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The Teacher
by Emily Veinglory

Clarius brought me goose feathers for new pens; I stood at my worktable and inspected them. No matter how often I told him to gather dropped feathers he would persist in plucking them from my small flock. Clarius was of the opinion that a scholar of note should have clean white plumes for pens. Clarius had, in fact, a great many of opinions about what a certain scholar should be doing.

Clarius returned from the back room with a boar-bristle brush and put his free hand quite casually on my flank. “Your coat is very rough,” he said.

“Leave it be.”

The equine part of my body requires a little care but Clarius’ attentions had begun to take on rather a different quality of late.

“The king is visiting tonight,” Clarius persisted. “You must look your best.”

Clarius set to grooming my coat, with my consent or not, so I tried to ignore him. I busied myself setting down my new recipe for a tincture to treat the green fever. It was still not an entirely satisfactory treatment and many of the ingredients were probably redundant, but I was satisfied that it improved upon the mummerly perpetuated by most who would call themselves healers.

I managed to disregard Clarius as I enumerated the tonic’s correct proportions. My work table was little more than a tall bench set before the window and golden light was streaming in from overhead. In the brightness and warmth, his rhythmic strokes began to beguile me. He started at the flank on my right side and moved forward slowly along my body.

Clarius knew that it took brisk, firm strokes to draw out the last remnant of my winter coat and make my shabby pelt shine. He wielded the wide, stiff brush with the skill of a lad who had worked in a stable in his time. Indeed his father had despaired of the boy ever having any other interest. So when Clarius grew into a young man with a deep sonorous voice and all the other budding attributes of adulthood, his father sent him to me. In return for his assistance, I was meant to provide the boy with the rudiments of an education and some guidance, much as I had to a few youngsters. As it turned out he was rather more interested in teaching me a thing or two.

I wanted to tell him to desist, but the sensation was too intense. I went back to feigning preoccupation with my task as best I could as he worked his way to my shoulder. His right hand lay casually on my body as he worked, coming to the point where a toga demurely covered my human portion. Many centaurs eschewed human garb but they were feral creatures and made without human parts that needed covering. I am fully

human at the groin and the line of connection slants up to the small of my back--a point that Clarius was drawing close to.

The side of Clarius' hand insinuated itself quite casually under the back of my toga and I felt his little finger caress the point where hair gives way quite suddenly to human flesh. The skin of my haunches twitched as if to ward off flies. Other parts began to make an entirely different response.

"Enough, Clarius," I snapped as I skirted aside. "If you are so starved of company you might take a few days and go into town. It's only natural that you feel the solitude of this place."

Clarius sighed and plied his brushes with slightly excessive vigour. "Is it so impossible that I seek to touch you not because you are the only man for miles, but because you draw me?"

I backed up awkwardly and walked around behind him. "I am not a man, Clarius, and you are a fool if you think otherwise."

My cottage was comfortable enough but it was still built somewhat to a human scale. Whenever I wish to think or need a little space I go to the cave I had lived in when I first arrived in these parts. Back in those days, I had been little bothered by the locals who saw me as a monster best not provoked. But then some of them heard me playing upon my lyre or saw me picking healthful herbs. It became known that I had healing ways and could teach the use of bow and javelin. I rose slowly to the status of wise man and teacher, not entirely because I wished this but because I did not have the heart to turn needy people away. Indeed, I was now hard pressed to protect my solitude as those I helped had bestowed upon me a proper shelter, scholar's clothing and this final intrusion, boys like Clarius. For some years now, even the king came to speak to me if he was wrestling with some issue that he thought I might have insight into.

My lyre was still sequestered up in the cave where the air was more conducive to it staying in tune. I spent most of the afternoon working idly upon a ballad I had been composing on and off for years. I folded my equine limbs beneath me and lay in the soft grass at the cave entrance, which had grown long since I'd moved my domicile. It made a soft and fragrant mattress, and in this comfort it was almost possible to forget that I was not a man outside, as I felt myself to be within.

They say that a centaur is a horse vomiting up a man and a man farting out a horse--and that pretty much captured my feelings in the matter; two creatures combined into one ill-made chimera. Such was my fate: to be only half human no matter how I struggled or aspired.

I captured the old half-remembered melody and ran it through my fingers one more time. I closed my eyes and tried to locate some words that would fit to it, but the music gambolled in a way no words ever seemed quite to match. I played it through a dozen times in different ways and moods, but with no greater success. A string broke beneath my finger, and with a sigh I stopped.

I opened my eyes and found Clarius standing in the cave entrance, leaning upon the stone archway. "Has music soothed you?"

"Am I a beast then, to be soothed?"

He laughed, and for a moment my feelings were too acute to deny. He was a tawny creature with curling hair and the full stature of a man but still the slenderness of youth. Ganymede must have looked so when Zeus bore him off; a man so well made that even the light of the sun caressed him like a lover. I daresay that my eyes gave me away, and made him bolder.

"Not as a habit," he replied. "But I seem to have a gift for annoying you. I daresay you will be making the king take me back to the capital with him. But not, I hope, before I groom your other side. I would not have him thinking I neglected my duties, and you do look rather ridiculous."

In truth, I had not thought of ridding myself of the lad, but that would be a good way of doing it. The king owed me many favors and could easily find a place in his household for an able man. In fact, it would rather improve Clarius' position and more than satisfy his father.

I struggled to my feet and set the lyre back upon its graven peg. "Have it as you will, Clarius, but my human parts should not concern you."

I stood in the cave entrance with my left side toward the dying light. He set to work with focused vigor.

"Strange that you think of yourself that way," he said. I made no comment but he continued anyway. "As having human and equine parts, I mean. It seems to me that you are a whole, all parts are parts of you, indivisible."

"You might think otherwise if you knew the pains I get in my back, lacking those muscles a horse neck might have to hold an upright posture. And the trial of finding food that sustains me properly, or clothes that accommodate my form."

He kept brushing briskly, working up again from flank to shoulder. "You should tell me these things. I am meant to serve you, after all. My brother got pains in his back and could always relieve them through massage."

Now that was an alarming thought and all too easy to imagine. Clarius had such strong, broad hands, and a definite willingness to use them. I began to wonder what excesses his father might have sent him here to curtail. Clarius stood by my left side, and even given my form, I had no more than four or five inches of height on him, for he was a tall youth and I more pony than horse. He reached up and tucked a stray lock of hair behind my ear.

“Your hair and beard are little tidier than the rest of you,” he chided.

“I can tend to that for myself,” I said as I turned my head away in annoyance.

“Aye, you could if you cared to, but as you don’t...”

He ran his fingers against the grain of my short beard and pressed close against me. I had a moment when I might have pulled away. And then it was gone.

He leaned toward me and kissed me as his fingers curled around the back of my head. And I kissed him, hard and with a passion. The impulse welled up within me too strongly to deny. He was a beautiful young man and his touch was more than I could bear.

I pressed forward, pushing him against the hard wall of the cave mouth. He embraced me eagerly. He raised one thigh to press against my equine shoulder. I struggled to pull back but my body would not answer. Clarius reached up, cupping my face in his hands.

“You are not so indifferent as you pretend.”

“You are beautiful and you know it. Clever also, and not cruel except in pressing me... but foolish, Clarius. As I have said, I am not a *man*.”

“Man enough, by the feel of it,” he said slyly with his belly hard against mine. “Man enough for this.”

He untied the waist of his short toga and pulled it over his head. My eyes were drawn to the long, golden length of his body. I was afraid as much as enflamed, but I did not step away when he reached forward and undressed me. He moved firmly but not quickly like any man might handling an uncertain beast.

He slid down onto his knees and I felt a flash of embarrassment, subsumed by a wave of pure pleasure. He swallowed my half-proud human cock deep into his throat, his wet tongue laving against its head. He was deft in his movements and firm. I trembled along the whole length of my body and steadied myself with one hand upon the jagged rock face. He teased me, drawing in my cock slowly with his tight lips.

I heard myself moan and felt his hand reach up along my equine shoulder, partly on the smooth flesh that journeyed sinuously along my abdomen, partly on the dense coat whose grain wended in whorls over my forequarters. He stood slowly, his hand lingering on my aching cock. So far my animal parts remained almost quiescent and I prayed they would

remain so. I had precious little experience with intercourse and both he and I were ill-prepared for dealing with that.

Clarius turned and placed one hand over mine, gripping the rock. I was well enough read to know the invitation, but I was unsure.

“Clarius?”

“Now. Please.”

I felt the fluid lines of his hip under my hand, the taut muscle of his buttock. My thumb stroked down the crease to rest upon his rear. In this he seemed so small, and yet he was so eager. He pressed up against me and my thumb slid into his flesh. I took my cock in my other hand and pressed it against him.

“Yes,” he moaned. “Yes.”

I pushed forward slowly, easing through the tightness into his warmth. I knew at once why passion makes men mad. I had never felt such a sensation, not even imagined it. I felt the head of my cock enter through one tight ring, sliding over the head and gripping the shaft, and then another, and then into his body. He pushed back against me and I used the weight of my great form to pin him against the rock. I pressed my full length into him, and he cried out again. “Yes.”

I had a man’s instincts, after all; it seemed all self-consciousness was gone. I put my hands about his waist and pushed against his body hungrily. Passion built within me like a spring tide. His form before me was so strong and willing; he met each stroke and reach back to grab my wrist. For so long I moved within him and he held me tightly. Slowly, my urgency built and I stroked harder and quicker.

Even as I felt my balls tighten he cried out and jerked with his climax. I felt myself come as if the life force in me reared up from the most distant part of my tail and shot down my spine and out of my body like lightning. I leaned into him, suddenly aware of my loud, harsh, rapid breaths. I held onto him as an anchor while my world rearranged itself around this commonplace revelation. I wanted Clarius, I wanted him to stay. I wanted him to love me.

After a few long moments Clarius chuckled. “The rock is rather cold here,” he said.

I apologized as I backed away. He turned to me, looping one arm casually about my waist.

“Perhaps I shall not be leaving with the king after all?”

“If you are wise, you should consider it.”

“As you have said, I am anything but that.”

Perhaps, but also certainly not a fool. I held him in my arms and I began to worry about what he still had to teach me; hoping and fearing that he would.

The king seemed relieved to be sitting in a fairly humble dwelling without even a servant to attend to him. My mind was not entirely made up; Clarius scared me. I had fought in wars, sailed oceans and twice talked to a God--but Clarius scared me. Or what he did to me scared me.

His Highness had not overlooked this new addition to my household, nor his effects.

“You are looking prosperous, old friend. Don’t tell me there is just this one lad looking after things.”

I settled down on the straw pallet that served as my couch. “I am not in my dotage yet, Pericus. I could do just as well on my own.”

I caught Clarius’ slightly wry expression as he brought us watered wine. That slight goad was enough.

“You could make his ambitious father very happy by giving him something a little more challenging to do with his time.”

My tone was pleasingly casual as if the thought had only just occurred to me. I did not look at Clarius.

“Certainly,” Pericus replied with truly blithe indifference. “We can always use a capable young man. He can act as a scribe I take it?”

“Oh, certainly. He is an able scholar and useful with most weapons also.”

“Does he ride?”

“I dare say so; his father kept horses. But I do not as you well know.”

Pericus just laughed at my sharp tone. He knew that I was not inclined to be reminded of my other nature and its uncouth ways. He got to the point of his visit at last; a long list of travails and concerns. His oldest daughter had taken with a childbed illness. My blood boiled at his description of the midwife's foolish actions.

Then there was his conflict with the priests of Hestia, spurred on by his conniving queen. He took my advice on so many things, from whom to put at the head of his infantry to improving the soil in his orchard. The king’s visits were always like this; he did not make

the journey often and always had a great deal on his plate. Soon, almost the whole night had passed.

I barely looked at Clarius as I sent him to bring me scrolls and ingredients, to write down recipes and mix potions. But I did not miss his cool demeanour or rather noisy way of moving about. Nor, it seemed did the king.

“I think your young man is not best pleased.”

I merely shrugged. “Clarius is rather too used to getting his own way.” The night sky was beginning to leaven with the first light of dawn. My folded limbs were hellishly uncomfortable; I eased to one side and Pericus took the hint.

“And here I am keeping you from your rest again.”

“You are always most welcome in my house, and for as long as you wish.”

But the king stood and I lurched up stiffly to see him out. Clarius came to my side.

“Whatever it is you have been composing to say, Clarius, I will not hear it,” I said to him.

He was set to ignore me until he looked up into my eyes. I do not fall back upon my mettle often but when I do it is as hard as iron. Clarius’ fine features fell from stubborn outrage into a more open expression of... what would I call that? Loss? It was too late for regrets now. Pericus may act like a personal friend, but one does not retract an offer made to a king.

Clarius made a small bow and went to get his things.

“Will he be as loyal to me, I wonder?” Pericus said with amusement.

Clarius stood at the carriage door as the sleepy coachmen helped Pericus inside and prepared to leave. The sun was showing as a red sliver on the horizon. The cottage door closed, and remained closed. Finally, there was nothing to do but step inside the carriage.

Settling back in the farthest corner from the king, he knew he should show proper respect. Clarius was always being told this; respect your father, your patron, your king. The words come out anyway.

“Your highness, if you value my patron’s advice, why do you not bring him into the city, the palace?”

Pericus seemed not quite the same affable old man that he was in the house, but after a few moments, he deigned to answer.

“He is the wisest of my friends, but I do not think that the nobles of the capital are ready to share the palace with one who is not entirely a man.”

Clarius sat a long time feeling his blood run hotter. Even the disappointed sadness of Pericus’ words just made his condescension more infuriating. Many miles passed as the sheer weight of the king’s presence kept his ire from finding voice. Finally, Clarius decided that if the king was counted as wise, he would prefer to be the fool.

“I am beginning to think,” Clarius ventured, “that I am the only one who can see that Klepius is a man. A wise teacher, a skilled healer, careful, moral and a better man than I suppose I shall ever be. And if the Gods made him differently I wonder if it was not as reflection on him but a test to us: that we should understand that nothing about a man’s physical body can make him a monster.”

Pericus seemed to have no idea what to say. The carriage clattered on. Clarius felt quite calm then, if he was wrong, so be it.

“Please have the carriage stop.”

“You are meant to come with me,” Pericus said with surprising warmth.

“What my king commands, I suppose I must do. But it is my good fortune that I was not born a slave, and trust my king would not make me one without compelling reasons.”

Pericus tapped the carriage roof and the vehicle rumbled to a stop. “Your king is somewhat humbled, young man. And you have a long a long walk ahead of you.”

Clarius clambered down, hefting a bundle of his few possessions over his shoulder. The coachman vaulted down to close the door but Pericus gestured for him to wait a moment. “You may see the capital yet, Clarius. But do you think Klepius will be pleased with either of us?”

Clarius looked down the road, seeing footsore hours ahead of him. “Perhaps not, Your Highness,” he said with a parting bow. “But what can any man do but follow his conscience?”

That was perhaps a little condescending on his part--especially in addressing a king--but Pericus nodded his farewell without chagrin.

Clarius walked toward the slowly rising sun, nervously rehearsing what he would say, returning to a man who was obviously in a hurry to get rid of him. In the long months of his time with the centaur, Clarius had come to see past that form, even to admire it. He became so sure that Klepius was a man in *every* way, no matter how he might deny it. When he had finally managed to provoke true passion, Clarius had felt a rush of triumph and victory... that softened into some indefinable emotion.

And within hours he had been cast off.

What if Klepius would not even admit him? Clarius imagined returning to his father with a shudder. For refusing the king's service, he could expect a beating he would be fortunate to survive. In every way that Klepius' house was calm and warm, Clarius' father's house was fraught with the peril of his sire's ambitious demands and rebukes for inevitable failure.

Clarius found his steps faltered. A return, begun upon impulse and heartfelt desire, began to feel futile. Perhaps he would do better to choose some other path, and seek his fortune on his own in some distant town. But all he had in hand was a bundled toga, a few keepsakes and enough coins for a new pair of shoes and a hot meal, but no more.

At the top of a steep grave he came to a stop, his mind tumbling in a tempest of doubt. He took one more compulsive step forward, firmly planting his foot down on something long and sharp. With a yelp, he lurched back and tumbled onto the grassy verge.

I thought to sleep a little, but it was thought that prevented it. One most persistent thought, in fact. Clarius. Clarius laughing, Clarius smiling, Clarius chasing the geese, Clarius pressed against the rock-face moaning with desire. Clarius.

Restlessly, I shifted my hooves and ambled out of the silent cottage. I looked down the road and cursed myself. *To think that some folk count me wise.* What had scared me was how much I wanted Clarius, in every way, and how he would inevitably leave me. But what did hastening the day achieve? To cauterize the wound cleanly perhaps? Or just to prop my own feeling that I was master of my own poor life, if only in my ability to destroy it.

I took a few steps down the road and paused. What was I going to do, walk all the way to the capital without a cloak, food or any clear plan? I took another few paces. It didn't make much sense but perhaps in seeking always to be so rational, to deny the mindless beast within, I had lost something--something precious.

I kept walking. My hooves moved on, making muted unshod clops upon the narrow lane. Eventually I would have to turn back: live with my decision or go all the way to the king's keep and take my offer back--Clarius willing. And would he be?

Another mile slipped by, and then another--and miles beyond count as the day wore on. I seemed to lack the will to stop in this futile pursuit. Finally I slowed, but at that moment saw a sharp movement up ahead. Again I wavered; it seemed my habit of late. People even just a few miles from my home were apt to react to me in rash and hostile ways.

Then I heard a voice, a muttered curse. My hooves, that seemed the wisest part of me today, started forward. I climbed the small hill into which the road was sunk and at the top I found him.

Clarius clutched his foot, a long iron nail thrust deep into it. He looked up at me for a while; that strangely superior glint was gone from him as his mouth gaped open and tears of pain sprang from his eyes--or maybe there was some other cause.

I knelt carefully, no easy task on equine knees, and held his foot firmly as I drew out the nail that had gone right through the woven heel of his house sandals. He untied the sandal and pulled out a shirt from his traveller's bundle. He winced as I tore a strip from his old tunic to firmly bind his foot until it could be properly cleaned and dressed. Well, what is a ruined tunic against the chance of infection or poisoned blood?

"Best you come back with me, I suppose," I said as if grudging.

I helped him up, unsteady on one foot, then turned my flank to him--the invitation was clear.

"I couldn't," Clarius gasped. "I mean it wouldn't be..."

But he leaned close to me and my hand reached out for him. His lithe form fitted so naturally against my side and for the first time he felt almost fragile. What was there to fear here? A young man who leaned into me, who walked away from the king to return to me? And if he was hurt why should I not carry him?

"Be practical, Clarius. It's a long way and you won't be walking."

And bold Clarius looked thoroughly daunted, which was a nice change. He did put one hand on my broad back and as I stood for him, slid up carefully to straddle the barrel of my equine chest. His instincts made him squeeze gently with his thighs to grip, and the feeling was incomparable. I stifled a shiver.

I took us back toward home. After a few tentative minutes, I felt Clarius shift his weight, settling close against me; his hand crept forward to rest just behind my waist, his thighs tightened, and his shins curled around my equine ribs. What an eloquent body the boy had. My hooves hastened a little on their way and all of me--*all of me*-- was eager for us both to be home.

Forgotten Race
by Fiona Glass

Halfway up the mountain's wooded flank, Frank Carstairs paused to let his escort catch up. Puffing toward him Major Grey took off his pith helmet, wiped the sweat from his brow and swatted ineffectually at the inevitable cloud of flies, midges, and mosquitos buzzing and whining above his head. "I say, Carstairs, I'm beginning to wish we'd stayed in Puerto Cruz. Nice climate, sea air, plenty of pretty girls in port, eh? What?"

Frank pushed his own trilby back on his head with the silver knob of his walking cane and filled his lungs with the muggy air. The slope was precipitous, the track stony and half washed away by last winter's storms, and he was being distracted by the pert arse of one of the boy porters - an arse which had wiggled tantalizingly up and down before his eyes the entire way up. It was shaped like a ripe peach, hidden only by indecently short and sweaty shorts, and the muscles bunched and relaxed in a way that shortened his breath much more than the climb. He'd never wanted an expedition to reach its destination more - or less.

He turned to the Major and summoned a smile. It was a little frayed around the edges, but that just matched his temper today. Grey had been getting on his nerves for the last three hours with his 'all jolly soldiers together' act and it was becoming harder and harder not to let it show. If it had been down to him he'd have made this trip alone - or at least, alone apart from the porters and his guide, but the embassy had insisted on an escort. And as the ambassador was stumping up the funds for this little jaunt, he'd had no choice but to agree.

"Er, quite," he said now. "Conditions will probably get worse before they get better. Perhaps you would like to take your men and return to the city?"

"Oh, no, old chap, I couldn't possibly do that. What - leave you all on your own in this godforsaken jungle?"

"I wouldn't be alone. I'd have Juan and the boys."

"Yes, yes, but they're just the natives, old boy. What you need is a little old-fashioned British fire-power."

Frank resisted the urge to strangle the Major for implying the 'natives' didn't count. It was absolutely typical of the British upper classes, he'd found, and he supposed he should only be surprised that it wasn't a view he held. He'd been educated at the best schools, after all - Harrow and Cambridge, with a good degree in Egyptology and a posting to the British School in Rome after that. But different he was, and just now he was having problems keeping those differences to himself.

"How much farther to this bally place?" asked Grey, swatting insects again. The blood pounding beneath the ruddy skin of Grey's face drew them like moths to a flame, but he'd refused the local insect repellent Carstairs had offered him at the start of the trip.

"Good Lord, man, what a smell! What the devil's in it anyway? You can't expect me to put foreign muck like that on my face," Grey'd exclaimed, and the bottle had been handed back unused.

Frank stifled a smirk. Well, it was the SOB's own stupid fault - he rather hoped the Major would be bitten raw. "In answer to your question, at least another four miles," he said. "And most of it's uphill." Ignoring the Major's mutterings, he planted his cane in a patch of fern, faced the slope and prepared to soldier on.

A couple of miles farther they turned off the main trail and followed a faint and vanishing track through the jungle, hacking their way through the tumbled logs and tangled vines that lay across their path. At times, Frank wondered how Juan knew the path existed it was so completely buried in vegetation. They must still be heading in the right direction, though, because soon they passed over the mountain's shoulder and began to work down the other side. Now they were really 'lost' - miles from the nearest village, surrounded by dense jungle that masked every landmark in a plaited green roof of leaves, and utterly dependent on the goodwill of their guide. Frank hoped the Major remembered that little point the next time he sneered at one of the boys.

Two more hours of toil brought them out at last onto a wide, grassy terrace cut into the side of the hill. It was relatively clear of trees, and the stepped shapes of several ziggurats could be seen looming at one end. Frank pushed his hat back with his cane again and stood and stared, a lopsided grin gradually spreading itself across his face. All those whispers amongst the tribesmen had been true, then - the lost city was real! Dumping his bags, hat and stick in a heap on the ground he dug around for his journal and camera to record the happy occasion.

His euphoria was short lived. Major Grey strode up, a heavy frown making him look even more unpleasant than he was. "I thought you said we were going to a city? This doesn't look much like a city to me."

Frank sighed. "This is a Tolmec city, Major. The Tolmec died out some three to four hundred years ago. It was unlikely that there would still be houses here."

"Oh. Well where in damnation are my men supposed to sleep? There's nothing here but heaps of ruined stone. You can hardly expect them to kip on the ground with the snakes and scorpions."

"Why not? It's where I'll be sleeping," said Frank, and started scribbling again. He kept his head down until the Major had stumped away to supervise setting up camp, but then his curiosity got the better of him and he began to explore in a surreptitious way. There was little enough to be seen. The trees might have been kept at bay but there was still a

dense carpet of vegetation covering all but the tallest structures, which burst forth like volcanic islands in a vivid green sea. They would need to clear a space to work, of course, but that could wait until the morning; the light would be fading soon.

He strolled away from the others, poking about amongst vine and fern with his cane, unearthing pristine blocks of stone that might have been hacked from their quarry only the previous day, and occasional staring-eyed heads. This place was amazing - quite the best one he'd found so far. Others closer to the coast had been ransacked and their treasures carted away, but this looked as though it had never been disturbed. And yet - there were oddities, now he came to think. Three hundred years was a long time in this tropical world - time enough and more for the trees to have come back and buried everything ninety feet deep. So someone - or something - must have recently cleared the site, which meant perhaps he wasn't the first to discover it after all. If that was true it would be a blow, not just to his professional pride, but to the ambassador who'd paid for the trip. Frank couldn't imagine explaining to him that four thousand pounds had been wasted finding something that was already known.

They passed an uncomfortable night camped in the lee of a stubby stone tower. There was plenty of wood lying about beneath the trees but most of it was damp and the fire smoked abominably, making Frank's eyes stream and catching in his throat. It was cold, too, during the night, and the ground was hard and hordes of mosquitos chewed his skin. The only thing that cheered him up was the thought that Major Grey was just as cold and sore as he was - although the Major probably didn't have a massive erection to add to his woes. Frank cursed the memories of the porter's arse and tossed and turned, trying to find a position that didn't rub his cock against either his blanket or the ground, but it was no use. And even though around him the other men snored, he still didn't dare to take himself in hand. He'd been known to make quite a racket when he reached his peak.

When first light came he scrambled out of his makeshift bed, stretched and groaned, relieved that it was day. Daylight meant two things - an end to the dreams that tormented him, and exploring the site to occupy his mind. Whistling a popular song that the Queen's German husband had not long penned, he poured a bowl of water, grabbed his razor and walked to the edge of camp to relieve himself and shave. He had the razor at his cheek when he heard the first faint drum of hooves. The sound was so low he thought it was thunder at first, but then he felt the tell-tale quiver of the ground beneath his feet. Stepping out from behind his bush he watched, and sure enough they were there. Seven small figures close to the ziggurats and rapidly heading this way.

He wondered who they were. The local tribes didn't ride horses much, and this place was too out-of-the-way for city boys to hunt. Perhaps he'd been wrong after all, and there really were people living up here? The sound was louder now - pounding and thudding and shaking the earth as all seven horsemen thundered across the plain. Two were clearly in front, racing neck and neck, with the others strung out behind like carriages on a train. There was something odd about them, though. From this distance it almost looked as though the horses had no heads.

Frank rubbed his eyes, wondering if he'd gone to sleep again. But no, the result was still the same. He could see the hind quarters of the horses, their tails flying out behind, and he could see the heads and bodies of the men. But nothing else. What the devil was going on? He waited until the riders were so close he could see the whites of their eyes, and then he understood. The riders weren't on the horses, they were a part of the horses, the two forms flowing together so naturally that it was impossible to tell where one ended and the other began. Men's heads and chests, of course, and men's arms waving spears and bows, but near to where the men's hips should have been were the withers of a horse, and narrow horse's legs and hooves, and a swishing horse's tail. The effect was startling, and his razor slipped from fingers gone strangely numb. This was amazing - this was incredible - if this was true he'd be the most famous explorer in the world!

As the group (herd?) ran past, the last one saw Frank and broke away from the rest. His gait slowed to a trot and then a walk, his man's body swaying as his horse's legs took his ungainly weight. Something else swayed, too, Frank saw - a man's penis, hanging large but limp between his front legs. He blushed and looked away, and tried not to wonder if there was another, bigger, horse's cock as well.

The horse-man was a magnificent creature. His hair and beard, and his horse's tail, were black, but his flanks were a rich dark brown that caught the sun and gleamed, and he stood fully six feet high. He gazed at Frank for a moment, and then began to speak. "My name is Jason. Who are you?" he said, and Frank was amazed to realise he spoke not Spanish, but ancient Greek.

"Er, Frank," he replied, and tried to remember something of that language from classics lessons at school. "Er, what, er, who are you?"

"I am a centaur," said Jason with a smile, clearly answering Frank's first question first. "Surely you must have heard of us?"

"Well, yes, but...." Frank's mind filled with images from childhood picture books. "They didn't look much like you."

Jason smiled again, running one hand through his long curly hair before patting himself on the flank. "No, the old artists could never seem to get the details right. Tell me, why are you here? This is our land and has been for many centuries. By what right do you walk on our sacred turf?"

Frank resisted the urge to jump backward, like a naughty boy caught running across the grass by the keeper in the local park. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to intrude. I heard reports of the city and wanted to explore. I'm an archaeologist, you see."

"An archae-? Ah, yes, I see. You study ancient things. Well, I am ancient enough. Perhaps you would like to study me?" Jason tilted his head to one side and an amused glint entered one brown eye.

Frank felt a blush starting somewhere near his toes and wished he'd covered his face with shaving cream before these odd creatures had arrived. "I, er, that would...." he began, and was rescued, if that was the right term, by Major Grey.

"Carstairs? Carstairs? Oh, there you are. Come along, there's a good chap, Sergeant Dodds is cooking bacon and you don't want to miss- Great Scott! What the devil is this?" The Major, who had appeared from the undergrowth like a particularly unwelcome genie from a bottle, stumbled to a halt with his mouth open wide. His face darkened from puce to royal purple and his little pallid eyes seemed to pop right out of his skull.

"This is Jason," Frank said, with all the confidence he wasn't feeling himself. "He's a centaur."

The Major made a strange strangling noise in his throat. "Oh, very amusing I'm sure," he said at last. "I suppose this is one of your little jokes, eh, Carstairs? Dressing your friends up in silly costumes to frighten the life out of my men? Tut, tut, that won't do at all. I suggest you stop talking to Dobbin here and come and have some breakfast instead." He turned and lumbered back toward the camp, and they could hear him muttering long after his scarlet coat had vanished amongst the trees.

"Dobbin?" said Jason in an enquiring tone.

"Oh, Lord, sorry about that. It's just... he isn't really used...." Frank looked up to find the amused glint was back, and swallowed in relief. "The man's a damned fool. He wouldn't know a centaur if you bit him on the arse. Not that I think you should."

"No, no, kicking is more our line," said Jason, and the amusement spilled over into outright joy.

They laughed together for a minute or two, and then Jason backed away. "I would not want to make you late for your feed. Perhaps we can meet again later?"

"Oh, yes, I'd like that," said Frank, still trying not to look at Jason's cock. Was it his imagination or had he just seen it twitch? No, it was definitely larger than it had been before.... "I'm sorry, what was that?"

"I was saying that we live in the caves in the cliffs, but I have a special place beneath the largest of the temples. You are more than welcome to come and see me there. Now, I must be off. I have already lost the race, coming to talk to you."

"Race?" said Frank, but Jason had already turned to trot away.

"Later!" he threw over one glossy chestnut shoulder, and then he galloped off, his tail and hair streaming in the breeze as he headed for his friends.

For Frank the morning dragged after that, as no morning exploring a new site had ever done before. The sun seemed to stand still in the sky and the hands of his pocket watch to be stuck down with glue. Even as he directed the men to clear the choking vegetation, he was thinking less of the treasures to be uncovered than of a pair of laughing brown eyes. There was no chance to get away on his own, though, with seven men, six porters and a guide milling about, and Major Grey getting under everybody's feet. A couple of times he tried to sneak off down the hill, only for someone to call him back with a question about the logistics of the site, or the latest find. By the time the camp fire was smoking again in readiness for lunch, he was heartily sick of hearing the words "Oh, Mr Carstairs," and wanted nothing more than an hour or two by himself.

Grabbing a tin plate of meat and a couple of slices of bread he made his escape, hurrying behind a curtain of clinging vines before anyone could see. Keeping to the fringes of the trees he circled the plain until he was close to the largest of the ziggurats - a great stepped slab that was tall enough to stand between him and the sun. Its dark shadow zigzagged to his feet and he followed it to the temple's base - a platform of massive blocks of stone, cut so skilfully that he could scarcely see the joins.

He perched on a fallen boulder to eat his al-fresco lunch, and was just licking the last crumbs from his fingers when he sensed he was no longer alone. Sure enough, when he glanced up there was a deeper pool of shade beneath the dappled trees - a pool that rippled and shone as Jason stepped forth.

"At last you are on your own," he said, and moved to rest one long brown leg against Frank's side.

Frank tried hard not to let his body respond, but centaur or not, Jason was so very, very male. His man's torso gleamed with sweat as though he'd been running again, and his smell was not that of a horse, but of a warm, well-exercised, and fully aroused man. Though lax, his man's prick dangled far too close to Frank's face for comfort, filling his nose with the scent of pheromones until he was almost insane with need, his own cock swelling at the other's silent command.

"I, er, found it difficult to get away," he said, and cursed himself for the gawky schoolboy tone.

"But you are here now, and I find you very attractive," said Jason, and crowded closer still.

Frank thought of his face (better described as 'strong' than handsome), and his hair, cut unfashionably short for the heat, and decided that attractive wasn't a word he would use. He'd never met a real live centaur before, though, and there was no saying what they liked. Judging by the way Jason was leaning into him, this one clearly liked him, and it was getting harder and harder to ignore the results. He made one last, desperate attempt. "Er, you said something earlier about a race?"

The sound Jason made was pure horse's snort. "If I explain, will you come with me?" he said, and it didn't sound as though no was an answer he would accept.

"Yes," said Frank.

"Very well, then. The race is something we hold once a month at the rising of the moon, in honour of Artemis who was always sacred to our kind. We set aside our usual tasks and take up our bows and spears, and the fleetest amongst us race across the plain."

"And what does the winner win?"

Jason shook his head. "It is not about winning, but taking part. Although I lost even that honor this morning when I stopped to talk to you. Which means you owe me...."

"What?" Now Frank was beginning to feel alarmed. Jason towered over him, raising his front hooves off the ground to increase his height, and Frank felt insignificant and small. "An apology? Look, I couldn't help being where I was - we didn't even know the plain was inhabited."

"Not an apology. Something more." Jason's voice was hoarse, and when Frank dared to look he found the man's penis had started to stiffen and rise. "Come with me, now," the centaur added, and took Frank's arm in his hand.

Frank had no choice but to follow, so strong was Jason's pull. Now he knew how the carriage felt when it was drawn by a horse. The centaur led him right under the base of the ziggurat, to a place where the stone blocks had been tunnelled away, and hustled him inside the resulting cave.

"We will not be disturbed here - my people do not often come this way," said Jason, and pushing Frank against the wall, began to nuzzle at his face and neck.

"But - but what about my people?" said Frank, rather breathlessly, doing his best to remove his clothing while still holding Jason off. Not that the centaur's actions were unpleasant - in fact it was rather nice. Jason's long black hair was tickling his chest, and Jason's warm wet tongue was moistening the inside of his ear, and the sensations were making his cock react as though it was on parade. Major Grey would have been proud of the way it stood to attention. But still.... "They could come looking for me at any moment."

"Then we shall have to be quick," said Jason, and reared up on his hind legs.

For one unbelievable minute, Frank contemplated a fate worse than death, as a huge horse's cock stabbed upwards toward his body. It was at least ten inches long and as wide around as a woman's wrist, and he trembled at the thought of the damage it could do if he was forced to accept it. Jason clattered his back hooves nearer, pressing the whole of his great body close and pinning Frank to the wall. He hooked his front legs over Frank's

shoulders, bent his man's body at the waist and put his hands on either side of Frank's head.

"Open your mouth," he ordered, and Frank thought he was going to die.

"No, please," he said, looking at the horse's cock again, and this time Jason saw.

"Don't worry," he said, gasping for breath. "I only want to put *this* in your mouth." And with one hand he took hold of his man's penis and pointed it toward Frank's lips.

"And what about that?" said Frank, nodding downwards to where the great shaft reared pink and moist between the horse's legs.

"That I will rub against yours," murmured Jason. "I hope you will find it pleasurable. Now, the time for talk is over. Open your mouth and let me inside."

This time, Frank obeyed. He parted his lips, licked them with his tongue, and waited. Jason surged forward again, resting his man's cock on Frank's bottom lip, letting him get used to the weight and taste. It was not so very different from any other cock he'd sucked - perhaps a little heavier and the musky scent was stronger, but that was all. He darted his tongue out and licked at the slit, and heard Jason expel a great sigh above. More daring, he drew the head of the penis inside his mouth and licked it again, his tongue following the line of the groove. This time, Jason groaned, and a little fluid leaked out of his cock onto Frank's tongue. It tasted salty but sharp, and Frank lapped it up and increased the pressure of his lips.

As he did, Jason groaned again and began to thrust, his cock sliding in and out of the tunnel of Frank's open mouth. Frank could feel it hitting the back of his throat, and did his best to relax the muscles and take it as deep as he could. It was a while since he'd done this, but like riding a bicycle, once learned it was something you never really forgot. Jason obviously approved; his thrusts grew stronger and he rubbed his whole body against Frank in a great surging rush. Frank felt something warm and wet against his own prick. He couldn't see past Jason's horse's chest but guessed it was the horse's cock. It felt surprisingly good - hot and strong against him like that, so big it almost surrounded him. He began to thrust in response, moving his hips so that his prick clashed against the other like two crossing swords. So much hard flesh against his cock was causing him to lose control and he began to moan around the other cock in his mouth.

Jason was obviously nearing his peak as well. His whole body was trembling, and his head dropped down until his chin rested on the top of Frank's hair. He was rubbing himself against Frank constantly now, seeking contact with every inch of skin, and uttering little growls and grunts.

Frank no longer cared whether it was horse or man or both that he was rutting with. Jason's whole being overwhelmed him - his size, his power, his animalistic smell, all combining to take him close to the edge. He leant forward away from the cold stones at

his back and into the body heating him from the front. He flung back his head and nipped at Jason's arms where they encircled his head and trapped him. He thrust his cock ever harder against the answering hardness that covered him, and finally, with a great yell, he came, his seed spraying out across Jason's horse's crotch.

Jason answered with a grunt, and plunged his own cock deeper into Frank's mouth, the glans catching on his tongue. Frank pressed his lips around the base and sucked, and was rewarded with a muttered ancient curse. He felt the cock pulse, once, twice, and then it too shot forth, the liquid spilling down his throat. At the same time his groin was bathed in a heavier shower of spunk from the horse's cock below, and then Jason withdrew.

Frank grunted as the weight lifted off his shoulders and Jason backed away; the two cocks were still dripping fluid onto the ground, but had deflated to normal size, and the horse's one was hiding itself away.

"Oh. My. Lord," Frank panted, feeling his knees buckle as reaction hit. "That was incredible. I've never felt anything like that."

"So I should hope. There are not many of my kind left in this world," said Jason with a smirk, and moved forward again to place his arms round Frank's waist. "Thank you, my friend. It is a long time since I had the opportunity...."

"Oh?" Frank felt surprised. "Don't you do it with the others, then?"

"No, their taste is for females, but I have always preferred men. Human men, as attractive as you. But the local tribes will not come up here - they fear us and say the place is haunted by evil spirits. And I don't see many other men."

"Lucky we chose this site to survey, then. Tell me, what are you doing here? I thought all the centaurs in Greece had died out."

Jason nodded, a sad look in his eyes. "Most did, of course, long ago. But a few of my kind travelled with the sailor folk - you would probably call them Phoenicians. They reached India, and then the Far East, and finally they sailed right across the Great Sea and came here. And here we have been ever since, stealing just enough women to maintain our herd. At first the city people welcomed us, but when the rains failed they left, and we have been alone ever since."

"That's sad," said Frank. He took his courage in both hands and kissed Jason on the lips, and felt proud when Jason lowered his head and nuzzled him again. They held each other for a while, until Frank began to shiver.

"You are cold," Jason said. "We should go out in the sun, and find your clothes." He led the way out of the stone tunnel and back into the daylight outside, and Frank rummaged for his clothes and perched on his rock to put them on.

As he dragged his shirt over his head he felt Jason staring, and looked up with a question in his eyes. "What's wrong?"

"Oh, I was just thinking it was nice to have some company for a change. Tell me, will you be staying here for long?"

Frank raised his leg to yank on a boot. "Well, the plan was to explore the place for a week or so, and then move on," he said.

Jason's face fell. "That is a shame. I have finally found a suitable mate, and you will leave so soon."

Frank kissed Jason again. "That was the plan," he said. "But it can easily be changed. Why, a great city like this could take months to clear and dig, and who knows what we might find buried here beneath the vines."

"Indeed," said Jason, smiling now. "It was a very great city at one time, and it continues down the mountain side as well. Perhaps it will even take you years to explore."

"Perhaps it will," said Frank, and laughed at the thought of breaking the news to Major Grey.

Pets
by Kay Derwydd

“Mommy, mommy! Can I have a man?”

I cowered back against the bars as a small hand reached between them to touch my leg.

“No, honey. A man is a big responsibility. Maybe next time.”

My name is Captain Ian Bishop. I was the captain of Her Majesty’s royal flagship before the Rebellion usurped Queen Raleen. Those who had not died in the wars were forced into less savory positions as novelty pets and in some cases, lovers to the Rebels. It was an odd turn of events, to say the least. I was one of the last to be captured. I was deemed too wild to be a lover, so they put me in this damned cage and slapped a price tag on the front. While being a pet wasn’t at the top of my list, anything was better than living in a pet shop. However, no one wanted me. I quickly developed empathy for animals that humans had domesticated over the centuries; life in a cage was anything but pleasant.

I watched as the young child and her mother left the shop with a small puppy cradled in the child’s arms. I’d be lying if I said that I wasn’t relieved. As much as I really wanted out of the shop, being a child’s pet was not something I truly looked forward to. I had overheard enough conversations between the shop owner and customers to realize that their children were just as careless as human children. And while the adults were generally more cautious when they walked, the children were not; it was not unheard of to see hoof marks on a human’s tender, easily-bruised flesh. They weren’t abusive, mind you, just careless. I only prayed that an adult would adopt me for their own pet instead of giving me as a gift to a child.

I watched warily as the shop owner walked over to my cage. He was larger than most, although the males were definitely larger than the females overall. His hooves clacked on the marble floor as he strutted over. He stopped in front of my cage, adjusted the price tag, and grinned.

“You’re a pretty one,” he said. I backed away. I absolutely did not want to be his pet. Unlike some of the females that came in, he smelled too much like a horse. “Oh don’t you worry,” he said with a dry chuckle. “You’ve already been spoken for. Your new owner is coming tomorrow morning bright and early to pick you up. I’m only leaving you out in the open for publicity. Your prettiness is good for business.”

He walked away, switching off the overhead light before disappearing behind the curtain that separated his living quarters from the storefront. I settled down on the plush pillow that was my bed and wondered what my new owner was like. Before I had formed an idea, I drifted off to sleep.

* * *

The bright flash of the overhead light rudely jolted me out of a nice, peaceful dream. I jumped up quickly and managed to bash my head into the hard plastic cover over my cage. As I rubbed the sore spot, I watched as the owner went to unlock the shop door. He then came to me with a plate of vegetables. In the few months that I had been in this cage, I had become an involuntary vegetarian. He handed me a cup of water along with the plate, then turned back to readying the shop for another business day. I sat quietly in my cage, eating my breakfast and watching him move about the store.

I wasn't the only pet. There were many dogs, cats, birds, and various small animals. I was, however, the only human pet. Other shops in other cities carried more than one human pet, but Merc was the only merchant who had dared to take me. None of the others would even give me a second glance. They all said I was pretty but wild. They were afraid I would cause more trouble than I was worth. Merc thought differently it seemed.

Just as I finished my breakfast, Merc's companion, Fain, came out from the back room. Had they not been together, I would've tried to win Fain's attentions. He was slightly smaller than Merc and he didn't smell nearly as bad. He came over and unlocked my cage.

"Time for a good washing," he announced. He stepped to the side and I crawled out of my cage. He quickly caught me under my arms as my legs began to give way due to disuse. "Steady now. We can't have Terian's property damaged."

I snapped my head around and stared open-mouthed at him. "Terian? Terian bought me?"

"That's it," Fain cooed. "Just take slow, easy steps."

"You didn't answer my question." I hissed as Fain helped me to sit down in the tub of almost-too-hot water.

"I'm not avoiding your question," Fain replied as he poured a small bucket full of water over my head. "Yes, Terian purchased you. He will be here within the hour to pick you up." He dipped a sponge into the water, soaped it up, and began washing my back.

"Did he buy me as a pet? Or a lover?"

Fain slid his soap-slick fingers through my long blonde hair and combed out the rough tangles. "His uses for you are unknown to me, but you will be well-cared for."

Fain dumped another bucket of water over my head. He picked up the sponge, then gave me an odd, crooked smile. Without a word he began washing my chest gently. A shiver ran through me as he took great care to wash my nipples. He dipped the sponge into the water and then squeezed it to rinse the soap from my chest. When he lowered the sponge once more, it was to wash my stomach. I swallowed hard and watched him make circular

motions with the sponge, every rotation moving closer to my crotch. When I looked back up, I noticed the hungry look in his eyes.

“What is it like?” I asked him quietly.

He grinned and looked around briefly before answering my question. “You mean, what’s it like to be with one of us?” I nodded. “It’s both different and similar to being with a human. We have human sex organs, which makes things much easier for all involved.”

“Human sex organs?” I lifted an eyebrow at him in question. I had never even seen one of them unclothed.

Sensing my true question, Fain unfolded his long legs and stood. He removed his dark gray tunic to reveal a muscular chest devoid of hair. His chest was broad like a male human’s and very smooth. His nipples were a dark brown, much the color of the roan coat on the rest of his body. I let my gaze travel down over his torso, then between his front legs. Sure enough, a man’s penis hung there between the front legs of a horse. Even as I watched, the flaccid flesh began to harden under my gaze. I looked back up to Fain’s face and realized that I was going to get a first-hand demonstration of my question.

“Touch me,” Fain whispered. He dropped the sponge into the water and brought one of his human arms up to touch my shoulder. With a gentle pressure from him I sank to my knees.

“How?” I asked him, unsure as to what kind of stimulation a centaur enjoyed. I had seen horses mate before, but never centaurs.

“Well, for starters, stop trembling,” he said with amusement. “I’m not going to hurt you.”

I sighed and tried to calm myself. I reached out to touch him and he shivered. I had been with human men and wondered if maybe it was the same with centaurs. With a shrug of my shoulders, I leaned forward and kissed the tip of his cock. He groaned and gripped my head.

“Oh...” he whispered. “Take me in your mouth. Lick me.” From his reaction, I quickly gathered that it was much the same.

I wrapped my hand around his hard length and slid my lips over the head. He was larger than a human male, but not by much. I sucked on the tip and Fain tightened his grip on my head. He began moving in and out of my mouth with slow, gentle strokes.

“Oh yes. Terian will be quite pleased if he decides to use you for pleasure.”

I could only moan in agreement as Fain’s strokes sped up. I pumped and twisted my hand along his shaft until his moans turned to intermittent gasps of pleasure. I knew he was close to climax and I suddenly wondered if it would taste anything like a human. I didn’t

have to wait long. With a sudden groan, Fain gripped my head and buried nearly half his length in my mouth as his body tightened. Warm, slick semen shot into my throat and I swallowed quickly to keep from choking. It tasted saltier than a human's, but wasn't entirely unpleasant. When he was spent, Fain pulled out of my mouth and gave me a crooked smile.

"Yes, I think Terian will be very pleased," he said as he slid his finger across my lips, scooping up a few stray drops of semen. He slid them into my mouth and I sucked them clean. "Oh yes. Terian will like you very much."

* * *

After my bath Fain led me back to my cage, but not without a few new adornments. Terian was very picky about his pets, Fain had said. I didn't second-guess him on that. Terian Thunderhoof was the centaur equivalent of a king.

It had been Terian who had led the initial rebellion against Queen Raleen, and it had been Terian who had ordered that those conquered be made to serve. I often wondered what had possessed the centaurs to revolt, as they had always seemed like a peaceful group. I later learned that the Queen had been hosting hunting trips in which the centaurs were captured and oftentimes humiliated into becoming slaves. My sense of duty waned upon hearing such reports and I surrendered shortly before the Queen herself did. I don't know what became of her.

My adornments were nothing short of spectacular. Fain dressed me in the most exquisite fabrics, draping them around and over my nude body like robes. He combed my hair out and spritzed it with a water mixture that smelled sweet and exotic; he later told me that it was a combination of roses and jasmine flowers. Around my ankles and wrists he buckled bracelets of solid gold. Around the bracelets sparkled a multitude of brilliant gemstones. Finally around my neck he buckled a collar of twisted gold and silver. I reached up to feel it and gasped when the metal pulsed with a soothing vibration.

"It's to calm the pets before they are turned over to their new owners," Fain explained as he brushed my hair out once more. "Not all pets are as compliant as you seem to be."

"If I'm so compliant, why was I labelled as wild and unstable?"

Fain finished with my hair and turned me around slowly. "It's not that you were wild, Ian. It was only a little story for publicity, really. Terian reserved you the moment you surrendered; you've been his all along."

"Then why has he not come for me before now?" I asked. I wasn't sure what to think of all this. Centaur or no, Terian Thunderhoof was quite a striking figure to behold.

Fain reached up and cupped my jaw gently, giving me a soft smile. "Terian wanted to give the population time to accept our victory before he made public his claim to the

infamous Captain Bishop.”

“I suppose that makes sense,” I said quietly.

Just then Fain’s attention was diverted to the shop door behind me. I knew from the immediate sparkle in his eyes that my owner had arrived. I turned around slowly and met the emerald gaze of a snow-white stallion. I had only caught fleeting glimpses of Terian Thunderhoof during the war and after my surrender, but seeing him before me in all the regal glory befitting a king, I was rendered speechless.

Even with all four hooves firmly on the ground, Terian towered over me. His horse's coat, which began just below a human waist, was as white as the newly-fallen snow. It took all the restraint I could muster to keep from sliding my hand over it. From the waist up, Terian’s body was hard and muscular, with broad shoulders and a firm stomach and chest. A cascade of silky, straight hair, as pure white as his coat, shimmered as it draped over his chest and shoulders. His torso was delicately draped in a tunic of lustrous purple. Upon his head was a simple crown of twisted silver and gold. Even when the clack of his hooves echoed in the shop as he shifted his stance before me, I still could not find my voice.

"Captain Ian Bishop," the centaur announced. His voice was as deep and rich as the purple tunic wrapped around his torso. He extended a strong, broad hand to me. "It's a pleasure to finally meet you."

"The pleasure is all mine," I managed to say as I shook his outstretched hand. I meant to pull away, but he held my hand firmly. "What would you have me call you?"

"Master," he said without releasing my hand. "You aren't like the others. Why?" My arm dropped limply to my side when he finally released it.

I looked down for a brief moment as I remembered painfully vivid details of the war. "I didn't agree with Queen Raleen's motives."

"Ah, yes," Terian said quietly. "She destroyed the young ones like a plague destroys a population. Tell me--why did you so willingly surrender? Were you so disgruntled with your queen that you turned your back on her?"

I nodded slowly. I knew that I should have felt shame for surrendering so easily, but I simply could not bring myself to feel such a thing. A hand under my chin brought my eyes level with Terian's steady gaze. Within those eyes, I saw a glimmer of redemption, or perhaps it was simply a man’s hope. Terian smiled and moved closer to me.

“I will take you home,” he said. “You will be treated respectfully so long as you show the same respect. When night falls, you will sleep by my side. I have no others to warm my bed, and I do not wish for anyone but you.”

I nodded as best I could with his hand gripping my chin. “Yes, my Master. Might I ask a question?”

“You may.”

“Why me? There were so many others who were more virile, yet you chose me.”

Terian moved yet closer and I suddenly felt as if my breath had left me. “You are unique, Captain Bishop, but perhaps it is your sympathetic nature toward my kind that endeared you to me. I would not speak of such things now.” He brushed his lips across mine and I gasped. I felt him smile seconds before our lips touched fully.

I didn’t know if I was allowed to touch him, but I risked all to do just that. I reached up and touched his cheek gently. When I did, Terian leaned into me and his tongue slid between my lips and along my own tongue. His arms circled my waist and he pulled me to him. The strength of his arms astounded me and I wondered what it would be like to touch the rest of him. He pulled away from me slowly then and turned.

“Thank you for keeping him well,” he said, addressing Merc and Fain. They both dropped one foreleg down and gave him deep, graceful bows. When they righted themselves, Fain smiled at me.

“It was our pleasure, Your Highness,” Merc said. Fain’s smile widened.

* * *

As I followed Terian into the throne room, I was torn between looking at the paintings in gilt frames on the walls and the slender torso of the regal centaur in front of me. Intermittent bursts of light reflected off of his tunic, setting purple-gold sparkles skittering across the walls. The rhythm of his hooves as they clacked along the lacquered marble of the floor matched the thundering rhythm of my heart. When he stopped at the end of the hall, he settled down on a palette of purple and gold cushions. As he tucked his legs beneath him, a female appeared at his side. Terian took one of the silver goblets from her tray and with a nod, offered the other one to me. I took the second goblet and smiled in gratitude.

“You will be given your own quarters, just off of mine,” he said as he sipped on the sweet wine. “You are not a prisoner here. You are free to wander, but be wary of the guards. You cannot leave the palace and they will catch you if you try.”

I looked around the room briefly before answering. “I can’t imagine wanting to leave this place. Your palace is beautiful.”

Terian smiled from behind his goblet. “You have known men in the past.” It wasn’t a question and I felt myself blush at the statement.

“Yes, Master. I was married to a woman once, but it didn’t work out. We divorced when I realized that I much preferred the company of men.” I looked up and realized that Terian’s tunic had shifted, revealing a hint of bare flesh between his white fur and the purple fabric of his tunic. “You said that I would share your bed. Does that mean that I am to be your lover?”

Terian’s smile widened. “How does that make you feel? To know that you have become a lover to a centaur?”

Something told me that my experience with Fain was one to be kept to myself, so I resisted the urge to admit that I found the experience rather enjoyable. Instead, I focused on the way Terian’s hair shone under the soft lighting of the room and the sparkle in his green eyes that made more than just my heart flutter. He was more beautiful than any human man I had ever been with.

“I think I’ll like it immensely,” I told him. It must have been the right response as Terian’s eyes darkened as only lust could make them.

“And how did you enjoy men before?” he asked me.

I wondered at the question, not entirely sure what he was asking, but then it occurred to me that he wanted me to describe what I did. I felt my blush deepen as I realized that I was going to have to tell this regal centaur some of my exploits with men from my past. I took a hefty swallow of wine and forced my heart out of my throat when I noticed the gleam in Terian’s eyes. I looked down into the last of the wine in my goblet.

“I assume you’re asking what things I did.” I didn’t look up, but I knew my question was more rhetorical in nature. “I enjoyed both giving and receiving pleasure. I love the feel of a man in my mouth, but also the feel of a man as he comes deep within me. The pulse of hardened flesh at the moment of climax.”

I looked up then. Terian had shifted again and his tunic had moved once more, revealing more flesh. I swallowed hard at the sight, wanting nothing more than to kiss that exposed bit of smooth skin. He set his goblet down on the floor beside him and took mine from my hand. He slid one hand through my hair to cup the back of my neck and pulled me to him. His other arm slid around my waist, pressing our bodies together. His strength was surprising, but it was the urgency of his kiss that held me spellbound.

Terian felt warm and strong as his tongue explored my mouth, sliding along mine in a heated, pulsing rhythm that gave me hints of what was to come. When he pulled away, he smiled.

"Touch me," he whispered. The feral sound of his voice belied the gentleness in his touch. To wait any longer would have seen the last of my sanity.

Terian stood, unfolding his slender equine legs, and backed up against the wall. I moved

to him on my knees, and when he pulled his tunic over his head, I was greeted with the most exquisite bit of flesh I had ever seen. His chest was as hard and muscled as I had thought it would be. I slid my hands over him, marveling at the smoothness of his skin, the lines of his stomach. A soft moan escaped him as I moved my hands lower, over the rippled lines of his belly to caress the line where snowy fur met pale flesh. Between his front legs, a man's cock stood out, hard and waiting, leaking shining droplets from the tip. I dropped to my knees and wrapped one hand around his shaft. Terian moaned again and slid his fingers through my hair.

Remembering the taste of Fain, I rolled my tongue lightly over the tip of Terian's cock. The taste was much the same as he pulled my head forward. Half of his length slid into my mouth and I tightened my grip around the base, milking it as I began to slide my lips back and forth along the shaft. Terian began a slow rhythm of making love to my mouth and my own cock began to grow hard as his moans grew deeper. Then without warning, he pulled me up and slid his tongue into my mouth. He slipped his hand beneath my tunic and gripped me tightly.

"I want to feel you, Ian," he whispered on my lips. I could only nod as he licked a slow trail down over my throat. "I want to taste you, to feel your body surround me."

Terian pushed me to my back and lowered his body to the floor. He folded his legs under him seconds before sliding his tongue up the hard length of my cock. I arched my back and he parted my legs with nothing more than a brush of his hands on my thighs. He reached under me and I could feel him stroking his shaft, the tip of his cock brushing lightly across my exposed buttocks. Then I felt his fingertips brush over the puckered hole of my entrance. I drew in a sharp breath.

"Relax," Terian coaxed. "I won't hurt you, Ian." He reached over and I noticed a small jar of golden liquid sitting on the floor. "It's olive oil," he said as he slicked his fingers with the oily mixture. "It will help."

Terian smiled and slid two long, slender fingers inside me. I gasped and arched my back again, impaling myself further on his fingers. He stroked them in and out and I began grinding my hips, meeting his movements as my body began to relax around him. Then he pulled his fingers out and I felt something much larger press against me.

"Put your legs around me," he said. I did as instructed and Terian pulled me closer to his body. My head fell back as the rigid length of his cock slid deep inside my body. "Yes," Terian whispered.

He pulled me up and into a soft, gentle kiss. I wrapped my legs around his waist and moaned softly as his cock filled me completely. Terian held me to him, one arm around my waist and the other around to cup the back of my neck. He was still seated, but as our kiss deepened, he began to thrust slowly in and out. I circled his neck with my arms as I felt the pressure build within me, every thrust he made causing his cock to slide past my prostate. I rocked my hips forward every time he slid inside and Terian groaned in my

mouth. When I felt like I couldn't handle anymore, he shifted, driving his cock deeper inside me.

"Come for me," he whispered on my lips. "Come with me, Ian." That did it.

I cried out in his mouth as my cock jerked between our bodies, coating our stomachs in my release. A wave of pleasure rocked me from the inside out and seconds later, Terian groaned as he came. I held onto him as he filled my body, his cock pulsing deep inside me and sending fresh waves of pleasure through me. When we both were finally spent, Terian withdrew from me slowly. He placed a lingering kiss on my lips and smiled.

"My love," he whispered softly before kissing me again. "No amount of time or money could buy what I have here in my arms. I've wanted you for so long, Ian." I could only nod as Terian took my breath away with another kiss.

Contributors

Emily Veinglory: Hi! I am an animal psychologist by trade and a freelancer writer/illustrator by inclination. My proudest achievements as a writer so far has been Torquere Press's acceptance of my fantasy book 'Broken Sword.' This book reflects many of my ongoing obsessions including fantasy, homoerotica and vampires. I have previously written two novellas centred on a romance between King Arthur and Merlin (published by a small press called Angelwings Press). My short homoerotic fiction appears in the 'zine Dark Fantasies #7, the e-zines Bloodlust-UK and Forbidden Fruit (Issue #5), and Torquere Press's anthology 'Chance Encounters'.

I am currently working on a non-fiction book proposal that would allow me to return to New Zealand and to write full time. I am also developing two homoerotic werewolf novellas and book concepts based on the mythological figures of Chiron and Robin Hood. For more information, please visit my homepage at www.veinglory.com

Fiona Glass: Fiona Glass writes mostly homoerotica and has had short stories published by Torquere Press, Chippewa Publishing and Sultry Heat Publications, as well as in the online magazines Velvet Mafia, Erotic Dreams and Forbidden Fruit. Her collection of poignant gay love stories, 'One Degree of Separation', was published by Torquere Press in 2005, and her first novel, 'Roses in December', is due from the same publishers in summer 2006.

In her spare time she edits the homoerotica magazine Forbidden Fruit (www.forbiddenfruitzine.com) and in any spare time after that dabbles in graphic design, watercolour painting and gardening. And reading, of course. She rarely has her nose far from the pages of a book.

Fiona lives in a Victorian house in Birmingham (UK) with one husband, one visiting cat, several fish and far too many spiders. You can find her online at her website, Illusions. (www.tavaran.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)

Kay Derwydd: Kay is an odd bird. Her tastes in nearly everything are highly eclectic and change regularly depending on her mood. When it comes to writing, however, they tend to remain static. She specializes in writing gay (m/m) erotica, but has also written several m/f pieces. Most of her stories fall into one or more of the following categories: Vampires, Horror, High Fantasy, Sword & Sorcery. She also has written several Slice-of-Life pieces, and a few BDSM/Fetish pieces.

She lives in Delaware with her partner and their two toddlers. They live roughly ten minutes from the Atlantic Ocean and the beach boardwalk, both of which inspire many stories, especially during the summer when the guys are scantily clad in tight shorts and

T-shirts are very rare sights.

Website: http://www.geocities.com/kay_derwydd

Taste Test: Centaurfold

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