Summary

Jaskier finds Geralt in a sorry state. Cue cuddles and feelings!

Notes

This takes place after my fic "You've Been Deprived, Haven't You My Dear?" but it can stand alone. Enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

Geralt doesn't know how long he's been here, wherever “here” is, but he curses himself all the same. He let himself get distracted. One of the surest ways of getting a Witcher killed. He had been camped in the woods a day’s ride from Gulet, where Jaskier was planning to meet him. As usual they had spent the winter apart, Geralt in Kaer Morhen while Jaskier wintered in an Aedirnian court. And as he had stared up at the stars, all Geralt could think about was how dearly he missed his bard and all he planned to do with him once they reunited.

So the subsequent ambush and his current predicament is not at all surprising. Nor was it random, as the tools of his captives prove. The chains he hangs from are somehow reinforced, too strong for even a witcher to break. To make matters worse, the hood sealed around his head holds some kind
of dampening spell so Geralt’s enhanced senses are muffled, dulled.

Geralt can’t remember the last time his captors visited. All he remembers is pain when he refused to answer their questions. If they truly thought he would betray Ciri they were utter fools. But Geralt supposes he can count himself a fool among them.

At this point Geralt has sunk into a meditative state to cope with the pain, so it is that more shocking and alarming when a pair of hands touch him. He jolts in poorly disguised panic before bracing himself for the next wave of torture. Tension thrums through Geralt’s body in expectation, so he is disoriented and unbalanced when nothing comes.

Instead, after a prolonged moment where Geralt’s mind races to imagine what will come next, the clasp sealing the hood loosens until it releases. All at once the world floods back through Geralt’s senses and he can’t stop the shout of pain as he tries to cower from the sensory overload. Too much. Everything is too much. It is as though a 200 piece instrument symphony is blaring in his head whilst a cart full of scented oils topples over him next to a sewer and all the world’s light shines into Geralt’s eyes. As Geralt’s hands are released he collapses to the ground and remains there, curled in a pathetic ball of torment. He doesn’t realize he’s screaming until a familiar voice begins to sing.

I’ll follow you wherever you go
And never leave your side
I fell for you so long ago
You can’t leave me if you tried

So listen to me, my dear heart
If my words mean anything at all
Know I ache whenever we’re apart
And I’ll come running when you call

Keeping his eyes sealed Geralt rasps, “Jaskier?”

He flinches and releases a whimper when a hand caresses his head. Too much. It’s all too much. The hand retreats as Jaskier whines mournfully. “What did they do to you my beautiful wolf?”

Now that the singing has stopped all of the world’s sounds are flooding back and Geralt tries to curl in on himself further. “Sensory deprivation,” he manages to grit out. “All. Too much.”

“Thosefuckers,” Jaskier hisses. “What can I do to ease you back?”

Geralt lays there silently as he attempts to zero in on Jaskier’s scent and sounds as the bard breathes and shifts restlessly. This is almost as bad as when he was first given the mutagens. Geralt had hoped he would never have to feel so overwhelmed again. At that time, Geralt was forced to curl in his own sick and tears and fight through it alone. But he doesn’t need to do that now. Jaskier has shown him time and time again it is not weak to lean on others. “Sing to me?” he requests pitifully.

It takes Geralt a moment to process the words. “Corpses?” he croaks.

A dark chuckle sends a shiver down Geralt’s spine. “You didn’t think I would allow them to live after they kidnapped my White Wolf now did you?” For a moment, Geralt is distracted by the enormity of Jaskier’s confession. His bard killed for him. Gods. “Can you stand up on your own or
do you need help? Or would that be worse?” Jaskier frets.

Grunting, Geralt attempts to stand, only to collapse again. Keeping his eyes closed he turns his head to the sound of Jaskier. “Please.” With a hum, Jaskier starts singing softly as he gently grips Geralt’s arm. He can’t help flinching; the bard’s touch prickles on his over-sensitized skin like the thorns of a porcupine. Gritting his teeth, Geralt leans into the touch and staggers out of his captivity, trusting Jaskier to guide the way. As they reach the open air and sunlight pierces his eyelids, a new wave of sensation crashes over Geralt, causing him to stumble and whine in distress.

Jaskier shushes him as he sings slightly louder in his ear. They trudge on for a mile or so until Geralt hears the whinny of Roach. Somehow Jaskier found her. Thank the gods or whoever the fuck is watching. A weight as heavy as deep winter’s snow falls on Geralt’s shoulders and all at once his knees give in. Plopping unceremoniously down to the ground, Geralt wraps what he distantly registers as one of Jaskier’s heavy furs around himself, taking solace in the comforting weight and scent.

As Jaskier continues singing in Geralt’s ear, voice growing hoarse, the Witcher straightens up so he’s kneeling. Remaining curled under the soft fur and breathing through the sensations washing over him, Geralt coaxes himself into a meditative state. Perhaps if he meditates for a bit Geralt will feel centered enough to face the world once again.

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By the time Geralt rises from his meditation, night has fallen, granting reprieve to Geralt’s sensitive eyes. The mountain they find themselves on is alive with the sounds of midnight animals and Geralt contentedly follows the hoot of an owl and the howl of a wolf. Taking an experimental breath, Geralt relaxes fully as he manages to zero in on the honey and pine scent of his bard and filter out everything else.

Turning, Geralt spots Jaskier a foot away, humming quietly to himself as he strokes a fire. Geralt’s heart squeezes painfully in his chest as he stares at the bard. Gods but he missed him. A cursory look reassures Geralt that Jaskier is in good health despite the fact that he somehow killed all of Geralt’s captors. Health assessment done, Geralt allows himself to enjoy the rest of his observation of the bard. Chestnut hair askew as though he has run his hands through it for hours, Jaskier is in nothing but a rough chemise and dark breeches rolled past his ankles. Practically naked, the minx. Geralt releases a hungry rumble at the sight.

Jerking his head up at the sound, Jaskier rushes over to Geralt only to hover by his side awkwardly. Hands raised as though they are itching to touch, Jaskier bites his lip. “How are you feeling?” he asks in a whisper.

Humming Geralt rasps, “Less like an ostrich that longs to stick its head in the sand.” When all Jaskier does in response is smile softly Geralt adds with only a slight hesitance, “You can touch me again.” Geralt watches, stomach twisting in anticipation, as Jaskier’s face crumples in relief. Tentative fingers reach out to brush through Geralt’s hair and like a puppet that lost its strings Geralt collapses into the touch as it grows firmer.

Between meditating and having the familiar and comforting fur wrapped around himself, Geralt is able to handle the touch with only a slight twitch. Jaskier, observant as he always is, immediately removes his hand at the motion like Geralt is a feral wolf. The bereft whine he releases in response as Geralt chases after the bard’s hand causes a fond chuckle to bubble from Jaskier’s chest and melt away his anxious expression.

Geralt sighs in bliss as Jaskier settles before Geralt and rakes talented fingers through his hair,
combing through the knotted mess it had turned into during his captivity. A steady hand presses the back of Geralt’s head in silent suggestion but he resists it, turning to look at Jaskier with pleading eyes. Jaskier smiles softly, knowing his witcher well. “Anything for you my wolf,” Jaskier croons before shifting.

Tension Geralt has been carrying since he parted with his bard releases as Geralt sinks into the welcoming fur of Jaskier’s shifted form. Though Geralt has (begrudgingly) acknowledged that he genuinely enjoys the bard’s company, there is something about his wolf form that settles something instinctive, primitive, even bestial in Geralt.

Releasing a satisfied sigh, Geralt smiles as the russet colored wolf curls around him until there is no space between them, snorting when the shifter snuffles into Geralt’s ear. Lying entwined with his wolf, Geralt feels a missing piece of himself latch into place and he finds the words fumble out. It was always somehow easier to talk about emotions when Jaskier was shifted. “Come with me next winter.” When he receives an inquiring whine in response, Geralt turns to stare into those intelligent blue eyes, fingers twining through the fur. “To Kaer Morhen,” he clarifies. Swallowing, Geralt gathers his courage and presses his head against his wolf’s. “I don’t want to be parted for so long again.”

Geralt sputters in disgust when a gleeful wet tongue licks across his face. Shoving the wolf away with a laugh, Geralt moves to make a biting remark about Jaskier’s breath when something he spots gives him pause. Inching closer, Geralt lifts Jaskier’s muzzle and inspects the wolf’s face. Eyes widening, Geralt slowly remembers what Jaskier had said earlier that day and something clicks in place. “You killed them in this form?” Jaskier ducks his head with a whine and in a burst of nervous energy Geralt moves toward their bags and grabs a rag and waterskin.

Kneeling down, Geralt gently washes the blood he had spotted out of the beautiful fur as Jaskier watches him with guarded eyes. Geralt is torn between warmth at Jaskier's protectiveness and sorrow that this form that can provide such comfort to him had to be used in violence. Panic begins to set in as Geralt truly registers what Jaskier has done. They sit there in silence for a moment more before Geralt’s fears pour out. “You could have been killed,” he says through gritted teeth. Discarding the rag, Geralt grasps the wolf by his scruff, panic morphing into the safer emotion of anger. “You could have been captured. There was a sorcerer there and he would have loved nothing more than to keep you as a pet,” he spits out in a mixture of disgust and terror.

Between one blink and the next, Jaskier shifts until he is kneeled before Geralt. The witcher isn’t expecting the fury burning like embers in his eyes. Digging fingers into Geralt’s thighs Jaskier hisses, “I was terrified I was tracking a dead man. When you didn’t meet me where we agreed I knew something was wrong and what? You hung there and honestly believed I wouldn’t run after you?!”

Since revealing his true nature to Geralt, Jaskier tends to forget his own strength. Gently releasing the hands from where they were digging lasting bruises into Geralt’s legs, the witcher cradles them to his chest. “I hoped you wouldn’t come looking,” he murmurs, returning Jaskier’s fiery gazes unflinchingly. “Because I knew they would either kill you or use you to get me to talk and either possibility would have broken me.”

Like fire under a rain storm Jaskier’s gaze softens as he grows dewy-eyed. “I am truly sorry my wolf,” Jaskier starts, voice cracking. “But no one, not even you, could stop me from coming to save my heart.” Overwhelmed and speechless, Geralt can do nothing in response but lean forward and capture the lips he had feared he would never feel again. With a whimper Jaskier falls into Geralt’s lap and time slips away as they relearn every inch of each other, hungry for every touch and kiss.
Later, after Geralt couldn’t hide a wince when Jaskier pressed against him and the witcher tuned out the ensuing lecture as Jaskier tended to his various injuries he had been hiding, Geralt stares up at the night sky. It shouldn’t seem like such a drastic difference, this night compared to the night before he was ambushed. But when Geralt turns to the snoring wolf tangled in his arms, Geralt acknowledges that the difference was like winter and spring.

Without his bard, even surrounded by his family, Geralt’s days felt gray and bitter. So much so that Lambert had found endless amusement in taunting Geralt for being more dour than usual. (“Never thought I’d see the day Geralt of Rivia would be brought to his knees by a brainless bard!” “I can suck you off if you’re that cranky without your rentboy.” “When can I meet this bard of yours? I want some of what he’s giving if being without him puts you in this shit of a mood.” And so on.)

The feral wrestling matches that ensued failed to discourage the younger wolf and only served to provide entertainment for Yennefer, Eskel, and Ciri and get Geralt assigned with extra chores from Vesemir. And though Geralt couldn’t be caught dead admitting it, Lambert had a point. Geralt had been a miserable git. It was their first winter apart since they confessed how they felt and Geralt couldn’t get his mind off of his lover.

But with Jaskier back by his side, warmth that Geralt had been deprived of for months had seeped into his limbs and curled up like a cat in his core. The heart Geralt had been half-convinced was a shriveled up shell before meeting the bard reopens like a flower in bloom. And each time Geralt looks at Jaskier it feels like the sun smiling down on him. No, Geralt cannot survive in eternal winter, which simply means he must ensure with all of his power to protect his bard, even if Jaskier insists on returning the favor.

End Notes

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