

This had been the most daunting thing yet. Myrkr sighed as he flicked ichor from his freshly combed hair with a look of annoyance as he sat cross-legged on the edges of the vast lake. He remembered whenever his husband had told him about his first voyage here and how it had genuinely shocked and yet intrigued him. Chaos was far more open to new things than he was. After all, Myrkr was an old dog, and you can't really teach them new tricks. As he sat there, shadow-like emissions steadily streaming from the tips of his soft ears, his lips curling slightly as he watched Chaos nerd out about the sciences behind darkness and matter. He thought that it was cute, he always found that when Chaos had discovered new sources of passion, that he would just go on and on about the subject for hours if given the chance to do so. He came along with him to explore and see what the fuss was about with this strange and unique planet called "Core", which he found to be a little silly of a name. Why not something super duper complex like "Alpha Excidum" or some kind of crazy elaborate name. Of course though, not everyone was as complex as he was. Chaos looked up from his work and gestured for the old Skirean to come over and see what he was doing. He got up and strolled over to see that Chaos was showing someone how to collect the ichor properly, unlike what happened to him last time he tried to take a sample. "You have to make sure that the bottle you use is not one made of thin material and it's even better if you know how to enchant it from decomposing." He explained as he quietly showed the crook watching his demonstration. He flicked his fingers and fire came from the tips of each claw, gently warming the wax on the top of the bottle to seal the specimen inside. Myrkr couldn't help himself and broke the silence, "So is it... *Living*?" Chaos glanced up at his lover and shrugged, "I'm not too certain. It moves and eats, so I'm assuming yes." Myrkr crossed his arms in front of his chest, "And you plan to keep it in that confinement of a jar with no access to air?" Chaos thought for a moment, "It doesn't even breathe air. The oxygen levels here are almost nonexistent." Myrkr then felt like an old fool. "Hm. Interesting, but that's still a rather tiny bottle for a living thing, don't you think?" Chaos began to put the bottle in his bag. "I think it'll be fine until we get back... Until then we should try and find some more materials to take back with us. I'm in need of some broken ampules... And reflective trim..." He mumbled as he stared down at the list of things he would need for an upcoming project. He had most of the items, but still needed the two to complete the recipe. Myrkr looked over his bicep and eyed the paper, trying not to fall over with how tall Chaos was compared to him. He could sense that his husband was lingering and looked over at him with a small grin. He handed him the paper gently and Myrkr gave him a shy smile before looking over it himself. He noticed how Chaos was already trying to map out the different areas in which things could be found, like shed infection. Shed infection..? What was that? He thought to himself, wondering what exactly Chaos was planning on making. He had heard that some of these items hold a particular value to them, something that, as a retired body broker, he was fully aware of and interested in. "Do any of these items hold value?" He asked, looking up at Chaos with an expression of amusement. "Not until they've been mixed together to craft the item. I mean, they do, yes. Some items are rarer to find and could possibly hold a trade value, but a crown value? Unlikely." Myrkr frowned. How strange. He nodded quickly and handed Chaos the list back. "We ought to get going, then. We are burning daylight." Chaos agreed and began to lead them back into the ichor-covered forest. Much of the fauna here seemed to be made partially of glass and dark matter which perplexed them all. Chaos had once been brave enough to touch this bark, finding it to be oddly similar to that of the trees on Skire. He hadn't yet dared to take any samples

because he wasn't quite sure yet if it would be a safe thing to do. He noticed too, that the canopies dripped with this odd goo and it honestly reminded him of inky caps or some strange form of organic mucus. What was even stranger, was that it was quite literally a part of these trees and seemed to be helping with a form of photosynthesis, but not for oxygen. Chaos stopped to write all of these things down just to make sure he knew to remember these observations. As they approached the place where the ampules should be, Chaos seemed unsurprised to find none. Perhaps they had already been taken by something else? He sighed as he looked around, his crook partner went into the other direction in order to cover more ground. Myrkr stayed where they stopped, unsure on what to do since he was really only along for the ride to support and see what Chaos did. As he moved to sit down on a dark log, something became disturbed and slithered down behind the trunk, away from view. Myrkr thought that he had heard something moving behind him, but turned back to admire Chaos as he worked. He grinned a little as Chaos fumbled with a pencil and nearly dropped it, only to see that Myrkr was chuckling at him. The larger CCCat walked over and sat down beside him for a moment, "What's so funny?" He asked as he gently nudged his husband's arm with his. "I'd kiss your head if I didn't have this silly helmet on..." Myrkr grumbled as he leaned over, resting on Chaos's arm. "How long do you think we will remain here for?" He asked, Chaos frowning a little. "Well, we just got here a few days ago..." Myrkr sat up, "It's been longer than a few days I believe." He said, which had caught Chaos off guard a little. "It has?" Myrkr nodded, "Luckily we have a nice ship that we can backtrack to before dark so that we don't have to stay in these ugly suits all night long." He complained, folding his arms over his chest again. "It can't possibly be that bad..." Myrkr looked up at him with a look that screamed annoyance. "You're joking right?" Chaos shrugged, "Hey, you begged me to come. I didn't force you. Maybe you should help me find these ampules and trimming, then we can get back." He suggested, and that was when Myrkr perked up a little. "Fine. Let's go and find these... Ampules." Chaos chuckled and stood back up, his husband following. "By the way, I'm only here because I love to support you in anything you set your mind to. Not because of anything else." Chaos smiled, "I know... And I'd always do the same for you too. You're my best friend." He said, gently taking Myrkr's hand in his. Even though they couldn't feel each other's palms or the heat from them, they knew what it felt like to actually hold hands. It was the gesture and being close that they both adored. As they walked back up to their partner, he was already digging up what appeared to be the remains of ampules, and that was all that he and the crook really needed. Chaos looked excited to finally find some. "Did you see any more?" He asked as he gently let go of Myrkr's hand and crouched down beside the Crook to examine the area with him. "No... Not yet at least. It at least looks to me like there have been some around here before. I'm sure there are more nearby but we'll have to keep searching." The crook said with a monotone voice. Chaos simply nodded and got up to continue their search. Myrkr didn't exactly know what these vials looked like except in pictures or art that Chaos had drawn. So, he just began to skim the area for what he remembered from memory. Ampules... Ampules... He grumbled to himself and he began to tread further along, almost losing the other two. Myrkr kneeled down after having noticed something shiny poking from the base of an ichorous bush. Beneath the caked roots and brambles, he saw a partially buried and shattered glass ampule, he knew that he had just hit the jackpot. Meanwhile Chaos and the other researcher were busy talking about plans and theories as to where they would be. Myrkr began to dig gently with his claws as he began to unearth not

one, but several of these things. His excitement grew as he steadily pulled out five of them, putting them into his bag carefully in order to bring over to his husband and the other Skirean. "Hey, guys!" Chaos looked up and walked over to him, noticing that he wasn't hurt and then the sounds of rattling glass coming from his bag. He cocked his head slightly to one side as he walked up, and Myrkr revealed to him the ampules in his bag. "Holy... Where did you find them?" He asked, and Myrkr took his hand and began to lead. "They were just under here, buried underneath this brambled bush. It looks to me like someone or something hid them from plain view." Chaos chuckled, "I guess someone is just as interested in collecting broken things as we are. How fascinating." He admitted before hugging Myrkr, "Great job... Thank you for helping us." He said, smiling down at him. Myrkr smiled back proudly, "See? I may be old and grouchy, but I know how to find things when I want to." He said with a proud face. "Indeed." He said with a chuckle, "We should probably try to get back to the ship before nightfall. It'll be arriving soon. I have the time tracking on my watch." He said, walking over to fetch his fellow researcher and they began to walk back to where they would need to stay for the remainder of the night. Nights were particularly long on Core, which Myrkr actually quite enjoyed. He was, after all, a child of darkness. He just loved the coolness of the air back at home, how the animals of the night sang their haunting tunes to fellow species and for others to hear the chorus of the night. But here, it was far more jarring and scary. Things howled and screamed, but luckily the ship was generally soundproof. He remembered the first time they had been late to get back to the ship, the piercing howls of some kind of pack animal wrang in his ears and put him into high alert. Chaos however, seemed completely calm about it. He stayed close to him every single time after that. For some reason, knowing that his husband was seemingly unbothered helped him be less afraid of the unknown. He came to enjoy the odd and alien sounds that the ichor planet made. While utterly terrifying and scary, part of Myrkr thought that it was extremely cool and fascinating too, just like his husband did. He had hoped that they would be making another trip like this again. After all, they still needed to find the reflective trim that Chaos needed. It was apparently the final crafting ingredient to this strange ward that he was creating. Myrkr too, wanted to see if he could also use anything they find from this place for his own magical purposes.