

TALES OF CORNELIO

TOME ONE

REUNION

Bane & Wave

[PG-13]

*swearing, alcohol,
violence, horror*

a story by

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*special thanks to
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Ventose - 1st moon '96

Like every great moon, Wave is waiting for his old friend, sitting the bar of the crusty inn of Caplange, a small settlement along the coast. Bane hasn't shown up for a few years now; but the feline pirate hasn't yet given up. Good thing, as the familiar smell of wet dog hits Wave, as he hears the inn's door opening. He spins on his stool enthusiastically, practically bouncing from his seat to go tackle his good buddy in a viril embrace.

BANE! you filthy dog!! Finally showed up!

WAVE! you mangy ol' cat! What'chu been up to!

*Sailing n' plundeing, the usual. But you?
Where have ya been?!*

Well, see. I got a kid, so that's kept me busy

Like an actual, bipedal being?!

Yessire! Named 'er Snip, she's uh, four I think.

No way. Who's the mom?

No clue. I just came home one day and she was there?

*Oh yeah that checks out I guess.
No offence but uh, how's she still alive?*

Naah t's'fair: Azdelle took care of 'er a lot.



EBERHARN
BEASTBANE

HE/HIM 38 y.o

WEREWOLF

MONSTER HUNTER

WAVE LYKOI

HE/HIM 42 y.o

MINX

PIRATE (NAVIGATOR)



Wave nods sagely, as if that was a reasonable thing to do, even tough, unlike the barkeep overhearing this, he know that Azdelle is a large, six legged, furry draconic creature that inexplicably hangs out with Bane, along with a myriad of other supernatural creatures. He's always been more popular with beasts than people; it took him a while to agree to come to town, back then.

Took up a job, too! For some fancy lads in Parmannia,

You?! Working for someone?

I know, right? But listen, they gave me land for the pack, and I figured it'd be nice for Snip to grow up near, yknow, people.

Wave agrees. They spent the rest of the night chit-chatting about what they've missed from each other; Wave recounts tales of the far seas; heists and captures, thrilling chases and discoveries all around. Bane talks a bit about his work; catching or convincing rare beasts to come back to "the Ranch", and taking care of them there; tough he doesnt specify what the Ranch does. He'd rather talk about his daughter, which he is very proud of; he talks of how she always asks questions that he's never even thought of, and how she's so resourceful and that she has a great appetite. She'll grow sharp and strong, that's for sure! She even brought back her first solo kill just the other day; can you believe she caught and killed a squirrel bare-handed?! Wave listens a bit incredulous; guess the apple doesnt fall far from the tree.

Messidor - 2nd moon '96

A few months passed; the friends parted and reunited, now once again in the rythm of things. After their usual greetings, Wave asks:

So! How's the kid?

Oh wonderful! She's a real lil artist, lookit that!

Bane takes out from his pocket a heavily worn piece of folded paper.

She's been drawin' all over them walls at the ranch, t's adorable. And! I got someone teachin'er to read n write



Oh, good! You wouldn't even know how to spell her name

S N I P, you ass!

Oh, excuse me, you know letters now? Spell mine

Erm... I'll have to ask her

They burst out laughing, clanking their tankards. Wave boasts about the great heist he and his crew pulled off, raiding some ancient temple ruins on the edge of the Trench - that part of the ocean no sane sailor dares to wander - coming back with countless riches. Bane cheers him on, and the two ramble on and on till they get kicked out for getting rowdy; where they move on to the docks; talking about the monsters lurking in the Trench.

So you're telling me you're runnin' away, like a coward.

Not "running away", just, yknow, avoiding them
pfsh, yeah right, scaredy cat

Oh, go fuck yerself

Wave rebukes, playfully elbowing his drunken friend; who trips and falls off the dock, sinking like a rock.



Wave's worried for a moment, watching bubbles rise to the surface; but his worries are soon soothed as he's splashed by the wolfman emerging with a fish between his teeth.

After helping him back up onto the pier, the two fellas finish their night on the Napster's ship, drunken and drenched.

They exchange gifts before splitting; Bane offering some rare furs, and Wave some fancy booze; and some colorful chalks he found, for the little one.



you know how to swim, right?

Brumaire - 3rd moon '96

Wave hasn't showed up this time, worryingly. Bane waited for him the whole night, and the day after, before having to leave.

Ventose - 1st moon '97

This time, when Beastbane steps into the tavern, he sees Wave moping pathetically at the bar, between half drunk bottles and empty mugs. Bane sits next to him, giving him a supportive pat on the back

By the gods, Wave, you look so much worse than usual.

Oh, BANE, shit really hit the fan.

Wave turns his face to him, but doesn't even sit up. His usual peppy mischief is replaced by a profound tiredness; and his left eye is now covered by an eyepatch. Concerned, all Bane finds to say is:

Ooh boy. What happened?

Dead. EVERYONE. The ship, the crew, there's nothings left. 'xcept me. Hells, I should've died with 'em

Waves takes a big swig of the first bottle he can get his hand on; before slamming his forehead back on the counter. Beastbane takes a big breath and sits next to his miserable friend, quite unsure of how to approach the situation. He didn't really know them, the crew; but Wave cared about them like family.



*oof, ya
look terrible
yeah...*

Well, ya didn't. And frankly, I'm rather glad yer alive.

You would've had me showin up here for years for no reason?

Hah, yeah, like you did to me

Well, I wasn't dead, so.

Wave chuckles weakly, but doesn't move. Bane clears his throat.

So, how long you've been moping?

Urgh, hell if I know

The barkeep, glad someone's finally paying mind to that raggedy cat that's stinking up the place, remarks that he's spent the past three weeks drowning his sorrows here; looking at Bane expectingly.

Alright, sounds like you need some fresh air

Baaaaah, how about a new bottle o' whiskey instead?

Oh yeah, that looks like it's working real good for you.

Bane picks up the lethargic cat, who complains but doesn't fight; salutes the barkeep and leaves the establishment, carrying Wave on his shoulder, of somewhere away from source the tremendous amounts of alcohol he's surely consumed.

Alright bud, when's the last time you ate a meal

Uh, Define meal.

Solid food?

Hmmmmmm.

The barkeep gave me fries a couple times?

Beastbane sighs profoundly. He is not good with emotions, but that won't stop him from taking care of his friend: even though he doesn't know what to say to make him feel better, he'll at least make sure that his body's managed. Despite the late hour, he managed to find some fish kebabs, and the two end up on the beach, not too far from the pier. He drops Wave in the soft sand, where he lies, pathetic, being fed pieces of food by his shaggy friend; reluctantly at first, but that fish is real tasty. They stay silent for a while, listening to the waves and watching the stars.

After a long while, Wave speaks up.

*Y'know, when I say I should've died with them,
That ain't just survivor guilt.*

He sighs deeply.

*Something fucked happened out there,
And I don't know why, or how, I made it out.*

Beastbane nods supportively. After a beat, he asks;

How long ago?

I'll be honest, I don't even know when's today, so,

It's mi-ventose, seventeen. I think?

Oh, Oooh, Wait, so I missed a moon?

You did. And I waited for you all night.

Barkeep charged me full even tough

I didnt even take a room.

Did you sleep on the floor again?

Maaaybe

Wave chuckes; that's Bane for you.

He eventually sits up, looking at the horizon;

But it takes him a minute to speak again.

*It was, gosh, early Fructidor I think. We went back
to that ol' Temple I talked about last time, remember?*

Bane nods. Wave takes a big breath.

So this place, the entrance was on a reef bank. And these reefs, they were only accessible sometimes- y'know how the sea is. That means we had to sail off in a raging storm. None of us even questioned it, we just went. It was madness; never seen waves like this before- as tall as buildings, and not following any sorta pattern- the nastiest sea I've ever navigated. But somehow, we all made it to the reef in one piece.

We all rushed to the temple; storm was still raging. When we got there, Fang started getting real hectic. To be honest, we all were, but he was on another fucking level. He just kept muttering weird shit to himself, checkin' every brick on the wall.

I guess he knew what he was doin, cause he found a secret passage: it opened up to some spooky ass stairs. So we all went down. It was dark as hell, our lanterns barely did anythin. But we just kept on goin, and goin. I don't think anyone talked on the way down. Even Luth didn't say a word. Eventually it opened up to this huge, like, pit? it was covered, everywhere, it was, like, roots, or, eels.

He trails off, deep in thoughts.

And there was, in the middle, this like platform, with some kinda pedestal, with, just, the most beautiful dagger, glowing, planted right in it. and then Candee said something, I think she cast a spell, or was about to- and Fang went nuts. Yelled at her that she didn't know what she was talking about, pushed her down the stairs and booked it for the dagger. We all started yellin, and runnin- for Fang, for the dagger, for Candee...

He pauses, taking a breather. Even though it's been months, he hadn't talked about it to anyone until now; moments flashes in his mind, clear as if he was still there; he shakes it off.

Fang, I've seen him take a firebolt for the Luth. He jumped into shark infested waters to fetch Candee's focus. He personally nursed Ragnu when he lost his leg. He cared about the crew, he cared about us. But as soon as we got to that room, it's like he didn't trust us no more. Like we became an obstacle for him.

Wave sighs, a deep, profoundly sad sigh.

He got up on the platform, attackin anyone who tried to get near; yelled something in tongues, and pulled out the dagger. Candee cried out, the walls started shiftin, Fang got swallowed by shadows.

He was laughing, Maniacally.

I'm not sure, what happened next.

Everyone just started attacking each other. It was chaos. I watched my friends, my companions, all turn against each other, some, they looked possessed; the others, we were just trying to stay alive. Every time someone fell, Fang, or whatever he had become, surrounded by dark, writhing tendrils, rushed over, slicing 'em wide open with the dagger. It turned their inside turn pitch black, darker than ink, darker than coal, darker than the darkest of nights.

Luth, my own brother, who's had my back for as long as I can remember he stabbed me, right in the flank. We tussled; I tried to reason him, get him back, but, he was just, not there. Candee got the hit on him. She fucking blew his head up. "It's too late," she said. She pulled me away, she said, "We made a big mistake, we have to kill Fang, before". But she never got to finish her sentence. I guess we were the last two, because as soon as Luth was eviscerated, Fang came for us. Candee got stabbed right through the throat. She looked at me as life fled her eyes.

I couldn't do anything but watch,

I waited for an opening, jumped him, got him down. We wrestled for a while; he kept talking words I couldn't understand, his eyes completely blacked out, whispering in a voice that wasn't his. He disarmed me; I was losing so much blood, there wasn't much time.

He managed to stab me, in the eye. It was, the worst pain I've ever experienced in my life. Worse than getting my arm almost cut off, worse than being pierced by a dozen magic missiles. It was like, barbed wires were growing, spinning, in my skull, freezing and burning at the same time. But, he laxed his guard. Just a second, just enough for me to turn his blade against him. Right through the heart.

His blood, it was already black. He coughed, it trickled down his chin. It stained his shirt, pooling on the blade, dripping on my hands. It was cold. For a moment, I thought, this is it, I made it, I killed him, like Candee said. It's over.

But, it wasn't Fang. It might not have been since the first time we left that place.

It laughed, a grotesque caricature of his traits, deforming, stretching out, melting. It laughed, and everything was contorting. The floor, the walls, the pedestal, the crew my friends. Everything. Even the knife, in my hand, it became soft, and sticky, like pine sap, but dark, so dark. I pulled it out, tried to let go; Fang's body spat out one last wave of black blood and collapsed, like it was mud. But it kept laughing. The last lantern went out. And my head, my eye, it hurt, it hurt so bad. I tried to cover it, protect it, but it made it, so, so much worse. I was in agony. And it kept laughing.

Wave stops, as the scene replays in his head, again and again- but it's like every time, something's different; something's off. A different lantern the last to be snuffed; his other hand holding the knife, and Fang's horrifying, distorted face, never once looks the same. But one thing stays constant. It didn't just laugh. It spoke.

GOOD

It said.

It spoke not in the common tongue; rather, the same one as it did before. But this time, he understood. **WE**, it said.

SHALL WORK TOGETHER

The words resonate through his mind.

This is what he had been trying to drown out ever since he got off that cursed reef. **TOGETHER TOGETHER TOGETHER**

He sharply inhales.

Honestly, it's all a blur from that point on. I must've passed out, who knows how long. I don't even know how I got out of that hole. I just remember finally stepping outside. The sun was shining - almost blinding; the sea, flat. Everything was so calm. Warm. Tranquil. I was still hurting, but it was bearable.

It's like all of it had just been a bad dream. The ship had suffered some critical damage, but I had no choice but to take sail; the tide was rising, and lingering any longer would've gotten me drowned. I didn't even say goodbye, I just sailed off.

I didn't even feel sad, I just, felt empty. I vaguely aimed for Highstar and got drunk off Luth's stash, leaving my fate in Julaguania's hands. Guess she had me in her favors, because I only sank a couple miles from shore. It took, I dunno, could've been days, could've been weeks. Months maybe. Time doesn't feel the same when you're alone and delirious in the middle of the sea. Once I got to land, I managed to get to one of the caches, so I was able to make it here. And then well, I waited for you. And then that's now.

Wave flops back down on the sand, exhausted; Bane comfortingly pats his chest; he honestly didn't quite understand everything Wave said, but one thing's for sure, it was not a good time. He spends some time trying to think of what to say, but his mind draws completely blank.

Wow, that... Sucks.

*It really does.
Anyways, what have you BEEN up to.*

What!?! Nananah you cant just make a horrifying monologue about your misery and then try to change the subject?! Im sorry, were gonna talk 'bout this a bit more. Are you gonna be okay?

I MEAN, I GUESS? I DON'T I HAVEN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT ABOUT ANYTHING REALLY, SINCE THAT HAPPENED. I'VE BEEN BETTER.

Yeah, no shit! Damn. What- is there anything I can do for you? Anything. Ill fistfight that reef if you ask me to. You just say the word.

Wave smiles, a soft, genuine smile, for the first time for a long long while. He knows he means it. With a wistful sigh, he put his hand on Bane's, patting him back.

*I'm NOT sending you there buddy.
DON'T EVEN TRY TO GET NEAR IT.
I hope NO ONE EVER finds it again.*

Alright, that's fair.

The two continue to watch the starry sky above, silent for a bit.

But I mean it, yknow. Anything you need, Ill make it happen one way or another.

Anything?

Anything.

I...

Asking for help really is hard. It's showing the most vulnerable part of yourself and hoping they dont use it against you. But Beastbane would never turn on him.

I cant... be alone again

Bane suddently sits up, his big bushy tail batting the sand, wagging.

Oh! I know! You could come to the Ranch with me! That way, you'll get to be with me! And meet Snip!

Wave is startled by Beastbane's sudden enthusiasm; so much so that it takes him a moment to process the information. Perhaps he does need a break from the high seas; a break that's not tanking all his funds in cheap booze to quiet the voices in his mind.

You know... That actually sounds pretty nice

Then it's a fucken deal, brother!

Bane grabs his arm, pulling him into a hug; slapping his back enthusiastically. Wave hugs back; relieved. Maybe it'll be worth to keep on living.

-to be continued-

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