

Prompt: Feathering the Nests

Subprompt: N/A, AKA hoping I get the 20% drop because I got none of the boosts
:pensive emoji:

Decadent Denouement

Lugging around the increased weight from the pebbles and dust in his pack began to wear on Tenet by the end of his journey. He had figured that sourcing a gem himself would be inexplicably dangerous, especially with fragile cargo over such a long distance (as he knew of gem mines only in the Kotakaii mountains, on the other side of the continent). His only choice was to head to the city closest to his childhood home; one where he knew a certain someone would hold the stock he needed.

When the tips of buildings were finally visible over a short hill, Tenet was both relieved to see his journey near its end, and wary as ever seeing *where* it ended. Despite his instincts, he knew there was no other choice, and that he would have to sacrifice a piece of himself for his egg's sake. Tenet marched onwards over the hill and finally arrived at his childhood town- it was no home, but he spent much time there on errands as a pup. Because of this, he was... well known, to say the least. Many were too intimidated to confront him about his past, but unfortunately for Tenet one of the boldest hounds he remembered was the one he must speak to.

When Tenet came before the shopkeep's stall, the icy blue hound's eyes widened in surprise. A toothy grin wrapped itself over his bumpy snout, and with bared fangs the shopkeep announced,

"Now, look at what the Yens dragged in! I sure haven't seen *you* in a while."

Tenet groaned softly in reply. "That's because I've had better things to do than speak to irritating pup-pals. You know I only ever come here for a reason."

The shopkeep snirked. "Like harassing the little pups? Or do you have a so-called *real* reason now? Are you doing favors for your pappy again? Get told off during your previous training time?"

Tenet's tail lashed to and fro, but he clamped his jaw shut. He retrieved a small pouch of coin from his pack, and then held it up so the shopkeep could clearly see it. "I'm not here on a favor for *him*, Ros. I haven't been on a favor for that old man in years. I'm here for a *real* reason, yes- and it is to do proper business in the marketplace," he spoke slowly, through clenched teeth. His lips bared his fangs, betraying his true emotions, and Ros' contempt snirk continued to plaster itself across his snout.

"Oh, sure you are. What is it this time? Are you in dire need of some ancient artifact I just so happen to hold? I doubt you could even af-"

Ros' demeaning remark was cut off by Tenet's gruff response. "I am looking for a *gem*."

Ros leaned forward in response, his fuzzy eyebrows raising. "A *gem* huh? I never thought you'd settle down," the hound teased. "Heck, I thought you'd die alone, settled or not!"

Tenet's thick black cheek fur was the only thing hiding his embarrassment. "It is *not* that, either- and if it was, it's still none of your business. I don't *need* a reason. Do you have one or not?"

Ros leaned back, swinging his tail excessively as he turned to the mounds of boxes behind his wooden stall. "I sure don't know, surely we'll have to sit out here for a while, while I look..."

Tenet managed to expel his emotion through a single ear flick. "That's fine," he replied, his teeth still grating against each other, "you are my only option."

Ros' eyes glinted in the light, and his grin briefly widened. "You can always count on me for the most elusive wares," he said, pushing a box aside. He dug his large paws into a crate full of various knickknacks, then lightly dropped the box he had retrieved on the stall's counter. He flipped open the lid, revealing glistening gemstones of various colors, shapes, and sizes. "I'm sure that pouch of Kouneen you got saved up there can get you one or two of these, depending on size... we'll see."

Tenet squinted down at the box, struggling not to smash it right into Ros' dumb face. Most of the gemstones in it were quite small, and some were not even polished. Tenet was not sure if the gem had to be polished or not, though- he felt that the 'perfect gem' had to involve personal preference to some degree. What did he want his egg to hatch on? A sharp ruby? A smooth opal? An unrefined emerald? He did not know how this choice would affect his egg, or him, but he knew the longer he spent standing there, the more Ros could humiliate him, and the more likely anyone would see what was in his sack.

After a few moments of deliberate decision-making, Tenet reached a paw into the box and, gently as he could, took a small chunk of unpolished kyanite between his claws. The way it gleamed in the light reminded him of eyes, and its sharp edges and sky-blue coloration reminded him of his own horn, something every kirunhound of his family took pride in. He figured it the best fit for his egg, if personal preference was the deciding factor; whether it was the right choice or not would soon be seen, with good luck.

Ros peered at Tenet's choice indecisively, gauging how much he would squeeze out of the purple hound for it. "Kyanite, huh? Well, I had to go deep into the caves of Kotakaii for those specimens... I'm afraid that will cost you the entire pouch of Kouneen you've presented me," he said cheekily, closing the box and putting it back away into his stash of junk.

Tenet sighed, putting the stone in a pocket of his satchel, separated from the egg. He could not afford to have it hatch now, of all times. "Fine. Keep the pouch,

too. I can always make a new one," he muttered, turning his head from Ros. "This goes beyond whatever rivalry you're so intent on continuing."

Ros snatched up the pouch eagerly and looked inside, counting the little stash of Kouneen in his head with glee. "Whatever you say, buddy. I'm just glad you haven't kicked some poor pup in the face yet," he replied offhandedly, not looking up from the pouch.

Tenet's ear flicked, but he managed to turn away. "It was nice doing business with you," he said through clenched teeth, "but I will be taking my leave now."

And with that, Tenet strolled away from the marketplace and out of the town, his tail flickering to and fro in unbridled, unspoken rage. He knew he would be back here soon enough to settle the score, but for now there was something more important than petty arguments.

He was going to be a father, despite his own's best judgement.