communication buildup

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by Kiwi8_fruit6

Summary

Husk's biggest insecurity with being in a relationship is being cheated on, being left for another. Angel Dust, as part of his contract with Valentino, has to work as a porn star, pole dancer, and a prostitute.

There could be a conflict here. Instead, they talk it out.

When Angel sashays back into the hotel lobby after work – in a swell mood; his clients all had reasonable requests today and Val was pleased (or distracted) enough to let him keep a more substantial share of the pay – Husk refuses to meet his gaze. In fact, the feline pointedly turns his whole body away as the spider enters; busying himself with cleaning cups at the rear of the bar.

It stings, the rejection – of course it does. But Angel has known Husk for nearly a year and a half now; they've been going steady since the last Extermination. He's learned intimately all of the old cat's quirks and cues. The way Husk hunches in on himself now – *just like how he shrinks from his wartime nightmares* – extinguishes any temper Angel could muster. If Husk were really pissed, he'd be letting the whole hotel know with no hesitation.

(Maybe some of Cha-cha's counselling has finally rubbed off; a year ago he would have gone all offended and huffy himself. Probably gotten into a nasty quarrel too.)

So Angel breathe in and out; traipses over to the bar and slips himself onto a barstool.

"Hey, Husk. 'S'matter, babe?"

"…it's nothin'."

"Aw, c'mon Husky. I can tell something's bothering ya."

"*You're* bothering me." There's no real heat in the retort, and Angel notes the cat's back cringe slightly as he says them. He tackles the gut-punch hurt down, reminds himself that Husk's only got his walls up.

Husk grabs, chugs a bottle of beer, then turns and glowers seeing the spider still at the counter. "Couldja fuckin' lay off? I don't want to talk 'bout it right now." His eyes dart about as he scrubs his mouth, scanning the room as if expecting eavesdroppers or an ambush. That detail doesn't escape Angel's notice.

"Kitty, it's past midnight," he murmurs reassuringly. "Just us down here."

Husk grunts, turns away to take another swig, but some of the tension in his back has gone down. That's a good sign.

Angel pauses, inhales, before continuing. "Look… I know this is probably something to do with my workin' the streets an' all. Ya do tend to get all…y'know, surly-like, uncomfortable… on nights like these. Been noticin' that for a while now. At least," he quips lamely, trailing off, "when I ain't sauced up on sum't'in…"

A gritted sigh. "Fuck it." Husk places the bottle down and turns around. The furrow of his brows and the stoic concern in his voice broadcast no resentment but insecurity.

"I know, alright?" he blurts. "That you're in a contract with Val, that you gotta do all this stuff on the streets 'cause he makes ya." His tone softens. "An' it's not you. I don't hold it against

ya, Angel. I mean it. Don't want you beating yourself up over it, cause I reckon you – uh – get enough of that already…"

Angel feels his chest tighten a bit. "Then what izzit, Husk?"

Husk averts his eyes, anxious. He seems to take a while to find the right words, and speaks them in a small, hesitant voice:

"Am I not…gonna be… *enough*, for you, someday?"

Angel sits bolt upright instantly. "Dontcha dare drag yerself like that Husky." The spider's voice is a low, protective growl. "You're miles better than any of the Johns out there, in and out of bed."

He waves a trio of arms wildly, emotionally, in the direction of the main doors, the city beyond. "We talk. Ya listen. We drink – I have a ball just spendin' time with ya, before we even get to the bedroom – and that means so much more than any number of clients I can suck off in one night. That's just getting laid an' paid; sure I might fucken enjoy it some nights but only for what it is! Can't remember their faces even when I'm sober. I ain't fallen for any of them like…like I have with you."

Husk doesn't say anything, his ears folded against his head. There's a long enough silence for Angel to really start to fret, before the cat hesitantly makes his way around the counter and sits on a stool next to Angel, taking off his top hat.

He's not looking at Angel again – gazing down at a knotty floorboard – but he's not fully turned away. *This is okay*, Angel tells himself.

"I was… I've never had good luck with love. And relationships, an' shit."

"…Okay." Husk has never, ever brought up his past in detail like this before. He's notoriously Charlie's most difficult therapy patient when he can get dragged to her saccharine counseling sessions.

"The first time… I had a ring, was gonna propose. Then the Depression hit, and turns out she was more after the money, which I didn't have no more, so she left. Few years later, I fell for another broad; said she was gonna wait for me while I was fighting in the War. An' guess what?"

"She…didn't?"

"She'd left town, just months after I was shipped out. Never knew where she'd gone. Who she'd moved onto."

That blows, and *I'm sorry*, hang unspoken and insufficient in the lobby air.

Husk fiddles with his claws. "An' then I tried to settle down with a lady one last time; but she couldn't cope wit' my battle shock. The nightmares, the shakes, the drinking… I knew she was sleeping around for a while, at the end. Guess I gave up on love after that. Felt it weren't worth the gamble, scared that I'd always be cheated 'n' hurt if I tried to play fair."

Angel's chest aches for Husk at that. Oh, he's been there, alright – the pain of being dumped, spurned; of his heart being led astray. But he never completely abandoned the hope of finding the *one*.

"Husk, I –" murmurs Angel. He's not sure where he meant to take the sentence, but suddenly there's the feeling of Husk's paw resting on his leg, and the concept of putting words together flees his mind. Husk meets Angel's gaze properly – his eyes are big and round and sincere.

"But… you're different, 'Legs. Really. Ya choose to spend time around – with me, when ya don't have to. Stayin' for the hangovers and all the other shit... 'n I appreciate it. Past the tits an' flirting, you're seriously the nicest guy I've met, up there or down here."

"Awww, ya flatterer," Angel coos. Husk's mouth finally twitches into a small smirk.

"An' I should know that means something. That you're staying, that you're doin' all the… nice, just bein' in a relationship things wit me. An' in my head I really don't mind that you do skin flicks n' one night stands for a job. I knew at the beginning, and I chose to say yes to this…us."

"It just…" Husk starts to frown again, "…it just reminds me, is all; the feeling when you go out…"

"I get it, Husk. Don't blame ya for any of that." Angel sighs, rubs a still-fading bruise on one arm. "When Val wants his dough there ain't much I can do, an'… I'm sorry for that. Honest." He wants to say more – but he can't let himself consider the impossibility of getting out of his contract.

He would stop, really, if he could – if Husk asked him to. But he doesn't know how he'd get there, and he doesn't know what he would do *after. (Apart from Husk, that is.)*

Angel makes to get up – but Husk suddenly reaches out and clasps one of the spider's hands, blushing very hard under all his fur.

"I…uh… I ***love*** ya, Angel. What we've got… I don't want to lose it."

Angel is going to cry. He leans down and kisses Husk, cradles the cat's cheek gently. Husk melts into it, begins to purr.

"You ain't gonna," Angel says, choked, when they break apart. "I love ya too, Husky."

"Sap," Husk mutters. His eyes are also sparkling. "Thanks." Then he sniffs and screws up his nose. "Can still smell em' on ya. Take a shower, 'Legs."

"Ooh, there's yer possessive streak." Husk puffs up, flustered, at that, and Angel can't help but snicker wetly. "You know I like that in a man."

Husk relaxes into snorted chortles too."*That* - heh - doesn't work well when yer all misty-eyed."

"Hey, I reckon it worked just fine." Angel plants a peck on the cat's cheek. "Just for you, dreamboat."

Husk gently paws at the glossy lipstick marking white fur. Then the cat reaches over, and places a little cobwebbed 'Bar Closed' sign on the bartop. "*Your* room, uh, tonight?"

Oh. "Ya never need to ask, Husky."

"Dependant on you taking that shower though." Husk stands; his grumping ruined by the fact he's trying not to smile. "I like it when you smell of…you." He whips up a single pointed claw. "*Don't* fuckin' dare say 'Is that'cha kink?' right now."

"I wasn't gonna." Angel gets to his feet as well. "*Buuuttt.*.. if I'm all stinky an' such, why are we still holding hands?"

Husk doesn't answer, as he and the spider amble towards the stairs. They climb.

...

"…still holdin' hands there."

"…don't make me say it all again."

"I gotcha." Another of Angel's arms entwines around Husk's. Husk leans into the contact; Angel leans back.

Together they reach the top of the stairs, merging into the peaceful shadows of the corridor.

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