

Frozen Trap

t'Sade

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Around Talar, the woods were draped underneath a thick blanket of ice and snow. White frosting weighed down every branch, except where the bare bark peeked through with desperate hopes for spring. Cold winds whistled through the branches, cutting into the stiff silence with casual disregard.

His boots crunched through the frost, stepping agilely along a game trail forgotten by the recent fauna. Barely leaving a trail behind, he moved in only the rustling of his winter cloak and the slap of the sword strapped to his back. A lump from his pack pushed out from his lower back, giving his silhouette the impression of a hunchbacked creature. The thick leather hood of his cloak clung to his head, shuddering with each blast of wind that slammed into him. Tiny clouds of breath dotted his trail, lasting but a second before freezing out of sight.

Talar's eyes, the color of the sky's summer memory, scanned through naked branches and spears of ice. Their gaze never caught on anything, sliding constantly to glance at the ground before rising back up into the winter fog that filled the woods.

A flash of movement caught his attention and he froze, his hand snapping up for his sword. Before the sound faded from the woods, his fingers were already wrapped around the stained leather hilt. His gray cloak spread open to reveal his muscular chest, straining against the black leather armor that rested underneath. A tiny insignia of a tree sparkled in the dim light of the winter day, a stylistic tree reaching for the sky. No clouds of breath came from his nose as he glared into the woods. Then, a flash of tail and a deer bounded through the snow, following a different path. Talar relaxed

slightly, but didn't move his hand away from the hilt of the sword until two more deer bounced past and disappeared back into the fog.

Fingers released the hilt after a few more seconds and Talar brought his hand down. The cloak sealed back along his chest barely in time to protect against the cutting wind that whistled through the trees. Letting loose with a deep breath, he watched as the billowing cloud exploded in the wind.

“Only three more days.”

Talar's voice was deep and rumbling, filled with longing and anticipation. It also cracked with the forty-odd winters that hung on his shoulders. He made no effort to pull back his cloak and exposing his face to more wind. Instead, he continued to step forward, following the game trail. His eyes returned to the woods, scanning for any sign of movement as he walked.

“Three more days.”

His patrol took him along the woods until the gray sunlight began to fade. Shadows stretched through the woods like claws, reaching out across his path. Just as he began to search for a camping site, he heard a yelping sound drifting through the trees. Talar froze in position again, his hand reaching up once again for his sword. Cocking his head, he strained to hear the sound, but the yelp was gone. Growling to himself, he pushed back his hood to reveal an older man in his forties. A thick beard, black with only a few streaks of gray, covered half his face. Twisting his head, he listened again.

Cold wind howled through the trees, kicking up snow and ice into thick clouds of fog. He strained his senses, peering around him in a slow circle as he tried to pinpoint the source of the sound.

Then came a whimper.

It was soft and weak, an injured animal of some sort. Talar swallowed his breath and released his sword. Twisting around, he heard the sound again. Without a second thought, he was already stepping quickly off the game trail and into the woods. His boots left a trail of broken ice and crushed snow as he broke into the woods.

The sounds grew louder as he tracked them, following his instincts as much as his senses. Even though, he froze when he reached the animal.

It was a wolf, a large wolf about twice the size he would expect one to be. Jet black fur shook in the whistling wind, but he was caught up in the angry eyes staring up at him. One was ice-blue and the other a feral yellow, a strange gaze that left him feeling slightly out of place. Talar's hand dropped down, showing that he carried no weapons. This did nothing to stop the snarl of anger from the wolf, but he felt better about it.

Talar's eyes gazed down, looking at the source. To his surprise, the wolf leaned over to block his vision. Despite the creature's efforts, he could see a crimson stain spreading out through the snow.

Blood.

Anger raged through Talar and the wolf growled in response. With trembling feet, the wolf tried to back up, but a rattling sound stopped it. Talar caught a glimpse of a rusty chain trailing from beneath the injured wolf. His eyes narrowed as he knelt down, to peer through the blood-soaked snow at the rusted trap sticking out of the ground. The jagged teeth of the trap gnawed at the wolf's back right leg, sinking to almost half their length. A faint flash of white showed where the blades cut to the bone. Talar's shoulders slumped as the anger was replaced with a burning frustration.

"Poachers."

He glanced around automatically, but found no footprints in the snow or along the ice. Keeping one eye on the snarling wolf, he circled around twice, looking for prints. He found none, but that didn't stop his growing suspicions. Slowly, he returned back to the wolf and looked at it with growing concern. It snarled at him, snapping at the air. Streamers of drool splashed down on the snow, melting it into smears of ice.

Talar chuckled, "Somehow, I don't think you are going to let me pull that out."

The wolf snapped again, then whined as the chain rattled once again. Talar shook his head in despair, feeling the pain of the wolf even as it limped back a step. A bright patch of blood sparkled in the snow from where the trap dug in.

“I hate poachers.”

Working at one of the straps on his chest, he dropped his pack on the ground. Keeping his eyes on the wolf, he pulled out an oiled wrapping. Inside was salted meats and hard bread. A sliver of mold-covered cheese clung to one fold, but he only took out half of the meat and bread before re-wrapping it.

Tearing what he pulled out in half, he tossed it toward the wolf who jerked away. The wolf sniffed at it for a moment, then turned away with a grumble.

Talar chuckled and shrugged, “Eat if you want to, I don’t have much more.”

Moving painfully, the wolf slowly dropped down, then leaned slightly to its side. Curling up, it began to lap at the bloody leg and gnaw on the steel trap.

Talar blinked at the tears that formed in his eyes, watching the wolf try to ignore the pain. Soft whimpers escaped from its throat, but it made no effort to look back at him.

Chewing on his own meat, he watched the wolf for a long time before moving again. Dropping his cloak and pack, he set out looking for wood. It took him three trips to bring back a large pile, about a half meter in height. None of the branches were cut or broken, just half-rotted dead wood and branches. Pulling a tarp from his pack, he attached it to a thick tree, forming a lean-to. It only took a few moments, from well-practiced actions, and he had a serviceable shelter.

Talar drew out a reddish rock from his pack and set it in the snow about two meters from the wolf. It snarled at him, growling deep in its chest. Talar tried to give it a reassuring smile as he stacked wood in a neat pile around the rock. When he finished, he stepped back and muttered practiced arcane words that scraped at the back of his mind. The wolf whimpered and pawed at its ears and head as he managed to choke out the last syllable. The reddish rock flashed once, then twice. Flames exploded from the fire in a brief gout, then a steady glow radiated from the rock. Snow melted in a matter of seconds, then the wood crackled. A few moments later, tiny wisps of flame flared into existence and the wood caught fire.

The wolf yelped at the first flare of power and his heart tore as it jumped back, yanked on the chain. With a whine, the leg collapsed and the wolf fell down. Blinking at the tears, he stepped back up.

“I’m sorry, but we both need the heat.”

Still whimpering, the wolf snarled at him and his flame before cautiously settling back to the ground. Giving him another glare, it returned to lapping at its injured leg. Talar stared at it for a moment, then chuckled dryly again.

“Not much for conversation, huh?”

The wolf ignored him. Taking a step closer, Talar held out a hand for the animal, but a deep growl halted him. He held it there for a moment and the wolf snapped at the air, near his fingers, before snarling at him. Talar drew back his fingers and stepped back to his lean-to.

“I’m sorry, but I’m hoping that you had calmed down a little. I have to get that trap off.”

When the wolf returned to its licking, he crawled into his shelter and pulled out a blanket. Draping it over his legs, he rested his back against the tree trunk.

“Maybe in a few hours.”

—

Talar woke up with a start, but his body was already freezing him into place. Slowly, he cracked open one eye and peered out into the murky night. His fire was flickering slowly, a dull flame barely kept alive by the glowing red rock beneath. He peered over, at the wolf lying on its side. The snow was melted around it from the heat of the fire and dirt below was caked and dry. His pile of wood had been replaced three times and it was only the third night.

Scrambling to his feet, he stretched and stepped toward the wolf. It lifted its head from the ground, staring at him with one blue eye and growled deeply. In silence marvolance, it curled back one lip to snarl at him before the wolf rested its head back on the ground. He watched as its entire body shook from heavy panting.

He shook his hand. “Three days and you still don’t trust me?”

Another growl.

“Not my idea of a date either.”

Reaching into his pack, he pulled out the last of his food and tossed the meat to the wolf. The tiny scrap landed on the ground

and the wolf looked up. Staring at him with its odd-colored eyes, it leaned over and snapped up the meat. Gulping it down hungrily, the wolf licked its lips before returning to its injured leg.

Talar shook his head, a smile ghosting his lips, "Three days of only eating when I wasn't looking. And just as you eat, I happen to run out."

He shook his head again, "Figures."

Fingers trailed along the oiled cloth, but even the moldy cheese was gone. Folding it carefully, he tossed it into his lean-to.

"I hate hunting."

One ear of the wolf perked up. Talar pulled out a leather sling from his pack and straightened his armor. Buckling his sword to his back, he padded off into the snow. When he came back, the light was already fading into night. Hanging from one hand was half a dozen rabbits and other woodland animals. His cheeks were streaked with melted snow, as if he were crying.

At the smell of the rabbits, the wolf lifted its head and stared at him. Talar fished one off of the rope tying them and tossed it to the wolf. Teeth snapped on the limp form and the wolf began to tear into it. Blood and bits of fur flew everywhere as the wolf hungrily chomped on the fresh meat.

Talar had to turn his back as the animal snapped it down. He dug a hole in a thick pile of snow, wrapped the rabbits in a tarp, and buried it. Piling snow deeply on his catch, he pulled out a tiny carved stick. Piercing the snow, it formed a tiny sign. Whispering under his breath, he spoke more words of magic. This time, the stick shuddered and sunk further into the snow, until only a single carving of an eye was peeking out. Talar glanced at the wolf and grinned.

"Keeps hungry wolves away from my dinner."

The wolf blinked its eyes, then returned to its bloody meal. Fishing out a bag from his cloak, he pulled out some wrinkled tubers and several handfuls of nuts. His eyes glanced up at the wolf, who was eating with gusto, then back to his vegetarian meal.

"I will admit, you might have the fresher meal. But, I can't eat wild animals. Even if I wanted to."

Selecting a handful of nuts, he cracked them open and began to eat. The wolf managed to finish the rabbit in record time, then licked its lips. Talar chuckled and stared back at the wolf.

“You may be a lousy date, but at least you appreciate the meal. Hopefully, Maramon would be as understanding. I was supposed to be in town tonight, in his warm arms.”

Ears perked up.

Talar smiled, “Yeah, nice and warm Maramon. A lovely boy, about twenty winters. I visit him every time I come into town, about every four months.”

Heat grew inside him as Talar sat down near the fire. His voice was soft in remembrance, talking to himself more than to the staring wolf.

“He was a blind boy, blond and full of life. He always had a joke and always a bright view of life. He was... a serving boy at a tavern. More of a slave, but I saw that joy.”

Tingling was growing along him, stretching along his stomach and centering around the growing hardness between his legs. Feeling a faint blush in his cheeks, Talar found himself continuing the memory.

“I bought his contract, freed him and set him up in a new home. That was three, four years ago. I told him to get a pretty wife, but he never did.”

Talar paused for a moment before continuing, “Every year I come back, he is there, with open arms and a warm smile. He always had this... talent that brought a smile to my lips... and other things.”

As he spoke, his hand drifted down to the growing hardness of his manhood. It was already throbbing and he teased his fingers into the slit of the leather, gasping softly at the touch against his aching shaft. It only took a few seconds to pull it out, throbbing and heated. His mind was already lost on his memories as he rested on one hand while stroking with the other.

“He was warm, so hot and hungry. Tight ass and a very strong hands. He was always so gentle, so sure when he touched me.”

Talar’s hands were slick with precum as he continued to stroke up and down his member. It was fairly long, as most cocks go, a thick girth that felt very comfortable in his hand. Talar’s eyes closed as he imagined Maramon against his body, the soft skin, the tight

opening, the tiny grunts of pleasure. Even the endless waves of thrusting, of taking, that brought both of them so much pleasure. His stroking grew faster and stronger, even as his voice trailed off in memories.

Then, he felt his cock growing hotter, the tingling gathering at the base until it felt like it would tear him apart. As his memory struck against the pure sensations of being licked, he finally released himself. Long jets of cum splattered into the air, landing on the fire with a hiss. He moaned loudly, firing again and again until he felt completely drained.

Gasping, he opened his eyes and looked down the translucent whiteness in his hands. Feeling hot, he wiped his palm against the ground and stared at the white smear for a moment before remembering the wolf. Blushing fiercely, he peered over to see the animal staring back at him, blue and yellow eyes unblinking.

Clearing his throat, "I suppose you don't understand."

The wolf stared back for a moment, then returned to licking its wound. The sound of its tongue against the steel was harsh, almost brutal, against the crackling of the wood in the fire. Frustration burned in his heart for a moment before he crawled back to his shelter.

"Maybe tomorrow, little cub. Maybe I can free you and see if Maramon will still forgive me."

The wolf looked up for a moment, growled softly, and set down its head on the ground. The rusty chain rattled for a moment as it tried to shift into a better position. A faint whine escaped its throat and it rested back down. Talar stared into its eyes until sleep caught him in a shadowed embrace of half-formed memories.

—

Morning caught him with the vision of a faint streak of blue sky that quickly faded back into gray. The promise of clear skies was enough to drag Talar out of the lean-to. Stretching up, he grinned at the wolf.

"Going to let me help you today?"

The wolf only stared up at him, lifting its head slightly before setting it back down. It neither growled nor snarled at him. Talar grinned at it and pulled out the tiny stick marking his catch. The stick sparkled for a moment, but did nothing else. Pulling it out, he

dug into the snow and pulled out one of the half-frozen rabbits. The wolf's ears perked up and the tail moved slightly. He threw the rabbit to the wolf who tried to catch it. It flopped on the ground before being snapped up. Ice and bone cracked beneath the wolf's hunger.

Talar watched for a moment, replaced the marker stick, then grabbed his own meal of nuts and frozen tubers. Both ate in noisy silence and then Talar went out to gather up another night's worth of wood. When he returned, he rebuilt his fire, now extinguished, and stared down at the cracked gray stone in the middle.

"Damn! The fire stone cracked."

He pulled another red rock from his pack and set it into the center of the charred wood. Repeating the activating words, the rock burst into flames. Wet wood caught quickly with the magic of the flame. Talar peered up to see the wolf watching him calmly. A faint glimmer of emotion flashed past him when he found the yellow and blue eyes staring into his own.

Frowning, Talar stared back.

"Can you understand me?"

The wolf blinked once, then lowered its head to lap at the bloody leg. It made no additional effort to look back at him and Talar finally looked away.

"Guess not. Well, might as well see if you are willing..."

As his voice trailed off, he stood up and gently padded toward the wolf. A few steps away, the animal finally looked up at him, but made no effort to snap or even growl. Talar held out a hand hesitantly.

"May I?"

Yellow eye blinked, then the blue. Talar slowly brought his hand to the trap, tracing the curve slowly as he focused his eyes on the wolf's. It looked back with the same serious expression as before, one lip almost, but not quite, snarling. Giving a faint smile, he rested his other hand lightly on the trap.

"I'm going to remove this, will you let me."

His heart almost caught in his chest for a moment, then the wolf looked away. Sunned, the ranger did nothing for a moment, then found the pin that caught the spring. Working it out, he released it and the device instantly snapped open. Talar twisted it slightly and

pulled it off of the poor wolf's leg. It whimpered and whined from the pain.

As soon as the jagged teeth slipped out of the wound, the wolf crawled away. Talar disabled the trap and snapped the spring with his dagger. A few moments later, the trap was hanging from its chain, forever useless. He remained in his crouched position before he looked at the wolf.

The creature favored the injured leg as fresh drops of blood splashed into fire-warmed mud below. Talar sighed softly and gestured towards the woods.

"You are free from this, my friend. I have no healing magic to stop the wound. Look around, there is nothing to stop your freedom."

The wolf stepped back, limping to avoid using the injured leg. Eyes glanced into the depths of the woods, then back to Talar. He could almost feel something happening, something he couldn't understand.

To his surprise, the wolf limped into his lean-to and found a comfortable position. Flopping down, the wolf stared out from the darkness, eyes turning almost red from the fire light. Talar could only stare at the burning eyes.

His mouth worked silently for a moment. Slowly, he sat down on the mud, unable to understand what what was happening.

When the wolf didn't move for some time, Talar found the energy to push off the ground. Crawling forward, he joined the wolf who gave a short little growl then closed its eyes.

"Well..."

Talar did not finish the sentence. Instead, he pulled up the blanket over him and stared down at the wolf. To his surprise, it shifted over slightly to its heavy weight leaned against his leg. He was not exhausted, but he did let his eyes close, if only to avoid looking at the wild creature next to him. Moments later, he felt the cold nose of the animal pushing under his blanket. Without opening his eyes, he stretched his blanket over the cold, furred form and let a tiny smile touch his lips.

—
Another day had passed and Talar found himself resting inside the lean-to, with blankets filling in the cracks that would have

allowed the wind to enter. The wolf, a male from closer inspection, was pressed against his leg, snoring softly. Talar's hands were working with his journal, a flickering light from a glowing pendant keeping the words visible as he wrote entry after entry into his log. When he started, the book was barely half full. His current situation brought him to almost the end of the cloth-bound tomb.

He finished with a sigh and set the book down. His body ached from his current position, but he had no desire to move. Soft snores of the wolf kept him from shifting. His eyes trailed down to the injured leg, which was healing quickly in the warmth of the lean-to. A diet of frozen rabbits also helped with the healing process and Talar was happy that the wolf would survive the poacher's trap.

The healing brought Talar's attention back to Maramon. His cock began to twitch as he let the smile cross his lips.

"You'll never believe this, Maramon. Not in a hundred seasons."

He paused a moment, thinking of Maramon. His thoughts drew back to sex, of the pleasures with his lover and he spoke up again, in a quiet promise.

"Maybe five more days. Hopefully, you'll be talking to me then."

Talar chuckled, then looked down worriedly at the wolf against his leg. It barely shifted, snoring again. The eyes remained tightly closed.

Another hunger grew inside him, one following the aching hardness between his legs. Watching the wolf for movement, Talar trailed his fingers down his hard stomach to the buttons sealing up his pants. With delicate movements, he unbuttoned each one until his cock, hard and throbbing, popped out. The tip glistened with precum and he moaned softly.

Fingers wrapped around the heated hardness, stroking up and down as he let his thoughts wrap around the sexual fantasies of him and Maramon. Sexual need flared up inside him and he stroked harder, trying for a quick orgasm to release the edge of need.

Talar started to reach his crest when he realized the snoring was gone. His eyes snapped open to find the wolf looking at his cock with a strange expression. Heat flushed along his cheeks and he yanked his hands away from his cock. Hard and throbbing, it bobbed for a moment, glistening with his juices. Carefully, he wiped his hands on his blanket and started to reach for it, to push it away.

A deep growl, powerful and rumbling, filled the lean-to. Talar froze, staring at the wolf. It looked back at his cock, then leaned over.

When it licked his shaft, Talar had no clue how to response. The tongue was hot and slightly dry, but it left a delicious pleasure as it trailed from his base to the very tip of his member. He gasped from the sensations, his toes curling in his boots as he just stared.

A blue eye caught his, blinked once and the wolf did it gain, lapping from the base to the tip. The very curl of the pink tongue wrapped slightly around his aching member, sending even more pleasures rocking through his world.

Talar gasped as the tongue slathered across the tip, lapping at the entire crown until it tingled with desire. He gasped from the intensity, moaning as the wolf lapped again, moving from the base up to the tip. Slowly, the wolf lifted itself to rest both legs on his one leg, almost trapping his member.

“No, you shouldn’t-”

His hands started to reach up, but the wolf growled softly. He yanked back his hand, unable to move as the wolf resumed a slow and deliberate licking. His cock felt huge and hot, jerking with every pulse and the wolf tongue caught it with every lap. Soon he was moaning loudly, trying not to rock his hips up into the wolf’s teeth.

After endless pleasures, he felt the pressure finally reaching a climax. Every breath strained to hold back the explosion that threatened to implode his balls.

It didn’t last.

With a groan of pleasure that he felt through his bones, his cock finally exploded. Glistening jets of white shot out of his tip, splattering against the wolf’s mouth, the top of the lean-to, and even dripping on his blankets. More streamers of white dribbled down his length, pooling at the base of his cock.

Before he could respond, the wolf closed its eyes and lapped at the pools. Its hot tongue trailed across his stomach, curling around the base of his member. Talar moaned softly as the animal tenderly cleaned him. He closed his eyes to enjoy it, unwilling for the sensations to end.

Too soon, the tongue was finished lapping, but Talar found himself very sleepy. With a gentle push, he let the darkness consume him.

Morning came too soon. Automatically, Talar checked down his side, but for the first time, there was no warm wolf next to him. A brief flare of concern washed over him and he rested one hand. The blanket was cold, the wolf had left some time ago. Gathering up his clothes and shoving his half-hard cock back into his pants, he managed to crawl out of the lean-to.

Overnight, snow had splashed down, coating everything in white. Even now, the occasional streamers of white tumbled off limbs and rocks, to disappear into the white fields of snow. His magical fire continued to burn, melting the snow almost three paces from the flames.

Talar's eyes scanned the surroundings, looking for the wolf. A few prints clung to the hardened mud. They led into the snow and disappeared. Frowning at the unexpected feelings of growing sadness, the ranger padded towards the edge.

Faded underneath the snow, the wolf's print led off into the woods. His fingers shook as they traced the edge, measuring the snowfall against the tiny indentation.

"Couple hours ago."

He paused, errant thoughts from the previous night flooding through him. His cock, buried underneath his clothes, twitched in memory.

"I could follow..."

Talar's voice trailed off after a second. He stared out, troubled emotions ripping through him as he followed the wolf's trail even deeper into the woods. His hands tightened into a fist as he glanced back at the lean-to.

It tore him in half, but Talar was forced to make a decision. A single tear formed in one eye as he turned away from the trail, standing up as he moved. His lips worked over one of the endless sayings he heard during his route, the words he told to everyone who grew too passionate over a problem.

"Let it go."

There was no conviction in his voice, just duty. Without feeling anything, he packed up his lean-to. Chanting the deactivation words

for the fire stone over the fire, he watched as the fire snuffed out in a second. An hour later, almost three times the length it would normally take him to pack, there was still no wolf. The clearing was cleaned up, he had removed almost any trace that he was ever there. Even the fire was scattered, the burnt logs thrown out wide into the woods.

Talar paused at the edge, his possessions packed up. Even the last frozen rabbit hung from his pack, to be thrown later to some animal in need. When no wolf came bounding out of the snow, despite an injured leg, Talar finally had no choice but to turn away. Quiet steps took him further away from the wolf, and toward Maramon.

—

Twenty years passed.

Twenty long years for Talar. He left the rangers eventually, disappearing into retirement. His pension bought him a little home on the edge of the woods. He built it with his own two hands, just a tiny one-room hut.

Winter mornings always came hard.

With a groan, Talar ignored the burning sensations in his joints and forced himself out of bed. It creaked with imperfect craftsmanship, but it held up. The cold air, even inside his hut, slashed at his naked body, but he managed to push pains aside. His eyes glanced over to the mirror, where his image stared back. Most of the muscles were still there, but they were softening with age. His gaunt face looked back, half-hidden underneath the beard. Slowly, his eyes traced down further, to the manhood peeking up from a thick patch of gray hair. It managed to survive two decades without failing him, but there was only a few more years of life left in it.

“Not getting any younger...”

He chuckled and found his clothes. The leather armor was long since gone, given up with retirement. His sword hung over the fireplace, where a banked fire spat the occasional ember up the brick chimney. Clothed, he grabbed another log from the far wall, which reached the entire length of the hut and had almost four months worth of split wood waiting to be used. Gently setting it on the embers, he stoked the fire back into life.

Putting day-old coffee on the flame, he added more water and more grounds. Soon it was boiling and Talar was feeling more

awake. Breakfast followed, but he made no effort to leave. Instead, he pulled out a thick tome and began to read by the fire light.

Some hours later, he heard movement outside. Straining his senses, he could hear the anger in the footsteps. After a few more moments, he knew it was a group of six. He managed to push himself up from the bed as the first set of boots hit his stairs. His hands wrapped around the sword's hilt, warm from the fire, and pulled it down. The blade was hidden in the sheath, but he knew it was still free from rust and usable.

When the fist pounded against the door, Talar was ready. Holding the sword against his back, he padded over to the door and cracked it open.

Outside was a young man in his twenties. Heavy chain mail armor hung from his shoulders like a bag. In his hand was a naked blade. Along the edge, a silver glint caught Talar's attention. Giving it a second glance, he realized that someone had dipped the edge in molten silver. Slowly, his eyes trailed back to the man.

"How may-"

The young warrior interrupted him with a curt, impatient voice. "We are looking for a monster."

Talar shrugged, "No monsters here, Ranger." He had noticed the sign of the Franome Rangers, the same organization he once belonged to.

The young ranger sneered, "I'll be the judge of that."

Without waiting for a response, he kicked at the door. Talar, anticipating it, had his foot wedged behind it and the wooden frame refused to budge. A sharp pain grew from his foot, but Talar felt his own anger growing.

"Apparently there is a monster here."

No question of where the response was directed and the young ranger's face grew red and angry. Talar caught the edge of the blade shifting, right before it was brandished in his face. He leaned back slightly, but kept his foot in the door. Another slam from the young ranger trying to open the door. The point leaned forward, the silver-gilt point hovering dangerously in front of his eye.

"If you don't open this door, old man, I'm going to kill you. Now, let me in!"

Realizing his position, Talar shoved the door back. To his surprise, the young warrior managed to keep it in position and it crashed against the ranger's boot. There was a brief moment where everything held, then the young warrior slammed hard against the door. Unready for it, Talar felt himself slipping and fell back. His sword managed to catch some of his fall, but when the ranger burst into his hut, he was unable to prevent himself from falling to the ground.

The old man found himself looking up at the silver-edged sword before he could respond. The sneer, full of anger and self-righteous, dominated his vision as the young ranger held the point against his throat. With a curt command, he ordered the others to search Talar's hut.

It only took a few seconds. The young rangers found nothing they were seeking. One of them brought Talar's old uniform to the leader. He stared at it for a moment, the sneer and anger never fading, only intensifying. When he looked down at Talar, there was pity in the dark eyes.

"An old failure who didn't have the honor to die in battle. What makes you think you even had a chance?"

Talar sighed. The point of the sword pressed painfully against his throat.

"Honor? Respect? I can see that none of this means anything--"

The point pierced Talar's skin, drawing a drop of blood. The sneer on the young ranger's face grew more intense, darkening the eyes until Talar could almost see the gaze of death in them. Gasping for breath, the old ranger froze until the sword finally drew back.

"Pathetic. Nothing but an old pig living alone in the woods."

Behind him, the other rangers, none of them over twenty winters, filed out, neither looked at Talar or their leader. The leader waited until he and Talar were in the room before straightening his outfit.

"There is a werewolf in the area. A terrible creature that you are obviously unable to handle. Even with your so-called fighting skills, I recommend you stay in your hole."

Talar crawled to his feet before choking out the words.

"Werewolf?"

An impatient tone, “Yeah. Black one. With one yellow and one blue eye. If you see it, let the professionals handle it.”

The description caught Talar right in the chest, a painful squeezing of his lungs as memories slammed into him. The leader stared at him for a long moment, misinterpreting the look on Talar’s face as fear, before shutting the door and storming down the wooden stairs. Talar gasped for breath, the squeezing pain increasing. His voice was strained and feeling very old as he whispered into the hut.

“Could it be...? A werewolf?”

Hope, just a flare starting to grow, dissolved under the despair of an old man. Shaking his head, he pushed the thought away. “No, it couldn’t be.”

Age reminded him of many things and he limped over to the fire. Stirring the old coffee around, he poured himself another mug. Body aching, he managed to return to his book, but the words only swam underneath his eyes. When he read the same page four times, he set down the book with a sigh.

“I have to find out.”

Talar got back up and found his winter gear. It took hours to prepare himself and reach for that door. He paused, his fingers trailing along the handle for a moment before swinging it open. Outside, cold wind snapped across the porch, kicking up tiny tornadoes of snow and ice. His front yard, a field, was covered in white, except where the broken trail of the rangers stretched out into the distance.

He took a deep breath before stepping out onto the porch. The wind cut around him before he closed it and hefted his sword. The sheath hung around his belt, an easier draw for an older man less interested in looking impressive than surviving. Pulling his cloak’s hood over his head, he made his way after the young warriors.

Their trail was fading underneath the snow, but atrophied skills enabled him to follow their marks. The young warriors were moving quickly now, spreading out to hunt for the “monster.” He followed the leader, the only one moving with bold, angry steps.

Despite his efforts, he lost them after a few hours, called “bells” in the city. Of course, in the wilderness, there were no impressive bells to call out the time.

The trail drifted across a half-frozen river. His eyes scanned across the opposite side, trying to find the continuation of the trail.

It never came.

Talar shook his head, feeling tears freezing in his eyes.

“No... I can't lose him again.”

Then a howl of anger cut through the wind. Talar's head snapped up and he spun around. The howl came again, a snarling of a wolf attacking. He quickly found the direction and sprinted through the snow toward it. Slick snow caught him, tripping him into the ice, but he just struggled to his feet and frantically raced toward the growing sounds of violence. More screams, some human, cut through the wind. He slipped again and felt the burning pain of his knee flare up through his thoughts. Unable to give up, he fought against the pain, limping quickly until he came to the fight.

It was a wolf man, almost two and a half meters tall. Long jagged claws slashed at the air. Around him, in a wide circle, was bright red blood. Four of the rangers were already dead, one of them missing his head. The leader and one other were circling around the black werewolf, swords brandished. The other warrior was injured, streaks of blood dripping from his ear, but otherwise looked unhurt.

As he watched, the injured ranger darted forward, sword in an overhead slash. The creature hesitated until the last moment, then slipped sideways. The sword's sharp point caught the edge of the werewolf's fur. The triumphant cry turned into one of terror as the werewolf snapped up with one claw, slamming into the warrior's stomach and slashing up. Blood and guts sprayed everywhere as the claw ripped a line up to the ranger's throat. The corpse slumped to the ground as the werewolf stepped back, breathing heavily. Claws dripped blood as he snarled at the lead ranger.

The leader growled back, “I'm better than them, creature. And I'll be going home with your pelt on my back!”

In response, the creature growled back, “Just leave me alone! I hurt no one!”

It ended soon after.

Both charged forward, blood and anger in their voices. The leader slashed to the left and threw himself away from a claw that threatened to take off his arm. A second slash of the silver sword caught the edge of the creature's shoulder, cutting off fur and

sending a spray of blood into the air. Talar could only watch as a dagger in the lead ranger's spare hand snapped out, to cut at the creature's throat. As the silver edge of the blade swung around, the wolf ducked its head. The blade caught one ear, slicing it off but the muzzle caught the warrior in the throat. A sickening crunch later and the young man slumped to the ground. Dead.

The creature panted heavily. It dropped to one knee as it shuddered. Snow underneath its form began to grow red with fresh blood. Talar found himself stepping forward. One foot caught a frozen branch and it snapped. The shaggy head lifted, growling and snarling. The retired ranger found himself staring at two eyes, one blue, one yellow.

Talar hesitated before speaking, "Is that..."

His heart pounded in his chest as he stepped forward again. Pulling back its lip, he saw the bright, blood-stained teeth. A low growl filled the area, as the wolf crouched down. Talar hesitated for a moment, holding his hands out away from his sword.

"Is it you? Is it really you?"

The creature halted its snarling, then stood up straighter. Multi-colored eyes peered at him and Talar found himself speaking again.

"It is you, isn't it?"

A faint nod from its head, then a rich, rumbling voice came out.

"The man? From the metal bite?"

"The trap?"

"Yes," the creature's voice continued to rumble, but the snarling had stopped. "From the metal... trap. You saved me. Long... long winters ago."

The almost human wolf took a step forward. Blood-soaked ice crunched underneath its foot and Talar stepped back slightly. The wolf shook his head, almost violently.

"No, no fear. No fear me."

"I... I'm not..." A helpless feeling swelled up through Talar as he realized he didn't know what he was feeling. Fear, excitement, even terror washed up through his veins and he felt the world almost spinning around him as he stared at the wolf. Drops of blood fell from the glittering claws, splashing on the ice in red-stained circles.

"Are you a monster?"

The wolf head shook, "No, I hurt no human. Only hunt... what I eat."

Some of the fear dissolved, but the edge of fear continued to hover as he found his eyes locked on the red claws. The creature looked down, then knelt. With careful movements, it plunged its claws into a fresh patch of snow and wiped it clean. When they came up, the claws were clean.

"Sorry, I could not avoid them."

"The rangers?"

"Yes, rangers." The creature stumbled over the name but continued.

"Man found me, saw me change. Called me monster."

Talar sighed, "And they attacked, calling you a beast."

A nod.

"How long?"

"Two cold seasons."

"Two years they have been hunting you?"

"Yes, two... years."

"Why?"

"You said... not to kill." A faint pause. "I think."

The hesitant response brought a faint smile to Talar's lips. "You think?"

The creature stepped forward hesitantly, "It was like a dream... I cannot remember clearly. I remembered you... from the dream. So, I seek you. Find you."

"How long?"

"Eighteen... years."

"Why?"

Finally, the wolf hesitated for a moment. He could see it struggling for words that it didn't have. Around them, the wind kicked up again, blowing cutting ice across the snow. After a few seconds, he began to shiver. Clearing his throat, he spoke up.

"I'm getting cold. Do you mind if we continue this at my home."

Thankful, the werewolf nodded. "Get warm. It is cold."

Talar smiled, "Yes, it is cold."

He led the wolf back toward his home, following the tracks of the former rangers and himself. The wolf padded behind for a long time, then sped up to walk next to him. Up close, he realized the werewolf

was almost half a meter taller than him, making him feel very small. Clouds of hot breath fogged into the air and he caught the scent of the creature, warm and musky. The same smells reminded him of before, in the lean-to and he let his smile hesitantly cross his face.

When they returned to his home, he knocked his feet clear of snow and went inside. The wolf creature crouched through the door, brushed off the snow from his furry shoulders and shut it behind him. The ice and cold steamed off of him as he padded twice around the room, looking with curiosity but touching nothing.

Talar watched him, seeing the faint limp and even a scar where fur refused to grow. Faint feelings of fear continued to grow inside him, but he sat down on the edge of the bed and watched. Finally, the wolf stopped and stared at him, its head almost brushing against the ceiling. Uncomfortable, it knelt down on the ground and looked over at Talar.

“Sorry...”

Talar smiled, “No problem. I haven’t have visitors for many years. And... I don’t know what... to do with you.”

The wolf gave him a pleading look, “Help me?”

“How? What do I have? I’m just a tired old man.”

The werewolf shook its head, almost violently, “No... no, this isn’t how I speak. I plan, I planned.”

Talar chuckled, “Plans never work, do they. I had so many things I was going to tell you, when you were just a wolf.”

Ears drooped down, “Sorry, I fail in plan.”

“I understand, I’m at a loss of what to say.”

Silence grew around him, filling the hut for a long time until light started to fade with the coming of night. A rumble of hunger twisted at his stomach. Talar tore his eyes away from the yellow and blue and padded over to his fire. Pulling out bags of potatoes and other food, he started to prepare.

“You might remember, I don’t eat meat. I don’t have any either.”

He felt the werewolf padding up to him, peering at the foodstuffs he spread out on his table. The hot breath washed against his shoulder and he felt very vulnerable as it leaned against him. Fur, soft and warm, brushed against his bare arm and he felt it tingling across his skin.

"I... remember. You gave me rabbit, but you didn't eat it. You only ate not-moving things, plants. I... I tried to go without, but I got hungry. I kept trying, but I kept getting hungry."

Talar grinned, "Being a vegetarian is hard. If you don't do it right, you will starve."

"I... found out. I got hungry."

He looked up at the eyes looking down at him. A flush of heat rose through him as he saw compassion and other emotions in the creature's gaze. The words coming out of his mouth froze and he stared. Yellow and blue eyes stared back, blinking slowly for a moment. The deep rumble of the wolf filled the air between them.

"Show me?"

His throat felt tight, "Why?"

"You under... understand. You help. Always helping."

The werewolf paused for a second, then continued before Talar could respond, "You made me feel good."

"I... made you feel...?"

The wolf reached to him with a fur-covered paw and pressed it lightly against his chest. Talar felt his body tightening underneath, but he couldn't find the energy or even desire to pull away. Instead, he leaned against it slightly, looking up at those bi-colored eyes.

"I'm old and tired. You've been trying to find the wrong person."

"No." The rich voice was emphatic as the werewolf stepped closer. The smells of the animal washed over him, giving him a sense of comfort even with the memory of the half-forgotten night in the lean-to.

"I want you. Make me feel good."

"How?"

A faint thread of hope ignited inside Talar as he leaned harder against the werewolf, enjoying the feel of fur against his skin despite the growing fear that the animal would end up a monster. His hands worked on dinner, moving automatically with years of practice. Some time later, he and the wolf were eating food. Watching the large hands working at the plate brought a smile to his lips. Soon, he was laughing and the wolf chuckled with him.

With the end of the meal, much of the fear was gone. Despite the creature's large form, there was a hesitant gentleness that surprised him. Setting down his empty plate, Talar realized he was tired.

“I never asked, do you have a name?”

Blue and yellow eyes looked at him from across the floor, less than a meter away. In the eyes, Talar could see emotions raging through them, ones that he could only hope exist. The wolf shook his head for a moment.

“No, only monster.”

“Well, we can’t call you monster.”

“Then give me a name.”

Simple words. Talar struggled for a long time, then shook his head.

“I can’t.”

“What about Maramon?”

Bitter pang of sorrow and loss struck at him but Talar looked away.

“No, not him. Maramon is dead.”

“Dead?”

“Many years ago. He got sick and died.”

He said nothing for a long time, then started the story from the beginning, even though the werewolf never asked.

“It was a few years after you left. He was running errands. I was on patrol. According to others, there was a child. He fell through the ice and Maramon ran out to help him.”

Tears formed in his eyes and his words stuck in his throat, but he continued in a helpless need to finally tell the story. Years had passed since he last talked to someone for more than a few minutes. The pain of Maramon’s pneumonia, and his later death, was still raw, even after the years that had passed. Hours passed, along with the night and well into the morning. Sunlight speared through the window when his story finally trailed off.

Talar stared at the floor, drained and devoid of words. The werewolf didn’t move once through his story. Instead, the bi-colored eyes watched him, curious and hungry for knowledge. Talar blinked at the tears, trying to find the energy to move or even say something else.

To his surprise, the wolf shifted first. Stretching up, it padded over to Talar, warm body dangerously close, and knelt down. Strong arms wrapped around him, he pressing his head against the furry chest. It felt warm. So warm that he never wanted to move. The rich

rumble of the werewolf's voice vibrated through him as the animal spoke.

"I... can't be Maramon."

Talar sniffed and nodded, "I-I know."

He leaned against the chest, hearing the deep sounds of the slow breathing. Trying to swallow, his throat felt like it was made of fire. Unable to find the energy to lift his hand, he wiped the tears against the wolf's chest. To his surprise, he felt the ripple of muscle underneath the jet-black fur.

The wolf's rumble spoke up, "But, I want to be like Maramon."

Talar looked up, at the compassionate eyes that looked down at him. It took him a few attempts to speak, but he whispered up at the powerful creature wrapped around him.

"Do you know what you asked?"

"Being warm. Touching. Your lover."

Talar nodded, "Eighteen years. You searched for me for almost two decades, just to be my lover?"

"No," the wolf paused, "There is more. You saved me. It may be your job, it may have been more than that, but you were willing to stay. And I began to understand you. Your words, your actions. You didn't hurt me, you fed me. You took care of me."

Talar leaned against the wolf as the words rumbled around him.

"I wanted to thank you. As a wolf, I couldn't. Except for helping your pleasure. In the years after, I... kept thinking of you. Something missing, in my... head and in my heart. You understood, unlike the others. Things I realized I wanted to be. I want to be with you."

Talar started to say something, but the wolf interrupted him, rumbling in soft, low tones.

"You are alone, but do not want it. You see things I want. To understand. You spoke of being with Maramon, of being with someone. I want to give you that. I understand companion, my pack was destroyed but I enjoy being with others."

"You... you want to be with me?"

"Yes."

Words failed him and Talar just leaned against the wolf, feeling like the world was out of place. Warmth and comfort filled him and he let the animal move underneath him. Powerful limbs lifted Talar, carrying him toward the bed and gently setting him down against

the homespun blanket. Talar looked up at the powerful figure standing over him, fear long since bled away with his emotions.

“D-Do you like men? Men like me?”

In response, the werewolf rested one hand down against Talar’s crotch. It felt warm and strong, as he pressed the furry palm against the growing bulge. A soft gasp rippled through Talar as he looked up at the dual colored eyes. The wolf grinned slightly.

“I remember this. Very happy memory.”

Talar stared down at the hand, his cock growing underneath the paw. The werewolf began to stroke it through his pants, tracing the edges with tips of his nails. Gulping, the old man nodded.

“I remembered...”

The wolf rumbled deep in its chest. “Good.”

Strong fingers worked at the seal of his jeans, working each button. By the time the last was removed, Talar’s cock felt hot and aching, a desperate need for releases. He helped the werewolf push down his pants, over legs that once were powerful but now just a little older. Gently, the werewolf guided his jeans off and then worked on Talar’s shirt, removing it after a few moments.

Talar found his eyes trailing to the wolf, where a bulge of its own was forming. He could see the sheath, black furred as the rest of his wolf, but it was huge. The sheath itself as long as his own length. A pink tip began to push out from the sheath, entrancing Talar with its movement.

Soft paws wrapped around his cock, warm and soft. The furry digits felt wonderful against the aching heat, stroking up and down until they were soaked by precum dribbling out.

He found himself alternating between the sensations around his shaft and the growing werewolf cock. Bright and pink, it was thick and immense, twice his length as it pushed out of the furry sheath.

With a trembling hand, he reached out to touch it. The surface was slick, soaked in juices, and very hot. Hesitant fingers wrapped around it, stroking up and down. The werewolf responded in kind, stroking Talar’s shaft with slick, furry fingers. Talar moaned loudly, his fingers wrapping tighter around to stroke from the throbbing tip to the heated base, right where the sheath stretched tightly around the growing girth.

Both of them stroked, soft and gentle. Talar's cock felt hard in the wolf's paw, but the pleasures never reached an explosion. In his hand, the heat continued to grow, but it too was halted. Both of them realized that near the same time. Talar looked up to the young wolf.

“More?”

In response, the wolf straightened, but kept Talar's hand wrapped around the heated cock. With delicious sensations, the werewolf stretched out over Talar's body, feet on either edge of his bed. Lowering himself on Talar, the old man could only gasp as the werewolf pressed the length of his heated slick cock against Talar's own. With a moan, the two lengths slipped together, furry balls pressing against his own. Talar moaned as the wolf drew his knees up on the bed, straddling him with the fur-covered heat.

With a tiny movement, Talar stroked up against it, running his length against it. The sensations were wonderful, sending an ache through his shaft as he gasped with pleasure. Above him, the wolf did the same, drawing back and pushing forward, sliding hotly with his slicked fur.

“Oh... my...”

Talar gasped with the sensations, stroking harder. The wolf pressed his furry body against him, pinning the two shafts between them as they stroked against each other in faster strokes. Captured between his hot body and the furry one, the heat grew as both of them ground their hips.

His cock was growing hotter, moving wetly against the throbbing heat. Near the middle, he could feel the shaft growing thicker, a knot forming of solid heat and girth. He looked up at the chest of the werewolf, stretching high above him. The head, peering down, was well above him, rocking in time with the thrusts that pounded their shafts together. Reaching up, he pressed his face against the furry chest as the heat of his cock started to surge.

Moaning loudly, he rammed harder. Heat and pressure grew in his balls, firing old memories. With a powerful surge, he started to orgasm hard into the furry valley between their bodies. A pair of strokes later, the werewolf also orgasmed. Powerful heat filled the area, soaking his stomach and fur with hard, powerful thrusts.

Gasping, Talar could feel it jetting with incredible force, flooding between them until it soaked into the sheets below.

As one powerful thrust brought the wolf cock almost up to his ribs, the wolf howled with release. A few more thrusts brought the rock-hard knot of the wolf's cock against Talar's stomach. Trembling, he couldn't find the energy to move until the werewolf lifted himself slightly, moving back to prevent crushing Talar.

Gasping, the old ranger looked down at his stomach, at the soaked juices that flooded them, and then up at the werewolf.

"Wow, better than I remembered."

"Yes."

The werewolf leaned forward. Its black form shimmered and Talar felt the weight lifting up from the bed. The body shrunk and twisted until a black wolf stared at him with one yellow and one blue eye. He grinned at the wolf, reaching down to pull a blanket over the smear of cum. Blotting it up, he grinned again at the wolf who padded forward, resting along his entire side.

Talar sighed happily and rested one arm along the wolf, holding it close.

"I could grow used to this."

The werewolf woofed once and closed its eyes. Talar closed his own.

"Yes, maybe a companion is what I needed."

t'Sade

About the Author

t'Sade has been happily using third-person singular since the late eighties. Besides that strange quirk, they enjoy writing a brutal combination of sex and violence for decades. Most of their stories explore the fringe edges of sexuality in the epic quest of trying to write a story for every fetish and turn-on known to the human libido.

It's going to take a long time.

Their writing can be found on their website, tsade.com. Most of it is free to read and enjoy.

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About the Publisher

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