Chapter 9:

A few minutes later Calvech and Dobrica watched from the side of the office as the crocodile plush that had been placed in the chair began to grow, the green leather forming into textured scales. Fingers and toes began to separate back into their separate digits and even the clothes that the one known as Lazarus Simms reappeared with him once he was big enough to fit them without falling off completely. It was strange for the two to watch was essentially a reverse transformation as far as Modino and Santer were concerned, eventually it finishing on the glassy eyes as they reverted back to their normal form and blinked a few times in confusion. By the time the crocodile looked down at himself the last of the leather had disappeared from his body, making it look like nothing had ever happened before.

“You should really be more careful Mr. Simms,” Santer said, idly typing on his keyboard before turning to face the bewildered male. “Sunstroke is a very serious condition, it was lucky that my trainers found you in time or else I couldn’t stand to think what would have happened. It appears that you’re going to be making a full recovery, so good for that I suppose.”

“That’s bull and you know it!” the crocodile practically spat.

“No, that would be Modino,” Santer replied, Calvech covering his mouth as he snorted slightly. “If you’re looking for him he’s in the office opposite this one. He wanted a shared office but I figured that walls make for better business partners, wouldn’t you agree?”

“Stop that!” Lazaraus said as he got up, almost tipping over the first time as though using his legs for the first time. “You know as well as I do that I didn’t get no sunstroke while I was in an indoor track! You used that same voodoo that you did to turn those boys into horses on me, making me into that… thing. You’re not going to be so happy when I get the police down here telling them that you kidnapped me!”

Santer merely sat there with his elbows on his desk, nodding slowly before grabbing his phone and shoving it over towards him. “Go right ahead,” the black leather equine said. “Call the police and tell them that the owner of a magical gym turned you into a leather plushie after turning four people that you brought here because of debts into… what was that, horses? Yes, surely they will believe that over my sunstroke story, you’ll definitely not be sent to the nearest psychiatric facility for evaluation.”

Even though it was clear that the crocodile was boiling with rage he said nothing, instead just turned and began to walk out of the office before a sudden whistle from Santer caused him to turn around. “I don’t believe I said you could leave,” the nexus stallion said as he pointed to the chair that Lazarus just left. “Now sit down right there, we still have business to discuss.”

“I don’t think so,” Lazarus replied. “Thanks for taking care of my stable for me, but I think I’ll be terminating my training services with you as of immediately.”

“That’s actually great to hear,” Santer said as Lazarus continued to leave, pulling out a bottle of alcohol and two glasses. “That’ll make things much easier when I take over your casino and kick you out to the street.” Those words caused the crocodile to come to a screeching stop, freezing dead in his tracks before slowly turning back around to face the horse. “Which is exactly what’s going to happen if you walk out that door right now.”

It was clear that at the very least the casino owner knew that this wasn’t some sort of bluff, a mixture of anger and frustration on his face as he slowly turned back around while Santer poured him a drink. “You got a lot of nerve threatening my livelihood,” Lazarus said. “What makes you think a two-bit operation like this could stand to take over something that I’ve been working at for thirty years?”

“Now usually I would just go in with brute force, maybe call in a few favors and show you just how well connected I am,” Santer said as he leaned back in his chair. “However, I was inspired to play this one straight up, mostly, and merely brought out your loan from your note holder at a rather premium price.”

“You’re lying,” Lazarus said with a chuckle. “There’s no way that Fredrick would risk his own reputation to sell you my loan note, he knows that I can have his business shut down in a heart beat.”

“Well you’re free to confirm it with him yourself,” Santer said, raising his hands in the air before pointing at his own nose. “When you talk to him though you’re going to want to speak directly to his middle head, the other ones are still acclimating a bit and you might confuse him.”

Calvech and Dobrica could see the crocodile mouthing out the words that were just said to him before realizing what happened. “You son of a bitch!” Lazarus shouted as he picked up the glass and threw it against the wall. “I don’t care if you turn every one of them into those freaks, you aren’t going to drive me out of my own town and my own business!”

“I have no intention on driving you out of your business,” Santer replied. “Instead I have a more mutually beneficial offer that you can’t refuse, literally. This is your last chance because I don’t like repeating myself, you either sit down in that chair right now or you walk out that door and see which one of us can pull more sway in this city.”

The other two watched as Lazarus balked at the threat and for a second looked like he was going to leave, but after looking into the glowing white eyes of the horse he seemed to reconsider and slowly sat back down in the chair as Santer slid the other glass he had taken out towards him. “While I don’t approve of your methods, your attitude, your general well-being, or really anything about you,” Santer listed as he poured the amber liquid into the second glass. “I have to admit that your idea of creating creatures in order to have MMA fights and horse races is extremely intriguing to me. Modino would honestly prefer the wrestling, I’m more of an endurance man myself, long distance running and things of that nature-“

“Get to the fucking point already,” Lazarus said before grabbing the glass and downing the contents in one swig.

“I would like to promote a joint venture with you,” Santer explained. “We take those events and run them here; your casino can have a cut of the profits, whatever percentage you want really since money really doesn’t concern me, and you bring me these ones that are heavily indebted to you who are interested in this alternate means of paying you off. Now for my end of the deal those that choose to go this route no longer belong to you, they belong to me, and three-fourths of that money you get that they make in these events goes directly towards paying their debts and that is as far into my business as you’re going to get. How does that sound to you?”

“It sounds like you’re hosing me out of my own territory,” Lazarus said as he pointed down to the glass, Santer pouring him another drink that he gulped down as well. “Alright, you keep the freaks and I’ll send you any others that have red in my books that want the same treatment. Either way I get paid I guess.”

“You see?” Santer said with a smirk. “I knew we could come to some sort of arrangement.”

Lazarus stood up from the chair and moved to the door of the office before turning back once more. “Don’t think that this is the end of it,” the crocodile stated as he grabbed his hat from the nearby hook and put it on. “We’ll be conducting business again, but next time we’re going to be on my terms.”

“Sure we will,” Santer responded dismissively. “Hey, if that plushie thing ever evolves then feel free to come and set something up with me, I always have room in my bed for one more.” The crocodile just scowled and slammed the door, the black-leather stallions smirk turning into a frown as he grabbed the other glass and tossed it in the trash. “What a miserable creature.”

“But hey, you still won,” Calvech said as he and Dobrica sat back down in the chairs opposite the black leather stallion. “Not only do you get to have more promotional events here but he’s also going to bring over more potential minions that you can rescue from him. It might not be a perfect resolution but you definitely got one over on him.”

Santer smiled a little at that, nodding his head. “Yes… though I doubt that’s going to be the end of the trouble coming from Mr. Lazarus Simms,” he said as he put the bottle away under his desk as well. “Of course what I do always comes with its share of enemies, my brother once managed to enrage an entire college full of demon hunters… though I think he just provoked them for fun. But in any case, now is not the time to think of the rather odious crocodile, not when we have a joyous occasion to celebrate.”

The two looked at one another as Santer stood up, then beckoned them to follow him. They shrugged and did do, heading out of the office and down into the fitness center proper. It was eerily quiet as they walked through it, everything completely still with not a soul in sight. It was only a few days before they were going to launch officially, the two knew, where was everyone getting things ready?

They quickly found out where as they were escorted into the boxing gym where Modino stood with the entirety of the staff, all of them tossing confetti before clapping on their arrival. “Whoa, what is all this?” Dobrica said as the group split to reveal a cake and some other party foods and drinks. “You guys are celebrating… us?”

“Well in case you forgot, this is where we first offered you the job of helping us get this place ready for its grand opening,”

“Threatened,” Calvech injected with a smirk. “This is where you threatened us to help you get this place going or else.”

“Ahhh, you’re talking about ancient history that no one even cares about anymore Calvech,” Modino spoke up. “Although you two did break in.” This caused a few chuckles from the rest in attendance before the spandex bull started to speak again. “But it was because of that one action that we turned this place from a potential disaster to what will probably be the best fitness center in this entire region!”

“All thanks to your help,” Santer stated as he put his hands on his shoulders. “No go on, you got a lot of people wanting to also share their thanks for helping them out with their problems. Just don’t go sneaking out the back, we have one last thing that we want to talk to you about before you head out of here for good.”

Dobrica and Calvech were more than happy to mingle, though they took a few seconds to make sure they had gotten every and all enhancements off of them before they did. When they came back out the orca-jay and horse found that they had become quite popular, the two of them hardly able to get food and drinks before people started to come up to them. The first for Calvech was all the trainers who were quick to tell him that they were so grateful for getting them this job, not only for the source of income but because they got crazy fun bodies that they got to be as horny with as they wanted… after their shift had ended. For the purple stallion it was crazy that the group he might have had the least amount of direct interaction with was actually the ones who most appreciated what he had done for them.

For Dobrica it was seeing a familiar feline face… or rather two of the same faces as the identical spandex cheetahs came over and gave her a hug. They informed her that they were getting along great and that no one even seemed to bat an eye that he had taken on a personal assistant, some even believing because it was because they were both cheetahs. One thing was for certain, Beck stated, it was fantastic having someone that lived with you that could work with you one second and then be in the mood for sex at the exact same time. While they both hadn’t become minions of Santer and Modino they were highly invested in getting the fitness center the resources they needed in order to get as much exposure in the city as possible.

That led then both to their most recent client, the three-headed wolf coming up to them while holding a piece of cake. The left head told Dobrica that ever since they had become a Cerberus they were having the time of their lives, and they were almost twice as productive as he shot a look at the head on his right talking to Calvech. That head was busy telling the purple stallion that they had run into a little trouble with Lazarus Simms for selling the note to Santer, but it appeared that the ornery crocodile didn’t exactly know how to deal with their newfound situation. The entire time the two side heads were conversing the middle one continued to eat his cake, pitching in a word or two before they all went in for a big hug.

Next came the shark squad swim team, most of them slightly surprised that Calvech was, in fact, actually a male. None of them seemed to mind though, in fact many of them had expanded their horizons to help foster team spirit as they gave the two a big grin. They also said that they all joined on as the aquatic staff for the fitness center, assuring that they would have some of the best water-based programs in the tri-state area. The group was also very excited because Modino informed them that before they started there full time they would meet someone named Famjin that was an actual aquatic expert, Dobrica and Calvech looking at one another when they remembered seeing that name before on the plans that the two nexus creatures had stolen…

But before they could really inquire about it Calvech was suddenly hugged from behind, the horse turning around to see Alister standing there. Like many of the others that they had met he had agreed to join in and become part of the Modino team, stating that there was no way that he could give up benefits like this as he flexed his powerful muscles. The purple horse did the same and when they compared one another they found that their physiques were remarkably similar. Calvech wondered if that was because he had worn the suit first or because they were having sex when it transferred to him, either way he congratulated him on the job and the new body.

The party continued on for a while and Dobrica and Calvech looked around for anyone else that they might want to talk to, finally deciding that it was time to go and meet Modino and Santer to see what they wanted to do before they parted ways. Once more they were hugged and thanked by everyone there, taking an extra few minutes before they finally pulled away. The two gave a contented sigh and couldn’t help but smile as they left the room and headed towards the offices where the two said they would be. Before they could get there though they heard a loud voice behind them shouting at them to stop.

“You didn’t think you were just going to leave and not say good-bye to us, were you?” the white leather equine said as he and the other three racehorses stood there with their arms crossed. “There’s no way that we’re going to let you out of here without giving you all the praise and attention you deserve.”

“Yeah, we heard that you got us out from under the thumb of Simms,” the steel-blue leather horse said as he stepped up next to his boyfriend. “I don’t think there’s really anything we can say or do that can convey how much that means to us. Instead of dealing with that bastard we get to go to work for Master Santer, and he’s already been discussing with us what we’re going to do after we pay back all the money we owe with our racing.”

“Well, with their racing,” the white leather horse interjected as he wrapped his arm around the smaller male. “I won’t be running with these guys, instead Lord Modino said that he’s going to take me under his wing and teach me how to fight so that when they get another big guy like me they can have a heavyweight match for the ages. I’m already looking forward to it and while I’ll probably not get a chance to pop that crocodile like you did I’ll imagine his face every time I’m in the ring.”

“We’re glad that you guys are in a better situation,” Calvech said with a chuckle. “It was probably one of the most fulfilling things that we did here, and it really showed us that this place can be a force for good and more than in a traditional sense. I’m happy that I was a part of its set-up and hope that it really does become the place to go to when it opens officially.”

“It will be if we have anything to say about it,” another of the leather equines said. “And since this place is our home now, we definitely have something to say about it.”

The two continued to chat for a bit before parting ways, the equines heading back towards the indoor track they had met them on in the first place. “I feel kind of sad that we’re not going to be training them ourselves,” Dobrica stated as she watched them go. “We really only had one lesson with them and we had to deal with Lazarus the entire time. Imagine what we could do with them after a bit of work, you’d probably have them running like the wind.”

Calvech just nodded, looking down at his own hooves for a second before stating that they should probably keep going. The two spent the rest of the walk in silence, climbing up the stairs to the administration area that looked out over the main area of the gym and walking into the area that set up for Santer and Modino. This time they found the two in the spandex bull’s office, both of them waving them in and having them take a seat. Once they had done so Santer reached around and pulled out a bottle, popping it open and pouring the contents into two glasses that he handed to Deborica and Calvech before getting one for himself and Modino.

“We thought for this next bit we’d make it a more private affair,” Santer stated as he raised up his glass, the other three doing the same. “To our fellow managers, who not only helped us cooperate with one another but kept this place from being utter chaos on opening. Normally we are the ones who are being thanked but this time that honor definitely goes to you.”

The four clinked their glasses together and took a drink. “It’s not like we got nothing out of the deal ourselves,” Dobrica stated once she had finished. “You have shown us such amazing things here, and though we were a little skeptical at first about your intentions we’re glad that we stuck with it until the end. So I guess what I’m saying is thank you as well.”

“You might want to hold off on that for just a second,” Modino replied before reaching into his desk and pulling something out, placing two plastic cards in front of them. “Santer and I would like to present to you these two lifetime all-access passes to the Iron Bull and Horse fitness center. Come on in whenever you want, use whatever facilities you want, basically do whatever you’d like except for burn the place down.”

The two took the passes and looked at them in awe. While they had suspected that the two might offer them something like this seeing it there in their hands was something all the same. “I… don’t know what to say,” Calvech responded first as he held up his card. “This is amazing… but I kind of thought that since we didn’t become your minions that you wouldn’t be interested in giving us something like this.”

“I guess you can consider yourselves honorary minions,” Santer responded with a smile. “What do you think Dobrica?”

The orca-jay continued to sit there for a while, examining the pass before looking up. “I’m certainly down for that,” the hybrid said. “Am I going to have to be male every time I want to use this thing?”

“No no,” Modino quickly answered as they both laughed. “Since you won’t be working directly with us anymore or becoming our minions we can lift that particular restriction off of you. That being said you have access to all the options that you had before so if you want to become male then go for it.”

“Well…” Dobrica said as she began to grin herself while looking over at Modino. “I was actually wondering if I could borrow the swimsuit that you gave Calvech while I got something that made me male so-“

“Thank you so much for this, guys,” Calvech interrupted as he stood up, Dobrica sticking out her tongue at him. “Dobrica and I should probably get out of your hair though, you have a grand opening in a few days and we wouldn’t want to put you behind. Thank you for everything guys, as we said this will be an experience that we’re never going to forget. Oh, and make sure to say hi to Falco from us.”

The two nexus creatures thanked them once more as well and shook their hands before leading them out, giving them one last wave as they left before locking the doors behind them. No doubt they were going to have their own special celebration, Dobrica suggested as Calvech snorted. As the two walked down the pathway they noticed that for the first time there were other people on it, some of them even taking a picture of the building. As they got further away they also saw a sign advertising the fitness center, pointing people in its direction along with all the other possible places someone could go.

Once they had gotten back on the pier they went and grabbed a frozen treat from the nearby vendor before going over to the pier where they could still see a few people pointing out the new structure. “Looks like whatever disguise power they were using is wearing off,” Dobrica commented as she watched an older couple pointing out the shiny new building. “Pretty soon it’s just going to be intergraded into the community like it’s always been there, they probably already have it on GPS.”

“Wouldn’t doubt it,” Calvech replied. “You going to miss it?”

“I certainly don’t miss losing these every time I stepped foot in there,” Dobrica stated as she grabbed her chest. “But as for everything else… yeah, I think I am going to miss it. You saw everyone at the party, we changed a lot of people’s lives in there. Especially those poor debtors… hopefully Simms doesn’t cause too much trouble for them.”

“It’s a crocodile with a plush fetish against two of the most powerful creatures in the entire universe,” Calvech responded with a small smirk. “I think they can handle themselves against one piece of scum that happens to have some city council member on their speed dial. Plus if they do run into problems they can just find the guy who is hassling them and invite them in to turn them into a centaur or something.”

The two laughed and decided to continue further down the pier and away from the facility that they had just spent so much time invested in. It had only been a few short days for the two from the time that they had snuck in and saw the two nexus creatures squabbling to leaving with them singing their praises. They both admitted they were going to miss them the most, but they knew that their place wasn’t with them, at least not permanently. Still, as they got into their car to leave both had pulled out their new gym memberships, a small grin playing at their faces as they looked forward to the day they could use it.