

Chicken Jerky

By C. Jade Wyton

A very pregnant Olivia has a bit of an overreaction to finding out Farren ate her chicken jerky.

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It was the loudest, shrillest, most ear-piercing sound that Daimon had ever heard come out of his wife's mouth.

He'd been lying in his bedroll by the warmth of the recently-smothered campfire, waiting for her to come lay down with him. But she'd passed him with a flick of her tail and made for his pack— Mentioning she was going to get the last of the chicken jerky he'd gotten for her in town the previous day.

Apparently it was missing.

Everyone in the camp shot upright from where they lay (Bertram falling from the log he'd been sitting on while keeping watch) as Olivia's long, horrified scream echoed through the trees like a woman being murdered.

There was a click from the other side of the camp as Volante jumped to her feet, flame-thrower armed and ready in seconds.

Bertram picked himself up and out of the bush he'd landed in just as Veruca escaped her bedroll, and Sheshalan gave a cry as Farren tripped over her.

A clamouring exclamation followed as Olivia took a deep, deep breath.

'Who's there?!'

'What in tarnation?!'

'The hell's happening?!'

'What's going on?!'

'Vhy is yelling?!'

'Farren get off me you massive—'

Olivia finished her deep breath in, and another scream escaped her as she threw Daimon's pack to the ground and collapsed to her knees.

Calmly, having been awake and so (for once) knowing exactly what was going on, Daimon rose to his feet and stepped over to his wife to lay a hand on her shoulder.

'It's *gone!*' Olivia shrieked. 'Someone fucking *took* it!'

Daimon simply nodded as the others all managed to gather at Olivia's side, concern written all over their faces.

'What—'

'Liv what are you talking about?!'

'Who took—'

'What was—'

'MY CHICKEN JERKY!' she screamed, rounding on the group. 'SOMEONE ATE MY JERKY!'

A moment of silence followed, as everyone slowly processed what Olivia had been shouting about, before Daimon watched everyone glance around at each other with half-confused, half-annoyed, half-relieved expressions.... Or, perhaps

that was too many halves? Daimon wasn't sure. He was too distracted by Olivia's upset to even try to do math.

So instead he pet her on the back and then retrieved his pack, sifting through it to make sure that the food really *was* gone and she hadn't somehow missed it.

When he didn't find it he upended all of his things onto the ground, emptying the entire bag just to be triple-sure it truly wasn't there as Olivia gave another shriek.

When he had confirmed it was, in fact, gone, he calmly turned back to the group. 'Volante? Have you been in my things?'

The offended squawk that escaped Volante was different from the offended scoff that usually escaped her when she was lying about causing problems, and Daimon could tell immediately it wasn't her.

'Who's been in my things?' he asked, more generally. 'I had chicken jerky in here. I got it for Liv yesterday before we left town. She was having cravings?'

'Ooh....'

Daimon's ears pricked up as Farren gave a embarrassed groan and sheepishly raised his hand as everyone turned to glare at him.

'I didn't realise it was Liv's,' he admitted. 'I thought it was yours. You're usually so happy to share, I thought you wouldn't mind.'

'YOU!' Olivia screeched, rising to her feet and pointing at Farren. 'How *could* you *do* this to me?! I *trusted* you! You're *supposed* to be my *father*! What kind of father takes his pregnant daughter's food?!'

Everyone flinched as Daimon quickly scooped an arm around Olivia (who clearly hadn't realised exactly *what* she had just said) to stop her lunging at their party's leader.

'Olivia,' Daimon said, softly. 'Olivia, calm—'

'YOU'RE THE WORST FATHER IN THE WORLD!'

'Liv, I'm sorry,' Farren said, raising his hands submissively. 'I didn't realise it was yours. I would have *never* eaten it if I had—'

'A likely story!' Olivia exclaimed, her voice breaking as tears welled up in her eyes. It was clear she was about to cry. And not a fake cry, either. But a very, very genuine one. 'You hate me! You've *always* hated me! You've just been biding your time so you can *torture* me in the most evil ways!'

'Liv—' Farren cut off as Olivia burst into tears.

Pulling from Daimon's arms, the woman ran to her sleeping bag and crawled head-first into it to hide herself as she sobbed and wailed.

A long moment of quiet passed between the Dawn Runners before Veruca turned to Farren and scoffed.

'I am not believing you are eating pregnant woman's food!'

'I thought it was Daimon's—'

'They're married, dipshit!' Volante said, smacking the orcish man on the back of the head. 'You *really* don't think half the stuff Daimon's pack isn't Liv's?!'

'Sheshalan, come on, defend me here!' Farren opened his arms wide. Then, when Sheshalan snorted and started her way towards the crying lump by the campfire, Farren turned to Bertram instead, with a pleading look in his eyes.

Bertram simply shook his head and looked away.

Farren then turned to Daimon, giving a wide and exhausted shrug. 'I really

*am* sorry.'

Daimon looked to Farren. Then to his wife as Sheshalan removed her from her sleeping bag. Then back to Farren. Then, he turned and made for his horse.

'I'm going back to town,' he said, simply.

'Daimon, y'sure that's wise?' Bertram asked. 'We were travelling all day. Even if yer fast, y'likely won't get back here 'til sunrise.'

'I know,' Daimon replied. 'But Olivia wants jerky. I'm going to get her jerky.'

'Well I'm coming, too,' Volante said, following after Daimon. 'You get lost in the general store when there's more than one aisle, there's no way you'll be able to find your way back to town on your own.'

'Thanks,' Daimon offered a smile to Volante as the pair began to prep their horses for travel. Then he glanced back to Bertram. 'Are you coming, too?'

Bertram glanced back to the rest of the Dawn Runners, where Sheshalan was comforting Olivia and Veruca was aggressively shooing Farren away from her, and then nodded. 'Yeah, ah'll come. Safer to travel in numbers.'

Daimon nodded as he took Pixie's reins and led him through camp.

He paused at Liv's side, leaning down to peck a kiss on the top of her head and explain where he was going.

Olivia rubbed the tears from her eyes as he did, and mumbled a thank you.

'I'll be back as quick as I can,' said Daimon, before mounting his horse and starting back to town.

As he left, he heard Veruca give a small chuckle as she returned to Olivia's side.

'See? Daimon is being loving husband and fixing problems,' she said. 'Aren't you being glad you didn't overreact?'

—END—

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