***I want to give a big shout-out to Michael Evans for becoming a patron! :D***

***Thank you, and enjoy the story!***

~\*~\*~\*~\*~

 “And so, under David Farthing’s guidance did the Revenant Party pull the former United States out of what many historians call ‘The Godless Era’, which began within the mid-1960s and continue onward until 1997. Although the Revenants and Farthing’s loyal followers help pave the way and protect the rights of every Christian and patriot in America, it would not be until President Anderson’s inauguration address that the U.S. would finally be reorganized into the Devout States of America. A nation reborn under God and country—”

 The bell rang like a siren, pulling everyone in the classroom from their seats.

 “I expect your reflective essays on Andersons ‘We are Reborn’ speech due back this Monday!” the teacher announced to me and my retreating classmates. “Have a good weekend, a Happy Valentine’s Day, and God bless you children.”

 “God bless America,” we all mumbled aloud.

 The chaotic hallways of Scottscliff High remained excited for today. Already, I could see all our female and male classmates eagerly pulling their backpacks from their lockers, then escape either to attend Thursday’s Bible Study, or back home to prepare for a potential date.

 *And hopefully*, I inwardly grinned, *get their rocks off too!*

 “I swear, they keep teaching us the same stuff over and over,” one of my friends, a tall brown she-wolf on the cheerleading squad named Karen, commented to me. “Am I the only one noticing?”

 “Karen,” I chuckled, “*everyone* has been noticing since freshman year.”

 “I know, I know,” she moaned, carrying her bookbag with two paws, “but Trish, you’d think they’d change it up and challenge us a bit in history. I swear, at this point, I’m gonna have that ‘We are Reborn’ speech *and* this year’s textbook memorized by graduation next year!”

 “Tell me about it,” I joked, “I’ve already got the calculus book memorized.”

 We laughed until the sight of the school’s entrance came into view. A semi-long line had formed of students exiting the building and placing their backpacks on a tray, allowing one of the six adults to check our luggage for any ‘contraband’. Nodding to one of them—this tired tiger named Jackson who also worked as one of the two security guards in school—Karen and I did the same. We allowed him to check our schoolbags, then passed through one of them scanning us with a metal detector before letting us out into the cold February air.

 Beside the contraptions were official posters warning about illegal smuggling, saying any fur suspected of having the listed items below were to immediately be reported.

 This was a common sight for towns near the Disputed Zone border. The government couldn’t allow ‘Immoral States-sponsored terrorists’ to ‘infiltrate their sinful devices’ into the paws of average high school students. Granted, we were not a well-populated Nebraskan town, or even the most vulnerable border town in the Devout States, but the only clue was that one of the smugglers went to this school. Whether they were student or faculty was yet to be determined, and for good reason.

 I felt a tingle run up my spine when Jackson glared at me. Ears folded and bushy tail curling beneath my (very, very conservative) dress skirt, I prepared for the worst.

 “You have a good evening now, young ladies…” he half-smiled. “God bless America.”

 Sighing with relief, me and Karen walked out the front doors and into a chilly afternoon that would become nighttime in a couple hours. Students had either already begun to walk home in their winter coats or taken the buses. Luckily, my house happened to be only a block away.

 “So, what’re you doing with Jesse tonight?” she asked once we were out of earshot. “I hear that the theater’s playing a couple of romance flicks tonight.”

 “Which ones?”

 “Oh, uh…*Help, I Married a Liberal!*, *Becky the Belle 3* and *The Lord’s Not Dead*.”

 I raised a quizzical eyebrow. “None of those sound romantic, do they?”

 “I hear the couple in *Becky the Belle 3* is so cute together,” her tail started wagging against some of the snowfall, “and *Lord’s Not Dead* has the Newslads playing! Oh, I can’t wait to get the soundtrack! Anyway,” Karen calmed herself down, but didn’t decrease the smile etched across her muzzle, “What’re you and Jesse doing tonight?”

 My tail swished happily. “We’re having dinner at my house while Mom is out of town.”

 “Trish!” the she-wolf gasped aloud.

 “My dad’s gonna be watching over us the whole time!” amused giggles bubbled from my lips. I hope this would help convince her with the lie, “Seriously. We would never do anything sinful, and Jesse’s too much of a gentleman to suggest otherwise.”

 “True,” she shrugged, “but you’ve heard that they caught Danny Crayton with a package of…contraband…?” When I asked her what kind, Karen glanced over her shoulders, to the disinterested classmates ahead of us on the sidewalk, the she-wolf meekly said, “Birth control pills.”

 I pretended to seem shocked. “Really? Daniel Crayton had those?!”

 “Yeah,” she said in a hushed whisper, “I heard he and Marsha have been breaking their chastity pledges. She’d already had some of those illegal pamphlets after they checked her locker, and Daniel wanted to give her some of those pills so they could…do the deed after football practice.”

 The term was ‘fuck’. Or fucking. Make love, if you wanted to be formal yet filthy.

 “Now they got suspended yesterday, and Daniel has to attend abstinence classes until graduation,” Karen exhaled. “Can you believe those terrorists managed to seduce our star quarterback to their propaganda? And the day before Valentine’s Day, no less!”

 “It’s a pity,” I managed to hide my inner laughter at how serious she sounded. In all honesty, it was no bombshell someone like Daniel got caught with our products. The brash bull couldn’t keep a secret for long if his life depended on it. “Sex is sacred, after all.”

 “Exactly!” the she-wolf half-smiled for me. “We should pray for their souls.”

 “I’ll do a prayer for them tonight,” I promised her, though my prayer would be of the different kind. The kind that would’ve made me a suspected sympathizer. As I stopped beside my picketed two-house, a genuine part of me said to her, “I hope you and Kendall have fun at the skating rink tonight.”

 “I know we will,” she barked happily. “You and Jesse have a good dinner.”

 “God bless you.”

 “And God Bless America.”

 Once the she-wolf departed for her own house a few blocks down, I walked up my front steps and entered the kitchen, where Mom had already started discussing tonight’s ‘errand run’ with my Dad. None of their public phones were in plain sight. Only their flip phones. Most likely kept in the office so any possible spybots couldn’t hear anything illegal we were doing.

 “—trouble dropping them off tonight if we’re not careful, Carla…” he shifted in his wheelchair to get closer to the kitchen table, then pointed to somewhere on the unfolded map. “They’ve already placed car checkpoints here and here.”

 “I’ll be safe out there, George. A new checkpoint’s not gonna stop me,” Mom turned to me and happily swished her tail against the kitchen table, “Oh! Afternoon Trish.”

 “Hey, Mom. Hey, Dad. What’re you two talking about?”

 “Well, sweetie,” Dad coughed before perking his ears at me, “your mother is being stubborn with me.”

 “I’m not being stubborn, George!” she pouted, clearly annoyed by his smirk. “We’ve been doing this for years, and no new checkpoint into town should keep us from getting the next shipment out on time.”

 “They’ll check whatever’s in the car though,” he argued. “It won’t just be a simple give-them-your-ID-card stop. This one will have them looking into your car for anything suspicious, and the moment they see the packages in the backseat or the trunk, it’s game over…”

 “You’re…fuck, you’re right,” Mom sighed. “Maybe we can do something to hide them then? Where do you hide illegal contraband in plain sight?”

 “I dunno, you’re the one who does this every month, honey.”

 Looking over the map, I decided to help ponder on this dilemma with them. Scottscliff was not a large town, but given how close the town limits were to Colorado, a depopulated, high-surveillance state filled with spies and smugglers crossing the border between us and the Western Republic (or the Immoral States, according to the government), the new security made my mom’s hobby…difficult.

 “Hey,” I spoke up, having thought up a suggestion. “Why not stop by the supercenter before reaching the checkpoint into town, buy groceries and then place all the contraband in the bottom of the bags?” When my folks stared at me, I shrugged, adding, “It’s not like the guards will check *every* bag you got, right?”

 Dad grinned wickedly, as did Mom after a moment of thought.

 “…you definitely are your mother’s cub, Beatrice.” He laughed. “That’s brilliant. Guards may be thorough, but they won’t waste their time on checking the bottom.”

 “I have to agree,” Mom patted my shoulder.

 “Think that’ll work?”

 Dad rolled his wheelchair to hug my side. “It will work, sweetie. It’s your idea.”

 Outside these curtained windows and debugged walls, the Barrows were another raccoon family in Devout Nebraska. We attended church every Sunday, attended neighborhood events such as barbecues, Dad served our country during the Caribbean Conflict before being honorably discharged (gaining a hefty retirement pension), Mom performed her duties as a loving housewife, and I excelled in school while being one of the leading member of the cheerleading squad. I also dated a handsome and high-achieving neighbor boy.

 Inside, however, we were more than an idyllic family. We were a family of traitors.

 “So, did you have fun at school, Trish?” Mom started putting the map away. A sullen look came on her dark-furred face. “I was talking to Mr. and Mrs. Osmond across the street while shoveling, and they mentioned the Crayton boy was caught. With the pills.”

 Momentary silence reigned in on the kitchen.

 “He was.” My ears folded inward. “Karen told me he and Marsha Simpson got suspended after school. Apparently, the horndog decided it was a *brilliant idea* to bring them to school.”

 “Did he now?” Dad cackled. “He thought nobody would search his backpack?”

 “Actually, I think one of his buddies tattled,” I suggested.

 “Typical,” Mom muttered while texting somebody on her flip phone. “Dumb boys can’t think with their head and have to use the one between their fuckin’ legs…”

 “Tell me about it,” I couldn’t help but laugh.

 “So, how’re you and Jesse doing?” she asked without looking up. “You taking the pills like I said?”

 Images came to my head of Jesse and the many times we’d done it. Me against the bed, him fervently thrusting inside me, and our collective moans combined with my moist walls clenching around his slick length. I remembered one time, Jesse and I had been edging ourselves for a good hour or two, and the poor badger’s whimpers could almost be heard in the other rooms. Then, after pulling his cock out and peeling away one of the dozen condoms I had secretly stashed in my underwear drawer, he came all over my bare chest and abdomen. Later in the showers, it took me twenty arduous minutes of soaping and scrubbing in the to clean out the musky spunk embedded in my fur.

 Dear God. Already, I was starting to get wet.

 “Of course!” I nodded, aware that she—somehow—knew about me and Jesse’s ‘studying sessions’ in my room. Not that she disapproved. “I haven’t been forgetting, Mom.”

 A sullen look crossed her muzzle.

 “I’m so sorry, sweetie, but,” she held the archaic device to her ear, then continued when the ringing started, “you’ll have to change up the drop locations tomorrow.”

 “Already got some in mind.”

 Mom answered on her phone, “Eros, this is Psyche 3. We are go tonight.” I started to follow her through the hallway into Dad’s office when she paused and whispered, “Hey, you go on. This is an important call, Trish.”

 Mom Code translation: I need you to piss off.

 “But Mom—”

 “Please?” she hastily returned to her phone. “Yeah, I’m still here.”

 Mom then closed the office door shut before I could say anything more.

 “O-Okay…”

 Solemnly joining Dad in the family room, I sat on the couch beside him as he tuned the TV to a gameshow about matching Bible passages. All while I ran through the possible hiding places me and Jesse had discussed a couple days ago. There was the teen joint on Franklin Avenue—maybe hide them in the bathrooms—and under the bridge in the local park, The Attic coffee shop, some bathrooms in the mall maybe…

 “Beatrice?”

 “Hmm?” I turned to Dad to my right. He was leaning back in his wheelchair, having cushioned it a few months after his final tour. “What is it, Daddy?”

 “You…You know your mom prefers to do this side of the job on her own, and it’s best you don’t get too involved, sweetie.”

 “But I want to do more, Dad.” I argued, “I’ve been helping her out with this thing for two years now, and—”

 “We know you can do more, but for now,” he smiled heartily, “your mother and I don’t want you to go way over your head. And if you ever got caught…we wouldn’t know what to do…Your mom and I made peace together that…t-there’s the possibility she might end up arrested one day and I could never see her again, but the *last* thing either of us want is for you to end up…end up…”

 My tail curled onto my lap. “I know, Daddy. I…I understand what you and Mom mean, but I just feel like I can do more. Each day feels like I’m in a cage…”

 “Hey, we never imprison you,” he teased me.

 “Hehe, I was talking about this goddamn country, Dad—Eep!” I covered my mouth and darted my eyes around the room, looking for either of the parents’ smart phones.

 That was when Dad started to laugh.

 “Relax, my phone’s upstairs. You can speak your mind. The spybots won’t be able to hear you all the way down here.”

 Everybody feared the possibility of your phone, home computer or tablet being infested with government-owned spybots that acted as cookies whenever you used the Internet. Which was why my family (at least in private) used a flip phone. No internet access equaled no spybots.

 “Well then,” I giggled and managed to relax, “in that case, I feel like a fucking prisoner in this country. Ya get me?”

 “Hey!” he frowned, “I said you can criticize the country, not have a potty mouth!”

 I sheepishly folded my ears. “Sorry, Daddy…”

 “So, what’re you up to tonight?” he asked after a moment.

 “Me and Jesse are cooking a romantic dinner for two here,” I couldn’t help but wag at the thought. “We figured the fancy restaurants are too booked for Valentine’s Day, so we just decided to cook some of Mom’s meatloaf.”

 “That certainly explains the ingredients your mother packed into the fridge this morning,” he chuckled lightly, then grew quiet, “Will you be having sex afterward?”

 My cheeks flushed with heat. “D-Daddy!”

 “Look, I don’t want to walk in on you and J by accident, okay?” he held his paws up, clearly feeling as awkward about this as I was. “As your father, I also want to know that you two aren’t being too loud and are being safe. You *are* using protection, right? J too?”

 “If I answer you, Daddy,” I proposed after another moment of enduring his semi-famous Dad Stare, “will you please stop calling my boyfriend ‘J’ whenever he comes over?”

 “Why not?” he asked. “It’s what the cool kids say.”

 “It’s embarrassing!” I whimpered and groaned. “It makes you sound the opposite of ‘cool’.”

 “Fine, fine…Just tell me then,” he continued to press me for answers, “have you been using the…things we provided you last time?”

 Dad may have been supportive of our efforts, but the old raccoon still couldn’t say ‘condom’ or ‘birth control pill’ without acting like the concepts were scandalous. Then again, my grandparents on his side played the roles of strict moral guardians. If he asked so much as what a contraceptive was, it earned my dad a smack on the head.

 “Dad, I promise you everything is fine. I’ve got, like, a week left.”

 He smiled nervously. “Mom can give you some more, if you need them, sweetie.”

 “Um…yeah, I think I’ll need some more…Please…?”

 “Sure, Trish…” Both our tails curled, and Dad mentioned, “…alright, we can stop having this conversation—”

 “Oh, thank God!” I groaned with immense relief. “That was uncomfortable.”

 “Sorry, sweetie…” he tuned the TV volume up. “You just be safe and have fun—”

 “Please shut up before I pass out from fright.”

 “Heh, okay…” He then asked several moments later, “So when are you going to tell your mother that Jesse knows? I hate keeping things from her, and she’ll want to know about this.”

 My tail curled in slight shame. “…I’ll work on it, Daddy. I promise.”

\*\*\*

 Jesse Rhodes and I had known each other since middle school. His family once lived in rebel-occupied Denver before the Second American Civil War started but escaped to Nebraska once the rioting and bombings began. His parents were happy to escape the violence, and although the city had long since fell to strict Devout control, this small town remained their permanent home.

 Mr. Rhodes worked as a tired accountant for the local bank while Mrs. Rhodes was the school’s enthusiastic cafeteria lady, with Jesse’s younger sister would move to the fifth grade by the end of the school year. Like every other indoctrinated family living in the Devout States of America, the Rhodes seemed like the idyllic heteronormative nuclear family. For a while, Jesse also seemed like the idyllic son a nuclear family.

 That was, until we fell in love.

 *Ding dong!*

 Skipping to the front door, I stared through the peephole and found a handsome seventeen-year-old badger wearing slick dress pants and a black vest beneath a white undershirt. The tie he wore was bright blue with a dolphin on it, while a relax smile formed on his long muzzle when I opened the door.

 “Nice tie there,” I pointed and snickered.

 Jesse stiffened. “Am I…overdressed?”

 “Obviously,” I couldn’t hide my amusement. “Let me guess, your parents made you look snazzy, even though we were cooking something together?”

 “Yeah, they did…” He coughed. “May I come in?”

 I craned my neck out to see his car parked in the driveway.

 “…nah, I’ll just let you freeze to death outside,” I joked before letting him in.

 He peeled his coat away and followed me into the kitchen, though not before I leaned up to peck him on the cheek. At six feet and one inch, it was often hard to kiss him at our heights, but the badger got a kink out of me standing on the tips of my footpaws to do it.

 “Happy Valentine’s Day, Trish.” He pulled something from his back pocket, causing me to squeal with delight. “I uh, thought I’d get you this. What do ya think?”

 “What do I think?” My bushy tail wagged back and forth. “It’s so cute!”

 In Jesse’s paw rested a beautiful silver locket stringed onto a delicate necklace, and when I opened the case up, I found a small photo inside. It depicted me wrapped around my badger’s strong arms, with us wearing formal clothing for the freshman dance. One of our first dates together, as an official couple.

 “Aw, thank you so much sweetie.” I leaned up again to kiss him, then wagged my tail at his leg before ‘casually’ placing a paw on his backside. “I’ve got a present for you, after dinner.”

 A big, goofy grin instantly appeared in Jesse’s trousers. Not to mention the start of a noticeable tent. Clearing his throat and laughing nervously when we both heard my dad rolling into the kitchen, he and I immediately went into the living room.

 “So, how’re you and the folks doing, Trish?” he asked, trying to subtly adjust himself.

 “They’re good, they’re good…”

 “Uh…good then,” he half-laughed to himself before pulling his paw away and paying further attention. “Did you hear about Daniel Crayton and Marsha?”

 “Oh, please,” Dad called out to us from the kitchen, “everybody and their mother is talking about those two. The neighbors have been calling me and talking about it like they committed murder…”

 “Might as well be in this damn country,” I mentioned casually. Already, I immediately glanced back to Jesse. “You left your phone in the car like I said?

 “Uh…yeah I did, Trish.”

 “You sure you did?” I asked again.

 Jesse stared deadpan at me with his perfect, sandy-red eyes. “No, I’m covertly recording you for the Archangels, actually.”

 Jesse could be sweet as living sugar, and the fact that he supported my family’s secret cause made him even more of a perfect boyfriend. However, he also had a tendency of forgetting what I said unless I specifically make something clear. This didn’t happened all the time, and it didn’t get on my nerves as much as in the beginning of our relationship, but we were still working on this bad habit.

 “Right, sorry,” I chuckled in embarrassment. “So, until we get started on dinner, would you like to go up in my room and have a uh, nice…relaxing…study break?”

 We hurriedly went upstairs to my bedroom in less than a minute.

 As quietly as possible, I gingerly closed the door, shut the blinds and threw myself at Jesse as we fell onto the bed. His paws roamed my back while our tongues, his much longer than mine, tangled through each other’s maws. Together, we made out in a loving embrace within the sanctity of my bedroom. Four walls separating us from the world outside. No single soul could criticize us for exploring our bodies, grinding into each other or gently kissing in waves of hot passion.

 In my opinion, the thrill of sex and intimacy came from the immense risk. And while we would save third and fourth base, the feelings of teenage taboo still lingered at the back of our minds. If caught by anybody other than my parents, what me and Jesse would do tonight—had done countless times—could’ve landed us hefty government fines. Physical displays of affection weren’t uncommon amongst couples, sometimes it was even encouraged in order to prove your normalcy in the dating scene, but nobody wanted the teenaged population of Devout America to go beyond first base until the honeymoon after an approved wedding ceremony.

 Since the Revenant Party’s rise to power, sex had been looked at as something to fear, and how only an exchange of vows and two metallic rings could protect you from eternal damnation. They acted like sex before marriage was worse than murder, irresponsible or not. This ‘unholy’ behavior was frowned upon by our peers, by the school, the town, the state and the entire country, which made it even more sexy.

 Nobody wanted me to eagerly thrust my hips into Jesse’s pelvis. Nobody wanted the badger to cup my right bra beneath my shirt. Nobody wanted me to trace his painfully erect cock through the creases of his pants or make him moan happily as I unlatched my bra for him, then peel my shirt off to reveal my bare breasts. Nobody wanted me letting Jesse fondle my tits and rub my soaking panties as he lapped at the side of my neck like a starving man.

 “Mmm! Ahh, J-Jesse…” I whimpered softly. “Hnnn!”

 “Oh, Trish…” he panted. “I love you so—”

 Unfortunately, Dad had to knock at the door.

 “Beatrice? Your mom just left, so if you and Jesse want, you can start making that romantic dinner now. I’ll just microwave me some pizza, okay?”

 Wow. I hadn’t even noticed the garage door opening and closing earlier.

 “Uh, sure Daddy!” I replied nervously. “Thanks! Bye now…?”

 The petrified expression on Jesse’s face remained for several long seconds, as did mine.

 “Suddenly, I’m not in the mood…”

 “Here, here,” I scrambled for my clothes. “We better get started on dinner anyway…”

 “Then that means we can have more time…making love?” he whispered in my ticklish ear, making me giggle alongside my horndog of a boyfriend.

 “If by that, you mean fuck like pent-up porn stars?” I whispered back, “We’ll see, but you’ll have to be a good boy for me, alright Jess?”

 “Yes, ma’am!” He lightly smacked my ass, and I giggled as we departed downstairs.

\*\*\*

 “Oh for…Jesse,” I whined, “this isn’t a teaspoon. It’s a regular spoon!”

 “Where are they then?” he shuffled through the utensil drawer.

 “In the same drawer, Jess! Are you suddenly blind or something?”

 “Still can’t find any…” he grumbled. “Trish, are you sure they’re in this drawer?”

 “I’m sure about it,” I replied back, only to pause mid-thought. “Hey, it’s probably in the cleaned dishwasher. Check there!”

 “Here!” he presented it to me moments later. An annoyed groan escaped his lips. “You think Mrs. Barrow would better organize that drawer, by the way. Can’t imagine how she uses it every day while, ya know…”

 Ears twitching up, as I continued scooping another teaspoonful of salt into the meatloaf batter, my head craned towards the badger and I asked, “What do I know?”

 “…ya know, doing her wifely duties.”

 A momentary frown crossed my muzzle, followed by a cheerfully bright and upbeat smile that had Jesse paling down at me. This was a trademark of Barrow women: The ‘You-Better-Answer-Me-Correctly Smile. Mom taught me the basics of this relationship technique after I once saw her use it when Dad commented how the news lady on FaithTV was attractive.

 “Jesse Rhodes, was that you implying my mom belongs in the *kitchen*?”

 On cue, the male badger gulped. “If I say ‘no’, will you forgive me?”

 A sly smirk formed on my muzzle. “Only if you help me clean up afterwards instead of going to watch TV. Like last time.”

 “Fair enough,” he half-chuckled. “Sorry, sweetie...”

 “Ugh,” I continued mixing in some chopped onions and celery into the meat batter, “you’ve been watching too much of those propaganda, women-belong-in-kitchens shitcoms they keep playing, haven’t you?”

 “Uh, don’t you mean ‘sitcoms’, Trish?” he asked in mild confusion.

 “That’s what I said: shitcoms.”

 “Sure you did, sweetie…” he half-chuckled again, then cleared his throat before rifling through the refrigerator. “So anyway, what else do you think we can mix into the meatloaf? I see BBQ sauce, a container of parsley, mushrooms, olives—”

 “Ew! No olives, please.” I whimpered. “Whoever thought to have olives in the cafeteria pizza at school should be the ones tried and imprisoned…”

 “Tell me about it,” Jesse joked. “Wait, what about the eggs?”

 “Oh yeah!” I blanched, busy tail curling at the memories, “Thank God I stopped eating breakfast at school. Those scrambled eggs tasted like soggy cardboard!” Jesse started to laugh. “What’s funny?”

 “I was talking about if we added any eggs in yet?” he clarified for me. When I shrugged, the badger widened his eyes. “Eggs are important to meatloaf, Trish. They keep the meat from falling apart when its cooked in the oven.”

 He pulled the carton of eggs out and helped me crack a couple, doing our best not to spill any of the whites or shell cracks while joking further about the awful school food. Unbeknownst to our school and classmates, my boyfriend had a closeted passion for cooking. Part of me knew if the Cooking Club wasn’t an all-girl’s group, or the D.S.A. didn’t think a guy who enjoyed cooking had to be homosexual, Jesse would’ve been more than eager to show off his favorite hobby. Instead, he made do with the Mathematics and Science Clubs, both of which he did have interest in. Luckily, the badger had me to indulge in his (second) dirty little secret.

 Half an hour later, we had the meatloaf mixed properly and placed in the oven.

 “Aaaaand it’s in!” Jesse beamed triumphantly.

 “Hell yeah!” I clapped his paw. “God, I can’t wait to see how it tastes!”

 “We’ll find out in about forty minutes,” he kissed my forehead. “I love you.”

 “You said that to me half an hour ago, Jess.”

 The badger would not stop smiling. “I know.”

 His grin affected me too, and I leaned back up to kiss him.

 “I love you too, you soft lug.” Giggling, I then stretched my arms up before doing the same for my neck. “Now then, while that’s cooking, let’s clean up.”

 “Aww, can’t we wait until *after* dinner, Trish?”

 “We do the cleaning now,” I proposed to the horny badger, “and we can have all the time afterward to cuddle, make out and…” Winking, I then finished, “…other stuff.”

 Turned out, I didn’t even need to fish out another You-Better-Answer-Me-Correctly Smile. Boys were always eager to do anything for a girl.

\*\*\*

 Dinner started off wonderfully, to say the least. The meat loaf was cooked to perfection, the dining table set under candlelight and our forks eager to dive into the succulent meal. Jesse and I sat across from each other on the wide ends of the dinner table, with two lit candlesticks between us in the dim room. It was so romantic.

 “And that’s how I found out there’s a female orgasm,” I concluded casually. “Yeah, those pamphlets from the Western Republic have some really interesting info in ‘em, Jess.”

 The badger seemed flustered as cut up his meatloaf slices. “G-Good to know…”

 “Mmm,” I gulped down another slice. He and I really cooked it well. Once I swallowed the mouthful, it gave me time to ask, “So, Jess, you read those pamphlets I gave you last month?”

 “Yeah,” he nodded.

 “Did you hide them?”

 Once again, the badger stared deadpan right at me across the table.

 “No, I decided to tape them on the front of my bedroom door, Trish,” he commented dryly. “Seriously…” When a sudden laugh escaped the back of my throat, Jesse looked at me funny. “What is it?”

 “Sorry, it’s just,” I composed myself, “I just had the most *perfect image…*of you acting like Martin Luther…” A few giggles erupted from me, “…nailing the pamphlets on the church’s door!”

 In mere seconds, Jesse was laughing too. “Yeah, that is a funny image…”

 We eventually gathered ourselves and resumed dinner.

 “Hey, Trish?” he asked a moment later.

 “Yeah?” I looked up.

 “I noticed you were a bit depressed when we were, ya know…” he blushed, “making out upstairs. You weren’t too…into it. Is something on your mind?”

 I paused mid-slice, sighing. With a slightly folded ear, my head slowly nodded up and down. For some odd reason,

 “A little bit…” I confessed. “My mom thinks I can’t handle the bigger side of her operations. All she’s got me doing is sending out the pamphlets and contra shit out to everybody, and I just feel…like she doesn’t think I can handle the rest.”

 “Isn’t what you do risky enough?” he argued. “You’re the one also smuggling. It doesn’t matter if it’s across towns or across the town itself. It’s still enough to get you in trouble.”

 “But I want to do things that could get me in even more trouble,” I shrugged, flicking my tail and picking at the meat loaf on my plate, “if that makes any sense…?”

 “Oh, I think it makes sense,” the badger chuckled. “You’ve always been a rebel girl.”

 “Thanks for the compliment, Jess,” I giggled, wagging my tail. “And you’re one to talk. You got a thing for rebel girls.”

 He folded his ears and looked away in a bashful manner. It was so fucking cute.

 “I uh, ya can’t blame me, Trish…I just…”

 Winking, I discreetly leaned back to allow my left footpaw to rub between his legs. Immediately, Jesse’s reaction morphed between surprise and a boyish moan. It then turned into hitched breathing when my toe felt up his heated shaft, an erection rising through his trousers as I stared directly into his eyes. My smile lustful and teasing across the short distance. His panting increasing. Our mutual sexual tension growing in the confinement of this small dining hall.

 “Beatrice!”

 I fell from my chair with a short yelp. Landing right on my tail.

 “Ack, motherfucking shit!”

 “Trish!” Jesse jumped from his seat.

 “Beatrice, where are you?” It was Dad, who rolled into the dining room to see me on the ground, rubbing my sore tail while Jess helped me up. “Hey, are you two okay?”

 “Yeah,” I hide my embarrassment, “I-I just fell…”

 “Yeah, Mr. Barrow, she did!” Jesse blurted out. “So what’s the problem?”

 I turned to my father to see him disheveled and wide-eyed with deep worry.

 “Daddy?” Some of that same worry infected me. “What’s going on?”

 “We got a huge problem…” he looked between me and my equally confused boyfriend. “Trish, your mother just called me. Her car’s stuck in a ditch.”

 “What?” me and Jesse gasped in alarm.

 “Is she okay?” I asked Dad. “Is she safe? Does she have the contraband in her car?”

 “Yes, I hope so, and she sadly does,” he listed off replies. “She called me a few minutes ago. The ice was slippery on the road, and after grabbing the stuff from the supplier, Carla found herself on a ditch off I-92. The car ain’t dented, but it won’t get out on its own…”

 “We could use a truck to tow it out?” Jesse suggested.

 “Jess, we can’t call the tow truck company—”

 “I meant your dad’s truck, Trish,” he clarified for me.

 “That’s what your Mom suggested, Trish,” Dad agreed, nodding. “We all know that the moment we get outside help involved, it might risk getting the police involved too if they start asking why she’s outside of town tonight.”

 “Isn’t the contraband hidden in the groceries like I suggested?”

 “Yeah, but there was more of it than your mother guessed, so she’s hidden the rest in her trunk,” he explained further. “Trish, I’m sorry for interrupting your dinner date, but she needs you two to help out.” He looked to my boyfriend, “Jesse, I know this is a lot to ask for, but—”

 “No need to worry, sir,” my badger smiled earnestly. “I’m more than willing to help Trish and her mother out. I can keep a secret.”

 “Attaboy!” he laughed. “Now you two better get going. Carla’s sounding anxious.”

 “‘Needs us two’?” I asked Dad after a moment of thought, then felt my eyes turn to horrified saucers. “Wait, did you—”

\*\*\*

 “—tell your boyfriend that we’re the ones smuggling through this town?!” Mom barked from the speaker on my flip phone. “Beatrice Harriet Lynn Barrow, are you mad???”

 Sitting in shotgun seat, I tried my best to relax. “Mom, wait, I have you on speaker!”

 “Don’t change the conversation, missy—”

 “Jess can hear you, alright?” I held it to my boyfriend’s right, “Hun, say something.”

 “Hey, Mrs. Barrow…” he gripped the steering wheel, steadily keeping his vision towards the dark road between desolate farmlands ahead of us, “We’re on our way, don’t worry.”

 “Thanks, Jesse,” a cough came from my phone. “Keep watching the road while I lecture my daughter, will you, dear?”

 The badger guiltily nodded, despite it being unnecessary. “S-Sure thing, ma’am.”

 “Good boy. Now,” I swear I could feel my mother’s voice turn as cold as the lingering frost on my seat’s window, “where were we, Beatrice? The part where I scream at you for telling your boyfriend that our family commits high treason and trafficking in our pastime? Or where I’m demanding why you didn’t tell me all these past months?”

 “…a little bit of both, hehe?”

 “I’m deadly serious, young lady.”

 I gulped nervously. She never called me that unless I was in deep shit.

 “Believe me, Trish, you are in so much trouble by the end of tonight,” she suddenly groaned on the other end of the call. “Then again, we’re all going to be in even more trouble if you and Jess don’t get here first. We can discuss punishment when we’re in the clear.”

 “It’s a deal, Mom!” My tail wagged slightly, despite our dire circumstances. “And I’m so sorry I didn’t tell you. I’ll tell you everything, I promise!”

 “You will, sweetie, but for now, be careful please.” Her concern matched mine. “You too, Jess. And for what it’s worth, I’m glad my daughter’s not helping me on her own…”

 “No problem, ma’am!” Jesse replied. “Just hang tight, we’re almost there!”

 The Great Plains states, once vibrant and populated with plenty of farmers, now lay abandoned in the dead of winter. Ever since the Civil War began, squalls of furs had fled either east for west to avoid the battlefields, while those along the border stayed behind. It wasn’t uncommon to find a deserted car or structure half-destroyed near the Disputed Zone, and out along I-92 outside of Scottscliff, no other souls could be found for miles.

 After a long silence of Jesse driving and me patrol-spotting, we sighed in collective relief when the sight of my Mom’s SUV could be seen in the other highway lane. Then we made a U-turn at the nearest exit and finally parked to the same side of the road.

 “Kids?” a lone figure waved beside the car. “Is that you?”

 “Hey, Mom!” I jumped from the passenger seat. “You okay?”

 “I’m fine, but we need to hurry!” She peeked over to Jesse, who was leaning out his window. “Jess, you got that rope and shovels?”

 “Sure do, ma’am!” he nodded.

 We immediately went to work on getting rid of the snow underneath the SUV. I could spot some groceries packed in the backseat and wondered how much contraband Mom had stowed away in the back. By the we got the rest of the snow out from under the trunk, the worst happened.

 Jesse spotted the lights first. “Hey, girls! A car is coming this way!”

 “Shit, it’s gotta be a patrol!” Mom muttered, handing her shovel to Jesse. “Act natural and follow my lead if they stop, got it? You too, Trish.”

 We nodded and waiting as the lights drew closer. Eventually, they came to a halt next to us. It was an official Devout military-grade truck, with two uniformed soldiers inside. One happened to be a German Shepherd while the other was an unseen feline. The shepherd demanded why we were out here, to which my mother and I pretended to be helpless damsels, saying I called my boyfriend to help me and Mom out of the ditch. We made sure not to mention the groceries to seem suspicious, and Jesse only responded to their questions in short answers. I worried they would ask further ones or suggest they could help us, until…

 “Well, it seems you have this under control then,” the shepherd concluded. “If you still can’t get out, be sure to call the cops and we can have a tow truck haul you out. Good luck then, and God bless you!”

 “And God bless America…” we three replied. Once the truck veered out of sight, Mom uttered a small ‘fascist morons’ before we resumed our work.

 “So Jesse,” Mom asked him minutes later into our shoveling, “mind telling me how Trish told you about our…line of work?”

 My badger suddenly froze. “Oh, it was nothing really…”

 “I caught him in the school bathroom, Mom.”

 “Please don’t tell her!” he whimpered between digging and keeping his heated face down. “It’s so embarrassing!”

 “Jesse Rhodes…”

 Mom Code translation: What were you doing?

 “Ack!” he growled and whined, setting the shovel aside. “I got this side done. I’ll turn the truck around, alright? Okay, bye!”

 As Jesse scurried with his tail tucked between his legs, I chuckled to my mother.

 “Remember those topless porn pics I hid in the boy’s bathrooms?”

 Mom gasped. “You caught him looking at them?”

 “And jerking off to them,” I added, to which the elder raccoon cackled in disbelief. “I’m not joking. It happened five months ago. I was waiting for him after Chemistry Club, but one of his club mates said he went to take a crap. So, I went looking for him until I found him with one of the pics I hid. And well, let’s just say I was surprised the whole school didn’t hear him…”

 Mom had paused shoveling and was clutching her stomach. “I knew you two were sleeping together, but I had no idea the boy dating my daughter was also a pervert.”

 “Yeah, but you should’ve seen the poor guy,” I told her. “After he realized I caught him, Jess was a mess. He seriously thought I was going to report him. I had no choice but to tell him I put them there.”

 “You had no choice?” Mom repeated.

 “Well, what would you do if the guy you’re dating was convinced he’d be arrested?” I asked her. “If I hadn’t told him, he would’ve continued making a scene and got us both caught by the janitor. And he’s been good at keeping this secret, Mom!”

 “I’m not angry that you told him, Trish,” she scooped out the last of the snow, “I’m angry you didn’t tell me for five months. I need to know these things, sweetie.”

 By now, Jesse had quietly turned the truck around and attached the rope to the SUV’s rear axle and the truck’s hitch. As he did this, the badger did everything to avoid involving himself in the conversation. Especially since I’d never let him live it down since then. Sure, I gave him permission to look at the pics, but as I pointed out to him, “Why look at naked girls in photos when you can have the real thing?”

 “Anyway, you’re still in trouble for this, Beatrice.”

 “I know, Mom. I’m sorry…”

 “Like I said, let’s focus on getting out of this first, alright?” she smiled understandingly and wiped her gloved paws of snow. “Now let’s get the fuck out of here, shall we?”

 “Right, Mom!” Gripping my shovel, I called out, “Jess, you ready?”

 “Yes, ma’am!”

\*\*\*

 “So, how far are we?”

 “We’re almost there, Jess. Just beyond those trees.”

 After getting the SUV out of the ditch, Mom had us put the unhidden contraband in the truck. She instructed me to take it to the family’s hiding spot in the woods outside of Scotsscliff, then immediately come back home.

 So here we were. A teenaged couple in the middle of the night, driving a truck through a forgotten forest road with several illegal packages of differently-sized condoms.

 “Is that it there?” Jesse pointed out the windshield to the silhouette of a house.

 “That’s it,” I chirped. “Let’s hurry and get the shit inside.”

 This single-story home used to belong to an old hermit. He hated civilization and the like, with his only friends being my mom (when she worked as a grocery clerk and he needed supplies) until the day he died. This place still stood though, neglected for the past two decades to nature, but still useful for the Western Republic-Devout American smuggling pipeline.

 Unfortunately, it was close to the highway, which meant we needed to navigate in the dark, lest a potential patrol car found us and the hidden stashes we kept here.

 “Yeesh, it’s dusty in here,” Jesse coughed, covering his muzzle with his gloved paw like I instructed (no fingerprints on the contraband). “How long has Mrs. Barrow been using this place again?”

 “Ten years now!” I grunted while carrying the first box. “Let’s hurry downstairs, Jess.”

 This place had seen its fair share of punishment across the years. Harsh weather, the changing seasons, natural decay and the like. Some teenagers bold enough to come out here would let out their anger and hatred on the walls of this house. Not a single room in this structure hadn’t been vandalized or neglected from time. That was, except for the basement.

 At the back of the house in (what used to be the kitchen), I had Jessie move an old mattress aside to show a well-hidden trapdoor. Opening it up revealed a small staircase leading down to a cellar filled to the brim with—

 “Holy Mary, Mother of…” Jesse breathed in delight and shock. “What is…this?”

 I grinned like a cub on Christmas Day. “A treasure trove of sin and contraband.”

 With help from a couple flashlights, Jesse and I hauled the rest of the contraband into the cellar amongst everything else. Not just condoms, but birth control pills, morning-after pills, pornography, anti-Devout leaflets and sexual education pamphlets for both men and women. The rest of the items were relics of the recent past. In one corner rested covered paintings protected from dust and grime, while the opposite corner had shelves housing dozens of zipper-protected books.

 “That’s the last of ‘em…” Jesse stared at the several boxes and whistled. “Is it me or do we have a lot of horny classmates?”

 “Not all of these are going to our classmates,” I mentioned, looking once more at the shelves. “There’s always a husband or wife who doesn’t want to have another kid but want to get their freak on anyway.”

 “Like who?”

 “You’d be surprised, Jess,” I chuckled, then grew silent in the dark, barely lit basement, flicking my tail at the floor and unintentionally gathering dust. “Hey sweetie?”

 “Yes, Trish?” he paused looking at one of the packages. “Something wrong?”

 “Nah, nothing’s wrong...I just…can I ask why you’re doing this? With me?” Glancing around to look into Jesse’s sandy-red eyes, shining beneath the glow of his flashlight, I added, “Remember what I told you that day?”

 “That I didn’t have to do this?” the badger shook his muzzle, most of it in embarrassed nostalgia. “How could I forget? But yeah, I remember what you said. Perfectly.”

 “You still don’t have to, ya know,” I suggested, one of my ears folding inward.

 “But I want to do this with you, Trish,” he told me, confident in his words. “I’ve already gotten this far with you. Whatever happens to you and your family, I want in. This country is...fucked up, I know that. And if doing this, getting this stuff out to furs who need them, means risking getting myself arrested, it’s worth it.”

 I couldn’t help but fall for the badger all over again in that cellar basement.

 “Aww,” I stepped forward and wrapped him in a hug. “You really mean that?”

 “One hundred percent,” he kissed me lightly, pressing his nose with mine. “I want to keep helping you however I can, Trish. Even if we might go down together one day.”

 I also couldn’t help but remember…

 “Speaking of ‘going down together’, Jesse,” I giggled, reaching into my bra and pulling out a condom wrapper. It was white with a red rose on the front. “I was planning on giving this to you later tonight, but considering all that’s been happening…Happy Valentine’s Day.”

 Jesse looked down at the condom, then gave me that same horny, goofy grin.

 Forty-five minutes later, we drove home with satisfied smiles. As Jesse traversed through the snow and the checkpoints into town, I had a small texting conversation with Mom.

 **Mom: You coming home?**

 **Me: Yes, on our way.**

 **Mom: What took you so long?**

 **Me: Nothing. So can Jess be a part of our hobby?**

 **Mom: …I’ll think it over.**

 I couldn’t help but feel victorious. What she said translated from Mom Code to, “He’s in.”