

Is It Really So Wrong?

Horns & Halos #3

Author's Note:

Welcome to Horns & Halos, a new Patreon-exclusive series set in the Fur & Fangs universe! Short installments will be provided for my \$10+ Patrons on a regular basis. They will also be offered as short podfics/audio recordings.

Lila is a bisexual succubus, a demon who feeds on the intense emotions of others (especially sexual desire). However, she isn't all that good at interpreting which emotions other people are projecting—or getting laid.

Mikey is an angel. They are genderfluid, using a variety of pronouns. They usually wear a pin to let people know what pronouns they want that day (including one that says 'whatever'). The way they present their gender will vary from installment to installment.

“COME ON, LILA,” Maeve insists, shoving a suspiciously muddy-looking shot into my hand. “Drink it.”

I sniff the glass, wincing as its acrid smell coats the back of my throat. “Ew, gross!” I thrust it as far from my mouth as possible, trying to force it back on Maeve, who’s seated on the opposite side of the couch. “It smells like rotten fruit covered in nail polish remover.”

Nico snorts, causing his golden nose ring to jump against his blunt snout. He’s slumped in one of several beanbag chairs that decorate Maeve’s apartment, since apparently she never outgrew the 90s or her childhood. “Hey, I drank my gross drink. You gotta drink yours, too.”

“But you don't drink alcohol,” I protest.

Nico aims a long-suffering look at me. “Last turn, Maeve made me drink orange juice and cinnamon with a raw egg in it. Are you seriously telling me you’d rather have that?”

“He has a point,” Maeve says. “Those are the rules of shot roulette. You gotta suffer like the rest of us. If you don’t want any more alcohol, I’ll make you something else... but you probably won’t like it.” From the mischievous glint in her emerald green eyes, I can tell it’s a real threat. Who knows what horrible, disgusting things Maeve has hidden in her kitchen? Pooka are known to eat raw fish, after all.

I study the shot glass warily. My friends would never force me to drink alcohol, but they *will* force me to down something gross to satisfy their sadistic tendencies. “Why can’t we play shot roulette with yummy shots?” I whine as I bring the glass back to my mouth.

“Because that isn’t nearly as fun,” Nico says.

“Fine, but no pictures, and if I puke, you’re cleaning it up.”

“Don’t you dare,” Maeve says, but I ignore her. I down the shot before I lose my courage, nearly choking as it scorches my throat and keeps burning well into my chest. It tastes as bad as it smells, and I have to chase it with a big gulp of water. I sputter as my traitorous friends burst out laughing.

“That was awful. What was it?”

“Bailey’s and lime juice.”

“Well, it smelled like nail polish remover, but it tastes like cement mixer.”

Maeve grins, showing off her pointed teeth. “So, you don’t want me to mix you another?”

“Screw you.”

“No thanks. I’ll leave that to your new boo.”

That statement has me coughing all over again. My shot threatens to come back up, and my eyes water with discomfort. Another swig of water helps settle my stomach, but not by much. Even without looking, I’m positive my face is a much deeper shade of purple than it’s supposed to be.

“Mikey isn’t my boo. Just a friend.”

“Yeah, right,” Nico says. “A friend you’ve been on a date with.”

“It was at work,” I argue. “Not a real date.”

“But you’re *going* on a real date this weekend,” Nico insists. Obviously, he and Maeve aren’t going to let this one go. “Aren’t you meeting at Central Park or something?”

“Central Park is nice. Lots of people go there.”

“Yeah,” Maeve says. “On dates.”

“Not just dates!”

“Why are you freaking out?” Maeve drawls, clearly enjoying my torment. “Don’t you want it to be a date?”

I do. I really, really do, and that’s the problem. While I’ve grown even more certain of my attraction to Mikey—which has taken me by surprise, because I don’t feel sexual attraction very often—I still don’t know what they want from me.

That’s not true, a voice in my head whispers. You know exactly what they want from you. Remember?

I remember, all right. For the past week, it’s been nearly impossible to forget. When Mikey asked me to ‘check’ their aura and describe their feelings, I was bombarded with more sexual energy than I’d ever felt before. It was nothing like the creepy vibes I sometimes get off customers. Instead, it was raw, honest, and genuine.

And way too appealing.

“I think you broke her, Maeve,” Nico says, reaching over to tap my leg.

I shake myself back to reality, desperately trying to recover, but Maeve’s already snickering. “Nah. She’s probably thinking about what the end of the date will entail.”

I grab a bottle of flavored vodka from the table and pour myself another shot in an empty glass, one that isn’t tainted by Bailey’s and lime juice. I down it to buy myself some time, but still end up wheezing. I’ve probably reached my limit for alcohol tonight.

Thankfully, Nico comes to my rescue. “Okay, enough,” he rumbles, giving my knee a reassuring pat. “We’re just having some fun with you, Lila. We want your date to go well.”

“Not officially a date,” I say once I catch my breath. But I’m still stuck on Maeve’s words. What *will* the end of my maybe-date with Mikey entail? I’m both hopeful and terrified that they’ll want to have sex. Maybe more terrified than hopeful. Sleeping with someone so quickly would definitely confirm some of the stereotypes about my species, but I can’t stop thinking about it.

As the shots start to take effect, my willpower erodes. I think about Mikey’s lean, tattooed arms, one of the constants in their ever-changing appearance. I think about their hair, too. Running my fingers through it. I bet it would feel great at any length. I think about their lip ring, and how it would feel if we kissed—cool metal on top of warm lips. Or maybe their lip ring will be warm too, from the heat of their mouth?

“Lila? Lila to the Customer Service desk.”

I’m dragged unwillingly out of my fantasy by Maeve, who leers at me like she knows exactly what I’m thinking. “Oh, fuck off,” I grumble, giving her a gentle shove. “I won’t put up with that crap from you outside of work.”

“Ooh, someone’s grumpy. Do you need to crash on my couch tonight? You’re swaying.”

It’s true. I am swaying a little, and Nico’s concerned face is starting to blur. “Yeah, that’d be good.”

“We shouldn’t’ve made her drink the Bailey’s,” he says.

“She’s the one who took another shot afterward,” Maeve argues.

“Yeah, but—”

“I do want it to be a date,” I blurt out, slurring my words slightly. “It freaks me out how much I like them and how hot they are.”

Maeve tilts her head. “Why is that a problem?”

“I... I dunno.” That isn’t quite true. I have some idea, but I’m way too drunk to articulate my feelings on the subject.

Luckily, Maeve takes pity on me. “Here, use this,” she says, grabbing a blanket from the back of the couch and tossing it over. It’s a special weighted blanket that Maeve uses for her anxiety, and I wrap myself up, grateful for the added sense of security. Shortly after she purchased it, I dipped into my limited savings to buy one for myself, too. Maeve’s smells different, like her apartment, but it isn’t a bad smell, so I throw it over my head and take refuge in the darkness.

From beneath my blanket-tent, I hear Nico lumbering around the apartment to gather his stuff while Maeve says goodbye. He pauses behind the couch, patting me with a large hand. “See ya tomorrow, Lila. Get some rest and drink lots of fluids. We aren’t in college anymore.”

“Mmhmm. Bye, Nico.”

He departs, while Maeve carries several dirty shot glasses into the kitchen. I hear the hiss of water from the sink, and then the sound of something being placed on the coffee table beside the couch. “Fresh water,” Maeve says, giving my blanket a tug.

I poke the top of my head out. “Thanks.”

“I’m serious. Drink it. And don’t worry about your date with Mikey. It’ll go great.” She ruffles my hair, then heads down the hall, disappearing into the bathroom.

I take a few gulps of water before huddling back beneath the blanket, feeling like a turtle inside its shell. Comforting weight presses in on me from all sides, and my breath warms the dark space quickly. Soon, I’m half-asleep. My languid thoughts wander

back to Mikey, but instead of feeling another anxiety spike, liquid heat pools in my lower belly.

Maybe the alcohol has lowered my inhibitions, or maybe I'm just weak. Either way, I don't have the strength or will to redirect my mind as I imagine Mikey stripping off their clothes. If we do have sex, will they choose to have breasts? I'd be fine without, but I kind of hope so, because the thought of burying my face in their boobs is *very* appealing.

And what about the rest? Do they prefer having sex with a pussy, or a cock? I'm not sure which I'd prefer—my experience is limited, after all. I guess I don't care, as long as I can figure out how to make them feel good.

That thought sends a jolt straight between my legs. Suddenly, I realize that's what's really important to me. What I'm invested in. Making Mikey feel good. I don't really care how I do it, as long as I get to witness their reactions, knowing I'm the cause.

I slide a hand between my legs, too drunk and tired to touch myself—especially in someone else's apartment—but desperately needing some kind of pressure there. A few more jolts pass through my stomach, but my hand helps. Soon, I drift into an uncomfortable sleep beneath the blanket, surrendering to fitful dreams that involve Mikey's lips and warm, naked flesh pressed against mine.

FRIDAY FLIES BY DESPITE my inevitable post-shot roulette hangover, and before I know it, Saturday has arrived.

I feel restless as I rummage through my closet, trying to pick an outfit. Most of my clothes are fairly conservative because of my work's dress code and personal preferences, but I want to look good today. I want Mikey to notice me.

Maybe I'll sense attraction in their aura again? It's an electric thought that fills me with hope. With some hesitation, I choose a non-work shirt with a lower neckline than usual, and a pair of black leggings. That should be fine for Central Park, but it'll give Mikey the opportunity to stare at my boobs, if they want to...

I really want them to.

A shudder passes through me, but I shake it off as I head for the front door, grabbing my jacket and purse. The elevator ride is short, and a blast of tunnel wind blows through my hair as I step outside. It isn't too cold, but cold enough that I'm glad I brought my jacket, even though it hides the assets I was hoping to show off.

My phone buzzes in my pocket. I pull it out to see a text message from Mikey: '5 minutes out. See you!' I text back a thumbs-up, then start power walking down the block. If they're only five minutes away, that means I'm running late.

As I feared, Mikey ends up beating me. They're waiting at the 5th Avenue entrance, wearing a hoodie and cargo pants, their bright purple hair sticking out from under a black beanie. The button on their chest says he/him today, so I try to make those pronouns stick in my head. I want to prove that I care about his comfort.

"Hey," Mikey says, offering a hesitant grin. "Feeling any better?"

I blush. Maybe texting him about how ‘*Maeve made me drink Bailey’s with lime and now I hate everything*’ yesterday wasn’t the best idea. “Yeah, I’m fine. But if you ever hang out with Maeve and she asks you to play shot roulette... don’t. She’ll try to wear you down by saying the drink can be non-alcoholic, but those are even worse.”

Mikey’s eyes widen. “You sound like you’re speaking from personal experience.”

I pull a face. “Nico had to chug a raw egg with cinnamon.”

“Oh *gross*.”

Any awkwardness is effectively broken as we both laugh. “You have great friends,” Mikey says through a fit of snickering. “Great taste, too.”

My eyebrows lift at that pronouncement. “Thanks. Present company included, I hope.”

“Dunno about that. Maybe your taste is questionable after all.” He winks, then offers me his arm. “Shall we?”

I accept the invitation. Something sparks within me as I rest my hand on his elbow, and I suppress a gasp. The contact is so magnetic that at first, I think I must be picking up on Mikey’s aura again. But I haven’t reached out to see what he’s feeling, and though I can sense him near me, I realize he isn’t the origin of this feeling. For once, the pull is coming from within me.

If Mikey notices, he doesn’t say anything. He makes small talk as we walk into the zoo and around the Hippocamp Fountain, heading left toward the rainforest zone. It’s contained in a two storey building, so the heat can be turned up. A blast of sweltering air hits us as we enter through the marked doors, so I remove my jacket, tying its sleeves around my waist.

As soon as I do, I feel Mikey's eyes on me. His sidelong glance isn't leering or lascivious, but it's definitely appreciative—and instead of the skin-crawly feeling I normally get when someone checks me out, my face heats up and my heart beats faster. It's a struggle not to avert my own eyes in embarrassment as Mikey focuses on my face, obviously being polite instead of gawking at my decollétage.

I almost want to say, *'It's okay, I wore this shirt for you.'* But, of course, that would be awkward. People don't just come out and say, "By the way, it's cool if you wanna ogle me."

It's only fair, since I've been doing a fair bit of ogling myself. Mikey's hoodie doesn't reveal his tattooed arms, and his beanie covers his hair, but his soft features and full lips are definitely worthy of admiration. Once more, I find myself interested in his lip ring, wondering what it would feel like against my mouth.

Come on, Lila! Don't be a perv. Just enjoy the zoo and his company.

I haven't been to the zoo in several years, being a resident of the Big Apple, but the tropical display is as beautiful as I remember. Toucans and parrots fly from branch to branch, while long-limbed mapinguari wrestle on the leafy forest floor, gnawing each other with the toothy mouths in the middle of their stomachs.

"Look at that one," Mikey says, pointing at a smaller specimen off to one side. "He's chewing on his feet." The baby mapinguari is indeed chewing his oversized feet, forming a furry ball with his knees tucked into his chest. The single eye atop his head roams around the enclosure, watching the rest of the group play.

We observe the mapinguari and the birds for a while before leaving the building and moving on to the temperate zone. Unicorns graze behind a low fence, while next door, a pair of wyverns sun themselves on a rock. To my surprise, the unicorn herd perks up at our arrival. They trot to the edge of the fence, shoving their noses in Mikey's direction.

"Whoa," I mutter. "I've never seen them do that outside the children's zoo." A few older unicorns stay there year-round, so the kids can feed them treats, but these are young, wild specimens, not the type of unicorns I'd expect to accept nose-pats.

Mikey shrugs. "They like angels," he says, reaching out to stroke the unicorn's snout. Its velvet nose looks like paper smudged with charcoal, while the rest of its body glows with an ethereal white light.

"Why?"

"Lots of animals like us. Maybe we have a calm vibe?" He smiles at me, keeping his hand on a large male unicorn's nose while another, smaller unicorn tries to shove her head in as well. "You wanna try?"

I chew my lip. "Uh... demons are kind of the opposite when it comes to animals. Nico's cat still hides every time I come over."

"Don't worry, they won't bolt. See?" Mikey holds out his other hand, and more unicorns shove their heads into his palm, jostling each other to secure space along the fenceline.

"Fine. I'll try." Cautiously, I reach for the nearest unicorn, the smaller female. To my surprise, she allows me to stroke her nose, and even lips at my fingers as though searching for food. I giggle at the ticklish sensation. "Wow. This is cool! The unicorns at the state fair never let me pet them when I was a kid."

“Aww. Well, this one likes you. You like Lila, don’t you?”

Gradually, the unicorns lose interest in us and wander off to graze. We move on to the wyverns, while Mikey muses: “So, I’m guessing you didn’t have pets growing up?”

“Nope. I wanted to, but Dad always said no.”

“Is your relationship with him okay, or...?”

“Yeah. He’s pretty sweet, for an incubus. Mom’s a human. They’re married and live in Long Island. What about you?”

Mikey pulls a mild face. “My parents try their best, but they can be a bit... judgmental.”

“Oh?”

“They can’t understand why I don’t want to work for Heaven.”

That statement comes as a surprise. “You don’t work for Heaven? I—I guess I assumed...”

“It’s okay,” Mikey says, bumping his shoulder lightly against mine. We stroll past the wyverns, making our way to the arctic zone. “I did my required internship, but then I decided to work a regular job. With Heaven, there’s always strings. They do a lot of good, but you have to live on their properties with the other angels, and dress and act a certain way to promote the ‘brand’. I didn’t wanna do all that, you know?”

“I totally get it. I’m technically a card-carrying member of Hell, but aside from paying my yearly dues, I don’t get involved in my local chapter. I just don’t care about making a few crusty old demons at the top even richer and more powerful than they already are. It’s basically a pyramid scheme with a goth aesthetic these days.”

Mikey laughs. “If you’re gonna sell your soul to a bloodsucking corporation to make a living, why restrict yourself to a specific one?”

“You get it.”

We arrive at the arctic zone, where a blast of cold air convinces me to put my jacket back on. The penguins are adorable as always, waddling around to accept fish from a shivering naga in a parka. “Someone drew the short straw,” Mikey comments, watching the naga keeper feed the penguins from her bucket.

“Don’t naga hate the cold?”

“Yep. Bet she’d rather be feeding the unicorns or something.”

“Aww, look at that one! It’s just a grey cotton ball.”

“Watch that other one. He keeps going up to the top of the hill to slide down.”

The rest of the afternoon flies by as we finish our circuit of the zoo. When we return to the Hippocamp Fountain near the front entrance, Mikey pulls his phone out of his pocket. “Want me to take your picture? I dunno if you’re comfortable with that—”

“Counter offer: let’s do a selfie? We can get the fountain in the background.”

Mikey’s eyes light up. “Sure.” He puts his free arm around my shoulder, leaning in until his cheek almost touches mine. I pick up the sweet scent of body wash and fabric softener, and my heart skips a beat. It’s impossible to ignore the sexual energy pouring off him, energy that sends my stomach spinning into a series of backflips.

“Ready?”

Heat pounds between my legs. *You have no idea.*

“Smile!”

I smile, but I don't look at Mikey's phone. Instead, I stare straight at his face, unable to tear my eyes away. He gazes back at me, and we both lean in by some unspoken agreement.

His lips are even softer than I hoped. Warm, too, and they taste like some kind of fruity chapstick. It's a relatively chaste, close-mouthed kiss, but that doesn't stop my entire body from trembling. I don't want to stop, though. Quite the opposite.

We break apart just an inch to breathe, then kiss again. Mikey's lip ring doesn't get in the way at all, and it's warm, like I imagined it would be. I summon enough courage to brush the tip of my tongue against it, and Mikey gives a quiet moan, tightening his hold on my shoulder.

By the time we part again, I'm so dizzy I almost need to sit down. I've only kissed two other people before, and those kisses weren't anything like this. My entire body is tingling, and I'm surprisingly short of breath.

"I really liked that," Mikey says, in an almost reverential voice. "You too, right?"

"Me too," I confirm. "Definitely."

"So, uh..." Mikey rubs the back of his neck, giving me a sheepish smile. "Does that mean I can keep this?" He shows me his phone screen, which has a surprisingly great picture of us kissing. I have to admit, we look pretty adorable, smiling into each other's mouths with his arm around my shoulders.

"Yeah, you can keep it... as long as you send it to me."

Later that night, I replay the kiss in my mind while my fingers work between my legs. I don't touch myself often. Haven't done in a long time. But for some reason, as soon as I crawl into bed to go to sleep, my hands start wandering, and I don't have the willpower to stop them.

I think about how warm Mikey's lips were. How gently his mouth moved against mine. I imagine what it would be like to tug his lower lip, ring and all, between my teeth. I wonder if he's pierced anywhere else.

As I rub my clit, drawing circles around the slippery bud, I think about Mikey's hands. We held hands on our way out of the zoo, and in line at one of the food carts on 5th Avenue. His hands were soft, but strong and flexible. A musician's hands. I knead one of my breasts as well, imagining it's Mikey's hand instead of mine.

Would he be gentle, if we had sex?

I moan into my pillow as I slide two fingers inside myself, thrusting into a surprising amount of wetness. I can't remember the last time I've been this slick, this ready. I curl forward, pressing into my front wall and catching my clit on the heel of my hand.

I wish he was the one doing this...

That thought is enough to help me hit my peak. I come with a strangled sob, gasping Mikey's name into the pillowcase and spilling around my fingers. My inner walls pulse, and my hips jerk out of rhythm until the waves subside.

After that, there's nothing to do but roll on my back and wait for my breathing to even out. With my hand that isn't sticky, I reach for my phone, which is lying on my nightstand. I pull up the picture of me and Mikey, and smile. So far, I haven't screwed up.

Things are going better than I'd hoped... although Maeve will probably ream me for not texting her as soon as our date ended.