

## **you try so loud to love me**

by iztopher

Te'ijal and Galahad consummate their marriage, for better or worse. Worse wins out.

My sibling, Oak, has a headcanon that Te'ijal and Galahad have awkward, regrettable sex exactly once as humans. Xe intends it jokingly, but with my headcanons (Te'ijal with human dysphoria, Galahad as asexual aromantic and essentially trying not to be, etc.) it turns heartbreaking. So I went ahead and wrote it.

Title from *That Unwanted Animal* by The Amazing Devil.

Thanks to Danny for encouraging me to write this and betaing it for me!

*Content warnings:* Graphic sex, between two people should not be having sex.

...

After three hundred and four years of marriage - to the day, tonight- Te'ijal had learned when she was at risk of overstaying her welcome. Since their move to Sedona, Galahad had taken to wearing linen pants and long cotton shirts to bed instead of his bulky armor, but she still knew better than to hover around the bedroom while he changed. When she saw his hands move to the buckles of his gambeson, she knew it was time to move for the door.

So when he spoke, it stopped her in her tracks. "Wife, wait."

She turned back to face him. "Yes?"

He waited for a moment, thinking over his words. "I am so glad to finally be able to celebrate our anniversary with you. Thank you."

Te'ijal bristled. "Nothing was stopping you before, you know. We've been married for over three centuries."

"Perhaps," Galahad said, "but it has only been in the past year that our union has been one good and worthy of celebration. And so, I have been thinking." He took a deep breath and a step towards her, exhaling shakily. "I believe it is finally time to consummate our marriage."

"Consummate," she repeated, her shock drowning out any humor. That couldn't possibly mean what she thought it did. Galahad wouldn't have said it if it did.

"When a man and a woman are married, it is expected that they—"

It did, then. She almost let him finish just to hear him describe it, but she couldn't help herself. "That part I follow. What I don't understand is *why*. You've never shown interest in it – any interest in *me* – before."

It was a stupid question. Te'ijal knew the answer before she asked it, and hearing it from him didn't make its sting any less sharp.

"Isn't it obvious, dear wife? Before, we were cursed. Every part of me you had was something you had taken. I didn't want to share what little I had left. But now, our souls are free. We have an opportunity to have a real marriage – one without the curse of the soul pendant or of vampirism. And with it, I can be a real husband to you."

Part of her wanted to laugh, or maybe even shriek, that what they had before was far more *real* than whatever this was, before that damn flash of light and life had changed everything about them. The rest of her swayed uncertainly under his words.

Te'ijal had wanted this, once, fiercely. Had wanted *him*. Eventually, she realized it was impossible, and it had been easy to let it fade, but –

*She could have him?*

"You're serious about this," she ventured cautiously, stepping towards him on instinct.

"I would not suggest it if I were not."

Te'ijal hated her body in its humanity, its weakness, the warm undertone of her cheeks and the violet shade of her eyes. She hated that her fat and muscle shifted so the same shirt fit differently a month apart. She hated the purple bruises that appeared above her hip or below her knee because she

was now capable of stumbling in the dark.

She hated knowing her husband only wanted her when the body she inhabited felt more like a curse than it felt like *her*.

But...

Three hundred and four years of marriage, and she still had no idea what his bare chest looked like, what his skin would feel like beneath her fingertips. Even as humans, for all his saccharine sweetness, he'd never once kissed her, at least where she wanted him to – the back of her hand, the top of her forehead, didn't count.

And now he was suggesting to *bed* her.

It wasn't the way Te'ijal had wanted him, had hoped he might one day want her, but it was something. An opportunity. Maybe, most charitably, a silver lining to this whole mess.

It could be fun. She hadn't had enough of that, lately.

Galahad remained silent, saying nothing to try to reassure or convince her in any direction. She tried to meet his eyes, maybe find some guidance in his expression, but almost immediately he glanced at the floor.

There was something so ridiculous and charming and *Galahad* about it, offering sex and refusing eye contact, and it nudged her forward.

"Yes," she said.

He looked up again at the sound of her voice. "Very well, then." They stayed frozen like that for a moment, uncertain, Te'ijal wondering if he would reach for her if she just waited long enough. Instead he went for his belt.

"Wait," she said suddenly, searching for her old confidence, back when it was justified and natural and easy. "I want to undress you."

"Entirely?"

She could have laughed. Instead she settled to tease. "Well, I was hoping so, my succulent darling."

Midway through the process, she began to regret her request. Even with his armor off, there was his gambeson and undertunic, his belt and pants. At least it was something to do with her hands. She needed that. Galahad stood still as a statue as she worked metal out of leather, fabric off of skin, until he stood awkwardly in his hose and braies.

So that was what he looked like: appealingly sturdy, broad shoulders and solid stomach. Te'ijal reached a hand to his chest, testing how much was soft fat and how much was firm muscle under the pressure of her thumb.

Galahad startled under her touch. "Do you want to, ah, keep your nightgown on, or..."

She drew her hands away and raised them above her head. "Please, take it off me."

"Of course. Very well."

It came off in one easy swoop, and he set it gently on the floor. Te'ijal wished, absentmindedly, that she had been wearing something more complicated, given an opportunity for the tension to build in her body as he slipped off each button of her shirt or unlaced the back of her dress.

She had hoped for some intensity – anticipation, maybe, or hunger, if she really dared – in his gaze. Instead he barely took in the sight of her before saying, as if scripted, "you look lovely, wife." It would have to be enough.

"...Thank you."

Te'ijal stepped towards Galahad until he was stumbling backwards towards the bed. It wasn't entirely unlike chasing him into a corner, but much slower, and she was much more careful not to startle him.

And, well, she took the opportunity to work off their underwear. She had them both naked by the time she'd wrangled him up against the bed, nearly sitting on the mattress. Now they were getting somewhere... or she was directing him somewhere and he was following, by any means. But when she reached a hand to his cock, she was relieved to find it ready. Leaning into him, her lips gravitated naturally towards his neck.

She had scarcely ghosted his skin before he shuddered and yanked his head back.

"Please don't," he said.

She nodded and withdrew, a little unsure what to do with herself instead. "Bed," she instructed him after a moment's hesitation, hardly useful, and then, realizing her mistake, "lay the angle like you might sleep."

"Wait," Galahad said, "you should lay down instead, so I can..."

She cocked her head to the side and cut him off. "Do you *want* me to?" she

asked.

In response, he was silent, eyes darting away from her.

“Because I would rather ride you.”

Te’ijal watched his throat with interest, the swell and bob of it as he swallowed and nodded, moving the way she told him.

“Thank you,” she breathed, following suit, hooking a leg over his body and straddling him. She quite liked the sight of him beneath her - throat bared to her, muscled arms and chest on full display, the longer strands of his blond hair splayed across the pillow.

Normally she would have liked to spend some more time in this part, guide his hand into her before anything else, but Galahad seemed so woefully out of his depth that she wasn’t optimistic about the prospects. And as much as she wanted to spend some time learning the body she’d long been so curious about, every time she tried he flinched or fumbled and made her worry she shouldn’t.

His erection was reassuring, at least. She grasped the base in her hand and lifted her legs to position herself above him. “May I?”

Galahad’s stomach tensed, but he nodded. “You may.”

She took him inside in one fluid motion, hoping for a feeling of fullness, satisfaction. Instead she was underprepared and uncomfortably aware of her own body, a dull pain rocking through her.

Her husband probably felt better than she did, she reasoned, and so she eyed Galahad beneath her. “Galahad, how are you?”

For a long, unsettling moment, he was quiet save for his breathing. Finally, he said, “okay.”

Te’ijal supposed it was only consistent her husband was as stilted and awkward about sex as he was everything else. “I’m going to start moving, then.”

“Go ahead.”

She gave an experimental roll of her hips. The pain in her cunt neither lessened nor worsened with the movement, and that was acceptable to her for now. It would ease up soon enough. Having someone inside her again after hundreds of years was a foreign feeling, and Te’ijal had hoped it would

feel more natural with him, but she found a rhythm eventually all the same.

She reached one hand to cradle his jaw, the other to rub along her clit. With time and arousal her aching dissolved. The awkwardness didn't. The room was as stiff and silent as Galahad beneath her, staring at her with eyes wide and unsure. Sweat formed on his brow, but his breathing seemed calculated and deliberate, like he was treating this the same way he did his training.

"You can touch me however you like," Te'ijal said encouragingly.

His hands reached to her hips and found purchase there. She found she liked the pressure of his nails biting into her skin. It was just about the only thing that let her ground herself in the knowledge it was Galahad inside her.

Where was the passion he had as a vampire? The feelings he'd been claiming for months as a human? He was the one who suggested this, so surely he was motivated by *some* desire, but she couldn't find it on his face or in his touch.

She couldn't let herself dwell on that. She'd never have any fun that way.

"You can come, husband," she coaxed.

"I know," he said. "I'm - I'm trying."

"Just relax." She moved her hands to each of his sides, sweeping down in playful strokes. He tensed beneath her instead. "How's this?"

"I need more time," he admitted, and Te'ijal hated that it made her stomach twist. Hundreds of years of fantasy, and now she couldn't wait for it to be over. There was no enjoyment in looking down on him like this, still and unmoving, glassy-eyed and tight-lipped.

She choked down something welling in her throat.

"What is it, dear?" he asked, dropping his hands, "are you in pain?"

"No," she said, shaking her head. "No, I just... I'm just tired."

He propped himself up on an elbow, sitting upright. "Why don't you lay down? I can be the one to move."

It occurred to her that they could end things now, but the idea struck her as a little pathetic. Anyways, his suggestion was appealing enough to override the impulse. An opportunity to feel him as an active participant was reassuring, and they'd probably both feel more satisfied after it.

So Te'ijal nodded and lifted herself off him. She shuffled over to lay down beside him, spreading her legs wide enough for him to sit comfortably. When he shifted between them, she hooked her ankles together at his back and nudged him forward. With one hand, Galahad braced himself against her by gently squeezing her thigh.

"No blood," he murmured. "I suppose that makes sense."

"Do you want there to be blood?" she teased, leaning her head back as far as she could to bare her throat to him. Maybe this could still be fun after all. "That can be arranged, dumpling."

He frowned and shook his head. "That isn't what I meant, wife. There is supposed to be blood during the first coupling of a marriage, when the hymen is broken."

"Is there, now," Te'ijal said wryly, searching her memory of the more erotic human romances she'd read.

"It's fine," he said. "Frankly, I'm relieved." His free hand reached to his erection, fumbling to position himself. "Are you ready?"

"Yes."

It took a moment for Galahad to push inside her, clumsy but painless. He moved both his hands to brace himself above her before setting a careful rhythm. Te'ijal snaked her arms under his, meeting at his back and gently raking her nails against his skin.

His thrusts were slow and steady, reminding her of a march. The sex certainly had all the variation of one. He didn't try to touch her anywhere she didn't explicitly tell him, and when prompted, his rigid uncertainty betrayed it was equal parts concern and disinterest.

"*Galahad*," she moaned deliberately, intended for his benefit.

For a moment, he froze. "Yes, dear wife?"

She could have laughed. Instead, she said, "ah, nevermind. Keep going."

He nodded and leaned down against her, and when she thought he might actually kiss her, his face dug into the pillow beside her own. When he finally said, "I think I..." it was more into the bed than into her ear. In order to avoid gasping out *finally* Te'ijal bit her lips together and groaned behind them.

Galahad gave a weak grunt, and then she felt him twitch and spill inside her. After a moment's hesitation, he withdrew.

He pulled his body up from hers, meeting her eyes for one tense, searching moment. It was the first time all night she'd felt like he'd actually looked at her. Then he stood from the bed, gathered his clothes, and made to retreat to the washroom.

"I'm going to shower. I'll draw you a bath once I've finished."

Te'ijal wasn't surprised he didn't ask if she was satisfied. She tried not to be disappointed, either. It was obvious Galahad had no care for her pleasure, but he'd seemed to have just as little interest in his own. She was near certain he came only because the simple mechanics of their bodies demanded it, given enough time and stubbornness.

She wasn't sure she would have wanted him to touch her even if he had offered. She hated how she felt: sweaty, and sore, and not in the way she remembered being rewarding. She was unpleasantly damp all over, the space between her thighs worst of all, and it set her temperature off kilter. As if the regulation of human body heat wasn't already bothersome enough. Her skin was flushed and hot, but she felt chilled to the bone.

It could have been a minute, or it could have been an hour, that she lay there near-shivering, miserable and alone and wishing she wasn't. At least Galahad's absence actually justified the silence.

When the door swung back open, she sat up in bed, sitting cross-legged. Her husband returned in fresh clothes, face and hair damp, but as he approached the bed, she saw that he was still a little flushed. His cheeks and the tip of his nose were blotchy, and there was a red rim around his eyes.

It took Te'ijal a moment, but when she recognized what that meant, she felt her stomach sink.

"Galahad?" she said without thinking.

"Yes?"

It was a dangerous question to ask, but she couldn't stop herself, or think of anything safer to say to him.

"Did you... actually *want* to have sex with me?"

"Of course, love."



She so wished he wouldn't call her that, especially not like it was supposed to mean something. "I mean *me*, Galahad. Te'ijal. Not your wife."

He frowned. "What do you mean? You *are* my wife."

"I am also my own person," Te'ijal said, more bitterly than intended, mostly trying to articulate the difference. "Your wife could be anyone."

"But she is not."

The choice of pronoun made her laugh, if only so she didn't scream. She waved her arm in the air in a wild, agitated arc. "There it is! *She*, like I'm not right in front of you. Don't pretend that anything about *me* matters to you. You haven't even called me my name once all night."

He never called her by name. Tonight wasn't special. But it hurt to realize, when she thought she was well past that.

"Oh, is that your issue, *Te'ijal*?" he asked, raising his voice on her name as if out of spite. "I focused on our marriage and lost sight of you separate from it? Because *you* do not get to judge me for that!"

"And why don't I?" Te'ijal asked, barely restraining her voice from yelling, and she found that goading him felt *good*, the most she'd felt like herself all night, if not the past year. She wanted him to call her a monster, to remind her she ruined his life, as if she had ever been the one who forgot.

So when his voice dropped, her heart plummeted with it. "Please, wife," he said, sitting down on the bed and reaching towards her. She drew backwards, and so instead he raised his hands in surrender. "I don't want to fight you. Not tonight."

Te'ijal was too stunned to speak. Whoever this man in front of her was, she could scarcely recognize him as Galahad.

"...Your bath is ready. Why don't you take it and then come to bed?"

"Oh, and I bet you want me to sleep in the bed with you, too," she scoffed.

"I had hoped so."

She wanted to say something furious and cutting, that would twist his stomach the way hers was working itself into knots, but nothing clever came to her. So she rose from the bed in sullen silence, making sure to get off from the side he wasn't sitting on, gathering her clothes on her way out.

She just barely resisted the urge to slam both the bedroom and bathroom doors. By the time she made it to the bath, the water was lukewarm at best. It still felt good to sink inside and scrub her skin clean. Her temperature settled itself, and eventually so did her nerves. She considered resting in the water until the ache across her pelvis eased, but it would probably be a while.

The idea of avoiding Galahad for longer was just as tempting, if not hypocritical. It occurred to Te'ijal that there was something ironic about her being the one to walk away from him in a huff. Some amusement at the idea broke through the hurt.

Eventually she managed to will herself to rise from the bath and dry herself off and dress. She padded into the bedroom, hoping that if she was quiet enough, Galahad would be asleep when she entered.

“Wife?”

No such luck, then.

Te'ijal sighed. They could argue again, or...

Was there really any point in fighting their new enforced normalcy? She had just fucked him at the first opportunity. Surely that forfeited her right to cling to how they used to be. And anyways, if she fell asleep on the floor, he would just move her.

She felt nauseous as she climbed into bed beside him, swallowed up by the blanket.

Satisfied that she was situated, Galahad leaned over to the bedside table and blew out the candle.

He waited until he couldn't see her face to ask cautiously, “...*you* wanted this, right?”

“I did.” She should have known better. It felt obvious in hindsight. “I just hoped it'd be different.”

Galahad was quiet for so long Te'ijal thought he may have fallen asleep. When he spoke, his voice was soft and strained. “We could try again, if you wanted. Some other night.”

She swallowed down the lump forming in her throat, threatening to choke her. “I'll think about it,” she said, already resolving to never mention it again.