

What Reindeer Really Know

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What Reindeer Really Know...

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The scent of musk and hormones filled the air. As the sun began its descent, torches were lit around several pavilions. A group of musicians on a nearby stage began their performance with African drums. The thump thump of the primal beat seemed to shake the very ground Rudy stood on.

A perfect way to begin the three-day reindeer rut festival.

Rudy leaned against the wooden bench of one of the open-air bars. The humid air clawed over her skin. The outfit she wore, no more than a short skirt and a crop top, was mandatory at these events. The heat was a far cry from the North Pole when she spent her time training reindeer for sled work.

Her best friend Bratz, similarly dressed, nursed a cocktail that would send Rudy unconscious if she drank such a mix. Bratz was sipping it very very slowly.

Rudy sipped her Screamer. This would be the closest she'd be getting to an orgasm tonight. She was here on business.

"Looking for a new crew for Santa's sled this year?" Bratz asked.

"Not this time. This is a special job. Quite touching when I heard about it. When Santa mentioned it to me, I couldn't refuse."

"Oooh. Tell me more."

"I'm meeting a guy called Pete Hanford, who lost his wife five years ago to cancer. His son sent a letter to Santa asking for a special ride on the anniversary of his mother's death. He wanted his father, Pete to join him on the ride. Pete wanted to check out the crew who'd be carrying his son. The only way he can do that is to come to the festival and look for himself."

This was the perfect place to select the right crew for him. All the available women would be here. Besides, she didn't have time to visit the various communes and select the women that way. Santa had admitted to being surprised that Pete had agreed in the end. Must want to do this for his son a helluva lot.

Bratz grinned. "Hanford. Don't they own that chain of up-market department stores?"

Rudy recalled Pete's face in the newspapers. He had lovely dark eyes and a classical looking face. Had she been an artist she would have spent hours painting his features. It was going to be a treat to see him in the flesh.

"Sounds amazing. When did you find out about this job?" Bratz asked.

"Santa informed me a week ago, but it was too incredible a gesture to turn down. Think of how excited his son will be when he flies his very own sled for the night. Santa wanted me to take care of selecting the crew personally."

"Will you ride as well?"

Rudy hadn't shape-shifted in five years. "As a reindeer, yes. It will be weird after so long on the ground."

Bratz sipped her cocktail. Her eyes were already beginning to glaze over. "Does Pete know dress protocol?"

"Hasn't a choice or security won't let him in." Rudy bet he wouldn't relish that part. Pete would be forced to wear little more than a sheath to cover his manhood.

"I'm sure you'll make him comfortable," Bratz said. "You're good with newcomers. They seem to flock all over you."

Bratz gaze ran over Rudy's body. "You look great for forty. Your breasts are perfect and not an ounce of fat anywhere. You shouldn't have left the festivals so soon after breeding age was over. You can still come here for the sex."

After a five-year hiatus, she had missed the no-strings sex.

Bratz cupped her own plump breasts. "Look what three kids does to you."

Rudy had a daughter as well, but didn't remind Bratz of that fact. Bratz liked food and drink to excess while Rudy had to watch her weight. Not for vanity reasons, but since a reindeer trainer selected slim women, it would be farcical if she appeared as anything else.

"Men like voluptuous women," Rudy said.

"Yeah, and miss my brain."

"A rut's about sex, not about how smart you are. Why should you care?"

"I want a lifelong mate."

"Avoid the shape-shifters, then. Find a normal man if you want a long-term relationship." It was useless

telling Bratz more. Sloshed as she was she'd not listen anyway.

Bratz's face brightened. "Oh, look. Here come some more."

The brakes of a bus hissed as it stopped at the end of the dirt road. Rudy counted about fifty women carrying blankets and wearing scantier clothes than she did. Thongs were the rage with the younger ones, and usually they went topless.

"A drink?" the bartender asked.

"No, thanks," Rudy said. As far as she was concerned, she was working.

It was almost dark when another bus pulled up. It was painted red with white anthers on the side. A group of men wearing little more than sheaths swaggered from the bus. They walked along a torch lit footpath towards the nearest open bar where the bulk of the women congregated.

"He'll have big antlers when he fights later on," Bratz commented.

Rudy spotted the big blond-haired man at the lead. Well-muscled, too.

Antlers may be what set them apart in reindeer form, but the human equivalent was penis size. And did they like to strut their packages about. Most were already semi-hard beneath their sheaths, a state they'd stay in for the three days. They were all shape-shifters, and the men with the biggest cocks, once they turned to reindeer to fight, would also have the largest antlers.

The younger women, obviously new to a rut, found it all very heady and erotic. Rudy had too,

once, but now it left her merely intrigued. She felt like the old maid amongst the children, nearing forty as she and Bratz were.

The last man from the bus paused at the end of the torch-lit path. He looked around, appearing lost.

"Oh, my," Rudy whispered.

His face was more beautiful than in the photo. His dark hair fell to his shoulders, making him appear younger than his thirty-odd years. He was muscular, but not too much. Perfect, in fact. The sheath between his legs gave away nothing at all. Moisture trickled between her legs as she considered the possibility of mixing pleasure with business, preferably in that order.

Bratz nudged her, grinning. "I can't recall the last time you got turned on so much."

Was she that obvious? Her face felt hot. She cleared her throat and tried to rein in her hormones, but to no avail.

"I think Pete's about to be frisked by a man," Bratz said.

The blond-haired man she'd spotted before had returned to where Pete stood. Three women followed.

"You best rescue him if you want him for the night."

Rudy saw the wide-eyed look on Pete's face as the blond-haired man moved behind him.

Definitely time to come to his rescue.

"I'm going," Bratz said. "Have fun with him. You look like you're dying to."

Rudy gave her friend a brief hug. "I will if he does," not believing for a moment that he would.

* * * *

Pete could not believe the brazenness of the man. He'd been warned, but it didn't make this any easier to bear.

He brushed the man's hands from his buttocks. "I prefer women," he said abruptly.

And immediately realized that was a mistake.

The three young women descended onto him. One cupped his testicles, sending him instantly hard. Another ran her painted nail over his torso. "Not too bad, are you. First timer, I bet."

"We'll keep you safe, " another purred from behind.

He felt the sheath being loosened. Since the death of his wife five years ago he'd avoided sex, and women in general. Looking down he nearly passed out. She was going to suck him, and that both frightened and aroused him. His wife had never done anything so brazen, and right now he wanted to feel her mouth over his cock, and suck him senseless.

"Whoa, girls, he's mine."

The woman who was about to suck him licked the tip of his shaft, nearly making him come. She stood up, a pout on her lips. "I thought you'd retired."

"I have, but this is business." She grabbed Pete's hand and shook it. "I'm Rudy, by the way."

Pete glanced at her and his erection got even harder. He had heard about Rudy's reputation at the ruts, but didn't expect his reaction to her to be so strong. Her brown eyes were filled with what he

hoped was hunger. He removed a stand of dark hair from her glistening shoulder and imagined extending their business relationship one step further.

No strings-attached sex was what Santa had called it. If he wanted it. Santa had warned him that ruts do that; turn those most hardened from such behavior into horny beasts.

The scent of sex in the air was becoming more potent. He heard moans from the darkness beyond. Shouts made him turn around.

Two men were already fighting in a nearby ring over a woman. Their fists struck thick muscle while the amused woman looked on.

Slowly they shimmered, and in a blink, turned into reindeer.

"Pete. Can I call you Pete?"

He jerked his head back to Rudy. "Sure."

She inclined her head to the ring. "All over a woman. It's tedious, really. And what happens to the men? They'll break their antlers and end up getting nobody for the entire three days."

Pete wasn't sure what she meant.

"What I mean is, their cock doesn't fall off or anything. They just aren't as appealing without antlers." She steered him away from the crowd. "Do you know why only women reindeer fly sleds?"

"No. I don't," he said, interested.

"Males lose their antlers in a rut while woman keep theirs until spring."

He tried to imagine reindeer without antlers.

"Not a good look, is it?" Rudy said. She leaned closer to him. Her scent was sending him into freefall.

"Besides, who else can navigate a fat man in a red suit around the world and not get lost?"

He laughed. "I didn't know that."

From her reputation, he expected her to be all over him and in a way, wished she would. He'd like to be left with experienced hands for the night.

"You ever been fought over?"

"When I was younger. Frequently."

She had a few lines around her sultry eyes, yet her pale skin appeared flawless. His gaze strayed to her pert nipples that appeared hard beneath her red top. He wanted to brush his hand between her legs to see how damp she was.

Which made him question where he'd be sleeping. Preferably within the arms of a lover, Santa had suggested. Rudy would do nicely.

He wanted to kiss her slightly parted lips. This was ridiculous. He never expected to react so strongly to her. Maybe he really had been out of touch with women. "I have to stay somewhere tonight. Can it be with you?"

Rudy gave a comforting smile. "Lovers. Oh, I can do that." She slid her fingers into his. "Do you want to pretend, or make it for real?"

"I'm not sure." Why was he hesitating?

"There's no rush," she reassured him.

The cicadas hummed in the distance, a backdrop to the beat of the drums. With only the light of the rising moon to guide them, they wandered further away from the pavilions.

In the trees beyond he heard grunts followed by satisfied cries. Their noises intensified his erection

rather than diminishing it.

"There we are. Our first crew member," Rudy said.

"Where?"

He could barely make out the three women who'd cornered a young man near a tree. A glimpse of moonlight caught his face between the branches. He looked quite worried.

Rudy slid out of Pete's grip and walked right up to him. She whispered in his ear. A smile soon replaced the wild look in the man's eyes.

The women looked annoyed.

He pointed to each. "I'll have you first, you second and you third. If you don't like it, go elsewhere."

The three women stood in silence for several seconds. Finally, one nodded.

"What did you say to him?" Pete asked, intrigued.

"It's his first time. It can be quite intimidating if you are hit on by a lot of women. He's not used to a threesome."

Pete recalled the three women who'd cornered him near the bar. He swallowed. Neither was he.

"It's all consensual. He's just a bit overwhelmed, but wants to try it."

His erection became unbearable, so much so that the damn sheath was chafing him. He loosened the bottom tie. Too bad if she noticed. It certainly felt a lot more comfortable hanging free. A breeze picked up and he sighed at its cooling effect. "Have you done it?"

Rudy nodded. "When I was younger. Now I don't have the energy for it."

He found her frankness refreshing. If anything, he

was like a virgin compared to her.

"Watch."

"Them having sex? I think not."

"Look at the woman he selected first. She's tall, lithe and fast."

He could see the first two attributes, but fast?

"How do you know that?"

"Watch."

The man pretended to run, and the lithe woman grabbed him first, pulling him down.

"You need speed and agility," Rudy said.

The lithe woman began to straddle the man. Pete tried to turn away, but instead watched riveted as she moved up and down.

"She's a stayer as well. She'll outlast the other two as a reindeer on a sled or as a woman with him. That's what you want, a good strong stayer for the ride."

That was it. He couldn't stand it any longer. He had to have Rudy. *Now*. His erection pressed between her thighs as he grabbed her waist. His mouth descended onto hers. His heart pounded loudly as he began to kiss her. The sensitivity in his cock was maddening. Rudy gripped his shaft and moved her hand up and down in long even strokes. Her tongue seemed to devour his throat.

My, could she kiss.

The onset of orgasm came so suddenly that he tried to remove Rudy's hand. Her lips left his, and she whispered into his ear. "It's normal to feel so out of control."

She grabbed his hand and thrust it between her

legs. She was dripping. "Put two fingers up my cunt, now."

He'd never done anything like this before.

"I'll help you," she said in a throaty whisper.

His fingers slid up her passage. Thrusting in and out he felt her passage tighten around his fingers.

"Oh, yes. Perfect," she growled.

Her breathing grew more erratic and she gripped his shaft harder, thrusting back and forth. She began to go rigid. "Don't stop."

"I don't plan to," he said between ragged breaths.

She cried out, sagging into his arms.

"That was wonderful," she whispered.

He nearly fell to his knees as he came over her thighs. He'd never experienced anything so intense. Not even with his wife.

Rudy's eyes were dark shadows. In a throaty voice she said. "This is a no-strings-attached event and it's normal for newbies to react like this. Any inhibitions you have will fade as the night wears on. Truly it will. By midnight you'll be a pro."

"Do you mean I won't be so out of control?"

"No. It means you'll be too exhausted to care."

* * * *

Rudy was tingling all over. The slightest of breezes sent her into aftershock. Never had she been so horny as she was tonight. What a fool to have put sex on hold for so long.

The groans and laughter of the ménage nearby had grown louder. She'd completely forgotten where they

were.

"Pete," she said, attempting to distract him. "Do you want to go anywhere in particular with the sled?"

He seemed to come out of a trance. "My son wants to do a sled ride. I've offered a range of presents from our stores and Santa suggested a special run near some hospitals."

Why hospitals? Did he want to be reminded of where his wife died? And what if he did? It was no business of hers.

A gulf formed, one she hadn't seen coming until now. He was from a totally different class to her, as was his whole society. It was best to quash any stirring in her heart while she still could, and that meant getting a crew for him quickly.

"Let's keep going."

His arm slid around her waist again. This time it felt like he wanted to, not as a front. She leaned into him. *Why not?* For the first time in a long time, she wanted to relive her old days. Take him to a quiet place or anywhere that was flat and ride him to exhaustion.

It was only when Rudy heard a nearby stream that she'd realized they'd drifted quite a way from the music.

Shouts from behind brought her back to reality.

Perfect. Get distracted, not whimsical.

She gripped his hand. "Come on. You'll have to see this at least once." And hopefully get him as horny as hell for her again.

In a nearby fighting ring, two reindeer were in full swing. The clash of their muscular bodies seemed to

make the ground shudder.

The woman being fought over raised her hands as if cheering them along. Rudy watched as Pete looked at her twice. She could guess what he was about to ask.

His eyes widened. "Is that your daughter?"

She nodded.

His face darkened. "I don't think I'd appreciate my child behaving like that."

"This is our world." *One that you are happy to use when you want to give your son a precious gift.* "Can't you accept that for the night? After all it's not like we'll be seeing each other again, is it."

Pete nodded. "You're right."

It was only then that she noticed his sheath was loose. She looked at his erection. Another surge of heat flowed through her passage. She was dying to be fucked. Cupping his testicles, she said. "Pete. I want you to fuck me, now."

And wished she hadn't been so coarse. It worked with recalcitrant newbies in the past. They proved to give the best sex, especially when she'd commanded them to do specific things to her.

He seemed to go through a mixture of emotions, ending up with a wry smile. He gripped her shoulders and spun her around so her back was to him.

She felt his erection hard up against her butt. His hand strayed to between her legs, pausing at her pussy. He nibbled her ear. "You're right. It's no strings, as you said, so I should just let go."

Oh, he smelt so good. That indefinable horny male

smell.

With slow up and down moments he slid over her clit, dipping occasionally into her slick passage. The contractions in her vagina sent a shiver of delight over her body. She was so close she couldn't believe it. One of his hands slid up to her top, cupping one breast. "It's too tight. I don't think it would be a good idea removing it here."

"Later," she whispered, "when I ride you."

He stiffened, but noticed an increased hardness against her butt. She was turning him on with her words.

Rudy widened her thighs further apart, giving him greater access. He thrust two fingers up her passage and with his thumb circling her mound she jolted as the first orgasm exploded through her.

She gripped his hand to stop him. He really knew how to use those fingers now. "Let go, or I'll end up screaming."

Amongst the shouts around her she doubted anyone would hear her.

A shriek came from nearby. She wasn't the only one being pleased.

The drumbeats intensified as the two male reindeer spun around again to meet each other. One already had part of his antler missing. He should give up, but no, he'd keep going beyond all reason.

Suddenly she lost her grip on Pete's hand and his fingers flicked over her clit.

"Pete," she pleaded, gasping between breaths.

His breathing grew heavy behind her. "Come once more, then you can fuck me senseless."

Who was being dominant now? What a dark horse he was. A fierce shudder tore through her. "No more."

He removed his fingers and leaned into her. "I can't believe I just did that."

She gripped his hand and together they left the shouts behind. She was so hot she needed him. Now.

"Lie down."

His thick shaft rose above his sheath. With a single movement she straddled him and entered him fully.

Pete cupped her buttocks. "Oh, Rudy. You feel so good."

Rudy rose, then sank again. She cried out as a deep orgasm flooded through her.

He gripped her buttocks and forced her up and down again. She took over, whimpering as she peaked again and again.

He arched beneath her and cried out. Warmth spilled into her, in a flood then as he ebbed into her. She watched his eyes riveted to hers and his face twisted in that blissful look of ecstasy.

Beads of sweat formed over his muscled torso as he regained his breathing. Rudy never felt so complete as she did now.

Fool, she thought. He lives in a totally different world to you. Think of his son. He needs a mother that is respectable. She was hardly that. At least when she did meet his son, she'd be a reindeer so he'd never be the wiser. Like Bratz, the need to have a life partner was more important than wanted to admit and Pete, as little as she knew him, could become that man. A pity tonight was all she had to carry the

illusion that he cared.

* * * *

Pete never felt more alive than he did now. He'd never wanted his wife as desperately as this, and the revelation shocked him. Had he ever loved her, or was it the love of a woman who'd never considered such an incredible way of having sex? He really had lived a basic sex life until tonight.

He undid Rudy's top, freeing her breasts and massaging them, loving the way they cupped so perfectly in his hands. "You really are beautiful."

Recalling her daughter he could understand why men fought over Rudy at a younger age. He was surprised none did so now. Perhaps he'd got to her first. A strange feeling of possessiveness came over him. He could judge what she was doing, but this was Rudy's world, one he'd have to accept if he wanted her beyond the night. That, despite the incredible sex he had with her, he didn't know yet.

Rudy removed his hands as if sensing his uncertainty. "We should go and find the rest of the crew."

Damn. He hadn't meant to shrug her off like this. "Rudy. I've not been with a woman for five years. I didn't mean to--"

She cupped his cheek. "Pete. Don't make any commitments that you aren't prepared to keep."

Before he could ask her exactly what she meant by that, she lifted herself off him.

He noticed she didn't replace her top, leaving her

breasts exposed. He wanted to suckle each of them and hear her moan again.

"There," she said.

He looked at another woman who was in the process of pleasuring a man's cock with her mouth. That jarred him from his lust. How did Rudy know of *her* abilities as crew on a sled? Heck. He was just realizing that six horny women would change to reindeer and cart his son across the sky.

It was too late now to get out of this. A promise was a promise.

As if sensing his disquiet, she said. "Tomorrow you'll be back in your business dealing with suppliers, snooping on your competitors and whatever else you do. We have a life like that as well. That woman you see sucking that man's cock off is, in fact, Santa's best marketing consultant. And her--"

He followed her gaze to a woman in the middle of a discussion on her mobile phone. Pacing to and fro, she was completely naked and her skin laced with sweat. "She's the coordinator of all the sleds on Christmas Eve. Cooped up in an office all night managing crises and organizing last minute replacements."

"All women."

"Oh, yes. All the men do is get drunk. Totally unreliable. Santa even has a drink or two. Certainly can't drive the sled without a helper."

"Ok. Ok. I get it. What about you, Rudy, what do you want?"

She appeared stunned at the question. Had no one ever asked her before?

"Me?"

"You."

"I just want to do what I'm doing."

"Actually, what do you do? I mean outside of training reindeer near Christmas."

"I tell stories."

Had he heard her right? "Pardon?"

She seemed irritated. "I collate the best stories from the sled runs each year and create a book. You have no idea how many children want to know what really happens to Santa on a run."

Was it the same book he was thinking of? "Are you telling me you wrote the Incredible Xmas Tales book?"

She seemed visibly upset. "You don't think me capable?"

"Well. No. I mean you don't seem the type to write...books."

She stiffened. "You think all I am is a good fuck and able to herd animals."

He gripped her arm. "I didn't mean that. It's a shock, that's all."

"I'll find the rest of the crew later," she said, shrugging his hand from her arm. "As for arrangements, Santa will pick you and your son up around midday Christmas Eve. I'll be there, but as a reindeer, so you can be assured your son won't recognize me."

Had he touched a place in her heart that she feared to tread? It was a place he wanted to explore further. "Heck, Rudy. I wouldn't care if you didn't write a word of it. That you have intrigues me even more."

She looked worried, truly worried.

"Are you scared of our differences? I'm not."

She backed away. "I can't." And quickly walked towards the closest bar.

"My son loves that book," he called after her, knowing that chasing her would be futile. "It inspired him to contact Santa about my wife."

If she heard, she refused to acknowledge it.

* * * *

It was just before Christmas Eve, and for the thousandth time Rudy wished she hadn't walked away. Pete was a rich man who lived in different circles. He has a son. No way could a reindeer trainer and an occasional good fuck be part of a life like that. Sure, she could write a book, and that was what kept her imagination soaring. It was her gift to those millions that hope was possible against all the odds.

A pity she could not apply such hope to herself. The odds were stacked too much against her with Pete. It was a mistake seducing him.

I thought it was mutual, a tiny voice in her head said.

It was easier hiding in a back room at the North Pole, wrapping up the last of the storybooks. Hundreds of copies would go out tonight.

Not so easy to hide from her memories, which flatly refused to let the matter go. With Pete she'd felt something entirely beyond sex, and still did two months later. A connection she never felt with the father of her child, and that had been entirely different. She had selected him for conception,

nothing else. Pete was meant to be strictly business but her heart had got in the way.

She finished wrapping the last book. At least that was over for another year.

A knock on the door made her look up.

Bratz removed her jacket and hung it on the hook inside the room. "Look at you. As pale as these walls."

Rudy shrugged. "What of it?"

Rudy knew that look. She was about to be lectured.

"I've been speaking to Pete, and--" Bratz placed her hands on her hips. "You're going to listen whether you want to or not."

Resigned, she leaned back in her chair. "Ok. Spill it out."

"Pete's had time to think about you, and seriously, he's smitten. If you had strung out your time with him at the festival, you'd have ensnared him then.

"We're too different. I would never fit in his world."

"That's not stopped people. I hate to say this, but you are too scared to risk falling in love. You think you're too old and that no one would want you. Bah!"

She was right, but Rudy didn't have to listen to it. It was too late anyway. "What would you know about love? Look at you, a disaster," she retorted.

"Oh, that's a confession. Rudy in love."

Nor had she. The word had come unbidden.

"I happen to be getting married," she said smugly. "I sobered up, as you had warned me so many times, and found the love of my life the second night. He's a bus driver. Not a shape-shifter at all, thank

goodness."

"I'm glad for you. I truly am. Can you go so I can finish this wrapping?"

"You look like you're done to me." Bratz tapped the watch on her wrist. "Aren't you meant to be somewhere about now?"

Rudy bolted from her chair. Bratz was right. She had to shape-shift in the holding pen, then get herself hitched to the sled. Slipping into her jacket and boots, she went outside.

And ran headlong into Pete.

She didn't notice him at first, wearing a thick fur jacket and boots. She had no idea he could look equally gorgeous in clothes.

Nor it seemed from his reaction, did she. "You look great dressed," he said.

She couldn't help but laugh at that. Only when her gaze lowered, did she notice he held a copy of the book.

"If you think I want you to change, I don't. I want a woman who can drive me crazy in and out of bed." He took a step closer. "I've been unable to think of anyone or anything but you."

Before she could react, his mouth descended on hers. His tongue dove into her mouth. She weakened at the knees as an intense jolt of energy seared throughout her body. He released her, his face triumphant if not a little flushed.

In her ear he whispered. "You haven't lost it for me at all. In fact, if we had time, I'd take you right here."

Feeling moisture between her legs, she squirmed.

"Back to your *other* ability, Rudy," he said, adding

a mischievous wink. "Could you write our story for the book next year?"

It touched her that he should ask. "About your son. Of course."

"And also how we met, developed preconceived ideas about each other, and hopefully we can get back together to dispel them?"

Had she heard him right? Did he mean it?

"I can't imagine a future without you. At least give *us* a try."

Bratz nudged her from behind. "Nothing to lose, baby."

She had forgotten her friend was there. "Bratz. You set me up."

"Absolutely. You may hate each other in a week, but you'll never know for sure if you don't take a risk in the first place."

That was true. Rudy returned her gaze to Pete's smoldering dark eyes, and saw possibilities. This chance may never happen again. "I'll try, but--"

His mouths sealed hers again, as if she needed reminding. What had she been thinking in leaving him?

He released her, breathless. "No words, only a nod."

She nodded.

"That will have to do for now." He tucked his arm under hers. "I believe we have a ride to catch."

About the Author

Born in Australia, Sarah has been writing stories on and off for as long as she can remember. She lives in Queensland with her husband who is very supportive of her ever-changing work lifestyle. Her other life is writing for organizations, but writing fantasy and SF is a lot more fun.