

# Courtly Love, a tail

*by* Martin Heavisides

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I'm a little apprehensive about introducing Marilyn to my folks. Dad's no bigot but he is old school. "I've heard of mixed marriages but this is ridiculous!" I only hope he can restrain himself, and say that in private to me.

They're bound to wonder what sort of offspring we'll hatch. We've done the tests, we are cross-fertile. Mom's bound to say she'd be happier if we weren't, but we've discussed it. We've both decided to call it a favourable sign, a nod our way by fate.

I suggested we fly down. I know all the underground flightways like---I won't say the back of my hand, because humans are proprietary about that term, and Marilyn is human. There's no denying this though, we had opposable thumbs long before people did. They don't mention that so much in the folklore and legends. We decided on driving as it's a long trip, and that way we could each take a turn. (Humans have their points, but I've never met even a mutant with wings you could rely on in a headwind. Maybe ours will be the first.)

She told me she'd been getting so bored, at the party where we met, with the lines men were feeding her. The one in the Dracula cape (I could read his lips across the room) "You're just my type." The wolfman crooning "What a little moonlight can do." And me? "You look good enough to eat." Well at least I made her laugh.

(None of us have of course, not since the Ragnarok/Potsdam accords. I doubt any of us could any more, we've shared the dominion of earth so amicably with humankind for so long. I discovered later she had given my words a completely different construction, and the boldness was what made her laugh. When I understood what she'd taken me to mean it made me blush violet and crimson, like a chameleon in a field of lilacs and poppies. I hadn't intended to be quite so forward.)

She told me later it had been nearly a week before she stopped wondering when I'd take off my costume. I think she must have believed what she wanted to until our differences no longer mattered. I stoop quite a bit and even so stand twelve foot tall. (Just over six if I decide to go about for a while on all fours.) My wings normally tuck invisibly behind, but extended their full length when we made love, a span of six foot from tip to tip. My tail is another body for length, and can crack like a whip or move slow and sinuous as our evolutionary cousin Anaconda. (Humans have body language, but they don't have tail language, and it costs them some in expressiveness.) Did she really imagine all that could be a costume, with a feeble male, six foot high or so, somewhere deep-buried in its frame, directing and manipulating its every move? We laughed about that, and I told her about the lava spas near where I was born.

