Fighter

by Artemis2050

Summary

 Heck with Canada. I say we set this someplace warmer. How y’all feel about the Big Easy?
Chapter 1

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Such Are Promises by Artemis2050

Author's Notes:
This was my second story. Started out as one, wound up as two. What can I say? They asked, I answered. 'Artist' completes the story.

Such Are Promises

He was a fighter.

That was enough for him to know. He wasn’t introspective by nature. In point of fact, most of his time was spent in a deliberate attempt to avoid introspection. He avoided attachments, because when you got attached you were asking for trouble. He avoided responsibility, because something that was hardwired into him wouldn’t let an obligation go unfulfilled. This was probably why the very few people who ever saw him more than in passing seemed to depend on him more than he liked, which was why he saw them as seldom as possible.

Tonight he was in a bar belonging to one of those people, and he was pissed, because Toby was in trouble and he’d asked Logan to help him get out of it. That meant sticking around, and making sure the gang that was trying to shake down the bar owners in this part of New Orleans were either floating in the river or convinced they soon would be. He’d known Toby for a long time; the big man had done the fight circuit some years back, after a short career as a boxer. He’d wound up a cage fighter-cum-wrestler dubbed the Cajun Cannon; he’d retired a few years back and apparently moved back home to open this place. It didn’t surprise Logan a bit that the guy was having trouble with the locals; for a fighter, Toby had one of the gentlest natures he’d ever run across.

He hunched over his beer, ignoring the other patrons of the bar.

Toby wandered down and stood in front of him. “Hey. You need another?”

“I’m good.” He really just wanted to get this over with and leave.
“Okay. I’ll check back in with you in a little while.” Logan jerked his head in reply and the big bartender moved away.

“Hey.” A female voice came from behind him, and he turned his head. “This stool taken?”

“No.” He hitched to the side a little as she sat down.

“You know Toby?”

“Yeah.” Exactly two words to her, but she didn’t seem to get the hint.

“You visiting? From where?”

He stood up, grabbed his beer and simply walked away. He could spot an attempted pickup as well as the next guy, but he wasn’t interested. Not tonight and probably not this trip. He stalked to the back of the bar and leaned against the wall in a dark corner. His eyes scanned the bar idly, wondering if any of the crowd were the ones he was going to gut later that night.

“That was rude.” He looked down and the woman from the bar was standing there, holding her glass.

“You want rude? Okay, how’s this—leave me alone.” He took a deep draught and finished his beer. She stood there for a minute, during which he studiously ignored her, and finally she left. He stayed where he was.

Twenty minutes later, he felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned and she was back. This time, holding out a Molson. “What’s that for?”

“Third time’s a charm.” He took a good look at her for the first time. She was young, maybe twenty-one or twenty-two. Way too young to be trying to pick up men like him in bars.

He took the beer anyway. She smiled and leaned up against the wall next to him. He went back to scanning the crowd.

“Some people go to bars with the idea of being sociable,” she ventured.

“Some people do a lot of stupid shit,” he returned bluntly. She stared at him for a second and then she laughed.

That was strange.

“You always this sociable?” He ignored that. She sighed and leaned back against the wall again. “You’re welcome.”

He looked down at her, nonplussed.

“For the drink. You’re welcome.”

His mouth twisted, completely against his will. “Thanks.”

She opened her eyes wide in an exaggerated expression of surprise. “Good lord almighty, he knows the word.” His expression turned to a scowl and she ducked her head. “Sorry.” He went back to scanning the crowd, fully expecting her to get bored and leave.

“You come here often?” Christ, she was persistent.
“No.”

“No, he doesn’t come here often. Therefore I deduce he’s not from around here.” She looked up to see his reaction; he didn’t give one. “Okay…so maybe he comes from around here, maybe he doesn’t. And…he doesn’t care whether I live around here. In fact, he isn’t interested in talking to me at all. In fact, he really wishes I’d just pick on some college boy and leave him alone.” She sighed.

“All right, all right. I’ll be over there playing pool if you change your mind.”

He watched her as she made her way across the barroom. She was cute, he had to admit. No, more than cute. She had long auburn hair that fell halfway down her back and she was wearing tight jeans and a little green top that hugged her curves nicely. She wore a scarf around her neck and she had on long black gloves that came almost to her elbows. She leaned over the pool table, setting up her shot, and she caught her full lower lip between her teeth—

Logan turned around and almost knocked over a blonde woman making her way towards the ladies’ room. He ignored her outraged look and went back to the bar. Toby came over to him immediately.

“You met Marie.”

He raised an eyebrow. “’Marie’?”

“Yeah.” Toby looked confused. “She bought you a beer, right?”

“I didn’t get the name.” He leaned against the bar, checking the crowd again. The fact that he had an unimpeded view of the pool table was, of course, purely peripheral.

“You’re kidding.” Toby picked up some glasses that had been drying and began slotting them back into the rack. “She’s somethin’, that one. Plays a mean game of pool.”

“Yeah?” She made her shot and threw her arms up triumphantly, grinning at the other players. “You seen any of these guys you’re talking about?” Definitely time for a change of subject.

“No. Not yet. But they tend to come in late.” Toby’s concern for his bar overrode any lingering interest in what was going on with the girl.

Logan was still leaning against the bar when she left around two. She waved to Toby as she went out the door and then, for just a second, her eyes met his. Her smile changed just a little and she gave him a wave of his own; just the least flutter of those black-gloved fingers. Then she was gone.

He didn’t talk to anyone else the rest of the night, because he wasn’t here to play pool or get laid, he was here to break a couple of kneecaps so an old buddy would quit getting hassled by punks. Which didn’t exactly explain why he kept noticing various women. This one had long dark hair, another was wearing a top in a particular shade of green, another had full, lush lips—

Okay, that’s enough of that. Rule number one was don’t get involved, especially with little college girls looking for thrills in the Quarter late at night. He turned his mind firmly back to business. He stayed until closing, but nothing happened that night. Toby got tenser as the night went on, but none of the thugs that had been shaking him down made an appearance. He waited until Toby was locking up and giving instructions to the night porters before heading upstairs to the room where he was crashing for the night.

He didn’t think he was going to sleep too well, somehow.

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Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Heck with Canada. I say we set this someplace warmer. How y'all feel about the Big Easy?

Fighter by Artemis2050

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The Company of Strangers by Artemis2050

Author's Notes:

There is one teeny, tiny change in this chapter, especially for someone I admire very much. And the first one to spot it and email me wins a No-Prize.

The Company of Strangers

The next night found him holding up the bar in his now-accustomed spot. He watched the door intently; this was Saturday night and it was even more crowded than it had been the night before. He wanted to know exactly who was in the place, if any of them was likely to start trouble. Why Toby didn’t have regular bouncers was beyond him; if tonight was anything to go by, this was a bunch determined to get drunk and do stupid things.

So he was keeping a close eye on the door. Which is why he saw her when she came in around eleven. She’d reversed colors tonight; she was wearing a black top with a green scarf and gloves, and this time instead of jeans she was wearing black leather pants. She hitched herself up onto the bar to lean over and greet Toby with a kiss. Then she glanced down the bar and saw him. Her smile widened a little. She jumped down from the bar and started making her way across the room. Logan watched her with more appreciation than he’d allowed himself the night before.

She waited until she’d squeezed through the crowd and fit herself into the corner of the bar next to him before speaking. “Hey. You must like it here after all.”
He let himself relax into an expression that was as close to a smile as he usually got. “Must be your favorite.”

“Oh, I love this place. Speaking of which—” She looked for the bartender, but even as she did Toby was putting a drink down in front of her.

“That’s on Logan here,” Toby said, and Logan shot him a look. Well, he owed her a drink. Not that Toby ever let him pay for anything anyway.

She grinned impishly up at him. “Now see, I was sure you could be as sociable as the next guy if you only tried.” She took a sip of her drink. “Thank you. My name’s Marie, by the way.” Her accent was Southern but not local; he couldn’t quite place it.

He shrugged. “You’re welcome.” She was young, all right, way too young and fresh for his style. He preferred women who knew what the score was, who didn’t expect anything beyond a little excitement. She was going to learn an unpleasant lesson in a hurry if she kept up this behavior.

“So…we’re even.” She nodded towards the pool table. “Want to play for the next round?”

“Play pool?”

“Unless you’ve got something else in mind.” The smile turned even more mischievous.

Wiseass kid. “You’re on.” He led the way to an empty table and racked the balls as she selected a cue. “You want to break?”

“You go ahead.” She chalked her cue, watching intently as he made the shot. He sank a striped ball and moved around the table. “Nine-ball. Side pocket.”

“Oh, you play you have to say it before you shoot?” He gave her a sharp glance, but she just looked back at him inquiringly.

“Yeah.” He leaned over and made the shot. “Thirteen. Corner.” He gestured with his cue as he moved to set up.

“What if you call one but sink another?”

All right, that was a step too far. Toby’d said she knew how to play. He ignored the question until he sank the shot. Then he straightened up and fixed her with a glare. “You lose your turn. Same as if you try to distract the other player with dumb questions while he’s tryin’ to shoot.”

She tried for another wide-eyed ‘who, me?’ look, but her mouth curved up despite her best efforts. “All right, I’ll be good.” He turned back to the table and sank two more balls before he wound up with too difficult a leave and missed a shot. She stepped forward and leaned over the table.

“Isn’t it hard to play in those things?” She looked up and he nodded at her hands; she was still wearing her gloves.

“Thought you said no distracting questions.” He raised an eyebrow at her and fell silent. “Six. Corner pocket.” She made the shot. “Um…fourteen. Side pocket.”

He surveyed the table. “Ten’s a better shot.”

“Can’t reach. I’m not six three, you know.”

“So use the bridge.”
“I’m no good at that. I don’t get a good feel for the cue.”

“Here. I’ll show you.” He got the bridge from the rack on the wall and brought it around the table to her. “Like this.” He slid the bridge across the table, She put her cue on it, but didn’t support it far enough down the stick. “No. You gotta get closer to it, same as if it was a regular shot.” He put his arms around her and guided her hand further down the cue. “Feel it?”

“Yeah, I think so.” She leaned over further, biting her lower lip in concentration like he’d seen her do the night before. She slid the cue back and forth experimentally several times before taking the shot, but the cue caught a little and she didn’t get enough follow-through.

Someone behind them laughed, and Logan straightened up. A fortyish man in a red plaid shirt was standing there; Logan vaguely recognized him from the night before. The man shook his head. “Ain’t seen you miss that shot anytime these last couple years, Marie. You anglin’ for lessons or somethin’?”

“Shut up, Pete.” But she was blushing, her cheeks turning deep pink, and she grabbed for her drink.

Logan took the bridge off the table and set it on the side. She gave him a quick glance and turned even pinker. He put one hand on the table on either side of her, leaning over to speak directly into her ear. “You playin’ me here?”

“Maybe. A little.” She was fighting another smile.

“Why?” God, she smelled good.

“Well…guys don’t like girls to beat them.”

He stayed right where he was. “Men like women who play straight.” He heard her catch her breath a little. “Take the shot again.” He stepped back. She took another gulp of her drink before she reached for the cue and bridge.

“Ten. Corner.” This time she made the shot easily. She moved around the table. “Twelve, corner pocket.”

He moved to that corner of the table and crossed his arms. She wants to play games, we’ll play games. She looked up from her shot. “What?”

“Nothin’. Just standing here.” He raised the eyebrow again and she glared at him.

“Fine.” She missed the shot and slapped the table in annoyance.

“Too bad, kid. You need a lighter touch.” He hefted his cue and looked over the table. “Fifteen. Corner.”

She went to that corner of the table, but she didn’t just stand there. She leaned over as if trying to get an angle on his shot.

He had an angle, all right. Her top was cut pretty low and she knew exactly what she was giving him a view of. He focused on the shot with determination and sank it. Try to con a con, huh? She put on a pout and stood up. He gestured. “Seven. Side pocket.”

This time she moved to stand right beside him. The scent, frankly, messed with his concentration more than the sight, though she couldn’t know that. He leaned over to set up his shot and she leaned against the table with him. He could feel her against his side as he drew back for the shot.
He missed.

“Too bad, sugar.” Apparently she learned fast. She reached for the chalk again and surveyed the table with a critical eye. “Lighter touch, huh?” She gave him a warning look and he stepped back. She leaned over. “Four. Side pocket.” She made the shot. “Sixteen, in the corner.” She made that too. “Twelve, corner.”

“Like hell.” The shot was there, but she’d have to bank the cue ball off the cushion to make it.

“Want to double the bet?” She gave him a challenging look.

“Two drinks? You think I’m an alcoholic or something?”

“Okay, pick another bet.”

It was an invitation for another teasing, flirtatious comment, but he didn’t take it. He met her gaze directly, held it. “Your scarf.” His eyes went to the filmy green fabric. He wanted it, for what reason he didn’t quite know. *It would smell like her.*

Her eyes widened a little and the bantering words she tossed back didn’t quite come off. “Strip billiards?”

”Whatever.” He kept his eyes on hers.

“Against what?” Her gaze raked up and down his body. “Don’t see anything you’ve got that would fit me. ‘Cept maybe that belt buckle.” Her eyes lingered on it for a moment.

“Fine.”

She closed the few steps between them and boldly put her hand on the buckle in question. “You sure? Wouldn’t want you to get all embarrassed if you can’t keep your pants up.” The smile she had now was absolutely wicked.

“Ain’t gonna be a problem, because no way in hell are you making that shot.” He took the gloved hand and moved it away firmly. “Take the bet, take the shot.”

She took her time and he didn’t try to distract her. It was a good try; she got the angle exactly right but she didn’t hit the cue ball quite hard enough and the twelve-ball stopped just short of the pocket. For a second he wondered if she’d blown the shot on purpose, but her reaction wasn’t feigned; she swore under her breath and caught her cue up in annoyance. He held out his hand.

“Pay up.”

She set her cue down and walked over to him, loosening the knot of the scarf, leaving it hanging free around her neck. “Not gonna give me a chance to win it back?”

“Nope.” He took hold of one end of the scarf and started to slide it free; she held onto the other end. “You lost. Hand it over.” He tugged on the scarf and she didn’t let go; instead she let him pull her closer, stepping forward as he drew the material through his fingers. He leaned forward, mesmerized by the delicious scent and the huge brown eyes that seemed to be getting bigger as she got closer—

“Logan!” It was Toby’s voice, sounding panicked, and Logan realized the bar had gone silent. He let go of the scarf and pushed the girl out of the way, striding toward the bar.
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A Fighter By His Trade by Artemis2050

Author's Notes:
Things heat up in the bar. Not in a good way.

A Fighter By His Trade

People were scattering now, running out of the bar. Toby had his hands raised; a man in a black leather jacket was holding a gun on him. Two more men, both huge, stood off to one side.

“Put the gun down, bub.” He saw both the thugs turn to look at him. “We don’t want any trouble in here tonight.”

The man with the gun turned his head. He was an ugly bastard, pockmarked and with a deep scar running down one cheek. “Stay outta this, asshole. Ain’t your business.”

“That’s where you’re wrong.” Goddamnit, this was fucking unacceptable. He’d forgotten what he was actually here to do. “Let’s take this outside before someone gets hurt.”

“Someone’s gonna get hurt if you don’t get the fuck out of here and let us discuss business with Barkeep here.” The man jerked his head at his goons and they both started towards Logan.

He dropped into a crouch and dodged the first punch. He grabbed the man’s arm and threw him across the room; he crashed into a table and stayed down, for the moment. The second man pulled a
knife and took a swipe at him. Logan threw up an arm and the knife glanced off it, slicing him near the elbow. The man stepped back, grinning, and then paled as he watched the deep gash close itself up almost instantly. “Holy shit.”

“No kidding.” Logan wiped the remaining blood off his arm. “Wanna try that again?”

“Both of you shut up.” It was the leader. Logan turned, and froze. The man had Marie, one arm twisted behind her back, his gun pressed against her temple. Her face was contorted in pain. “Want me to blow your pretty little friend’s brains out?” He didn’t move. Damn it to hell, why hadn’t she run like everyone else? “Toby, you empty out the till. That should cover our take for the week.” Logan saw Toby move to do so. “Paul, put some cuffs on the hero here so he don’t get any more bright ideas.”

“I ain’t touchin’ him.” Goon number two was still staring at Logan’s arm. “Boss, I cut him and he didn’t—“

“My pleasure, boss.” The huge man shoved Logan toward the end of the bar, pulled out a pair of handcuffs and fastened one wrist to the brass railing that ran around the bar. Toby set a paper bag on the bar and shot Logan a worried look.

“All right, just let her go. No one needs to get hurt here,” the bartender said.

Paul came forward, avoiding Logan, and grabbed the bag. The man in charge jerked his head at his other henchman. “Jake, come here.” He started backing towards the door, dragging Marie with him.

“Let her go.” Logan took a step forward, as far as he could go.

“I think you gentlemen need to understand that we ain’t foolin’ around here.” He ran the black-leather gloved hand that held the gun up and down the girl’s cheek. Logan saw Marie close her eyes, but it didn’t seem to be because she was scared—more as though she was concentrating. “The lady’s gonna come with us. We’ll send her home in the morning, you understand. But we got a party to go to after this and I think she’d enjoy it.”

“You ain’t leaving with her.” Logan’s voice was low and deadly.

“Not much you can do about it, hero. Jake, you hold onto her.” He was almost at the door; he shoved Marie towards the second man and then everything happened in a blur. Logan unsheathed one set of claws and slashed through the chain on the handcuffs even as he saw Marie reach towards the second goon’s face. He retracted them before dispatching Paul with two punches, the second an uppercut that sent him flying backwards and the money he held scattering across the room. He was aware of the second goon hitting the floor as well, though he wasn’t sure what had happened; he only saw the boss raising his gun towards the girl again. With a roar he let the claws out again and slashed down.

A hand, holding a gun, hit the floor of the bar. It was no longer attached to its owner. The ugly man gave a high-pitched scream and collapsed, writhing in pain. Logan was on him in a second. The man was wearing a tie; Logan jerked it off him and knotted it tightly around what was left of his wrist, making a rough tourniquet. Then he leaned forward, into the man’s sweating face, and released a single blade, letting it inch forward until it was poised over one eye. “I ain’t foolin’ around either,
pal. I’m gonna let you live, so you can make sure the word gets out. Next one comes in here and tries anything is gonna lose body parts they just might miss even more. That goes double for anyone who puts their hands on a woman. Got it?” Terrified, the man nodded. “Good.” He saw Paul, out of the corner of his eye, starting to get to his feet. He rose as well and the larger man cowered away from him. “Get your boss the fuck out of here. Your buddy here can wait for the cops.” With a vicious jerk he used the extended claw to slice away the cuff that still dangled from one wrist before retracting it.

He looked around, the battle rage calming. Toby was just rising from where he’d ducked behind the bar; he looked shell-shocked. Fuck. Toby knew he was a mutant. It was an open secret on the fight circuit—it was hard to hide things from men who saw him getting beaten night after night and never showing a mark—but he didn’t know about the claws. Well, now he knows. “Call the police. Clean up the floor first.” He kicked the severed hand towards the fallen man. “I don’t see him filing any complaints.” Toby just nodded. Logan knew that look; he had a feeling he wasn’t going to be getting free drinks around here any more. He turned.

Marie was standing still, over the second goon’s body. She had a dazed expression and he had no idea what had happened there; the guy was out cold. She couldn’t possibly have done that. “You all right?” She nodded, almost reflexively. He saw her kneel down and get something from the floor; it was her second glove, the one she’d pulled off for some reason. Her green scarf still fluttered free around her neck.

That’s mine. And now he had a reason to want it; it would be a reminder of all the reasons he shouldn’t let pretty little co-eds flirt with him. He strode forward and reached for it; she flinched away from his hand and his lip curled in grim satisfaction. Good. Now maybe she’d quit playing with fire. “You owe me somethin’.” He grabbed the scarf and jerked it free; she gasped. “Have a nice life.” He strode towards the back stairs without a backwards glance; all he wanted now was to get his stuff and get out.

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The Fighter Still Remains

“Logan, wait!” Incredibly, she was running after him. He just continued up the stairs, reaching the tiny room Toby had lent him and banging the door behind him. He caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror over the battered dresser; his shirt was stained with blood. He tore it off, balling it up, and stuffed it, along with the scarf, into his knapsack. He searched the bag savagely for another shirt.

The door opened. “Wait. Please. I need to explain—"

“Get outta here.” He dragged the new t-shirt over his head, not looking at her.

“No.” She actually came a step into the room. “Just listen. I know what you are—"

“Yeah? Then you know more than you should.” He shoved what remained of his belongings into the knapsack and slung it over one shoulder, grabbing his leather jacket from the foot of the bed. “Out of the way.”

“I’m a mutant too.” She didn’t move, and now she had his attention. “What just happened—my mutation’s my skin. I absorb energy from people. You asked me why I wear the gloves, remember?
Before I learned to control it, I needed them all the time, so I learned to play pool wearin’ them and now it just doesn’t feel right without them. But it takes me a minute to get it turned on or off, so when I thought you were going to touch me—I just didn’t want to hurt you.” She ran out of breath.

He stared at her. “What?”

“My skin,” she repeated. “If you’d touched me just then—I didn’t have it back under control yet. You’d have passed out like that other guy.” She swallowed. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings.”

That was possibly the most incongruous sentence he’d ever heard in his life. He let his knapsack fall back onto the bed. “You dropped that guy using your skin?”

She nodded. “I suck their energy out. He’ll be all right—I didn’t hold on too long.”

He took a step towards her. “And that’s why you wear gloves.”

Another nod. “It just kinda became my style, you know? That and, um, the scarves.” She was still holding the second glove in one hand. Now she pulled off the one she still wore, and put them both down on the dresser. “I just wanted you to know that. And—thanks for saving my life, and everything.”

He reached over her and closed the door behind her. He heard her heart rate increase a little, but she didn’t try to move away from him. “Don’t think those are gonna fit me.”

“No,” she agreed. “They probably won’t.”

“You got this thing turned off?” He really hoped so, because she was inches away from him now.

“Yeah—“ He brought his mouth down on hers, hard, and her hands came up to his face as she kissed him back. He let his jacket drop to the floor and grabbed her around the waist, pulling her closer. His lips moved down her neck; when his teeth scraped against the edge of her collarbone she moaned and he pressed her back against the door, his hands sliding under her shirt, reaching up to cup her breasts. Her tongue darted out and along his ear and he let out a growl. “We should go,” she whispered. “Before the police get here.”

Fuck that. But she was right, and reluctantly he raised his head, tugging her shirt back down. “Where you want to go, darlin’?” Her brown eyes, looking dazed with something else now, met his.

“My apartment’s about two blocks from here,” she said. “If you want.”

“You sure?” He held her gaze, willing her to give him permission. Christ, I want her naked. Now.

“Oh, yeah.” He kissed her one more time, lingeringly, and then let her go. He retrieved his knapsack and jacket while she straightened her hair and clothing.

“Don’t forget your gloves,” he reminded her, and she gave him that slow smile again.

“Come on, sugar.” She picked them up and held out a hand. He took it and let her lead him back down the stairs, into the bar.

Incredibly, there was no sign of the fight. People were already trickling back into the place, and there was no hint of any of the combatants. Toby came out from the back as they reached the bottom of the stairs. He looked surprised. “You leavin’, buddy?”
Buddy? Logan was expecting something more like *Get out of my bar, freak.* “Thought I’d better, before the police got here.”

Toby brushed that off. “This’s the Big Easy, man. The police like it when you work out your problems without having to bother them.” His experienced eyes took in Marie’s still-slightly-disheveled state. “Still…maybe you got someplace more interestin’ to be, eh?”

“Gonna make sure she gets home safe,” Logan replied gruffly.

“Yeah?” Toby looked amused. “Yeah, you do that.” He chucked Marie under the chin and Logan saw that she was blushing again. “Take care of that hero of yours, ‘kay, chere?” She let go of Logan’s hand long enough to put her arms around Toby’s waist. He patted her head fondly. “Thought we were gonna lose our good-luck charm for a second there.” He held out a hand to Logan as he let her go. “See you soon, then, my friend.”

Logan shook his hand and then put a hand on Marie’s waist to guide her out of the bar. Several of the regulars, regathered around the bar, cheered as he made his way through the already-crowded room. He hurried her on a little faster, ignoring them, but Marie turned and waved a goodbye. She pressed against him as they went out the door.

“You know you just became a legend in the *Vieux Carré,* right?” She gave a throaty chuckle. “They’ll be bragging for years that they were here the night the Wolverine took on the Royal Street crew.”

He grabbed her arm and brought her to a halt. “Where the hell did you hear that name?”

Her brow knit. “Toby. He loves to tell stories about his days as a fighter. They all tell him he’s makin’ things up.” She wound her arms around one of his, looking up questioningly. “Why? You don’t like being called that?”

Slowly, he shook his head. She smiled a little hesitantly.

“Okay. Logan.” She tugged on his arm. “C’mon. It’s this way.”

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Fighter by Artemis2050

Chapter Summary

Heck with Canada. I say we set this someplace warmer. How y'all feel about the Big Easy?

Goin' Home by Artemis2050

Author's Notes:

So what would you do at Marie's place?

Goin’ Home

It was hot, a close-to-Midsummer kind of night, and the air was scented with the magnolias and honeysuckle that were in bloom. She led the way around the corner, off Jackson Square, and they walked in silence until she stopped in front of a house. Set back from the street a little way, it was a typical nineteenth-century, slightly run-down rambling old place; Logan could see a light on in one of the top floor windows. An arbor stood at the entrance from the street, its lattice thickly overgrown with ivy and jasmine.

“This’s me. Well—I have the ground floor.” He pulled her off the sidewalk, under the arch of the arbor where they were in the shadows. He took her face in his hands and she reached up to rest her own hands over his.

“I don’t have to come in,” he said gruffly. “You don’t—owe me or anythin’.”

He could feel her lips curve into that slow smile. “I want you to, though.” She turned her head a little to one side and he felt her lips against the inside of his wrist. He sucked in a breath at the touch. “Come on.”
He let her lead him up onto the big, sprawling porch and she reached into the mailbox for the key to the door. She opened the door wide for him to pass; he came in and stood awkwardly while she closed the door and moved past him to turn on a lamp that stood on an end table. He looked around.

They were in a large room, furnished with slightly shabby pieces that she’d probably gotten second-hand. It was a pretty, feminine space, with flowers in vases and artwork on the walls. The whole place smelled like her.

Marie turned at the archway that led into the kitchen. “Want a drink?”

“Sure.”

“What do you want?”

“What’ve you got?”

She went into the kitchen and he heard her open the refrigerator. “There’s beer.” She stood up so she could see him over the low wall between the rooms. “Not Molson. It’s Amstel Light.” She shook her head before he could answer. “Never mind.” She hunted further. “Vodka…and bourbon.”

“Bourbon.” He slung his jacket over the back of the slipcovered couch and set his knapsack down beside it. She came back into the room, carrying two bottles and two glasses filled with ice pinched between her fingers. She moved to set everything down on the coffee table.

“Want to sit down?” He came around and sat down on the couch. “Say when.” He let her pour about two fingers before reaching for the glass.

“Thanks.” She poured some for herself, then picked up the other bottle. “Coke? What d’you want to ruin good liquor like that for?”

“I didn’t offer you any, you notice.” She took a sip and added a little more Coke. “I like it sweet.”

“You can’t taste the bourbon that way.” He took a long swallow of his own drink.

“Really?” Then she was moving towards him, and the next thing he knew she was on his lap, her knees straddling his hips, and her mouth met his, slightly cold and tasting of Jim Beam and Coca-Cola. He managed to set his glass down on the end table before he spilled it. She drew back.

“Hmmm. Might have to rethink the Coke after all.”

He took her drink and set it down beside his, then wrapped his arms around her, pulling her down for another kiss. Her arms went around his neck and he slid a hand under her shirt, up the smooth curve of her back.

He wanted to see her, and he reluctantly freed his lips from hers. “Put your arms up.” She ran her tongue over her lower lip before she raised her arms from his shoulders. He stripped the clingy black top over her head and tossed it onto the couch. One hand found the catch of her bra between her breasts and released it. She arched her shoulders a little and let it fall onto the floor.

“Light touch there, mister.” He grinned when he recognized his words being thrown back at him. Christ, she was gorgeous. He lowered his head to one rose-tipped breast and ran his tongue down its soft swell. She let her head fall back and he ran his hands up between her shoulders, pulling her closer and burying his face against her chest.

Her hands ran up his arms, his neck; they tangled in his hair and pulled his head back. This time her kiss was fiercer, more demanding; when she broke away her eyes were dark with desire. She...
at his shirt. “You too.”

He didn’t want to let her move far enough away for him to get the shirt off, frankly. Instead he shifted a little, hitching forward so he could stand. She wrapped her legs around his waist as he lifted her. “Where’re I takin’ you, baby?”

“You too.” She fastened her mouth on his neck as he carried her in the direction she’d indicated, finding a spot where his neck met his shoulder, and it almost made his knees buckle. The windows were open in her bedroom, letting in a soft night breeze that stirred the curtains, and he lay her down on the bed. He loved that the bedclothes were rumpled, not smoothly made up; he could imagine her sleeping here other nights, her long limbs tangled in these sheets that smelled of her. He kissed her again and felt her hands at his waist, pulling off his shirt; he let her strip it over his head and then her hands moved down his chest; his nerves were on fire wherever her fingers traveled.

He moved down her body, tasting every part of her, and she writhed under his touch. He sat back and slid a hand under her hip, lifting her leg up, and ran his hand down until he could reach her ankle. She was wearing sandals; he slid the first one off, then let that leg down and reached for the other. He found the fastening of the leather pants she wore; they laced and it took him a moment to work the strings free. Then he slid the butter-soft leather down her hips, taking her underwear with it, and his earlier wish was fulfilled; she lay naked before him, her legs splayed loosely over his.

She propped herself up on her elbows. “Like what you see, sugar?”

“Hell, yeah.” Like it? She was perfect, her skin creamy white in the moonlight, and he hadn’t seen a woman in his life he’d wanted more.

“I want to see you too.” Her voice was breathy and husky at the same time. She moved then, tucking her knees under her, and he stood up, kicking off his boots. She crawled forward, to the edge of the bed, and reached for his belt, tugging him closer. He let her undo the belt and slip it free, and then her fingers were on the buttons of his jeans, working them free. She had her lip caught between her teeth in the same expression she’d had when concentrating on her shot at the pool table. Now she had the buttons undone and she pushed the jeans down his hips. She rose up on her knees, one hand closing over him as the other ran over his chest. He wound one hand into her hair as she brought her mouth to his body, the hand that was on him stroking slowly as her lips teased his chest and stomach.

He let her go long enough to shove his jeans the rest of the way off. She looked up at him. “I love the way you smell,” she whispered. She took his hands and drew him back down onto the bed with her.

He stretched out beside her, pinning her down with a leg thrown across hers, and ran a hand up her body to cup one of those perfect breasts. She reached towards his face and he seized her wrists, stretching her arms out over her head. He kissed her, plunging his tongue into her mouth; she raised her head, trying to free her hands; he moved his mouth to her ear, nibbling and licking. “Hold still.” It came out in a growl.

She caught her breath, but stopped fighting his hold. He bit her neck gently. “That’s a’ girl.” He let go of her hands and she didn’t move. He worked his way down her body, spellbound at the way she shivered at his touch. He let one hand slip between her legs and she threw her head back, a moan escaping her. “Relax, darlin’.” She took a deep breath and stilled herself.

Logan ran his tongue into her navel, feeling her muscles tighten at the slight invasion, then at last bent his head over the curls between her legs. God, her scent was unbelievable, heady and rich, and she was already wet and ready for him. He breathed out over her sex and she moaned once more; it was a sound he wanted to force from her again and again. Then he flicked his tongue over her,
tasting her for the first time, and the moan turned into a whimper. She didn’t move her arms from where he’d put them, but she clutched the bedclothes in her hands as he continued to tease her with his tongue.

He focused his attention on her, his senses inundated: the soft thighs under his hands, the sounds she made as he caressed her, the musky taste of her, honey-rich and exhilarating. She was beautifully responsive to his touch; she seemed to hold nothing back, opening herself to his hands and mouth on her most intimate parts. He slid one finger into her and she gasped, arching her back with the sensation.

_That’s it, darlin’_. He wanted to feel her come, needed to know what she’d look like, sound like, when he sent her over the edge. He increased the pace and soon she was trembling, the muscles of her thighs quivering, and as he slid his finger deeper into her he felt her convulse around him.

“Jesus fucking _christ_.” Her hands slammed down onto the bed beside her and her body half rose off the mattress. “Oh, my _god_.” Her hands caught at his shoulders, dragging him back up, and she kissed him hungrily. Her body arched up under his, pressing against him in invitation, and he didn’t hesitate. He reached down, finding the opening of her sex, and guided himself into her with one strong thrust. She bit down on his lip as he entered her, hard enough to draw blood for a moment before the cut closed up. She was still trembling with the aftershocks of her own orgasm as he drove into her again and again; she raked her fingernails down his back and the sensations were driving him wild. He moved his hips against hers faster and she wrapped her legs around his waist, drawing him even deeper into that slick heat.

He wanted to draw it out, bring her with him again before reaching his own climax, but it was too much, feeling her around him and her hands and lips on his body. She raised her head and fastened her mouth over one nipple, and it took him over the brink. His mouth worked silently against her neck as the sensations washed over him. He only just managed not to collapse on top of her, staying just enough in control to roll to one side. She moved with him, keeping her arms around his neck and holding him deep inside her with one long leg wrapped around his. She kissed him again, gently this time, and lay her head back on the pillows. “That was amazing,” she murmured.

“She sure you’re finished, sugar?” Her teeth and lips worked against his skin and if he hadn’t been ready to go again, he would have been at that. He grabbed her waist, rolling onto his back so she was astride him. She laughed and leaned forward for another kiss, the curtain of her hair falling in a sweet-smelling cascade around them both.

He sat up, sliding his hands under her thighs and bringing her legs around him so he could shift onto his knees. He supported her with one arm, his other hand going between them again to excite her further. Her mouth found that spot on his neck again and her legs clenched around him as she rode him. At last he felt her shudder again around him, making fevered moans against his ear, and he seized her hips, bringing her down against him harder and harder until he was again overcome by ecstasy. He wrapped his arms around her, kissing her neck, her chin, her face, tasting the sweat that
that trickled down the soft skin in the humid summer air.

Gently he lay her back down, letting himself slip out of her as he drew a sheet up over her. She stretched drowsily, her body moving with feline grace under the thin linen, and turned her head to burrow into the pillow a little, already half-asleep.

He rested on his elbow for a moment, gazing down at her. He raised his hand, still damp with her, and brought it to his face, breathing in that incredible scent. Almost unconsciously he ran his hand over his own neck, anointing himself with it. With her.

He reached down to brush back one long lock of her hair that had fallen forward over her face, and she sighed and shifted a little on her pillow.

*God, she’s beautiful.* He stayed there several minutes, just watching her, before he reluctantly sat up and reached for his jeans where they lay in a tangle of their clothes on the floor.

“Hey.” He turned; her eyes were open. “Where you goin’?”

“Back to the bar.”

She hitched herself up onto one elbow. “Why? Ain’t gonna be any more trouble there tonight.” Her drawl had increased in her sleepy satiety and she held out a hand. “C’mon back to bed.”

It really hadn’t occurred to him that she’d want him to stay. That particular intimacy wasn’t something he was familiar or even comfortable with; in fact, he was usually anxious to leave as soon as possible. But the idea of sleeping beside her, waking up with her in his arms, was almost too enthralling. He hesitated, and then her hand was on his arm, stroking gently, and he surrendered to the temptation. “You sure?”

She looked a little puzzled. “Course I’m sure.” She tugged gently on his arm and he let her draw him back down with her; she raised the sheet to settle it over him as well. He lay back against the pillow and she nestled her head on his shoulder; he put an arm around her, pulling her close, and she sighed, letting her hand rest on his chest.

“You’re…so warm,” she murmured drowsily.

He knew when she fell asleep, felt her breathing grow slow and steady and her body relax against his. The breeze from the window brought the scent of honeysuckle and jasmine with it, and he knew he’d always associate it with her, even if tonight was the only night he was with her. He lay awake for some time, absorbing the novelty of it, before drifting off himself. The last conscious thought he remembered having was *This is what it must feel like to be at home.*

Then he slept.

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