off to sleep, shi felt so relaxed. The song Garrek was humming was particularly nice; soft and soothing, it was. Like many songs, it sounded almost familiar.

After what seemed like hours later, though it was probably no longer than half an hour, Goldfur was on the point of nodding off. Hir purrs of pleasure were getting quieter, and hir slight movements in response to Garrek’s massage were getting fewer.

Shi was suddenly aroused to alertness when shi felt hir buttocks being spread apart and a familiar tongue licking over hir femininity. “You *were* softening me up, weren’t you?” shi mrrred, lifting hir head and looking back at hir mate.

Garrek gave hir pussy another lick then grinned. “You might say that. Making love is so much more enjoyable when you’re not tense, don’t you agree?”

“Never a truer word spoken.” Goldfur languidly rolled over onto hir backs and gazed at Garrek. “Give me some more of that slick tongue of yours...and I’ll pay you back for those wonderful roses,” shi murmured, spreading hir hind legs apart a little, knowing that Garrek would be getting a good eyeful.

“Aww, you don’t really have to do that, you know...but I’ll take any excuse to indulge in some sex with my favourite chakat!” Garrek replied, winking at hir before nosing at hir glistening pink slit, delving deep with his tongue.

“Tease,” Goldfur said before shi shivered and mrrred in pleasure. It really had been too long since shi’d had such a treatment. Working as a tech on a starship wasn’t exactly conducive to a really good session of lovemaking, so shi treasured these nights with hir mate greatly.

Garrek’s agile tongue lapped at hir sweet juices as it flicked up and down hir sex, especially over hir clit. While he teased hir mercilessly with his tongue, he slipped two fingers into hir pussy and began to slide them in and out, driving his mate to even greater heights.

In a short time shi reached hir peak, unable to resist any longer against Garrek’s ministrations. Shi yowled hir ecstasy as shi came, giving Garrek a muzzleful of sweet pussy juice, which he savoured greatly. He lapped eagerly as shi shuddered hir way through hir climax.

It ended all too soon, and Goldfur was left feeling quietly euphoric. Shi purred loudly as Garrek gave hir sex one last lick and raised his head. “You sure know how to make a kitty feel good, don’t you?” shi mrrred.

“I like to think that I’ve had plenty of time to perfect,” Garrek replied with a grin. “But I haven’t finished yet.” As Goldfur raised hir eyebrows he slowly moved up the bed, snuggling up to hir side, and lowered his head, giving hir left nipple a tender lick.

“Mmm,” Goldfur mrrred, feeling hir ardour rising again. Shi scritchd Garrek’s ears as he began to suckle on hir sensitive nipple, drawing out a small trickle of hir milkwater. His left hand sneaked across and began to play with hir other nipple, raising hir pleasure levels. After a minute or so he

switched nipples, suckling on the other while tweaking the recently vacated one. His mate was purring again, getting louder and a little quicker as he brought hir toward another peak. He swapped nipples a couple more times before shi yowled again, gripping Garrek's head firmly as shi came.

When shi'd had some time to come down from hir high, Garrek stretched out beside hir and lightly rubbed hir tummies, using both hand and forepaw, coaxing hir to purr again. "That's such a wonderful sound," he murmured in hir ear, planting a gentle kiss on hir cheek.

"I'm glad you think so," Goldfur murmured back, smiling widely. Shi cast a glance down at hir lower belly, where Garrek's forepaw was getting closer and closer to hir sheath. "You're on a roll tonight, aren't you?" shi said with a grin.

"Of course I am; it's your birthday, after all," the amused foxtaur replied, licking hir nose. "Why shouldn't I treat my lifemate to a night of unremitting pleasure? Besides, if I treat you well now, you might do the same for me when it's *my* birthday." He gave hir a conspiratorial wink.

"Perhaps...I've got seven months to think about it," Goldfur said teasingly.

Garrek poked his tongue out in mock disgust. "Just for that, I'm not going to play with your cock any more." He took his forepaw away from hir sheath, which was already beginning to swell with hir male arousal.

"Aww, I'm sorry." Goldfur fluttered hir eyelashes and made puppy-dog eyes at Garrek. "Forgive me?"

The act was so overdone that Garrek broke into a fit of giggles. "I'll tell you in seven months," he said, handing Goldfur's words back to hir on a verbal platter, eliciting a poked out tongue. He then leaned in for a quick kiss, which lengthened into one of nearly half a minute. During that time he put his forepaw back on his mate's sheath and began to stroke it, coaxing hir maleness out of hiding. When it was at its full length he broke the kiss, smiled widely, then shifted himself around so that he was looking directly at Goldfur's erection. His tongue licked out and played over the sensitive head, earning a pleased mrring and a reflex jerk, before he slowly engulfed it with his muzzle and began to nurse on it, lightly stroking the exposed part of hir shaft with a clawtip.

Goldfur was in heaven as hir member was taken inch by inch into hir mate's mouth. It wasn't often that shi got the full treatment, but when shi did shi felt as if all the world wasn't big enough to hold hir ecstasy. Shi was in such a heightened state of pleasure from what Garrek had already done that it was only a short time before shi was filling Garrek's muzzle with hir creamy seed.

Garrek spent some time making sure that he had extracted every last drop of semen from his mate's member, before slowly stretching out beside Goldfur again. "Mmm, tasty!" he pronounced, leaning over to deliver yet another kiss on hir lips. "Wouldn't you agree?"

There was just enough of hir seed present on his lips and tongue to allow hir a taste of herself. "Not as nice as yours, I think," she said with a grin.

"Why, thank you!" Garrek pretended to put on an air of modesty, which lasted a few seconds before it was replaced with a narrow-eyed look. "And now, my dear, I think it's time for the grand finale." With a burst of energy that Goldfur thought obscene (considering what activities he had just put hir through) he suddenly moved himself to straddle hir body, gazing into hir eyes. "I think it's time to extract my 'payment' for the roses," he said with an exaggerated wink. With that, he lowered himself and pushed his hips forward.

Now this is new! The chakat was pleasantly surprised by this new development, even more so by the unconventional position. Shi thrust hir hips up in response to Garrek's entry, putting hir arms and forelegs around him and holding him close as he began to make love to hir. His movements were strong yet sensual, filled with passion. Garrek pressed his lips to Goldfur's, and they parted to allow their tongues to play against each other. Their tails twined together and swished in tandem as they built toward their peaks.

Just when Goldfur thought shi'd come again Garrek slowed and stopped, nuzzling at hir muzzle. "I'm going to make this last," he murmured with a light chuckle. He waited a couple of minutes, spending that time engaging in some passionate kissing, then resumed his thrusting, building up again.

The teasing foxtaur brought them to climax three more times before allowing them to go over the edge, by which time Goldfur was literally on a knife-edge of sensitivity. He pounded hir hard briefly before he released his load, groaning loudly with the relief it brought him. Goldfur followed scant moments later, hitting the biggest climax shi'd had in...who knew how long.

Garrek managed to roll them over onto their sides before he collapsed, exhausted from his exertions, as was Goldfur. "Wow," shi panted a few minutes later, opening hir eyes and looking at hir mate. "I didn't know you had it in you."

"I didn't know I did either," he replied weakly, smiling more with his eyes than his mouth. "I'm so glad that we have birthdays only once a year – us poor males couldn't possibly survive all the sex!"

"Bah!" Goldfur lightly swatted Garrek on the thigh with a handpaw. "All that exercise is good for you. Far more interesting than lifting weights, yes?"

"Point," Garrek murmured, shifting his head forward to lick Goldfur's nose. "Right now, I'd much rather recoup some of that energy I expended than exercise. Sound like a good idea?"

Goldfur smiled. "I couldn't think of a better one if I tried," shi murmured, draping hir arms and legs over his body and snuggling up to him. "Goodnight, loverboy."

"Goodnight, dearheart."

A few seconds followed before Garrek spoke again. "Computer: all lights off."

The lights throughout the cabin dimmed, then went off, leaving the two mates in quiet darkness, save for their breathing.