

## **The Scent of a Mephit**

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The sad skunk femme sat alone at her table and watched the couples out on the dance floor with a quiet jealousy. Why had she even bothered to come to the singles' dance she asked herself, not for the first time that night. Of course nobody was going to be interested in her, she being a skunk after all.

Even though she'd learned long ago how to control her scent, there was still a slight musky smell that followed her. No amount of bathing or deodorants could help that. She didn't even think it really made her smell bad, just distinctive, but of course nobody else thought that way. They were all too willing to believe the stereotypes that continued to endure, and people tended to keep their distance from her.

She'd had some small grain of hope that there'd be another skunk at the dance tonight, and perhaps she'd even have a chance at romance and a little happiness. Skunks tended not to get out much though, and she'd found herself the only representative of her species there tonight.

So she just sat there instead, watching everyone else dancing happily together while she sat at a her table, lost in a lonely corner in the back of the room. She sighed to herself as she felt her eyes watering up, and she turned her attention to the drink in front of her. It was only a couple of minutes later when she felt a gentle tap on her shoulder.

Startled, she turned to look up at a handsome male lynx standing next to her.

"Excuse me," he said as she blinked at him questioningly, "but I couldn't help but notice you sitting back here. It's not right that such a pretty lady like yourself should be all alone like this."

As her mouth opened slightly and she stared back at him, he flashed a smile at her before continuing. "You wouldn't mind some company would you?"

"Oh no... of course not" she stammered, "it's just that it's surprising, that's all."

His smile broadened a little at that and he sat down, taking one of the empty chairs next to her. "Well now, I guess introductions are in order" he said, "my name's Jerry."

"I'm Sheryl" she replied, still a little unsure of the situation. She did take his hand as he offered it to her though, and let out a little gasp of surprise when he lightly kissed the back of her hand instead of shaking it.

"Well, it's a pleasure to make your acquaintance Sheryl, thanks for letting me join you."

They started talking and much to Sheryl's surprise, Jerry's flirting became subdued and more natural. He simply talked with her like they were old friends, and soon enough she began to feel that way about him. Before she knew it they'd been talking for close to an hour, having got caught up in the conversation.

Jerry noticed the time as well, and smiling at her once again he said "it's getting late and they'll be closing things down here in awhile. Can I get a few dances in with you before it's over?"

She felt a little nervous once again, but soon agreed, taking his hand and walking with him out onto the dance floor. She caught a few odd glances from some of the other dancers as they walked by. She saw the looks here and there of people who wondered just how anybody could wind up with a skunk, but she did her best to ignore them.

As Jerry moved closer, gently putting his arms around her, she hesitated, pausing a moment before she reciprocated his embrace. Finally she just closed her eyes and leaned against him, feeling his comforting presence as they moved together in the slow steps of the dance.

They enjoyed three dances together as her mind sorted things out and her thoughts drifted from comfort to those old familiar doubts. Pulling back slightly to look at him, she gazed into his eyes as he looked back at her intently. He seemed so warm and caring, but she just had to know. Taking a slow breath, she asked him "Jerry, why are you here with me now?"

He blinked back at her, his own turn for puzzlement and surprise having come. "Because I saw you sitting there all alone, and you looked so beautiful and sad" he replied after a moment's pause. "And talking with you, I really like you Sheryl."

"No Jerry, why are you with a skunk like me?"

Realization dawned on him, showing evidently on his face. "Oh is that it? People are always saying how bad skunks smell, but I've never seen that. You see I did something stupid at work several years back and got a whiff of some strong chemicals." He paused, and with his ears dropping slightly he flashed her a small embarrassed smirk. "Ever since then, I've lost my sense of smell..."

She stared back at him, almost in disbelief. "You mean... ?"

"Yup, I can't smell a thing," he replied, his smile becoming warmer. "It doesn't matter anyway. I don't care what people say... I just like being with you like this tonight."

With that he pulled her closer once again and she offered no resistance. They spent the rest of the evening dancing together, both of them ignoring the occasional glances from some of the other dancers.

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Before they knew it, the dance was finished and everyone was clearing out. Neither of them had wanted the night to end just then, so she'd taken him up on his offer to spend some time together at a local coffee shop.

"Thank you for a wonderful time at the dance" she said as they were sitting at the table, waiting for their drinks to arrive. "I'm glad I went, even though I thought I wouldn't enjoy it."

"You're very welcome" he replied. "I had a nice time myself and I was lucky to find such a lovely partner to dance with. You look really beautiful Sheryl, that blue dress looks pretty against the black and white of your fur."

"You're not so bad yourself" she answered with a smile playing across her muzzle. She was enjoying the comfortable presence of his warmth once again.

They only had to wait a couple of minutes before their waitress returned with their mugs of steaming Java. Bowing his head down, Jerry brought his nose to his cup and took a heavy sniff of the aroma. "Mmmm, I just love the smell of gourmet coffee." A moment later he realized his mistake as he looked up to see her watching him, her expression darkened.

"Jerry, you can smell the coffee?" she asked, her voice revealing a mixture of surprise and hurt. "But you said you couldn't smell anything..."

"Oh no," he sighed, "I didn't want to get caught like this." His tufted ears drooped once again as he looked at her sheepishly.

"I did really find you attractive when you were sitting there all alone" he continued, "and I wanted to try and spend some time with you. I'd heard how people could lose their sense of smell like that. I figured you might be self-conscious about your scent, so I made that up to try and get you to feel more at ease... I'm sorry for lying to you, I didn't want to hurt you."

She looked back at him, studying him with misty eyes for several moments, unsure of what to say. Finally, as he reached out to take her hand in his she replied "I guess I can forgive you, at least you did do it trying to be nice to me..."

"Thanks Sheryl," he said squeezing her hand gently. "I am glad that we got to spend some time together tonight, I was truthful about that... Plus, your scent isn't all that strong anyway" he said as he brought her hand to his muzzle and kissed it once again. With a warm smile playing across his lips, he looked back up at her. His gaze meeting hers, he paused for several moments before finally adding "I think I could get quite used to it..."