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## *LIX – Unconventional convention*

Jean sat on crosslegged on the hotel bed. The rest of the SNF had beds in the same room as well. Emma had brought some reading material, and she was studying some of it closely. Jean realized that calling this a "hotel room" was a gross understatement. It was a suite. Two separate bedrooms, each with two beds, and a living-room separating the two. Not to mention the enormous bathroom with a heated floor, a fur dryer and a jacuzzi large enough to hold all four of them at the same time.

Chuckling to herself, she realized there was no chance there'd be more than three furs in there at the same time anyway.

She ran a paw through her ashen hair and and looked over at Emma. "What're you reading, anyway?" she asked.

"Just some of the stuff I didn't understand during the past semester..." the mink replied and smiled shyly.

Jean blinked a few times. "You? There's something you didn't *understand*, Emma? Good God...you're not serious..."

"Actually, I am. You're the one with the ridiculous memory, after all. I'm just the one who tends to get all the scientific things right the first time," Emma chuckled.

"So I'm assuming that's not a book on historical theory?"

"Good heavens, no. I know that by heart. Nono...this is a lot more tricky..." the mink said and held up the book.

Jean read the back of it and facepawed. "Roman history. Emma...why didn't you just *ask*?"

Emma blushed and looked down. "I didn't want to give you extra work. There's so much for you to do while we're here..."

"And I'll need something to relax with. That looks like JUST the thing. I'll be happy to help," Jean said and winked.

Emma was about to answer when the door opened and Lizzy entered. "You have GOT to see the buffet...I kid you not, it's RIDICULOUS. It's so big it crosses an international timezone..."

Jean looked at the doe and blinked. "Erhhh...that big eh?"

"When it's noon for the bagels it's three in the afternoon for the chicken!"

"That's three timezones, actually."

"Oh shush...let me get away with my exaggerations will you, Emma?" Lizzy grinned and flopped down on the mink's bed.

"Where's Miriam?" Jean asked.

"She's gone to take a look at the convention center. She said she wanted to take a picture. A sort of 'Before and After' thing, I believe," Lizzy answered and patted her stomach. "I've eaten too much. They had fruit down there I didn't know existed..."

Jean couldn't help grinning. "I think it'd be very out of style for Zig Zag to get rooms in a hotel that's anything but top notch."

"I don't know...but I do know that the buffet is huge...and it's all VERY good. Don't cheat yourself, girls. You HAVE to try this."

Emma looked at the clock. "I'm sure we'll get a chance to eat lunch there, but if we don't get a move on, Lizzy, we're going to be late for setting up the stalls. Remember, that's why we're officially here. We're supposed to be working, y'know."

"Oh...blast. I forgot about the time. Yeah, we'd better get a move on. You take care Jean...you've got a meeting coming up, don't you?" the doe said and got back upright.

Jean nodded and smiled. She gave them a little wave as they left and leaned back. A meeting. She had to go to an actual business meeting. It was bad enough in itself, but this wasn't exactly a normal one of the kind. She had no idea what to expect from the porn industry when it came to that sort of thing. She sighed and tried to relax a little. Somehow, she had a feeling the next few days would be very stressful.

There was a knock on the door to the living room. The vixen got up and headed out of the bedroom and opened the door. Zig Zag was standing outside, smiling.

"Hello. Ready for your first meeting? Jean? Hey...pick up your jaw before it unhinges, dear. You look like you'd never seen me before," the skunk chuckled.

"Errhhh...bleeehhh..." Jean tried and shook her head. "Whoa...sorry. I mean, I have...but you look absolutely fantastic, Zig. Please, come on in, while I apply my own warpaint."

"Warpa...ohh...I see. Well, sure. Just don't take *too* long. We've got a meeting in fifteen minutes. First of many. Nervous?" Zig Zag asked and entered.

Jean looked at the skunk once again. Zig Zag had made a real effort on her already pretty impressive hair. She was wearing a black and white suit and in every respect, she looked like corporate power in the flesh. The vixen noted with slight envy that Zig Zag was one of those few furs who could get away with wearing silk stockings and make it look *good*.

"Very nervous, and don't worry, it won't take long, I promise. The others just went to help set up the stalls," Jean finally said and headed into the bathroom to apply her own makeup.

"It's all right. No need to be jittery. Just go in with me, let me do the talking and answer when you get asked. Actually, I'm glad you knew someone who could help out. Normally, the actors and actresses do most of the work in the stalls themselves but this time it's a bit different since they're going to be mingling...in costume. This way, we're not short-pawed."

"Not unless Lizzy manages to eat herself to death. She just told us about the buffet. Apparently it's...extensive," Jean said and chuckled.

"It is. Most of the companies and studios attending the convention have rooms here. That's a lot of furs to feed," Zig Zag said with a shrug.

"Who's this meeting with anyway?"

"Pethouse, actually," Zig Zag said and leaned back. The chair was quite comfortable and she sank in, crossing her legs.

"Day'uhmed...we start out big, don't we?" Jean said and peeked out from the bathroom.

"Might as well. They might be interested in putting a substantial sum into the movie..."

"I thought it was all financed...?" Jean said, sounding surprised.

"It is. But if I can get a part of it financed from other sources, there's no harm done. Also, if they'll be willing to do this, they'll put THEIR marketing and distribution departments to work on the advertising part of this, and I doubt I have to tell you what that'll do for the sales."

"Holy mother of...wow. Really? They'd do that? I mean, that magazine is sold all over the world, isn't it?"

"It is. Even as far away as the far east and Russia," Zig Zag said with a smile.

"But won't they want to take the credit for it then?" Jean asked.

"I won't let that happen. If they make that demand, we just walk out. They'll come to their senses soon enough."

"You're playing hard to get, aren't you?" Jean giggled.

"Any femme has to know how, Jean. Take my word on that. And believe me, I'm very, very good at being hard to get."

"Somehow, I do believe you," Jean said and came out of the bathroom again. "All done. Doesn't take all that long. I don't know how to apply as grand a makeup as you..."

Zig Zag blinked. "Well, it looks good, but if you don't know how to do that, I'll have to teach you sometime soon."

Jean smiled and nodded. That was the kind of offer no sensible femme would turn down. "Let's go then. Do I look okay?"

"You look just fine," Zig Zag said and got up again with a smile and a wink.

###

The fur looked up at the big sign. So...this was it. This was where the convention would take place, from tomorrow. He knew she'd be there. There was no doubt in his mind whatsoever. He wasn't exactly sure how things would go, but he knew he was in the right place.

There were already quite a few other furs milling about. Some were carrying bits of stalls and scenes inside. The fur gathered there'd be a lot of actual scenes in there. What was going to happen on them wasn't really his concern. He was there for other reasons. Though he had to admit to himself, he didn't mind the situation.

A young doe bumped into him, carrying one end of an enormous banner. A red vixen was holding the other end and a mink was steadying the middle. At first, the fur wondered why they didn't just roll up the banner, until he saw that it had a long, thin plastic rod running through the top, all the way along. And since it was fifteen feet long, it was a bit difficult for one fur to do alone. The doe nodded apologetically at him, and he returned it with a slight smile. He almost took no further notice of the banner until he saw the faces represented on the ends. There she was.

He knew he hadn't come in vain, now. There was no doubt left.

The fur took a step back and ran a paw through his hair, taking a deep breath. This was the perfect place. There were so many others around that it'd be impossible to escape when he found her. Not here.

He smiled to himself. Things would finally be as they should be. At long last. He'd still win.

Turning around, the fur started walking away. Tomorrow he'd come back and see if she was there.

###

"Zig Zag...this is Miss LeBrun I assume?" the tall, regal Doberman asked and extended a paw to the striped skunk. He was dressed in an extremely well fitting, obviously tailored black suit and white shirt. Simple, but very appropriate given his own black fur.

He looked dashing, Jean noted to herself. The watch on his wrist was a Rolex.

Zig Zag shook the offered paw and smiled with a nod. "Indeed. Very nice to meet you again, Mr. Rex. I hope we're not late?"

"I never wait for late business appointments, Zig Zag, you should know that. You're just on time," the Doberman said and smiled.

Jean noted that she'd never seen so many sharp, almost blindingly white teeth on a canine before.

The Dobermann extended his paw to Jean next and kept the same smile on his face. "Miss LeBrun, pleased to meet you. I'm Harry Rex, in charge of marketing with Pethouse magazine," he said.

Jean realized her tongue felt numb and she only barely managed to mumble a polite hello as she shook Harry's paw.

"No need to be shy. I don't bite," Harry chuckled. "Let's sit down and get started shall we?"

Zig Zag nodded and nudged Jean out of her stupor with an elbow to the vixen's side.

Everyone took a seat. There was a folder on the table by each chair. Zig Zag immediately opened hers and started looking through the paperwork. Harry stayed quiet for the moment, letting the skunk look. After a few moments, Jean couldn't control her curiosity any longer and opened her folder as well.

It didn't make a lot of sense to her. It was a lot of fiscal information, mainly. But she did her best. From what she could gather, this was a proposal from Pethouse, to take over the marketing and distribution of the movie.

Five or six minutes later, Zig Zag looked back up and folded her paws on the table. "You do realize I can't possibly accept this, Harry, don't you?" she said, seriously.

"I suspected you'd say that. What exactly is your problem with this proposal?"

"We put all the work into it. Jean has worked herself to the bone on the script...my actors and actresses are sore in places they're not USUALLY sore in after a shooting...I've put a large amount of my own money into this...and it's *already* fully financed. I don't NEED your money to do this movie, but it would make things quite a lot easier. Do you think that given those circumstances, I'd be willing to let you run off with forty percent of the money this movie makes, and let you launch it as YOUR movie?" Zig Zag said, calmly.

Harry nodded, slowly. He folded his paws in his lap and leaned back. "Very well...let's use that as a *suggestion*, shall we? Now...first things first. When you contacted us, Zig

Zag, you said this movie was going to be radically different from any porn movies released anywhere, so far. That it'd be...what was the expression you used, again...historically accurate?"

Jean cleared her throat and lifted a paw as if to speak.

"You don't need permission from the teacher, Miss LeBrun," Harry chuckled. "What's on your mind."

Jean blushed but smiled. "This movie isn't historically accurate. No movie ever made has been. It's not possible to make a movie that depicts history as it was...because no one alive was there to see this for themselves. It does, however, try to be historically precise."

Harry looked crosseyed for a moment. "You're going to have to explain that to me..." he said, not sounding too sure of himself. "What's the difference between 'Accurate' and 'Precise' in this case?"

Zig Zag smiled. Inwardly, she clapped. Getting Harry Rex on the defensive was definitely the right way to go.

Jean nodded and got up. "Mind if I use the blackboard?" she asked.

The Dobermann gestured for her to do so.

Jean picked up the chalk and pondered how to best explain this in layfurs terms. She wrote down 'Accurate' and 'Precise' on the blackboard and put a circle around each. "Okay, let me ask you this way. If something is accurate, Mr. Rex...what words would you otherwise use to describe it?"

"On the mark. Truthful. Factual." the Dobermann said after a moment's hesitation.

Jean's face contorted only very slightly. "As it is, 'Factual' is a four-letter word in the world of history, Mr. Rex. Historical fact does not exist, for the reasons I explained. If you want factual information you must have *all* information...even the information that isn't available, and you must then treat it with absolute objectivity. While some furs are really good at objectivity, it is flatly impossible to become an emotionless automaton and not let one's own 'world' influence how you read and digest material. The Germans have a really brilliant word for this called 'Weltanschauung', which translates into 'the way in which you observe and interpret the world, based on your life and your own experiences'. Trust Germans to make one efficient word for all of that," Jean said and wrote that word down, circling it on the blackboard. "You say it's on the mark, but that's only the case certain exceptions. It's not automatically 'on the mark', when you're talking history. You

can try to ensure it, and work towards it, but like with 'factual'...you can't ever hit the mark with everything. We can make sure armour and scenes look 'on the mark' as far as we *know* it. But we can't guard against small mistakes, because we simply lack the information to avoid them. Lastly you said 'truthful'...no, Mr. Rex. Sorry. Not automatically," Jean said . "Now...what would you say about 'Precise'?"

"That would be truthful, at least," Harry said. He felt his words stick in his throat. Normally, at meetings like this, he was the slick, cool one who stayed in control. He had to admit, though, that the roles were reversed here.

"Indeed it is. But with a couple of important conditions," Jean answered and wrote that down under 'precise'. "Now...needless to say, I wasn't present in Rome when Caligula was emperor, so I can't make it truthful. But I can at least make sure that the things we do know about his time and reign are depicted precisely. See the difference? It's some of what I just spoke about. It's about detail-work. We can make sure that details are shown right but mostly, this can be done with objects and locations. Costumes. We can set a reasonably precise *mood* for this movie, by making sure those things are at least as close to what we know about ancient Rome as possible. How did they dress? What materials were used for their clothing? What about the armour of the gladiators? We can make sure that Forum Romanum has an organic feel, instead of the pile of ruins sitting in the middle of Rome today, sure, but we also have to make sure it *looks* like it did before it was ruined."

"I'm starting to get the idea..." Harry said and nodded. "Go on."

"For one thing...I don't understand a whole lot about the actual fiscal parts of your proposition, but I do know that the sketches you made for possible advertising have to go. They're useless..."

Harry blinked and looked at Zig Zag. "She's blunt at least..." he mumbled, not without a certain amount of acknowledgement. Then he looked back at Jean. "Why's that? I had some pretty talented furs working on that for several days."

"Did you tell them to open a history book?" Jean asked. "I am not entirely sure what the Colosseum is doing in those pictures."

"Wasn't that where gladiators fought?" Harry asked, sounding confused.

"It was...twenty years later than this movie takes place. It wasn't *built* yet during Caligula's reign," Jean explained.

"Oh...bummer. Okay...now I understand what you mean by factual, precise and accurate. Good," he said and then looked back to Zig Zag. "I have a question for *you* then..."

"Go ahead?" Zig Zag said and poured herself a glass of water.

"If this movie is so radically different from other porn-movies, why do you go through Pethouse to get it released? I mean...like it or not, we *are* a porn company as well. Why not get someone in Hollywood to help with this?"

"Two reasons. First, they won't touch anything with sweat-scenes in it, and there ARE such scenes in this one too. Secondly, I've got a deep aversion to the major production companies in Hollywood. Let's just leave it at that," Zig Zag answered and sipped her water.

Harry shrugged and nodded. "Fair enough," he said and looked back to Jean. "Very well then, Miss LeBrun. Since you've already explained the difference between accurate and correct...sell this movie! I want to hear...*from* you since you wrote the script...what it's all about."

Jean blinked and looked at Zig Zag. The skunk nodded, reassuringly.

"Very well, Mr. Rex," she said and cleaned the blackboard, then wrote down a list of names. "This takes place during the reign of Caligula..."

###

Gabrielle looked at Esteban and Yohni. Then they all looked at their costumes. Then they looked at Wanda who was already putting hers on.

"How do you do that without help?" Yohni complained.

"I can't..." Wanda answered. "Only some parts of it. I need help with the rest. It's not all that hard, really. Shin guards and such....come on, didn't you ever play soccer in high school?"

"I'm not goeing to ask!" Esteban said and looked at his costume. "At least I can feegure mine out I theenk. There eesn't a lot OF eet."

Gabrielle sighed. "Wanda knows how to. Esteban only has to figure out the shoulder-guard and shin-protectors...since anyone can put on a loincloth. Yohni get's to wear a really nice dress once she figures out how to tie the ribbons around her chest. And

me...I'm going to walk around looking like an armour plated version of Xena. That doesn't bother me. What DOES bother me...is that there's a LOT of ittybitty pieces of this armour and I have no clue how to put it on."

"You have about twice as many pieces of armour to figure out as me, I admit that..." Wanda said. "But maybe I can help you anyway...let's give it a try."

Gabrielle nodded and the two femmes got working on it.

"Why does Zeeg Zag want us een costume already thees eveneeng aneeway?" Esteban asked.

"She said it'd be a good idea for the big pre-convention dinner tonight. With all the hobnobs and bigjobs there..." Gabrielle said and smiled as she finally figured out how to clasp the chestguard on, using a couple of loose buckles from the table.

"Ohh...that makes sense I guess..." Esteban said with a shrug.

"Jean's going to be there too of course. I think we're going to be walking exhibits. So that if anyone asks, she can illustrate with us. I just hope they don't ask us to perform a fight scene for entertainment while they eat," Wanda chuckled.

Gabrielle looked glum. "I'm hungry. But somehow I don't think we're going to get to eat a lot tonight."

"Awww...that esn't fair. We're the one's hauleeng all the extra weight around. We need feedeeng too!" Esteban whined.

"I'm sure Zig Zag won't let us go hungry to bed..." Yohni said, amusedly.

"Well, if nothing else I'll just have to eat you, Yohni..." Gabrielle said, whistling innocently.

"I should've seen that one coming, I really should," the mongoose said and rolled her eyes. She couldn't conceal a smile though.

Esteban managed to get his costume on himself and looked rather proud of himself. "When you two lovebirds are done tosseeng hormones around, I have a questeeon," he said.

"Oh look who's calling who a lovebird," Wanda grinned and slapped Estebans neck gently.

"ACK...not weeth the mane. Why's evereeone always messeeng up the mane..." he whimpered and smoothed it down. "Aneeway...we've had seex weeks to learn how to put these theengs on. Don't you theenk we should've learned how to put our costumes on ourselves by now?"

"Probably. But we don't rehearse in costume very often yet, and let's face it, wolfy, we don't exactly wear armour normally," Gabrielle said and smiled.

"Well...eet seems we're getteeng there. Let's feegure out how to do the straps on the dress and let's get goeeng. We'll be late otherwise."

Everyone agreed and between them, they figured out how to strap Yohni's chest to make the dress sit right. A moment later, they were ready to go.

"You have to be an exhibitionist to work in this business," Gabrielle said and smiled crookedly as she opened the door. "I think that's a very good thing in this situation. I feel like I'm going to a Halloween party."

###

Miriam looked at the finished stall. She smiled and brushed her paws off against each other. It had taken some time to get it set up. Fortunately, Lizzy was very good with a hammer and screwdriver. Otherwise they'd never have managed. Everything was ready. Both the main stall and the smaller tables around the place had been set up and all the material had been laid out. Emma had been blushing beet red most of the time. She clearly never watched a porn movie. Miriam didn't really do so herself but it took more to shock her than that.

Lizzy came over with three cokes. She gave one to each of the other two and smiled. "So...we're all set, aren't we?"

Emma nodded. "I don't know how I'll get through the next few days. Someone please remind me how Jean convinced me to go along for this trip?"

Lizzy grinned widely. "She needs support after those meetings and besides...a free trip to San Francisco? We'll have plenty of time to sample some of the nightlife after the convention closes at night."

"That's true..." Emma said and nodded. "And San Fran is supposed to be a lot of fun at night."

"Yep. And hey, when do we really have a chance to hang out with movie stars otherwise?" Miriam said with a wink and a nudge to Emma's ribs.

"Well, blue movie stars in this case, but I suppose you're right. Celebrities in any case."

"Absolutely. And it's not like anyone's going to mistake us for one of them..."

Lizzy cleared her throat. "Speak for yourself, Miriam. I'm good looking enough to work in that business!" she said, trying to keep a straight face.

"Ohhh, look who's full of herself," the vixen replied, deadpan.

"Anyway...I'm starting to understand what Jean is saying. Zig Zag seems really nice, you know. Sure, we're here to work and so on...and yeah, it's voluntary but frankly, who gets a free trip across the country for four days work?"

"I think she's got money like grass," Emma chuckled.

"Probably. Sex sells, after all," Lizzy said and shrugged. She sipped her coke again. "Besides, there's one thing I'm looking forward to these next few days..."

"What's that?" Miriam asked and sat on the edge of the stall.

"I'm really wondering who *comes* to a convention like this. Somehow, I keep getting this mental image of males in dirty overcoats and white tennis socks, wearing thick glasses and a french beret."

"Oh good grief, I didn't need that mental image," Emma shuddered. "I'm sure they'll be pretty ordinary furs."

"I'm sure you're right but I'm hoping to kill some of my own prejudices on this," the doe said and shrugged.

They all fell silent and finished their cokes. It was getting late. They were all getting tired. Working all day on the stalls and tables had worn them out. A good night's sleep would do wonders.

Tomorrow was the big day, after all.