

Oh, Saturday Sun

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Characters: Hornoiki, Muspelheim, Fornax, Surtis

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This had to go perfectly or else he wouldn't know what to do with himself.

He fiddled with his cloak again, trying to get it right at its most attractive angle on his shoulders, when he paused and groaned. It's not going matter if he looked as dashing as possible in his newly made cloak, it's not like Muspelheim would be able to appreciate it. He looked down at himself, sighed, and fiddled with it again. It's the thought that counts, damn it.

For the past few moons, Hornoiki has been meeting with Muspelheim, painter of the Blazing Trails clan. At first, it was mostly during Muspelheim's painting sessions at their home, the mural of a forest fire slowly coming into shape before his eyes. The first meeting had started *disastrously*, much to Hornoiki's eternal embarrassment. He thought he was going to die on the spot after his fumble, but then Muspelheim had saved it by offering to teach him the different textures of the paints he used. It had been a deeply educational and interesting experience.

He should've realized that he had a crush then. He really should have.

After that, Hornoiki started to join in whenever Muspelhiem has over. Sometimes he sat and watched, sometimes he asked questions about the clan dragon's painting methods. Sometimes Muspelheim would ask him if he wanted to touch his paints or a dried part of the mural to understand how he paints, and Hornoiki always said yes. He'd let him grab his paw or wrist, and move it wherever he needed it to be. To say that his face was usually changed from blue to red was an understatement.

This, however, was a new development. Last week, Muspelheim had stopped his painting of a burning tree and turned his head towards him. He asked, "How would you feel about meeting outside of my sessions?"

Truthfully, Hornoiki thought he would explode and die. Outloud, he said, "I'd be delighted to meet you outside of your painting. I enjoy your company."

"Hmm." A small smile was born on the painter's face. "Any chance you may take me on a tour of your estate? I know with my... condition, it would be strange, but-"

"No, no! I'd love to!" Hornoiki had nearly shouted, flinching at himself. "I'll find the best ways to give you the most perfect experience for you. It's no bother to me."

Muspelheim was quiet for a moment, then, "That would be lovely, Hornoiki."

Hornoiki smiled and hoped the painter could hear it in his voice. "Then have no doubt, Painter Muspelheim, you'll have a wonderful time in my paws."

That was a promise he hoped he was going to keep. He had spent a lot of time going around the property, checking each and every area for places Muspelheim could actual experience. Touch, smell, sound, anything that didn't revolve around *looking* at something. It was a lot harder than he expected, but! He had done his best and had picked out the best places for Muspelheim and him to go to.

Perhaps he was going a little too strong with this. Crushes of his always started like a shot to the heart and kept going and going and going until he. Well. Burned out. Or was rejected. Which is what usually happened, anyways. It was just a part of his nature, he supposed, and it was a part of everyone else's nature to leave him. He fiddle with his cloak again.

"Come on, how many times are you going to bother with that thing?"

Hornoiki jumped, swiveling his head around as his claws clutched the collar. He frowned. "Fornax, don't scare me so!"

"Oh, you're such a hatchling! Stop touching that damn cloak and let me-"

She knocked his paws away, tsking at his apparent disarray. He didn't personally see it, since he kept moving the damn thing so much, but he let her take the collars and swerve it this way and that, trying to find the best fitting angle. Which, again, was pointless since Muspelheim wouldn't be able to see it, but he didn't stop her.

"Working yourself into a pile of nerves before a date, brother?"

He flustered, face turning red and he choked slightly on his own spit. "It's- You- I never said it was a date!"

Fornax snorted, pulling him closer to her and spreading the cloth out more even over his body. As she smoothed out any folds or creases she saw, she said, "If it's not a date, why are you dolling yourself up then, hmm?"

"I want to make a good impression!"

"He's blind, Ho-ho. He's not going to be impressed by what he can't see."

He pouted, looking away from her much like a hatchling would. He *hated* that she could call out his bluff with an ease that was entirely unfair to him. She read him like a scroll while he

struggled to pick up a shadow of her. Finally done messing with his cloak, she let go of him, raising a scalebrow at him. A smirk rested on her lips.

“A crush again?”

With a heavy, well worn defeated sigh, he nodded. “It’ll pass.”

“You always say that.”

“And it always happens.”

“When you don’t want it to.”

Hornoiki stood and stormed off, head dipped low as he scowled childishly at the ground. Of course, his sister wouldn’t let him have a moment alone to sulk, as she followed him outside. The shock from leaving the dimmer insides of their home to the vivid colors and light of the world never stopped being new to him. Fornax’s voice was less pleasant.

“When is he arriving?”

He glanced up at the sun. “Soon. Enough time for you to *go away*.”

She, of course, ignored him. “You’re fussing a lot for someone who has plenty of time.”

“I like to be prepared.”

A moment of quiet, as they both walked towards the entrance of their family estate. He stopped and sat right besides the opening of their walls, wanting to be the one to greet Muspelheim first. His sister sat next to him, leaning over to look at the opening with him.

“He’s a clan dragon, isn’t he?”

Hornoiki blinked, glancing at her with furrowed scalebrows. “Yes? You already know this?”

She didn't say anything for a few seconds, leaving him to believe that maybe, for once, she'd let him be. Instead, she said, "He's not... one of those run-arounds you usually fall for, is he?"

That was a question he didn't want to think about. Muspelheim didn't seem like one of the other men Hornoiki had an unfortunate habit of falling over, ones that didn't want him for *him* and left as soon as they were bored, or were simply disinterested from the very beginning. But, considering clans and their more unfavorable behavior, there was always a chance. A big chance he was, in fact, one of those men.

But when he looked back at Muspelheim and their interactions, he never felt like some fling or mildly interesting object to look at and then throw away. He felt like someone that the painter wanted around, someone to talk to, someone to be wonderful company with. Muspelheim seemed honest. He seemed like someone who knew himself and what he wanted.

To his sister, he said, "He's different. He wouldn't come if he didn't want to."

He could see the judgemental expression his sister gave him, the concern thinly veiled underneath. She didn't press, however. Fornax bumped his shoulder, gave him a last look, one he couldn't discern, and turned back towards the manor.

"Tell me what he thinks about the flowers! Mother works hard on them!" She called over her shoulder, waving a single wing in goodbye. He rolled his eyes, but he didn't bother trying to stop the fond smile that fluttered on his face.

The waiting was, as it always was for him, near unbearable. He fidgeted where he sat, claws tapping impatiently on the ground as his tail twitched back and forth. He very well couldn't start messing with his cloak after both he and his sister spent so much time making it perfect, but his paws itched to grab at the collar and twist it around between his toes.

Muspelheim could take his time, it's fine. He wasn't even late, Hornoiki was worrying for no reason.

But Ancestors, he was going to *die* if he didn't arrive soon.

As if he had summoned him with his anxiety, Hornoiki spotted the familiar giant landing just a few meters from the estate, accompanied by his sister, who looked stern and like she didn't want to be here. He straightened his back, cracked a friendly smile, and waved a wing to her. Outloud, he said, "Painter Muspelheim! Scholar Surtis! A pleasure to meet you both and a joy to have you visiting again, Muspelheim."

Muspelheim walked in a steady, firm pace, his steps large and sure. The mock flame weights of his blindfold swayed gently in his breeze. He smiled when he heard Hornoiki's voice, dipping his head in a slight bow. Surtis glanced at the blue dragon, then turned back to look at the ground in front of them, watching for anything that might trip her brother. Hornoiki thought nothing of the minor rudeness, he was used to her behavior by now. Especially when she was around Muspelheim.

The pair reached the entrance and Honoriki stood, giving himself only a moment to hope his cloak was fine. "I hope my tour is up to your standards."

"Depends on what you show me," Muspelheim said, a chuckle lingering underneath his words. "Hopefully with no sights in mind."

"None at all," he replied, his own voice mimicking the amused tone.

Muspelheim tilted his head where Surtis sat, glaring without malice at Hornoiki. She tapped her claws on the ground and his head pointed towards the sound. "Little Starburst," he said and her expression melted into something soft, something less stern. "If you may return before nightfall, I would appreciate it."

A pause. “Okay,” she said. Something in her tone, something Hornoiki couldn’t hear, made Muspelheim hum and lean in closer. She moved her head to meet his, his nose pressed into her cheek. “Please, be safe.”

“I will be. I promise. Hornoiki will make sure of it.”

He was right, but the weight of such a promise still rested uneasy on his shoulders. When Surtis looked at him, eyes narrowed in suspicion, he made sure he had a reassuring, relaxed smile. She seemed to believe it, as she sighed and pressed in closer to her brother before leaning away.

“Big Moonbeam, I love you.”

“Little Starburst, I love you, too.”

She gave one last sigh, shot Hornoiki a final glare, and with a beat of her wings, flew into sky. To where, he wasn’t sure. Perhaps somewhere close by, just in case. He watched her until she was a speck in the blue, then turned back to Muspelheim, who waited for him.

“Your sister is quite protective.”

The painter shrugged, his face betraying nothing but the same calmness he held. “When you are of my nature, it is only right to become so.”

“Oh, I agree with that.”

Mimicking the tapping Surtis had done, Hornoiki waited until Muspelheim had located him, then pressed himself closer to his massive body. “I hope this is alright,” he said, thanking the Ancestors that his voice didn’t shake in nervous tremors at the closeness. “I noticed your sister had done the same during visits and I wouldn’t wish to confuse you or leave you alone on accident.”

“It is more than alright.” Hornoiki could feel the rumbles of his voice against his skin. “I appreciate you thought to do as much as copying my sister. Most wouldn’t have noticed.”

“I’m not like most.”

A smile, proud and confident, slid onto Muspelheim’s face. “We’re in agreement with that.”

Horniki wasn’t sure how he managed the tour after that. He was over cloud nine, off in his mental fantasyland of him and Muspelheim being together, that little exchange being commonplace. It was wonderful. It was sweet. It was something he thought impossible. But maybe, *maybe*, there was a chance, and he was going to take it.

Damn, was he going to take it.

He started with the garden first, if only so Fornax didn’t talk his damn ears off about not showing the painter their mother’s flowers first thing. He led the two of them carefully through the pathway, stopping here and there so Muspelheim to touch the petals with his delicate pads. The painter told him of the sweet and soft smells of the plants, taken in through deep breaths as he ran his pads over the petals, which he described in detail. He preferred the more coarse feeling ones, reminding him of his home on the farm and the wheatstalks he loved to walk through.

Then the apple orchard, small and nearly pitiful if Hornoiki wanted to compare it to Muspelheim’s back in the Rich Farmlands. But he was discouraged of entertaining such thoughts, as Muspelheim commented on the cool shade on his scales, and the delicious, juicy taste of the apple Hornoiki plucked down for him. The bark was rougher than back home, but he asked if he could have some stripped on his next visit so he and a friend of his could make art with it. Who was he to say no?

He took him through the path that circled their home, talking about how hard his ancestors fought to own this estate, how their efforts at proving themselves were never forgotten. His grandparents were the last of that hard fought line, with his parents and his own generation able to enjoy the fruits of their labors. Muspelheim spoke of his clan's own struggles, of the forest fire that had destroyed the original family's lives, before they saw a way to create a new one. He asked if Hornoiki wanted to be a clan, and he said his family didn't want the stress of such. Muspelheim smiled and said what a smart idea.

All the while, they were leaned against each other, Muspelheim towering nearly a meter taller than Hornoiki, the smaller dragon's shoulder brushing against his arm. His cloak had slid off to favor the other shoulder, perhaps on purpose on Hornoiki's part. But Muspelheim had said he liked the texture of his cloak beforehand, which sent a blush onto his cheeks at the compliment.

Finally, Hornoiki brought them to the edge of the estate, where it looked out further into the city in a beautiful view. But they weren't there for the view, of course. Hornoiki had a different idea in mind.

"Usually this place is for the sights, but," he said, leaning away from Muspelheim, who only followed him so they remained touching. He stopped moving and leaned back. "I thought you might enjoy the sounds instead."

Muspelheim's head perked up, the weights jingling. He huffed, amused. "Oh yes, the sounds of the city. Those are fun to listen to when you're from a quieter place."

"The yelling is funny."

"Very."

They sat in a comfortable silence then, listening to the distance sounds of the city. Some merchant was yelling about their sales or yelling at some customer about prices. A group of kids were playing. The ambient sound of the crowd flowed like gentle water in the quiet air. Hornoiki soaked in the noise and the warmth of Muspelheim's scales, for the first time fully relaxed that day.

"I had a wonderful time with you, Hornoiki," Muspelheim said, his voice as soft as the petals in the garden. Hornoiki looked at him, smiled, and leaned a little harder against him.

"That's good to hear. I also had a wonderful time, too."

"May I ask that we have outings like this more often?" He pointed his head downwards in the direction of Hornoiki's voice. "It would make me very happy."

Hornoiki opened his mouth, then closed it. He looked away, despite knowing Muspelheim wouldn't care about his flustered gaze, even if he could see it. "That sounds like a courting attempt to me, Painter Muspelheim. You must have... better options than to hang out with me."

There was a pause, then he felt the soft pads of Muspelheim's paw trail down his cheek, then his jawline, and stopped at his chin to grasp it. He was a ragdoll in the painter's touch, letting him turn his head to face him again. Muspelheim hummed, rubbing his pads against his scales like he did with his paints or the petals.

"My sister tells me you are blue, the second softest color I have." His pads trailed against his bottom lip, then up to his cheek. "Soft like the feather of the birds. My own little Blue Bird."

He leaned in, his snout pressing against Hornoiki's in a gentle, cautious touch of someone who didn't know how far the distance really was. Hornoiki stared wide eyed, before closing them and returning the kiss.

When he pulled away, Muspelheim had a smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. “I would love to court you, Blue Bird.”

Hornoiki returned the smile, reaching his paw up to cup the one that had slid onto his cheek. “I would also love that, Muse.”

“Good. This would have been a disappointing tour if you had said no.”

He laughed sudden and sharp, then coughed. “I mean, I would feel the same if you had rejected me. We are in agreement.”

“We are.”

Muspelheim leaned in again and Hornoiki met him halfway, careful not to bump too harshly against him when he did. As he kissed the painter, he had a mischievous thought in the back of his mind directed at his sister, who was going to have the shock at the turn of events of the tour. The thought was simply this, of pure sibling rivalry:

Eat shit, Fornax!

Muspelheim was different, after all.