

CWs: mention of vore, mention of depression, mention of therapy

The warmth and love at the underground base of supervillains was always in steady supply, but at no time was it higher than the Korpsmas season. Assassins and thieves banded together to fill the stockings of all who celebrated, decorators took the opportunity to collaborate on big public spaces, and the mad scientists worked overtime to fulfill every twisted fantasy of naughty and nice alike.

And so, when the morning finally arrived, Vixie found Ellen festooned in garb befitting Father Christmas himself, her coat ruffled and full and her hat drooped over her eyes.

The six-pack was, perhaps, un-Kringle-like, but as Papas Noel went, her sister had always been Vixie's favorite anyway. Besides, as far as Vixie was concerned, Ellen was the only reason this time of year continued to be worth celebrating. Without her dedication to the spirit of Christmas, she'd be left with old memories instead of making new ones each year.

Besides, Ellen's snoring was *adorable*.

With a satisfied smirk, Vixie turned to find somewhere else to sleep—and nearly ran face-first into Miss Carmen's...

"O-oh!!" she squeaked, hurriedly backing a few tiny steps away so she could look up, *up* at Miss Carmen's face. "G—uhm, m-merry Korpsmas, M-Ma'am!"

"Merry Korpsmas, Vix." She gave the vixen a scritch on her scalp, sipping her mug of steaming hot cocoa with the other. Her voice was low and gentle; plenty enough to be heard, but melodious and sweet. "Couldn't sleep?"

Vixie shook her head. "I-I slept okay, b-but... uhm, I g-got up to pee, and h-haven't gotten back to b-bed yet, M-Ma'am."

“Mm.” Carmen’s face scrunched up in a mischievous grin. “Tell you what—since you’re awake, and it *is* Christmas morning, how about we exchange our presents for each other?”

“B-before anyone else w-wakes up, Ma’am?”

Carmen gave the swiftest, tiniest nod. “Just one each. I don’t think anyone will mind—especially if you help me get breakfast started right after.”

Now it was Vixie’s face that scrunched.

“L-let’s do it!”

The pair crept past the snoring Foxpaw’s couch, across the living space to a tree that Vixie had no problem crawling under to retrieve a wrapped package of her own—Carmen directed her to another as well, content to let the short vixen wiggle about on the floor.

If nothing else, she admired the view—even if she had to put a footpaw on the base of Vixie’s tail to keep it from perking up and swiping at the lower branches.

She surfaced soon enough, handing both parcels to Carmen—who, of course, generously handed one back. It was *heavy*, rectangular in shape and unmistakably solid. Vixie turned it over slowly and carefully, then looked up at Carmen.

“Yours first~” the tabby lilted.

Vixie was not one to argue and much less one to disobey; she carefully unwrapped hers, even when Carmen reminded her that she didn’t need to be quite so frugal as to save the wrapping paper, fingers carefully unsticking tape and unfolding folds. Vixie had a lot of practice with the latter.

She shook with excitement as the last of the paper fell away.

“A-a brick!!”

Carmen giggled. "Other side, Vix!"

The foxgirl's ears twitched as she turned the brick over in her hands; a blue sticky note stuck, folded, to the back. Vixie straightened it out with her thumbs.

Beneath a pair of silhouetted portraits flanking the number "141.12" was written a note in simple, mostly-clean handwriting:

Merry Christmas, Vixie! Dr. Solmere tells me you've been making a whole lot of progress with your sessions, and with that in mind, I'm proud to announce that I've cleared you for twice as many ISFOOD bodies each month!

Tell #03 hi for me!

The rim of a caramel coffee stain rested across the signature, but Vixie recognized the K-BURP director's handwriting well enough by now.

Vixie's tail couldn't help but swish in delight behind her. Just knowing that her therapist had given her a good report was gift enough for her, but knowing she could spend twice as much time in humid, cramped conditions brought a giddy rush of warmth to her privates.

Carmen leaned down, one hand cupping her cheek as her lips brushed the fluff of Vixie's ear:

"I'll take you up on that tomorrow, if you like."

A rush of *moisture* joined the warmth.

"A-ah! Y... y-yes, M-Ma'am!"

"Good girl," Carmen grinned, straightening back up and turning over the gift in her hands. "So...?"

“Oh, o-of course! J-just, uhm, b-be careful, M-Ma’am!”

With a claw and great care, the wrapping paper fell away. Green flesh and short spines stood atop a carefully-packed pot, the cactus short and squat and round.

“Aww,” cooed Carmen, “I *love* things that bare their fangs to hide how fragile they are. It’s *cute*.”

Vixie giggled, unsure of how to interpret that but feeling, nonetheless, like giggling was the correct response.

“Of course, not nearly as cute as *you*,” Carmen added, squatting down once more to kiss a stammering Vixie between the ears, “and you’re only getting stronger every day.”

“I-I...!”

“I mean that, Vix.” The fox shook with emotion, clutching her brick, as Carmen spoke. “I’m *so proud of you*. Thank you.”

“W... w-why are you th-thanking *me*, M-Ma’am?”

“For letting yourself be helped. It’s hard to do. A lot of people *don’t*. So yes, *thank you*, Vixie. And Merry Korpsmas.”

“O-oh! Well... th-thank *you* for, uhm... f-for helping me, Ma’am.”

Carmen’s arms wrapped around the vixen, carefully slipping her hands underneath the mane of hair. “Of *course*, Vix. Now I’m gonna pick you up and walk you over to the kitchenette for some peppermint hot chocolate before we get breakfast started for everybody. If I’m gonna eat you tomorrow, I may as well treat you today!”