

Rapid Combustion

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Rapid Combustion

by [the_deep_magic](#)

Summary

“Percy found an omega out here?” Vax manages, trying to turn away from the wind as if that would make the smell less enticing. It suddenly seems like it’s everywhere, and his blood is already rushing south.

Keyleth shakes her head, her cheeks aflame.

That’s when it clicks, and Vax feels lightheaded with the realization. “Percy *is* an omega?”

Keyleth nods.

Notes

Sometimes you just need to channel the id. Takes place pre-stream or very early stream.
Warnings for your standard heat-related dubcon.

“Trinket: sit.”

The bear just stares at Vax, his haunches no lower to the ground than before.

“Trinket: *sit*.”

Trinket twists his head to the right and belches.

“How am I ever going to train you to pee on Grog’s leg if you won’t even follow simple commands?” Vax asks.

Trinket takes a few lumbering steps forward until his snout is right in Vax’s face and gives a sharp snort that blows Vax’s hair back.

Vax sighs. “Trinket: *please* sit.”

With a surprisingly smug expression for a bear, Trinket sits.

“Excellent,” Vax says, clapping his hands together. “You’ve trained me to say ‘please.’ We’re making progress.”

Vax is just wondering whether Trinket needs to fill his bladder for the next stage of training when he sees Keyleth walk up. He thought she was out hunting with the rest of the party, but perhaps not. “Hey, Kiki, have you got any advice for—” He cuts himself off when he sees the ashen color of Keyleth’s face. “What’s wrong?”

She takes a deep breath. “It’s... No one’s hurt, but... it’s Percy.”

“Did he finally shoot an eye out?”

“No! I told you: he’s not hurt. He’s...” Keyleth gestures futilely but doesn’t seem to be able to get the words out.

She’s not one to get involved in pranks, so it’s at this point that Vax genuinely starts to worry. “Is he under a spell?”

“No, not exactly.”

“Not exactly?”

“It’s not an outside influence or anything. He’s just... Well, you should probably come and see.”

Vax pulls the Keen Dagger from his belt and stands. “Do I need this?”

“No! No, I’m sorry for the secrecy, it’s just...” Keyleth’s eyes drop to the ground. “I promised Percy I’d never tell anyone, but I think I have to break that promise, and you’re the only one who can help him. Well, you or Vex, and he specifically said ‘not Vex.’ I don’t think he wants her to see him like this.”

“Like what?”

“Just... follow me.”

Keyleth leads him back to the circle of their tents around the fire, but then keeps walking. It’s fairly obvious that one of the tents is missing.

“We moved it about a hundred yards away,” Keyleth says before Vax can ask. “You’ll see why.”

In fact, the smell hits Vax before he even spots the tent. It doesn’t smell of anything he can name, but his hindbrain recognizes it immediately and it takes all his self-control not to go sprinting off in the direction of the source.

It’s something he’s not smelled in a very long time, but it’s still unmistakably an omega in heat.

“Percy found an omega out here?” Vax manages, trying to turn away from the wind as if that would make the smell less enticing. It suddenly seems like it’s *everywhere*, and his blood is already rushing south.

Keyleth shakes her head, her cheeks aflame.

That’s when it clicks, and Vax feels lightheaded with the realization. “Percy *is* an omega?”

Keyleth nods.

“How is that possible? We’ve been living in each other’s pockets for months – this can’t be his first heat since we joined up.”

Keyleth bites her lip, looking unsure of what to say, or perhaps how much to say. “He’s been hiding it since... well... I don’t think the ruling family of Whitestone was ever particularly proud of producing an omega. There was something in the distilled stone residuum that could suppress the heat, and when he ran out of it, Pike was able to do something or make something... He doesn’t like to talk about the details.”

Vax sighs. “No, I suppose not.”

“And now without Pike here... Vax, it’s *bad*. The Air Ashari have a ritual for getting through unmated heats, but I never needed to learn it. And I never saw anyone this far gone.”

“It smells like it’s full-blown already. Did he think he was just going to tough it out?”

She nods. “I don’t know how he thought he was going to hide it. I don’t know how long it lasts for humans, but even with the ritual, it takes omega druids three days if they’re unmated. With an alpha partner, maybe half a day, but no less than that. We’re at least a day’s march from any healers or major towns, and he’s in no shape to move. Even then, I think Percy would rather go through it alone than trust a stranger.”

Vax groans. “And Vex and I are the only alphas.”

“Yeah.”

“Did he ask you to ask me for help?”

“Not... exactly.”

“*Keyleth.*”

“He just said ‘not Vex.’ I didn’t know what to do!” Keyleth cries, throwing her hands up.

“His body temperature’s been rising steadily since this morning. He keeps swearing he’ll be fine, but I’m worried his brain is going to cook in his skull. I don’t know any humans who’ve gone through this.”

It’s hard to talk without getting a lungful of that tantalizing scent, but Vax balls his hands into fists at his side and tries to think about gelatinous cubes. Ropers. Really rotten flesh golems. It’s no use – he’s practically salivating. “His reason is compromised, Keyleth. I’d be taking advantage of him.”

“I’m not an idiot, Vax! I would have done everything in my power to keep you *away* from him if I weren’t afraid for his safety!”

Vax sighs and rubs the bridge of his nose. “No, I know. I’m sorry. I just know what it’s like to be, through no fault of your own, at the mercy of your body. Alphas get a little more control, but I can’t be in that tent with him and not... Well, there’s only one reason for me to go in there. Has he ever even been with a man, let alone a male alpha?”

“A man, yes. A male alpha, I don’t know,” she says, shaking her head. “He’s *suffering*, Vax. You can fix that. If he’s angry later, he can blame me for getting you into this.”

“We both know it doesn’t work like that.”

“No, it doesn’t,” Keyleth says, deflated. “But if you start now while everyone’s away, I can put a silence spell around the tent and make excuses for you both. It’s possible you could come back out for dinner with the group without giving anything away, and then if you go right back to your tent... You’d both be exhausted tomorrow, but there’s a chance that no one else would find out.”

“It’s that important to him that no one knows?”

“He has his guns and his pride, Vax. And he thinks that’s all he has.”

With a humorless laugh, Vax says, “If I knock him up, everyone’s going to find out anyway.”

Keyleth shakes her head. “I can work that spell, at least. I did it just now, so that’s the one thing you wouldn’t have to worry about.”

“Well,” Vax says, setting his hands on his hips. “*Fuck.*”

“That pretty much sums it up.”

Vax groans again. “I can’t decide on it here, not downwind of... that.”

“Well then, go,” Keyleth says, getting behind him and shoving him gently away from the tent. “Get out of smell range and make up your mind. And remember that there’s a chance Vex is going to smell the same thing when she gets back if you two don’t... mitigate it. I can try to hold it back with gust cantrips, but that’s going to be hard to maintain all day and night.”

Without another word, Vax sprints off toward the woods. Or rather, he intends to, but for a moment, his feet refuse to willingly take him away from the scent of an omega in heat. He finally manages to walk away, but every instinct in his body is screaming at him not to.

It’s not much better away from the tent. Most likely, even the knowledge that an omega – his friend and ally, possibly Keyleth’s best friend – is in heat has already compromised any impartiality he may have had. Can he live with himself for violating a friend who isn’t in his right mind? Can he live with himself if he *doesn’t* and Percy’s damaged? And what if Vex somehow finds him and can’t help herself? Is Vax responsible for that, too?

Being an alpha has never been a significant part of Vax’s life – or Vex’s, as far as he knows. It certainly didn’t matter one whit to their father, who saw their human blood as a fault above all others. On the road, Vax has helped a few omegas through their heats, though never a human and never anyone he knew very well. He can never quite decide if his decisions to help were selfish or self-serving – he genuinely doesn’t like to see omegas suffering, but it’s hard to look past the fact that the only consequences for him are no-strings-attached sex.

Ultimately, this time as with all the others, he feels dirty for giving into what his body so desperately wants, but it seems like the least objectionable course of action. If Percy shoots him dead tomorrow, so be it, but at least Percy will *see* tomorrow. Still, he puts the chestplate of his armor on, just in case.

He lets Keyleth know his decision, and she promises to make an excuse to the others and keep them from breaking camp until late the next morning. Personally, Vax is sure they don’t have a hope in hell of hiding it, silencing spell or not, but that’s not the problem that’s in front of him. Usually Vax would just take a deep breath to steady his nerves before tackling a task like this, but breathing in is emphatically not helping this close to the source.

His dick is already hard, throbbing against the seam of his trousers, and his normally nimble fingers scrabble uselessly at the tied flaps. He eventually manages to untie the triple knots that Percy probably convinced Keyleth to make, only needing to slice through one set of ties in the process as his body screams at him to hurry up. After a few moments of strained consideration, he unsheathes each of his daggers and stabs them into the dirt outside of the tent. Whatever he’s about to face, a blade isn’t going to help him. Vax steels himself and goes in.

What he expects is Percy curled in a ball on the ground, barely coherent in full-blown heat. What he gets is Percival Frederickstein Von Musel Klossowski de Rolo the Third crouched and fully alert with the pepperbox pointed right at Vax’s head.

“What the fuck are you doing here?” Percy growls, and there’s only the slightest quaver in his usually smooth voice.

“Percy,” Vax says, shutting his eyes and tensing every muscle in his body until he can’t move a single one. “I’m unarmed, but I’m also incapable of showing any kind of submission right now, so I need you to put the gun away.”

There’s a tense moment where nothing happens, and Vax worries he’s going to have to bodily disarm Percy, and that kind of aggression is going to shred what little self-control Vax has left. But then Vax hears the gun thump to the ground and he opens his eyes.

“It isn’t actually loaded,” Percy admits. “My hands have been shaking too badly.” As Vax’s eyes adjust to the dim light in the tent, he has no idea what force is keeping Percy upright. Sweat is dripping down his temples, and his whole body is trembling. Amazingly, though, save for the coat, he’s completely dressed, cravat and all. Vax, still a few feet away from him, can feel the warmth he’s giving off. “I’m going to assume Keyleth sent you?”

“She did. Though if I’d passed within ten yards of this tent without knowing, I’d have been in here anyway.”

“*Alphas*,” Percy mumbles with disdain, and it’s enough to make Vax chuckle.

“Roiling in heat and you’re still looking down on everyone else? At least I know it’s still you in there.”

Percy fixes him with a frown. “I didn’t tell Keyleth to talk to you, let alone send you in here.”

“I know. She thinks you’re stubborn enough to let yourself burn instead of asking for help. Is she right?” Percy shoots him a defiant look, and it makes Vax’s brain roar with the need to make him submit. “Get on your knees and take your stupid bloody cravat off.”

“I’m not submitting to you.”

“The posture should at least buy us some time, you fuckwit. You’ll be able to think.”

Though he looks deeply skeptical, Percy’s shaking hands reach for his throat and unwind the fabric. It releases more of his scent, and Vax can’t help the groan that escapes his mouth. He’s gone a week without eating before, and he’s never felt hunger like this.

Seeing Percy on his knees, baring his throat, helps some, but it’s not enough. “I need to get close enough to scent you.”

“Fuck you,” Percy spits out, though his expression is conflicted.

Vax lets out a humorless laugh. “Not yet. Do you feel better on your knees? A little less likely to combust?” Percy says nothing, but the look on his face is answer enough. “You’re going to have to trust me. It’s not ideal, I’ll give you that, but we need to help each other.”

Percy’s eyes flick to Vax’s belt, then back up. “And you left the daggers outside?”

“Freddy, there are several things I’d love to put in you right now, but a blade isn’t one of them.”

Vax counts three heartbeats, and then Percy says, “Okay. You may touch me.”

“Thank you, your highness,” Vax says, but he’s clinging to that thread of annoyance. If Percy can be arrogant, Vax can sass him right back, and they can both keep other instincts at bay a little longer.

Vax kneels in front of Percy, the scent of ripe omega nearly overwhelming him, but he manages to get one hand around the back of Percy’s neck and squeeze, not painfully, but enough to sate his need for control in the moment. It makes Percy whimper and tilt his head back, and Vax lowers his head without even thinking to rub himself against Percy’s throat, mingling their scents.

Even though the smell doesn’t abate, some of Vax’s mental fog does, and he feels less like he’s going to simply pounce on Percy if the human doesn’t control his every move. Percy, too, seems to relax a little in Vax’s grip, and he takes in a deep, shuddering breath. “You’ve done this before,” Percy says.

“I have. Not with anyone quite as far gone as you, but that was your choice.”

“Oh, and what would you have done in my place?”

“Probably the same fucking thing. Doesn’t mean it was a good idea.”

Percy gives a dry laugh. “That’s fair. I don’t suppose I can persuade you to tie me up and leave.”

Vax rises up on his knees, enough that he can press his nose down into Percy’s scalp where his luscious scent is mixed with sweat and a hint of gunpowder. “I don’t think even *your* tongue is quite that silver. I’m not here to force you into anything, but if I leave, you risk two things: your death, which I don’t think bothers you very much, and my sister finding you like this, which does.”

Percy, who’s started to press himself against Vax’s body, immediately goes rigid. “I don’t—I can’t—”

“I know,” Vax says softly, itching with the urge to dig his fingers beneath Percy’s clothes to find more bare skin. “It’s why I’m offering myself instead.”

“Is that what this is?” Percy groans into Vax’s neck, his hands working ineffectually at the buckles at Vax’s side. “An offering? That’s not what it feels like.”

“This is what it is.” It’s ridiculous, trying to have a conversation while Percy is trying to climb inside Vax’s armor and Vax is fighting the urge to clamp his teeth down on the back of Percy’s neck, but the contact helps. “I can help you take care of this. I don’t know if we can keep it from the others, but I think I can do it without hurting you.”

“You *think*?”

“Percival, I want to *devour* you,” Vax growls, the sound rumbling up from somewhere deep in his gut. “I want to knot you tight on my cock and keep you there for hours. I’m not that strong, but I’m stronger than you, and I can hold you down and take what I want.”

Percy, that little fucker, nips at the tendon of Vax’s throat and murmurs, “I’m not afraid of pain.”

“Good,” Vax moans. “That’s good. Because I’ll do my best to get you ready, but it might hurt.”

“Tiny little slip of a thing like you? Will I even be able to feel your knot?”

Vax hardly even processes the words; he reacts purely to the insubordinate tone of Percy’s voice and topples the human over backwards, pinning him to the ground by his wrists. “You need to... avoid challenging me if you want to get through this in one piece,” he manages through gritted teeth.

Percy just grins up at him, glasses askew. “Where’s the fun in that?”

Vax growls, clamping his eyes shut so he can form a sentence. “I’m gonna help you get off. If we’re lucky, that’ll buy us enough time to talk this out.”

“Promises, promises,” Percy groans, and Vax has no idea how Percy’s able to form words in the state that he’s in. Vax’s own brain is screaming with the need to take, to claim, but he’s fairly certain neither of them can work the buttons on Percy’s trousers just now. Instead, he leans his weight forward, presses the top of his thigh against the bulge between Percy’s legs, and hopes like hell that the human gets the hint.

Percy does, his hips rolling up and into the muscle of Vax’s thigh. It’s not much, not with multiple layers of clothing in the way, but it seems to be more stimulation than Percy’s gotten yet. The façade slips and then drops entirely as Percy rubs himself desperately against Vax, who rocks down into the thrusts, giving Percy a firm surface to grind against.

It goes on for maybe a minute, Vax gritting his teeth and trying to focus on the act of holding Percy down. His body wants more, wants to plunge its way into the omega beneath him, but the urge isn’t yet too strong to suppress. However, it’s also apparent that this isn’t enough for either of them, so Vax rolls onto his side, pulling Percy with him. Here, he can keep a thigh between Percy’s legs while reaching around and gripping two firm handfuls of his ass, grinding them both together from the shoulders down. It’s enough to scratch the itch a bit, simulating what both of them would rather be doing, minus layers of clothing.

The sounds Percy’s making start to go up in pitch and his thrusts start to get faster. Vax leans towards Percy’s ear, whispers, “That’s right, Freddy. Come on, give it up.” With a high, tense whine, Percy does, hips juddering against Vax’s leg.

As Percy goes lax against him, another smell layers atop the scent of omega desperation. It’s the smell of satisfaction, and Vax breathes it in deep. *He* did this, he made this gorgeous omega come in his trousers with little more than a bit of grinding. It calms his alpha instincts for the moment, and his lust-addled brain is able to string words together again.

He hears Percy say, “You *would* have to start this in the most humiliating way possible for me, wouldn’t you?”

His tone is needling, but he’s not making any move to let go of Vax yet, so Vax chalks it up to bravado. “It’s your own fault for wearing trousers with so many damned buttons.”

“Says the man still wearing actual armor.”

“I was worried you would shoot on sight, and I wasn’t entirely wrong.”

Percy sighs and rolls to the side, flat on his back and looking up at the ceiling of the tent.

“How long are we going to pretend you’re not here to put your dick in me and keep it there?”

Vax sits up, trying not to groan. “There are other options, and I wasn’t going to lead with my dick if I could help it.”

“How romantic.”

Vax takes the high road, carefully removing Percy’s glasses, folding them, and setting them to the side. Then he flicks Percy’s ear. “How is it that you’re this deep into heat and you’re still keeping up the witty repartee?”

“Just a natural gift, I suppose.”

“Well, at least you’re still able to talk this out,” Vax says, going for the buckle of his chestplate. “In my experience, we’ve got about ten minutes before the next wave hits.”

“Pelor’s *balls*,” Percy groans, rolling away from Vax. “I forgot how terrible this is.”

Vax is tempted just to wait until Percy’s ready to talk, but they haven’t got much time, and the fact is that he needs some information to make sure they’re on the same page. “Have you ever gone through this with someone else before?” he asks as gently as he can.

“With a temporary partner, an alpha hired by my father, in case you didn’t already think I was fucked up enough.”

“Male or female?”

“We tried one of each. It was easier with the male. The... symptoms didn’t last as long.”

“Well, that’s a point in our favor, I guess.” Vax doesn’t bring up his pessimism in regards to hiding this from the group. Percy has enough to worry about as it is, and whatever happens, happens. “We’re not going to get you through this without some kind of penetration, but we can try limiting it to fingers if—”

Percy cuts him off with a sour laugh. “Has that ever worked? Even once in history?”

“I’ve never tried.”

“No,” Percy groans. “If we’re doing this, we’re doing this.”

Vax starts to come back with something sarcastic, but he holds it back. Instead, he says softly, "I'm sorry about this. I know you wouldn't exactly be eager to have me in your tent if you had the choice."

"Better you than... well, anyone else in the group, I suppose. Keyleth would be willing to try if she were an alpha, but I wouldn't want her to debase herself."

"But you're fine with me debasing myself," Vax muses with a smile. Yes, this is still Percy.

"I don't have the highest opinion of myself, but I *have* to imagine you've done worse."

That gets an actual, honest-to-god laugh out of Vax. "It could be worse. At least Grog's not an alpha."

Percy snorts. "Well, as long as you gave both halves of me a proper burial at the end, perhaps I could get through it with some dignity intact." Vax gets a good look at Percy's face as he sits up. He makes a disgusted grimace and looks down at the crotch of his trousers where a large wet spot is spreading. "Ugh."

"It'll wash out, you priss."

"But I'll always know."

Percy pushes shakily to his feet and begins unbuttoning his waistcoat, then turns away to address his trousers and smallclothes. The moment he removes them, Vax is hit with the smell of his spend and his mouth begins to water again. He's determined to give Percy a modicum of privacy while he can, considering the fact that Vax did just make him come in his pants, but it's a sharp reminder of the urgency of their situation.

In the end, Percy ends up shedding everything, so Vax follows suit. "Well, here we are," Percy says, gesturing about the tent. "Allow me to give you the grand tour of the bedchamber. It is appointed with essentially nothing you need. The facilities are a bit rustic, as they're all out of doors."

Vax chuckles, working on spreading the bedroll out a bit. He can tell Percy is falling back on verbosity to avoid awkwardness, but there's something oddly charming about it. Vax has, at various times, found Percy to be irritating, appealing, and intriguing. He's certainly got a nice body – slender, toned, rangy – and from the inescapable realities of living in such close proximity, Vax already knows he's rather shockingly well-endowed. He's most curious about Percy's hands, what those clever fingers can do when they're not fabricating weaponry. Unfortunately, he's not going to get the chance to sample either tonight, but it's a good reminder that this isn't about what Vax wants.

The smell of Percy's need is starting to strengthen again, so Vax puts a hand up to tug him down. "Come here. Physical contact will make the urge... less sudden."

Percy nods, sitting stiffly and then stretching out beside Vax, heat pouring off of his skin like a furnace. When Vax tugs him close, he's got the feel of a man who's desperately trying to tell himself to relax, and Vax knows the feeling. "Before we're... foggy again, is there

anything you need? Anything that will make you more comfortable? In a relative sense, at least.”

Percy sighs, flopping onto his back again and scrubbing a hand against his face. “I haven’t done this in such a long time.”

“It’s been a while for me, too,” Vax says, molding up alongside Percy’s form. “And I’m sorry to get so personal, but considering the situation... just so I know, are you... used to penetration?”

“I have dabbled, but it’s not my usual bailiwick,” Percy says, still covering his eyes. “There is, ah, one thing. Something that helps me during heats.”

Vax waits. “Yes?”

It still takes another few moments for Percy to answer. “From before, I remember that it helps if you... sweet talk me.”

Vax doesn’t laugh, but it’s only by virtue of biting hard at his lip. It’s not what Percy said – it’s that he seems so damned embarrassed at saying it. “Sweet talk?”

“Not baby talk, gods, nothing like that,” Percy says. His hand finally falls away from his face, but he’s pointedly looking away from Vax. “No pet names, either. Just... talk nicely to me.”

“So praise helps?” Vax asks gently, tilting Percy’s chin so they’re face to face.

“Praise, yes,” Percy sighs, seeming relieved, and Vax hates that it was so painful for Percy to ask for something that innocuous.

Vax hazards a small display of genuine affection and kisses him lightly on the lips. “I know it’s been a long time, but your body remembers how.”

“That’s the worst part,” Percy groans. “Tell me, what’s it like not to live in fear of your own body? Not to worry it will just decide what it needs on its own and leave you to deal with the consequences?”

Vax leans over to kiss the bare knob of Percy’s shoulder. “Alphas have to deal with some of that, too, but not to the extent you do.” Another kiss to the outside of his collarbone. “I won’t tell you it’s some beautiful, natural thing, because it seems like the shitty luck of the draw, but have you considered that you might be overly concerned with control?” Nibbles and licks across Percy’s collarbone – it’s got to be the heat, but even the sweat on Percy’s skin tastes good.

“I should just let nature take its course? Hope a big, strong alpha takes pity on me every month?”

“No, you do what you’re comfortable with,” Vax says. He’s half on top of Percy at this point, and thankfully Percy seems to enjoy the attention – despite the sourness in his tone, he’s brushing Vax’s hair back from his face and tucking it behind his ear, a surprisingly tender

gesture. “But maybe trust your friends a little. We can help you plan, maybe find a backup option if Pike’s not here. Grog and Scanlan might give you shit for a hot second, but only in jest, and not for very long.”

Percy grimaces. “I can’t... I can’t think about that right now. It’s starting.”

“Fair,” Vax says, dipping his head to kiss the hollow at the base of Percy’s throat. He’s leaning over Percy on one elbow, trying not to press their lower bodies together yet. “There’s one thing I do want to make sure you hear: anything you say or do never leaves this tent. I would ask that you extend me the same courtesy. We may... behave in ways consistent with our biological roles, but that’s not who we are. Not outside of this tent, anyway. Do you understand me?”

“Yes, we’ll never speak of this again.”

“That’s *not* what I said, but we can talk about that later. I just want you to know that you can do what you need to do, ask for what you need without fear of me using it against you. For example, if you were to be pinned under an alpha in rut and *question the size of his knot*—” Vax drives home his point with a bite to the join of Percy’s shoulder and neck.

“Yes,” he hisses, not entirely out of pain, “Okay, that was a lapse in judgment.”

“Oh, I wasn’t looking for an apology,” Vax says, raising his head and grinning. “You’ll learn the truth soon enough.”

Percy’s gaze fixes on Vax’s mouth, and Vax gives into the urge to bend down and kiss the human beneath him. Percy kisses back hungrily, with far more teeth than necessary, and it triggers a dominance response so fast that Vax has rolled on top of him before he knows what’s happened. Percy’s hard already, pressing up with his hips until Vax can straddle him and grind back down. Once Vax is solidly in position, his hands and knees firmly planted, Percy can’t buck him off, and even though his attempts are probably just perfunctory, Vax’s hindbrain doesn’t seem to know it.

Vax growls and rolls his hips until Percy has to break the kiss to gasp for air. His scent is all need, the same dangerous smell that drew Vax in earlier, but purer, stronger now that there’s no fabric to block it. They grind together until Vax can’t stand it – he pushes his thigh between Percy’s legs again, but this time it’s to make room for his hand. He gives Percy’s cock a miss and slides a hand between his thighs instead, finding him slick and ready.

“Gods, Freddy,” Vax groans. “You always get this wet?”

Whatever Percy wants to say in reaction, he’s fighting with himself over it, and Vax doesn’t want to make it worse. He kisses Percy’s forehead, then his cheek. “I’m going to use my fingers now,” he says, even though words are beginning to become a struggle.

Sure enough, one finger slides in easily, and the heat is exquisite. Vax feels his cock throb with the thought of what’s to come, a slight tingling at the base in delicious anticipation. His knot only comes out during rut, and it’s been a long time for him, too.

Percy's eyes roll back when Vax starts to work his finger in and out, and Percy's hips start to curl up against Vax's hand. "So good," Vax murmurs into his ear, nibbling at the lobe, and a fresh surge of moisture coats his fingers. "That's right, open up for me."

"More," Percy grates out, and Vax replaces one finger with two. Or he tries to – despite how wet Percy is, Vax can barely work the tips of both fingers through the first ring of muscle. Percy lets out a sob of a breath at the intrusion, and his eyes are shut tight. Vax's cock is perfectly average, but he's going to hurt Percy if the human can't find a way to unclench.

"It's okay," Vax breathes. "It's okay. Just relax for me. Your body wants this, but you're fighting it. You don't need to fight it." He's practically crooning words he never thought he'd say into his friend's ear, but right now, this is his omega, his sweet, frightened omega who needs his help. "Let me in, Freddy. It's just me, and I can make you feel so good."

A few more moments pass, and Vax starts to worry. He can tell Percy's in distress, his brain trying to override his body trying to override his instincts, and it's turning him into a bundle of tension. Vax withdraws his fingers, ignoring the sound of loss Percy makes in favor of gripping his cock with slick fingers and starting to stroke. For a few minutes, he just concentrates on making Percy feel good, though at the speed this is escalating, he might not be able to make Percy come again without anything in him.

"Percy," Vax says, "can you still understand me? Are you still able to talk?"

"Yes, yes," Percy groans. "Fingers. Put them back."

"I think I've got a better idea. Turn over for me." He removes his hand from Percy's cock and Percy whimpers, but doesn't move. "Percival, *now*."

It's not a voice Vax uses often, and he knows that, whatever his biology, he's not the most commanding presence in most gatherings. But Percy obeys so fast it's nearly comical, scrambling up and over until he's lying on his stomach.

"That's it," Vax says, getting up on his knees. "Much better." He can't resist a quick bite to the back of Percy's neck, but from there, he quickly trails kisses down the human's spine. Vax has never actually done this to an omega in heat – it seemed too personal, perhaps too intimate to try with people he barely knew – but he's willing to give it a shot.

He shifts around until he's kneeling between Percy's spread legs and biting gently into the flesh of his ass. "You smell so fucking good," Vax murmurs. "I could smell you from thirty yards away. Let's see how good you taste."

With that, Vax spreads Percy with his hands and dips his head to tongue lightly at the source of the slick. It's a unique flavor, sharp and tangy, but not an unpleasant one. Percy's hole quivers under the touch of his tongue, so Vax goes in with more pressure, and Percy keens.

"You like that, Freddy?" Vax asks, grinning to himself.

"Yes," Percy moans, squirming in the bedroll. "Yes, *please*. More."

Vax scoops his arms under Percy's thighs, tilting his backside up, and dives in with enthusiasm. Percy is deliciously responsive to every wriggle of Vax's tongue, and Vax soon feels the tight muscle start to loosen under his ministrations. By the time he works the tip of his tongue in, Percy's actively trying to stop himself from thrusting back onto Vax's face, and the growing ache between Vax's legs is getting harder and harder to ignore.

Percy lets out a sob when Vax pulls away, but he quickly replaces his tongue with the tips of two fingers, and this time, it's easier to work them in. Vax wipes his dripping chin with the back of his other hand and chuckles. "I'll have to remember how much you like my mouth."

"Like – *hnnnnngh* – like your dick more," Percy manages, getting up on his elbows and fucking himself on Vax's fingers so vigorously that Vax hardly has to move his arm.

"We'll get there," Vax soothes, but he works another finger in for safety. "You're doing so well, Percy. You're almost ready for me. You're gonna feel so good around me, all hot and wet and tight."

It sounds like Percy's trying to say something, but only vowel sounds come out, and Vax has to agree with that sentiment. It's time.

When Vax removes his hand to quickly slick himself, he groans aloud when hand gets to the base of his cock. He can't help but squeeze there, the skin so sensitive around his budding knot even before it starts to swell. He doesn't bother to ask whether Percy is ready – it would be almost insulting at this point, the way he's presenting.

"You perfect thing," Vax groans, gripping Percy's hip tightly as he guides his cock with his other hand. It's near agony to hold still, to let Percy adjust to the intrusion while his hole clenches and flutters around the tip of Vax's cock. Vax rubs a hand down Percy's back to distract himself, murmuring a litany of *so good, so good for me* until Percy's breathing starts to even out a bit.

It's a fairly good sign that he's ready when Percy starts trying to fuck himself on Vax's cock. "Easy," Vax says firmly, then softer: "Easy. I've got you. It just gets better from here." He sinks in a little farther, then pulls back. Then a little deeper still, then back. He steels himself for one more go when Percy flexes his arms and shoves backward with surprising force, his hips crashing against Vax's. All the air leaves Vax's lungs in a whoosh as he bottoms out, and Percy grunts with success.

Vax has the presence of mind to laugh, even as he grips Percy's hips and starts to thrust in earnest. When he does, Percy's deeply satisfied grunts on the apex of every thrust are like music. Vax's body sings with the pleasure of finally fucking into a heat-drenched omega, particularly one as strong and eager as Percy, and Vax can't remember why this is only the first time they've done this. They should *always* be doing this.

Before long, the rim of Percy's hole starts catching on the swelling at the base of Vax's cock, and Vax slows down to enjoy the unique, fleeting pleasure of being able to work his nascent knot past the tight ring of muscle. The drag and pull of that last inch is the sweetest fucking thing imaginable, and if the sounds Percy's making are any indication, he fervently agrees.

Like all good things, though, it's only temporary, and Vax carefully seats himself fully inside Percy before he gets locked out. He'd forgotten how fast it comes on once it starts, and all he can do is bend down over Percy's back and roll his hips as his knot grows. Percy squirms and whimpers, caught between the pleasure and the deep, burning stretch of it, and Vax does what he can, wrapping his arms around Percy's torso and making soothing sounds. But sounds are all he can manage – words are entirely beyond him as his knot reaches full size and he starts to come.

It's different from a regular orgasm – it doesn't come on as hard or peak as high, but it swells through him like a slow wave, cresting and then petering out again. It also lasts much longer, his body seizing up with bliss every time a new wave hits and he pours out more of his seed. Distantly, he's trying not to make Percy hold too much of his weight, but it's hard to make his body obey his commands when it's got such a singular focus.

Eventually, though, the waves start to die down, spaced farther and farther apart, and Vax regains a bit of control over his faculties. He leans back on his knees and tightens his arms around Percy, pulling him back to sit astride Vax's lap, secured tightly on his knot.

"Fuck," he groans as another shallow wave shivers through him. "Percy. Are you okay? I got – *oh gods* – I got a little lost there at the end."

"I'm fine," Percy groans, surprisingly articulate for the moment. "But I could use a hand."

Vax releases his middle and reaches down to Percy's cock. It's rock hard in his hand, but it's also very wet. Vax grins. "Percy, did you come again already?"

"I th-think so," Percy says brokenly as Vax starts to stroke. "When – *ah* – when you were w-working your knot in and out."

It sends a final aftershock through Vax's body, the thought of his beautiful omega coming on his growing knot. "Mmm, you feel so good, Freddy," Vax purrs, languid satisfaction starting to replace the sharper pleasure from before. "So warm and sweet for me. I just need one more thing from you." He licks and bites lazily at whatever skin he can reach, just to have the taste of Percy on his tongue. "I need you to come again, sweetheart. Can you do that for me?"

"Yes," Percy groans, body starting to go rigid as Vax's hand speeds up.

"Mm-hmm, let me hear it."

It starts as low, rolling growl in Percy's chest, and Vax feels the vibrations of the sound as it gets higher and breathier until it all peaks with a hard shudder, and wet warmth drips down Vax's fist.

He stays there on his knees with Percy astride him as long as he can, rubbing his cheek between Percy's shoulders as they both come down, tied together, but eventually Vax worries about cutting off the blood supply to his feet. With Percy's help, they shift awkwardly until they're lying on their sides. Percy's taller and a little broader than Vax, but nevertheless, he makes a remarkably good little spoon.

“Y’okay?” Vax manages after a few minutes.

“Mmm.”

Vax knows this has the potential to be the most awkward part, being physically stuck together, but right now he’s sated and drowsy with a beautiful, well-fucked omega in his arms, and he feels totally and utterly at peace. It’s his alpha brain, tricking him into thinking he doesn’t have a care in the world, but right now, it doesn’t matter. He did his job. He can rest.

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They nap through dinner, both exhausted by the first fuck of heat. It’s dark by the time Vax opens the tent flap – the smell of sex inside is heavy enough to cut with a spoon, and Percy’s heat scent hasn’t returned too pungently yet – and there’s a makeshift tray with two bowls of stew and two large waterskins.

“They know, don’t they?” Percy groans as Vax brings the food and water inside but leaves the tent open for now. He’s not fully dressed, but he’s pulled his shirt and his glasses back on, so he looks a bit more like himself.

“They might,” Vax says, tucking into his stew. He’d forgotten how ravenous a rut makes him. “Would that be so bad?”

With a resigned sigh, Percy says, “I suppose not. As long as they don’t actually see me in the middle of heat. Or smell me.”

“I haven’t taken a poll, but I think we’ve all known some omegas in our time. We know that they’re not some submissive, faint-hearted stereotype.” Percy doesn’t respond to that, so Vax hazards, “Keyleth mentioned that your parents weren’t exactly accepting.”

Percy lets out a long sigh. “They weren’t bad people; they just didn’t know what to do with an omega. As far as I know, there hadn’t been one in the family for generations. With money and titles come expectations.”

Vax is a little surprised that Percy volunteered even that much about his family. Obviously, they all know he comes from wealth and that most of his family is deceased, but he rarely ever talks about his roots. “I can’t speak to that, exactly,” Vax says carefully, “but I know that parental expectations can be... damaging, even if they’re well-intentioned.”

“They made the world seem so insular,” Percy says between bites of stew. “The thoughts and opinions of the people around them mattered so much. Now, after having spent some time in the wider world, I can see all of that means precisely dick. And yet, I have this little voice in the back of my head telling me that I can’t let anyone know, that I’ll be in danger – or worse, in disgrace – if anyone finds out what I really am.”

It might be the most that Percy’s ever said to him that Vax can be sure isn’t bullshit. “Well, I’m not sure that you need anyone in Vox Machina to protect you – not with your various projectile creations there – but we’ll stand beside you all the same.”

Percy turns to look at Vax with a surprising amount of sincerity. “Thank you, Vax’ildan. Apart from one... entity, shall we say, I haven’t known much consistency in a very long while.”

Vax is terribly curious about the “entity” that Percy just referred to, but he’s already shared so much that it seems rude to pry, particularly as he’s going to be back inside Percy’s ass in short order. Instead, he hands Percy one of the waterskins. “Drink up. We’re expending fluids at a frighteningly high rate.”

“Speaking of,” Percy says, standing up. “Somehow, I actually have to urinate. Excuse me.”

He only gets a few steps out of the tent when Vax feels a sharp squeezing sensation in his chest. It stops for a moment, then comes back again even stronger. Vax lets out a pained sound, as does Percy. Vax hears Percy swear, and then the footsteps head back toward the tent.

Percy pisses close enough to the tent that Vax can hear it, and Vax thinks he has a good idea of what’s going on. “Heat bond?” he asks as Percy comes back inside.

“Yes,” Percy says, flushing. “I’d hoped it was a phenomenon that would pass with my youth, but here we are.”

“Aw, you’re still plenty young, Freddy,” Vax says lightly, standing up to stretch. “And I don’t mind sticking close to you for a bit.”

“Thank you. I know you didn’t sign up for any of this.”

Vax laughs. “I didn’t sign up to join a roving band of adventurers and get into a prank war with a goliath, but that doesn’t mean I’m not enjoying the experience.” When Vax looks over, Percy’s eyes are starting to darken, and the scent of heat is beginning to fill his nostrils again. “Should I close the tent back up?”

Percy nods, removing his shirt. “And if your mysterious alpha instincts will allow it, I think I’d like to ride you this time.”

As Vax stretches out on his back, lightly fisting his hardening cock, he knows it’s just his hormones talking, but he thinks he would’ve definitely signed up for this if given the chance.

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Despite the physical fatigue, and perhaps because of the earlier nap, Vax finds himself unable to sleep later in the night. Percy, another three orgasms down, is passed out beside him, sleeping deeply. Many of the specifics of the other heats Vax has participated in are shrouded in a fog of lust, but Percy has seemed much sharper and more lucid during the down times than other omegas. Of course, he’s a sweating, writhing, begging mess when he’s tied on Vax’s knot, and even the thought sends a little pang of arousal through Vax’s tired body.

It is... different, seeing Percy as an omega. Not because of anything about Percy, but because of the way Vax is reacting to him as an alpha. Frankly, Vax is a little embarrassed at some of

the thoughts that have been crossing his mind – sweet omega, beautiful omega, *his* omega. Percy may be quite agreeable to look at, but few people would accuse him of being sweet, and he's certainly not Vax's. Vax wouldn't ever admit any of it out loud, and he wonders what words are going through Percy's mind that he'd never admit to.

Vax takes in a deep breath and lets it out as a sigh. With his mind substantially clearer, there's a bit of melancholy to the situation. A mere 12 hours ago, Vax hadn't even known that Percy enjoyed the company of men, let alone that he preferred being knotted by a male alpha during heat. Upon meeting him, Vax had deemed Percy to be out of bounds, but that may not have been true. And he'll never know whether Percy would have chosen him outside of the hormone rush of heat.

There's nothing in the world quite like heat sex, Vax muses, but it's awfully limiting. He might get to suck Percy's cock for a bit, but he's not going to get to feel it inside him – for this particular window of time, that won't really be satisfying for either of them. Truth be told, he prefers bottoming when he's not in rut, and he'd love to come with Percy's long, dexterous fingers pressing all the right spots inside him.

He's getting hard again, and when he scents the air, he realizes that Percy is starting to wind up, even in his sleep. Still, he'll let the man sleep until the need wakes him – he needs his rest. For the moment, Vax closes his eyes and lets a hand drift downward, fingers teasing at his swelling cock. There's something titillating about quietly fantasizing over the man beside him, even though they'll be fucking again soon.

On impulse, he sucks two fingers in his mouth to wet them, and then reaches down to press at his hole. It doesn't feel quite as good as usual, as it's not the arrangement his body wants right now, but the touch feels comfortable and familiar. Perhaps one day Percy might humor Vax, maybe when they're in one of the rare luxurious inns with decent sheets and they've had a bit too much to drink, press him down into a soft mattress and sink that long, thick cock into him slowly, letting Vax feel every delicious inch of him, Percy murmuring softly into the back of Vax's neck, hands coasting easily up and down Vax's torso, waiting until Vax is nearly out of his mind before wrapping his hand around—”

“Vax,” comes a soft moan next to him. It's Percy, pawing gently at his shoulder. “*Need.*”

“Yes, sweetheart,” Vax says, rolling over to give Percy a soft kiss. “I'm here. I'll take care of you.”

He helps Percy roll halfway on his stomach and tuck one knee up to his chest. By then, Percy is leaking slick again, soft and open and relaxed, though probably getting sore, too. Vax himself feels a low ache in muscles he hasn't taxed this hard in a long time. He presses inside Percy in one smooth, gentle thrust, molding up behind him and rocking into the heat of his body.

“That's it, Freddy,” Vax murmurs into Percy's shoulder. “I'm here now.”

Wordlessly, Percy reaches back for Vax's hand, tugging it around until he can thread his fingers between Vax's.

“Yes, I’ve got you. *Mmm*, still feel so good. That’s right, just relax, I’ve got you.”

Percy starts making sweet little mewls on every exhale, and Vax loses himself in it. Even with the stamina of heat, Vax isn’t sure Percy can get hard again, but he does, and Vax strokes him and strokes him, telling him how wonderful he is, how perfect, until he comes with a shiver on Vax’s knot.

They fall asleep still tied together.

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Dawn breaks and Vax rises with it to see Percy still sleeping. The scent is still in the air, wafting in gentle waves from Percy’s body, but it’s noticeably dying down. One more time might break the heat, and they can clean up and rejoin their friends, possibly before their absence is overly notable. There’s still only the slimmest of chances that the others haven’t figured out what’s going on – surely they’ve at least assumed that Percy and Vax have dragged a tent off in the woods to fuck in privacy, though they might not know the reason for the urgency.

Vax fills their waterskins in the nearby creek, and by the time he’s back, Percy is awake and tearing into some dried meat from his pack. He hands some to Vax, and they break their fast in silence.

When they’re done, Percy stretches and groans. “It’s easing off. I think it’s almost over.”

Vax nods. “That’s what it smells like. Before things get too intense, can I make a request?”

“I… think you’ve been more than accommodating for me, so yes, whatever I can do.”

“Can I suck your cock?”

Percy’s eyebrows rise. “That’s something you’d enjoy right now?”

“I may be an alpha, but I still like dick,” Vax says with a shrug. “And you’ve got a particularly nice one.”

“Thank you?”

“You’re welcome. Now can I suck it or not?”

That gets a chuckle out of Percy. “I suppose I shan’t deny you this incredibly burdensome favor.”

Percy’s still naked – neither of them have been dressed for half a day – so it’s easy just to shuffle around and kneel between his spread legs. Dominance behavior is less important this late in the heat, but with Percy on his back and Vax bending over him, nothing about the act feels submissive, just an alpha making sure his omega is properly cared for. Vax only has to stroke him a few times before he’s hard, the head of his pale cock flushing a deep rosy pink.

He's heavy on Vax's tongue, an incredibly pleasing mouthful, and Vax hums happily as he sinks down. Percy tastes good here, too, like hot summer rain. Vax isn't up for anything fancy, and he doesn't try to take Percy too deep – he's out of practice at that – but he uses his hand where his mouth can't reach. It's good in an easy, uncomplicated way, with Percy gasping under him and stroking at the loose hair that falls around Vax's face.

When the scent of Percy's need grows stronger, Vax searches between his legs and slides two fingers into him without difficulty. He's gotten over his earlier resistance completely, and that makes something in Vax's hindbrain purr contentedly, his omega happy to receive him. Between the sounds Percy makes as Vax pumps his wrist and the steadily growing taste of precum on his tongue, Vax ignores his own arousal until it's nearly too late. When he reaches down to rub himself, he finds his knot already starting to grow.

With a sigh, he lets Percy slip from his mouth – well, that had been fun while it lasted. “Sorry, Freddy, but I need to get in you quickly.”

Percy nods, pushing up on his elbows and pulling his knees up until his feet are flat on the floor. “I'm ready.”

Vax slides home – perhaps for the last time, though he's trying not to think about it – and starts up a slow rhythm. They've gotten to know each other's bodies very quickly and intimately over the past day, and Vax knows by now not to go too hard at the start, to draw out the last few moments before their bodies lock together. It's every bit as delicious as it was the first time, and as good as it feels when Vax is buried solidly in Percy's body, it's bittersweet. Vax genuinely likes being with Percy this way, and he doesn't think it's entirely the alpha hormones talking.

“Talk to me,” Percy murmurs, drawing Vax out of his own head.

“'s good,” Vax slurs. It's not anywhere as desperate as it had been yesterday, and Vax is enjoying the laziness of it, rocking against Percy like they've got all the time in the world. He bends down to kiss the human, getting a sweet little jolt of sensation when Percy curls his hips up. “I could just keep going, do this all day, all week. Keep you plugged up on my knot, coming and coming and coming while I pump you full.”

Percy's breath hitches, one leg coming up to curve tighter over Vax's hip, and Vax wonders if he's just hit on something new. “Would you like that? Skinny human boy, filled up with my seed until your belly starts to swell?”

Percy whimpers, twisting under Vax, and Vax pauses, circling his hips instead of just rocking forward and back. It's not something Vax can keep up very long, but while he does, Percy whines and tosses his head back, as abandoned as Vax has ever seen him. “That's right, *oh fuck*, keep squirming on me and you'll get what you want. I'll give you as much as you can take and then I'll keep going. If I ever let you off my knot, it'll be dripping out of you for weeks.”

With a groan, Percy grabs for his cock, but Vax bats his hand away, high on the way Percy is writhing with a combination of embarrassment and arousal. “No, that belongs to me, and I

don't think I want to let you come yet. Not 'til I do. Not 'til I empty myself into your hot, tight little cunt."

Percy gasps, jerking Vax tighter into his grasp, and it tips Vax over the edge. Despite his words, his body doesn't have much left to give, but it's still trying mightily to fill Percy up. Vax shudders hard, muscles clenching so tightly that there's a little pain on the release, and it's *divine*. Before he loses himself completely, he reaches a shaking hand down to stroke Percy's cock. It's weak and awkward, his body utterly caught up in spending itself, and he groans when he feels Percy's hand clamp down over his own. Percy uses Vax's hand to bring himself off, and the thought of it wrings another convulsive peak out of Vax.

As Percy shivers through the last of his orgasm, Vax would swear he *feels* the heat break, even though they're still knotted together. Percy at least has the presence of mind to pull Vax's head up for a slow, messy kiss, more tongue and teeth than anything else, but for the moment, it feels exactly right.

After a few minutes of labored breathing, Vax plants his hands on either side of Percy to try to take some of his weight off the man. "Sorry," he groans. "Wasn't thinking about getting stuck in this position when I knotted you."

Percy shakes his head. "'s fine. 's the last time."

Vax can't help a little sigh of disappointment. When he feels a little less vulnerable, perhaps he can successfully place the blame on his biology. In the moment, though, he's just saddened that it's over. There's been a certain inexpressible rightness to the past 18 or so hours that might not be entirely due to the heat.

But he pushes the thought out of his head, determined at least to enjoy the time he gets to spend still buried inside Percy. With some careful rearranging of limbs and a daring feat of strength, Vax rises to a kneeling position with Percy astride him, and then slips his legs out from beneath himself until he's just sitting cross-legged on the ground with Percy in his lap.

Once they're situated, sweaty and winded from the effort, Percy surprises Vax yet again by taking Vax's face in his hands and kissing him, slowly and tenderly. It's the heat bond, it must be, but *oh* does it feel wonderful. They've been kissing off and on throughout the whole thing, but it's always been a prelude to something more. This is just... this, Percy's rough, callused hands gentle on Vax's smooth cheeks. Vax's arms wound around Percy's slim torso, holding him steady. Percy seated a few inches above Vax, tongue pressing down against Vax's lips until Vax lets him slip inside. Vax never wants it to end.

But it does, of course, when Vax's knot finally subsides and he feels himself start to slip out of Percy. There's a rush of wetness, as there has been before, but it's decidedly less sexy now that the heat's broken. Percy pulls back from Vax and grimaces. "We may have to burn this bedroll."

Vax chuckles, even though the distance between them feels sudden and cold. "Yeah, I don't think Tiberius's prestidigitation is going to cut it."

Percy crawls on slightly trembling limbs to find his glasses. He puts them on, already looking far more like himself despite the unruliness of his hair. "How are you feeling?"

Vax groans and stretches his legs. "Sticky, but fine. I should probably be asking that of you."

Percy's hand slips between his legs to probe gently at his opening, and Vax knows he's blushing now. "A little sore. Glad we aren't riding horses."

"Shame Pike's not here to heal you up."

"If Pike were here, it wouldn't have come to this."

"Oh." That's right. None of this was Percy's choice, and if they plan better, it won't need to happen again. Feeling chastened, Vax stands as best he can and starts digging around for his clothes.

"Vax, wait," Percy says quickly. "That came out... harsher than I meant it to."

"That's fine, Freddy. You definitely don't need to apologize to me."

"I'm not, precisely, but I am thanking you."

"I'm not sure you should do that, either."

"Vax, look at me." Vax does, and turns to see a Percy who's far more composed than any man without pants on should be. "I am deeply grateful for this. If you hadn't... compromised yourself, I would still be suffering a great deal."

There's so much to unpack in that statement that Vax truly doesn't know how to respond. All he can think to say is, "I don't feel like I've compromised myself. In fact, I was concerned that I was taking advantage of..." He can't quite bring himself to say *of you*, even if it might be true. "...of the situation."

Percy frowns and looks down for a moment. "That is... kind of you to say, but you did no such thing. My foolishness in not preparing for this eventuality is obvious. I won't let it happen again."

"Look, I understand that this isn't the ideal solution, but I'm always happy to help."

Percy looks up so quickly that his glasses go slightly askew; it's sort of adorable. "You'd be willing to put up with all this indignity again?"

Vax chuckles humorlessly. "I don't think we're looking at this in the same way. I don't see it as undignified on either of our parts, though I see how it might feel that way. I hope it's not too forward to say that I... I enjoyed myself."

Percy flushes, but he doesn't look away. "I suppose I may as well confess the same. Admittedly, it has been a long time since I've needed to endure an episode like this one, but you made it palatable." Vax must be unable to control the grimace he feels like making at the choice of words, because Percy quickly corrects himself. "No, that is an unforgiveable

understatement. I enjoyed the process more than I thought possible. I don't believe I've ever come so close to feeling comfortable in my own skin. I... have had certain uncharitable thoughts about alphas over the years, but you have proven them false quite thoroughly."

Percy is red to the tips of his ears now, and Vax is pretty sure he's about the same. It's so much more direct than Percy's usual brand of irony and entendre, and it's nearly as shocking to Vax as finding out that Percy's an omega. Vax is utterly speechless.

"Now if you'll excuse me," Percy says, gathering up his clothes. "I am going to submerge myself in the creek until I no longer smell like a whorehouse."

Vax gives Percy a head start – and gives himself a moment alone to process everything that's happened since yesterday – before heading to the creek to do the same. They wash and then begin packing the tent and their belongings in remarkably comfortable silence.

Percy remains quiet throughout the walk back to their friends' camp, and Vax has to be the one to stop him and ask how he wants to stage their return. If Vax looks closely, he can see that Percy is discomfited, but with his full suit and coat back on, it's like he's put on the armor of his station once more. If anyone can pull this off without attracting too many probing questions, it's Percy.

"Do you want me to go first?" Vax asks.

"No," Percy says, straightening his back. "I'll go. But try to wait a few moments before you follow me, if you don't mind."

"And the heat bond?"

"Oh." Percy readjusts his glasses. "Yes. That should only last a few more hours. I will try to remain a respectable distance from you."

Vax shakes his head. "That's not what I was trying to... I just meant that I can't stay very far behind you."

"Oh, of course."

"Don't worry, I won't stare at your ass any more than I did before," Vax says with a wink. Percy makes a show of rolling his eyes before walking away, but if it were possible to roll one's eyes gratefully, surely Percy would be the one to manage it.

The bond seems to be weaker now, as Percy gets farther away than he had from the tent the previous evening. Vax waits as long as he can, until the tugging in his chest becomes impossible to ignore, before following. The camp is in the process of being broken down, and Grog and Tiberius are bickering about something. Vex is tying up the large pack that Trinket carries, and Keyleth is gathering tent stakes. Percy greets her and asks about a map. Vax watches him for a moment, but no one seems to be engaging him with questions. It's almost suspicious.

As Vax surveys the scene, he feels a hand slap his ass and looks down to see Scanlan. “Well, hello.”

Scanlan flutter his eyelashes up at Vax. “How’d you sleep, elf boy?”

“As well as I could, under the circumstances,” Vax says lightly, unsure what, if anything, Keyleth may have told the group to excuse their absence.

Scanlan snorts. “I’m pretty sure Grog’s the only one who bought Keyleth’s story about you and Percy getting sprayed by a dire skunk.”

“Are you saying Keyleth is a liar?”

“I’m saying I’ve never seen Percy walk that bow-legged.”

Vax stares Scanlan down, sending up a quick prayer to Sarenrae that he’s able to keep a straight face. “You get your visits to the brothels with Grog. Can’t Percy and I have a little fun?”

“Oh, no judgment here,” Scanlan says with a hand gesture he must think is magnanimous. “Get your fun while you can, I’ve always said, and it must a shitload of fun to make Sir Percival Wolfenstein Fancynames de Rolo the Third squeal.” He grins. “Is it something you’re going to repeat?”

Vax casts a look over at Percy, who’s peering down his nose at everyone like he didn’t have Vax’s knot in him two hours ago. “Uh, possibly. That remains to be seen.”

“Well, just make sure you invite me over to watch. Or participate.”

“No, Scanlan.”

“Listen, a lot of people are intimidated by The Cube at first...”

“*No.*”

Scanlan shrugs. “Your loss.”

He walks away, and Vax watches as Percy takes a seat on a rock and winces slightly. Sure, it was an exaggeration to say it’d be dripping out of him for weeks, but Vax would place a solid bet on the rest of the day, at least. He smiles to himself and goes to see whether Trinket remembers yesterday’s lesson.

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