

Blue

amenon

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The Little Blue Book

Dedication

For Sapphwoolf, because it's a good opportunity to reveal the second dedication on *Full House*:

To Sapphwoolf; For Zen and Alaric.

And to all the big dreamers.

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The Little Blue Book

There was a knock at the door. Nick disengaged at Keith's signal.

"Come in!"

Zen poked his head in, then entered. The wolf was carrying a pitcher and some glasses, and put them down on the table occupying one corner of the room.

Keith was clearly amused to see Zen, and the wolf shot him back a wry grin. Nick didn't quite grasp the subtext, but smiled as well. He'd thought Keith had seemed a bit concerned earlier, and this looked to be a good outcome. The wolf had almost seemed more thrown by Natani and Maddie than *Keith* had been, and Nick didn't quite understand why. Was there something there? He'd looked for clues in how Zen and Maddie had behaved the previous evening, but had come up with nothing. But then, Maddie's focus had seemed to be hostility towards himself; he didn't think there was anything typical about what he'd seen. Still, surely Natani wouldn't do that to her brother, if that were the case—so what *was* it?

"Thought you could use some water, the way you've been going."

Keith smiled at the wolf, quite charmingly. "Did you have a good nap?"

Zen stuck out his tongue. "Well, you lot kept shaking the walls. How's it going?"

"We're just playing around. Nick's taking it easy on me."

Nick grinned at him. "Hey, I'm just not used to having to watch my hemline."

Keith grinned back. "You should try fighting in a *dress*."

Should he? ... maybe he should.

Zen took a spot next to the table, leaning against the wall. "Well, don't let this old wolf distract you."

Nick would have been curious to see the 'old wolf' fight, but not curious enough to throw away the opportunity to keep grappling with Keith. "Well, shall we?"

*

The basitins resumed their spar, and Zen spectated. Indeed, it was far from serious; and at least as far as he could see, Alaric didn't *really* have any trouble with the robe. He was taking his steps with confidence, wrapped ankles flashing as he moved. No punches or kicks were being thrown, and the focus seemed to be entirely on grappling and positioning. Bouts ended up on the walls, or occasionally the floor. They were... playful. It lifted Zen's heart to watch Keith in this contest, smiling, laughing, whether he came up on top or not. Perhaps this harkened back to some exercise for basitin youth.

Though if that was the case, Zen rather suspected they weren't playing by regulation rules. Occasionally, one would catch the other in a vulnerable position, and rather than taking martial advantage would nip, or lick, or nuzzle, usually eliciting laughter. Not all of the openings were forced, either.

And some of the holds looked rather suspicious.

Still, while it wasn't *exactly* innocent, he didn't feel like he was interrupting anything, either. At least yet. And who knows, maybe they'd had enough for the day. There had to be *some* limit, even to basitin stamina.

He hadn't dared check on the condition of the bath.

Alaric was still something of a mystery to him. From all the things Keith had said over the years, he'd have expected a being of pure mischief. But even though Alaric had thawed from yesterday, Zen still hadn't caught more than a glimpse of that. The basitin still seemed... watchful, almost, open affection to Keith notwithstanding. And that was basically unavoidable, given Keith himself. Keith never left any room for doubt about how he felt, and that drew a response. To love him, to be loved by him, was to show it. For Zen, for Natani, and, apparently, for Alaric.

How... would it work? While it was still officially only today, it seemed a safe enough bet that it wouldn't stay that way. So what would that mean? From the moment Keith and Natani had become Keith and Natani and Zen, the basitin had never excluded either of them, never left either of them feeling unwanted or unloved. It had fallen to him and Natani to sort out whether private time was necessary, and for whom. And if someone bowed out, it was most often Zen; Keith and Natani's relationship had intricacies that even he, with the link, didn't fully understand, but which he regardless felt called for the occasional moment of absolute privacy. Even if the two were by no means shy in expressing themselves.

Natani usually rolled her eyes and called him brotherly.

He was fine with that.

All of that was as easy as breathing for them, being who they were, knowing each other's minds, agreeing on what mattered most. He guessed Keith would keep to the same strategy, at least try it; indeed, Zen wasn't sure what else the basitin *could* do, besieged by *three* people. Even on his best gallivants, Zen had never quite gotten in *that* situation—though he never set out to to break hearts, and he'd done pretty well at that.

Though, sometimes, when he returned home, Keith would show just a *hint* of jealousy... Zen was *almost* certain that it was feigned, for his benefit, but that suspicion did nothing to blunt its effectiveness. Those moments always seemed to result in private time for Zen, so he could assuage Keith at length.

He pulled his mind back on track. So what of Alaric? He didn't quite see Keith getting all *three* of them—though, if it was just to show Keith a really, *really* good time, then perhaps...

Back on track. Alaric. How would they sort it out? Alternating days? That just felt... silly. Play it by ear? How well could that possibly work? He seemed deferential—especially to Natani—and it couldn't come down to them *doling out* Keith to him. The idea just felt wrong. They had hopes for Alaric—hopes for *Keith*—and those hopes wanted an equal. A worthy equal, to be sure, but an equal.

Alaric slammed Keith into the wall next to him, interrupting Zen's reverie. Their struggle reached stability, and they disengaged. Keith rotated his shoulder with a wince.

Alaric didn't look too concerned. "Too hard?"

Keith shook his head. "Didn't brace right. It's fine. Let's take a break, though." He grinned at Zen. "Could use something to drink."

Zen poured a glass of water and handed it to him. When Keith took it, his hand brushed the wolf's. Quite deliberately. The little... Natani's laundry list of Things To Do With Keith flickered through his mind, and Zen almost reached out. The way the basitin was looking at him, it wouldn't have stopped at a touch. Or a kiss. Zen stuck his tongue out at him, then gestured with the pitcher and raised his eyebrows at Alaric.

"Yes, please."

Zen poured another glass. Alaric's hand didn't brush his.

"Thank you."

"So, does this little contest of yours have rules?"

He hadn't addressed the question to either of them in particular, but it was Keith who answered. "It's pretty basic. Getting your opponent on their back gets you a point."

"Oh? That sounds somehow familiar."

Keith rolled his eyes and smiled. "Care to give it a go?"

He looked at Keith, and the basitin almost blushed. It would be a match to one point, and damn the consequences. He was about to refuse—

"I'd like to see that as well."

Huh. He looked at Alaric. "Then how about *you* show me how it's done?"

*

"Sure. If you'll step this way..." Nick was confused. The way the two of them had been looking at each other... what *was* that, if not his cue to take a step back? But here he was, about to face the wolf, wondering whether he should throw the match.

Keith was clearly amused by the situation. "Nick! He'll get you if you let your guard down!"

So that was a no on the throw, then.

*

Alaric fought... politely. It didn't stop Zen from getting completely trounced, but at least he was getting manhandled in an immaculate manner. The basitin was all quiet efficiency and calm demeanour. This was probably how these things were *supposed* to go, if maybe not so one-sided. Zen took it well, taking Keith's example to laugh or smile even when getting utterly destroyed, so as not to discourage his opponent. If he was going to get a point, he wanted it to count. He'd been expecting to be the underdog, of course; he could rarely beat Keith *or* Natani, and watching them spar he'd gotten some idea of Alaric's abilities—Natani's strength in a basitin-sized frame, with technique that put Keith's to shame. So he'd went in holding back, concealing the full advantage of his reach and a few choice tricks, looking for an opportune moment.

He knew it had come when he saw Keith pull up a chair and sit down, pulling his legs up into the seat, not minding his hemline. Naked ankles on full display. If that didn't do it, he was out of luck. On the next bout, Zen maneuvered, positioning Alaric so that he should *just* see Keith from the corner of his eye, then played for time. The moment Alaric glanced at Keith, he struck with everything.

*

Through a series of events it took him a moment to piece together, Nick found himself flat on the floor with Zen sitting on his chest. The defeat stung. He'd underestimated the wolf, *and* it had been *exactly* as Keith had warned him. The moment he let his guard down. But as the moment stretched, with Zen still sitting on him, grinning down and catching his breath, he just started to feel ridiculous. He raised his eyebrows. "I think that counts already."

Zen laughed. "Let me savor it. I'm not sure I'm going to get another one."

This... Nick laughed as well. This wasn't someone to fight. This was someone else to play with.

*

The next bout started with Nick grabbing Zen by the tail, much to the wolf's apparent dismay. Keith watched on, smiling, as the melee deteriorated. It quickly became something that, while not intimate, was clearly friendly. Now *that* was more like it. He provided more distractions, aiding this combatant or that as they vied for positional advantage—or disadvantage. The score was cast aside and the match, such as it was, became more even as Nick took on handicaps and Zen stepped up his game. Free-form suited him better. Perhaps suited both of them better.

It went on for a while, but the last bout ended with *Zen* on his back and Nick sitting astride. Of course, it was only the last one because that was when Zen decided to call it. Nick offered his arm and the wolf took it, quite theatrically using it for leverage to hoist himself up, before, also quite theatrically, dusting himself off and finding numerous complaints with his body. Nick seemed the right amount of skeptical, and Keith had to grin.

When Zen came walking past, Keith smiled at him and gave him a 'well, what now?' expression. Zen tousled his hair in response, then was slow in removing his hand. Keith, not wanting the moment to pass, put one hand on the wolf's waist. The moment drew longer... but Zen tousled his hair again, this time withdrawing his hand, and stuck his tongue out. Keith let his own hand fall away, brushing the wolf's leg through his robe as he stepped past. Zen was being... so very himself. He might actually have to ask Nick to give them a moment, so he could force the issue and give the wolf a proper tumble.

Indeed, Nick was looking a clear question at him. He shook his head in response. Not yet. He grinned instead. "So, did that little contest of yours have rules?"

Nick grinned back. "Not that I noticed. Care to give it a go?"

Keith stood up and stretched, luxuriously, aware of both Zen behind him and Nick in front. "Sure."

*

Zen had been intending to make his excuses—maybe go take that nap, maybe even for real—but the sight of Keith stretching broke his resolve just long enough for him to decide to sit down, first, just for a moment. To catch his breath. The chair was still warm from Keith, and somehow that moment kept stretching as he watched the basitins at play.

And play they did. It was more or less a wrestling match by now, almost all groundwork as they tangled, on some level probably still trying to pin the other, on some other level perhaps trying to *get* pinned instead. It looked glorious fun, *had been* glorious fun after that first point. Even an old wolf can feel young at heart.

Still. As their play once again took on more suggestive elements, Zen sighed inwardly. There was only one way this was going to go, and he figured it would go that way sooner with him out of the room. But he knew where that would leave him, and he wasn't even sure he could find all of the cards again.

He glanced out the window at the rain. Less heavy than yesterday, but it was yet another thing to remind him that, a day or so ago... he'd been about to grapple Keith himself, when Mad-die had come knocking. And the basitin was so, so very grappleable. Rarely, in fact, had he looked more grappleable than at this very moment, getting pinned by Alaric and putting up suspiciously little struggle.

He could wait. Of course he could. But... *maybe*...

He propped his feet up on the table. If he didn't much miss his guess, this would tell him what he wanted to know. Keith just grinned at him and laughed when he saw, and Zen winked back. Alaric glanced at him to see what was up, then did a double-take. Zen tugged at his robe, to bring the hem a bit farther up his shins, and splayed his toes, and Alaric was distracted enough for Keith to execute a sudden and very efficient take-down.

"Collusion!" Came the muffled complaint.

So there was, perhaps, interest. If that hadn't just been shock value. But how to proceed? The key, he decided, was to go over the top. Make it so it can be laughed off. Serious hopes, buried in humor. Go big or go play solitaire. But what would do it?

An idea flashed into his head.

No, surely not.

But...

Some thoughts, once thought, cannot be dismissed. He put on his best grin. "How about a different contest?"

The basitins had gotten off the floor again. Keith raised his eyebrows, clearly amused. "What did you have in mind?"

"Feet only." Zen wiggled his toes to make the point. "He who comes first loses. Winner gets a treat."

Keith looked shocked at his forwardness, then laughed. "And the treat?"

Alaric looked... speculative.

Zen shrugged magnanimously. "Winner's choice. I'm willing to bend over if that's what it takes to get some action around here."

Keith was pure amusement. "And you're not usually?"

Zen stuck out his tongue with a smile.

*

Nick was a fast thinker, and he had plenty of time to get past his initial surprise while Keith and

Zen bantered. He had little doubt the wolf was serious, but couched in humor it would be easily shrugged off.

But it was a no-loss for him, if he was of a mind to go for it. Oh, Keith would win the ‘contest’, that much was certain, but that was a loss he would have paid dearly to experience. *That* idea was on the *secret* list. And if he should win, well, it would be his call; he could pass. Or... not. Looking at Zen, he found himself entertaining new possibilities. He wouldn’t mind finding out what that muzzle felt like. Or... he glanced at the wolf’s feet again, as he wiggled his toes... other parts of his body. And one good turn would, of course, deserve another. He found himself wondering about parts of Zen’s anatomy *not* on display... and needed to pull his mind back on track. Quite apart from the fact that Nick found him easy enough on the eyes, there was the wolf’s disposition. There was a ready warmth to Zen that would surely have put him off, had it come from another basitin, but he found disarming instead coming from someone wholly outside the strictures of his society. The wolf treated him like he was an equal—like that was *obvious*.

And above all else, he was Keith’s lover—and more. There could be no better recommendation.

It couldn’t hurt his case with the wolves, either, as far as he could see—though it was becoming obvious that their only concern about him was whether he was good for Keith, or not. But if Zen was actually interested in him, it might be better to... no, he didn’t think this was really about him, not with the way the two were looking at each other. But given the way they *were* looking at each other... it also followed that it *had* to be about him, in some way. Was this the wolf thinking ahead, to what something beyond just today might be like? Was the real question ‘can we share?’

He knew what he *wanted* the answer to that to be.

Well, whatever else it was, it was an opportunity for him to *do* something. He’d been stuck following Keith’s lead—and a good lead it was!—because he didn’t quite understand how *anything* worked here, and he wasn’t going to risk anything by making careless moves. It had been one unexpected turn after another, but even though this was yet another such, he felt for the first time that he *understood* the situation. Keith was going to turn Zen down, because *of course* he was. Zen would know that as well, so this ploy was aimed at *him*. His first option was to be quick on the draw, make some appropriately inappropriate joke, and excuse himself to give them a clearly much-overdue moment. Alternatively, if he did *nothing*, the status quo would be preserved and the wolf would probably end up excusing himself... or maybe not, depending on how they played it.

He waited for Keith to begin his inevitable line. “I think that might be a little—”

Alaric raised his eyebrows. “Keith Keiser... turning down a challenge?”

*

Yes! Alaric had bitten! But Keith quickly pulled him into a huddle in the corner, and Zen was left watching them confer, oscillating between worried and very worried. What were they talking about? It was no use trying to overhear basitins whispering.

Keith nodded to Alaric one last time, then turned to walk towards Zen, pulling his tail into his

robe as he came. The way he did that... Keith's expression was pure mischief, but it softened into love as they looked at each other. He leaned over Zen, to whisper into his ear. "We're up for it, but... are you sure you wouldn't rather just have a little match with me? Nick wouldn't mind stepping out."

Keith leaned back to look at him, concerned, so... Keith. Zen fought hard not to wrap his arms around the basitin and never let go. But as tempting as that offer was, there *were* reasons to go through with this. He grinned at Keith. "And if I don't?"

The basitin grinned back, mischief returning. "You have *no idea* what you're in for."
"Promise?"

Keith leaned close to whisper again. "Promise." The basitin pulled away, rubbing his cheek against Zen's as he went, tempting him even more. Keith turned around, pulling his robe off in one clean motion. Now fully naked, he swatted Zen lightly with his tail, then let it trail through his lap as he walked away. Zen's eyes being glued to his rear was the only thing that saved him from having his tail grabbed. Zen tore his eyes away to glance at Alaric, and found that the basitin was as preoccupied with the front half of Keith as he'd been with the rear. And who could blame him? Alaric, likewise, visibly struggled to glance back at him, and they shared a smile and a moment of understanding. *Good taste*, he thought at the basitin, and even with no link to carry it he felt that the idea got across.

Alaric pulled off his own robe, smooth in his motions despite the weird circumstance, and let it fall away. He was nearly of a size with Keith, but generally girthier; more clearly muscled and a bit broader of chest and shoulder... though narrower at the hip. Zen's eyes wandered to his basitinhoo, already at full attention at the sight of Keith. Ah, youth. Yup. Generally girthier.

Zen realized Keith was looking at him, an amused expression on his face and in the tilt of his ears. Was that another 'good taste'? He smiled back. "I hope the idea isn't to just keep teasing me as long as possible."

A grin. "We'll see." It wasn't very reassuring. Still, Keith turned to Alaric. "It seems our judge is feeling impatient."

Judge? Good enough an excuse to feel a little less like a complete pervert, watching them. Zen grinned. "Yeah, I haven't got all day. Busy schedule and all that."

Alaric snapped a salute, which Keith for some reason found utterly hilarious. He mimicked the gesture, unable to keep a straight face. "Your honor."

Something to do with basitin protocol, Zen guessed. Alaric had been joking about challenges earlier; maybe this was to do with that. He settled back in the chair, propping his chin up with one arm, and tried his best to look bored and impartial. He gestured with his free hand and reached for some likely words. "You may proceed. May the best basitin win."

Another burst of laughter from Keith, and Alaric smiled. Probably close enough. Both basitins bowed from the waist, then turned to face each other. Another salute, and for a moment they just looked at each other, smiling. Keith stepped closer and kissed Alaric, and going by how the other's tail curled it wasn't exactly innocent. Zen smiled and magnanimously let the (probable) breach of protocol go. He'd have to ask about that one day. Keith broke the kiss and stepped back, leaving Alaric looking a little stunned.

Both basitins sat down, leaning back on their arms to leave their legs as free as possible. Zen realized that Alaric still had his feet wrapped, and apparently intended to remain that way. “Wrappings?”

Alaric grinned at him. “A ruling, your honor?”

Zen considered. That should feel... interesting. And it'd be new for Keith, at least as far as he knew. He waved his arm. “I'll allow it.”

There was some vying for position, and for a moment only feet met feet... but it seemed quickly decided that playing defense was out, as quick, careless moves were unlikely to benefit... well, anyone, really, in that terrain. Thus, a demilitarized zone was born, and both adopted a policy of unfettered access, laying the groundwork for a truly mutually beneficial arrangement, promising growth and prosperity for both.

Zen shook his head, amused. Natani would have really let him have it for that one. *I need to stop reading Keith's books.*

Keith got the first touch, slowly tracing the pad of one foot up the underside of Alaric's erect shaft. When he reached the tip, he grabbed one side with his toes and pulled opposite, bending. Alaric's reaction was palpable. As was Zen's. He *knew* how that felt, was right there with the basitin in his imagination, and felt his own body stirring, unbidden. Keith pulled back, resting both feet against Alaric's groin, the other basitin's balls cupped between his naked ankles. Alaric rallied, caressing Keith's sack with his toes while his other foot tried to catch the base of his shaft. Keith's tail thrashed and he arched his back, giving Alaric an opportunity to trap his manhood against his stomach, giving it a long stroke with his wrapped foot, paying Keith back. Alaric focused on the head, massaging it with his pad, pushing against Keith. With a gasp, Keith went lax, causing Alaric to lose his hold; but he quickly pushed his advantage, shifting closer and trapping Keith's shaft between his wrapped ankles.

Keith seemed to be letting himself get lost in the pleasure, barely putting up a fight. Zen didn't quite trust his performance—was he toying with Alaric? Or... was he looking to throw? Was that what the warning had been about? What would Alaric ask for, if he won? He really *didn't* know what he'd be in for. Still, looking at Keith, the basitin's expression one of pure pleasure, his foremost thought was that he wanted badly to be a part of it. Though he supposed in a way, he was. Who knew how extra-specially kinky a 'judge' being present made this for the basitins? Not him. That was the problem. Maybe he should have made it a three-way duel, with a penalty for the loser... He would've been lucky to last a minute, and then he would have owed them *both* a treat... he lost himself for a moment, in imagining all the ways that might have turned out. Or what if Keith had thrown? He sighed to himself, though it was close to a whimper. He hadn't quite been reduced to pawing at himself, but he was painfully hard, willing the basitins to end this torture and do something, *anything* to him.

It looked close. At some point, Keith had recovered, and both basitins were clearly feeling it now, eyes locked, bodies straining, nearly panting. Alaric was using one of his feet the way he'd used Keith's stomach, earlier, pinning the basitin's member against it with his other, massaging the head with his pad, pushing against the toes of his other foot, shifting them, pressing back... an Alaric win looked all but inevitable—until Keith broke out all his best tricks at the last mo-

ment, and as both basitins jerked and groaned, Zen had no idea which had finished first. As they both collapsed, gasping for breath, Zen realized there had been no great explosion; hardly any issue, and what there was was mostly clear. That gave him some idea of just how busy they'd been, earlier. *Guess that rules out cleanup duty.*

Keith was the first to lever himself back into a sitting position. He wiped himself off on his discarded robe, then cleaned Alaric's feet, still near the scene of the crime, before tossing the robe at the other basitin with a grin. "Let's try to keep the laundry down."

Alaric laughed, still on his back. "Oh gods, that towel..." He too levered himself up and wiped himself down, before cleaning Keith's feet... perhaps unnecessarily thoroughly. He actually blushed! Keith nudged him to leave off, but his smile made it clear he meant no reproach.

That's all well and good, but... Zen cleared his throat. "So, who won?"

They both looked at him, seated on his throne, pitching a tent. Keith raised his eyebrows and grinned, and Alaric did another double-take, then quickly came back for a third look. Zen winked at him with a grin. Always nice to get a reaction.

Keith smiled a smile that Zen did not trust at all, but which left him tingling with anticipation. "You're the judge. Who came first?"

"... neither of you?"

The basitin grinned. "Correct. Would you remind his honor of the rules, Brother Alaric?"

"I believe the exact stipulation was: 'He who comes first loses. Winner gets a treat.'"

Keith was still looking straight at him, though from his tone he spoke to Alaric. "And if neither of us lost?"

"I believe it follows that either neither of us gets a treat... or we both do."

"So, your honor..." Keith stood up and stepped closer, his tail swishing slowly, on the hunt. "Which shall it be?" It wasn't much of a question, but as Keith drew nearer, Zen couldn't get the word out. The basitin once again leaned over him, nuzzling his neck before giving it a playful nip. "Well?"

"Both." It was almost a groan.

Keith grinned. "Up."

Zen rose, very aware of the confines of his robe. Keith tugged up at the side of the garment, and he got the idea, reaching into the neck to pull the whole thing off and send it flying. Giving him no time to take stock, Keith guided him, firmly, backing him against the narrow end of the table. Well. That gave away some of the game. Zen leaned against the table, grabbing the edge for support, and tried not to let his excitement show too much. Was that really what Keith had in mind?

*

Keith knelt down, wall-side of Zen, and looked at Nick. Time to make introductions. It was a bit of a detour from the plan, but he was curious, and he needed to know. Nick had gone along, but was it just that? And how on board was *Zen*, really? What he had in mind probably wouldn't work if this was just half-hearted exploration for one or both of them, so in that case... Well. Keith caught Nick's eye and signaled him to approach, pointing him to Zen's *very* hard member,

knot and all. There was no putting this genie back in the bottle, but there was more than one way to make a wish.

Nick approached, kneeling opposite him, and Keith thought he liked what he saw. The other basitin seemed unable to take his eyes off Zen's knot. Keith smiled. The wolf would like that, too.

Nick tore his eyes away to look at Keith. "Is this...?"

"Yeah."

"Huh."

The other basitin glanced at the knot again, then looked the entire thing over. Keith thought he seemed rather... intrigued. Nick opened his mouth, but didn't seem to find the words. Then, as if remembering it was actually attached to someone, he glanced up at Zen, blushing a little. Keith glanced up as well, to see Zen looking rather adorably smug.

Nick returned his eyes to the prize, and once again opened his mouth only to close it again without saying anything. But then, maybe it wasn't words he was looking for... Keith extended his tongue and gave his side of Zen's shaft a lick, looking at Nick. Care for a taste?

The other basitin blushed again, and Keith wondered that in all the years they'd known each other he'd never seen that until today. Never *really* seen Nick, before today. He'd spent all that time looking away. Nick got his blushing under control and extended his tongue, first getting just a taste, then giving a long lick down the side. The latter was accompanied by an appreciative sigh from Zen. Keith saw that he'd closed his eyes. Probably meant that the wolf was trying to hold back.

Yeah, he didn't think he needed to worry much.

Keith gave his side another lick, nudging it toward Nick, who nudged it back with a grin. They batted it between them for a moment, before Keith started slowly migrating wolfward. Nick matched his pace, and they both nuzzled up to Zen's knot at the same time. It *throbbed* between them and the wolf groaned, then groaned louder when they started licking at it. The knot swelled slightly, and Nick's eyes went wide. Keith grinned at him and drew back. Nick followed suit. Zen's member twitched between them, and the wolf whimpered. Keith stroked one of his legs gently, and slowly, the twitching subsided. That had been very close, and if Zen had moved at all... the wolf must've been dying to buck his hips. Hmm. Could they take a longer detour? He eyed the room. They'd probably set a new distance record... No, too ambitious. Some other time. If there was such a thing. No, better to just—

Nick got his attention with a twitch of his ear, then glanced at the tip of Zen's member, then looked a question at Keith.

Nod, smile. Go for it. A tip of the ear to suggest moderation. Nick moved to directly in front of Zen and carefully licked the tip clean, then took it into his mouth, getting a good taste. Zen visibly throbbed again, and Keith was tempted to let the other basitin get more than a mouthful... but, again, some other time. He put his hand on Nick's chest. Let's not get carried away. The other basitin released Zen, looking a little disappointed and licking his lips. Keith tilted his head, signaling for him to resume his place, opposite.

They grabbed Zen by the legs, lifting, and tipped him onto the table.

*

Nick was left holding Zen's legs, watching Keith as he stepped to the side of the table. Keith put his hand on the wolf's wrist and looked down at him. "You okay with this?"

Zen growled. "Gods yes. Just get on with it!"

Keith leaned down to kiss the wolf at some length. As he did, he rubbed one of Zen's cheeks with a hand. There was that gesture again... and Nick had to stifle a laugh as the wolf's tail banged into his legs.

Keith broke the kiss, and Zen looked up at him with longing. "... or you could do that."

Keith smiled at the wolf, and gave his cheek another stroke. "Just gotta get the lube. Okay?"

Zen sighed. "Okay."

Keith grinned. "That's a good wolf."

Zen growled, and Keith darted away, drawing Nick's eye as he went... to a cupboard in the corner. "Does *every* room in this house —" Nick looked at Zen, and interrupted himself. "— that's a yes, isn't it?"

The wolf grinned at him. "Not the vestibule." Nick considered. That'd probably be because— "We haven't figured out where to put it."

Nick laughed. Yeah. He looked at Zen, who was grinning back at him with his hands behind his head. Something about the situation caught at him. He smiled at the wolf. "Comfortable?"

"Yeah, I'm good." Zen sighed, then grinned. "My balls are killing me, though." The grin melted into a smile. "You?"

It wasn't his body Zen was asking about. Nick grinned. "Yeah. I think I am." *And I may feel like my dick is about to fall off, but saying that would be going off-script.* Keith seemed to be under the impression that he had infinite stamina, probably because he himself seemingly *did*. Nick hadn't had to disabuse his friend of the notion yet, but it was becoming a very, very close thing. The wolf, meanwhile, seemed to have the opposite problem. *Balls, hm?* Alaric figured his leverage and decided that yes, he could just adjust his grip a bit, shift one foot back and crouch a little... He nuzzled Zen's heavy sack carefully, and the wolf gasped. He'd found he rather liked the wolf's scent, and this didn't do anything to change his opinion. He started licking, slowly, teasing the large orbs, the short fur tickling at his tongue. Something like a growl, a low rumble, began to emanate from Zen.

After he'd thoroughly slathered the wolf, he straightened back up to see Zen looking a little dazed... and that the wolf had dripped a fresh mess on his stomach. He grinned. "Any better?"

Zen let out a contented sigh, then laughed. "No, not really. But... thanks. For the effort."

Nick shrugged. "Any time."

The wolf laughed again. "Don't say that unless you mean it."

His instinct was to repeat himself, but he hesitated, and while hesitating realized that Keith was leaning against the wall, holding a small jar, grinning at him. How long had...? He... might have gotten a little carried away. But... he didn't blush this time. "Come here and give me a kiss?"

Keith went from brief surprise to a wide smile, and stepped closer, to put his arms around Nick's neck and give him exactly what he'd hoped for. It was very, very tender. When he was done, Keith leaned his head against Nick and looked at Zen. "What d'you think?"

“I think you should *get on with it!*”

Keith laughed and put the jar on the table, almost against the wall. He removed the lid, and Nick could see that it held a white-ish salve of some sort. Good. Any more of the nuts, and his dick really *might* fall off.

Keith—somehow still hard—quickly lubed himself up, thoroughly... then stopped and looked at Nick, smiling. “Mmm... could have asked you to do that.” Yes, he could have. But Keith didn’t wait for a response, instead moving on to applying more of the lube to Zen’s ass. There was an intake of breath from the wolf.

Preparations complete, Nick passed his place—and Zen’s legs—to Keith, who let the legs fall on his shoulders while he positioned himself. Nick couldn’t help but look at Zen’s feet, right in front of his face, and missed the moment entirely. There was a satisfied sigh from the wolf, and when he turned to look, Keith was already moving, thrusting in and out of Zen. Keith quickly found his pace, and Nick took in how he was standing, how he was holding Zen’s legs, how and how far he was moving... and built an idea of how it would feel to replicate it. Apparently, this was a very precise thing.

Zen sounded amused. “Does that really take both of you?”

Keith glanced at Nick, grinning. “I think he wants something to do with his mouth.”

Well, he’d pretty much gotten it down anyway. Nick stepped up the side of the table, feeling a little too conscious of the wolf’s eyes on his not-quite-stiff manhood. Zen raised his head up a bit, apparently in anticipation.

*

Alaric looked down at him. “Er...”

Zen rolled his eyes and made the first move himself. He wanted to do this before the... distraction... got too much for delicate work. He stretched his neck to get closer and gave Alaric’s semi-hard shaft a playful lick. Not that far from how Keith tasted—a different motif on the same flavor. The basitin didn’t seem to have an objection, so, maintaining eye contact, he gathered the whole thing into his muzzle, suckling lightly. Alaric looked suitably entranced.

For a few of Keith’s thrusts Zen just held there, letting the slight swaying of his body do the work for him. Keith felt amazing inside him, and every thrust was like another drop in a bucket, building towards... something. They’d got it all figured out; the speed, the depth, the angle. Too fast, didn’t really work. Too slow, didn’t work enough. Keith had given it a good try—was *always* willing to give it a good try—but no matter how good it felt, it always got to be too much for Keith before it got to be too much for Zen. He took that as a compliment, really. They’d given it a try with Natani’s little implement of doom, as well, but that had dissolved into laughter. He just couldn’t take it seriously. But... two *basitins*? That, that was serious.

But Alaric hadn’t gotten instantly hard in his mouth. Zen didn’t think it was indifference, so... perhaps he wasn’t as indefatigable as Keith, after all? Zen started working his tongue, gently, *gently*, and Alaric let out a long sigh, his ears drooping happily. As his mouth grew full, Zen went for a smile. *Yeah, I’m pretty good at this.*

*

The wolf's muzzle was exquisite. As Zen gently coaxed him into full hardness, Nick had to use the table for support. His tail curled of its own volition. The wolf's expression warranted a response. "That *is* a good wolf."

Raised eyebrow, cocked head. 'Did you really just say that?'

Nick laughed. "Sorry?"

A shrug, a look. 'It's fine, but... remember who has your dick right now.'

The wolf was surprisingly expressive with his mouth full. Nick gave it another go. "You're *amazing*."

Another smile. 'That's more like it.'

Nick was fully hard again, and with the way the day had been going he should have been on fire... but something about the soft heat of Zen's muzzle, the tender care of his wonderful, wonderful tongue, was alleviating the soreness. And this was an awkward position, too... What would it be like to have the wolf between his legs? Zen strained to completely engulf him, pushing his nose against Nick's stomach, and thoughts dispersed. The wolf held there for a while, apparently with no trouble. His tongue never stopped, and Nick could do nothing but lean harder against the table and let out another long sigh as Zen lavished him. He let some of his weight fall against the wolf, pushing back against his muzzle. Zen didn't seem to mind, and he wanted badly to start thrusting slowly. To let the wolf, so obviously willing, coax another climax from his battered body.

With regret, Nick pulled back. Zen let him go, looking up at him questioningly, still holding part of him in his muzzle. As good as it felt, Nick still had a part to play, and if the the wolf could get him to spend himself here—which Nick rather suspected he could—he might not be able to play it. No matter how good Zen was. He smiled down, and the wolf seemed to get the idea, pulling back all the way. Nick found he ached more in the open air than he had in Zen's mouth.

The wolf settled back on the table. That position just now couldn't have been very comfortable. But Zen wasn't done. He turned his head to the side and nudged Nick with his free hand, beckoning him nearer, up the table. Nick took the half-step to follow Zen, and... the wolf immediately nuzzled his balls. He gasped at the sensation, and the wolf started licking them, lapping at them slowly with his tongue. Nick shuddered, his tail curling again, his eyes almost sliding closed. This... this probably wouldn't be too much stimulation? Right? No matter *how* good he was? He gasped again as Zen took one of his balls in his mouth, tugging at it carefully—positioning him, he realized. He let the wolf guide him a bit more to the side, feeling guilty about forgetting to think of his comfort when he was being so... the wolf licked at him again, and he couldn't find the words. Whatever it was, he wanted more of it. He looked down at Zen, speechless. The wolf smiled at him again, then reached up with a hand to tousle Nick's hair. He had to laugh at the unexpected gesture. Who *was* this? He didn't know how he had expected Zen to react to Keith's little plan, but this, somehow, wasn't it. Zen's hand withdrew, the wolf bracing himself against the wall, and Nick let himself get lost in trying to make sense of the wolf... and the sensations of the wolf's tongue on him.

His reverie was interrupted when, with a grunt, Zen's tongue ceased, his eyes sliding closed.

The wolf let out a long, low moan, and Nick glanced at Keith, surprised. The other basitin looked intent, but smiled and winked when he saw Nick looking, then nodded at Zen. He'd just been focused on what the wolf was doing to him... almost forgetting what Keith was doing to the wolf. Nick's eyes were drawn to Zen's member, sticking out over the wolf's stomach, fully hard—more fully hard than he'd thought possible. The knot looked even bigger than before. How could that ever...? The wolf's manhood twitched and throbbed in time with Keith's thrusts, and with almost every thrust more pre oozed from the tip. There was a trail down the top of it, and the wolf's stomach was a sticky mess. He swallowed at the sight, his mind filling with images of reaching out, of... he caught himself, his hand already extended, and looked at Keith. The other basitin shook his head, grinning, and Nick grabbed the edge of the table instead.

*

Zen snapped back into the present. His mind was starting to wander, turning in on itself, getting lost in the pleasure. Every thrust pushed him infinitesimally closer. The bucket had a leak, but the drops just kept... on... coming...

He snapped out of it again when his head shifted, planting his nose right in the Alaric family jewels. His world filled with the basitin's scent, and he thought he heard a yelp. He blinked his eyes open, feeling muddled. "Sorry."

Alaric laughed, so he did it again. Yup, a yelp. He grinned up at the basitin, who had that cute slightly befuddled expression again. Instinct said to do something about it, but he kept his hands where they were, renewing his grip on the table, as another wave of pleasure threatened to wash him away. Free hands were a liability. Sometimes, this ended with him grabbing himself. Needed to brace, hold on to something else, give instinct other things to do. He forced himself to focus, renewing his hold on the link. That, too, had threatened to slip.

He wanted to give Alaric another lick, to make up for the nose, but the basitin had stepped back just a bit. That let him see that right at the tip of his basitinhoo, there was a pearly bead. He licked it away, getting his first real taste, and smiled at Alaric, satisfied. *Ha! Got you.*

Then he heard himself moan again, and there was no room in his world for anything except keeping his hands where they were, holding the link for dear life... and Keith, moving inside him.

*

Nick watched Zen lose himself again, his eyes hazing over with lust. Nick's hand went to where the wolf had licked him. Somehow, Zen had coaxed something out of him. He longed to feel the wolf's tongue again, and found he was stroking himself. To keep hard, of course. Not let it go to waste. He forced his pace slower.

Nick kept an eye on Keith, to make sure he didn't miss his cue, but his eyes kept returning to Zen's feet, on Keith's shoulders, swaying in time to his steady thrusts. One of the wolf's legs was twitching. It was mesmerizing. Zen moaned and splayed his toes, and Nick found he didn't have an excuse to keep touching himself.

Eventually, the signal came to 'circle behind.' He was never going to look at squad signals the

same again... There was room enough on the wall side of the table to situate himself, reach the jar of whatever it was that passed for lube. The white salve felt slick and cool against him. The coolness was welcome. He gave himself a good coating, then got so distracted by one of Zen's feet being *right there* that Keith had to elbow him to get him back on track.

The switch went off without a hitch. Nick didn't let himself get distracted by the sensations and quickly matched what Keith had been doing—angle, depth, tempo. The other basitin nodded, satisfied, and Nick immediately got distracted by the sensations—hot, tight, and very, very slick. Still, he kept the pace. The stimulation was almost uncomfortable, and again he remembered how much he'd been through today. Still, with Zen laid out like this in front of him...

He needed to get Keith on a table.

For comparison purposes.

Obviously.

Nick settled in for the long haul, thinking endurance thoughts.

*

Zen whimpered when Keith withdrew and he felt his legs passed, but almost immediately Alaric was there. The thought that it was him—*another* basitin—made up the few lost strokes. Did it feel different...? Keith was beside him, now. He couldn't think, could barely, just barely, hold the link. He'd never been this close, not like this, had no idea how far there was left to go. He felt there, in the middle of it.

"Zen?" He focused on Keith. All the gods, but he loved Keith. The basitin reached out to stroke his cheek, gentle even now. All the gods and more. "Zen?" He thought he made some kind of sound in response. It seemed to satisfy the basitin, because he grinned and Zen could feel something hot and hard press against his upper arm. "Guess what this is?" He was still... of course he was. Wait, had he even...? Keith leaned closer, to stage-whisper into his ear. "We can keep doing this for *hours*, you know? As long as it takes."

The basitin kissed him, the final drop, and his world unraveled. All control fled him, the link slamming open as his body could no longer contain him. It would be up to Natani to—

**

Oh crap! Oh crap! Oh crap! Oh crap!

They met in the maelstrom, and for a moment, there was no Natani or Zen—only both. Both minds open to both bodies, too close, too immediate, too familiar to divide into themselves. They spun, a roiling storm of need and desire, the charge building ever higher, searching for a path to ground, shying from any they could not both embrace.

The kiss! Keith! The kiss!

Lightning struck.

**

Nick had been starting to wonder if Zen hadn't already reached some kind of final destination on

his journey, and was now just *staying there* to spite their efforts. But no. The real deal left no question. Immediately after Keith kissed him, the wolf's entire body tensed up, then *erupted*, shooting his first jet. He clenched so hard that it broke Nick's rhythm, and he couldn't do anything except lean his weight against the wolf's legs and hold on for dear life, trying to keep from getting kicked off as Zen thrashed. The wolf had wrapped his arms around Keith, and, judging by the basitin's ears and tail being near vertical, was kissing him back. He'd never seen anything quite like it. He'd never seen anything quite like *any* of it. Zen just... kept going, painting the walls. The only reason he hadn't painted *Keith* was that most of it was going *over* him. Nick, still inside him, not daring to shift in case he got thrown back, felt like he might come away from the experience fit to be a Messenger.

Finally, *finally*, the wolf began to settle down, and Nick let out a sigh of relief. The kiss was still going, Keith bent over the wolf. Slowly, Zen's arms around him relaxed, and the basitin regained his freedom... not that he went anywhere. Just when all had grown silent, a bit of the bounty dropped from the ceiling, hitting Keith on the ear.

*

Keith checked his ear.

Huh.

He looked at the room—and the ceiling, the rather staggered-looking Nick, and the wholly passed out Zen—and had to laugh. Well. *That* had been a success. And... he'd seen the flash in Zen's eyes. Of all the possible things...

And the kiss. *Gods*, the kiss. He shook his head slowly in wonderment. He felt charged, like all his fur should be standing on end.

"Help me with him?"

Keith looked at Nick, and... *No. This will not do.* Maybe something had reached him in the kiss, or maybe it was just everything that had been going on, but... for the first time, he thought he truly understood what the wolves saw when they looked at him, what those words *meant*. He found his own interpretation of the idea, and grinned. It wasn't that you *take* what you want. You *give* what you want. *You give what can't be taken.*

His steps felt unusually light as he circled around, coming up behind Nick. The other basitin was clearly expecting him to take Zen's legs. Instead, he embraced Nick from behind, letting his erection rub against the base of his tail, his hands travelling down to Nick's hips. He was still half inside Zen, which Keith took as a good sign.

Intake of breath. "Keith?"

He pushed slightly, and Nick slid deeper into the wolf, coming to rest against Keith's hands, cushioning the two. He felt Nick's tail twitch against him, and smiled. "You didn't come yet, did you?"

"No, but... this was about him, right?"

"Uh-huh. But you did a really good job, so... wouldn't it be a little sad if it ended like that?"

"But... he's asleep."

"And what a way to wake up, huh? And, you know..." He pulled his hips back a bit, letting his

cock draw a haphazard pattern on Nick's buttocks. "I didn't come either." He pushed against the underside of Nick's tail, making his meaning very, very clear, and felt the basin tremble against him. He shifted again, back to his original position, hugging Nick from behind. His ears twitched. "I mean, if you want to put him to bed first, that's fine. But..." he licked a very specific spot on Nick's neck, and felt his tail jerked between them. Nick knew what that meant. "... I don't think I can let you just get away." Maybe it *was* something like a promise. But, with Nick almost balls deep in Zen, maybe there was room for such a thing. He leaned his head against Nick's back. "Unless you want me to?"

Nick sounded hoarse. "No, I... please don't."

Keith smiled. "Please don't what?"

"Let me get away."

He gave Nick's neck the lightest possible nip, and felt his whole body tremble in response. "Okay."

He pulled his hands free, then took a half-step to the side, dodging around Zen's leg to reach for the lube. He kept one hand on Nick at all times. Not letting him get away. Fresh dollop of the stuff in his hand, he considered. Mm, might as well... No such thing as too much lube, and this stuff wasn't as long-lasting as the nuts. He pulled Nick back further, until just his tip was in Zen, then reached around with both hands to lube him up again. It was a very, very slick business. Nick trembled under his touch, enough to pop out of the wolf, his dick settling against Zen's balls. Keith cupped the tip, rubbing it against his salved palm, before positioning him again. A nudge of his own hips encouraged Nick to thrust forward, slowly sliding in. Keith got his hands out of the way, this time, and Nick sank all the way in, his balls coming to rest against the wolf's ass. Zen's tail gave a little twitch, prompting Keith to lean to the side to get a look, but he was pretty sure the wolf was still completely out.

Nick let out a long sigh. Keith smiled. "Feel good?"

"Yeah. But... asleep?"

"Under the circumstances? He'd think it was hilarious. But if you want it to be just the two of us..." Keith poked at him again.

"I'll... take your word for it."

Good. Keith gave Nick's neck another lick, and he relaxed with a sigh, letting his weight settle against the wolf. Didn't look like he was planning on doing a lot of moving... which suited Keith just fine. That might be just the ticket.

He lubed himself, getting his cock every bit as covered as Nick's was. The position could be challenging. But... slow and steady gets the job done. Preparations complete, he positioned himself with intent. "Okay?"

Nick sounded a little hoarse. "Okay."

Keith let his tip rest against Nick's tight entrance, giving the other time to relax himself. He teased at the base of Nick's tail gently, and heard an appreciative mrrrow. He'd started to get a pretty good idea about some of the things that worked for his old friend. He increased the pressure a little. Nick gave, and it was his turn to mrrrow. He could feel his own tail curling just as Nick's twitched under his hand. He kept pushing in, slowly, watchful, not letting the sensations

overwhelm him. It was a tight angle. Again, Nick proved himself more than able, and before long he found himself completely engulfed, coming to rest against the basitin, resting against the wolf... he slid his arms around Nick, embracing him, and just held there for a while, occasionally giving a little twitch of his hips. He knew *he* liked that... and evidently, Nick did as well. He let out a long exhalation, his ears drooping, and Keith could *feel* him relax. "That's..."

Keith smiled. "Yeah." He started moving, small, slow motions, and nuzzled Nick's neck, occasionally giving a little lick to just the right spot. Keith let his hands slide down to Nick's hips, regretting the loss of closeness a bit but wanting more room to move. As he pulled out farther he gave Nick a little nip to make up for it. Another shudder. He built it slowly, nipping a little harder with each longer stroke, until he had his full range; from barely in to bottoming out. Nick trembled and moaned, his tail twisting between them. Keith moved one hand to the base of it, teasing at it gently as he switched to licking for a while, then taking a firmer hold when he used his teeth again. Nick moaned louder, his tail going stiff, his ears quivering.

Keith took his other hand from Nick's hips, bracing against the table instead, and now every time he was pulling back the other basitin would follow a little, sliding out of Zen a bit—and every time he thrust back in, it would carry Nick home as well, bringing an even more powerful shudder from him. Keith could tell Nick was getting close, so he let himself get engulfed in the sensations, not damming the pleasure to prolong it. A few more thrusts and Nick was almost there, so he slammed home a little harder, grinding him into the wolf, and tugged on his tail, nipping. He felt Nick clench around him, and with a long, loud moan the basitin began to spend himself inside Zen. Keith kept the push and his hold on Nick's neck, and repaid every clench with a little tug on his tail. There was more than one way to milk a basitin.

And stopping here... wouldn't do either, so when he felt Nick was *almost* done, he switched back to licking and let his own instincts carry him away, holding the other basitin close and bucking his hips with small, tight thrusts. Just when his cup was about to overflow, he felt Nick clench around him again, his entire body going stiff. All thought ceased.

**

Keith had a goodly moment to himself—his arms around Zen's legs, propping up Nick—to consider the perils of being too successful. He needed one of these jokers to wake up to help him with the other! Granted, he probably could have woken one or both up, but... he smiled. It was a problem he was happy to have. Still, if he'd known that was going to happen—

Zen started to snore, and Nick began to stir. Keith laughed quietly to himself. Saved by wolf sinuses.

"Mmh?"

"Welcome back." Keith kissed the back of Nick's head. "Can you stand?"

"Yeah, I... whoa!" Maybe not.

"Take your time. I know what that can be like."

"You... of course you do."

Smile. "Yeah. Think I do, anyway. We can compare notes later. But first, we need to get sleeping beauty here to the bed."

“Me too. I think.”

Keith leaned against him. “*All of us.*”

They eventually managed to extricate themselves and haul Zen over to the bed without banging anything up too badly. The wolf, of course, began to stir just when they finished laying him out. This bed wasn't so huge—three would be a snug fit, especially with one of them being a stupidly large wolf. Keith saw no problem with that. He slipped into bed, past Zen, taking the wall-side, then beckoned Nick to follow. He did, taking the opposite side of the wolf, not at all shy about being right against him. Good.

Keith smiled at Zen as he opened his eyes. “Welcome back.” The wolf blinked, focused on him, and then smiled with such obvious love that Keith's heart melted. He leaned down and kissed him gently.

Zen sighed happily. “I love you.”

Keith laughed. “Yeah, I got that. You too. And earlier... was that...?”

The wolf shook his head. Later.

Keith nodded. “How are you feeling?”

*

Zen closed his eyes for a moment, taking stock, considering. He could tell that Natani was sleeping, and didn't look deeper. He closed the link tight. After something like that, you need to just be yourself. He let out a long sigh and opened his eyes. Squeezed between two basitins. Well, there was a thought. For later. Much later. He smiled at Keith again. “Never better.” But... *two* basitins. “And...” he rolled to his side, slowly, and propped himself up on an elbow. Never hurt to loom a little, for a bit like this. “Alaric?”

*

Nick became freshly reminded that Zen was *big*. But not threatening. He smiled up at the wolf. “I think you can call me Nick now.”

“Oh?” Zen smiled. “Well then. Nick?”

Yes, indeed, the wolf could call him that. “Yeah?”

“I'll have to pay you back for that.”

Nick grinned at him. “Oh? What—”

Zen leaned in and kissed him, and there was nothing submissive about it. And... Nick found himself wanting to yield. He could tell Zen was leaving him enough space to pull away, but... here, away from the world, he was free to be who he wanted to be, and this was someone Keith trusted with his life. He didn't *want* to pull away. He didn't want to have the *room* to pull away. So he gave some back, in invitation, wanting to see if he could draw the wolf in.

He was not disappointed.

A long moment later, the two looked at each other, a little breathless. Nick recovered first, and flashed a slightly shaky grin. “Interest payment?”

*

Zen laughed, and rolled back on his back. Keith was propped up on one elbow on his other side, looking decidedly amused. The basitin raised an eyebrow at him. “And what about me?”

Zen gave him a brief kiss, and a lick on the nose. “You, I have some credit with.”

Keith returned the lick, then settled down against him, with his head on Zen’s shoulder and one arm around his neck. After a moment, Nick did likewise on his other side, and as the two basitins jostled, trying to both get comfortable at the same time, Zen wondered if this was what it was like for Keith, between him and Natani.

He could get used to it.

“... wait, what happened to the ceiling?”