

## CHAPTER-1

“I don’t believe him!” Thomas yelled at the top of his lungs. He’d kept it in for the length of the drive and the walk from the parking lot, but he’d seen a rat in a suit and for an instant, he’d thought that was his father, on his trail again and he couldn’t hold it in anymore. “There’s no avoiding him. He was up before I was out the door, in spite of getting up even earlier than yesterday. Can you believe that?”

The tiger with the pale orange fur and brown stripes next to him rolled his eye and chuckled. “I’m the one picking you up ever earlier in the morning, so yes, I do believe that. But he’s just looking out for you. Uni’s a big step.” He motioned around them, at the stalls and tables with people around them, calling out to the students walking through the park.

“I think that by being here, I qualify as being old enough to deal with this on my own.”

“Of course, Mister Hertz, and how are you dealing with deciding what your major’s going to be? It would help pick a fraternity.”

Thomas glared at his friend. “Do not call me that, Paul Heeran, you’re going to summon my father. And I have plenty of time to decide.”

“Figuring out what you’ll major in would make finding a frat house that fits you easier.” He stepped away from the rat. “Speak of which, give me a moment.”

Thomas watched Paul walk to a booth with a sign for [need the frat name] over it and talk with a lemming who handed him a pamphlet. With no one to distract him, Thomas looked more attentively at the booths.

The one Paul was at had pictures of lab equipment, and with his friend going for a Biochem major, it wasn’t hard to guess what they were about. Others had pictures of stars, possibly an astro-

physic frat. One had pictures of machines, so Thomas couldn't work out which one it was among all the possibilities. One had a projection, instead of a picture of—

Thomas's gaze was pulled away from the booths by the couple that passed by, a muscular bear and curvy lioness, both dressed in tight-fitting clothing. He didn't bother with discretion. He wasn't the only one looking. He envied her a little. The guy looked like a quarterback, and Thomas touched his left eye as he remembered kissing his high school quarterback. If that hadn't put him off the type, nothing would.

"I'm glad to see the opportunity given to you isn't going to waste," Paul said next to him.

Thomas pointed to the bear. "Excuse me, but have you seen him?"

Paul looked at the man Thomas pointed to up and down, then nodded. "Yeah, definitely a great specimen. Have you kissed him already?"

Thomas narrowed his eyes at the tiger. "No. Have you seen that he's with someone?"

"If I remember correctly, wasn't the one you kissed in high school dating one of the cheerleaders at the time?"

"That was a dare." Thomas pouted.

"Do you want me to dare you to go kiss this one?"

"No, thank you very much. One black eye in my lifetime is more than enough."

"Could anyone tell?" Paul asked innocently, walking again, "I mean, your face fur is black."

"It's not about people seeing it," Thomas replied, falling into step, "those things hurt."

"How about them?" Paul pointed to a booth with plenty of

devices on the table Thomas couldn't identify.

"What do they do?" he asked once he realized his friend wasn't pointing to one of the men.

"Mechanical Engineering."

Thomas looked at his friend, then motioned to his thin frame. "Do I look like the mechanically inclined type?"

"Engineering," Paul said, enunciating the word. "That means working at a computer or drafting table. You tell muscular people what do to when it comes to building your creations."

Thomas hummed. "I'd get to tell guys what to do." He looked back to the bear and imagined telling him to get on his knees while Thomas face-fucked him. "I could do that."

Paul sighed loudly. "Tell me you have a relative who's a lawyer because you are going to be piling on the sexual harassment suits." He checked his phone. "I think there's a frat for people who can't make up their mind."

"I can make up my mind," Thomas stated, "but a major's a major decision."

"Very funny," Paul replied drily.

"Thank you." Thomas smiled.

"How long have you been waiting to use it?" Paul put the phone away.

Thomas shrugged. "Just since the start of the year."

"You know, I think I have the perfect frat for you." He nodded ahead and Thomas looked for who he might mean. There was a table with pictures of the ocean. There was no way Thomas was getting close to that much water. A table with only two guys beside it, the muscular armadillo motioning a guy over and talking to him while running a hand over his arm. The one after that had signs with melted metal pouring from a large bowl. Nope, not risking getting his fur

burned off. After that was one with doctors standing in an operating room. Too much blood for his liking.

"I give up," Thomas said.

The tiger pointed to the nondescript table where the armadillo leaned close to the man and whispered something. The man stiffened and hurried away, which made the monkey next to the armadillo laugh.

"Who are they? Shouldn't they at least have a sign up with their frat name?"

"You don't know about Sigma Theta Gamma? Come on, tell me you at least did some research into the frat houses here."

"And let my dad think I care about anything related to university? He's already overbearing about everything related to it. If he thinks I care, I'm never going to survive it." The tiger opened his mouth, but Thomas silenced him with a glare. "That man arranged to be my advisor. It isn't enough my father is a teacher at the university I'm going to, and on top of that, he manages to be one in charge of my course load. There's no way that's legal. Do you want to see all the classes he wants me to take?" Thomas pulled his phone out and brought up the very long list. "I'm not even going to have time to sleep with everything on there."

"He's doing it because he wants you to succeed, you know that right?"

"Don't go taking his side, you're *my* best friend." He put the phone away. "And he was supposed to have gotten over being overbearing with Vic and Jude. I have no idea how those two survived having him constantly look over their shoulder when it came to school."

"Maybe they were just training for you," Paul said with a grin. "Just think how he's going to be when your younger brother gets here."

"He's going to be on a football scholarship, just watch him. It's

going to be about the sport for him.”

Paul sighed and grinned. “Then, my friend, you are doomed.” Thomas’s snarky reply was cut off by the monkey.

“You came!” the monkey exclaimed, then turned to the armadillo. “I told you he’d be here.” He had an accent Thomas couldn’t place and his face coloring was interesting with the dark brown fur shaping it, surrounded with a white, then tapering to a lighter brown. He hurried toward the two of them, with the armadillo rolling his eyes.

Thomas took a step back, hands up. “Woe there.” Then he stopped. “Hey, I know you.” He couldn’t believe it hadn’t immediately come to him, with that face.

That pulled the money up short. “You do?” Paul was also looking at Thomas, but speculatively.

“Yeah, you were the one making out with the Margay by the ice cream shop where we had the social after the orientation tour.” He stuck to calling it making out. Even if he was confident, appendages had been out of pants in the glance he’d gotten. Thomas tried to pull more about the monkey. “Adesida, that’s your name. We’re in the same Studies for Success class too.”

“Wow,” the armadillo said from where he leaned against the booth, “they have a fuck your way to the top class here? How did I not know that.” Thomas stared at the man, who just grinned at him.

“You’re the one with the giant Sunday!” the monkey exclaimed, and Thomas blanched.

“That’d be him,” Paul offered helpfully.

“What was that about?” Adesida asked.

“Oh,” Paul started, and Thomas looked at him, horrified. No, his friend was not going to betray him like that. “Just a father showing how proud he is of his son.”

“I hate you,” Thomas grumbled.

“Your father is a teacher here?” the monkey asked. “What does he teach?”

Thomas sighed. “The sciences.” One reason for him not to go into engineering, his father would arrange it so he was teaching him every science-related class.

“I’m Limbani.” He offered his hand to Thomas. “I’m sorry, but I didn’t get your name.”

“Thomas.” He hesitated, then took the hand. “Thomas Hertz.” He yelped as the monkey pulled him into a hug.

“It’s a pleasure to make you acquaintance, Tom.” He leaned in. “You and I are going to have so much fun,” he whispered.

Thomas pushed away. Was the monkey seriously hitting on him? Here, with the armadillo there? “Ah, err,” he cleverly stammered. “Thank you?” the monkey’s muscles were leaner than the armadillo, but they were there, and he’d felt the bulge in Limbani’s pants during the hug; definitely something there. He took another step back and looked at Paul for support, but his friend was covering a smirk with a hand.

“And you are?” the monkey asked Paul, offering his hand. “I’m sorry, remember you from the social, but also don’t know your name.”

“Paul Heeran,” the tiger answered, smiling, “and I’m going to pass on the handshake, if you don’t mind. I don’t know you well enough to let you grind your crotch against me.”

“I can grind it against your ass,” Limbani offered, no sign he was joking in his tone.

“That’s going to take getting to know you a whole lot more.” Paul looked the monkey over, and as usual, Thomas saw none of the lust he was sure had been on his face when he was looking Limbani over. Paul didn’t want guys in that way. “Do you waltz?” he asked, which earned him a confused expression.

Limbani turned to the armadillo, who raised his hands to stop the question.

“Don’t ask me, I’m from Texas. If it ain’t line dancing, I don’t know anything about it.” He had a marked Texan drawl. “I’m Lawrence Rowling, this guy’s minder for the time being.”

Limbani rolled his eyes. “Sure, like you didn’t hit on every guy that came by, too. At least I know Tom’s interested.”

“You’re awfully sure of yourself,” Thomas replied.

The armadillo sighed. “You have no idea.”

“Lawrence, grab the clipboard and sign them up for the party,” Limbani said, pointing to the booth’s table. Thomas saw a clipboard on it, on the opposite side of where the armadillo leaned against it. Then what the monkey said registered, and he was looking at him again.

“What?”

“Here,” Lawrence said, handing the clipboard to Limbani. “You do it since you’ve already decided they’re coming.”

Thomas looked at the clipboard the man held, then at the table. Had there been one closer he hadn’t noticed? No, the one eight feet away from where the armadillo had been was gone. Had he stared at Limbani that long? He hadn’t even noticed the armadillo move.

“How do you spell your last name?” Limbani asked.

“Wait, what?” Thomas looked at the clipboard, a tablet in a metal case, and the monkey holding the stylus, waiting on his answer. “I haven’t agreed to anything.” He took another step back. “Paul?”

“I say we go for it,” the golden tiger answered. “When is it?”

“Friday,” Lawrence answered, “it’s the one welcoming the Freshmen.” He smiled. “The guys attending are always a lot of fun.”

“Paul?” Thomas asked again, this time in disbelief. He motioned to the two other men. Sure they were hot as hell, but they were clearly jocks. He didn’t know his friend to be into those kinds of parties.

“You really need to do your research, Thomas,” Paul said, with a hint of exasperation in his tone. “This is Sigma Theta Gamma.” Again, he said it like it should mean something to Thomas. “You know the Freemasons?” the tiger asked.

“Of course, they’re—”

“Well,” Paul cut him off. “Compared to STG, the Freemasons let anyone in.”

Lawrence winced. “It’s Sigma Theta Gamma, STG makes it sound like we’re some sort of sexual disease.”

“If you have as much sex as the stories claim, there might be a few,” Paul replied.

“Nah,” Limbani said, “we have way more sex than that.” He winked at Thomas. “That’s why you’re going to be there.”

“I don’t know about this,” Thomas said.

“I do,” Limbani replied with a level of confidence that made Thomas uncomfortable. There was no threat in the voice, just this knowledge he was speaking the truth.

“I don’t know if it’s a good idea, Paul. I mean, are you really going to enjoy that?”

The tiger shrugged. “You never know I could find someone there who knows how to dance.”

“Wait,” Lawrence said, “when you say dancing, you actually mean dancing? Not the Horizontal Mambo?”

“We’re going to have to dance a long time before I consider that one,” Paul said seriously. “And yes, Thomas, I think it’s a good idea. Who knows, maybe you’ll impress them enough they’ll loosen their admittance criteria and offer you a bed.”

“I don’t think...” the armadillo said, looking at Limbani, who got a faraway look. Thomas wondered if the man was imagining the two of them in his bed. He glanced down at the tent in the monkey’s



pants. Yep, he was, and now Thomas was imagining the cock that had to be in there sliding into his ass.

Was he a bottom? Thomas hadn't considered the question before, since the idea he'd have sex had always been academic. Now, it was looking like he'd actually...

Oh fuck, he might —

He took another step back. "I'm not so sure about this."

Limbani was focusing on him again. "Oh, you are going to have a great time," he said, his smile broadening. "I just know it." Again, with that certainty. How was anyone that confident?

"Come on," Paul said, as the traitor that he was turning out to be. "It'll be a chance for you to experience something new."

He glared at his friend who'd just about told those two he was a virgin. Still, a house full of guys, at least one of which was interested in him, for some reason. As scary as the idea was, hopefully, he wouldn't get punched in the face this time.

"Alright, I'll go, if I can get my dad to agree to it."

"Your father has you on that tight of a leash?" Limbani asked.

"My dad's obsessed with me being successful," Thomas replied, trying to keep the annoyance from his voice. "I don't know if he's going to allow me to do anything fun."

"You can always sneak out," Lawrence offered.

"You don't know his father," Paul said with a chuckle. "I'm starting to think the man never sleeps."

Limbani smiled. "He's going to agree."

Again with the confidence.

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The Hertz household was quiet when Thomas returned from

the walk around the park and the other frat house booths. Considering how adamant Limbani was that Thomas would be at the party, he'd been mildly surprised at how easily he'd agreed to let them go, and disappointed. As forward as the monkey had been, Thomas had been expected to be pulled behind a bush to have a quickie.

He wished he'd had the confidence to make the offer.

His father was probably at the university, either looking for Thomas or working on his classes. Paul might be right, now that Thomas thought about it. Maybe his father never slept. Considering he could keep up with his mother and have the energy to work, and chase Thomas around, yeah, the man definitely didn't sleep. Said mother would be out at one of her exercise classes, Thomas couldn't keep track of which one happened on which day, and that was only her hobby.

He walked up the stairs to the second floor, where his bedroom was, along with his brother's and sister's, Roland and Jude, and the guest bedroom, which had been Victor's before he got married.

Thomas opened the bathroom door and came face to back with Roland, fur damp and a towel around his waist. The younger rat looked at the older in the mirror.

"Do you mind?" Roland demanded, and Thomas turned around, closing the door behind him. The vision of that muscular back was imprinted on his mind. When had his younger brother turned into that hot of a guy? And what was he doing, thinking of his fifteen-year-old brother as hot?

Thomas shook his head and headed to the third floor, the one with his parent's bedroom and the other bathroom. He'd needed a shower, no he needed a cold one to get the image of his brother in his underwear out of his mind.

Yeah, Paul was right. He needed that party.

## CHAPTER-2

The door to the house closed, snapping Thomas out of the English literature book he was reading (Feel free to change it/make it more specific). He'd settled in the dining room to make sure he'd be able to get talking with his father out of the way immediately. Eric would still be in teacher mode and might be sufficiently distracted to not completely understand what Thomas was asking for.

"Sure, Thomas," he mumbled, "and the entire football team is waiting in your bedroom for after you've had this little talk. "Dad," He called as the rat in the pale brown suit walked by the dining room archway, looking at his phones. "Dad?" He called again when he didn't acknowledge him.

Well, Eric was in teacher mode still. But if they didn't have this discussion now, Thomas would either have to go to his father's office to ask, or wait until dinner was underway, and that meant having Roland and Judith present.

He was about to call after his father a third time when the man poked his head in the archway. "Thomas, how was Greek Week. Have you found any brotherhoods that will help you be the best you can be?"

Wasn't the the army's moto? "About that," Thomas began, then hesitated and his father sat opposite him at the dinning table. He folded his hands before him and fixed his gaze on his son. His father was now fully in father mode. He wouldn't miss anything. "One of the frat is having a party on Saturday. Me and Paul were thinking of going."

"I don't know about that," Eric said, his tone serious. "You have classes on Monday, and you have a full course load, it's early in the year and you don't want to start getting behind already. You should be studying, instead of—"

The door to the house closed and a "I'm home!" resounded.

Thomas and Eric looked at the archway and a few seconds later his mother looked until the dining room, beaming.

"You're home early," Eric said.

"Am I?" She joined them and took the phone out of his breast pocket, looking at it. "So I am. I had to cut the class short, you know, stuff to do." She put the phone back and sat next to her husband.

For as focused on one specific thing his father was, Thomas felt his mother came across as scatterbrained to anyone who didn't know her. She had half a dozen projects going, her Youtube cooking channel, the exercise classes, she was giving painting a try, and not to mention the bedroom sports her and his father got up to.

She leaned her head on Eric's shoulder. "What am I interrupting? It looks serious." She grinned at Thomas, and he couldn't help the feeling that she knew exactly what she was interrupting. She was a mother, so she always managed to seem to know everything her children were up to.

"Our son is considering going to a party, this weekend."

"What a great idea!" she exclaimed, clapping her hand.

"Nadia, now isn't the time for him to be frivolous."

"Oh honey," she replied, "He's eighteen, now is the perfect time, for him to be frivolous."

"Nadia," Eric said, looking at her seriously.

"Eric," she replied, looking back at him, grinning.

His father narrowed his eyes suspiciously, and her grin only broadened. She moved closer and for a moment, Thomas thought they were going to kiss. It was always difficult to know when a kiss would happen between the two of them. They could be in the middle of an argument, then all would fall silent, and they'd be kissing. Or watching an action movie, and suddenly making out is added to the sound track.

“We have to think of his future, Nadia.”

“Oh, I am,” she replied breathlessly. “Do you remember that party? The one where we met?”

“I do,” His father replied cautiously, glancing at Thomas, “it’s why I don’t think he should go. The things we got—”

His voice caught and he looked down, his ears turning red. Thomas was happy the table blocked his view.

“Yes,” she said, “the things we got up to. The things we started.” She nodded down and Thomas did his best not to imagine what his mother was doing. He shouldn’t even know his parents got up to those things. No kid should know that about his parents, it was in a rule book, somewhere. “Shall we start some more of those?” she whispered.

Eric swallowed and stood, the chair clattering back. He took Nadia’s hand from his lap, and headed out the room. Only to stop when she didn’t get out of her chair.

“You forgot to give permission for our son to go to the party,” she said, winking at Thomas.

“You can go to the party,” his father replied, breathless, “just be back—” he was interrupted by his mother kissing him. It got hot enough Thomas looked away.

“You have fun, now,” his mother said, and Thomas only caught her grin as the two of them headed for the stair.

Thomas had trouble deciding if he should be outraged his mother had used sex to get his father to agree to what he wanted, or just relieved her intervention had removed the need for him to give details about the frat house in question. As sexually active as his parents were, and had been at his age—his mother wasn’t the most discreet about recounting those stories—he didn’t think his father would approve of a party at a frat renowned for their sex parties.

“Oh balls,” he breathed as the realization hit. He was going to a party where he could get laid. The grin that formed on his face was

as painful as the erection he got as he imagined the possibilities.

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“Breathe,” Paul said, chuckling as they walked toward the frat house, they weren’t the only ones having a party and the street was filled with parked cars.

“I am breathing,” Thomas replied.

“Slower. You’d going to hyperventilate. It’s just a party.”

Thomas looked at the golden tiger. “No, it’s a party where sex happens. There’s nothing “just” about that.”

“Sex doesn’t have to happen, you know. They aren’t going to strip you naked and gang bang you.” Paul eyed him, his eyes dropping to his crotch, which Thomas reflexively covered. “Unless, you know, it’s something you want.”

“No,” Thomas replied. A gang bang was too much. Maybe. “One. One guy to start with. Then we can see about having all of them.”

“We?” Paul grinned. “I’m leaving the sex to you. I wouldn’t say no to a foxtrot, or maybe some swing, but I’m staying vertical, and clothed,” he added.

“ID, please,” the margay standing by the door said keeping Thomas from commenting. He handed over his University of Minnesota ID and the guy looked at it, then smiled as he consulted a list on his tablet. “Welcome to Sigma Theta Gamma, there’s drinks in the kitchen, along with snacks.” He handed it back and took Paul’s. Pausing to stare at his friend.

Paul caused that in people who met him for the first time. His pale orange fur, and brown stripe were distinctive, and there were just enough golden tigers in the world everyone knew about them, but they were also sufficiently uncommon few had met one. Then the margay looked Paul up and down and licked his lips.

On top of his coloring being unusual, his friend was good

looking. Taller than Thomas, he was lean, rather than lanky, with all the exercise he got dancing. He was also well hung, which Thomas figured was what the pause at the tiger's crotch was speculation about. Thomas knew that from gym classes in high school and the kind of exploring that best friends did as they grew up. Not that those had lead to anything more than some touching. For as good friends as they were, and that being the main requirement for Paul to be interested in more, they weren't attracted to each other that way.

Thomas stepped further in, only to be stopped by a collie in a tank top and tight pants showing muscle and a good bulge. "Lefty or righty?" he asked.

"Sorry?"

Thew collie grinned. "When you jerkoff, you use your left hand or the right?" He held an art brush in his hand, and on the small table next to him was a bowl with a dark liquid in it.

Thomas's years burned at the personal question. "Why?"

"Brुकammer," the margay said "stop teasing the freshman and just mark him."

The collie looked at the margay. "Remember your place, Richard. You're the freshman here, not me. There's a chastity belt with your name on it, if you disobey the rules."

Thomas looked from one to the other trying to determine how serious the threat was. When he looked at the collie again, he motioned for a hand.

"Give me the one you use the least, I don't want you to get the mark off by accident and then have one of the other throw you out."

Thomas handed him his left hand. "Throw me out?"

The collie took it and after dipping the brush in the ink, he agilely traced a pattern on the inside of Thomas's wrist, on the skin at the line where his few began.

"You have no idea how many guys try to crash our parties,

and not just uni students. A lot of the residents in the area think we're the place to get their cherries popped." He grinned. "Which, really, we are, but we can't risk anyone underage getting in, so I mark you, and if any of my brothers asks to see it, and you can't show it, you get escorted out."

"What if I'm not under-aged?" Thomas asked, looking the design over. It was a line that went from one side to the other, rather complex for just a way to tell who had the right to be here.

"Then we can discuss popping your cherry after the party." The collie looked him over. "Not that I think that's going to be a problem for you." He painted a design on Paul's wrist, giving the tiger the once over too. Then checking out his ass.

Thomas compared his mark to Paul's, and if there were differences, he couldn't see them.

"Yes!" Before Thomas could figure out how had exclaimed it, he was engulfed in a hug. "I was wondering when you'd get here." Limbani said, squeezing Thomas's ass, which caused the rat to push forward in surprise and press against the monkey's hard cock. "Come on, I want to show you the place."

The monkey turned and took a step, only to be stopped by a bat, arms crossed over his chest and looking severe. He eyed Limbani, then Thomas, and his expression softened.

"Hi," he said, his voice deep. "I'm Henry. I'm the guy in charge here. Well, in charge of the walking sexual assault charge that's the monkey here." He offered his hand, and Thomas shook it. "Don't let him push you into anything you aren't comfortable doing, no matter how much he tells you he knows you'll like it."

"I won't force anything on him." Limbani replied.

"I know you won't," the monkey said, smiling. Thomas realized he was older than everyone. Definitely a senior. (how old is Henry?) "Just remember that no matter what you think you know, everyone's entitled to make their own decisions. Now you guys go and have fun." Thomas looked over his shoulder as Limbani dragged him



and the bat was looking him up and down, grinning.

The monkey dragged Thomas through a house that was much larger than he expected. The living room was filled with guys talking and laughing, and dressed, much to Thomas's disappointment. This frat was supposed to be all about the sex. So where was it? Limbani pointed to the dining room on the way to another living room, then up stairs, where he mentioned bedrooms as he opened doors to smaller rooms and looked inside, as if he was looking for something.

When he indicated the shower room, Thomas had to stop and stare. The setup was communal, without any dividers.

Limbani smiled. "We're all guys here. It isn't like one of us has anything the rest hasn't seen before." He paused. "Well, most of us." Before Thomas could ask what that meant, the monkey was leading him away again.

They went past a lounge, where a large TV on the wall showed a game being played, to exclamations from the room. As they walked away someone placed a plastic cup in his hand.

"Hey, Chouteau," Limbani called to the otter's back. "Wait your turn."

"I'm not poaching, Adesida, I'm making sure he's hydrated," the otter replied, "did you even think of getting him something to drink, or were you too obsessed with getting in his pants?"

"We went—" the monkey called back, but the otter was already gone in a room. "Sorry about that. Chouteaus think they run everything."

The cup was cold, and Thomas smelled it suspiciously before taking a small sip of the slush. It was a fruit cocktail of some sort, and it had none of the burn he associated with alcohol.

Limbani chuckled when Thomas looked up in surprise. "We don't need to get anyone drunk. Guys come here for one reason and we are more than happy to accommodate."

Thomas turned to offer the cup to Paul, only to realize his

friend wasn't there. He had no idea when the tiger had vanished.

"He went in the second living room," the monkey said. He looked ahead, to the stairs, then back the way they'd come. "We can go find him, if you want. We still have time."

"No, it's okay, I'm sure he's going to have fun." And as unsure with how fast things were going and the implication of what the otter had said, Thomas wanted to see where Limbani was taking him. "But, if you don't mind my asking. What's your situation? I mean you seem to know this place pretty well."

"Oh, I have a room here." He started walking again, toward the stairs, although he opened another door before it, looking inside another small closet, and closed it.

"Aren't you a freshman?" Thomas asked, following him up the stairs. "I thought only sophomore going room in a frat."

"My dad knows Lawrence's dad, who knows Madoc's who knows Xu, and they reached an agreement where I could move in immediately." The monkey smiled. "We all move in as freshman, it's just a question of lubing the way properly."

At the top of the stairs he opened a door and started to close it again, only to look inside it closer, then pull Thomas in with him. It was another storage room, but this one larger and nearly empty. With only a few set of sheets on the shelves along with pillows. Limbani closed the door and leaned against it.

"This is it." He proclaimed, and began undoing his pants.

This was it. Thomas stared at the monkey and swallowed as a (where is the cock size file you created?) hard cock sprang out. He took a step back and hit a shelf. His hand reflexively covered his ass as he realized something.

"I don't know if I'm ready for that."

Limbani pause and looked at him. His eyes turned vacant for a second, then he nodded and smiled. "You can relax, Thomas." He motioned him forward. "I'm not going to bed you over." Thomas

looked at the cock as he approached. "But you do want it. So why not do what *you* want to do? I'll just stand here and enjoy it."

"You're awfully sure I want this," Thomas said, eyes still on the cock. He licked his lips.

Limbani leaned in and whispered, "I'll let you in on a little secret. I know things." He grinned. "Like how badly you want to suck me off. Go ahead. We can move on to the rest afterward, if you want to." He paused as Thomas dropped to his knees. "Just be careful not to gag on it."

Gag on it? Was he going to even be able to take part of it? The cock was the length of his hand, and he could just close his middle finger and thumb around it. The balls were heavy and fit nicely in a hand. The monkey was already leaking and the cock pulsed as he chuckled.

He wanted this, Thomas reminded himself, breathing in the smell of cock and balls. He wanted to experience what fooling around with a guy was like. Hopefully Limbani wouldn't be judging his technique.

He licked the tip, not pausing at the slightly salty taste of the precum. He licked the head, then closed his lips around it. He pushed and pulled, letting his tongue roam the surface and his lips tease the crown. Limbani placed a hand in on his head, but only ran his finger in the fur, letting out an appreciative sigh. Encouraged, Thomas pushed more in, and when that went well, even more, until he hit the back of his throat with it and hurried to pull out, coughing.

"Are you okay?" Limbani asked, but he was trying not to smile when Thomas looked up to nod. "I did say to be careful."

Thomas licked the balls instead of answering. There was something enticing about the taste of ball sweat. He cleaned them thoroughly, then licked up the cock, which was leaking again, and just made it tastier. By the time he reached the head, he swallowed it, then as much of the cock as he could, and bounced his head on it.

Limbani moaned, and Thomas echoed it, his cock tight in his

pants. Why had he waited so long? Why hadn't he done this with Paul? Fuck not being attracted to him sexually, it was a blow job, not love. He tightened his lips, teased the head with quick pull and pushes.

Limbani cursed. "Slow down, I don't want to blow yet."

Thomas raised his eyes to glare at the monkey. Who the fuck did he think he was to tell him how to do this. He was going to suck him until Thomas was nice and ready to stop and not before. He redoubled his efforts, closing his eyes, and focusing on the texture of the cock, the monkey's moans, When he thrust. Thomas grabbed his thighs and held him in place, deep throating him and eliciting loud cursing. Then he was back to bobbing up and down.

Limbani panted. "I'm gonna—" then he tensed and grabbed Thomas's head, holding him in place as the cock in his muzzle pulsed once, twice, then filled his mouth with hot, salty, bitter cum.

Thomas swallowed, surprised and delighted at how much cum there was. When the jets quieted he rolled the cum on his tongue, enjoying the taste, then he fell on his ass, panting. He grinned up at Limbani who looked at him in amazement.

"Wow," the monkey said. "Wow. I thought you..." he didn't finish. "Wow."

"I wasn't too bad?" Thomas asked.

"I've had better, but you're definitely up there with them." The monkey mouthed another "wow".

Thomas needed a moment to work out it had been a complement, then he grinned. "I like it."

"I am so glad, because I want some more." Limbani smiled. "But I shouldn't keep you to myself all night." He stepped out of his pants and opened the door. "Come on, let's introduce you to more of the guy here."

"Your pants?" Thomas asked, picking them up.

"Leave them. At least this way I'll know where they are."

“Shouldn’t you cover yourself?” he asked, following the monkey out the closet.

“No point,” Limbani answered. “I’m just going to lose them again.” He grinned. “You should lose yours too. It’ll make things a whole lot quicker along the evening.”

He looked down at the tent in his pants, along with the wet spot, then at Limbani’s still hard cock. “I’m going to keep them on for a while.”

“Suit yourself.” The monkey headed down the stairs, and motioned in to the closest lounge, where guys were naked. “But you’re going to be in the minority fairly quick.”

Thomas swallowed at the amount of fur visible, along with cocks, balls and asses. At least one guy was having sex, and there was a lot of fondling, and—

“Is that real?” Thomas pointed to the hyena with the giant cock, the giant hard cock, that was being worshiped by three guys.

“Oh yeah, that’s Chima, he’s all real.”

Thomas stared at Limbani. “How do I get myself some of that?” he demanded.

The monkey laughed. “You could always ask nicely.” He grabbed Thomas by the shoulder as the rat turned to head for the hyena. “But, as enthusiastic as you are. I think that maybe we need to work you up to someone that size.” He smiled. “Trust me, you are going to love sucking off all those cocks as practices for that one.”

Thomas vibrated at the idea of sucking off more cock. “Point me to them, now.”

## CHAPTER-3

Thomas opened an eye and immediately closed it. Why was it so bright? He pulled the pillow over his head.

Pillow?

He forced an eye open and looked around. The clock on the bedside table read eleven forty-nine, behind it, on the wall, was a poster of Carl Marlow, the Viking's quarterback. Next to it, one of Einstein, the buff sidekick from the Unknown Explorer show he used to watch when he was a kid.

"How did I get back to my room?" Thomas asked, sitting and looking around. The room felt unreal somehow, like the air buzzed. "Better question, how did I get home?"

He tried to recall the evening.

There had been Limbani, then the monkey's cock in his muzzle. Thomas swallowed at the memory, his cock responding. He giggled. He'd sucked off his first guy.

He frowned.

No, he'd sucked off multiple guys. He remembered an armadillo, that would be Lawrence, an otter, a bear—maybe—things were fuzzy around that point, or maybe they'd gotten like that before. He sort of remembered a lot of naked bodies against him.

He rubbed one out, riding what he remembered. Then hurried to the bathroom, stopping only long enough to lightly knock and confirm it was empty, even if he could hear voices downstairs.

Once showered and changed in fresh clothes, Thomas headed downstairs.

"Look who's awake," Judith called. "Did you have fun at the party?" She smiled. Everyone looked at him. Roland was the only one who didn't keep looking, waiting for an answer. He went back to

piling pancakes on his plate, then drowning them in maple syrup.

“I did,” Thomas answered, trying to sound confident. He knew he had, but not remembering everything added an element of doubt he couldn’t keep from his voice.

His father’s gaze peering into him. “And how do you feel?”

Thomas swallowed. What stated had he been in when he’d returned home? Had anyone been awake? No, of course his father had been, waiting for him to return and make sure he was okay. Which by the look and question, Thomas might not have been.

“Cut our son some slack,” Nadia said, then looked at Thomas. “Paul dropped you off, you were sleeping.”

“More like unconscious,” Eric corrected.

She shrugged. “He said you forgot to drink in your fight to not drink anything alcoholic.” She pushed a pitched of water to his place at the table. “So drink up.”

Thomas sat. “I’d rather have coffee.”

“Once you’re fully hydrated.” She put pancakes on his plate.

He grabbed the strawberry jam and spread it over the top one.

“Drink,” she ordered.

He filled the glass with water, then drained it. He wasn’t thirsty, at least no more than he normally was in the morning. He’d drank plenty the previous night, he was sure of that, just not water, or alcohol. His ears heated up as he hoped he hadn’t had cock breath when Paul dropped him off. His dad would have checked for alcohol on it even if told Thomas hadn’t drank any.

He rolled the pancake and almost put it back down as he closed his mouth around it. That was another cylindrical thing he was putting in his mouth. He wished he remembered how many that made. The sweetness of the jam confirmed it wasn’t another cock and

he ate.

He drank half the pitcher, and that combined with half a dozen pancakes made him feel better. By then, Roland had eaten eight and excused himself to go hang out with Neil, his best friend and teammate on the high school football team.

“Remember,” their father called, “You have practice at four this afternoon.”

Roland’s answer was muffled but would be something to the effect that yes, he would be there, since he and Neil were on the same team. There also wouldn’t be any of the exasperation Thomas would have put in his voice. Roland didn’t mind having their father hover, since he loved playing football. Thomas liked school, just not the pressure to figure everything out right now.

Full, he excused himself, and went to his room.

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The icon in the top right corner of his screen flashed and he accepted the call with a tap of the key, then went back to killing the monsters that were rushing him.

“Hey,” he greeted the dishevelment tiger.

“What do you want?” came the groggy answer. “It’s too early.”

“It’s two in the afternoon.”

Paul groaned, then disappeared as the image turned black. Thomas heard the coffee machine make a coffee and by the time he’d cleared the dungeon room he was in, and collected the drops, the image became bright as the phone was taken and brought up so the tiger’s pale orange face was visible again. He looked no better, but he was holding a cup of steaming coffee now.

“Thanks for covering for me with my folks,” Thomas said, pausing the game.



Paul smiled. "What are best friends for?"

"Driving me around all the time?"

"That too."

Thomas leaned in his chair. "So..." his ears burned. "I..."

"You had fun last night?" Paul grinned.

"I must have," Thomas said, "because it's kind of a blur. Did I really not drink anything?"

Paul snorted, then cursed as he wiped coffee off his muzzle and table. "Don't do that."

"Sorry."

"And you drank plenty. I think you must have drained all the frat guys and a good number of the party goers. You don't remember?"

Thomas stared at his friend's image. "I remember a few of them. All of them?" he swallowed hard. Fuck, what if one of them bragged about it, and his dad heard?

"Calm down, Thomas, I doubt anyone realized you went around blowing everyone, it was very hectic." The tiger's ears folded back in embarrassment. "I never saw so many cocks."

"Did you get any?" Thomas asked, both because he needed a distraction and because the idea of his friend standing around not participating made him feel bad.

"Not at the party."

"I'm sorry."

Paul got a knowing smile. "Don't worry about it. Now, if you want something to worry about—" Thomas's blood drained at the tone—"does your sister frequent the Wild Frat dot com website?"

"How would I know that?" that wasn't where he'd expected Paul to go, not with that tone. "What is it?"

Paul grinned. "Do a search. Keywords: wild frat Chima."

Thomas did what Paul said, and the top one was of a link. "Giant Hyena is taken by Freshman." He clicked it and the page had a video. Thomas couldn't see much of the still, dark fur. People around looking at what was happening.

He started the video and immediately the angle moved to show the hyena in question seated on a couch, arms spread on the back. An bemused expression as he looked down at the rat kneeling between his legs. The coloring was rather distinctive, black head and torso, changing to white in an uneven line at his waste. Thomas say that coloring every time he looked in the mirror.

By the time he realized he was the rat in the video, the angle changed again, lowering to show that his muzzle was wrapped around the thickest cock, Thomas had ever seen. When his eyes bulge as he watched himself pull up and up and up.

Paul laughed.

Thomas looked at his door to make sure it was closed and put a hand down his pants. Fuck, how had he swallowed all of that? How had he not dislocated his jaw. Fuck, why didn't he remember that? It was so unfair.

The angle changed again, to show that Thomas wasn't kneeling directly on the floor, but his legs were on each side of a money, who was sucking him off at the same time.

"Oh come on," Thomas whined. "I want to remember that."

Paul laughed harder, and Thomas remember his friend. He let go of his cock. He could watch this later and fully enjoy it. In fact, he should probably save it, just in case the site removed it.

He glanced at the views the video had and his eyes bulged again. Maybe that wasn't something he had to worry about. How had over a million people watched it in a few hours?

"Are you okay?" Thomas asked. "I mean, are we okay? It sounds like I got all the fun and you just stood around watching me

have it.”

“I’m fine,” Paul said in that tone Thomas recognized from the time he’d heard Paul’s mother fuss over him. “It’s not like I was looking to get any cock. I met some cool guys, even got a dance in here and there. The monkey is an atrocious dancer, but he’s got enthusiasms. I’ll give him that.”

“Limbani abandoned me?” Thomas wasn’t sure if he should be horrified that his escort had left him without any protections against all the guys in that building. He looked at the paused video of himself, lips around a cock that had to be at least fifteen inch long. Okay, maybe Thomas hadn’t been in that much danger.

“He said you were busy with Felix and Henry when I asked where you were. Once he got too grabby and I stop the dance, we found you, sucking off the bat, that’s Henry, in case you don’t remember. The otter was sucking you off with an eagerness I didn’t know was possible, until you saw the hyena and you pushed him on the couch. I was afraid you were going to break your jaw, but I think you’ve been hiding somethings from me, Thomas.” The tiger looked at him seriously.

“I swear, that was the first time I ever sucked someone off.” Paul looked at him doubtfully. “I mean that party. I sucked off Limbani first, then Felix, and Larence, and you said others.” Thomas motioned to the video, “the hyena.”

“He was the last. By then, according to Limbani, you’d done the entire frat and some of the party goers. I think that if you hadn’t passed out after Chima, you’d have had a lineup.”

Thomas bit his lower lip, wondering how to ask his next question. “Paul, you really don’t have to say yes, but—”

The tiger rolled his eyes. “Yes, I will drive you to other parties like this if you need me to.”

“But if you aren’t going to enjoy them...”

Paul sighed. “Come on, you know me better than that. I can

enjoy myself without the sex, and who knows, if I go to multiple of them, I might run into someone I'm friends with already. It's not like those parties exist in a vacuum. The guys who go to them also go to classes and outside activities. Think of me as your chaperon, there to make sure you don't get yourself hurt in your enthusiasm to try new things."

Paul got a pensive expression, and before Thomas asked about it, the phone moved. The tiger was doing something on it.

"But if it's going to assuage your fears—" Thomas's email dinged with an arrival. "Just know that you can make sure I don't feel left out when we drive back from those parties too."

Thomas clicked the attachment and the picture filled the screen. His head in the lap of a guy with pale orange fur, with brown stripes. Behind that the foot well of a car was visible with pedals. Thomas's muzzle was wrapped around the guy's cock, his eyes dazed.

"Paul, I am —"

"An amazing cock sucker." The tiger said. "No regrets here."

"But —"

"How long have we known each other, Thomas? You're my best friend, so that wasn't uncomfortable." The tiger grinned. "Quite the contrary."

"But you're not attracted to me."

"It's a blowjob, not a wedding proposal. But let's forget about that for a moment."

"I kind of wish I could," Thomas replied, "but I'd have to remember doing it first."

The tiger narrowed his eyes. "Are you turning into a comedian on me?"

Thomas stared at the image. "What?"

"Look, the really important question you need to answer is

this: did you enjoy yourself last night?"

Thomas thought about it. Felt his hard cock. "Well, keeping in mind that I barely remember a fraction of what happened." He grinned. "I had the time of my life."

The tiger smiled, "good, then I did my job properly."

## CHAPTER-4

Monday was interesting, to say the least. Thomas imagined everyone could tell what he'd done at the party. In his Econ Class, the collie who assisted the teacher was Brukammer, and Thomas sank in his seat as the guy looked the class over. He had the image of golden fur in his face while his mouth was filled. And he was hard again.

Tuesday Limbani grinned at him when they're eyes met in their class. Then in his history calls a red panda stared at him for a full minute before going back to his books, which had left Thomas trying to remember if there had been a panda at the party, or if stories were already spreading. Would guys seek him out to get blown now? He stifled a moan as he got hard again.

Wednesday it was a badger who looked him over licked his lips, grabbed his crotch and walked on. It happened so fast Thomas almost convinced himself he imagined it.

Thursday was almost too much for him. His international politic class was taught by the hyena, Chima, and Thomas could only imagine him parading there naked his giant cock slapping his thighs with each step, growing harder and harder until it was standing up. And Thomas was suddenly extremely thirsty.

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"And then there are the dreams," Thomas said as he fired on the wall of zombies approaching. "It's like these guys aren't satisfied haunting my classes, they're haunting my dreams, all hot and sexy and hard and—" he glanced at his crotch, then cursed silently, he shouldn't have thought about that.

The golden tiger in the small window on the top right grinned, as his character on the screen lobbed an explosive at a pack of zombies. "Sounds to me like you need to jerk off more."

"When?" Thomas replied, switching weapon. "Where's the

machine gun ammo on this map?" he fire the magnum at the closest zombie. "You know my house. It's near impossible to do it here and not have someone hear or smell the result. Do you want me to tell you how often Roland does it?" he asked at Paul's dubious expression. He nodded to the wall his bed was against. "There's no more than a quarter inch separating our bedroom and he'd loud."

The door to his bedroom opened. "You think he's the only one who's loud?" Judith said, poking her head in. "Running the shower doesn't exactly cover your "yes, harder, poke me Paul, I love you Paul. I think you're even louder than Victor was."

"Judith!" Thomas yelled, reaching over to grab the pillow from his unmade bed and throwing it at his sister while Paul laughed.

He caught it. "I'm just happy at as the one daughter of the Hertz, I have my own bathroom. I'm terrified of smelling yours." She threw the pillow on the bed. "Hey Paul, don't let my brother molest you too hard." She closed the door.

"You so need to have a lock on your door," Paul said, snickering.

Thomas looked at his screen to find he was dead. His sister's distraction had cost him the game. "And keep dad from checking in on me to make sure I'm studying? He'll never allow it."

"What is he going to do when he wasn't in on your doing the nasty with some guy?"

Thomas shrugged, his ears burning. "Knowing him, he's going to ask for that guy's grades, then his plan for the future and then rework his class load so it's more efficient." He paused, and grinned. "Then, he and mom will compete with us for the loudest lover award."

Paul shook his head. "I'll never get how comfortable you are with the idea of your parents doing it. I know my mom had guys she had fun with, but—" he shuddered "—I don't want to think about it."

"It was that or die of embarrassment. My folks have no

problem telling us what they've done when they were younger."

"Oh my God, really?"

"Not the details," Thomas said in mock offense. His best friend already knew that, since he'd shared a few meals with his family. "But I have too much of an imagination, so yeah, I had to get comfortable with the TMIs if my parents."

Paul shook his head. On the screen his character was putting up a valiant effort, but alone against the horde he was losing ground, then he was overrun and the zombies walked into the building, and their scores appeared. Having lasted longer, Paul had the highest one, but they played co-op, so Thomas didn't mind.

"But yeah, the frat guys have been making my days and nights difficult. I *almost* regret going to the party now. At least before, when all I had were fantasies, I didn't spend my days hard."

Paul raised an eyebrow and tilted an ear. "That bad, really?" he leaned back in his chair. "You know, I can help you with that, if you want. I do owe you for the blowjob on the drive back."

It was Thomas's turn to raise an eyebrow, although his cock made its agreement to Paul's offer known. "You really want to come over and risk my dad walking in on us? Or worse, Judith?"

The tiger chuckled. "I was thinking of at school. You know where Jackson is, right?"

"The hall? Sure." Thomas looked at his friend suspiciously.

"The third floor restroom in the north wing is hardly frequented, I can meet you there tomorrow at ten, you don't have a class then, right?"

Thomas nodded. "How do you know we can... you know, there?"

Paul grinned. "You aren't the only one who gets pent up, Thomas. And it seems that unlike you, I do look for ways to relieve the pressure."



Thomas bit his lower lip. "Paul, why didn't you ask me to help you with that? I mean I did it in the car, so I know you're okay with me doing that."

Paul laughed. "Come on, it's not like I planned those things. I just used the time I had available to relieve the pressure. And believe it or not, I do want to know what sucking cock is like. So, how about it?"

Thomas swallowed as he imagined the golden tiger's head bobbing up and down on his lap. "Oh yeah," he said, his cock painfully hard.

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As Paul said, the restroom was deserted when Thomas entered it. He washed his hands, because he felt like he needed to do more than just get sucked off there, then he went in the third stall since the first two felt too obvious.

He tried to sit while he waited, but he was too nervous. This was basically doing it in public. That happened to other guys, guys in stories. Not him. Of course until a week ago, sucking cock was also not something that happened to Thomas.

He chuckled nervously. Well, college was a time for new experiences, wasn't it? He sat again, stood, checked the time. Paul was late. He knew his friend wasn't standing him up, but he'd expected a message letting him know about it.

The stall's door opened as Thomas put his phone away and he opened his mouth to ask Paul what had taken him so long, but the monkey grabbed Thomas by the collar, turned and shoved him against the closed door.

"Limbani—" he started, but the monkey kissed him hard. Then his belt was undone, a hand grabbed his ass before undoing the tail strap.

Thomas pushed the monkey back, trying not to panic. "Limbani, what are—"

“Shut up,” the monkey growled. “I’m hungry, you’re hard, and I’m going to suck you dry.”

“How —”

“I said shut up.”

Thomas’s pants fell to his knees and the monkey pulled the underwear down. Had Paul sent him in his place because—a hand closed around his hard cock and gave it two pumps, ensuring his brain shut down.

“Fuck I’ve been craving that thing of your since the party,” Limbani said, dropping to his knees.

Thomas smiled, looking down at the monkey’s head. Before he could tell him to start, the moaned as the monkey closed his mouth on the tip. “Oh fuck.” How could pure heat feel this good? The mouth moved up and down and Thomas banged his head on the door as he let out a grown, but didn’t care. Limbani tightened his lips on his cock and Thomas held his head still as he began thrusting.

When the monkey tried to pull away, Thomas kept him in place, thrusting harder, faster. Fuck, he needed this way more than he thought. He plunged his cock in deep and let out a scream with the orgasm. Then he was panting, the only thing keeping him up the door and the monkey.

Limbani pulled away, licking his lips and grinning. “I knew you needed it.”

Thomas rolled his eyes. Sure, the money ‘knew things’. They were both eighteen, so they were both always horny, how mysterious that Limbani knew that about him.

The monkey pressed his body against the rat’s “Feeling better?” Thomas nodded. “I’m glad I could help.” He grinned again. “In fact, I’m so glad that I had a talk with Henry, and considering what you’ve shown you can do during the party, I was able to convince him to offer you a room at the Sigma Theta Gamma, with all the...” he grabbed Thomas’s still hard cock. “Privileges that come with bunking

with us.”

Thomas nodded dumbly. He didn't quite understand what the monkey was saying. There was a hand stroking him.

“Now, there is one catch,” Limbani whispered. “A certain ritual we need to put you through, to make sure you...hmmm... can fit properly.”

Thomas nodded, then stopped, the words finally sinking in past his cock. “That.” He swallowed. “That sounds a lot like a hazing.”

Limbani smiled. “Well, it's only that if you complain about what we're going to do to you, isn't it?” He leaned in and lowered his voice even more. “Otherwise, it's just another party. One where you're the center of the attention. Of all our attention.” He took Thomas's hand and places it on his hard cock and the rat moaned. “So, can I expect you to be over tomorrow? Let's say six?”

Thomas nodded, then he was moved and was sitting. The door opened and he was alone in the stall, pants and underwear around his ankles, cock hard and leaking as he work at processing what he'd agreed to.

The door opened again and a golden tiger entered, looked at him and grinned. “You know, I knew you needed this, but I didn't really it was this bad.” He dropped to his knees, smelled Thomas's crotch, then shrugged and took the rat's cock in his muzzle.

“Oh fuck!” Thomas exclaimed and grabbed his best friend's head and fucked it with abandon.

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## CHAPTER-5

Thomas looked at the townhouses as he walked toward Sigma Theta Gamma, trying to discern which ones were the ones comprising the frat house. He didn't remember other doors, even if every houses had one from the outside, but the tour had been the very description of whirlwind, and after that, his attention had been on other things.

He'd considered asking Paul to drive him, but Thomas didn't even know if his friend would be allowed to come in and watch, or if Paul would care to watch. Voyeurism wasn't something they'd ever discussed, and while Paul had seen Thomas blow guys, it hadn't sounded like he'd gotten off on it.

The bus stop was at the end of the block and while he'd walked quickly, his pace slowed as he recognized the door, trepidation setting in. Was he the one who was expected to bring protection? How about lube? He reached for his phone, wondering if lubed protection was a thing.

Was this smart?

He rolled his eyes. Sex wasn't about being smart, it was about having fun. His dad would so not approve, and on that Thomas climbed the steps to the house and knocked.

The door opened and a red panda in a black bathrobe with three symbols on the left side breast smiled at him. Greek letters? The ones for the frat? Paul would know.

"Right on time, I like that." The panda licked his lips and stepped out of the way. Behind him, in identical bathrobes were Brukammer, and a capybara, whose robe was open. Thomas stared at the plump cock, then jumped when a hand pushed him forward, nearly stumbling into the collie.

"Careful there," Brukammer said, steadying him.

"Sorry." Thomas stepped back, into the panda.

“Oh, you have nothing to be sorry about.” A hand ran down Thomas’s back, and stopped at the tail strap. “Well, maybe except for being fully dressed. We can ‘t have that, can we, my friends?” Like many of the guys Thomas had met in the frat, the panda had a slight accent he couldn’t place.

“No,” Brukammer answered, stepping forward, reaching for Thomas’s belt, “That will not do. Sigma Theta Gamma members should proudly display their members.”

“You guys aren’t doing that,” Thomas stammered.

“We have to have rules about answering the door in the fur,” The capybara said, leaning against the wall and watching Thomas being undressed. “Otherwise we would have too many lawsuits.”

“Would anyone really answer the door naked?” Thomas yipped as Brukammer cupped his balls and licked his lips.

“Not now, Hubert,” the panda said as the collie dropped to his knees, pulled the pants and underwear down. “There are protocols to be followed.”

With a sigh the collie stood, his robe parted by the erect cock. Now Thomas wanted to drop to his knees.

“Well, someone likes what he’s seeing.” The capybara said, grinning and Thomas almost covered himself, but he reminded himself the collie had been about to blow him, so clearly they also liked what he had, as unimpressive as it was.

“Now, step out of your shoes and pants,” the panda said, undoing Thomas’s shirt. “If we don’t hurry, the others are going to come searching for us and we don’t want that. It would distract from what we have to do.”

“Do you guys realize how ominous you are making this sound?” Thomas asked.

“You are using the wrong word,” the capybara said somberly. “Momentum is the word you wish to use. Being allowed into our fraternity is a great honor. One that must be treated with respect and

ritual.”

“I don’t think you’re using that word right,” Olavo, Humbert said.

“We are performing a ritual,” the capybara said.

“Yeah, but...” the collie stopped and grinned. “You know what, who cares. Let’s just get this moving.”

The panda urged the naked rat forward, and Humbert led them to a door, which once opened revealed stairs going down. Thomas hesitated, memories of horror movies flashing by, and how basement were used in those, then reminded himself this wasn’t a movie, or at least not a horror one.

At the bottom of the stairs, he looked into a dimly lit room. It wasn’t as large as he’d expected, and seemed to be bare earth, which had to be for effect. The few lights on the wall were lower, six of them. The ceiling—

“We are here,” someone said, and Thomas’s attention was pulled toward the men standing in the room, “to test a supplicant.”

Supplicant? Who used a word like that? Thomas wondered, and realized he was thinking of anything other than the men before him. A quick count gave him thirteen. Thirteen named and hard guys, except for one of them, who wore a mask of some sort, a skull of a saber-tooth tiger, by the long fangs protruding down from the jaw, but also with antlers.

“Name yourself, supplicant,” the mask wearing Limbani demanded. Thomas recognized his voice not that he was forcing himself to pay attention.

“Th—Thomas Hertz.” Paul said he’d blow the whole frat, did that mean he’d blown thirteen guys? More than that, since he’d also blown some of the attendees of the party. Thomas’s chest puffed in pride.

“Step forward supplicant, that your lord can observe and judge you.”

“Really?” Thomas asked, unable to stop himself, “Lord?”

“Come on, just go along with it,” Limbani replied in a hushed tone, and among the snickering from the others were a few disapproving murmurs. Limbani had said this was in part to appease some who weren’t entirely happy with having Thomas join. Could they decide not to let him in if they weren’t happy with how he performed?

He stepped forward, trying to make his walk solemn. Closer, he noticed that next to Limbani was a table of some sort, which, like the earthen walls imitated stone.

Limbani walked around him. “The lord approves of this body’s supplicant.” He stepped back. “Prepare him for the test of his body.”

The bat, Henry, and Laurence, the armadillo stepped out of the assembled men, Henry holding a bowl, and Laurence an art brush like the one that had been used at the party.

“You’re enjoying this too much,” The bat whispered as he walked by Limbani. “I’m in charge, remember?” he cleared his voice and in a deep voice said. “The supplicant is to offer me his hands.”

Thomas did so, and Laurence dipped the brush in the bowl. In the low light Thomas couldn’t see the ink, and for a moment thought there was nothing, but the brush was wet when the armadillo traced designs on his palm. He smiled at Thomas. “Relax,” he whispered, “you’re going to have a good time.”

Thomas wanted to point out that was exactly not the kind of thing to say when you wanted someone to relax. But then, Laurence was on his knees, painting something on Thomas’s cock, making him moan.

The armadillo stood, looked Thomas in the eyes and kissed him. After the surprise, Thomas melted in it with a deep moan that made his cock ache. He started to wrap his arms around the armadillo but they were caught, and then Laurence stepped away, grinning.

“The supplicant is ready,” he said. “Lie back on the altar.”

With Henry’s help, Thomas sat on it, and realized it was actual stone, the top smooth, but uneven, and cold through this short fur. It was long enough for his head and torso, and there was even a rise for his head to rest on.

Wasn’t this a little much just for his sake?

Then his legs were raised over the Mask wearing monkey’s shoulders and felt the cock press between his ass cheek, and suddenly exactly what they were planning slammed into Thomas.

He tensed.

“Hey,” Limbani whispered, “it’s okay.”

“I—” Thomas swallows and lowered his voice. “I’ve never done this.”

“I know, but don’t worry, you’re going to enjoy it. We’ve seen to it.”

“What if I’ve changed my mind?”

Someone cleared his throat in a ‘are we doing this’ sound.

“Have you?” Limbani asked.

Thomas thought about it, and realized that he was scared of the unknown. Of course he’d never done this, but that didn’t mean he didn’t want to. He shook his head.

“Then take a breath, relax, and let it out.”

Thomas took the breath, held it and willed his body to loosen, then let it out, and moaned as Limbani pushed his cock in his ass at the same time. “Oh fuck!”

The monkey groaned as balls touched balls and Thomas forced his eyes opened, looking into the monkey’s blue eyes visible in the mask’s eye holes. Then Limbani pulled out and pushed back in, and Thomas’s eyes rolled back in pleasure. A few more thrust and the



money was picking up speed.

“Fuck,” he whispered, “this is better than I saw.”

Thomas snorted at the incongruity, but couldn't find the energy to comment. If he'd know being fucked would feel this good, he'd have done this way sooner.

With a cry, Limbani pushed his cock in deep and held it there, and as it pulsed in his ass Thomas let out a moan of pleasure.

When the cock pulled out, Thomas opened and eye. Henry was taking the mask off Limbani and putting it on, then took his place between Thomas's legs. Without preamble or speech, the bat pushed his cock in and Thomas was moaning again. The brown eyes in the mask's eyes hole looked at him in amusement, as Henry thrust in and out, hands roaming over the rat's chest, tweaking the nipples, which made Thomas jump and groan.

“My cock,” he whispered. Fuck he was so hard it was painful.

“Not yet,” Henry said, his grin almost malicious.

Thomas wanted to complain, but the bat change his angle of thrust and all that came on of the rat's throat was a groan. Then Henry was fucking him hard, and came hard too, but silently.

Thomas was loud enough for the both of them.

He barely got an eye open in time to see another rat put the mask on as he replaced Henry. The cock slid in slowly, stretching the moan of pleasure from Thomas, and the hands ran over his chest.

“You could use some muscle mass,” the rat said, or Thomas though he said. He wasn't certain there was anything real at this point. This was better than any porno he watched, or stories he read.

This was heaven.

He moans and groaned in pleasure, guys came into him and pulled out, replaced. Thomas floated in a sea of pleasure, one he never wanted to end. He didn't even try to keep track of who was fucking

him. Catching a flash of golden fur, one of redish brown, black fur.

Then his ass was stretch further than any had before and Thomas's eyes snapped open long enough to see the hyena over him, then all he saw was the empty eye holes of the mask ask Chima fucked him.

He was slow, almost tender, and as the pleasure built in Thomas he was filled with a sense of rightness, of belonging. Of being where he had always being intended to me. Who he had been intended to be with.

He thought Chima said things, but words were meaningless now. Thomas and being where he should be was all there was. Those empty sockets peering into him, seeing something they approved of.

Chima picked up speed, groaned and tensed, and as the cock in his ass pulsed, Thomas could only think that yes, this was where he belonged.

And then the world exploded in the white of his biggest orgasm yet.

## CHAPTER-6

Thomas stared at the content of the suitcase but didn't see it. He wasn't entirely certain he was awake, or that if he was, the previous evening hadn't been a dream. The guys, the sex, the otherworldly pleasure... he shook his head. Okay, that one was his imagination. Or at least he hoped so, he wanted that level of pleasure again.

"You know," Judith said, leaning in his open doorway, "I'd kind of expected you to be in more of a hurry to get out of here now that you can do so."

Thomas looked up from the suitcase and blinked.

She laughed. "Oh man, what did those guys do to you?"

He shook himself. "What do you mean?" he asked defensively.

She rolled her eyes. "Everyone knows about Sigma Theta Gamma, and you spent the night there."

Suddenly Thomas's room was extremely hot. It wasn't like he could claim his sister was wrong, as she'd said, everyone knew about the frat. But spending the night hadn't been his plan, not that he had thought past getting laid when he'd agreed to Limbani's offer. He certainly hadn't thought they were serious about him getting a room there.

He looked at the suitcase again and hurried to throw clothes in it. Shirts, pants, socks, underwear, then sheets for the bed. He figured that so long as he had enough for the week, he could come back next weekend for anything he'd missed.

He hurried down the stairs and winced as his father was talking with Laurence, or more likely, interrogating him. The Armadillo had driven him home instead of letting him take the bus.

"I understand your concerns, Mister Hertz, but —"

“Eric, please,” his father said in that irritable tone he got any time someone used Mister with him.

“But,” Laurence continued, “since we springed the offer for the room and membership on him last minute, we’ll take care of the dues for the year. You’re welcome to come by the house and talk with Henry about the particular, and if you want to make the arrangements for next year.”

Thomas paused at the bottom of the steps, was the armadillo checking out his father? Thomas caught Roland by the dining room archway, watching their father and Laurence. When his brother caught Thomas looking at him, he spun and disappeared into the dining room.

Thomas stifled a sigh. Roland was probably pissed that now he’d be the sole recipient of their father’s laser focus. If he thought it would help, he’d explain to his brother that he wasn’t trying to get away from their father, he wanted to have more sex. And it wasn’t like he was getting away. Eric worked at the university, and he was his adviser. Thomas would see him often, he was certain of it.

His mother hugged him. “I am so proud of you,” she said, eyes glistening. “You’re moving out on your own.”

“Not really on my own, mom, there’s going to be other guys there.”

She grinned. “I know.” She nodded to the armadillo. “And if they’re all like him, I’m going to want to hear stories.”

“Mom!” Thomas exclaimed, drawing his father and Laurence’s attention.

She took his head in her hands. “Honey, never be afraid of recounting your exploits, you know we aren’t.”

Thomas shut his mouth over his next exclamation. Of course, he knew. Not only did his parents have a habit of vanishing to have fun together, but they’d never been shy about sharing the adventures they’d been on when younger. To be fair to his father, Nadia was the

one more likely to tell the stories, but Thomas had never heard his father stop her.

“Remember, I want you here for Sunday dinner,” she told him. “And if you need anything, or, God forbid, you decide they aren’t for you, just call and I’ll make sure any evidence of what me and your father have been up to is removed from your room.”

Thomas sighed. “Mom, please don’t do anything there if you think there’s a chance I’ll come back.”

She nodded. “Very true. Eric, I hope you’ve cleared the rest of the day. We have a new room to ourselves.”

“Honey,” Eric said, “we have a visitor.” He indicated the armadillo.

“Eric, we’ve talked about this,” She said, “no threesome.”

Laurence raised an eyebrow and looked about to ask a question.

“It’s time to go,” Thomas cut it off. He’d already experienced enough of the frat brothers to suspect the question would have been embarrassing.

“Not so fast,” Eric said as Thomas tried to pass by him.

“Dad—”

“Laurence, would you take my son’s suitcase?”

The armadillo took it out of Thomas’s hand. “I’ll wait at the car.”

Thomas decided that his father letting his suitcase leave the house was a good sign, but he prepared himself for a reversal. As Judith had said, everyone knew about the frat house.

Eric took Thomas by the shoulders and looked him in the eyes. “Are you sure you want this, Thomas? I know Sigma Theta Gamma has one of the better placement records, but...” he trailed off. “You do know all of them come from wealth, while...” he trailed off again.

“You’re talking like we’re poor or something,” Thomas replied. “Or that I’m some sort of pity case for them.”

Eric opened his mouth, then closed it. “I’m more concerned they’re taking advantage of your...enthusiasm.” Thomas narrowed his eyes and Eric rolled his. “I’m not blind, Thomas. You have both Royer and Hertz blood in you. That makes you a hot-blooded male. And I’ve seen the posters in your room. The men of Sigma Theta Gamma are your type.”

Thomas’s ears burned. “Dad, please.” Judith laughed and he glared at her.

“I’m just saying to be careful. Don’t let your enjoyment of the situation distract you from your academic studies.”

“I won’t, Dad, I swear.”

His father smiled. “I’ll see you tomorrow then, remember, we have a meeting at eleven-thirty to discuss which direction you want your studies to take.” He hugged Thomas, then Nadia hugged him again, and Judith did too.

“You’re an asshole for leaving home before me,” She whispered good-naturedly.

He raised an eyebrow. “Excuse me, but haven’t you had like a dozen offers to move in with one of the guys you’ve gone out with?”

She rolled her eyes. “I’m not ready to shack-up with one guy yet.” She slapped his ass. “Now go, you have a frat house to entertain.”

Thomas looked around for Roland, but his brother hadn’t returned. He considered going looking for him, he didn’t like leaving Roland with the impression he was abandoning him, but Laurence was waiting by the pickup.

He’d call Roland once he was settled in.

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"Thanks for the ride," Thomas told Laurence once they were on the 694. "And I'm sorry for being silent before."

The armadillo smiled. "Don't worry about it. I wasn't letting you bus it back, dazed as you were, and Henry wanted one of us to be there to answer your father's questions."

"I'm a little surprised he said yes."

"Why? You're eighteen, you can make your own decisions."

Thomas shrugged and changed the subject. "The other armadillo, he's also a Rowling, right?"

"Gilbert."

"So, are you and him?"

"We're cousins," Laurence said.

"And you do it with him?" Thomas hadn't seen them going at it, but he had gotten the sense everyone in the house did it with everyone else.

"Of course, I never got the problem families have with that. Your mom and dad seem to be open-minded."

Thomas stared at the armadillo. "No, we're not going there. They're my parents, that gross."

Laurence glanced at him with a puzzled expression but didn't say anything, although he rearranged himself.

"Is this the house's vehicle?" Thomas asked to distract himself from the bulge. He remembered that cock sliding in his ass, and he wondered what it tasted like, since it was one of those he didn't remember sucking.

"Nah, this baby's mine. Bought it when I got my license. Second thing I bought with my own money."

"What was the first?"

"A Remington Wingmaster," Laurence answered dreamily. "I love that baby."

"You love a gun?" Thomas asked in disbelief.

"It's a rifle," the armadillo replied in a tone that told Thomas he needed to watch what he said next.

"Sorry, I don't really know firearms. Other than going hunting with my dad, I haven't had much contact with them."

"At least you're not like one of those northerners who get all up and arms anytime I mentioned owning seven."

Thomas stared. "Isn't that excessive?"

"Watch what you say, I can turn around and take you back to your parent for this kind of offense. There is no such thing as an excessive number of guns."

"Is that a Texas thing?" Thomas asked cautiously.

Laurence thought about it. "More like a Rowling thing. There's two things we love in my family. Fucking and shooting a gun."

Thomas looked at Laurence's crotch. He could make out the shape of the cock wrapped by the denim. It looked big.

"You are allowed to touch you know," the armadillo said, and Thomas realized he was staring and licking his lips.

"Shouldn't you be ordering me, since I'm the new pledge?"

Laurence rolled his eyes. "You passed your test with flying cum. You're one of us, so you get to do what you want. About the only reason one of us might say no, is if we need to study or have classes or other duties."

"You're driving." Thomas was pretty sure Paul had implied they'd been parked when he sucked him off.

"So? Getting blown while driving is the least I've done in my pickup."



Thomas tentatively reached for Laurence's belt and the armadillo slid forward to give him better access. The belt unbuckled and the pants open, Thomas reached in to pull the cock out and Laurence let out a moan.

The rat narrowed his eyes and Laurence chuckled.

"Fuck," Thomas said, looking at it. "Is everyone in the frat hung?" What was this, ten-inch? At least.

"Some of us are average, but they can still make you scream with it." He grinned. "Firmin certainly had you screaming on the altar."

Firmin was the badger, and Thomas didn't remember how big he'd been, or if he'd been screaming, but then, he'd done a lot of moaning and screaming last night.

He undid the seat belt and bent across the seat. Even before he had the tip in his mouth, Thomas moaned at the smell. How did cock smell so good. He moaned louder as he closed his mouth on it. It tasted even better than it smelled.

"Oh yeah," Laurence moaned, placing a hand on Thomas's back.

Thomas swallowed more of the cock, then more, and remembering how he'd nearly choked on Limbani's kept going, and was surprised not to gag when his face was in the armadillo's crotch. The cock twitched and Thomas pulled up then went back down, slowly bobbing up and down. He took his time, even in good traffic it was an hour to the university, and the beltway rarely had good traffic.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Finally," someone yelled as Thomas stepped into his new home. Then he arms were around him. A muzzle on his, kissing him, hands on his ass, squeezing. Getting over the surprise, Thomas kissed back and grabbed the ass.

"Will you two get a room?" someone said. "Preferably mine."

The badger pulled away and licked his lips. "You've sucked off Laurence, I recognize the taste."

"Right," the armadillo said, behind Thomas. "Because there were a dozen guys in the pickup with us. Come on Jacques, either go to Kuno's room so you guys can have fun or at least take it to the living room so we can come in and out."

Jacques squeezed Thomas's ass again. "In and out. There's an idea."

"I think I should move in first," Thomas said.

"I'll take him," A deep voice said, and Chima gently took Thomas's arm and led him away.

"You can take everyone, Chim," Kuno replied.

"Chima," the hyena retorted, shaking his head. They went up the stairs, past four doors and the Chima opened the fifth. "This is your room. I'm on your left, Yating is on your right."

The room was... modest. Somehow, with all the extravagance in the frat, Thomas had expected the room to be something out of a mansion, but it was about the same size as the one at home. The bed was in the corner. With the dresser under the window.

"Am I allowed to move the furniture?"

"Of course," Chima said. "You don't like this?"

"I prefer my bed in the middle of the wall, so I can get out on either side. I'd move it under the window where the dresser is, and I'd move that next to the closet."

"I can see it."

"Hey! Who left a suitcase down here!" someone yelled.

"Shit, I better get that." Thomas hurried to the entrance, where Hubert waited by the suitcase, arms crossed over his chest.

"You know, you should be punished for leaving stuff lying

around," the collie said.

Thomas swallowed. "Is that the kind of punished where I end up gang banged again?" he asked hopefully.

"Enjoyed that, did you?" Hubert replied, smiling.

"Kinda?" Thomas wasn't sure what answer would have it happen again.

"Look," Hubert said, "don't leave your stuff lying about. How you keep your room is up to you, but common spaces have to stay clear. You don't want to trip on something when you're fucking a guy."

Thomas opened his mouth to ask if that really happened, but the collie pointed to the suitcase, so Thomas grabbed it and hurried back to his room, where he found Chima putting the dresser next to the closet.

"How?" Thomas asked. The bed was under the window.

"Some of the others helped, you just missed them."

Thomas looked left and right in the hall and caught Jacques coming out of a room, naked. "Okay," he told Chima, "well, thanks."

"You're welcome." The hyena stepped by him and patted his ass. "I'm going to let you settle in. Come find me when you're done, I'll give you another ride."

Thomas turned to suggest the hyena do that right now, but an arm reached out of an open doorway to grab Chima and pull him in. That was probably for the best, Thomas decided. He should at least make the bed before he had sex on it.

He took the sheets out of the suitcase and as he bent to put it in the bed someone pushed him down.

"That's a sight I don't think I'll ever get tired of."

Thomas looked over his shoulder. Olavo was in the doorway, naked and hard. Next to him was an armadillo, also hard but smaller

than Laurence.

“Well, you unwrap the ass and enjoy it,” Gilbert said. “I’m calling dibs on his muzzle.” He stepped around the bed and Thomas was too stunned to react until he was turned on his back, letting out a yelp, then his pants were pulled off him.

Thomas realized he had a split second to decide if he wanted to do anything productive as a cock appeared over his head.

Fuck it, he decided. It was Sunday. He could be productive tomorrow. He opened his muzzle and took the cock in. Well, he could be productive tomorrow while in class. His legs were lifted and he moaned as a cock slipped in his ass. He suspected that study time in the frat was going to be difficult.

He grabbed Gilbert’s waist to control his thrusting and grunted as the cock in his ass hit bottom.

Difficult, but definitely worth the extra effort. He squeezed the ass and tightened his lips around the cock, determined to get the armadillo to cum before the capybara.

## CHAPTER-7

The chemistry lab (Feel free to change the location, I sort of blanked on where to put them) had a disused smell to it, Thomas thought as he fucked Limbani's muzzle. The monkey was loud enough in enjoying what he and Kuno were doing to him it made it difficult for Thomas to get entirely into it. He kept glancing at the door, worried someone would walk in on them with the monkey spit roasted between them.

He'd lost count of the times he'd had sex on campus, which was quite a feat, considering it was only the Thursday of the first week since he'd joined Sigma Theta Gamma. He'd also seen more of the employee side of the university during that time than he thought existed. There had been storage rooms, areas of the parks, maintenance room, a teacher's office, which Thomas wasn't entirely certain had been disused, the gym's locker room, and showers.

Thomas was amazed they hadn't been caught by the faculty — his father — security, or other students. The one time a student had walked in on them, in the gym's sauna, it had been Hubert, who'd been surprised to find them there, but then stepped behind Thomas as he was sucking off Limbani and fucked him.

Other than the sessions of sex with Limbani, who, Thomas was discovering, never got enough, life on campus hadn't changed much for him since joining the frat house. He still had his courses and his father seemed to know where he was at all times, and dodging him was becoming a full-time job.

When he grumbled about it an evening at the frat house, reactions from the guys present were to vehemently state they weren't getting between him and his father. Laurence wasn't as adamant, but Thomas didn't want to tempt him with his father after the way he'd checked him out when he'd been at his parent's home. Madoc, the other rat in the frat, had gotten a maudlin expression, but only shaken his head when Thomas inquired about it.

But the guys let him bitch about his father without complaining. Thomas had found the release allowed him to endure his father catching up to him, quizzing him about his studies and making sure he didn't waste the time between classes on frivolous activities.

And then there was Limbani.

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Thomas grunted and held his pulsing cock in the monkey's muzzle. "Fuck," he whispered.

"Yes," the monkey said, having released Thomas's semi-hard cock and sat on the lab table. Before Thomas could protest, Limbani was off the counter and behind the rat, pulling a packet of lube from somewhere. Where, Thomas didn't know, since the monkey was naked and Kuno on the other side of the counter.

"Does he ever stop?" Thomas asked the margay.

Kuno rolled his eyes. "Why do you think I agreed to let you join? We need all the help we can get to keep him sated."

"Oh," the monkey said, "you love it."

Thomas's planned protest was preempted by the moan the cock entering him produced. "Fuck," he panted. "How is it you get me hard already? I thought." He swallowed the moan as the monkey pulled out and pushed back in, and just let out a curse again.

Not every fuck session on campus included the money, but with the others, there was a text message on his phone asking when he'd be free, and then a secluded location for the meeting. Limbani just appeared, dragged him, and whoever else would take part, to some seeming inappropriate location chosen more for how close it was than how secure it would be.

The margay stepped between Thomas and the counter, dropped to his knees, and swallowed the rat's cock in its entirety, making him moan and curse again. They were going to kill him with sex.

But fuck, was he going to go with a smile on his face.

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“Do you get any study time in?” Paul asked, as they sat outside the food court with their lunch. Thomas had just arrived, panting from running, and the golden tiger has given him a sniff, which made Thomas’s ears burn when he’d then grinned. He’d run once Kuno and Limbani were done with him and was amazed he wasn’t utterly exhausted from what they’d put him through and the running.

“Well, the study time at the house is sacred. Henry basically walks the halls holding a chastity belt.”

Paul raised an eyebrow and tilted an ear, club sandwich nearly to his mouth. “A chastity belt?”

“You’d be amazed how effective that is. Limbani shrieked the one time Henry turned the corner, holding it. Which, considering how the money keeps going on about knowing things was funny as hell.”

“So, your life is now studying and sex?”

Thomas opened his mouth, closed it. Was that really all his life was about? “Well, this is the first week of me being there. I’m still a novelty.” He smiled at the memory of all the guys he’d enjoyed, then looked down at his crotch. How was he getting hard again? “I’m sure that once that passes I’ll get to know them as more than...” he looked around. “Well, you know.”

Paul chuckled, shaking his head in amusement.

“Speaking of knowing people, have you heard anything from the gang?” Thomas asked. “I chatted with Mark, he seems to enjoy Caltech.”

Paul nodded. “He was always the engineer among us. Marian’s not having as good a time of it in Omaha. From listening to what she didn’t say when we talked, her corporate management major is harder than she expected.”

“Why did she go to Nebraska for that? UMn has a great financial track. One of the brothers teaches it.”

“Brother? That was quick?”

Thomas shrugged. “Let’s just say that they are giving me a very personalized welcome. It’s hard to think of them as strangers after that.”

“Very hard I expect.”

Thomas gave his best friend a raspberry.

“But as for Marian, she wanted to get away from her mother. That was the furthers place she could afford to go to with the grants she got.”

Thomas nodded. Unlike with his father, Marian’s mother’s helicopter parenting was intense and came with physical impact. They’d tried to get her to talk with someone about it, but she wouldn’t even admit to them what they’d all guessed was happening.

The rest of the lunch was spent discussing their friends and schedules until Thomas’s father showed up to remind him he had classes, and after assuring him he’d be on time for his class, Thomas hurried to finish and head out.

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Thomas entered the house and ducked a hug from Limbani, then ignored a call to the kitchen by Madoc. But he paused by the living room because the conversation wasn’t about him.

“You have to stop,” Jacques told Firmin.

“Oh, get off my case. I didn’t do anything,” the badger replied to the other.

Jacques shoved a newspaper in Firmin’s chest. Thomas saw only enough to recognize the university paper banner. Firmin took it and looked at it, a grin blooming on his face.

“This proves it, *I* didn’t do anything.”



Jacques rubbed his face and said something in French that had the tone of a curse. "And if they complain?" He indicated the paper. "Do you really want to get sent back home, or..." Jacques noticed Thomas and his expression darkened. When he spoke again, it was in French. Firmin mostly seemed amused at the situation.

Thomas saw the naked panda approach, a lewd smile on his face, and the rat took off up the stairs and into his room, closing the door.

Freedom.

Well, he looked at the room. Peace and quiet, at least. The sound insulation was impressive. Considering how loud the hyena could get, Thomas heard nothing from the connecting wall, other than a soft 'thump' of the headboard knocking against the wall.

He dropped on his bed and immediately looked at his crotch and the erection he was getting at the thought of Chima fucking him. He knew he was a teenager and sex should always be on his mind, but this last week was just.... He reached in his pants to adjust himself, then stroked, only to stop. Why was he jerking off when all he needed to do was open the door for a guy to take care of that for him?

"And why did you rush to your room and not enjoy each and every guy who tried to fuck you on the way here?" he asked himself, and found he had to think about it. There had been a reason. Then he remembered. Studying.

There was mandated study time, but with the schedule his father had set up for him, it wasn't enough, and the conversation during lunch had made Thomas aware that he was getting close to falling behind. So he was going to spend the time until dinner in his room at his desk (just realized I forgot to put a desk in Thomas's room) and catching up.

He slotted his phone in the computer on the desk and leaned back in the chair and set on reading his chemistry manual.

He was only partway through the first chapter he'd set on reading when the door opened and his sister entered, mouth open,

stunned expression on her face as she looked from the empty bed to Thomas glaring at her from the desk.

“Why are you dressed?” she asked, “and not naked with one of the hunks in your bed?” She quickly moved the hand holding her phone behind her back but was unable to hide the mischievous grin that told Thomas what her plan had been.

## CHAPTER-8

“What?” Thomas stammered, staring at his sister. “What are you doing here?”

“What, I can’t come visit my little brother in his frat of hunky guys?” As Judith smiled, the door behind her, leading to the frat’s communal showers, opened and a wet Olavo stopped in the doorway, mouth dropping open as he stared at Judith’s back. She began turning and Thomas was off the bed, chemistry book landing on the floor.

“Oh, no!” he grabbed his sister’s arm. “Cover yourself,” he ordered the capybara. Olava simply turned the stare on him while Judith looked him up and down, licking her lips.

“Time to go,” Thomas said, placing himself before his sister.

“Thomas,” Olavo said, “what is—”

“I’m Judith,” she said. “His older and better sister.”

The capybara looked at her, a confused expression on his face.

A door opened. Further down the hall. “I swear,” the collie exiting from the bedroom said his fur matted with cum, “the next time, I’m tying you down and fucking you how I want regardless of what you claim you saw.”

The monkey exited the room after Hubert, his fur also matted, and froze when he turned in their direction. Limbani shrieked and hid behind the collie. Hubert stared at Judith as more doors open.

Thomas hung his head. There was no avoiding the commotion now.

“What’s a girl doing here?” Felix asked, in an offended tone.

Judith turned to the otter and crossed her arms under her breast in that way Thomas had seen her practices as they came in, back before they were, well, as impressive as they were now.

“Honey,” she said in a syrupy tone, “if you think I’m a girl, Do I have things to teach you.”

“Icky!” Limbani yelled and Thomas tried to figure out if the monkey was overacting for effect or he was that unused to a woman seeing him naked.

“Judith, you need to go.”

His sister smiled. “Why?” she motioned around them. Half the frat was in the hall now, with every guy, except Thomas, naked. Laurence and Gilbert were both hard and in the same doorway. “I haven’t had that much beefcake since I went to the Gopher’s locker room three years ago, and believe me, they weren’t putting this much sausage on display.”

Thomas groaned and was happy for one thing. Chima wasn’t there. He could just imagine what his sister would say on seeing that cock.

“Well, hello there,” she said in her ‘now there’s a catch’ tone, and Thomas spun. Madoc had joined the crowd, shirt on, pants in his hand.

“You’ve been with one, right?” Gilbert asked the rat. “Is she a girl, or a woman?”

Madoc stared at the armadillo, but before he replied, someone raised his voice.

“Yat! Get out here. We need your expert opinion!” then Hubert banged on the panda’s door.

Yating opened it, an annoyed look on his face. “What’s so important, I’m studying.”

The collie motioned to Judith. “Girl or woman?”

The panda rolled his eyes. “Guy —” he began, then stopped on seeing Thomas’s sister. “Woman, definitely woman.” The panda licked his lips, looking her over.

Thomas moved before Judith. "Hey, no eying my sister." He stared at the panda's stiffening cock. "Definitely no getting hard watching her." He paused. "Wait, you're gay. How are you getting turned on by her?"

Judith slapped the back of Thomas's head. "Are you saying I'm ugly?"

"He's gay." He pointed to the panda, who now had a leering smile.

"I'm bi," Yating said.

"Yeah, there's always one," Hubert continued. "We keep him around so we can know when someone of the female persuasion is around, if they are a woman or a girl. I mean we're all gay, so how else will we know?"

"You keep me around because when I pound your ass, you cream yourself," Yating replied without taking his eyes off Judith.

"Stop talking about sex!" Thomas yelled. "My sister can hear you."

"Thomas," she said. "You do remember what household I live in?"

He opened his mouth to say this was nothing like their parents talking about their exploits. This was in the present tense. But a distinct clearing of the throat stopped him. He'd learned not to ignore it.

"What is going on?" Henry asked as silence fell. The guys moved against the walls to give the bat, standing at the top of the stairs, a view of the scene. "Who let her in?" he demanded.

"I did," Firmin answered, leaning against the wall with the others, but smiling.

"And why did you do such a thing?" Henry asked.

The badger shrugged. "She'd his family, so why wouldn't I?"

“Because we have rules?” Henry said, tone darkening.

“It’s fine,” Judith said. “I really don’t mind what I’m seeing.”

The bat turned his gaze on her, and after letting out a breath he said. “Be that as it may. We have rules about who is allowed inside for a reason. What if it had been Thomas’s mother, who had come to visit?” he motioned around. “What would she have said to such a display?”

“You’re kidding, right?” Thomas asked before he could stop himself.

Henry raised an eyebrow as Judith covered up a snicker behind her hand.

Thomas looked at her.

“Oh, no,” she answered the look, her snickering increasing. “It’s all yours.”

“Care to explain that statement, Thomas?” Henry asked.

He sighed. “If you think my sister’s bad? She has nothing on our mom.” Judith was beside Yating now, whispering something in his ear. “She’d be ecstatic at this sight. She’d probably ask for a show.”

Henry seemed to have trouble replying, and finally ran a hand over his face with a sigh. “Please stop that,” he told Judith, who was running a hand down the panda’s chest. “Why are you here, exactly? I can not believe it is because you were looking for amusement.”

“Judith,” Thomas called, knowing his sister would only be too happy to ignore the question. “He’s talking to you.” How many times had he seen that? His sister with a guy on the living room couch, going way too far for a public space. Not that their parents worked hard at getting her to stop. That was Thomas’s job since he figured Roland had been too young to get first-hand exposure to those kinds of shows.

“Oh, I was going to invite my brother out to dinner to celebrate joining the frat, but now I’m thinking it can wait.”

"I know a great place," Kuno said, as Henry's expression darkened again, this time even more. "Thomas, take your sister to the entryway and I'll get dressed. Yat, you wanna come?"

"Please?" Judith asked the panda. "Don't leave me alone with the gays."

\* \* \* \* \*

"How do you know about his place?" Thomas asked as they entered the restaurant. A woman in a suit stood behind a desk, eyeing them. Only Kuno was dressed in a way that she might let him in. Wearing a suit of his own. Thomas was in jeans and a shirt, his sister in a similar ensemble, and Yating in a designer version of the same.

"We, I mean my family, come here a few times a year. Really great food. Kuno Richard," he told the hostess. "My family's table, if it's free."

The woman's expression shifted, smiling. "Of course, Mister Richard, right this way."

"Your family has a table here?" Judith asked.

"You're a local?" Thomas asked.

"Saint Paulite," the margay replied. "I thought you knew."

Thomas had noticed the lack of an accent, but he wasn't the only one in the frat. "I thought everyone was from out of state."

"Let's get back to the 'you have a table' in the restaurant," Judith insisted.

"My family has tables in a number of restaurants," Kuno answered as he seated himself in the large semi-circular booth. A dozen people could easily fit in it. "It makes impromptu celebrations easier, since by agreement, our table will always be the last to be occupied."

"How do you get something like that to happen?" Thomas asked, sitting next to the margay and making space for his sister, who

sat on the other side of the semi-circle, next to Yating. He took the menu and looked at it.

“Money,” the margay answered before turning to the hostess. “Red wine, I’m leaving it to your sommelier as to what’s best at the moment.”

With a nod, she left them.

“Where are the prices?” Thomas asked, flipping through the pages. Maybe he had to go online for those?

“Don’t worry about it,” Kuno answered. “This is my treat. Yating, Miss Hertz, I’d recommend making a selection before you launch into other activities.”

“That means stop making out, Jude,” Thomas said, rolling his eyes.

“If you’re jealous,” his sister answered, peeling herself off the panda, “just go at it with your friend.” She looked at the menu.

Thomas’s ears burned. “We’re in public.”

His sister rolled her eyes.

“Are you sure about it, Kuno?” Thomas indicated the menu. “I don’t want this to cost you too much.”

The margay smiled. “Don’t worry about it. Once I graduate, I’ll take you to a place where you can really worry about the cost of the food. Just enjoy the food and company.” Thomas startled when the margay patted his leg, squeezed it, then let go. “Which part are you from?”

“Minneapolis,” Thomas answered, and then they were chatting about the cities, their families, and small events they considered noteworthy. Miraculously, as far as Thomas was concerned, Judith joined the conversation, and Yating added to it with comparative things he’d experienced growing up in Taiwan. Thomas was surprised at how much they had in common, but the panda was quick to point out that his family wasn’t typical because of their



wealth and, there he faltered, other things.

The server arriving with a bottle of wine for Kuno to approve and then serving each a glass before another server took their order kept Thomas from pressing for more details. Almost as soon as the order was placed, Judith pulled Yating out of the booth.

“Great,” Thomas grumbled. He hoped his sister was going to be discreet. He didn’t want her to get them thrown out of a restaurant where Kuno’s family had a table. He began sliding to the end. Stopping his sister now was the best thing to do, but Kuno’s hand on his thigh stopped him.

“Where are you going?”

Thomas nodded toward where the panda and his sister had vanished. “To keep my sister from getting you thrown out of your own restaurant. You have no idea what she’s about to get up to.”

The margay smiled. “My family doesn’t own the restaurant. If we did, I could be much more blatant and not worry about the result.” Before Thomas could ask what the margay meant, the hand on his thigh had moved to his crotch and Thomas swallowed a yip of surprise.

“Kuno.” Thomas swallowed again as the margay undid the rat’s pant button. “I don’t think...” he whined slightly as the hand slipped inside.

Kuno frowned, pulling Thomas closer to him and more to the center of the semi-circle, where, Thomas realized, the odds of anyone noticing what was happening were lower.

“Two things,” the margay said, his hand slipping under the underwear. “One, please stop wearing underwear, they’re inconvenient for moments like these.”

“You didn’t comp—” he closed his muzzled as the margay squeezed his cock. Thomas looked around in near panic at being caught and at how turned on he was.

“At uni, I was able to just take everything your wore off you,”

Kuno answered the incomplete question. "This is different. And two, you have a hand of your own. Be a good man, and put it to good use."

Thomas stared at the margay. "Are you—" he bit his lower lip to stifle the moan as Kuno stroked Thomas's hard cock.

"Reciprocation is always appreciated."

This could get them landed in jail, Thomas thought. But that wasn't enough to keep him from reaching for the margay's pants, undoing the button and zipper, and then struggling to get the cock out. Kuno wasn't the largest of the frat, but he was already hard, which complicated getting it out enough to stroke it. But the margay didn't protest the handling, leaning back and moaning softly.

Thomas's hand shook as he stroked Kuno's cock, looking around.

"Relax," the margay said, eyes closed. "So long as we don't fuck on the table, no one will bother us."

Thomas couldn't relax, but he definitely enjoyed the pre-meal entertainment. Enough so that when his sister and Yating returned, she tilted an ear at his blushing ears and sniffed the air.

Once they were all settled, their meal was delivered and Thomas wondered for a moment as the coincidental timing that they'd all had the time to reach their climax before the food was ready. Then he was too busy enjoying the food.

## CHAPTER-9

Thomas looked over how work, bringing up the reference material he's used. It looked good. He rubbed his face. Maybe he could convince Paul to do his homework for him? A blowjob or two would be enough, right? He chuckled, he and Paul might just be blowing each other once in a while but it was an addition to their friendship he liked.

"Good," Someone said from his room's doorway. "If you're chuckling to yourself, you have to be done with your class work. Get out of those clothes."

Thomas turned, reflexively saving his work. "Madoc? Is now really the right time for sex?"

The rat in the doorway, wearing a tanktop and gym short, raised an eyebrow. "Are you seriously asking that? It's not even two in the afternoon. And the only bad time for sex is during study time, which this isn't, even if that's what you're doing."

"Chemistry," Thomas replied, indicating the screen. "Definitely not my strongest subject, so I'm making sure I do it early." A bundle hit him in the face and he caught the pieces of clothing as they fell.

"You're done for now, so, as I said, get out of those clothes, and into that."

Thomas looked at what he was holding. A t-shirt and gym shorts. He indicated the tag from Cabela's. "Did you just buy these?"

"I didn't know if had any. I haven't see you in gym clothes."

"You see me at school or in here," Thomas said. "That means dressed for class or naked."

"I'd say we can go train naked, but the university won't let us."

Thomas narrowed his eyes. "Let me guess, Limbani tried it."

Madoc laughed. "He's a Freshman. Sigma Theta Gamma has been here much longer than him. There's a sign at the gym specifically stating clothing are required." The rat motioned. "Come on, get changed."

Thomas looked at the clothed again and offered them back. "I appreciate it, but I'm good. I get the whole frat's buff guys, but that's not really who I am."

Madoc looked at Thomas, expression serious, before moving into the room, taking his phone out of the pouch he had strapped to his bicep. He ignored the offered clothing and turned to phone to show him a picture. "What do you see?"

Thomas looked and frowned. "What are you doing with a picture of my brother in his underwear?" Roland looked tired, so he'd be heading for the shower. Thomas did his best not to stared at his brother's muscled body.

Madoc smiled. "Your sister sent it to Yat, and he knows what I like so he shared it with me. But you haven't answered, other then getting turned on by him, what do you see?"

Thomas sputtered. "I don't—"

"Okay," Madoc replied with a shrug. "Here's what I think. You see him, and then you look at yourself in the mirror. Your look at your thin body and his and you wonder why he's the lucky one. Your older brother's more muscular than you too, right?"

Thomas did his best not to show his embarrassment. Vincent wasn't the wall of muscle Roland was, but Madoc was right in that Thomas was the skinniest in the family. Even Judith had better muscle definition than he did.

"Sorry," Madoc said, "I didn't mean to embarrass you."

"Just get to the point so I can go back to my homework." Thomas tried to decide what do to with the clothing in his hand. He considered throwing it at Madoc, in retaliation, but the rat outranked

him, and while no one had pulled rank, Thomas was certain he wouldn't care for the result.

"My point is, don't you want to look like that?" Madoc motioned to the picture.

Thomas rolled his eyes. "You have seen my body, right?"

Madoc smiled. "Yeah, I have." He liked his lips.

"Then you know it doesn't matter what I do. I'm never going to look like Roland."

"No, you don't know that." Madoc put his phone away. "Thomas, your body's a canvas. You can't turn it into a masterpiece if you don't put any work in it. And take it from someone who has made a few masterpieces. With my help, you can fill out."

"You're making it sound like you can do miracles or something," Thomas said.

Madoc smiled. "Something like that. Look, I'm going to make it easy. I really don't mind fucking twinks, but I really go wild for buff guys. Don't you want me to fuck you like a wild buck?"

Thomas hesitated.

"Nope, no hesitation. Change or I'm done fucking you."

Thomas tried to roll his eyes, but Madoc looked serious. He didn't think the rat would be able to stop himself, it was like the guys in the frat needed sex to live, but there were other guys, and they had to be getting bored with Thomas at this point.

And what if Madoc was right? What if Thomas could be buff? Or at least more buff than he was. He changed, not bothering to turn around. Madoc had seen him naked before, possibly more than he'd seen Thomas dressed at this point. And then they left his room, having to get against the wall as Olavo and Firmin ran by, both with a fire extinguisher in hand.

Thomas watched them go up the stairs, then looked at Madoc,

who shook his head in annoyance. "Gilbert," he said.

Thomas waited for more, but the other rat didn't provide it. He tried to remember any details about the armadillo that would explain anyone running to his room with fire extinguishers. He was studying to be an engineer. A nuclear engineer.

Was Gilbert building a nuclear reactor in his room? He couldn't be.

Right?

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"Another set," Madoc said as Thomas looked at him in horror. The rat motioned for him to get on with it, and Thomas reached up from the bench he was lying on to grab the handles and pull them down. It felt like he was trying to pull a ton.

"Hey Doc," a muscular giraffe stopped by them, addressing Madoc. "Me and John's are heading to the sauna, you going to be coming soon?"

Madoc looked the giraffe over appreciatively, and Thomas wanted to do the same, but the weight needed too much focus.

"Sorry, Martin, I'm working on my newest masterpiece, we're just starting."

"Starting?" Thomas exclaimed, nearly losing hold of the handles. He'd been at it for nearly forty-five minutes. There couldn't be that many machines left.

The giraffe looked at Thomas. "It's worth it." He pumped a bicep. "The Doc's responsible for me looking like I do." He lowered his voice as he leaned down. "And he is going to reward you after a good set, take my word for it."

Thomas chuckled, and nearly lost hold of the handle again. If he wasn't so out of breath, he would have told the giraffe Madoc was rewarding him without having to do all the work.

After the tenth repetition, Thomas let go of the handles and panted. "I'm done."

Madoc chuckled. "Not even close." Thomas tried to murder the other rat with his gaze, and got a pat on his shoulder for his effort and a water bottle. "Drink up. You have to stay hydrated."

"What's the point?" Thomas asked, sitting and drinking. "You're going to kill me before I'm done."

"It just feels like it. I'm making stronger."

Thomas rolled his eyes. "Is this a 'what doesn't kill me' thing?"

Madoc shook his head. "It's a 'you need to take care of yourself' thing."

"I don't think taking care of myself should be this painful." Thomas motioned at the gym with his bottle. "Are you responsible for everyone here?"

"Only a few." The rat looked around, his gaze lingering on the more muscular of the guys. His gym shorts did nothing to hide his erection. "Tell me," he said, turning back to Thomas. "Why didn't you work out before? You've seen your brothers, right? You know you have the genetics."

"I did PE," Thomas replied. "This is the result. So I think I missed the lottery."

Madoc rolled his eyes. "PE isn't about getting these results. It's barely about keeping you healthy."

Thomas shrugged. "So, are you going for a double major or something? I'm pretty sure this isn't part of forensic sciences."

Madoc was the one who shrugged now. "I just appreciate the view."

"You do more than look."

The other rat smiled. "Well, no one wants to stand at the buffet and just look. You have to eat what's offered. And when you

help prepare the dish, they taste even better.”

“Let’s not talk about food now. I’m already famished.”

“Oh, don’t worry, I’m doing to make sure you’re stuffed once we’re done. Now let’s switch back to your legs.”

“I’ve already done the leg machine,” Thomas whined but followed Madoc.

“That was for your thigh. Now we’re going to work on your calves.”

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“I want you be here three times a week,” Madoc said as Thomas followed him to the locker room.

“I don’t have that kind of time,” Thomas whined. “Have you seen my class work? My dad’s going me getting ready a century of school.”

“You need to make time if you want results, Thomas.”

“Listen to him,” someone said. “Dedication pays off, you know that.”

Thomas glared at Paul. “Of course, today would be one of the training day.”

Madoc held the door to the locker room for the two of them.

“You’d know it is if you paid attention,” Paul said. “Thank you. How did you convince him to work out? I’ve been trying to get him to do even the minimum since the first class of PE.”

“I did my PE stuff,” Thomas replied.

“I promised to withhold sex,” Madoc said.

“Huh. Never thought to do that.” The golden tiger opened a locked and began undressing.

“How long have the two of you fucked?” Madoc asked.



Thomas chocked on air, while Paul chuckled.

“We don’t,” the tiger replied.

“Why not?” Madoc asked in surprised.

“How friendship had never needed it,” Paul answered, now naked. Thomas never quite understood that aspect of his friend. For his insistence on getting to know someone before having sex, he had no problem getting naked when around people. But then again, if Thomas had a body like his, he’d probably be more at ease being naked too. Paul had lean muscles under the pale orange fur, the result of all the dancing he did, as well as the exercises to go along with that.

Thomas glared at Madoc, who was drinking in his friend.

“We’re heading to the shower,” the other rat said, “how about you join us?”

“He hasn’t even done his training yet,” Thomas said. “He doesn’t need a shower.”

Paul chuckled and faced them, looking the naked, and erect, Madoc over—when had the rat gotten naked?— “I appreciate the offer, but I haven’t seen you dance yet. And I wouldn’t want to get in the way.”

Thomas looked from Paul to Madoc, and then realized what the offer had been about. Paul chuckled as he winked at Thomas before putting on shorts.

“Dancing. Not really my thing,” Madoc said.

“It’s the price of admission,” Paul replied.

Madoc sighed in disappointment. “Come on Thomas. You’re not showering wearing those.”

“Then I think I’m going to head back to the house and shower there.” He’d have to wait a bit to get his erection to go down, but it would be safer than parading among all the guys here on display. Maybe Madoc’s presence would keep the guys from acting on Thomas

being turned by them, but his eye still stung at times, so he didn't want to risk another one.

"No, your session with me isn't over," Madoc said. "Out of them, and in the shower."

"Go with him," Paul said and winked again. "You never know the kind of fun you'll have." The tiger was out of the room before Thomas could let him know what he thought of this betrayal. He got out of the gym clothes and hand over his erection followed Madoc to the showers.

At least these were individual shower stalls, so no one would see what they'd get up to. The morning showers are the house were... interesting. Of course all they'd have to do is make sure they were quiet. Good thing Limbani wasn't here.

Thomas looked over his shoulder at the closed stall door and Madoc followed his gaze, eyebrow raised. Thomas shrugged and shook his head. No, thinking of Limbani didn't automatically summon the monkey.

Madoc set the water hotter than Thomas preferred and took his time going under. Then he found himself relaxing. Madoc soaped his back, rubbing hard. Not quite a massage but close. When the rat's hand was at Thomas's ass, a finger pressed against his hole and Thomas stifled a moan, then the finger was gone.

Madoc turned him and was soaping his front, tweaking Thomas's nipples, before moving on to soaping and rubbing his chest and stomach, sides and then was stroking his cock, making Thomas stand on tiptoe and bite his lower lip to keep from making any sounds. Madoc grinned, stopped stroking and knelt to wash Thomas's legs.

When he stood, he offered the rat the soap. "Your turn."

Thomas swallowed. "That's it?" he whined. "You're not going finish?" Madoc had left him hard enough to be painful.

The rat looked Thomas over. "I got every spot."

"I want to argue that."

“But you can’t. Now it’s your time to wash my back.”

“Just your back?”

Madoc leaned in and whispered. “You can wash all of me, but only wash.”

“I thought you guys couldn’t resist sex,” Thomas complained.

The rat chuckled. “Don’t think Limbani is an accurate representation of the rest of us. Unlike him, we have self control.”

“Right now that’s not a good thing,” Thomas grumbled, then soaped up Madoc’s back. When he reached the ass, he didn’t settle for just pressing his finger against the rat’s pucker, he gently pressed in and did elicit a moan, but Madoc reached back and pulled it out.

“Wash.”

With the back done, Thomas turned the other rat and nibbled on a nipple, only to get his ear flicked.

“I said wash.”

“You’re doing this on purpose, aren’t you? You want me to have blue balls.”

Madoc rolled his eyes. “This is training, sex comes later.”

“Why not both?” Thomas washed Madoc, not bothering with teasing the cock. If he couldn’t have sex now, he wanted to get the shower over as quickly as possible so they could head to the house and do it there.

“Because as impressive as your stamina is, you have limits.”

Thomas rolled his eyes in silence, then they rinsed off, with Madoc stroking him again, ensuring Thomas stayed hard. The rat wasn’t endearing Thomas to his training regiment. Hadn’t that giraffe said there would be a reward? This felt like torture.

With the shower off and most of the water slogged out of their fur, they exited the stall, and Madoc grabbed Thomas’s arm as the rat

headed for the lockers, and instead pulled him to a door.

Unsure what other torture Madoc had in store for him, Thomas was unprepared for the sight, sounds and smells that greeted him as he entered the room.

The sauna wasn't as hot as it should be, but that was compensated by the six hunks fucking on the benches. Moans and the smell of sex mixed with the scent of cedar and occasional sizzle of water dripping on hot stones.

"You made it," The giraffe said to Thomas, who couldn't form words.

It wasn't his first orgy, or even his second, but it was the first time Thomas was confronted by a guy he didn't know at all, having sex. He didn't consider the first party since he'd known Limbani, slightly, and he hardly remembered what had happened.

Madoc moved Thomas to a free spot on a bench. "Now is time for sex." He raised Thomas's legs over his shoulders and slowly pushed in. Thomas's moans joined that of the other guys, then were cut off as a muzzle pressed against his. Not Madoc, the giraffe. A mouth closed over his cock and Thomas screamed in the kiss as he came.

As he relaxed someone commented about tight Madoc had wound the rat, and before Thomas could comment on it, the muzzle was replaced by a cock, which he eagerly sucked.

Madoc came with a grunt, then pulled out of Thomas. Someone asked permission to fuck him, and Madoc motioned to Thomas, who looked around the cock to the muscular buffalo and gave him a thumbs up and moaned around the cock as a thicker cock than Madoc stretched him.

The guy in his muzzle thrust harder than groaned and came.

"You have got to be fucking kidding me!"

Thomas barely had the control not to bite down in surprise and fear and he pushed the guy off him and tried to get the buffalo to

stop thrusting.

“Madoc, how many times to I have to tell you to message me before you start one of these.” The rhino in the doorway said. “I had to heard about it from the Jerry.”

“Sorry,” the rat replied, not sounding it as he also moaned from the fucking he received. “I wasn’t planing on a group thing. I was just training a new brother. Thomas, that’s Hector, he’s the football team’s coach.”

His heart only starting to drop out of his throat, Thomas waved at the wall of muscle that was the rhino in the track and field uniform. The rhino nodded to Thomas.

“Well, I’m calling this as being capacity.” The rhino turned a lock on the door. “It’s a good thing none of you locked me out,” he said, undressing. “Because I would have made the whole team pay. And told them whose fault it was.”

Sighs of relief sounded and Thomas wondered for a moment if the entire football team was gay, then was distracted from the question but the buffalo thrusting hard and grinning once he had his attention again.

Then Thomas had nothing other to do but enjoy the cock up his ass, mouths on his cock and cock in his muzzle.

Maybe, just maybe, he could get used to this kind of training regiment.

## CHAPTER-10

“On your six,” Thomas said calmly, looking through the scope. In the distance, Paul rolled out of the approaching enemy’s line of fire, turned, and unloaded an entire magazine in the canine in the blue and pink uniform of the enemy.

“Thank’s Overwatch,” Paul answered, vanishing behind a burning car.

“Marian, Donna, Sit-rep,” he instructed.

“Approaching the enemy objective,” Marian answered. “Nathan, you ready to cover me? They have two shooters protecting it.”

Thomas turned to scan that section of the field, but buildings were in the way. He stopped as Nathan replied to Marian, and Donna said she was good. A player in the best-pressed uniform the game (I think we should change the previous zombie came for this shooter, to establish that even before the Frat Thomas took down Felix in it a lot) allowed became visible and Thomas smiled.

“There you are.” The assassin had sped out of sight immediately on respawning this time around. Thomas centered the reticule and fired. The assassin dropped. Thomas had to imagine the head exploding because the game didn’t go for such gory detail. “And that makes number four, Mister Fel-Lou-Max.” Thomas loved snipping.

“You ever going to give him the chance to play?” Mark said. “Donna,” he hurried to call, “I need healing.” He cursed. “Where did that shooter come from?”

“Give me a sign,” Donna replied calmly.

Thomas scanned the field and caught the green flash Mark let out. The one-time emergency beacon every player had for situations like this. It let Thomas see the other sniper perched on a lower building and took him out.

“Your shooter’s down,” He said.

“Thanks.”

Donna reached Mark and proceeded to heal, only to be shot down in the middle of it. Cursing, Thomas searched for the shooter as Mark was taken out. He saw the immaculate uniform moving from one car to the other.

“How the hell did you get there from your spawn so quickly?” Before he could fire, the assassin was hidden again. They knew he had height and line of sight on them. They were probably calling his location to their teammate, but Thomas knew where they were as his own were engaged with them.

The assassin’s head poked over the overturned car and Thomas shot the head off again. “And that’s five for this game. Sit-Rep.”

“Marian’s nearly there,” Mark called, “two minutes and we have this.”

“Don’t get cocky,” he replied. “Their assassin knows this map. I almost missed taking him down this time.”

The door to his bedroom slammed the wall. “I have had enough!” The otter yelled and Thomas startled, nearly dropping his controller as he spun in his chair.

Felix Chouteau stood in the doorway dressed only in an Anti-Vision T-shirt and glaring murder at Thomas. “You, Mister T-Top-Topper (feel free to come up with better handles), are cheating!”

Thomas stared at him, trying to figure out how the otter knew his game handle, then noticed the slim earpiece with the extended microphone, and the two-part controller in each hand.

“What?” in his peripheral vision he saw the “killed” message flash red, and he cursed Felix for the distraction, turning back to the game, only for his chair to be spun so he’d face the otter again.

“Don’t ignore me, Hertz. There’s no way you could have pulled

that last shot without a cheat. Come clean or I'm reporting you."

Thomas batted the otter's hands away. "Back off, Chouteau." He heard no one in his headset, which meant that on top of costing him the game, the otter had caused him to get disconnected.

"I will not. There is no way you can have beaten me with that!" Felix motioned to what Thomas had on his head, a bulky headset and the four years out-of-date handset. "I have spent too much on my gear to be taken down by a cheater."

Thomas was on his feet, pushing the otter away. "I didn't cheat. You can't sneak worth shit. Don't blame your lack of skill on my years of playing Shoot-Em Down."

"You are a freshman," the otter growled, "and not even one of us. There is no way you can't have beaten me."

"Oh, come on. The quality of the gear means nothing compared to actually playing." Thomas fought against looking down. Was the otter was getting hard?

"I have been playing. Me and my team have been training for months!"

Thomas snorted. "Try the years me and my friends have been playing."

Felix let out an exasperated growl and reached for Thomas. "I will show you who is the better man here—"

"That's enough," Laurence said from the doorway, his Texan drawl thicker. "And he is a brother, don't insult him like that. Also, I can't believe you two are getting so excited over fake shooting."

"That is not what I meant, and you know it! He's a cheater!" Felix said, hand on Thomas's collar.

"Just fuck him, Fel," Laurence said, rolling his eyes. "It's not like the freshman is going to bitch about it, right?" the armadillo looked at Thomas.



Instead of answering Laurence, Thomas stared at Felix. "You're Fel-Lou-Max?" He couldn't stop the chuckle. "Ah man, I must have taken you down like twenty times over the last few weeks."

"You cheat!" The otter yelled, but was pulled away from Thomas.

"Okay, this is getting out of hand," Laurence said, holding on to the otter. "How about we resolve this in a definite way?"

"Rematch," Felix demanded, glaring at Thomas.

"I said definite," Laurence said before Thomas could agree. "Like for real, no for fake. You against Thomas. Real guns, real targets. You win, you get to fuck him, Thomas wins, and I get that honor."

"I'm not shooting at Felix with a real gun," Thomas said, as the looked the otter gave him was uncomfortably smug.

"Not shooting at each other," Laurence replied. "Shooting at targets, best score wins."

"Wins you," a voice came over the television's speakers with a snicker. "Oh man, how *hard* are you going to try to lose?" Paul asked.

"Did I miss something?" Donna asked, and Thomas's ears turned crimson. They couldn't have heard everything. He looked at the screen, and the icon for him being connected to the team chat was still active.

"Oh, you have missed so much," Paul replied, still snickering. "Thomas no longer has to wonder if he likes kissing guys now that the consequences aren't a black eye."

The silence in his headset was because he'd disconnected that, not from the chat. Instead of letting the embarrassment crush him, as Felix looked to be enjoying his situation too much, Thomas smiled.

"Tell me, is this game a Sigma Theta Gamma only thing, or can others participate, like Paul for example?" he was a much better shot than Paul, so at least he wouldn't end up last.

“How did Thomas score a frat?” Mark asked.

“On his back,” Paul answered. “And Thomas, I’m passing on the invitation. As fine as I’m sure your ass is, I think two guys fighting over it, is plenty.”

“What are you talking about?” Thomas asked “They aren’t—”

Paul’s laughter was so loud the speakers squawked. Laurence was covering his mouth as if he was stifling laughter. Felix was looking at Thomas in disbelief.

“What?” Thomas asked. Which only made Laurence bend over with laughter.

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“Aren’t there shooting range closer to the house?” Thomas asked, getting out of Laurence’s pickup. They were nearly half an hour south of Minneapolis. Three spots over, Felix got out of his car, a deep red sports model from General-Ford. He didn’t know enough about cars to tell much more than it had to be expensive. And unlike Laurence’s dirty and banged-up truck, the car looked showroom ready.

Only three other vehicles were parked on the dirt lot. Three pickups that had seen better days.

“Definitely.” The armadillo lifted the truck-bed cover and took out a long case from it. “But this one is the closest that meets my requirements.”

“And what are those?” Felix asked, looking into the truck-bed as Laurence closed the cover. Thomas peeked too and caught sight of other cases secured to the bed. Some looking a lot like the gun safe his grandfather help in his living room.

“The right kind of requirements,” the armadillo replied.

“Not going to lend me something from your arsenal?” the otter asked, and received an offended look from Laurence.

“They have perfectly acceptable rifles here,” the armadillo said. “For you.” Inside the squat and wide building, Laurence smiled as he looked around. Thomas peeked at the armadillo’s crotch, expecting to see a tent, and received a roll of the eyes when he looked up. “I’m not that kind of Rowling.”

Which meant there was one who was? Thomas wondered if he wanted to know who?

“Hey Hugh,” the armadillo called to the antelope behind the counter. “My friends need a rifle each. They have a score to settle.”

“Mister Rowling, it’s a pleasure to see you again.”

“Laurence,” he replied with a sigh. “If we’ve had sex, you get to drop the mister, I told you.”

The antelope looked around in embarrassment, but it was only the four of them in the store. “Yes, of course. I’m sorry. Do you have any preference?” the store clerk asked Thomas and Felix.

“The most expensive one you have,” the otter replied.

“Do you have a Nosler S320?” Thomas asked. It was the model his grandfather had him use when his family went hunting at the cabin.

“Make that the 487,” Laurence said. “This is a shooting range, not a stunning one.”

“A rifle’s a rifle,” Thomas said, repeating his father’s comment when his grandfather would go on about the quality of this versus that rifle.

“That’s,” Laurence said and sputtered, “that comment would get you kicked out of my family.”

“Everyone knows, the best costs the most,” Felix said. He missed the disappointed look Laurence gave him as he studied the rifle the clerk placed before him. “What is it?”

“A Remington Elite 229,” the antelope answered without

emotions and Thomas thought he purposely kept his tone neutral.

“And there’s nothing more expensive?” Felix asked, not looking impressed.

“I have a 452 with gold plated stock, but it’s basically this rifle with more decorations.”

“Give me that one.”

“Sir, I—”

“The 452. Please.” That last word sounded like it hurt Felix to say and once the clerk was out of sight the otter rolled his eyes and mouthed “can you believe this?” Thomas kept silent as he didn’t think the otter cared for his opinion. Laurence also stayed silent.

The clerk returned with two rifles. The one he handed to Felix looked good, Thomas had that to say about it, nicely polished, with the gold filigree extending beyond the stock. The one he handed to Thomas had seen more use. It was scuffed and scratched. Part of the stock had been patched with wood putty and no one had bothered trying to make it match.

“I’m going to need a case for this,” Felix said.

“The range is just at the back,” Laurence said.

“And after? I’m not carrying this around in the open, it would get scratched.”

“Felix, you do get this is just practice, right? You don’t have to buy the rifle.”

“Are you seriously telling me not to buy a rifle?” The otter looked at the armadillo in disbelief.

Laurence looked at the rifle, then shrugged. “It’s your money.”

“Exactly.”

The clerk produced a case for it, and then Felix paid. Thomas’s eyes went wide at the size of the number.

“Don’t worry about it,” Laurence said. “I’m covering your rental.”

Thomas lowered his voice. “How *good* is that rifle?”

Laurence looked at Felix’s purchase again and shook his head. He didn’t lower his voice when he said. “A weapon is no better than the person holding it.” Then he led the two of them to the back.

The shooting range looked like what Thomas had seen in movies. A large and deep room with their area separated into individual stalls with a counter. Laurence went to the vending machine as Thomas settled in his stall and looked the rifle over. The weight was close to what he was used to, and the sight seemed decent.

Laurence placed five magazines on his and Felix’s counter, and then the one on Thomas’s left. “They’re auto-wrack, so just put the magazine in and you’re ready to go. Ear protection in first.” The armadillo indicated the large headset hanging on the wall before taking plugs from his pocket and putting them in his ears. “You both get one magazine to familiarize yourself with your rifle, then the next four are calculated, the highest score wins. You argue and you’re disqualified, which means you don’t take part in the reward.”

Thomas was impressed at how clear Laurence’s voice was. He’d expected to barely hear anything he said. He placed the rifle to his shoulder and fired. The hand at his back kept him from being thrown off his feet by the recoil.

“You okay?” Laurence asked, while Felix smirked.

“I wasn’t expecting that.” Thomas rubbed his shoulder. He’d have a bruise, for sure.

“It’s the main difference between a sporting rifle and a real one.”

“A stunner rifle is as real as this one,” Thomas replied.

“The fact you don’t need a license to own one says differently,” Laurence said with a slight smirk.

"My grandfather has a license."

"A hunting one, I expect. Which is to allow him to take down bucks, not for his hunting rifle."

"Are we going to shoot?" Felix asked. "Or is this just delaying tactics before you give up and hand me your ass?"

Thomas put the rifle back to his shoulder, readjusted his footing, then changed it as Laurence gave him instructions. And fired once. The recoil was strong, but now that he expected it and he stood to take it. The rifle barely moved. The sight was a little off, he thought. When he turned to ask Laurence, the armadillo was giving Felix instruction on how to stand, to which the otter rolled his eyes.

"I do know how to shoot."

"I know you're an expert at firing your load, but that's a rifle," Laurence replied. "Not quite the same time."

"I can wreck an ass a lot easier with my cock," the otter replied, then put the rifle to his shoulder and fired four times in quick succession.

Thomas took his time with the other ten bullets, getting a feel for how the rifle responded. Not that different from the one his grandfather taught him to use once he took the recoil into account. When the magazine beeped empty, he took it out and put another one in. Felix was impatiently waiting for him.

"Okay, four magazines, forty-eight bullets." Laurence tapped a code on each of the stall's walls. "The point system is standard. The closer to the center, the more it's worth. Unfortunately, I can't tell the range not to display it, so it's going to be over your target for everyone to see. Don't let that distract you." He then moved to the stall on Thomas's left and took a rifle out of the case.

"Oh Law, just to be clear," Felix said, peering around the divider. "When I win, I get the rat's ass, that means you get nothing."

"Sure, I'll just take my turn at the house. Now stop delaying and start shooting. The rifle, not your mouth," Laurence added,

putting his rifle to his shoulder. Thomas looked around the partition, but the otter was already sighting at his target.

Thomas did the same, taking his time. After his first magazine, Felix was ahead, as was Laurence. He couldn't hear the gunshot, so he didn't know how many bullets he'd used already, and he did his best not to worry about the score. No matter what, he was getting fucked, and for as haughty as the otter was, he was a good fuck.

As he fired the third magazine, Thomas noted the score on the otter's target wasn't going up anymore, while Laurence's ticked up fifty points every few seconds. Thomas surpassed Felix's by the time he put the fourth one in, but was nowhere close to Laurence's. He felt the otter's glare as he kept firing, taking his time with each shot even if it was clear he'd won.

He put the rifle on the counter and looked at the scores. Forty-eight bullets, with the center shot worth fifty. It meant Laurence had missed none of his shots. Thomas's grouping wasn't tight, but a lot tighter than Felix's. He turned to face them.

"I was done in half the time," Felix protested as Laurence took off his pants.

"It wasn't a speed shooting contest," the armadillo replied. Thomas stared at the hard cock, then noticed motion as a woman further down was staring at them before rushing to leave. "Out of your pant, Thomas."

"Laurence, I think we should wait until we're at the house. That woman just went to complain."

The armadillo looked at the closed door and then at Thomas again. "We're fine. This is private property and I have an arrangement with the owner."

"And how much did said arrangement cost you?" Felix asked, sounding amused.

"I'm not discussing money with you, Felix. I'm not interested in who has more of it."

“Isn’t that what those who can’t compete always say?”

“Whatever,” the armadillo said, then to Thomas. “Out of your pants. Unlike some people at the house, I don’t like ripping clothing off.”

Thomas looked at the door, then trusted Laurence and got out of his pants, putting them on the counter with the rifle. Then he was lifted to sit on the edge.

Felix pulled his cock out.

“No fucking me,” Laurence told the otter. “You said the loser didn’t get off here so put that away.”

“That was if I—”

“You don’t change the rules on me, Chouteau,” Laurence said bluntly. “Put that back in, go sit, and once we’re at the house, you can enjoy Thomas.”

Felix put his cock away as the armadillo pressed a lube slicked finger in Thomas’s ass, making him gasp, and left the range.

“Don’t worry about him,” Laurence said, moving the finger in and out. “He’s probably going to fuck Hugh.”

“I wasn’t,” Thomas gasped, “thinking about him.”

“Glad to hear it,” the armadillo said, removing the finger and lining up his cock. “I’m not a fan of the guy I’m fucking screaming someone else’s name.”

“You don’t have to—” Thomas groaned as the armadillo’s cock stretched him. Then he held on to Laurence as he was fucked hard and long. Thomas screamed the armadillo’s name through his first orgasm and was incoherent by the time the second came along.

As he came down from it, he felt the cock in him pulse and Laurence was grinning at him.

“I am never going to get enough of this,” Thomas said.



“Then you are definitely a brother,” the armadillo replied. “Not that I doubted it. Anyone who takes as much of Chima’s cock as you did and comes back for more is Sigma Theta Gamma, regardless of which family he’s from.” Laurence gently pulled out, and all Thomas felt was a loss. He enjoyed being fucked; a lot.

The armadillo cleaned them using wipes from a pack he took from his jacket, then dressed. Thomas was a little slower, his legs wobbly. By the time he had his pants on, Laurence was putting Felix’s rifle in its case, a disapproving expression on his face.

By the time Laurence took his already put-away rifle, Thomas was steady on his feet. He was amazed at how quickly he was getting over getting pounded out of his mind now. Madoc’s training was paying off in more than his shirts getting a little tight.

“How was Felix?” Laurence asked the antelope, as he paid for the use of the range.

“Competent,” Hugh answered. “I’m not a fan of pissed-off fucks.” Thomas leaned in to see the amount, but Laurence turned his phone away.

“He’s a sore loser.”

“And because of that I’m the one who’s sore,” the antelope replied.

“I’ll make it up to you.”

The antelope smiled. “You always do. This Saturday?”

“Can’t. Me and Gilbert have plans. He’s dragging me to test something. You busy Sunday?”

Hugh smiled. “I would definitely prefer worshipping you over some guy on a cross. My place at nine?”

“I’ll be there.”

Thomas took Felix’s case as Laurence reached for it.

“He’s going to want that, you know that, right?” The

armadillo said as they headed for the exit.

"I figure, I'm going to ride with him, so I can give it to him."

"You really want to do that? He's going to be pissy the entire drive. Chouteau isn't a good loser."

"I'm going to keep him from complaining." Thomas grinned at the surprised look Laurence gave him. It might be a mistake, but Thomas felt good and while he didn't want to get fucked by someone driving, he wasn't done having fun. And sure, sucking off Laurence on the way back would be fun, but not as much as bossing around a needy otter.

Felix waited for them by his car. "About time."

"You could have left," Laurence said.

"You have my rifle."

"You could have come and taken it."

Felix rolled his eyes. "And bother you and your boy toy?"

"Watch your tone," Laurence said. "He's a bother."

"It's okay," Thomas said, which earned him a suspicious look from the otter. "I'll see you at the house." He headed for Felix. "I'm riding with you." He offered him the rifle case.

The otter looked at it, then him. "Put it in the trunk." The trunk opened.

Once he was seated in the passenger seat, Felix eyed him. "What are you planning?"

As an answer, Thomas reached for the otter's pants, undoing them. "Drive," he ordered, reaching in for the cock. He wasn't surprised that it was already stiffening. He didn't know what it was about the frat, but everyone in it could get hard again really fast. Even him.

Felix smirked. "Well. I'm glad to know you can respect me."

The car smoothly pulled out.

Thomas hid his smirk and wondered how long until the otter was cursing him instead. After all, it would be what, an hour, an hour and a half until they were at the house, and Thomas wasn't planning on letting Felix cum until the car was parked in the garage.

He took the head of the cock in his mouth, smiling.

This was going to be such a fun drive.

## CHAPTER-11

Thomas still couldn't get over how, for as big as the kitchen was, it had a cozy feel to it, with the appliances matching the older decor. When he'd first seen it, once he'd moved in; during the party, he'd barely caught a glance as Limbani rushed him upstairs, he'd expected something out of a restaurant, all steel and chrome, not earth tones and.... well, the smell of sex might have something to do with it.

He finished making his sandwich and poured himself a coffee, his lunch, before going back to his room, and checked under the table before sitting at it to eat. He could always hear the guys having sex in a room, but he'd found out a few of them could sneak, when they wanted to give someone a surprise blowjob.

Spewing cereal all over the table, when a hot mouth sucked his cock in, had been a memorable experience.

He kept an eye on the guys who came and went, both to enjoy the view and to make sure none just vanished to reappear under the table.

"Thomas," Limbani called from the doorway as Thomas finished his pop. "We need to get going in fifteen."

Thomas stared. The monkey was fully dressed.

"The course we're giving?" Limbani said, grinning.

Thomas kept staring.

"Studies for Success?" Limbani said. "Come on, you have to remember."

"You were serious?"

"Aren't I always?"

Thomas had no idea how to answer that one. The monkey had been fucking Thomas hard that day when he'd brought up the idea of taking the giving the safe sex course as part of their outside-of-class

activities. It would be fun, he'd said.

Thomas had yelled 'yes', but by then he'd been yelling that with just about every thrust the monkey made, as close to cumming as he was.

"I didn't sign up."

"Oh, I signed you up when I did."

Of course he had. "I didn't prepare anything," Thomas said, hoping that –

"I have that covered." Limbani patted his holstered phone at his belt.

There were no penalties for not taking part. Just no points for the class, so Thomas could pass and no one would suffer. Well, maybe Limbani would be disappointed, but nothing sucking him off once he was back wouldn't take care of.

But what would Thomas do if not that? Study? He was ahead of his course load, finally. And while it would keep his father off his back if he got even more ahead, this was still class-related.

"Okay, I'm in." He rinsed his plate and put it in the dishwasher. "Do you need me to bring anything?"

"Just that pretty ass yours."

Thomas shook his head. "You are not getting me naked in front of a class full of people."

"Why not? We're going to have to give them a demonstration, won't we?" Limbani grinned as Thomas opening his mouth in astonishment the monkey would even think of doing that. Before Thomas could close it. The monkey took a picture. "That's worth keeping."

"I should let you do the class alone for this," Thomas threatened.

Limbani headed for the stairs to the second floor. "I'll make it

worth your while," he promised.

Thomas sighed. He had no doubt of that. "The door's that way."

"I want to see about getting Gilbert to help out. Come on."

Thomas followed Limbani, if only because now that he'd agreed to it, he wanted to make sure the monkey wouldn't get distracted by sex.

On the third floor, Limbani knocked on the third door. "Gil!"

The sound of something falling to the floor came through the door. Cursing. "Be right there!" Stuff being moved? Thomas looked at the monkey, who seemed uninterested in the sounds.

The door opened only enough for the armadillo to look at them. "What?"

Despite trying to block the view, Thomas's angle let him see a mountain of something under a hurriedly thrown sheet in the middle of the room.

"I need your help with a safe sex class me and the Thomas are giving."

Gilbert looked from one to the other, noticed Thomas's gaze, and moved to block it. "Is this a joke?"

"No, it's for our Studies for Success Class. You took it, right?"

Thomas tuned out the conversation, trying to figure out what Gilbert could be hiding. It was definitely not a guy. The only reason to do that would be because he didn't want to share, and his frat brothers were definitely not selfish in that regard. He remembered guys running up the stairs with a fire extinguisher. Gilbert's major.

"Is that a nuclear reactor?" Thomas asked.

Limbani and Gilbert stared at him, the argument about the armadillo's importance in the monkey's teaching plans broken.

“Why would you even think that?” Gilbert asked.

Thomas shrugged. “You’re hiding something, you’re a nuclear physics major.” Limbani pushed on the door, and with a sigh, Gilbert allowed it to open. The covered pile was almost as high as the armadillo.

“You do know a nuclear reactor is like the size of the entire Science building, right?” Gilbert said. “How would I even fit one in here?”

Thomas shrugged again.

Limbani sighed. “Does Henry know you have all that in here?”

“Yes.”

Thomas rolled his eyes. Even he could tell Gilbert had been too fast to answer.

“Well, it’s not like it’s my ass that’s going to suffer when he finds out,” Limbani said. “Just tell me you have a fire extinguisher this time.”

Gilbert pointed to the three on his desk. “Laurence brought them. Said that if I blew up anything again, he was sending me back home to have a talk with Colby.”

“That’s...” Limbani looked at Thomas. “The one who’s in charge, right?”

“In a few years, but his dad has him deal with trouble, and... well, you have to have met my uncle to know you don’t want him considering you trouble.”

“So... I could threaten you with telling your family what you’re up to?” Limbani asked with a grin.

“Only if you want to be woken up one morning by one of my surprises.”

The grin fell right off the monkey’s face. “Come on Thomas, it’s going to be just the two of us it seems.” He headed for the stairs.

“What is under the sheet?” Thomas asked Limbani once they were on the ground floor.

“You know how Laurence had a gun collection?” the money answered, opening the door. Thomas nodded. He hadn’t seen more than one rifle, but he could work out more had been in the cases in the armadillo’s truck bed. “Well, Gilbert shares his cousin’s obsession, but he likes the caliber to be higher.” He grinned. “A lot higher.”

Thomas froze in place as what Limbani meant registered. Then he ran to catch up with the monkey. “Is that even legal?”

Limbani shrugged. “Who’s going to tell on a brother?” He fixed Thomas with a hard look. “You?”

Thomas swallowed. That was a look he’d never seen on the monkey, and he much preferred the happy-go-lucky ‘please let me fuck you’ version over this serious one.

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“Welcome to Limbani’s and Thomas’s safe sex course,” Limbani proclaimed, and he slotted his phone into the podium at the front of the class. Not even half the seats were occupied. Maybe thirty people, two third women. “For those of you who were hoping for live demonstrations and a hand on—cock on?—portion, I’ve been informed that this class had to be purely theoretical. For the guys who insist on practicing what we will be teaching you, come see us after the class to schedule private lessons.”

Thomas hid his face in his hands, regretting agreeing to this. He should have known the only reason the monkey was interested was that he saw it as a way to have sex with more guys.

“So,” Limbani continued as if the level of discomfort in the classroom wasn’t through the roof, “you’re probably asked yourself, ‘Why safe sex?’ and indeed, why bother. What are the odds of anything crossing the species barrier?” the monkey tapped the desk and the podium and the screen behind him lit up with a list of events and dates. “Well, as you can see, the odds are not zero.”



Silence fell as the students read the information. Thomas looked it over and he only recognized two of them. The black death, and Tanzania, five years ago.

“Statistically, every decade there’s an outbreak of something that just doesn’t care for what species you are. It’s been mainly in isolated areas, and not particularly severe, but then there’s the black death, which reminds us that there is something out there that can be utterly deadly.”

Thomas swallows. He hadn’t known there were so many outbreaks. Or that so many of them were transmitted sexually. The black death hadn’t, but looking over the information and because of what the class was about, Limbani had indicated which outbreaks were sexual in nature and there were a lot.

Thomas stood there, in shock, as Limbani did all the talking. He was aware of the monkey looking at him a few times, as if he would address him, but then went back to talking.

All Thomas could think about were the numbers. Every decade around a hundred thousand people died of a sexually transmitted disease that had to cross the species barrier before a cure was found, and that was an average, so some had been much higher. Like the nineteen twenties’ ‘Spanish plague’, which twenty years later had still been clamming victims.

Once it was over and Thomas was following the monkey back to the house, the number kept bouncing in his head. Nearly a million death in the US alone that one time. What would happen now, considering how interconnected everyone was? Sigma Theta Gamma itself had people from half a dozen countries. If one of them caught something, how quickly would it spread?

Limbani said something, grinning, then touched Thomas.

With a yell, Thomas backed away. How many guys had fucked him without protection? Had protection ever been used? He couldn’t remember it happening. The guys in the frat just lubed up and did it.

He looked around. What if he was sick right now? Could a sexually transmitted disease turn airborne? Could he cause the next plague? Could he die?

“Thomas?” Limbani said, his tone insistent.

“I’m going to die!”

“What?”

Thomas backed away. What if Limbani had given it to him? When the monkey reached for him, Thomas ran.

He didn’t know where he was going. He just had to find some place safe, away from the frat.

He ran into someone’s arm.

“Thomas,” Limbani said. “Stop. What’s going on?”

How had the monkey gotten ahead of him? Where was he?

“You got me sick!”

“No, I haven’t. I can’t.”

“You don’t use protection! How the fuck do you know you haven’t given me anything.” Thomas tried to get out of the monkey’s arms, but for all the workout sessions with Madoc he’d done, Limbani was still way stronger.

“Trust me, I can’t get you sick. None of your brothers can either. It’s just not possible.”

“Liar!” Thomas fought harder. “You can’t know that.”

“Actually—Ow! Stop fighting. You’re not in danger.”

Thomas tried to stomp on Limbani’s other foot, but this time the monkey moved it.

“Look, we’re going to go talk with Henry, okay? He can explain things to you. Anytime one of us has had a panic attack he’s been great at helping us with it.”

"I'm not panicking!"

"I beg to differ. Come on, Thomas." Limbani said something in his native language. Then Thomas was over his shoulder and the monkey was running.

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"Thomas," Henry called. Hubert had his hands on the rat's shoulders as had much as Thomas fought against him, he couldn't get free. "You're safe. I can't believe Limbani thought that was a good idea. You aren't one of us." The bat pulled Thomas's legs apart, and the rat realized he was naked. He fought harder. They were going to fuck him again, they were going to give him something else.

"Someone hold his legs," Henry ordered. "I need to suck him off."

"No!" Thomas yelled. They couldn't do that. He didn't want to die! He looked in horror as he got hard, and then moaned as the bat swallowed his cock. How could he get off on them forcing him?

His orgasm built so quickly Thomas didn't have the time to understand it, then he screamed.

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Thomas startled awake, then groaned and slumped back in his bed under the weight of the barely awake Henry on one side and Limbani on the other.

"You're okay," Henry grumbled, and was asleep again.

Thomas remembered his panic attack and felt his face burn with shame. He couldn't believe how bad it had been, and he'd never had a panic attack before. At least Henry had talked him down once he'd sucked him off.

Thomas chuckled and had to admire the bat's dedication to taking care of them. Thomas wouldn't have thought to use an orgasm to calm a panic attack.

The most embarrassing thing in all of it was how unfounded his attack had been. Yes, outbreaks of diseases happened, but not only were they eventually brought under control, but every one of his brothers was tested before moving in. Even Thomas had been tested, and like them, he was clean. The results were... somewhere. He couldn't remember what he'd done with it. He remembered reading it, being happy at being clean since it meant he didn't have to bother with condoms anymore. And they'd celebrated by fucking him hard.

He looked down at his hardening cock. Yeah, it had been great. He tried to free his arm to grab it and the motion pulled on his neck, and pain erupted there. Once free, his hand went there. The right side of his neck was sore, painful even. And he felt scabs. He remembered Henry and Limbani escorting him to his bed after he'd been reminded of the tests and that he was safe and because they were Sigma Theta Gamma, they'd fucked.

Henry was a biter.

He looked at the bat. "You know, the vampire bat thing was overdone last decade." He sighed and chuckled. He had two guys in his bed. Why should he jerk off? He reached for both cocks and had them hard in seconds. He turned his back to the bat, and Henry moved as soon as the head of his cock was at Thomas's ass.

Yeah, Thomas was really happy not to have to worry about diseases with his brothers.

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## CHAPTER-12

Thomas shook his head in amusement as his father jumped to his feet as on the football field Roland caught a pass. Eric wore a football jersey with the number 23 on it; Roland's number, confirmed by the name on the back. The rest of the crowd joined him, sheering as Roland ran for the end zone. Only to groan when he was tackled down.

Thomas sat and noticed the rat making his way to him and his family. "Victor!" At the yell, Eric shifted his focus off his son on the field to his approaching son. They hugged. Victor hugged Nadia, then Judith, where she introduced him to Yating, then Thomas hugged him.

"Sorry I'm late," he said, "the kids wouldn't quiet down. How is the game going?"

"Didn't Dad tell you? We're up four points. What?" Thomas added when Victor took his bicep and squeezed them.

"You've bulked up."

Thomas's ears burn. "Yeah. I've..." he trailed off, thought of the workout sessions always accompanied by the fun afterward. Even when Madoc wasn't there to supervise him, there was always someone in the locker room who knew him and indirectly Thomas and it was getting easier to nod to the sauna, smile, and let things progress.

Thomas turned and motioned to the other rat, seated by the armadillo. "Madoc is who got me into it."

The rat stood. "Madoc Lewiston." They shook hands.

"Victor Hertz. How did you get Thomas to work out? When it didn't happen after the prom, I figured he was a lost cause."

Madoc glanced at Thomas with a tilted ear, but Thomas wasn't telling that story here. Then his eyes went wide as Madoc grinned and opened his mouth. He was going to tell his brother how

he'd gotten Thomas to enjoy it.

"I can be quite persuasive when I want."

"Those are Gilbert and Laurence Rowling," Thomas said to keep Madoc from adding anything else. "They're more of my frat brothers," He added with pride. "And they're cousins."

"Sigma Theta Gamma," Victor said with a knowing smile. "Judith called and let me know." He shook their hands. "One of my boys is names Gilbert."

"Keep him away from explosives," Laurence said, not reacting to the punch on the shoulder Gilbert gave him.

Victor looked at Thomas, eyebrow raises, but he shook his head. He wasn't going in the Rowling's collections.

They sat and Victor leaned forward, looking at the other. "Are you guys friends with Roland too?"

"Fan of football," Gilbert said. "I love the mid-game show."

Laurence and Madoc stared at him. "Where are they?" his cousin demanded.

Gilbert gave them an innocent look. "Where are what?"

"This is a high school, Gil. Not the university. You aren't blowing anything up."

"They're just fireworks." Gilbert leaned forward and looked at Thomas. "They're what you were asking about the other day."

Thomas had to dredge up the memory of Limbani trying to talk the armadillo into assisting him with talking over the safe sex class. "How did you know we'd be celebrating today?"

"He didn't," Laurence said. "If it wasn't your brother's birthday, he'd have found another excuse to detonate them."

"You don't really detonate fireworks," Victor said.

"You don't know Gilbert," the armadillo said. "You can't use them here."

Gilbert grinned. "You can't stop me."

Laurence looked up in exasperation, then smiled as he leaned into his cousin and whispered something. Gilbert swallowed, then smiled, standing.

"We'll be back in a while," Laurence said. "I'm going to go keep him from doing something stupid."

Thomas shook his head, having a good idea of how the armadillos were going to pass the time. He looked beyond Victor and noticed two other empty seats.

"Where did they go?" Thomas asked his mother when she noticed him looking.

Nadia smiled. "Oh, Judith and her boyfriend left to 'refresh' themselves."

"He's not her boyfriend," Thomas said. At least he was pretty sure they weren't.

"He's a boy," Nadia said. "Well, a man, definitely a man, and he's her friend. So her man-friend."

Thomas groaned. Why was he even surprised his mother had checked out the panda?

"Should we go rescue him?" Victor asked. He too, knew their sister well enough to understand what they were up to.

"Yating can take care of himself," Madoc said.

"And of her," Thomas grumbled.

Victor grinned. "That's good."

"Thomas," Nadia called. "We will be back in a bit ourselves." She indicated Eric, who was heading for the stairs. "I need to distract your father before he gets into an argument about benching Roland."

She hurried after the rat, catching up to him as he was starting down and pulling him up to the exit instead.

“Are you two going to vanish and leave me alone to enjoy the game?” Victor asked.

“You can come with us,” Madoc said.

Victor stared at him, then burst out laughing. “Thanks for the offer, but I’m married.”

Madoc nodded. “How much working out do you do?”

Victor’s response was interrupted by the bleachers cheering. Thomas stood to look. With Roland on the bench, he looked for the player who’d taken his place. He wasn’t in time to work out who had scored. But he found number 18, Neil, Roland’s best friend, on and off the team, as they regrouped.

“I’m trying to get back into it, but the boys are keeping me busy when I’m home.”

Madoc nodded and got one of his far-away looks. “I can imagine. I can’t wait to graduate to get back to my boy.”

“You have a son?” Victor asked. “Sorry, you just seem young.”

Thomas could only stare at his frat brother. Why had he never mentioned that?

“He wasn’t planned, but he’s definitely a joy.” (if you feel this wouldn’t work as the way Henry altered Madoc’s memories, feel free to change it)

“So he’s with his mother?” Victor asked.

Madoc frowned. “At my family estate. I couldn’t see taking care of him here, not with my course load.”

The crowd was up again, this time booing whatever had happened. Thomas didn’t care. Madoc had a son. Wow.

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"Alright everyone," the team's coach called as the team's families settled into booths and tables. "We might have lost the game, but you all gave a great show. I want you to remember that. It's still early in the season, so Saturday we're going to go over the game and see what we can learn from it. Until then, enjoy yourself."

Cheers erupted. Even tables who'd been occupied before they'd arrived joined in. Thomas enthusiastically joined in the cheering. "Great game," He told Neil, shaking the raccoon's hand.

"Thanks, glad you made it." He hugged Roland. "Happy birthday."

The rat rolled his eyes. "It's on Sunday and you know that. We're going to the movies to celebrate."

"If the coach lets you." The raccoon pointed to Eric, deep in discussion with the wolf.

Roland sighed, then grinned. "At this rate, I'm going to be the youngest professional player, like, ever."

"Maybe not," Thomas said, indicating their mother latching onto their father's arms and nibbling on his ear.

"Well," Roland said as Neil joined his father at their table, "looks like it might just be us for a while."

"Great game," Madoc said, seated across from Roland, between Victor and Thomas. The rat had been the only one of his brothers to stick with them for the celebratory and birthday dinner. Yating had ensconced with Judith after they'd wished Roland a great birthday party. Laurence had excused himself and Gilbert saying he still had to make it up to his cousin for keeping him from enhancing the mid-game show.

"Thanks, but it's mostly Coach Robinson's doing. I just run and catch the ball."

"And avoid getting hit," Thomas said.

"Most of the time," Roland replied with a grin.

"It still looked like you're good on the field," Madoc said, smiling. "You also look good off of it."

"Thanks?" Roland replied uncertainly.

"I've been training your brother," Madoc continued, "Thomas, take off your shirt so your brother can see how you're coming along."

"No," Thomas replied, ears turning red. He wasn't showing off to his brother, who surpassed him anyway.

Roland looked from one to the other, then grinned. "I'm going to pass. I'm sure you're great, Madoc, but I already have a fitness trainer." He nodded toward where their parents had vanished. "My dad's read everything about it and he's getting me to stick to it all."

Madoc eyed Thomas. "Out of curiosity, how buff do I need to get your brother to convince you I can do a better job?"

"No," Thomas stated forcefully, glaring at Madoc.

The other rat grinned. "What?"

"You are not..." Thomas trailed off as he realized what he was about to say. He knew Madoc wanted to get into his brother's pants. His straight brother's pants, but he couldn't say that in front of Roland.

"You aren't dragging me into the gym more than you already are," He said instead. "I'm more interested in getting through my classes than winning a mister universe contest."

"Can you get him to that point?" Roland asked.

"Not with my body, he can't," Thomas replied dejectedly, which earned him a stunned look from Roland and a speculative one from Madoc.

"What can't he do to your body?" Nadia asked, taking her seat. Eric finished buttoning his shirt before taking his. "You know that so long as it's pleasurable, you can let him do it, right?"

"Mom," Thomas whined, sinking into his chair.

“Oh, I haven’t heard him complaining,” Madoc said with a grin, which only caused Thomas to sink down further. “If you’re going to end up under the table,” he added. “There are a few things you could do there.”

“Someone kill me,” Thomas whined as Nadia burst out laughing.

\* \* \*

## CHAPTER-13

"So, that was the history mid-term," Thomas said, reaching under the bed and pulled a shirt, pants, socks, and underwear that were far too big for him. Who in the frat wore underwear other than him? Had one of the guys brought someone to his room to have sex? Why? And if they had, why hadn't they told him?

"Sounds like you passed," Paul replied. His mother said something too low for Thomas to understand, then Paul's was muffled as he answered her. "Sorry, she wants me to tell you history's important, especially the boring parts."

"My dad called her, didn't he?" He looked at the pile of clothing on the bed. Had everyone he'd had sex with left a piece of clothing? Should he keep them, bronze them as souvenirs? "I'm starting to think he'd roped in everyone I know to keep me studying."

"Even your brothers?"

Thomas chuckled. "Well, at least three have offered to tutor me."

"Right," Paul drolled, "because their idea of tutoring you would improve your grades."

"I think they're serious, it's not like they need excuses to fuck me." A knock on his door frame made him look over his shoulder. Gilbert was in the doorway, tapping his wrist to hurry him. Thomas indicated the pile of clothing.

The armadillo stepped in, but instead of taking the pile, he grabbed a shirt and left with it. Maybe he should leave it in the hall for the guys to take what was theirs. Maybe in the future. Today, it would just get Henry to yell at him. Right now was clean-up time up to prepare for the party.

"Anyway, the real reason I called," Thomas began.

"You mean you didn't call because you missed me?" Paul

asked. "I am hurt."

Thomas rolled his eyes. "I've seen you every day, sucked you off every other and last weekend I finally gave in to your incessant demanding and let you fuck me." (if you think the two of them fucking should be reserved for s 'special' on the page occasion, feel free to remove it.)

"Wow, you make it sound like I forced myself on you." Paul seemed to have trouble not laughing. "What a monster am I?"

"Anyway, the house is having their post mid-term exam party (should that be this night, or in a few days? If tonight, why would Thomas have waited to ask Paul?) I thought you might want to come, and see the dance moves some of the guys have been working on."

"The horizontal tango isn't a dance."

"Actually, I mean really dance. Limbani's been practicing something that requires him to be standing."

"Clothed?"

"Well, it's Limbani, you can't ask too much of the monkey."

Paul chuckled.

"Firmin, of all people, seemed to actually know how to dance."

"Why do you say 'of all people'?"

"He's turned into something of an asshole ever since I beat him in the shootout."

"Don't you think it's more because you kept sniping him in Shoot-em Down?"

"I didn't know it was him."

"You do now, and it's not like you stopped."

Thomas grinned. "Well, it isn't like I can take scream at him

here. He'd a sophomore (I can't find anywhere it states what year he's in.) but yeah, so, you're coming?"

"I'm going to pass. Willis's frat is having a party. And there are more." Paul seemed to search for the word. "Infamous parties then Sigma Theta Gamma, I could attend."

"More infamous than our party?" Thomas sputters. "How can that be? Anyone who stays for the hold thing leaves walking funny."

Paul laughed. "Yeah, but they do leave sober, and the cops haven't been called to your frat."

"So you'd prefer to attend a party where someone would be getting you drunk, or you might end up in jail. Noted. I'll pass the message on to Limbani."

"Please don't. He's accosted me a few times at school to offer to relieve my stress. He can be quite insistent."

"Yeah, determined is definitely our monkey. So you and Willis are serious?"

"Serious might be too strong of a term, but we've gone on a few dates, there's been a dance."

"And?"

Paul chuckled. "I don't dance and tell, you know that."

"Alright, then I hope you have a good party. I need to get back to helping ready the house for ours. Something about making sure nothing personal is within reach unless we don't mind losing it. There's something of a memento gathering contest."

"It's to prove you've actually had sex with a Sigma Theta Gamma guy."

"Isn't saying it enough? I mean, all one has to do is offer themselves and we'll go for it."

"You'd be surprised at the number of guys who claim to have had sex with your frat and haven't had the guts to actually go

through it.”

Thomas opened his mouth to claim that was impossible, then closed it. While he would never claim to have done it when he hadn't, he could remember how intimidated he'd been at the idea of being in a house with all of them initially.

“Before you go,” Paul said while Thomas was lost in thought, “have you figured out what your major's going to be yet?”

“What?”

Paul laughed.

“Did my dad call you?”

“Maybe?”

Thomas groaned.

“Don't worry, as far as I'm concerned, a Liberal Art's degree is as valid as any other.”

“If I'm okay settling with a low-paying job.”

“Don't let your dad's pressuring keep you from making any decision. Go for what you want. Not what he thinks is best.”

That was easier said than done.

“Anyway, I'm going to let you go to your orgy proofing. Have fun.”

“You too.”

Thomas terminated the call and looked around his bedroom. Maybe he could cover everything with plastic sheets.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Welcome to Sigma Theta Gamma,” Thomas told the ermine vibrating in place before him. “ID please.”

The ermine handed his student ID while trying to look around

the rat. He was going to be disappointed. Only he and Laurence were visible, and both were dressed. Thomas in the dress shirt and tie he'd gotten for his graduation, and Laurence in an impeccable business suit.

Thomas moved as little as he could, his shirt tight enough he was afraid he would rip it. He couldn't believe he'd bulked up so much in a couple of months a shirt that had fit well before the summer was now in danger of exploding.

When he was told he'd have door duty, he expected to be handed a bathrobe and told to only keep it close as much as he had to so the police wouldn't be called. Not that anyone at the door would call them. They were here to see naked guys at the minimum.

He handed the ID back and motioned for the ermine to enter. "Laurence will mark you and you, then you can go to the kitchen for a drink and move about. Any closed door is off-limit," he'd been given the script to say, but didn't expect anyone who'd entered to have listened.

The ermine stepped in and Thomas moved back to block the doorway as a pair of identically dressed donkeys stepped forward. Thomas couldn't keep himself from licking his lips. He hadn't had twins yet.

"Welcome to Sigma Theta Gamma, ID please."

They both moved in unison. Oh, what fun he could have with them.

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"We're at capacity," Thomas said to the next guy in line. "Sorry, the next party will be before the holidays." He and the six still in line complained, one even pulled out a hundred-dollar bill to be let in.

"We're at capacity," Laurence said, stepping behind Thomas, close enough the erection pressed against his ass, and Thomas pushed back as discreetly as he could. "Better luck next time." He pulled the



rat back and closed the door.

Thomas leaned against the armadillo. "Finally." He reached for his collar, but Laurence caught his hand.

"One thing left to do." He dipped the brush in the bowl of ink, there was hardly any left, and expertly traced designs where flesh met fur on his wrist.

"I'm a brother, I don't need to be marked."

Laurence smiled. "I just want to make sure no one confuses you for a party crasher in all the confusion." Before Thomas could offer another objection, the armadillo kissed him, and he reciprocated.

"I am like this part." Thomas grinned and started to unbutton Laurence's pants.

"I'm taking him," someone said, Grabbing Thomas's arm and pulling him away from the armadillo. Thomas and Laurence protested, but the naked Hubert kept pulling.

"Let me undress at least," Thomas said.

"Nope, I need you dressed."

"We have an intruder!" Thomas yelled. "Someone's trying to pass themselves off at Hubert and demanding I stay dressed!"

The collie gave Thomas an odd grin and then they were in the second living room, the crowd of naked guys parting to let them reach the table. "Here's the next victim." The collie pushed Thomas in a chair and only now did he notice the green felt on the octagonal table and the cards and the guys in various states of undress.

Except for Olavo, who was still fully dressed. The capybara frowned at the collie. "I thought you were with..." he trailed off and shrugged. "Welcome to the game. The game is strip poker, the loser loses clothing until there's only one left and he gets to lord it over all of them." Olavo grinned.

Thomas looked around. The only other brother at the table

was Madoc, who had lost his shirt.

“I’d have expected Limbani to want in on a game like this.”

“He keeps trying,” Madoc said and Olavo shuffled the cards. “But he doesn’t get that strip poker requires you to wear clothing.”

Thomas chuckled. “Maybe we should have a game of reverse strip poker for him. Start naked and anytime you lose you put clothing on.” He grinned at the horrified expression he got. “You guy know I don’t really know poker, right?”

“I don’t think knowing how to play would help any,” the calico cat seated to Thomas’s right said, taking the cards Olavo distributed. “He’s a shark.” He nodded to the capybara, who grinned.

“He’s a capybara,” Thomas replied, distracted by looking at his cards. Two jacks were good, the others were low in a mix of suits. He sighed heavily.

“You’re not supposed to make it that easy on me,” Olavo said.

“Yeah,” Madoc said, his face neutral, “you’re supposed to be here to help me get him naked.”

“That isn’t going to happen,” the capybara replied. “I am the king of poker.”

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Olavo cursed as he took off his socks, glaring at Thomas. “That isn’t how you play poker,” he complained.

“I don’t know what you’re complaining about,” Thomas replied. “You’re still wearing something.”

Thomas had lost his underwear on the last hand. He’d disappointed everyone in the room when he’d taken off his pants before that to reveal he still didn’t go commando. Madoc had rolled his eyes and made a comment about getting Gil to burn all of Thomas’s underwear.

“You realize you’re the only one to have cost him clothing,

right?" the calico said. He too was naked, and Olavo had instructed one of the watchers to get under the table to edge him when he'd lost his hand after getting naked. Edging seemed to be how Olavo lorded his victory over the others. Four of the eight players weren't currently incapacitated by being kept at the edge of orgasm.

Thomas was hard at the idea of that kind of torture and utterly surprised to have lasted this long. It wasn't like he was trying to win or to lose. He'd simply leaned into his inability to have a poker face by overacting every hand he got, without care for the cards. It had caused laughter and somehow thrown the capybara off his game enough he was now flustered.

Thomas kept with the act, gasping so loud as he looked at his card the moans vanished for an instant, then he leaned to the calico and whispered. "Look at these." To the now moaning cat whose eyes were closed. When he grinned at Olavo, the capybara glared back.

This time Olavo wasn't thrown, and when he laid down the straight, to Thomas's two pairs, ace high, he grinned and stood. "On the table," he demanded. "Your ass is mine."

"What, you aren't going to get me edged like the others?" Thomas replied, chuckling. "Am I special?"

"Oh, you're a special kind of pain in my ass," the capybara replied, stepping around the table, "which is why you're getting my cock up yours."

Thomas bent over the table. "At least have someone suck me off."

The capybara got an evil glint in his eyes. "Madoc, how about you edge him while I fuck him, since he seems to feel left out?"

Thomas groaned. That wasn't what he'd—

He groaned deeply as Madoc's mouth closed over his cock. Then Olavo pushed his cock into Thomas's ass and the rat decided he'd lost this in the best way possible.

In short order, the living room was filled with the sound of

sex.

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Thomas yawned and pulled a ham out of the fridge. "Why?" he asked, unable to add anything. The coffee wasn't even ready yet. This was torture, plain and simple.

Somewhere around two in the morning, Thomas had noticed the volume of guys thinning while he was moving on someone's cock. Around four, the moans had diminished and the sex still happening was on the floor, or the couch, or some of the beds, despite the doors having been closed when the party started. By then, Thomas was slowly grinding up and down on Chima's cock.

At six, he'd been ready to crash, utterly sexed out. But he'd been dragged to the kitchen by Yatin and Firmin and given instructions to cut the ham in small cubes.

Were they really going to trust him with a knife in his state?

"It's the house's responsibility to feed anyone left when morning comes."

"So You dragged me because I'm a freshman? Where Limbani and Kuno?"

Firmin offered him a toothy grin. "I dragged you because I like you so much."

Thomas groaned, but the coffee machine dinged so the otter was spared his cursing as he hurried to fill a cup and breathing the wonderful aroma.

Mildly more awake, he set about slicing ham while Yatin cut vegetables and Firmin mixed eggs. They might have to feed everyone, but it seemed it was going to be a simple breakfast.

Over the next three hours, no sex happened, which eventually Thomas was sufficiently awake to be amazed at. They fed the guys who staggered into the kitchen, and the coffee machine worked non-stop. Then someone from the frat would hand clothing to the party-

goers and escort them to the door. Thomas realized no one cared who got whose clothing when the twin donkeys left wearing clothing that didn't match.

With the last of the party-goers gone, the fourteen brothers sat around the table, cups in hand.

Henry raised his cup of tea. "And I proclaim this party to be another success." The other raised theirs and joined in the toast. The bat stood. "And as master of the house, I claim Thomas to start this celebration."

The rat only had time to finish his cup before Olavo and Kuno lifted him off his chair and laid him on his back on the table.

"Do you guys ever have enough of sex?" Thomas asked, laughing.

"That is sacrilege of the highest order," Henry stated as he raised Thomas's legs over his shoulder. "For that infraction, I proclaim you the bottom of all bottoms. No getting off this table until every one of your brothers had gotten off in you."

"Oh poor miserable me," Thomas said in a theatrical tone, arm over his forehead.

With a smirk, the bat pushed into him.

Sometime later, it was decided that fucking Thomas wasn't enough of a punishment, and now he was bent over a chair. With a cock in his ass and extremely large cock in his muzzle, Thomas felt contented.

He was happy. He was where he belonged, with whom he belonged. He glanced up at Chima and the hyena smile at him. For an instant, Thomas felt something was missing, but it didn't last. He was with his brothers, being fucked, being fed their cum.

Maybe it wasn't perfection yet, but it was close enough for Thomas.

\* \* \*

## CHAPTER-14

"I," Thomas said, then moaned as the collie hit bottom, pressing the rat against the wall. Hubert stroked him and he pounded his ass, and Thomas couldn't think. "I need." Hubert changed the angle of attack and Thomas groaned and came over the wall. The collie stroked him and pounded a few more times, then he was filling his ass.

Hubert pulled out and patted the ass. "See you after the weekend."

Thomas nodded, too busy catching his breath. Before he was done, someone else was pressing against him.

"Don't mind if I do," Henry said, pushing into Thomas.

The rat attempted a moaned protest, but then he was leaning into the bat. "No biting," he managed to say, as he felt him nibble on his neck.

"I suppose this one time, I can resist your sucking your blood," Henry said with a horrible German accent. Thomas laughed, then moaned, and groaned, and cursed. Henry was good.

The bat came and stayed in him long enough to jerk another orgasm out of Thomas, then pulled out. "Remember, you can always come back early," Henry said before walking away.

Thomas forced himself to move even if his head was spinning and he made it up the stairs before walking into Laurence and Gilbert, who grinned at him, looked at each other.

"A last one for the road?" Gilbert asked Laurence, then Thomas was on his back, on the floor, one armadillo's cock in his ass, the other in his mouth. He moaned, grabbed onto Gilbert's ass, and pulled him until he was deep throating the armadillo.

Thomas yelped around the cock when someone began sucking him off and had him cumming in under a minute. He tilted his head

enough to see Limbani sprawled on the floor next to him as he finished sucking him. Then he was getting up, grinning at him.

Gilbert groaned and came. Thomas's eyes rolled back as cum filled his muzzle. He was never going to get enough of this.

"I think," Laurence said, then had to stop as he moaned and filled Thomas's ass. "Fuck," he panted. "I think we need to throw him in the back of my truck and take him home with us."

"We're taking my car," Gilbert said, "and we'd keep him in the front so he can suck us for while I drive us home."

"The front of my truck is more spacious than your sardine can. And Dad's going to love him."

"No kidnapping a brother," Henry said, walking by. "You'll only be missing him for a few days. I'm certain your family will keep you busy enough during that time." Then he was gone.

"I call dibs for the instant we're back," Laurence said, then he pulled out and stood. He helped Thomas to his feet, cupped his balls, stroking his already hardening cock. "Don't eat too much, cause I'm going to feed you plenty." Then the Rowlings walked away.

With the bathroom in sight, Thomas hurried to it in the hopes of a quick shower, then dressing and making it out of the house before another brother had their way with—

Three heads turning his way as he stepped in froze him. Firmin and Jacques were under one jet, the badger washing each other. Two jets over stood the hyena, gigantic cock swinging between his left as he paused from lathering his muscular body. Thomas had a fleeting hope he'd join in a chaste shower, only for someone to push him forward.

"Come on," Limbani said, "we're wasting time. Soon we're going to lose this wonderful ass and mouth to his family."

"I'm going to be back," Thomas protested, and the monkey pushed him against the half wall made of glass block. When he'd first seen it, Thomas thought it was to provide a little privacy, but that

was before he understood how little that word meant in the frat. They were just there so someone could be pushed against them for support while being fucked. "I need to get washed!" he said before Chima placed a massive hand on his head and lowered him to the equally massive cock, now hard as a rock.

"I think we can get your fur clean," Jacques said, reaching a soapy hand under Thomas and stroking him. "While we feed you for your tip."

Thomas moaned as he swallowed the cock, stretching his jaw and his throat. For as big as the hyena was, Chima was always gentle, and he always knew how much Thomas could take.

Hands roamed his body and cocks filled him. Once Chima had fed him and pulled away, Firmin took his place, Jacques replacing the monkey. Once they were done, Limbani was back, or maybe he'd never left, Thomas couldn't be sure, and had them both under a shower jet, rinsing the soap out of their fur while slowly thrusting in his ass and jerking him off.

As soon as the monkey was done with him, Thomas ran out of the bathroom, rejoicing in the fact his bedroom was on the same floor and facing it. He slammed the door shut behind him and breathed.

Then he studied his room, going as far as to look under the bed, in case one of the brothers hid there, ready to pounce. They were acting like they'd never see him again, instead of this only being the thanksgiving long weekend.

He toweled himself dry and double-checked his bags to make sure he had enough clothing for his stay, along with his controller, and took out the dildo someone, probably Limbani, had hidden among his clothing there. Dressed in jeans and a t-shirt that was now one size too small, thanks to all the gym time Madoc had him do, he was ready to go.

He opened the door to find said rat standing there, along with Kuno. Thomas groaned.

"Look, I don't have the time. My sister's going to be here any



minute. If I don't meet her at the door, I'm never going to make it home for thanksgiving."

As the margay chuckled, Thomas realized they were both dressed. "We were just stopping by to wish you a good holiday," Kuno said. "And I'm driving Madoc to the airport, so if you think your sister would prefer spending the holiday here with Yat, I can drop you off at your parents' place."

Madoc stared at the margay. "You can't seriously be thinking Henry would let her spend the holiday here."

Kuno shrugged. "She seems to be able to get her way."

"I'm going to be fine, thanks," Thomas said.

"Just remember," the margay said, "if you get desperate for cock, I'm across the river. I'd love to introduce you to my father."

"Why would he get desperate?" Madoc asked, "he's going to be home too." Then a light bulb went off and the rat ahhed. "Sorry, I keep forgetting."

Thomas eyed Madoc suspiciously. He couldn't be implying what it sounded like.

"Well," Kuno said, "there's also going to be some of the guys here. A few of them aren't flying home since that means hours on a plane for only a day or two among family."

"Henry's also staying," Madoc said, "so you know there's a good cock for you here if you need it."

Thomas chuckled. "I think I can survive four days."

"I can go with you," Limbani said, stepping out of Chima's bedroom.

"No!" Thomas exclaimed, stepping away from the monkey, who laughed and headed for the third floor.

With Kuno and Madoc as his escort, Thomas made it to the entryway where he found not his sister, but Paul, in the living room,

with Olavo.

“So,” the capybara said, “it’s a jump to the left,” he did so, “then a step to the right.” Paul had his hand over his mouth, trying not to laugh. “Your hands on your hips.”

The golden tiger stopped Olavo as he began thrusting. “I don’t think that qualifies as a dance.”

The capybara’s face fell slightly, but then Paul stepped next to him and showed him a few steps of what Thomas recognized as the foxtrot since he’d been Thomas’s practice partner for it, along with many other dances. He leaned against the doorway and watched the tiger and capybara move. Olavo seemed to be a quick study. And when they were done, Paul gave the capybara a quick kiss, then had to put a hand between them to push Olavo away with a laugh.

Kissing within the frat was an opening move to sex. Olavo was going to have to get used to moving a lot slower if he wanted anything to happen with the tiger. Thomas guessed that if he applied himself, the capybara might manage it by February.

Paul noticed Thomas. “Dressed?” he asked with a grin.

“Where’s Judith?” he answered instead of acknowledging the question. “Do I have to go pull her out of Yating’s room?” he’d have expected to see his sister as she made it to the third floor, but if they’d arrived while he was showering...

“She isn’t here,” Paul said, watching Olavo as he practiced the steps. “Your dad called and asked if I could pick you up instead. He wasn’t so focused on Roland during the game he missed that she and Yating vanished together. He was concerned that you might not make it out of here if she was your ride.”

Olavo grabbed Paul as he stepped away and started dancing with him. With a laugh, Paul twirled out of the capybara’s hands, then pushed him toward the back of the living room where it connected with the other one, where Felix was seated on a plush chair with Limbani bouncing on his cock.

How did the monkey move around so much? Were there some secret stairs in the house?

"We should probably get out of here," Paul said. "Before someone makes you an offer you won't refuse."

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Thomas groaned as he let his head fall back. "We're never going to make it," he complained. "Why did everyone have to leave at the same time?" The 94 was at a standstill, had been for fifteen minutes, and they were now here near their exit. "We should have taken the back way there."

"It's thanksgiving," Paul answered. "No roads are moving any faster."

"I'm bored," Thomas declared.

"You have your phone. Unlike me, you can pull it out and use it."

Thomas eyes his friend. "Maybe I should pull out something else." He reached over, undid the tiger's pants, and pulled out his cock. "You think you can drive while I suck you off?"

Paul chuckled. "In this traffic, I think I can manage it." Then he let out a soft moan as Thomas swallowed the cock.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Is Donna going to be in town for the holiday?" Thomas asked.

"You didn't ask her?" Paul replied. The car had moved a hundred feet since Thomas had sucked him off and Paul was eying Thomas's crotch.

"I haven't talked with her outside the game. Mark's flying in tomorrow."

Paul nodded, looked around, then undid his seatbelt. "Take my place."

Before Thomas could ask what the tiger was going, Paul had scooted over to his side and Thomas had no choice but to do the same. Once behind the wheel, he took out his wallet to make sure he had his driver's license. He'd driven so little in the years he had it, he was never sure it was there. As he put it away, Paul undid Thomas's pants.

"My turn," the tiger said, then he had the rat's cock in his mouth and Thomas leaned back in the seat, hand on his friend's head, and enjoyed the mouth over his cock.

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"Do you think your uncle knew what you'd get up to in the car when he gave it to you?" Thomas asked. He was back in the passenger seat, but out of his pants, slowly stroking his cock. He and Paul had switched places two more times, and he figured there was no point in putting them back on until they were closer to his destination, which they were only halfway to. Paul didn't get hard again as fast as Thomas, but he wasn't slow either.

Paul laughed. "He was my age too at some point; I'm sure he knows what guys get up to when they have a car."

"Did they get up to this back in the stone age?"

Paul rolled his eyes. "They got up to this before there were cars. Sex is eternal." Paul's cock twitched. He still had his pants on, but he hadn't bothered putting his cock away after the second time.

Thomas took that as the sign and he leaned over and slurped it in.

Paul chuckled. "Fuck, you're going to suck the sex out of me the way you're going."

"Nah," Thomas said around the stiffening cock. "You suck it right back out of me,"

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Thomas parked Paul's car a block away from his house, which

earned him a raised eyebrow and tilted ear. "You're going to walk the rest of the way?"

Thomas pointed to his bare lap. "I'm not putting my pants on in front of my house, someone's going to be watching for me and they could see something." He reached back for his pants, then search for his underwear, which seemed to have vanished.

"So you prefer doing it in front of Miss Harmand's house?"

Thomas cursed and looked out across the passenger side in case the old cat lady was at her window. Not seeing her, he breathed again. Fuck, he didn't have the time to search for his underwear. He wriggled around the seat as he put on his jeans.

Then he pulled away from the curb and parked again in front of his house. He exited the car and walked around. Paul stepped out and they shook hands.

"Thanks for the ride," Thomas said.

"Thanks for the blowjobs," Paul replied, and chuckled.

"If you were trying to make me blush, you missed it by a couple of months. I've had too much sex in public at this point. Talking about it doesn't bother me."

"I'm still thankful for them. Have a good time with your family."

"I'm not vanishing, you know. You're only three houses away."

"Yeah, but this is thanksgiving. You, Hertz, are busy on this holiday." He stepped around the car. "Call me if you have five seconds of free time."

"Wish a happy thanksgiving to your mom for me."

"Will do," Paul replied before driving off.

As soon as Thomas entered the house, an old rat was hugging him. "There he is."

“Granma!” Thomas hugged her back. “You’re here early.”

She scoffed. “I was here right on time. You’re the one who’s late.” She looked him over and sniffed him.

“Granma,” Thomas said, ears burning.

“Oh pish-posh, I was young too. You aren’t doing anything I haven’t heard about.”

“Thomas, glad you could finally join us,” Nadia said. “I heard the highway was grid-locked. Did you make good use of your time on it with Paul?”

“Mom,” Thomas whined.

“That’s a yes!” Judith called from the kitchen. “See, I told you sending Paul in my place wouldn’t get him here any faster.”

“Well, at least I am here,” Thomas called back. “If it had been you, I’d still be waiting for you to let Yating go.”

“Or he would have taken her to his family,” Eric called back, “and Paul would still have had to go pick you up.”

“Yating’s family’s overseas,” Thomas said, joining them in the kitchen. “He’s not flying there.”

Judith perked up. “So he’s in town for the holiday? Maybe I should invite him to celebrate with us.”

“I think the house is going to be sufficiently packed,” Eric said. “Victor’s going to be arriving in a few hours. Which reminds me. He, Orinda, and the twins will be taking your room, Thomas, so you’re bunking with Roland for the weekend.”

“What?” Roland demanded, protein shake to his mouth.

“You two haven’t hung out since Thomas moved to his frat house,” their father said, “it’s going to be good for both of you to reconnect.”

Thomas swallowed. “Dad, maybe I—”

“No, Thomas, we’re a family. I won’t have you distance yourself just because you’ve moved out.”

He looked at Judith. Maybe he could bunk with her, but she shook her head. Thomas glanced at his brother, who looked away, focusing on his drink. Thomas immediately looked away too, not to be caught gazing at him. This wouldn’t end well.

Roland was pissed at him, and Thomas was... he really couldn’t let his mind go there.

Okay, he could survive there. As hot as his brother was—damn it—he had a frat full of brothers who not only were just as hot but weren’t related to him, so he could do with them what he imagined—no, not going there.

He caught Roland glaring at him before his brother stormed out.

Oh, this was going to be a thanksgiving for the record books on the awkwardness level, Thomas was sure of that.

## CHAPTER-15

Thomas looked at the field—the backyard. His father and Victor were on each of his sides, Roland, Neil, and Xavier on the other side, defending their end zone. He looked at Eric, who gave him a nod, then at Victor, who shrugged.

Thomas pawed at the football before him and glared at his brother, facing him. Their opponents were identically crouched.

“We going to do this?” Neil asked. “Or are the two of your going to lovingly gaze into each other eyes all afternoon?”

Xavier snickered. “I think Roland’s falling in love with Thomas now that he’s no longer a beanpole.”

Thomas Grabbed the ball and ran for his brother, turning at the last minute to pass between him and Xavier. He made it, hearing His father’s muffled cry as someone, Probably Neil, blocked him. He smiled. This time they were going to score—

The weight that landed on his back send him crashing to the grass and the ball rolled out of his hands.

“You lose,” Roland whispered in his ear. His hand pressing on his back and holding him in place.

Thomas rolled him off before his imagination could put his brother in place of anyone of his frat brother who’d lie on his back like this. Fuck, he couldn’t be so horny as to want that. Roland was his brother, for God’s sake. He had a frat full of guys to satisfy him.

The fact that Roland was using the game to make Thomas pay for their parents forcing them to share his room by always tackling him, that he had the ball or not. He glared at his brother, who responded with a nasty grin. Thomas did not look at his brother’s crotch as he got up.

He needed to sneak out and go see Paul.



“The game’s still eight for us,” Neil said, “and nada for you. And we have the ball.”

“I blame you for this, Dad,” Victor said, helping their father to his feet.

“It’s good for us to help Roland stay in the game while on holiday,” Eric replied.

“I am so happy the extend of my physical activities was the gym three times a week,” Victor replied.

“The weights,” Grandma Royer called from the side, “or the people going to the gym?”

“Exercise is exercise, Luisa,” Victor answered while Thomas’s ear burned for his brother, “doesn’t matter how it happens.” Victor winked at Thomas. “Isn’t that right?”

Thomas groaned.

“Places,” Eric called.

“You know,” Xavier said, and he took position on Roland’s left. “This would be a little more fair if one of us was on their team. I can take Thomas’s place. That way he can stand behind you, Rol, and have his hands between your legs eagerly waiting on your balls.”

“You want me to tell Coach to keep you benched for the rest of the year?” Roland snapped angrily.

“Now, now, Roland,” Eric said. “This is a friendly game, let’s not threaten your teammate.”

Roland fixed his eyes on Thomas instead of their father, gaze hard. Thomas sighed. Eric was someone oblivious to the tension. Roland looked at Niel and got a nod, then at Xavier, who also nodded. Then he was off like a train with Thomas tied to the rails.

Thomas moved to avoid his brother, and Roland moved with him. He supposed that to the watchers, their Grandma, Stewart— Neils’s dad, Uncle Neiro, and his husband, as well as Miss Harmand—

Xavier's grandmother, it looked like Thomas was expertly matching his brother's attempts at avoiding him. At the last moment, Roland zagged instead of zigged and he was around Thomas, who sighed in relief. By the time he turned to run after his brother, the rat was at the end of the backyard, throwing the ball down and raising his hands in victory.

"And that's nine to nada," Neil stated. "Are you guys ready to give up?"

"No," Victor said before Thomas could let out an emphatic yes.

"Wow, even the Elmire High isn't that much of a glutton for punishment," Xavier said. He grinned. "You remember how they stormed off the field when we scored their tenth touchdown to their nothing."

"Yeah," Roland said. "Coach had us in the locker for the rest of the game going over every mistake we made." He shoved the ball in Thomas's stomach and gave his brother a dismissing once over. "Ball's yours. Enjoy it while it lasts."

Thomas sighed. There was a tackle promised in that. He still took his position; his father wouldn't let him leave the game. As far as he was concerned, Roland's future depended on playing it.

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"And that's fifteen to nada," Neil called, and Thomas shoved Roland off him yet again. He hadn't even had the ball this time. This was pure vendetta. Make him hurt for being in his brother's space. He'd tried to explain things, that he didn't want to be in his room, but Roland and kept storming away. It was like his brother couldn't stand to be in the same room unless he was throwing Thomas to the ground.

"Thomas," Nadia called from the house's door, "I need your help in the kitchen."

"What about the game?" Roland called, sounding like allowing Thomas to leave would ruin everything.

“Duty calls,” Thomas replied with a grin to cover the relief. “You don’t get to tackle me anymore.”

“Mom! We need him for the game. Dad, tell her he has to stay.”

“Dad,” Neil called as Thomas headed for the house. “How about you take Thomas’s place?”

The answer was lost as he entered.

“He’s going to get over it,” his mother said, indicating the cutting board with the vegetables at its side.

“Mom, a bedroom is sacred to a guy. He isn’t going to get over me invading it.”

She rolled her eyes. “You two kept sharing bedrooms when you were younger.”

“We did not,” Thomas protested.

She smiled at him. “Of course you did. You wouldn’t let him sleep on his own. You were scared the monsters would get him. Don’t you remember?”

He had vague memories of monsters on his bed, and of climbing into Roland’s bed, but as innocent as it had been. He couldn’t think of it now because his damned mind just wouldn’t stay out of the gutter.

After cutting vegetables and assembling the salad, his mother set him to preparing cranberry sauce. He was nearly done when Roland, Victor, and Eric entered the house.

“Xavier and his grandmother had to go back to their family,” Eric said. “Your brother didn’t want to replace him on the field so the game’s done.” He approached Nadia, who placed a hand on his chest.

“Not stinking as do. Shower, the three of you.”

“I call dibs!” Roland said, then he was running for the stairs.

Victor sighed. “Please tell me Judith went to find that panda

she's enamored with."

"No such luck, bro," Judith said, entering the kitchen. "And just for that, you're going to have to grovel if you want me to let you use my shower."

"Come on Sis, I'm only going to be ten minutes. It isn't like you need it right now." He followed her as she huffed and turned and headed out of the kitchen. The groveling became fainter until Thomas couldn't hear it anymore.

"How about you?" Eric asked Nadia. "Can I use your shower? Can I convince you to use it with me?"

Thomas rolled his eyes.

"Of course you and," she replied, moving away from the counter. "Let me just tell Neiro to take over for me."

"Errr," Eric said and Thomas as he saw his father's mind hurry to climb out of the gutter. "Can't your mother take over instead? You remember when he insisted on cooking for us, four years ago."

"I do, but it's a sacrifice I'm willing to make for a shower with you. Aren't you willing to make it?"

"No. I love you, Nadia, but I can survive a shower alone, not to risk a hospital stay. How Karlos is still alive I'll never understand."

She kissed his cheek. "Then off you go. We'll have all night to make it up to each other."

"I swear," Thomas mumbled, going back to stirring the sauce. "You two are impossible."

"And how chaste are your showers, mister Sigma Theta Gamma?" she asked in an innocent tone.

Thomas's ears remained standing through will alone, but he couldn't keep them from burning and he kept his eyes on the saucepan in was stirring.

He set it aside as Nadia took the turkey out of the oven. "Your

turn to shower, Thomas," she instructed, and he headed up the stairs, grabbing a change of clothing from his brother's room, happy he wasn't in it.

The door to the bathroom opened as he approached it. Of course. If Roland wasn't in his bedroom, it meant he wasn't out of the bathroom. His brother's face hardened as he gave him the once over and Thomas kept his eyes forward.

No looking at his brother in his underwear. Once they were passed, Thomas looked over his shoulder at his brother's broad back, and down at his—damn it, no. He closed the door and leaned against it. Please be dressed and out of the bedroom by the time I—he looked at the bundle of clothing he held. Right, he'd taken clothing for that reason.

Letting out a breath, he placed the clothes on the sink and got out of his dirty clothes. Straightening, he caught a glance of his reflection and paused. That couldn't be him. He flexed and his bicep bulged.

The frat had mirrors, and he'd seen himself in it, but next to his brothers there he was a bean pole still. Here, in the context of his family house, of the memories of how he looked living here, he could see the difference. He ran a hand along the six-pack on his stomach.

Fuck, was Roland's behavior jealousy because he wasn't the only buff guy in the house instead of just having Thomas intruding in his territory? No, he couldn't imagine Roland being threatened by the little muscle Thomas had on him. His brother was still the hotter of the two.

Damn it!

He took the shower as cold as he could in hopes his cock would go down, but he had to give up and jerk off to convince it to give him some peace.

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Thomas looked at his phone. It was nearly three pm. What

was keeping his aunt? How long were they going to wait on her before eating? At this point, they'd all starve.

"So," Neuro said, "how are you adjusting to living at Sigma Theta Gamma?"

"Yeah, you fitting them in properly?" Karlos asked.

"Oh, don't insinuate too hard," Neuro told his husband, "I'm sure Thomas has made space for all of them." He looked at Thomas. "How many in the frat?"

Thomas sank into the love seat. "Why is it Royers have no shame?"

"It's what makes them so damned attractive," Karlos answered, leaning against Neuro.

"I thought it was my —"

Thomas groaned and covered his ears.

"I was going to say bank account," his uncle said, offended. Karlos laughed and Thomas glared.

"Sure you were. And is your bank about still ten inch?" Thomas covered his mouth. "Oh my God. I can't believe I said that."

Neuro patted his leg. "You're a Royer too, remember that. You need to get comfortable talking about this stuff." He smiled. "And yes, I am still ten inch. I'm glad you remember the stories."

"Someone help," He mumbled. And as if someone had heard him, the doorbell rang.

He was out of the seat and at the door before anyone even registered it. He opened the door and a rat in a sharp brown suit stood there.

"Aunt Carina," Thomas greeted her, relief pouring off him. They'd finally get to eat. "I'm so glad you've arrived." He stepped out of the way and she moved into the house.

"I'm glad to finally be here. I'm sorry we're late, but the flight was delayed, then there was a problem getting the car."

"I told you I could take care of that," a man said, stepping into view.

"Thomas," she said, "this is Ettore Lewiston, Ettore, this is my favorite nephew, Thomas Hertz." She raised a hand to show the ring on it and lowered her voice. "Ettore's my fiancée." She grinned. "Don't tell anyone."

Thomas looked at the diamond on the ring, surrounded with emerald and rubies. They had to be artificial.

"I won't," he said. "Let me just tell everyone to wear sunglasses so they aren't blinded by this." She grinned at him,

He offered his hand to the other rat. "It's a pleasure to meet you, welcome to the family, and please don't let my parent's stories chase you away. This family needs more people who aren't going to recount all their exploits at the first excuse."

Corina gave him a smile that worried Thomas.

"It's a pleasure to meet you as well." Ettore's grip was firm. "And I promise to not volunteer any information until everyone else has."

Thomas groaned. "How is it Royers always seem to find someone who shares in their delight of over sharing?"

"It's a skill," Corina said, beaming.

"Well, welcome to the Hertz-Royer household. It's actually amusing you're named Lewiston. I know one, and he's also a rat. It'd be funny if you were related."

"Only distantly," someone outside said, and Ettore stepped out of the way to reveal Madoc holding a boy in his arm. He took the boy's arm and waved it at Thomas. "Pryce, this is Thomas, your daddy's frat brother, and amazing lay. Thomas, this is Pryce, my son."

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## CHAPTER-16

"A Lewiston?" Luisa glowered at Corina and Ettore.

Thomas looked at his grandmother, standing at the bottom of the stairs. He couldn't remember ever seeing her this unhappy.

"Luisa, this is Ettore," Corina introduced her fiancée.

"I heard," she replied, crossing her arms over her chest.

"I'm sorry," Ettore said, "have we met?" he looked confused instead of annoyed, like Corina.

Luisa harrumphed. "Your family stole my sister."

"I'm sorry, my family did what?"

"You heard me. Adelle went and married a Lewiston, and she was never heard from again."

Ettore raised his hands defensively. "I'm sorry to hear that, but my family isn't the only Lewistons out there. I doubt we're the only rats with that surname even." He looked at her. "If you want to, I can try to help you locate her. My family has a few security specialists in it. What's her full name?"

Luisa studied the rat for a few seconds. "Adelasia Royer."

"Grandma Adelle?" Madoc asked, head snapping up. He'd been focusing on the child in his arms. His son, Thomas reminded himself. Wow, Madoc had a son. He remembered him mentioning it during the football game, but still...

"So it was your family," Luisa said, tone victorious.

"Madoc?" Ettore asked.

"Grandma Adelle," he said, "she was married to Jurrien."

Ettore looked thoughtful. "He isn't from my branch."

Madoc snorted. "Of course not. They were my grandparents. Back then, it wasn't like keeping track was as easy as now." His expression darkened, and then he shook the mood off.

"Then I'm sorry," Ettore told Luisa. "But if she didn't contact you after getting married, I doubt it's because of any rules we have. Even now, Raphael doesn't lock the women away."

"Really?" Luisa asked. "Then why isn't she here? Royers never miss Thanksgiving if they can help it."

Ettore's expression became brittle.

"She died," Madoc said in a flat tone.

"When?" Luisa asked, surprised.

"Twelve years ago. They were in a car accident." (this is the only way I can think of to keep the whole thing from blowing up into a 'fight'. And to make the death not related to Damian's action.)

"Why wasn't I told?" she asked, voice trembling.

"I don't know," Madoc said. "I don't think she hid where she came from." He smiled. "I remember her telling stories of her family, the guys she knew, the things she and her sister — you, I guess — did, and who she did. She and my Granddad were fu—"

"Madoc!" Thomas exclaimed. How could he talk like that with his son in his arms? He looked around, but at least the twins weren't there. Victor had taken them up to a bedroom for their nap.

Neiro chuckled. "Well, that confirms she was family. You okay mom?"

Luisa looked her age now that the defiance had passed, but she rallied. "I will be. Madoc, is it?"

Thomas's frat brother nodded.

"I'm going to want you to tell me about her after we've eaten."

"I'll be happy to." He looked at Thomas. "Although we're going

to want to do that away from this one. After months in Sigma Theta Gamma, we still haven't gotten him to loser this odd habit he had of blushing and clamming up anytime one of us starts talking about fucking a guy in public."

Thomas blushed at the chuckles. Even Luisa smiled a little. At least this had lifted the mood, even if it was at his expense. But if he didn't stop it now, this would become a discussion about who had the best sex, and he wouldn't be surprised if dicks were taken out for comparison.

If that happened. Madoc would steal Neuro away and the only thing that would be heard were the rats' cries of pleasure.

He pulled Madoc away. "I'm going to introduce him to Mom and Dad," He said.

"I have met them," the rat pointed out, not fighting Thomas.

"I'm going to introduce Pryce to Mom and Dad," Thomas corrected, then he leaned close and lowered his voice. "What are you doing here?" Pryce reached out and grabbed Thomas's whiskers.

"No pulling on that, Pryce," Madoc admonished his son. "You want to aim lower." The rat reached for Thomas's nipple.

"Madoc," Thomas hissed, and the rat chuckled. "Don't you think he's too young for that kind of stuff?"

Madoc rolled his eyes and leaned close to his son's ear and whispered. "Wait until he's sitting down, then reach for his cock. You'll see, he won't complain about you pulling on that."

Thomas gave Madoc a horrified look and the rat simply grinned at him. "I ran into Ettore and Corina when I got home," he said, as if he hadn't scarred his son for life with his talk of sex. "They were by to give the perfunctory greetings and for Ettore to introduce her to Raphael. She said they were heading to Minneapolis to visit family and, of course, Raphael gave her the third degree. He isn't all 'you have to be from a proper family' and all that, but after..." he trailed off. "He wants to know where the women who join our family

come from."

"And she mentioned my family."

Madoc nodded. "To be honest, I didn't want to be there. If I could bring Pryce to the frat, I wouldn't go back except for the usual family functions."

"Why don't you bring him? I'm sure the guys would love to meet him."

Madoc chuckled. "I know they would, but can you imagine them, trying to help out? Limbani's idea of it would be to bring guys to Pryce's room to fuck on the floor."

"I doubt Henry would let him do that."

Madoc frowned, then shook his head. "Anyway. Raphael won't allow it. He's adamant about keeping the kids at the estate." He messed Pryce's short head fur with a finger before looking up. "And really. Did how could I stay away from the Hertz guys."

"They are rather magnetic, aren't they?" Orinda said, stopping by them. "Oh, what a handsome boy. Pryce is it? The twins are going to love him."

"Just be careful he doesn't molest them," Thomas mumbled and his ears folded back at the realization he said the thought out loud.

Orinda laughed. "I do love the Hertz lack of filter."

"It's more of a Royer thing," Thomas said with a sigh. "You'd think diluting the blood would make us less prone to say inappropriate things."

"But it's so endearing," she said. "I'm Orinda, by the way. Victor's wife."

"Madoc Lewiston." He shook her hand.

"Oh, you're the one who offered to have sex with him." She chuckled. "I'm afraid you're too late. He's all mine now."

"Maybe I can convince you to lend him to me?" Madoc asked.

She patted his cheek. "Sorry hun, I am not the sharing type. But I have it on good authority Thomas is playing his part in demonstrating how good Hertz boys are in bed."

"Oh, come on," Thomas grumbled, ears burning.

"Being praised is not something you should blush about," she said.

"Maybe not, but having my sex life be the subject of discussions isn't exactly something I was looking for."

"You joined Sigma Theta Gamma," Madoc said, grinning. "We aren't known for being discreet."

"All I wanted was a room."

Madoc stifled a snort. "Right, after you sucked off every brother at the party, and then —"

Thomas placed a hand over the rat's muzzle. "Okay, I think that's enough indiscretion."

"It's okay, Madoc," Orinda said. "I already hear all about how Thomas impressed the frat on his back before being accepted." She smiled. "Anyone, the table's set, you three head there, I'll get the others."

Madoc shook his head when Thomas gave him an accusatory stare. Okay, if not him, who? Paul knew better than to talk about that with his family, and none of the others at the frat... Thomas hung his head. Judith. There was no way she hadn't pulled all the details out of Yating.

With a sigh, he led Madoc and Pryce to the dining room, where, in short order, everyone was seated.

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"How did you meet?" Eric asked Ettore as he passed the roasted potatoes to Karlos. "Roland, have more turkey. You need more

protein. You too, Thomas.”

Thomas glared the grinning Madoc silent.

“Oh, honey,” Nadia said. “I doubt Thomas has any trouble getting protein in him.”

“I don’t think there’s any protein in cum,” Eric replied, taking out his phone, but Nadia stopped him.

“Not at the table, dear.”

“Actually,” Neiro said, “percentage-wise, cum is nutritious. The main drawback is the low quantity each orgasm produces.” He looked at Thomas, who wished he could just disappear and be somewhere else. “Are you getting a lot of it?”

“Oh,” Madoc said, adding greens to his plate. “We are keeping him well fed.”

“Not anymore, you aren’t,” Thomas grumbled, glaring the threat and being ignored.

“I’m in charge of ensuring the chain of hotels my family owns meet the expected standards,” Ettore said, as if the sexual conversation was utterly normal. “I go from hotel to hotel, look over the books, speak with the staff. We’re not only concerned with the bottom line but also morale.”

“So he barged into my office,” Corina picked up, “full of bluster about how he was going to improve things.”

“That isn’t how I remember things,” Ettore said.

Please, Thomas prayed, please let this not be another story that turned into sexual exploits.

“Then you are wr—”

“Dear,” Ettore smiled at Corina, “We talked about this. No altering how things happened to impress your family. There’s no need for it.” He looked at Eric. “There were minor things to adjust, but nothing that could be blamed on Corina. She does a wonderful job

managing her hotel. When I was done, she asked if I wanted to have a drink with her, now that we weren't working anymore and..."

She placed a hand on his. "I had to insist it was nothing like a date. Just a drink to unwind."

Thomas stifled the groan. He knew how his family unwound, so he prepared himself.

"It was comfortable," Ettore said, then paused. "I lost my wife a few years. It's been hard. I lost myself in my job, but Corina pulled me out enough to remember life goes on. When I flew by Des Moines again, I called her and asked if she wanted another drink." She smiled at her. "She said yes."

"A few months later, he took me out to dinner," Corina said. "It was such a fancy place."

"I might have gone overboard," Ettore admitted.

Corina chuckled. "But it was so sweet, and the way you couldn't stop apologizing and offering to take me somewhere less pretentious was endearing. I kind of wish we could go there again."

"Why can't you?" Nadia asked.

"Oh, there was an incident."

There it comes.

"Oh, do tell," his mother said.

"Well," Corina said, "I needed to use the restroom, and Ettore, being a gentleman, at least in that regard, escorted me."

"I needed to go too," he corrected.

"There was a lineup at both the men's and women's."

"Then, Corina noticed that the handicapped restroom was unlocked and unoccupied, so she pulled me in with her."

"I didn't want someone else to take it once I was done and

leaving him to have to wait even longer.”

“Of course,” Eric said, smiling knowingly. Why was it Thomas was the only one not looking forward to what was coming? Even Pryce and the twins were silently paying attention.

“After we were done with that part of things,” Ettore said, and Thomas thought he might get away with not having to hear about sex at the table. “I had to make sure she was properly clean.” Thomas sighed, nope. “And since by then I was already kneeling between her legs, I figured, why not. It wasn’t like whatever dessert the restaurant offered was going to be better. So I proceeded to eat her out.”

“He is very good,” Corina said with emphasis. “And I couldn’t not return the favor, so I suck him off.” She smiled at Neiro. “I think he might be bigger than you.”

Thomas’s uncle tilted an ear. “More than ten inch?” he looked at Ettore challengingly.

But it was Karlos who said it. “I’m not going to believe it until I see it.”

Thomas hid his face in his hands.

Madoc leaned in and whispered. “Do you think I should introduce them to Chima?”

Thomas stared at his frat brother in horror, and Madoc grinned. Oh, that was not a good thing.

“Maybe after we’re done eating,” Ettore said. “Corina has a wonderful mouth and an eagerness I had forgotten a woman can have.”

“You would not believe it, but he was still hard after I sucked him off.”

“My family’s good about having staying power; isn’t that right Madoc?”

“Yeah.” He thought about something. “I think that even if I



just go with the mood, seven times is how often I did it without getting soft. I'd have kept going, but by then the guys were exhausted."

"That's can't be right," Thomas said. "The guys at the frat have just as much stamina as you do. They'd keep at it all the time if not for classes."

Madoc smiled. "Who said it was with our brothers?"

"Huh," Neuro said, looking from Ettore to Madoc. "You," he pointed to Ettore, "it's too back you're going to be my brother-in-law. But you," he pointed to Madoc. "I'm calling bullshit. I don't care what the genetic's like. A man's body simply isn't built to handle that level of horniness."

"I will happily demonstrate," Madoc said.

"Just a moment," Ettore interrupted. "What does me being your brother-in-law have to do with not having to prove myself?"

"Aren't you straight?" the rat looked from Ettore to Corina.

Madoc snorted.

"You're making an assumption, dear," Karlos said, patting Neuro's hand.

"Then I'm sorry. But you're going to be married."

"Not everyone is as possessive as Orinda and Nadia," Corina said. "Ettore loves me, I know that. Where he puts his dick when we aren't together, that's his business. And if we're together, then the deal is I get to watch."

"Someone kill me," Thomas whispered. He noticed Roland had a similarly stricken expression. One thing they could agree on. Soon they'd be best buds. If only Thomas could be that lucky.

"If I heard right," Neuro said, "you two have a hotel room, instead of spending the night here." He looked at Karlos. "You know, a bed would be way more comfortable than the couch."

Karlos looked at the couple. "How about it?"

Ettore looked at Corina. "They're your family, hun. I know that part took some getting used to."

She nodded. "Just so we're clear, once you're done and it's time to sleep, I am getting in the bed next to my fiancée."

"That's perfectly reasonable," Neuro said.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas watched Pryce and the twins run around the living room. Somehow he'd survived the dinner of sexual talk without melting away, and now he was squeezed between his uncles, Neuro and Karlos, listening to Ettore.

"The Denver house of Sigma Theta Gamma was nothing like the one here, from what Madoc told me. Much smaller. When I was there, it was only five of us. There was a Cormoran, a Chouteau, a Ling." His expression darkened, "and a Rasia."

"I guess even in an exclusive frat like yours, not everyone likes everyone," Eric said.

"I liked the guy well enough, slim, nice cock, really nice ass. But I couldn't trust him. He and his family were just trouble. But the sex was definitely good. Thomas, as an outsider, what's your opinion of your brothers?"

"I'm part of Sigma Theta Gamma," Thomas protested.

"Sorry, I mean as someone who isn't from the families who comprise the house, how do you feel about being part? Are they all treating you well?"

"Oh, we fuck him senseless," Madoc said and Thomas glared at him.

"They're treating me like they treat each other," Thomas said, and refused to elaborate. Maybe they could all talk about sex like it was the most normal thing, but he wasn't doing that, not with his grandmother seated there, within earshot.

After a few more attempts to get Thomas to talk about his sex life, the conversation moved to Neiro and Karlos, their meeting, their work, and, of course, their sex life. It almost sounded like Ettore was gaging what to expect from them.

Then the conversation moved to families. Did Neiro and Karlos plan on having kids?—they talked about it every so often but didn't think it was time. Would Ettore and Corina have kids—definitely. It was a Lewiston imperative, after all.

Thomas raised an eyebrow at that and looked for Madoc to ask what that was about, and found his frat brother had vanished. Looking around the living room, he also noticed Roland was missing.

No, no, no.

Thomas excused himself and went up to the second floor. He looked in Roland's bedroom before hearing the voices coming from the bathroom. He opened the door and there were his brother and Madoc, still wearing pants, thank God, but shirtless, and Madoc had his hands over his brother's defined stomach and the bicep Roland flexed.

Thomas buried the jealousy as deep as he could. *That* wasn't why he was angry. This was his brother Madoc was molesting. Thomas opened his mouth to order Madoc out of his house, but closed it as footsteps hurried up the stairs. His parents entered the first bedroom, the one Victor and his family were going to spend the night in. And before he could open his mouth again. His mother's loud moaning made his ears burn. Then his father joined in.

He had to talk with whoever had soundproofed the frat because his family's house was nothing like soundproof. He put his parents out of his mind and focused on his brother and his would-be molester, only for Roland to shove him out of the way, ears flat against his skull as he pulled his shirt back on. He glared at the closed door and hurried down the stairs.

"Not so fast," Thomas told Madoc, shoving him in the bathroom and closing the door behind him and wishing it had a lock. "Just what the fuck do you think you're doing?"

"I was giving Roland a few pointers on his workout routine," the rat replied, sounding mildly amused.

"Right," Thomas said, stretching the word. "Remember that I know how you treat your 'projects' I'm one of them. I've met a lot of them. Hell, they've fucked me. You aren't going to do that to my brother."

"Thomas," Madoc said, tone turning serious. "I think Roland is—"

"Roland is fifteen! And he's straight. And even if he wasn't, do you know what his first exposure to gays was? It was me coming home with a black eye because I'd been dared to kiss the star quarterback and he didn't exactly appreciate it. And because that's how schools are, every one at his school knows about it. He's the brother of the slut how can't keep his hands to himself. The only reason they leave him alone is that he's one of the best players his team has. They can't alienate him, but it doesn't stop anyone from whispering behind his back."

"I don't think you—"

"No, you don't think, Madoc. You're my brother, but fuck, you and the others can only think with your cocks. That's fine at the frat and Uni, but not in my house. What you almost did to my brother isn't acceptable behavior, Madoc. Don't put me in a position to pick the frat over my brother, because family is really important to me."

Madoc watched him and eventually nodded. "I understand, and I'm sorry for overstepping my bounds. Roland's lucky to have a brother who sticks up for him like you do. I don't know if mine would have."

Thomas's further tirade left him as Madoc's expression fell and then turned forcefully neutral. "Madoc? What are you talking about?"

The rat shook his head. "It's not important. It's in the past, mostly."

Thomas hesitated. "You know you can talk with me, right? I'm your brother too."

Madoc's smile was sad. "There's nothing to do about it. And talking just brings it all back. Thanks for the offer, it means a lot that you made it. But I'm going to head downstairs and spend time with Pryce."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Are you sure you don't want to spend the night here?" Nadia asked her brother as she hugged him.

"And give up sex with that guy?" he nodded to Ettore. "I'm sorry Sis, but your couch is nowhere near that good, even with Karlos under me."

"Remember," Madoc said once the siblings let go of one another. "I want you to pester Thomas until he agrees to bring you to the house. If you enjoy Ettore, you are going to love our frat brothers."

Karlos smiled. "No worries there. We have Thomas's number and, even better, Judith's. She knows how to get the Hertz boy to give in."

Thomas silently glared at Madoc, but his expression softened as they hugged. "It was good meeting you, Pryce," Thomas said. "Even if your father is a pain in my ass sometimes."

"Don't believe him," Madoc said. "I'll make a recording and you can hear for yourself there's no pain in the cries he makes when I fuck him."

Thomas's ears burned, but he only shook his head in disbelief. "You really shouldn't expose him to that kind of talk."

Madoc chuckled. "We learn young in my family. It's what makes us so talented. You enjoy the rest of the holiday. It was good meeting you all," Madoc told those who weren't leaving. With Neiro and his husband taking Ettore up on the offer of their hotel bed, the house would be less crowded.

Once they were gone, Thomas dropped onto the couch. "Can we not do this again?"

"I can't wait for next year," Victor said, holding one of the sleeping twins in his arms. That Pryce had still been conscious as they left amazed Thomas. He'd run as much, if not more, than the twins. "Ettore will officially be part of the family. I can't wait to hear the stories they're going to have to share. Can you imagine what their honeymoon will be like?"

Orinda looked at Victor, the other sleeping twin, in her arms. "I don't believe I'm saying this, but I didn't think there was such a thing as another family with the love of sex I've heard from the Royer, and that they've granted to the Hertz boys."

"Can we not talk about how much more sex talk there will be?" Thomas asked, ears burning as he imagined all the over sharing would happen now that Ettore was part of their family.

"Don't worry, dear," Nadia said. "I'm certain that by this time next year you will also have a great many stories to share."

"It's not about having the stories," Thomas whines. "I have the stories, it's about the sharing of them with people who were basically strangers."

His family leaned forward in their seats.

"Well," Luisa said, "it's only us right now."

"Yeah," Judith said. "Spill, bro."

Thomas grabbed the cushion next to him, put it over his face and screamed in it.

## CHAPTER-17

Thanksgiving quickly gave way to December and seriousness. Research papers needed to be handed in, studying became the thing to do, instead of sex. Thomas had been as surprised to see Olavo tell Limbani 'no' to an offer of sex than he had been the first morning at the frat, when he learned that an offer to wash his back meat a lot more than just that here.

The one guy who, Thomas was not surprised, kept the sex going was the monkey. Every evening he had a different guy in his room and either fucked them while reading a study tome perched on their shoulder blades, or had them between his legs as he types a paper, or fucking him bent over what Thomas had initially thought was some sort of ergonomic desk chair; now ... it might just have been some sex chair that Limbani was using for his desk.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas exited his room, bleary-eyed from screen light. The research papers were written and emailed and he was confident he'd gotten all the addresses right. If not, hopefully if one ended up in the wrong professor's inbox, they're forward it to the right one instead of simply returning it to him.

"Sorry," Yating mumbled, barely avoiding Thomas as they crossed path in the hall, Thomas heading to the stairs, the panda turning into the second-floor lounge. He watched him for a second and let the disturbing quiet register. It was amazing the things he'd gotten used to, like constant moaning and groaning. At least the smell of sex still lingered in the air.

Wow, now that was thought he never expected to have.

He made it downstairs without encountering anyone else. Felix was in the living room, pants on, reading. Gilbert had printouts of something Thomas wasn't sure he wanted to know. His fear was that he was grading the chemistry papers and that Thomas would see him red-mark the paper he'd just now emailed.

He turned into the kitchen and stopped, watching the panda assemble a sandwich.

“How did you get here from the lounge so quick?” Thomas looked back into the hall as if he’d be able to see it from where he stood and confirm Yating was still in there.

The panda looked over his shoulder and grinned. “Secret passage.”

Thomas opened his mouth to protest, but decided that it wasn’t worth it. Maybe there were secret passages, maybe Yating teleported here and would vanish again as he watched. Thomas was too tired to care if the lack of sex was causing reality to warp.

What he needed was coffee so he could go back to studying.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas looked over his answer to the chemistry exam. None of them jumped out at him screaming they were wrong, but none also inspired confidence. It was time to admit that the sciences weren’t for him because he didn’t have much of a head for them, and not because taking one of them as his major meant his father would have more reasons to hover over him.

Thinking of his father made him look at the door to the classroom, expecting to see him there. He’d be busy supervising his own class of exam takers. Looking over this class, it was nearly empty; the teacher seated at the desk, well, someone who wasn’t Gilbert was, so Thomas figured it was the teacher. Not that he’d know what the man looked like. The armadillo had been in charge of nearly all the classes, with someone’s recorded voice giving the lectures.

Gilbert was walking the classroom. The armadillo at initially ensured no one cheated, but not just looked bored as he collected the exams from the departing students.

Thomas glanced at the empty desk next to his. Paul had finished a while ago, possibly as soon as they’d sat down to start the exam. Thomas wasn’t sure, he’d been too busy trying not to freak out



that he'd fail.

He handed his exam to Gilbert, how simply nodded, and exited.

"How did you do?" Paul asked, making Thomas jump. The golden tiger grinned. "That good?"

Thomas swallowed his heart back down. "What are you still doing here? And I'm think I passed. But barely. I am not made for this."

Paul gave Thomas a one arm hug. "Don't be so hard on yourself."

Thomas gave Paul the stink-eye. "No, I'm certain Hard sciences aren't for me."

"Then you have narrowed your selection a little more. I think your dad would call this progress."

"Please don't mention him. You might end up summoning him."

"Eric Hertz," Paul recited. "Eric Hertz, Eri—"

Thomas clamped his hand over the tiger's muzzle. "I am serious. You have no idea the powers Helicopter Dad has."

Paul chuckled. "At least you aren't worrying about the exam anymore."

"Good," Gilbert said, exiting the classroom with a handful of students and looking at his phone. "Because we have something else to worry about." He looked up. "Hey Paul. I need to take Thomas with me. A certain monkey is freaking out about his upcoming exam and we have half an hour to sex him out of it."

"You want to come help?" Thomas asked as the armadillo dragged him away.

"You two have fun. Tell Limbani hi for me... if your mouth isn't filled."

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas walked out of the Studies for Success exam and a weight lifted off his shoulder.

Done.

That was it until January. Not that he was exactly free, but he no longer had to worry about doing the exams. All that was left was worrying about the results he'd get. Not that many classes caused that. Chemistry was the big one.

He hesitated before turning his phone back on and was not surprised at the conversations going on via text. Limbani was monopolizing it, again. Unlike Thomas, whose exam had been spread evenly over the exam period, the monkey's had all ended up bunched at the end. He was on his fourth exam without a break other than sleep. And he was getting desperate.

Sex Monkey: Help!

Chemistry Lad: Can't. Grading papers.

Lad's Brother: I'm helping Henry doing repairs at the house while you're all out of here.

Not who you think I am: got my own exam coming up, studying

Red and white: studying

Distinguished: can you wait half an hour? I'll be free then.

Sex Monkey: I'm going to be dead by then

Muscle lover: there are nearly a thousand guys here, pick one.

Sex Monkey: I don't need a guy I need a brother!

Thomas read on, bases on the timestamp, this had gone on for

the last ten minutes, with Limbani getting more desperate, but for some reason he wouldn't grab a random guy.

Maxium-T-Hertz: I'm done with my day and still at the uni. Can I help?

Otterly better than you: thank Balls. Go take his phone away. This chat's supposed to be for serious conversations!

Sex Monkey: yes! Get here now!

Sex Monkey: sex is serious conversation topic Chouteau!

Otterly Better than you: not when you get so picky. Madoc said it 1000 guy around you.

Maxium-T-Hertz: where is 'here'? Are we at least in the same building?

Sex Monkey: Hubert H, second floor, east ride restroom.

Muscle Lover: ride restroom <laughter> oh that is so you Limbani.

Maxium-T-Hertz: I'm in Carlson, 2 minutes and I'm there.

Sex Monkey: Hurry! I need SEX!

Thomas muted the chat and hurried. Getting fucked by a desperate Limbani would be a good way to celebrate the end of his exams.

\* \* \* \* \*

The restroom was vacant, except for the pacing, naked, hard, monkey. Before Thomas opened his muzzle, Limbani dragged him into the first stall.

"What took you so long?"

"The walk," Thomas answered, doing his best not to laugh as kneeled before the monkey.

Limbani grabbed him by the arm and pulled him up. "What are doing?"

"I figured I'd suck you off while getting out of my clothes and you can fuck me after."

Limbani stared at Thomas uncomprehendingly. Thomas wondered if the delay had broken the monkey.

"I don't need to fuck you," Limbani finally said. "I need you to fuck me. It's been days since I've had anyone fuck me. Why is everyone so damned busy with exams?"

Thomas focused on the important statement. "Me, fuck you?"

The monkey turned and offered his ass "Yes! Do you need an Orr here to get you going?"

"Okay, I have no idea what that's about." He looked at the ass and remembered to undo his pants. "Look, I've never topped before."

"Then here's your chance. Please," the monkey whine, tail raised high.

Was he even a top? Thomas wondered. He was hard, but then again, like Limbani, it had been a while since he'd cum. Probably way longer since the monkey couldn't go more than an hour, it seemed.

"Okay." Thomas took one of the lube packets he carried. "But tell me if I'm doing this wrong."

Limbani rolled his eyes. "It's fucking. You can't do it wrong. Hurry up."

Thomas lubed his cock and reached to lube the monkey's hole, only for Limbani to back against him, pushing Thomas against the door, grab his cock, align it and push.

Limbani moaned deeply, and Thomas swallowed in surprised at the heat surrounding his cock.

“See,” Limbani said, voice melting. “It’s easy.” He moved his ass against Thomas’s crotch. “Now, all you have to do is grab my hips and fuck me.”

Thomas caught his breath and took hold of the monkey’s hips. He moved hesitatingly at first, worried Limbani wouldn’t like it, but the monkey’s moaning prodded him forward, so he readjusted his grip and pushed him into the monkey’s legs were spread around the toilet bowl and hands rested against the back wall.

Thomas thrust faster. This wasn’t bad. He changed the angle and Limbani let out a nearly soprano scream of delight. This was fun. He pounded the money’s ass. This was... something. He fucked Limbani, and the monkey begged for more.

“That right,” Thomas said, barely recognizing his voice. “You want this, don’t you?” He fucked the monkey hard.

“Oh fuck, more!”

“Yeah, this is where you belong, isn’t it? With my cock deep in you.” Thomas thrust in and out, the sneer beginning to hurt, but he didn’t care. After all the fucking he’d been on the receiving end of. Limbani was finally getting what he deserved.

Limbani swore in his native tongue, and Thomas smile, he was fucking the English out of him. This was where Thomas belonged. As the top, as the one dominating him. As the one in charge. No one but *Him* could fuck like this.

This orgasm hit harder than any Thomas had experienced. His scream was such the building had to shake. The pleasure was his right. Taken because he said so.

Then Thomas staggered back, his legs nearly buckling under him. The closed door holding him up. Fuck, what had that been? What that what fucking felt like? No wonder the guys at the frat never seemed to get enough.

Limbani panted, hands still on against the wall. The toilet was covered with cum. “That, has got, to have been the, best fuck, evar!”

He looked over his shoulder. "Where have you been hiding this?"

Thomas had no idea how to answer. "I don't know what happened." He looked at the ass, realized he was still hard and the uncertainty left again. That ass belonged to him. He was still hard, so he was going to fuck it —

Limbani's phone beeped an alarm. "Fuck! I'm going to be late for my exam!" He moved Thomas from the door. "You are a lifesaver. I feel amazing. A true brother." Before Thomas could grab the monkey and pull him back inside the stall, he was gone, grabbing pieces of clothing off the floor and putting them back on.

Thomas growled, then stopped. He'd growled? He didn't growl. Why was he— the monkey was gone. He had no one to fuck.

What did it matter? He'd gotten off.

"More," He growled. He needed more. If not the monkey, then he knew who else needed to satisfy him. After all, that was what they were for. For his pleasure.

His smile turned feral as he button up his pants. Yes. He was going to take his pleasure from his brothers, those who had been put on this earth for him. He was done worshipping them. It was time for them to worship him.

\* \* \*

## CHAPTER-18

So many asses.

Thomas hadn't noticed before how so many of the gym's equipment positioned body with their ass in the air. He was tempted to make use of them, as they were on offer this way, but he was here for one specific ass.

Madoc had mentioned on the Frat Chat that he was done for the day, so the gym was where Thomas knew to find him. The first visual pass didn't find the rat, so Thomas walked among the equipment.

He found the rat on his back, straining to push the weights up with a giraffe spotting him. Thomas licked his lips and considered raising Madoc's legs over his shoulder and taking him right here. Thomas had his hand on his belt when he realized this wasn't the right place. No, he wanted to do this in the place he thought of as Madoc's sex room.

The bar clanged on the rack, and Thomas smiled.

"Hey Thomas," Madoc said, smiling. "Finally decided to add a few sessions to your —"

Thomas grabbed the rat by his tank-top and pulled him to his feet. "You're coming with me."

"I'm in the middle of—"

Thomas's grin became toothy. "I have your exercise right here." He grabbed Madoc's crotch.

"Lead the way then." The rat grinned.

Thomas lead Madoc to the sauna without pausing in the locker. As usual, when it wasn't used for sex, it was unoccupied. Was it ever used for anything other than sex? He pulled the rat's shorts down before sitting him on the bench.

Chuckling, Madoc spread his leg and arms. "Are you channeling Limbani?"

Thomas snorted, grabbed the rat's legs, and placed them over his shoulders.

Madoc tilted an ear as he kept using his hand to keep himself from falling back as his ass was pulled to the edge of the bench. "This is new," he said as Thomas undid his pants. "I didn't know you topped." The rat was grinning.

Thomas returned his grin and moved closer, positioning his cock head, then pushed. "Oh fuck," he moaned as heat enveloped it.

"Oh yeah," Madoc responded.

Thomas bottomed out in one push and looked down into Madoc's eyes. Down, under him. That was right. Thomas pulled out and pushed back in and whispered a stretched curse as pleasure coursed from his cock to everywhere in his body.

Again, he wondered why he hadn't thought to do this before.

Madoc let out a pained groan. "Okay, this isn't the best position. Pull out and we can—"

Thomas growled. He wasn't pulling out.

Madoc laughed. "Okay, okay, then we need to shift a little." The rat twisted in place and Thomas moved with him, having to get out of his pants, which almost caused him to lose his balance and fall out of that hot ass. Then Madoc was on his back on the bench and Thomas knelt on it. The position let him push even deeper into the rat's ass.

This was a good thing.

Thomas thrust in and out, hard and fast. Madoc's eyes rolled back and his panting became ragged.

"Fuck, where did you—" Madoc tensed and arched his back with a groan and cum flew out of his cock.



Thomas kept fucking him through the orgasm, the spasming of the ass finally causing him to moan in pleasure and push deep to unload.

Thomas help onto the back of the bench, looking down on the rat, who had a blissed out expression on his face. That was good. It was all good. He could do this all—

“Hey Doc,” someone said, “does this mean you aren’t going to spot me?”

Thomas glared at the gorilla in the doorway, who smiled back. The rat was his. A pat on his hip made him look down.

“Gotta go,” Madoc panted. “Duty calls.” Thomas growled and Madoc laughed. “We’re going to do this again, promise, but right now, I have to go help out Georges.” The rat moved and Thomas’s hard cock fell out of the ass.

The cold of the air on it shocked Thomas enough he didn’t react to the rat and gorilla leaving. He hadn’t noticed the sauna was turned off. It had felt so hot when they’d entered.

He cursed. He’d lost another ass before he was finished with it. He pulled out his phone. That was okay. He knew how to find another one.

\* \* \* \* \*

The library was quiet as Thomas stalked through it. The chat had told him where to find his next subject, and he knew to look into the furthest corners. That was where the fun could happen without attracting attention.

He found the otter seated at a table with half a dozen books on it and him typing; the screen projected above his phone. Felix noticed him and made a face. Thomas grinned. He was going to change that expression.

“Isn’t this a little above your intellect level?” the otters hissed

Thomas smiled. Oh, he was going to be above the otter. He

pulled him out of the chair and onto the table, undoing the tail clasp and pushing the pants down. Felix looked over his shoulder, muzzle open, but before he spoke, Thomas placed a finger to his lips and quietly shushed him. They were in a library, after all. Then he pushed his hard cock into the inviting heat of the otter's ass.

\*\*\*\*\*

Otterly better than you: Who the fuck spiked Thomas's coffee?

Muscle Lover: yeah, and can you make sure to do it again?

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas exited the office, buttoning his pants, leaving the armadillo sprawled on the floor, stomach covered with cum and more leaking out of his ass. Except for his raising and falling chest, he was completely still.

\*\*\*\*\*

Nuclear Lad: Limbani, I don't know how, but this is your fault.

Nuclear Lad: Good job.

Not who you think I am: What is going on?

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas shoved the badger into the storage closet before he even knew he was there.

\*\*\*\*\*

Not who you think I am: Okay, wow, what's going on with Thomas?

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas had trouble extricating himself from the capybara's arms and legs. Olavo seemed determined to have Thomas fuck him again, but it was time for someone else to be blessed by Thomas's cock.

\* \* \* \* \*

Distinguished: I'm liking this new version of our brother. Can we keep him?

St-Paul Accountant: Thomas, where are you? It's sounding like you're just what I need after this damned exam.

\* \* \* \* \*

Kuno screamed as Thomas pounded his ass. He didn't remember how he'd made his way to the margay. He remembered glancing at the chat, then the two of them were on the floor between chair and tables, the margay begging for more and Thomas giving it to him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas hadn't had sex outside before this. He'd smelled the collie in the park and had stalked him. He'd almost fucked him on the path, but Hubert had pulled him into the heavy bushes before Thomas got his pants down. The branches scratched as they fell to the ground. Then all he cared about was shoving his cock into that inviting ass.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Thomas," the bat said, before the rat pushed him into the living room. Henry held him at arm's length. "Maybe you can explain what you are doing?" Like everyone one of his brother, the bat was strong, but the protest was more amused than decisive. Thomas growled and leaned into the bat, using his weight and grabbing onto the belt.

"I guess, that is as good of an explanation as any."

They were naked, and Thomas was fucking the bat. He bit the shoulder. He didn't draw blood, but the old man(this is on purpose, and I'm realizing I need to make it more clear Henry looks to be of a similar age to the rest of the frat) should feel what he inflicted to him anything Thomas was under him.

\* \* \* \* \*

“You stink,” the armadillo said as he grabbed Thomas’s arm and pulled him into the shower room. Like Thomas, he was naked and Jacques was already there. “Gilbert can’t stop talking about how good you are, and I want some of that.” The armadillo leaned over the half wall of glass block and Thomas took the invitation, pushing his cock in easily.

He didn’t mind the badger’s body against his back while he fucked Laurence until he felt the cock slip between his cheeks. He paused and growled at the badger. Thomas was the one doing the fucking now.

Jacques laughed. “This is starting to feel like back home on my cousins’ eighteenth birthday. All no touching my ass today.” He walked around the half wall. “If I can’t fuck the rat, open your mouth, Laurence.”

Thomas refocused on the armadillo. The badger was next.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas screamed as he came into the red panda’s ass. Yating’s orgasmic yell muffled in the pillow his face was buried in.

He pulled out as soon as he could breathe again and left the bedroom. He headed downstairs, pulled by a need to find someone and knowing where he would find him.

There was only one left.

The One.

Chima waited for him by the door leading to the basement, the giant of a hyena naked, hard, eager. This was right. It would end where it started, the circle would close. He would be claimed.

The hyena preceded Thomas down the stairs and his eyes were fixed on the muscular ass before him. Chima was perfect. The embodiment of everything that made Him. He was male, he was potent, he was Thomas’s.

Chima opened the door, and Thomas followed him into the

room. It was darker than he remembered, but the block of stone was visible. The altar where Thomas had given himself over to Him, and where he would now claim Him.

The hyena lay back on the stone and Thomas took position between his legs, lifting them over his shoulders when he realized something wasn't right. He looked at the hyena's face, then around the room.

It was by the door, giving the impression it floated there, waiting for him to take it. Then he had the mask in hand and was placing it over Chima's head. The gray eyes looked at him through the eye holes as Thomas took in the complete perfection that was the being lying before him. Offering himself for Thomas to take.

Thomas pushed his cock in the hyena's ass and groaned, and it gripped him. Chima's head fell back, silent, but Thomas felt how much he enjoyed it. It was in the air around them, through them. This being had been waiting for this moment, and Thomas was going to perform for him. Show him that Thomas deserved to own him.

He thrust in and out, watching the hyena's body tense and tremble in time with his thrust. The large, perfect cock bouncing and leaking. The heavy balls tightening. Thomas was driving Him to ecstasy just as he was pushing himself closer to it. They were one and the same. The same vitality, shared and owned.

Chima grabbed onto the edge of the altar and raised his head to look at Thomas, and in the low light, Thomas could only look into the dark eye holes as the hyena's mouth moved, but no words came.

The approval hit Thomas viscerally.

He had given himself over to Him when offered the change, and now He was giving Himself over if Thomas wanted Him.

Thomas did.

Thomas raised his head as his orgasm struck and let out a silent scream that resounded through both of them, and then he crumbled on top of Chima.

## CHAPTER-19

Thomas had an ermine against the wall, their legs around his hips and his cock moving in them. They were loud in how they were enjoying themselves. Thomas came and let the guy down, looking at the crowd in the living room. Limbani was sandwiched between a bear and a gorilla, barely visible. Kuno was seated on the love seat, a guy bouncing on his cock while the margay sucked off another one.

Thomas saw Chima in the doorway, watching him, only to walk off as Thomas headed for him.

Thomas hadn't been able to find out why the hyena was avoiding him since the amazing fuck session the previous week. He'd thought it was because Chima was busy with his exams, but those had ended two days ago and Thomas hadn't gotten the hyena in bed again, always getting this odd expression from him anytime he moved close, then an excuse and he'd walk away.

"Fuck me now," a cat said, before kissing Thomas.

Thomas grinned in the kiss and put the hyena out of his mind as he put his cock in the cat.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Don't," the otter said as Thomas walked into the kitchen, still hard and horny.

"Get over yourself, Chouteau. I'm here for water, not your ass. Do you know if there's any ice left? The bucket in the living room's all melted." He grabbed the pack of bottled water.

"Ice is Kuno's job," Felix answered, shoving the sandwich in his mouth while thrusting in the tiger's muzzle knelling at his feet.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas fucked Laurence hard, while Gilbert fucked him. The armadillo cumming in his ass caused Thomas to cum in the one under

him. Then he was caught between them as Gilbert's weight held him in place. He vaguely remembered how protecting of his ass he'd been the day he'd discovered he loved topping, but he couldn't recall why. He'd loved being fucked before, and he still loved it.

"Gil, remember we I suggested bringing him home with us for Thanksgiving?" Laurence panted.

"No, we aren't bringing him for the holidays." Gilbert answered, also panting. "He's going to monopolize everyone."

"How about you two discuss this without me in between? There are other guys for me to fuck."

"At this rate, Limbani's going to be jealous," Gilbert said, rolling off. "Balls, I'm wondering where you're getting all that energy."

Thomas stood and stretched. "Unlike you, I'm going to be away from everyone during the holidays. I need to stock up so I'll survive it."

"Just fuck your brother," Laurence said, yawning.

Thomas snorted. "Yeah, not happening. My family's weird like yours."

He left them to find more guys to have fun with.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Is Paul coming?" Limbani asked, doing a quick tap dance that didn't have more grace to hit and that without shoes look more silly than anything, it also caused the monkey's cock to bounce around. "I'm ready to impress him."

Thomas rolled his eyes and pushed Limbani into the lounge. "He and his mother already left for Florida. You'll have to settle for me."

Limbani grinned and flopped on the back of the couch, presenting his ass. "Fuck me!"

Thomas did.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas assembled the sandwiches while the panther held him and fucked him slowly. "Your ass is amazing," he whispered before yawning. "I could fuck it for the rest of my life."

"No biting," Thomas said, sharper than he'd intended when he felt the teeth against his neck. "Sorry, I just don't like it."

"I could get you used to it. I'm Jackson. You ever want to go steady?"

Thomas barely kept himself from laughing. "Thanks, but I'm not ready for a commitment yet."

The panther opened his mouth, but Thomas tightened his ass on the cock, making him moan instead of protest. A few seconds later, the guy was too busy fucking Thomas hard to talk. Then he was slumping and Thomas sat him in the chair, a glass of orange juice and sandwich before him. The other in the kitchen preparing food for those who were waking up chuckled.

"Is it my imagination," Yating asked Firmin, "or has Thomas's ass gotten more attractive since he went all top on us?"

"Versatile," Thomas corrected.

"Definitely one of us then," the badger replied, looking the rat over and getting hard. "But yeah, there's something about that ass now that it's not only the thing that we can get from him that makes me want to bury my cock in it." He paused. "Then again, maybe it's just payback for almost getting me caught with my pants down in that storage closet after leaving me there, cum dripping out of my ass."

Thomas's ears burned. That day was fuzzy, except from the orgasms. Those were as clear as day, each one of them.

"How did you get out of that?" Thomas asked.

"I gave the janitor the blowjob to last him the rest of his life," the badger replied, grinning.



Thomas's reply was interrupted by the group of guys who entered the kitchen, led by Henry, and he focused on feeding everyone. When that was done and it was just his brothers left in the house, the after-after party orgy kept him too busy.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas watched his father carefully look around the entryway while Henry looked Eric over with a hungry gaze. He was the last to leave, the others having left for the holidays over the previous day and morning. Only Yating, Firmin and Jacques weren't going home to celebrate them.

"I hope the house is living up to your expectations," Henry said. "If you want, I'll be more than happy to give you the tour."

"Thanks, but we need to get going. I'm simply surprised with how clean it is. This is one of the frats I've never had a chance to visit before, and I was expecting... well, I'm certain you know your own reputation."

Henry laughed. "I make sure the house is clean. There's nothing worse than fucking on the floor and rolling to over a discarded bottle to break the mood." Henry looked the rat over again. "As for a reason to visit, Mister Hertz, you have an open invitation to do so. Even if you weren't one of my brother's father, you are definitely hot enough I'd love to have you."

Thomas opened his mouth to protest, but his mother appeared next to his father, smiling. "That is most generous of you, Mister Heindrich, but Eric is mine. Speaking of with, I need to take him with me."

Before Henry could comment, his mother led Eric deeper into the house, disappearing into the kitchen's doorway.

"Did you leave a suitcase in the kitchen?" Henry asked, seeming baffled by where his parents had gone.

Thomas looked at the time. "No." This would be a quickie.

"Then what are they doing?"

Thomas raised an eyebrow and considered his answer. "Well, when a man and a woman love each other very much, they fuck a lot."

Henry stared at him. "In my house?"

Thomas shrugged. "Just be happy there's no one in the kitchen. They won't be long, I promise. We're never late to Grandpa's." Thomas offered the bat his hand. "I'll see you in January. I hope you have good holidays with your family."

Henry chuckled and shook it, then Thomas carried his suitcase and backpack to the car.

Judith exited and opened the hatchback. "Where's Mom and Dad?"

"Where do you think?"

She bit her lower lip. "You said Yat didn't go home for Thanksgiving, is he..." she trailed off.

"He's here, he..." Thomas frowned. He was sure Yating had told him why he wasn't flying home, but he couldn't recall.

With a grin, his sister hurried to the house. "Don't take too long," he yelled after her. "Or you'll have to make it there on your own." Or Yat would drive her? What would Grandpa's reaction be to her showing up with a guy?

He put his bags in the back of the car and closed it. Then stopped at the door on seeing Roland give him the once over and turning away. He looked to the house, hoping his parents were dragging Judith back with them.

"Hey Roland," he said when no one exited it. "How's training?"

"Fine," his brother said, not looking at him.

"His Neil and his dad doing anything this year?"

Roland shrugged.

“Are you and any of the cheerleaders—” Thomas closed his muzzle at the glare his brother gave him. “Sorry, right, stereotype.” Maybe he should go back inside. Henry’s cock in his mouth could be better than constantly putting his foot in there in trying to have a conversation with Roland.

He couldn’t wait for his brother to be done with school, so Helicarier Hertz wouldn’t have reason to hover over him all the time anymore. Maybe he and Roland could go back to getting along again.

He grin at the realization the discomfort had kept his mind from landing in the gutter for once. Then the realization that it was just him and his brother at the car and it would be awhile until the rest of his family returned.

His mind plummeted into the gutter and provided unwanted images of what he and his brother could get up to while they waited. And he let his head drop to the roof of the car, hoping the impact would chase the images away.

## CHAPTER-20

Thomas looked out at the white.

Winter at his grandfather's differed from at home. The snow was white, not the gray-brown that it quickly turned into in the city. Other than as it fell and an hour or two after, white snow wasn't a thing.

The car was silent. Nearly sixteen hours on the road was enough to drain anyone, even Thomas, in spite of sleeping for part of it. They'd taken turns driving, except for Roland, who, even now that he had his license, their parents wouldn't let drive in winter conditions yet.

There had been two pit stops, both mandated by Nadia having difficulty keeping her hands off Eric. Judith had offered they'd just switch, with the parents in the back, but Roland and Thomas had both protested. The one time, during the drive, the two of them had spoken together, if not at each other.

Now, they were on the last stretch, south out of Bozeman, on ever smaller roads with ever fewer houses further and further away from said road.

The property was announced by an open gate with a large sign over it with the family name, Hertz. It was reminiscent of cattle ranches from shows, even if his grandfather had never gotten close to live cattle, as far as Thomas knew.

The ranch-style house came into view, with the smattering of pines and firs around it, growing thicker at the back, before joining the national park the property was close to.

The older rat waited on the porch, wearing a heavy jacket and steaming cup in hand.

"Glad you guy made it!" he yelled as they exited the car.

Thomas cursed as the cold cut through his winter jacket and

jeans. When had the weather turned so cold?

“Wouldn’t miss this, Dad,” Eric called back.

Roland was already at the back, pulling a suitcase out by the time Thomas got there, and headed for their grandfather before he’d located his among the jigsaw that was their belonging.

“How have you been, Magnus?” Nadia asked, hugging her father-in-law, and Thomas used the time to sneak by and avoid the bone-crushing hug his grandfather always gave. “Do you have one of your girlfriends over this time?”

“I’m taking a break from them over the holidays.”

Thomas’s mother laughed and her reply was lost as Thomas headed deeper in and away from the cold. The living room was large, compared to that of his house, with a fieldstone fireplace and wood stacked next to it. The kitchen was on the right, and deeper in the house, with a dining table that could accommodate everyone in the Hertz family.

On the left was the hall leading to the bedrooms. Roland was in the first one and Thomas went past the next, hoping Judith would take it. Neither Thomas and Roland wanted to be next to their parents. If Magnus didn’t have a girlfriend over, then it was on less possibility for him to have to listen in to rutting.

He snorted. Rutting, he was now down to thinking of it as some animalistic act. It seemed all the stocking up he’d done before the trip wasn’t going to be of any help. At least he still had his hand.

He left the bedroom and returned to the living room to his parents in conversation with Magnus, each with a steaming cup of hot chocolate in hand.

“Thomas, how is university? I hear you’ve joined Sigma Theta Gamma.” His grandfather grinned. “Having fun yet?”

Thomas’s ears burned. “Does everyone know about their reputation?” He took the offered cup, then submitted to the hug. At least now he could return the favor and elicited a surprised look from

his grandfather.

"Anyone who's been to university has heard of them," the old rat replied. "They're an institution among the frats." He grinned. "You can't imagine the trouble they had back in the twentieth century, when it was 'gay is a sin' nonsense. If not for how much money the frat put into the university they were part of, I doubt they'd still exist."

"Thomas has managed to maintain good grades," Eric said, "despite the distraction the men there have to be causing him."

Nadia elbowed her husband. "Oh, don't say that like it's a bad thing. Thomas is now living up the standard we're worked so hard to set." She grinned at her son. "Don't slow down."

Thomas started at the liquid in his cup and decided he should have stayed at the frat with the others.

"Roland, how is your football career?" Magnus asked.

"I made MVP for the last three games," he answered. "Coach says that if we continue playing like this, we're sure to make the playoffs."

"Roland's a sure bet for the NFL," Eric said proudly.

"And how about the romantic life?" Magnus asked. "You're sixteen, so have you found yourself a girlfriend or three? Or are you interested in guys? Or both?"

Roland shook his head and hunched in on himself. Thomas had to fight the urge to come to his brother's defense. Magnus was as interested in their sex life as their father was in their academic one. Maybe obsessing about other people's lives was a Hertz trait and Thomas would inherit it in some fashion?

God, he hoped not.

He exchanged a roll of the eyes with Roland, then sat before the fire to soak in as much of the heat as possible.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas joined his family on the porch as a car came to a stop next to theirs. Corina jumped out. "Dad!" and ran to hug Magnus.

The rat behind the wheel took longer. Looking out mournfully before shutting it down and opening the door. He put on an extra heavy jacket before taking the bags out of the car and joining them.

"Dad, this is the man I told you about." Corina flashed her engagement ring.

Magnus looked Ettore over critically. "Isn't that a lot of layer?" he asked.

Thomas groaned. "Can we do this inside, where it's warm?" the extra wool shirt he had one wasn't helping.

"Corina, are you sure?" Magnus asked. "He looks on the thin side. Is he going to be able to carry you over the threshold?"

Corina pushed her father inside the house. "He is plenty strong for me. Inside, I'm with Thomas. There's a reason I moved south the instant I was old enough. I swear, you're some sort of arctic rat."

Magnus shook his head. "I knew I should have taken you kids to the father country. You'd know what cold is if you spent a winter in the north of Germany."

"You guys are from Germany?" Ettore asked. "Do you know the Brukammers?"

"I know of them," Magnus said, while his children rolled their eyes.

"Honey, our family's *from* Germany, it's been over a century since a Hertz called it home."

Ettore seemed surprised. "But you still know them?"

"I know of them," Magnus said. "As heavily involved in manufacturing as they are, it was impossible for me not the ear of the family. I was a financial adviser in my old life."

"Old life?" Ettore asked.

"Before I retired," Magnus answered, and Eric snorted, then wiped his muzzle as his father glared.

"Yeah, sure," Eric said. "Retired." He looked to Ettore. "My dad's a workaholic."

"Says the son of mine who barely sleeps," Magnus replied. "Do you manage to keep him from heading out to his classroom before the sun comes up?" He asked Nadia.

"Oh God, yes, she does," Judith replied. "The two of them are like an alarm clock. Every God damned morning."

"You're just jealous you don't get to compete with them," Roland said.

"I would if they'd let me keep a guy overnight."

"Can we not talk about my parents having sex?" Thomas asked.

"What do you do for a living, Ettore?" Magnus asked, smirking at Thomas.

"I'm something of a corporate troubleshooter," the rat answered. "My family owns a chain of Hotel, and I go around making sure they are performing."

"And before you ask, Dad, Ettore performs quite well."

The old rat smiled. "Of that, I have no doubt. No Hertz has ever picked a mate who wasn't able to keep up."

"I thought it was the Royers who were the overly sexed ones," Ettore said.

"You're a rat, aren't you?" Magnus asked. "Are you telling me your family isn't sexually active?"

Ettore's smiled turned into a smirk. "Oh, my family is very sexually active. You could even say we bring the curve way up high."



Magnus raised his hot chocolate. "To being a rat." The adults joined in and Thomas could already see the stay being hell on him. He'd now have to deal with two couples who were going to be loud. He just knew it. At least his grandfather didn't have a girl over.

"So, you have a good job, you keep my daughter satisfied." Magnus nodded thoughtfully. "But I do have to wonder, can you provide for her?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas walked behind his grandfather, father and Ettore, his boots crunching the layer of hardened snow before sinking to his ankle. Roland walked on the opposite side from the group. He and Thomas had argued they should stay at the house as loudly as Corina had argued she should come with the men. After all, she was a better shot than Eric ever was. They'd all lost. Corina because Magnus had explained that this was about seeing how good of a hunter Ettore was and giving him the opportunity to answer questions without worrying about what she would think of them. The boys, because their grandfather said so, that was why.

So, they'd bundled in the heaviest, warmest clothing available, Thomas having to borrow some from his grandfather. He and his parents had forgotten that his bulking up meant some of the clothing he'd brought no longer fit him. And followed Magnus as he led them into the denser trees behind the property.

Within half an hour, Magnus had located hares, and Ettore brought down two before the group scattered, impressing the older man. Eric brought down an owl, then they were moving again. Magnus asking the questions that would make an inquisitor proud. Did he really need to know how often a day Ettore and Corina did it? And did Ettore have to be so willing to answer?

When the rat started describing how he and his fiancée performed, Thomas decided he had enough and headed in another direction. He was familiar with the woods from multiple trips to his grandfather over the years. And this destination had been marked in his memory by how he'd found it.

A ten-year-old boy getting separated from his family during a late fall hunting trip didn't get forgotten easily.

He found the grotto and felt the warmth as soon as he stepped in, enough he unzipped his jacket. There were no hot springs in the area as far as Thomas had uncovered, but he suspected one of them ran under the ground and was the reason for the heat. His breath still fogged, but it had made that late fall day when he'd taken refuge from the cold bearable until his family found him.

He sat on the stone outcropping and rested against the wall. He loved his family, but he was happy for the silence. He closed his eyes and soaked in his surroundings.

The silence wasn't absolute. Birds sang, animals ran and caused the snow to crack. A coyote howled in the distance.

Little by little, Thomas relaxed. He hadn't realized how tense he'd been. This was a family trip. He shouldn't be tense. But with his father's talk of his academic performance, his parents over sharing, now Corina and Ettore doing the same, and Roland in such proximity.

Why couldn't he just stop thinking of his brother that way? They were brothers, for God's sake. Laurence mentioning he and Roland should fuck hadn't helped. Being stuck in the car hadn't helped, and with Ettore and Corina taking the bedroom Thomas had claimed for himself, and being relegated to sharing the one Roland had...

"The bed's big enough for the two of you," Magnus has said, unconcerned, when Thomas had pointed out there was only one bed.

The moment Thomas rolled over, he was going to smack his brother with his erection and what a mess that was going to be. And not the good kind.

Damn it. Even on his own, he couldn't seem to stop.

The crunching of snow pulled him out of his thoughts, someone approaching. Solitude wasn't so precious it couldn't be interrupted, it seemed.

Eric became visible. "I figured I'd find you here." He looked around and smile. "You were curled up over there. You'd managed to fall asleep."

"I'd cried myself out," Thomas said. "I guess there's only so much I could feel before exhaustion took me."

Eric sat next to him. "How are you doing? You've seemed tense driving up here. If you're worried about your grades, you don't have to be, you—"

"Will you stop it?" Thomas sighed. "Can't you just stop being my adviser for like five second?"

"I'm not talking as your adviser, son. This is me as your father saying you are going—"

"And you don't get how that's even worse, do you?"

The confusion in his father's eyes was answer enough.

"Didn't you wonder why I've been working so damned hard to avoid you at school?"

Eric frowned. "I just figured you were busy with your studying."

Thomas rolled his eyes. "Yeah sure, and other stuff, but I've been running in the opposite direction the instant I saw you."

"Why?"

Thomas stared at his father. "Why? Because I don't want this." He motioned between them. "This constant hovering, looking over my grades asking what I want. You didn't even ask if I wanted you as my adviser, you just pulled strings and made it happen. Fuck, did you even ask Roland if he wants a second coach?"

"I..." Eric trailed off. "I didn't realize you felt that way."

"Because you never bothered asking," Thomas snapped, then sighed. "Sorry."

"I'm trying to do what's best for you."

"How do you know what's best for me, dad, when I don't even know what I want?" he sighed again, then they were silent.

"University," Eric said, "did you go because I pushed you to it?"

"No, I'd have gone, anyway. It's not like I can get much of a job these days without proper schooling. Maybe I'd have taken a year to figure myself out instead of going there directly. Maybe I'd know what I want to do with myself if I had. Now I feel like I'm just wasting time, since I can't find a major I like."

They were quiet again.

"You do know there's nothing wrong with a liberal arts major, right?" Eric asked.

"If I'm okay with minimum wage, I guess."

"Don't be like that, Thomas. We've had presidents who had a liberal art's major. I'll admit it doesn't make your future easier, but it doesn't end it either. And I'm sorry for pushing you so hard. I thought it would help you get further. I'll do my best to give you more space from now on."

"And Roland?"

Eric smiled. "Still looking after your brother, despite the tension between you two. Yes, me and your mother have noticed it. I'll talk with him. But football was something he loved before I got involved."

"But an NFL career?" Thomas asked.

Eric was thoughtful. "Alright, maybe I am pushing a little too hard there. But in my defense, his coach thinks he had what it takes."

"He's a Hertz, he'll excel at anything he puts his mind to, won't he?"

"So will you, Son."

Thomas nodded. If only there was something he wanted to put his mind toward. Other than sex. Really, his mind was already plenty focused on that.

“How about we rejoined the others before they launch a search party?”

Thomas nodded, and they left the grotto.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Not a bad hunt,” Magnus said as they approached the house. “We’ll make a great hunter out of you yet, Roland.”

Thomas’s brother was grinning from ear to ear, holding the hare he’d taken down. Ettore had been the one to give him instructions, another test his grandfather gave the future son-in-law.

Thomas hadn’t killed anything. His mind had been on what his father said about figuring out what he wanted and that he’d be good at it, no matter what it was.

“The hunters have returned,” Nadia yelled from the back porch. “And they bring food.” She sat in a chair, sun on her, and wrapped in blankets.

Corina stepped outside, arm fur red to her elbows. “I guess that can be for tomorrow, because I have tonight’s meat just about ready.”

“What happened?” Magnus asked, worried and hurrying.

Corina smiled. “While you brave men were out looking for food, food came looking for us.”

“Is everyone alright?”

“It’s just me and Nadia, Dad. And we’re fine.”

“She shot the cougar at what, three hundred feet?”

“Three-fifty,” Corina corrected.

“One shot and down it went.”

Magnus’s smile was brighter than the sun. “That’s my girl.”:

\* \* \*

## CHAPTER-21

The table creaked under the weight. Plates overflowed with food, from the steaks Corina cut out of the cougar, the potatoes: scalloped, pureed, baked; the sauces: cranberry, gravy, the vegetables; carrots, beets, green beans, corn. There was even turkey, as if Magnus hadn't trusted his family to take down something, or, Thomas thought this more likely, he'd prepared in case something happened and hunting couldn't have happened. It caused there to be enough food to feed three times the people seated around the table.

The conversation was cheerful, more discussions of how Ettore's family celebrated the holidays than interrogating him. The answers were much tamer than Thomas expected. He'd worked out from Madoc that the Lewiston could give the Royer a run for their money when it came to sex.

His grandfather had accepted Ettore was a suitable candidate for his daughter. Which caused Ettore to relax, finally, much to Corina's amusement. The rat had fretted over making a good impression, despite his fiancée's reassurance that they were getting married regardless of what her father thought.

Much to Thomas's surprise, neither his parents, nor the newly engaged couple, vanished in the middle of the dinner.

Somehow, the food was nearly all eaten. Thomas was amazed at the appetite he had developed. It had to be all that working out and sex he'd engaged in. He considered how much everyone ate and decided it was mainly the sex.

Dessert was brought out, a collection of pies and cakes that survived mostly intact. Then, with cups of coffee or tea or hot coco, they adjourned to the living room where gifts were piled on around the fireplace.

"Thanks, Aunt Corina," Thomas said, holding the sweater he'd unwrapped. Red and green zigzags, with a garishly brown reindeer on the front and a large white snowflake on the back. It was

something of a Hertz tradition that one of the gift had to be a horrible Christmas sweater, and his aunt hadn't disappointed.

"Put it on," Ettore said, wearing a white sweater with a Santa on it holding a present looking suspiciously like a dildo.

"Yeah," Roland said, grinning maliciously. "Put it on Thomas. It's going to look great on you."

Sighing, he raised it over his head.

"No, you have to take off your shirt first," Ettore said, grinning at Roland.

Thomas looked at the rat. Had his brother roped him into humiliating him? Thomas nearly looked to his parents, a demand they make Roland stop on his lips, then reminded himself he was eighteen and lived on his own. Hiding behind his parents, who were busy making out on the couch, was beneath him. He could tell the two of them 'no' on his own. He was enough of an adult for that.

With a sigh of resignation, he removed his shirt to a wolf-whistle from Ettore and Corina's laughter. Thomas purposefully didn't look at Roland. He didn't want to see the mockery in his eyes. It would take a lot more work on Madoc's part before Thomas looked anywhere close to as good as his brother.

The sweater fought him, tried to choke him as Thomas pulled it down.

"I think," Judith said, "that you missed the memo about all the working out Thomas has been doing. I didn't think a sweater could be too small on anyone."

"Happy now?" Thomas asked Roland, who had the decency to look away to hide his expression.

"Very much so," Ettore replied, grinning.

"You purposely picked one a size too small, didn't you, Hun?" Corina asked. Ettore assumed the most innocent expression Thomas ever saw on a man. Even Limbani couldn't match it, and Thomas had



seen the monkey try to ‘innocent’ his way out of a lot of things.

“Well, I think this is going to be more useful than I expected.” Magnus handed Thomas an envelope. He opened it and along with a Christmas card with a picture of reindeers barely dressed in holiday colors, it contained a hundred dollar cash card.

Thomas chuckled, “I can start rebuilding my wardrobe.”

“You can borrow Roland’s clothes,” Eric said, coming up for breath before Nadia pulled him down again.

“Mom,” Judith complained. “Can you at least take it to the bedroom?”

Roland glared at Thomas, a dare to even consider getting close to his dressed. Thomas rolled his eyes. His brother’s clothes were safe from him.

His parents stopped their sessions long enough to open gifts, their own matching, horrible sweaters, lingerie, hot and cold massage oils, internal vibrators. With every gift his parents opened, Thomas’s ears burned hotter.

At least Ettore’s and Corina’s gifts were ordinary, after the over sharing during the hunting outing, Thomas had been scared he’d see their entire sexual preferences on display, and with Ettore being bi, he’d been worried some of them would end up turning Thomas on.

Thomas’s gifts were, thankfully, the definition of tame. A new phone, and enough cash cards to rebuild his wardrobe and possibly ensure Limbani would be dressed, too. Roland had cash cards too, along with some high-quality football equipment courtesy of Ettore. To Magnus, the new family member had given a bottle of pills to assist with his sexual performance. Thomas couldn’t figure out if it was as a joke or if he’d been trying to be helpful. The answer had to depend on what Corina told her fiancée, and Thomas was worried about what he’d find out if he asked about it.

Judith had laughed as she took the vibrator out of the box.

“Something to make the stay away from your men more

bearable," Corina said.

With the presents all distributed, Thomas's parents disappeared. Corina and Ettore remained, talking with Magnus and Judith, even pulling Thomas into the conversation. Roland left not long after, and eventually Thomas headed off to sleep too.

He bypassed the bedroom he had to share with Roland, and went to his grandfather's office, which he knew had a pullout bed. He did not want to share a bed with his brother tonight, not with the way his cock was demanding attention. It was like everyone forgot guys had need too and that it wasn't something you did with your brother next to you.

He stifled the groan as thoughts of doing a lot more next to Roland began bouncing in his head. Thomas definitely had a problem.

He closed the door closed, then the book shelf that contained the Murphy bed down. Why hadn't he been assigned this as his room to start with? It wasn't like his grandfather was going to use the office while they were visiting. He wasn't *that* much of a workaholic.

He undressed and reclined on the bed, and looked at his erect cock. "Why couldn't I have been the one gifted the vibrator?" He briefly considered asking if she'd lend it to him, then imagined all the questions that would follow, the details she'd demand and settled on his hand and imagination.

And it wasn't like he was short on material. He had more encounters he could relive if he needed it. He moaned softly as he caressed his shaft before closing his hand on it. He let his mind wander. Limbani topping him vigorously. Putting Felix in his place by making him scream Thomas's name. Henry on top of him, biting his neck as he orgasmed.

Chima.

Thomas moaned loudly as he remembered the Adonis of a hyena fucking him with that mask on, losing himself in those empty orbs. Fucking him in return. The power he'd felt taking possession of the hyena, again with the mask. How much they both wanted it,

needed it. It was as if they'd been called to one ano—

“What cabinet is it in, Grandpa?” Judith asked, pushing the door in.

Terror gripped Thomas at the idea his sister would catch him jerking off. He tried to cover himself, but he was on top of the sheet and his clothes were on the floor. He looked for something, anything, to hide behind or cover himself with as the door kept opening. So slowly, it was like his sister was doing it on purpose.

He needed to get out of here before she saw him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas remembered Judith's surprised expression as their eyes met, then falling, then the shock of cold, lack of light. He looked around, trying to understand what had happened, where he was, and that turned out to be a mistake as the world kept on turning when his head stopped and he was falling again, only this time he could make out the stony floor approaching before darkness claimed him.

## CHAPTER-22

There was cold in the darkness, but somehow not as much as Thomas thought there should be. Still too much. He was aware of the shivering stopping not long before the voices came, loud and distant, then loud and close, scared, worried, angry. His father, grandfather, mother, sister and another voice he recognize but couldn't place. It was the only calm voice among them.

He traveled. In someone's arms, then much faster, lights disappearing into the darkness almost as fast as they appeared. Then lights so bright he expected to make it out of the darkness. New voices, urgent, clinical. Beeping. Heat nearly burning in its intensity, shivering again.

"Hey," he grumbled as something pricked his arm, and finally he was going to make it out of the darkness, but it turned cloying, viscous. It pulled him down further and he didn't have the energy to fight it. The voice receded into the distance, and then even his thoughts were quiet.

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Thomas cracked an eye open before realizing he was awake. The light was soft. The ceiling white. There was a disinfectant smell in the air. Even before he turned his head, he had a sense there were others in the room.

"Thomas," his mother said, immediately at his side, her relief loud.

He tried to greet her, but his mouth was filled with cotton. Why had someone done that to him?

"You gave us quite the scare, young man," Eric said, the worry masked by sternness.

He tried for a question since a greeting wouldn't happen, but the cotton wouldn't let the words form.

"Here, you must be thirsty," his mother said, holding a plastic cup with a straw to his lips.

He took a tentative sip and nearly moaned at how good the water was. He pulled on the straw harder and protested when she took it away from him.

"Careful, don't overdo it."

"What happened?" he asked, then was surprised the water had dissolved the cotton.

"We were hoping you'd tell us," his father said.

A knock on the opening door kept Thomas from voicing his confusion.

A nurse smiled at them. "I need to check your son's vitals now that he's awake," he said. "You can stay, I'll just be a minute or two."

His father moved away from the bed, and Thomas saw the heart monitor. His heart rate climbed as he worried about being hooked up to it.

"It's nothing to worry about," the nurse, an attractive monkey, if on the thin side. "It's just to keep track of your progress. How are you feeling?"

"Confused. Where are we?"

Worry crossed the monkey's eyes. "What's your name?"

Thomas rolled his eyes. "Thomas Hertz. I live on the Minneapolis side of the Twin Cities, and before you ask, I have no idea of the date, because I don't know how long I've been sleeping."

The nurse smiled. "Someone's seen medical dramas."

"Need something to do between studying and waiting for a guy to fuck me. Oh my God," Thomas said, his entire body turning to fire and the number on the monitor climbing quickly. "I have no idea why I said that."

The nurse chuckled. "It's okay, you can calm down. It's not the worse thing I've heard, or seen. But you're going to want to lower your heart rate before it trips an alarm and calls in a crash team."

"It can do that?" Thomas asked as the man placed a sensor on his index finger and took a thermometer out of stand.

"No, your heart has to stop for that to happen, and yours beating strong. Now, considering what you said, do you have a preference for which orifice I insert this in?"

It took a second for Thomas to understand what the monkey meant and he made a face. "Ew, I'm not letting that get close to my ass."

"Open up then."

The machine beeped, and the nurse took the thermometer out and removed the sensor.

"How is the patient doing," a woman asked as she entered. The dachshund had a lab coat and a tablet in her hand.

"He's doing good," the nurse answered. "His vitals are steady. The glucose levels are still a little low, but they're within acceptable range finally, Doctor."

She consulted the tablet, but her expression didn't change.

"I'm Doctor Argent," she introduced herself to Thomas. "Can you tell me what happened? Your family was confused as to the sequence of events."

Thomas opened his mouth and closed it as his ears burned. "I was... resting. I remember the door opening then..." falling, darkness, cold. Losing consciousness. "... nothing."

She made notes, her expression still not changing. "I'm sorry for I'm asking very personal questions, but I need to make sure we're treating the right problem." She fixed him with her gaze.

"Okay," he answered, wondering what kind of personal

questions she felt the need to ask.

“Do you have any problems eating?”

“No,” he answered, and her frown said it wasn’t what she’d hoped to hear.

She looked at his parents. “Would you mind giving us privacy? He might be more willing to answer if it was just the two of us.”

“Now, wait a minute,” Eric said. “My son does not have an eating disorder.”

“What?” Nadia asked, looking at Thomas in worry.

“Mister Hertz,” the doctor said in that clinical tone used in TV shows anything a doctor dealt with a difficult patient. “I understand that you might not want to believe your son has a problem, but parents are often the last to know.”

“I don’t have a problem,” Thomas said. “Well, not that one, anyway.”

The doctor looked at him in anticipation and Thomas’s ears burned again. “What problem do you have?”

Maybe he could disappear again? Or whatever had actually happened.

When her expression didn’t change, he sighed. “I haven’t gotten laid in a few days.”

She raised an eyebrow.

“I know that might not sound like a problem—”

She raised a hand. “You’re the only one who can decide if that’s a problem, unless it’s what led to your dangerously low blood sugar.”

Thomas frowned. “Some said that cum—” he closed his muzzle. “What is in the stuff you’re pumping into me? I don’t

normally say stuff like that.”

The doctor cracked a smile. “It’s just a saline and a glucose bag. Nothing nefarious.”

He eyed her suspiciously. “I don’t normally over share like that. That’s my parents’ job.”

She nodded. “Do you think you’ve misdirected the conversation enough to give me an honest answer?”

“I don’t have a problem with food, I swear. I eat normally, well, more than I used to with all the exercise I’ve been getting. Working out,” he added as the other smile that form on her lips. “With weights and machine.” He flex the arm without the wires attach to it. “I don’t come by this naturally. My brother sees to it I work myself hard.” He kept himself from adding ‘and works me hard too.’ But barely.

“Frat brother,” Eric added.

The doctor nodded, but focused on Thomas’s face. “You’re being honest about eating properly? I know it can be difficult to ask for help, but that is what I’m here for.”

Thomas almost pointed out he was eighteen and living in a frat house. Their definition of ‘eating well’ probably wasn’t hers, but he stopped himself again, which he took for a sign he was improving.

“I swear. I don’t know why I have low blood sugar. It’s never been a problem before, and before I... retired, we had a large Christmas dinner. I ate plenty, and I didn’t make myself throw up,” he added, remembering hearing it sometimes happened with people who had an eating disorder.

She still didn’t seem entirely satisfied, but she nodded. “Alright. I’ll take you at your word and treat this as a freak occurrence, but if you even need to talk, just call me, or speak with your parents or a counselor. *If* this is something deeper, don’t try to deal with it alone.”

She nodded to his parents and left them.



"Are you sure you don't have a problem?" his mother asked, taking his hand.

"Mom, I swear, I don't know what happened, but I don't have an eating disorder."

She searched his face, but unlike the doctor, she smiled and relaxed at what she saw there. She offered him the water, and he took a few more sips.

"What can you tell us, Thomas?" Eric asked. "Judith wasn't particularly helpful, even once she calmed down."

His ears went right back to burning as he remembered her entering the office. Their eyes locking before he was falling.

"What did she say happened?" he asked.

"She doesn't know," Nadia said. "She thought she'd seen you and she screamed in surprise at what you were doing, but she admitted she can't have seen you, since you weren't in the room when we got there and the window was closed and locked."

"I don't know what happened," he said. "I really down. I was... well, you know. I was kind of pent up, and I wasn't going to do *that* in the room with Roland. I was in the middle of it when the door opened. Judith called out to Grandpa, then..." falling, darkness, cold. "I don't know." He looked around the room. "Where is everyone?"

"In the waiting room," Eric said. "We didn't want to crowd you."

Thomas nodded and yawned, fatigue suddenly crashing down on him. "Okay. Will they visit?"

"Of course they will," his mother said as he closed his eyes. "But maybe we'll have them wait until you've slept some more."

Thomas mumbled a reply and then was asleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas woke up as someone places something on his finger.

"How are you doing?" the nurse asked. The same monkey as before.

"I'm not going to get any sleep if you keep waking me every time I fall asleep."

"You've been sleeping for four hours. Sorry about this," he took the thermometer out, "but I need to check your vitals. The mouth again?"

Someone chuckled as Thomas opened his mouth. Ettore was seated, reading on his phone.

"Still looking good, and your blood sugar's up, so you are clearly on the med," the nurse said, putting the tools away and leaving.

"Where's everyone?" Thomas asked Ettore.

"We've been taking turns keeping you company." The rat put his phone away and stood. "You gave us all a scare, vanishing like that. I had to insist your parents take a break and rest. I took a turn not long before the nurse woke you."

"Can you get them, I'd like to make sure they know I'm okay."

"I will, in a minute." Ettore was next to the bed, a serious expression on his face. "What happened, Thomas?"

"I don't know. I was..." he sighed. "I was jerking off, then Judith walking in scaring the shit out of me and..." falling, darkness, cold. "Nothing."

The rat searched Thomas's face with an intensity even the doctor hadn't matched. "You can tell me the truth, Thomas."

"That's the truth. I really don't know what happened."

"Thomas." Ettore paused. "Look, my family has enemies. I didn't think any of them would try to get to us through you, but if someone is coercing you into not saying what they did to you, I can protect you, I can make sure your family's safe, but I need to know who took you. What they did to you."

Thomas snorted a chuckle. "Are you part of the mob or something?" This was beginning to feel like an episode from a TV show. "Nothing happened," he said when Ettore's expression didn't change. "I mean, something happened, clearly, but no one took me." Thomas paused and frowned. "I mean, I don't remember there being anyone."

Ettore lips became a tight line, but the answer seemed to satisfy him. "If you think you'll remain awake, I'll get your family." (I'm not including the FBI because if Ettore suspects it's related to the Lewistons, he would make sure they aren't involved)

Thomas nodded and drained the cup of water while he waited.

To his surprise, Roland was the first in the room, and Thomas swore he saw relief on his brother's face before the scowl appeared.

"Asshole," Roland said. "You just couldn't bear not to be the center of attention, could you?"

"Oh sure, like I wanted to just vanish and nearly freeze to death."

Roland moved close to the bed and Thomas swallowed hard at the thought he might have died and missed watching his brother play in the big league.

"How did you pull it off?" Roland asked, curiosity replacing the scowling. "No one saw you leave the house, there are no tracks to the cave."

"Grotto," Thomas corrected.

"Whatever. If Dad hadn't had a hunch we'd find you there, because it's where you went when you vanished from the hunting trip, we'd have never found you and you would have had to come back with your tail between your legs."

"Roland, I don't know what happened, okay? If I knew, I'd tell you. You're my brother, even if you are an asshole too."

“Fine, be that way. At least for five minutes, Dad wasn’t hovering around me.”

“I am so glad nearly dying gave you some peace,” Thomas replied, rolling his eyes.

Roland’s angry retort was cut off by the door opening and the rest of the Hertz pouring in. When Thomas was done being hugged, he looked around for his brother, but Roland had pulled his own vanishing act.

## CHAPTER-23

Thomas walked up to the Sigma Theta Gamma feeling his father's eyes on his back.

He'd have preferred to get Paul to drive him, but Eric had insisted, and his stuff was already in the car. Thomas considered it a miracle he'd even convince his parents to let him get back to the frat. They'd wanted to keep him until he looked better, but he'd reassured him the guys would look after him as well as they would. His father has scoffed at that, but he'd given in.

"Thomas, welcome back how were..." Henry trailed off and stopped as he exited the kitchen. "What happened to you?"

"Nothing," he replied.

"Thomas's back!" someone yelled from the living room, Gilbert, or maybe Laurence, maybe. The drawl was right for either of them, but Thomas was still tired from lying on a hospital bed for days and couldn't fully place the voice.

Heads poked out of the living room, followed by bodies, naked or partially dressed. Olavo, Madoc, Firmin, Laurence.

"I fine," Thomas said, barely keeping the exasperation out of his voice.

"You don't look it," Laurence said.

Madoc was before him, pushing the jacket off Thomas's shoulder, then pulled the shirt off before he could protest and studying his body. "How the fuck did you lose so much muscle mass in a few days?" he demanded. "Didn't you do any of the exercises I gave you?"

Thomas batted the hand away. "Cut me some slack, okay?" he snapped, and continued before he could stop himself. "I'd love to see you exercise when you're forced to lie on a hospital bed for three days after ending up in a Montana cave in the middle of winter and nearly

freezing your cock off.”

Madoc pulled him into the living room while Olavo grabbed Henry and went into the kitchen. Thomas sighed and dropped onto the couch.

“Sorry, I shouldn’t have snapped.” His suitcase was taken from him, and Madoc sat next to him. “It’s just been a sucky break over all.”

Firmin sat on his other side, snuggling against Thomas and a hand rubbing his chest. “Well, I’m glad you’re back.”

“Me too,” Madoc said. “Sorry for going all coach from hell on you.” He nuzzled his neck.

“It’s okay,” Thomas replied with a contented sigh, then chuckled as Laurence undid his belt before raising Thomas’s legs and pulling the pants off him. Behind the armadillo, deep in the kitchen, Thomas saw Olavo and Henry arguing. The capybara pointed in their direction, said something and the bat gave a shake of the head with his reply, causing Olavo to storm off and out of view.

Then Thomas was distracted by hands running over his body.

“You guys have no idea how lucky you are my parents even let me come back. For a while it sounded like they were going to tie me to my bed to make sure I didn’t disappear again.”

“I didn’t think you were into that stuff with your dad,” Laurence said, and Thomas rolled his eyes.

“First my brother, now my dad? Do you guys have some weird fantasy about me performing incest? Keeping it in the family is your thing, Rowling.”

Firmin chuckled, rubbing Thomas’s side while Laurence ran his hands on the insides of the rat’s legs.

“We put it in any guys who offer themselves,” the armadillo replied.

"I don't see you putting in me," Thomas said with a chuckle and looked at the other two. "Honestly, if I'd known all it took to get some foreplay in here was for me to almost die, I'd have done it sooner."

"That sounds like a dare to me," the badger said.

"Yeah, we can't have him get used to *that*, can we?" Laurence raised Thomas's legs over his shoulders. "He might start thinking we're all romantic and stuff."

"That isn't what I—" the rest was lost in a moan as the armadillo pushed his slick cock in Thomas's ass, then Madoc was nipping at his nipples and Firmin was sucking him off.

Oh yeah, it was good to be home.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Come on," Paul said, "the class wasn't that bad."

"Huh? Oh no, just..." he trailed off. Returning to school had helped take his mind off the Christmas holiday, but it hadn't made him forget the oddity of it all. Then the way Ettore had said what had happened to him might be related to his family. He'd almost asked Madoc what that meant, but had decided the best thing to do was just put all of it behind him.

If only his mind would cooperate.

At least Paul didn't push. He'd asked without Thomas bringing it up as they walked to their first class of the semester, one of two they shared this time since, unlike the previous one, they'd sat down to build a better matching schedule. Stories of his vanishing act had made it out of the frat house, and if Thomas could figure out who had done it, he'd make them pay, but none of them admitted to doing it.

"Did you hear the latest?" Paul asked as they got in line for the food counter.

"Do I even want to know?" Thomas replied.

“Turns out, you were kidnapped by aliens, who probed you thoroughly.”

The rat rolled his eyes, making his food selection. “You’re just making that up.”

“Nope,” the golden tiger said. “Heard it from Julian, who heard it from his sister, who heard it from that weird guy who’s always hanging out by the library steps but no one’s really sure if he has classes here.”

“His name is Nalo, and he has classes. He’s an engineering major. I don’t know which one.”

“How do you know that?” Paul asked, paying for his food.

Thomas paid for his and followed the tiger to an empty table before answering. “We talk between fucks.”

Paul stared at Thomas, then looked at his ears. “Where’s the usual blush? Are you actually getting used to over sharing?”

“This is you I’m talking with. This isn’t over sharing. I just never had much to talk about until last semester. There was only so much I could say about my jerking off sessions back then.”

“True. So, if it isn’t aliens probing you, and if it is, you need to make sure they take me too next time. I want myself some alien probing.”

“Are you going to have time to get to know them well enough before they start?” Thomas asked.

“It’s aliens, I can make an exception for them.”

Thomas chuckled. “Don’t let Limbani know that. He might decide fooling you into thinking you’ve been abducted is easier than learning to dance.”

Paul chuckled. “You do have to admire his tenacity.”

“I prefer admiring his technique, endurance, and the way his cock feels in me.” Feeling mischievous, Thomas ran a foot up the inside



of the tiger's leg until he was rubbing his crotch.

With a roll of the eyes, Paul pushed the foot off. "It isn't because you've shown me what you can do now that you top that the cafeteria has suddenly become an appropriate place for this kind of stuff."

"You do remember what frat I'm part of, right? Anywhere is appropriate."

"So, if not aliens, then you were kidnapped by a group of evil scientists who did experiments on you to turn you into some sleeper agent ready to molest all of us on command. That or it was the FBI because you're actually part of the mob and you've been keeping it from me all these years. I won't forgive you if it's that one."

"That one's not funny," Thomas said, remembering Ettore's words and the implications in them.

"Sorry," Paul said after studying Thomas's face. "You want me to go on?"

"It's probably best you don't," he replied, seeing his father approaching. "Parent incoming."

"Yours or mine?"

"Since when does your mom hover around you?"

Paul's comeback was changed to "good morning Mister Hertz," and an innocent smile.

"Hello Paul. How are you doing, Thomas?"

"I'm good. Heading to the library after lunch to get some studying in."

"That's good, keep up the good work." Eric headed to another table where he talked with another group of student.

"Keep up the good work?" Paul repeated. "Who was that? What happened to Helicarrier Hertz? Was he somehow disarmed?"

“Me and Dad had a talk over the holiday; before my incident. He’s been giving me more space. I think the only reason he checks in on me still is that he’s worried I might vanish again.”

“Roland must be overjoyed to be receiving all that extra attention.”

“I don’t know. It isn’t like my brother talked to me before.”

They fell silent, and it quickly turned uncomfortable, so to break it, Thomas asked. “So, you and Olavo, how is that coming along? Is he a good enough of a dancer yet?” He smiled as Paul was the one to groan this time.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas moaned as he plowed the bat’s ass, his legs over the rat’s shoulders. Fucking one of his frat brother was definitely a great with to end the week, or start it, or anytime in the middle, Especially after having rebuilt his endurance and stamina so quickly, even if it had taken a daily workout session at the gym with Madoc.

Thomas raised his head and let out a yell as he came, then looked at at the bat, panting.

Henry looked at him, head canted thoughtfully. “So, he finally said. You really don’t remember what happened to you over the holidays.”

Thomas groaned. “Really, now? You’re going to go all inquisitor on me while I have my cock in your ass? No, I don’t remember. I really wish you’d all just forget about it. Fuck, at this point I wish I could forget myself.”

“No, that’s not what I mean, I—” the bat stopped and shook his head. “Never mind. I know you don’t really want to talk about.” He pushed Thomas off and next to him. “Get on your stomach, I know just how to take the edge off from that problem.”

“You know, fucking isn’t the solution to every problem,” Thomas said, as Henry lay on top of him, grinding his cock between the ass cheeks.

The bat leaned in and nuzzled Thomas's neck as he pushed his cock into the rat's ass. "Oh, I find that it is part of solving just about every problem I ever had."

"No biting," Thomas said through the moan that escaped him.

"I won't, no worries." The bat thrust hard, and as Thomas cried out, he thought he felt a prick at his neck, but it had to be his imagination. Henry had said he wouldn't do it, and Henry always did what he said. He was a really good guy that way, always respecting other's wishes. No wonder he'd been elected to be the head of the household.

Thomas wondered why he and Henry didn't fuck more often. This was only their what, second time doing it since he'd joined the frat? No, third, if he counted the time he'd sucked off the bat at the first party. Henry was always so busy.

But he was such a good top.

Why hadn't he and Thomas fucked more often? He'd have to remedy that in the future, but for now, he enjoyed being fucked by an expert. And he was right, he didn't feel worried. So he'd nearly frozen to death. He hadn't; that was the important part. The blackout didn't matter either. Eventually they'd find out what had happened, and Henry would make it all better than too. Like he had every previous time.

\* \* \*

## CHAPTER-24

Thomas looked at the candied mints in the oven before going back to preparing the batter.

“What you doing?” Limbani whispered in his ear, making Thomas jump and nearly sent flour everywhere.

“Making dessert for tonight.”

“Yummy,” the monkey said, undoing Thomas’s tail strap, then moved his hands around, under the apron, and gently pushed them down until gravity did the rest of the work. Thomas rolled his eyes and glanced at the clock on the wall oven. He was pleased he’d started early; getting fucked would slow things down. At least everything he needed was within reach. Even the oil was in the pan, just waiting to be heated.

“You don’t even know what I’m making,” he told the monkey.

“You are making it. It’s going to be good. It could be you on the table for dessert and it would be delicious.”

“I don’t know that my cum’s sweet enough to qualify as dessert.”

“Hmm, let’s find out.” Without warning, Limbani basically melted around Thomas to end up on his knees, pushing the rat away from the counter. The monkey chuckled. “Love the apron.” He ran a hand over the ‘Kiss the chef’ written on it in old-style cursive.

“You’re a little low to do what it says,” Thomas replied, studying the situation. Everything was still within reach. He’d even set his workstation near the stove, figuring one of his frat brothers would pin him in place. What he hadn’t thought of was being pushed away. He was just far enough from the counter he’d have to lean forward to mix the batter. Not a comfortable position to work from.

He spread his legs around the monkey, which let him scoot forward enough he didn’t have to lean as much.

“I like how you think,” Limbani said, muzzle pressed against Thomas’s apron-covered crotch. Before the rat could comment, the monkey was under this apron, licking his balls, then swallowing his cock in its entirety.

“Oh Balls,” Thomas let out at the sensation. Borrowing one of Madoc’s preferred curses seemed appropriate here. He forced his eyes to stay open as Limbani sucked. If the monkey thought he was going to get Thomas to make a mistake, he shouldn’t have given him so many chances to practice through getting an orgasm.

The most hard part of making the batter while getting blown proved to be fighting the urge to grab onto Limbani’s head and just fuck his muzzle instead of letting it happen. Part of it was hurrying things along, Thomas decided, the other part as the temptation to shove his cock as deep as it would go to show the monkey he’d made a mistake doing that here and now.

He’d added the milk and eggs when the orgasm struck and Thomas had to let go of the bowl and whisk or risk sending everything over the counter. Empty hands resting on it to keep from just letting himself drop and panting, Thomas found out that hurrying things along did nothing to make it end as Limbani swallowed the cum without letting go of the cock and went right back to sucking.

“Fuck,” Thomas whispered. “Leave yourself room for dessert.”

The monkey snorted and was sucking the rat off again.

Thomas had a harder time focusing around the sensations as he picked the whisk. His cock was more sensitive now, his eyes wanted to cross, his hands were shaking. He took a breath and focused. He could do this. He’d won a ‘Kill’em all’ match while getting blown. This was no more difficult.

The batter was ready with a minimum of spillage, and the stove was on to heat the oil. The thermostat hook to the edge was slowly rising and Thomas considered face fucking the monkey to end this and dedicate all his focus on the funnel cakes.

“Fuck, the funnel.” Reaching for it while the monkey wouldn’t

let him move proved an adventure, but he managed it and was pouring the batter into it as he felt the orgasm approach, his hands trembling and his eyes demanding to close so he could fully appreciate the ecstasy.

“Careful there,” Yating whispered in his ear, hand grabbing the one holding the bowl and steadying it. “Whatever this is, we don’t want it on the counter, do we?” He placed his other hand around Thoma’s stomach and pushed his cock in the rat’s ass.

Thomas let out a scream and exploded in Limbani’s muzzle as the red panda fucked him. When he could see again, Thomas was amazed the batter hadn’t ended up on the counter.

Limbani let go of the cock and extricated himself from between Thomas and the cabinets. “I’d love to go for a third serving, but getting the back of my head slammed against the door by Yat’s thrusts is killing my appetite.” He stood and stretched, his back popping. “And it’s kiss the chef, not fuck the chef,” he scowled.

“You kiss by sucking him off,” Yating replied languidly, his thrusting slowing to match the tone, “I do it by fucking. Your people have your traditions, mine have ours.”

Limbani said something sounding derogatory in his native language and Yating chuckled. The panda took the bowl and funnel out of Thomas’s hands before holding him in place with both.

“Now, how about I turn you into a creamed-filled dessert of my own?” Yating whispered before picking up speed again.

Thomas let out a soft curse. Maybe the funnel cakes could wait until dinner tomorrow, and he grabbed onto the counter to enjoy the ride.

Yating had Thomas close to his third orgasm of the cooking when the smell of oil caught his attention. If he was smelling oil this strong, a part of his mind said, someone had either spilled it on him or

—

“Fuck!” He yelled, remembering the heating element and

opening his eyes in time to see the flash of light as the oil ignited. Heat exploded in time with the light, and Thomas only had time to register being afraid before he was falling back and bouncing on something soft before passing out.

\* \* \* \* \*

The orgasm woke Thomas, and in time someone over him groaned, and the cock in his ass pulsed, and in time with them, Thomas felt himself becoming more awake.

“Fuck,” he groaned. “I needed that.”

“Well, there’s the answer,” Laurence said. “What the fuck do we do now?”

The guy on Thomas’s back rolled off, and instead of Yating, it was Hubert.

“Fuck!” Thomas yelled and sat up. “The fire!”

“Gil took care of it,” Limbani said.

Thomas looked around. Nearly every one of his frat brothers was in his bedroom. “Yating! Is he okay? The flash fire. I don’t...” he trailed off. The panda was seated on his computer chair looking rattled and eying Thomas with a mixture of awe and fear. He put the expression out of his mind. He had a more pressing matter. Yating was okay; that was the important part. He didn’t look burned; that was good. He looked at himself, searched for any signs of burns.

Not even singed fur. “How did you pull us out of there before we got burned?” He looked at the monkey. Limbani had been the last one to leave the kitchen, so... only it had taken a while for Yating to fuck him close to...

The silence unnerved Thomas. They were looking at him.

Madoc opened his mouth, but they all started speaking, the words mixing, but the tone clear. They were accusing him of something.

"I didn't mean to start the fire," Thomas replied, pushing against the wall. Wishing he could leave.

"Shut up," Chima yelled, and his booming voice silenced the room. He looked at Thomas, worried, then at Madoc. "You're all missing the important part."

The cacophony restarted, but directed at the hyena this time. Thomas eyed the door, but Gilbert was in it. The armadillo watched the argument, but still made it impossible for Thomas to leave.

"Shut up!" Chima yelled again. The silence was more uncertain this time. "If he did it, doesn't that mean we initiated him?"

Protests erupted again. Madoc glaring at Thomas as he raised his voice to say he'd know if they were from the same line.

Thomas had enough. This was turning weird, and he needed space. Or at least a shower; he could still smell the oil on him.

He got off the bed, intent on pushing Gilbert out of his way, but as soon as he put weight on his legs, they buckled under him. The armadillo caught him and deposited him back on the bed.

"Alright," Olavo said in the following silence. "We need Henry for this. Where is he?"

"We need everyone here, I think," Felix said, his expression neutral. "He's clearly broken rules. We need an elder to resolve this. I'll call mine."

"No," Olavo replied. "This is frat business, not family."

"You saw what he did," the otter replied, pointing at Thomas. "It's impossible."

"I didn't see it. None of us did. Even Yat isn't sure what happened," Olavo said. "That's why we need Henry. If he decides to bring in an elder, he'll call them. The Richards are basically next doors."

"He's not picking up," Laurence said.



“He said he needed to go see the dean about the house’s standing.”

“I hope the fuck’s worth it,” Madoc replied, “because this is a cluster.” He was still glaring at Thomas.

“Gil, you’re dressed, so you go get him,” Olavo said. “This takes precedence. In the meantime, everyone one out of here but Limbani. You are fucking him until he can walk straight again.”

Firmin’s snicker was cut short by the glare the capybara threw at him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Limbani left after the fifth fuck, the one when, once the monkey was done and he had Thomas walk around the bedroom, Thomas didn’t feel like his legs might let go before he made it back to the bed.

The sex had been energetic—Thomas didn’t think Limbani knew any other way—but the monkey had been odd through it all; like he wasn’t sure Thomas was real or something. There had been that moment, just before Limbani exited the room, when Thomas thought he’d finally get an explanation for what was going on. But the monkey closed his muzzle and left, closing the door being him. Then Thomas had tried to follow him. Hubert and Jacques stopped him, politely, but forcefully, insisting he stay in until Henry was back.

He considered forcing his way, but for as strong as Madoc’s training had made him, Hubert was still in an entirely different category.

He closed the door and dropped onto his bed. This was feeling stranger than that time they’d all fucked him in the basement, or his rampage for all their asses. Maybe that was what they all needed, for him to fuck them and remind them he was just one of the brothers.

He patted himself for his phone, which, being naked, wasn’t on him. Then he looked around his bedroom. No luck. It had been clipped to his belt, which had ended up on the kitchen floor. No calling Paul

for a rescue.

He leaned against the window, looking outside. The morning snow was intensifying; maybe there was a storm on the way. He could get out this way, climb down, or jump. Cross the street and make it to the bus and go home.

Only he was naked.

Well, that part was simple to fix.

He had a hand on the dresser when his bedroom door opened and Henry entered, closing it behind him. The bat looked around the room, assessing it, Thomas thought, before fixing his gaze on Thomas.

Henry rubbed the top of his muzzle. "It's my fault," he said, surprising Thomas with the admission. At least this way, he'd finally find out what was going on. "If I'd even considered who you might be, I'd have seen this coming. The signs were there; you just didn't tell me. You more or less freaked out anytime you caught one of us doing something magical. And I didn't see anything pointing to his being a possibility. But there's your sex drive, your unending energy. I just thought you were one of those rare guys who can actually keep up with us."

"Is this supposed to make any sense?" Thomas asked.

Henry smiled. "No, I supposed it isn't. Still, I can fix this." He motioned for Thomas to come to him and opened his arms, taking the rat in a hug.

Thomas melted into them. The gesture was the definition of comfort. How many times had Henry hugged him after a long day? A stressful exam? Or just because Thomas had needed a hug. The bat nuzzled the rat's neck and Thomas chuckled as he felt Henry part his lips.

"No," Thomas said, just as he felt the prick of the teeth against his skin. "Damn it, Henry!" he exclaimed, placing a hand on his neck and having it come away with some blood on it. "You know I don't—"

Thomas spun. How had Henry let go of him and moved to the

other side of the room without Thomas realizing it? He noticed where the bat was, turning to face him and licking the blood off his sharp incisors. He looked annoyed, but more importantly, he was still by the door, where he'd been when he hugged Thomas, while the rat was now on the other side of the room.

Henry let out a sigh. "I'm going to need more than a drop to fix this, Thomas." He shook his head. "Under my roof, all this time, and no one knew. I didn't know." His smile turned creepy. "Do you have any idea the things having someone like you will let me do?"

"Henry, you are sounding creepier by the second."

The bat waved it aside. "Don't worry, I'll fix that too. By the time I'm done, everything will be right as rain. Well, as right as I want them to be. I think having you pop all over the places will be amusing, to say the least. You're going to give Firmin a run for his money on the entertainment front."

Pop around? Why was Henry talking like this craziness was real?

How had Thomas gotten to the other side of the room?

How had he gotten himself and Yating out of the explosion without singed fur?

"Come here," Henry said, "let me give you a hug and it'll be perfectly fine. I'll even let you remember the fuck this time. I think you're entitled to remembering another one."

"I don't think so. How about I go home and you guys work out his craziness between you? Call me when it's resolved. Or maybe I'll just stay home."

"Sorry Thomas, I can't allow that. Do you have any idea what you represent? You can do the impossible. For centuries, what you did has been claimed as something only gods could do. I'm not letting you go."

"I can't do anything," Thomas said. "You guys are crazy."

“Let me teach you.”

Thomas rubbed his face. “Do you have any idea how crazy you sound?” When he looked up, Henry had covered half the distance between them, muzzle open, teeth bared.

Thomas didn’t think about what he did.

He glanced at the door but dismissed it. There would be the guys on the other side. Then the window. He could see the other side of the street from here. The lamp post, the parked car, the snow, the—

Fuck, it was cold!

Thomas turned and looked up at the frat house on the other side of the street. He’d done it, whatever it was. He was out of the crazy house.

He looked down at himself. He was naked. His blush was intense enough it pushed the cold away for a few seconds, but as he considered going back inside for clothes, Henry appeared in the window, searching, and then locking eyes on Thomas.

Thomas ran.

## CHAPTER-25

Thomas made it past two houses when common sense kicked in. He couldn't just run blindly. A pair of jeans, a faded 'Shot-em Down' t-shirt, and worn shoes weren't the right clothes to run in a building snow storm. He checked his pockets and cursed. His phone was still with his other pants, which meant he couldn't even take a bus home. He doubted he could blow the driver to pay for the ride; as surreal as his life had become, it wasn't a porno yet.

He ran up the steps to the closest townhouse and ran the bell, rubbing his arms for some warmth as he waited. At least with the snow fall, it wasn't as cold as January could get in the Twin Cities.

He heard motion inside the house at the same time as someone yelled his name. Four of his frat brothers were out of Sigma Theta Gamma, the armadillo pointing in his direction. Thomas cursed them for being out so quickly while taking the time to dress and put on a jacket against the cold. With him, he made out a badger and a collie. The other was too wrapped up in his clothing to be identified, but the cut and size could make him Felix.

Why couldn't *he* let Thomas go? Of everyone in the frat, the otter was the one who liked him the least.

The four of them ran in his direction and Thomas tried to get a sense of how quickly whoever lived here was approaching. He couldn't let Hubert get his hands on him. As strong as the collie was, Thomas wouldn't get out of his grip.

Not fast enough, he decided and ran down the steps and away from the others. At least running would keep him warm, while had the energy to maintain it.

The rail? He could probably get in without paying, and it would be warm, not that the Green Line would get him home, but it would move him a lot closer. With that plan in mind, he headed for the river. There was a stop just on the other side, using Washington. He poured on the speed. He had ways to go, and he needed to stay

ahead of them. He tried to remember who in the frat was a runner, and Chima was the only one that came to mind.

He looked around. The adonis of a hyena would be easy to spot even in the snow, but Thomas didn't remember where he was. Olavo had sent him to fetch Henry, but it wasn't like the bat had bothered telling him if Chima had returned with him. Thomas shuddered at how creepy Henry had become in those last moments.

The bridge was in sight when he recognized Firmin's voice ahead of him.

"There!" the badger called.

"No!" Thomas cursed, fear mounting, and collided with someone.

"Whoa, you okay?" the woman said, trying to steady him. "I'm sorry, didn't see you there. You sort of came out of nowhere."

Thomas wanted to run, but he needed to catch his breath. He felt like he'd just sprinted. He looked around, cursing this delay. With Firmin in front, it meant Jacques was with Hubert and...

He was on the bridge.

"How?" he looked ahead and back. Closer to the east side, and he felt like he'd run all this way.

She chuckled. "Well, in this snow, I guess you can easily miss others. Are you okay?" When he focused on her, she was studying him, and the cold reminded him of how he was dressed. Fuck.

"Had to leave in a hurry," he said lamely. What would this be like if Henry had shown up two minutes earlier? "I really have to go, sorry." He ran again, then cursed himself. He should have asked to borrow her phone.

But who would he call? He tried to remember Paul's number, but the only time he'd paid attention to it was when he entered it in his phone the first time. Every other phone he'd gotten his contact list had just been transferred automatically. He could look for it online,

but then what? Sit around and wait?

Kuno had to know the city as well as Thomas, being from the other side of the river, but would he think of transit? Like the rest of the frat, he was rich. He drove if he couldn't walk somewhere. But they knew him. They didn't make his lower social status a thing, but they'd be smart enough to know Thomas would have to travel by transit, even without his phone.

He'd call Paul and have him wait at the last stop. Paul wouldn't ask too many questions and he'd be fine with Thomas not wanting to answer until later.

With a plan in mind, he pushed himself.

The stop came into view, along with the crowd making its way in. He started cursing, then stopped. A crowd was good. He could lose himself in it; he might even be able to slip inside with whoever was in front of him without having to pay.

The heat of the crowd was also nice.

"I'm telling you," a voice came, far too close, "this is where I'll see him." How had Limbani gotten here so quickly?

Tried to push his way closer to the door, looking ahead to judge the distance. He could see them and through the glass the safety of the stop.

"I don't know how you can have seen him here," Kuno replied. "I can't tell who's who in there."

The person in front of him shoved Thomas back, and curses were muttered around him. Not taking his eyes off the doors and safety on the other side, Thomas did his best to will them to settle down before—

"There!" Limbani yelled. "Thomas, wait up!"

No, they couldn't get him and—

"Hey watch it," the man curse as he pushed Thomas away

from him, then looked around as if trying to figure out where the rat came from, then shrugged and stepped away before going back to studying his phone.

He was inside the building. A train was approaching. It was warm. Thomas wanted to lean against the wall, soak in the warmth, rest. He was exhausted. But a look at the doors and the crowd on the other side reminded him of the monkey and margay looking for him. He hurried to the stairs.

While waiting, he tried to borrow a phone, but they took one look at him, in his wet clothes, and moved away. When the train he wanted arrived, he got in, found a seat, and finally relaxed enough to go over what had happened.

Henry had acted like what Thomas had done was normal. No, not normal, with his take of gods, but he hadn't freaked out the way Thomas was feeling himself about to do. He'd watched enough television to know what it looked like he'd done was called: teleportation. But that was impossible.

Maybe he'd just blacked out because of the fear. Only he couldn't have gotten out of the house; not with the guys outside his room. He'd looked out the window as the bat rushed him, teeth bared, and he'd been in the street. It was impossible, but Thomas couldn't think of another explanation.

"Or I'm going insane and I imagined Henry eager to bite my neck out."

The older man seated next to him got off and sat further away.

"If I'm not, I'm probably sounding like it." He should stop talking to himself.

Then it had happened again on his way to the bridge. He'd heard Firmin ahead of him while looking at it, got scared and he was on the bridge, and again in the crowd.

Fear seemed to be the trigger, and where he looked where he ended up. Was he the next step in the evolution of—



“Okay Thomas, calm down. This isn’t a movie, so don’t go quoting one of them.”

If fear caused it, he had to remain calm. He’d gotten lucky twice now, appearing next to someone else and they immediately dismissing it. If he did it on the train, he didn’t think anyone could ignore it. Not to say of what would happen since he was in motion, or if he appeared outside.

He wrenched his gaze away from the window and closed his eyes. The best thing he could do now was rest and enjoy the warmth. He’d be cold and running again soon enough.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas looked at the house, then the van in the driveway. He shivered intensely, and he knew he couldn’t stay out here, but that was Gilbert’s van. That meant the frat was here, waiting for him. For an instant he saw his family, tied to chairs, being threatened by the armadillo holding fireworks, ready to explode.

He shook himself. He was letting his mind get away from him. Gilbert wouldn’t do that. But they were still waiting for him, so he couldn’t go there. He looked down the street and dismissed that, too. If one of them was at his parents’, another would be at Paul’s.

His teeth clattered together.

Fuck, he couldn’t stay outside, but if he couldn’t go in, where could he go? He studied his parent’s house again. Why did he think he couldn’t go in? He couldn’t be seen going in, that was for sure, but all he needed was to see in his room, right?

He had to move down the street to see his window and ducked behind a car when someone looked out the living room window. A rat, so he relaxed a little until he noticed how bulky he was. Madoc. He leaned to the side, hanging on to the car’s wheel well to keep from falling, and looked at his window on the second floor. He could make out the wall from this angle, with his poster of Gerry Erwell.

Now, how did he trigger it?

He'd been scared; his heart rate had spiked, his chest tightened. He did his best to recreate the sensation, going as far as to contract his chest until a shiver ran down his body.

He kept himself from yelling out when he lost hold of the wheel well and fell, but could do nothing about the chair he fell against that rolled and bumped against the desk. In the silence that followed, he waited and rejoiced at having done it. He'd consciously teleported.

And he'd also learned that his position didn't change, so he needed to make sure he was properly balanced and that there was nothing where he was going to appear. He'd been lucky to be next to the chair and not in it.

The distant conversation continued. As thin as the walls were in this house, he couldn't make out what they were talking about. Him, definitely. He couldn't stay. He hurried to the closet and took out the old winter jacket that barely fit him after Madoc's training. He stripped out of his wet and cold clothes and wish he could take a hot shower. No, soak in a bath for the rest of winter.

He had jeans on, damn it. Was everything in his old wardrobe going to squeeze his balls to near torture level now? Why hadn't he left a set of his new clothes here? The door opened as he was fighting to button the tail strap and he clamped down on his fear. He couldn't let it control his teleportation.

He was next to the door, a hand clamped over the rat's muzzle before they realized what had happened. Roland's eyes grew wide in surprise and Thomas tightened his hand on his muzzle to keep them from saying anything. With the door open, he could hear the conversation.

"Look, Madoc," Eric said, tone severe, "I know my son. There is no way Thomas does drugs."

"He didn't take it on purpose," Madoc replied.

“So one of you has drugs, and they left that lying around?” the threat in his father’s voice was clear. This felt early in any kind of conversation, so Madoc hadn’t been here long.

“Of course not,” Gilbert said. “We don’t do drugs. Henry wouldn’t let us even if one of us had an interest in it.”

“Then how?” Eric demanded.

“Some idiot brought a twelve-pack of soda they laced with something at the last party,” Madoc replied, sounding genuinely annoyed. “We found out when one of the guests started acting weird. Like everyone was out to get him. We thought we’d rounded up all the cans, but we must have missed one.”

Gilbert took over. “We found it empty in Thomas’s room floor after he ran out screaming about how Henry was a monster out to rip his neck out. We tried to catch him, but he gave us the slip. The last one of us saw of him was when he got into the Metro station. They tried to get to him, but by the time they were inside, a few trains had left. So me and Madoc got in my van and came here.”

Roland tilted an ear questioningly, and Thomas shook his head. None of that was true, but it certainly sounded believable. He hadn’t realized Madoc and Gilbert were such good liars. He pulled his brother into the room but didn’t release him or close the door fully. He wanted to hear the rest of this.

“Thomas would have called Paul,” Judith said. “It doesn’t matter how freaked out my brother is, Paul would be the first person he goes to, no matter what. Especially since he’d probably still be at the university at this point.”

Something clanged softly as it was deposited on a hard surface. The living room meant the coffee table.

“This is how much he was freaking out,” Madoc said. “He left without his phone. It was on his desk. He didn’t even put on a jacket.”

“Oh my God,” Nadia said. “My baby’s out there freezing. We have to do something, Eric.”

"Look," Madoc continued. "Kuno called his folks. His dad's tight with the chief of police, so there are people looking for him. We are going to find him quickly. We just wanted to make sure you knew what's going on in case he somehow makes it here. If he does, just call me, okay? Olavo's got medical training and we can look after him."

"If my son makes it home, we will look after him," Eric said, "and you can expect to hear from me after this is resolved. Sex is one thing, but I will not let Thomas be subjected to drugs."

"I told you," Gilbert said, "it's just a can that an idiot—"

"Sure," Judith said, and Thomas heard the roll of the eyes in her tone. "Pass the blame onto some else. That's always the easiest thing to do."

"We're not," Madoc started.

"Don't bother," Gilbert said. "We did what Henry asked. They know to be on the lookout for him. Eric had Henry's number. I'm sure he's at least going to call us if Thomas shows up here so we can call off the search."

"Oh, you can be certain I will call Henry once my son has explained what happened to him," Eric stated. "He and I will have words regarding how he maintains order in that house of his."

There was silence, then the door opened and closed. Shortly after that, Gilbert's van started and pulled away.

Roland grunted and pointed to the hand Thomas had around his muzzle. Only now did he realize that through all of this his brother hadn't fought him. If he'd wanted to, Roland could have broken free. Thomas let go of him.

"What the fuck?" Roland hissed.

"Yeah, that's how I feel too," Thomas whispered back.

"Are you on drugs?"

Thomas rolled his eyes. "Do I look on drugs?"

"You look half-naked," Roland answered with a smirk, "which, if I believe the stories I've been hearing, is half more clothes than you normally wear these days."

"Getting here in jeans and a t-shirt wasn't exactly a warm experience. I needed to change."

"I swear," Judith said from the doorway, "if you two are about to make out, I'm telling mom and dad."

"Judith!" Thomas and Roland yelled at their sister at the same time.

She chuckles. "In case you hadn't heard," she said toward the stairs, "Thomas is up here." Running footsteps sounded before she finished talking.

Naida had her arms around Thomas. "Are you alright? Did they do anything to you? You tell me Thomas and I will unleash the Royer's anger on them."

"I'm fine, Mom," Thomas replied, trying to extricate himself and failing. Hadn't all his gym time strengthened him, how could his mother hold him like this?

"You don't look to be under the effect of any drugs," Eric said, watching him.

"I don't know what that was about," he answered, giving up on escaping his mother. "There haven't been any drugs in the house, on purpose or by accident. Like Madoc said, Henry doesn't allow it, and he had a sense about those things." Thomas felt weird talking about the bat as the protector of the frat after seeing the creepy side of him.

"Then why the story?" Judith asked. "Do you think Yat would tell me the truth?"

"I don't know that you'd believe him if he did," Thomas replied, "it's kind of unbelievable."

"So something did happen," Eric said, tone sharp.

"Yeah, but I... there was the oil fire while me and Yat were... and then we were in my room, and they..." Thomas could feel his ears burn with everything he wasn't saying. He sighed at the expectant and confused looks he received and realized there was only one way he could hope for them to believe him.

"Mom, don't freak out." He looked over her shoulder at the corner of his room and worked on recreating the way he felt.

"Honey?" his mother asked, looking at him.

"Sorry, this is harder when I'm not scared for my life," he replied, recalling how being scared felt and trying to cause it again. He'd managed to get in his room. Tightening his chest until the shiver —

"Thomas!" his mother yelled behind him. He turned to see her looking at the empty space between her arms, and Eric, Judith, and Roland staring at him with a variety of stunned expressions on their face.

"How?" Roland asked, the first to find his voice.

"I don't know," Thomas replied and was engulfed in his mother's arms again.

"Don't scare me like that ever again," she threatened.

"Wait, is that what you did at Grandpa's?" Judith asked. "I knew I saw you there for a second. You looked right at me, then you were gone."

"I don't know," he answered. "I don't remember any —" he stopped. He'd repeated that in self-defense so often since that day he'd forgotten he remembered more. "Maybe? After you looked at me, I remember this sense of falling, hitting the cold ground, just before I lost consciousness."

"You should have told us," Eric said.

"And what, Dad? You'd have thought I was as crazy as I thought I was? I don't know what happened. Or why I ended up in the

grotto, of all places. I mean, I guess it happened because I got scared. That seems to trigger it, but I normally end up where I'm looking. So I don't know how I ended up there."

"Eric," Nadia said as his father opened his mouth. "I think we should focus on the here and now, don't you?"

The shift was hard for his father to make, but he nodded. "Alright. Why were Madoc and Gilbert here talking about you being on drugs and for us to call Henry if you showed up?"

"I think Henry knows something about what happened to me. He was way too happy about finding out I can teleport."

"Hearing you say it sounds even weirder than seeing you do it," Judith said.

"Alright, I expect you don't know how he'd know about it, so did he cause it?" Eric asked.

*Whatever he can do, it's because we initiated him.* Chima's words, the implication they were responsible, the denial from the others.

"I don't know." He didn't want to even put the hint of a doubt on his frat brothers right now, not with the look his father had.

"How did he find out then? You said something about an oil fire. And please don't skimp on the details because you think we're going to be offended about hearing you have sex."

"I will," Roland muttered.

Taking a breath, Thomas recounted the events of the last few hours, keeping the sexual detail to a minimum despite Judith's snickering. By the time he was done, Roland's ears were as red as Thomas's felt and he was turned away.

Having said it out loud did make him sound insane. But it made him realize one thing.

"I have to go back to the frat and get Henry to explain how he knows what going on? If nothing else, I have to get him to pull the

other off because if they're telling you stories about me being on drugs, what did Kuno have his father tell the police about me?"

"No," Eric said, tone final.

"Dad."

"No, Thomas, I don't think it's a good idea to go back to him. Especially not considering the things he said about using you. Using what you can do."

"I think he was just overly excited. Whatever he knows, seems what I can do is considered impossible there too."

"Even more reasons, then. Thomas, I've been looking into the families at the frat."

"Dad," Thomas whined. "Come on, you don't have to investigate them just because I live there."

"That isn't why, Thomas. While you were in the hospital, Ettore convinced me not to contact the authorities. His arguments almost made sense, and you woke up so I didn't push it, but it made me curious why he wouldn't want them involved. Madoc is also a Lewiston. Did you know his family has been tied to troubles in Denver? I couldn't find much, but they were almost systematically wiped out a few years ago. Kuno Richard's family is deeply involved in politics, not just in the city, but the state. Being tight with the police is the least of what they are."

"Yating?" Judith asked.

Eric shook his head. "I haven't gotten to his family yet since he's from out of the country, but I do know they're also rich."

"I knew that going in, dad," Thomas said. "You brought it up at the start."

"Yes, but now I'm not certain their wealth has been acquired entirely legally, and it makes me wonder how far they're willing to go to get their hands on you."



Roland snorted. "Just get one of them naked and he's going to run to them."

"Roland," Eric warned. "Now is not the time for jealousy."

"Sorry, Dad," his brother mumbled, and Thomas stared. What had Roland to be jealous about? His brother was a hunk. At sixteen, he had to have all the girls in his school drooling after him.

"Thomas?" Eric called. "Are you listening?"

"Yeah, of course," he hurried to reply and got a tilted ear in return. "I guess I wasn't," he admitted.

"I said, that for now, the best course of action is for you to spend the night in your own bed while we wash your clothes, and tomorrow we'll make arrangements for you to go to my father's. It's far enough they won't think to look for you there while I see about resolving this."

\* \* \*

## CHAPTER-26

Thomas jerked awake as the bus hit a bump. He glanced around, unsure why he was here, then remembered the run in the snow, getting to his parents, showing what he could do. A night's sleep, then breakfast, his mother packing some of Roland's clothing. His brother complaining, Judith snickering. Roland was a couple of inches shorter than Thomas, but he'd had his muscles for years. So, unlike Thomas's, the clothing fit his frame, even if the sleeves were a little short. His winter jacket was the only thing that was his. Roland didn't have a spare, and it had been bought a few years before, thinking Thomas still had growing to do. Now it was comfortably snug.

Nadia had wanted to buy him an entire wardrobe before she let him leave, and had nearly convinced Eric to let her do it when Roland had pointed out that if the guys at the frat were as rich as their father claimed, wouldn't they have people watching like everything?

Thomas didn't think it was possible, but Eric became thoughtful and vetoed the idea.

Around ten, his family snuggled Thomas out of the house, drove to a bus station an hour north of Minneapolis, and put him on one going to Bozeman, where he was to call his grandfather.

How he was to call him? That hadn't been worked out. Madoc might have returned Thomas's phone, but his father wouldn't let him take it. He'd argued they couldn't have done anything to it in the short time they'd had it, and Eric had replied that with enough money they could do anything, and he wasn't risking Thomas's life on the change they had.

Nadia had given him just under a hundred dollars in physical money. Where she'd gotten it, Thomas didn't know. As far as he'd known, digital was the only money that existed now. She'd smiled at him when he pointed that out and shook her head sadly, as if Thomas were unaware of the real world.

The bus hit another pothole and Thomas nearly fell out of the seat. Weren't the roads maintained here? He looked out as the bus slowed and saw the exit sign for Moorhead as the driver spoke.

"We will be stopping for fifteen minutes for anyone who wants to stretch their legs. There's a convenience store, so you grab a quick bite to eat. The next stop will be in three hours. Be back under fifteen minutes."

Thomas considered staying on the bus, but his stomach protested. The sandwiches his mother had given him had vanished before the bus left Forest Lake, and that had been five hours ago.

Pulled into a small parking lot next to the convenience store with a restaurant attached to it. His stomach growled louder at the sight and he patted his pocket to confirm he had the money on him and wondered if he was going to attract a lot of attention paying that way. Wasn't the idea to not be noticed?

People hurried to exit, and Thomas waited. He wasn't that hungry.

As the departing crowd thinned, Thomas stood, only to drop back down in his seat as someone fought their way on the bus. Who wouldn't be willing to wait for the exiting passengers to be done? No one good, that was who.

Thomas peeked around the seat and what he saw between moving people was a man in an overcoat showing his phone to the driver. The answer had him turning to say something to someone outside. And Thomas relaxed. If hunger was the price to pay not to be found out, he'd pay it.

A passenger took the man's hand and studied the phone; she was a woman. Thomas remembered her as having gotten on the bus at the stop two hours after they'd left Forest Lake. She'd sat in a row at the back, but she'd smiled at him in passing. She'd been the only one to acknowledge he existed on this trip. She'd seemed friendly, but she hadn't imposed on him. Now that friendliness was going to cost Thomas. She pointed toward the back of the bus.

Any hope he'd entertained this wasn't about him vanished.

He looked at the overhead compartment where the backpack with his spare change of clothing was. Could he open it, take it out and teleport before the man reached him? Sure, if he could get it to work on command. He cursed as he looked down. The man was making his way back, pushing people out of his way. He looked more like a businessman than someone looking to do him harm, he thought as Thomas looked out the window and focused on the farthest spot he could see an apartment building on the other side of the roundabout and tried to scare himself into going there.

His heart was already racing. And someone was coming to get him, so why wasn't his chest tightening, the shive—

He dropped in the snowbank and fought the urge to jump out and attract attention. He slowly got to his feet and put the building between him and the bus before dusting as much of the snow as he could off him. He ducked into the building as someone entered and considered his next move. Could he afford another bus ticket? He didn't know. His father had paid for this one and hadn't shared the cost, and without a phone, Thomas could find out.

Did he even want to get onto another bus? Did the man coming for him know he could teleport? If he didn't, wouldn't his best move be to wait at the stop for Thomas to come back?

How had he even known to be here, waiting for him?

So this bus was out of the question. Could he make it to another stop? Was there even another one in the area? The driver had said two hours before the next one.

That... that wasn't going to happen.

What option did he have left? Teleportation? He hadn't felt as tired this time as he had the previous ones. He needed the practice if he wanted to trust it as a way of getting himself out of trouble.

He banged his head against the wall. "Stop thinking that way, you're just a university student, you aren't going to get in trouble."

The couple exiting the building gave him the side-eye. He had to stop thinking out loud. Someone was bound to call a shrink on him and where would he be then?

Padded rooms didn't have much in the way of windows he could look out of to teleport.

He looked out the door, but only saw other buildings. He couldn't stay here. The man at the bus would have to figure he'd just missed him in the exiting crowd, and when Thomas didn't get back on, they'd search around for where he was hiding.

He zipped his jacket and exited the building, looking between them until he saw the horizon. He walked for five minutes, then could make out a distant space without buildings. Would this work if he couldn't see a reference point? Was there something he wasn't seeing there because of the distance?

Maybe there was a better way.

A door slamming shut made him jump, and he crashed down in loose snow.

"Well." He stood and looked around. In the distance, he saw buildings. In every direction. "So I can do this." He'd hoped the jump would have taken him out of the city, but this was just a field in the middle of it. The sun was a couple of hours from setting, so he knew where West was, and that was the direction he wanted, but did he want to go through the city?

At this point, was there any chance anyone knew where he was? Even if they knew about his teleportation, could they figure out where he'd landed? The simplest course was to get back to the interstate and follow that. The 94 would take him to Montana... eventually.

"Fuck, how far am I from Bozeman?" He desperately wanted his phone.

He trudged through the snow north, as that seemed to be the closest way to the buildings and a road. Once he reached it, he could

see more fields further north. Should he? Going into the city meant more changes for warmth as he ducked into stores, but he couldn't practice his teleportation with so many people.

"Head out of your ass, Thomas. This isn't a movie. Do this safely." He followed the road west, leaving the commercial area as the road went from four lanes down to two and became residential. He stopped at the occasional store for warmth, and once to get something to eat, then kept going, feeling good about his decision.

(so, it's clear I'm departing from the outline when it comes to the location. It's mainly based on where the Minnesota/North Dakota state line is located(in the middle of Fargo/Moorhead) if you feel this doesn't work, we can find a more deserted location to have Thomas jump-off.)

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This was not a good idea, Thomas thought as some of the street lights came on with the setting sun. The residential area had given way to another commercial one, then this industrial area, which, he hadn't noticed until now, when the lights that weren't coming on were physically damaged, looked to be abandoned.

The temperature dropped in time with the sun and even with moving, running; the cold was seeping through. He needed to decide, and quickly. Did he continue and hoped to walk out of this no-man's-land, go to one of the abandoned buildings and hope inspiration struck and told him how to survive a winter night without power, or go back to civilization, get warm and figure out a better plan?

Warmth it was.

He'd started walking when he noticed forms in the lengthening shadows and he had to calm himself. There was no way those were the people the frat had sent after him. He didn't care how much money they had. He didn't know where he was, so they couldn't.

He kept walking past them and told himself he was imagining that they were following him, that the cracking of the snow was just

that. Cracking of the snow, not people walking after him.

He picked a spot in the distance and wished he'd decided to teleport further north so he could stay out of the cities entirely. Canada was safe, right?

He'd almost made his mind to jump as far as he could see when a set of headlights turned in his direction. There was still enough of the sun he made out a pickup and almost jump, thinking Laurence had found him, then noticed the cracked marker light, the stuff attached to the front grill. And he was still looking when the pickup slowed and stopped next to him. The side was scratched and in places; it looked like barbwire had been used to hold pieces together.

The driver reached over to the passenger side and manually lowered the window. Thomas couldn't make them out until they banged a fist on the cab's ceiling and the light came on.

The kangaroo gave him a sheepish smile. "Sorry about that. Damned light's temperamental. Won't come on until I threaten it with a spanking. I didn't mean to look all spooky in here. I'm guessing you've got enough of that out there." He looked ahead and seemed to search the ever-lengthening shadows. Then looked at Thomas again. The man look older, around his father's age, and had on an old jacket with visible patching and a plaid shirt underneath.

When he spoke again, Thomas noticed his breath was fogging. "Can I drive you anywhere?"

Alarm bells rang so loud in Thomas's head he expected the entire neighborhood heard them. Warning from his parent to never get in a stranger's cars. Television ads between kid's shows when he was younger saying the same. Countless reports of people vanishing, last seen getting into a car that had just stopped next to them.

"I think I'm good, thanks," Thomas replied, fighting the urge to swallow as he saw movement in the darkness out of the corner of his eye.

The roo nodded and smiled. "Normally I'd call you smart for that, but do you really want to be out here with whoever's sneaking

about over there? Not to say in the cold? It's quite a number of really big blocks before you'll make it to working lights again. If that's where you want me to take you, I'll do that, but I get the feeling you're looking to go further. I can do that too."

"Where are you going?" Thomas asked.

The roo shrugged. "Got nowhere to be anymore. Made my stop, now it's wherever you want me to take you."

The warnings rang again, but the sounds of steps in the snow behind him played counter notes, pointing out that Thomas was pretty much out of safe decisions. He could only make the least bad one.

He pulled the door open, and he jammed halfway. Thomas squeezed through instead of trying to force it the rest of the way as the steps in the snow moved faster. He closed it and the pickup lurched forward. Thomas rolled the window closed and reached for the seatbelt, only to find a broken strap.

"Sorry about that, the driver said. Never got around to fixing it. I don't often have passengers." He turned the dome light off.

In the dashboard's light, Thomas stared at it, it was old, with needles instead of a display. He looked for the phone slot and it didn't have one.

The driver chuckles. "Yeah, it's old, but with some tender lover and a bit of car. It keeps me going."

"Is this even electric?" Thomas asked. He'd heard of fuel cars; back before climate change became a problem, and they had to be removed.

"It is. Did the conversion myself. I didn't see a point to add something to plug my phone in, since all it'd be doing is charge it, and it does that remotely well enough."

"You have a phone?"

The kangaroo glanced at him. "Kid, I'm not *that* old."



“No.” Thomas’s ears burned. “I mean, can I borrow it?”

“Who do you need to call?” the driver asked and Thomas thought the tone turned cautious.

He started to reply his parents, but stopped. They were the only ones who knew he’d been on that bus. He refused to believe his family would have given him up, but his father’s comment about enough money being able to make anything happen surfaced. His grandfather then? But his parents knew that’s where he was headed.

The driver reached for Thomas and he shirked back. “Hey, keep your hands to yourself.”

“Calm down kid.” The man reached for the front of Thomas’s seat. “I’m just turning the seat’s heating on. The heating on the cab isn’t as good as it could be.”

“You have a heated seat on the passenger side,” Thomas said in disbelief, “but you never fixed the seatbelt?”

“They came as a pair. Seemed like a shame to install one but not the other. You didn’t tell me who you wanted to call.”

“No one,” Thomas said, unable to keep the defeat out of his voice. He couldn’t even call Paul because if there was one person the frat knew to keep an eye on was his best friend.

“I’m Grant, by the way. In the moment of everything happening, didn’t think to introduce myself. If you feel at your feet, there’s a thermos with chicken soup in it. I’m told it’s great to warm the body and the soul.” He reached back behind Thomas’s seat and pulled a wool blanket. “This should help keep you warm.”

“This is looking a lot like you expected to have a passenger, Grant.”

The kangaroo shrugged. “So, where am I taking you?”

Thomas unscrewed the thermos and breathed in the aroma. It was still steaming hot. “Bozeman, I guess.” Where else could he go? His grandma Royer was in the Twin Cities, Victor, they’d expect him

to reach out to. He'd just have to be careful once he was in Bozeman. Maybe with having forced him off the bus, they wouldn't think he could make it there anymore.

He took a sip and nearly burned himself, then was slower in drinking it.

Grant turned the radio on, and Thomas was surprised to see the display light up and not a... whatever old cars used before electronics. The display flickered a time or two before a woman started singing to a rapid beat in Spanish. Grant changed the channel until soft orchestral played. Thomas would have preferred the singer, but anything to cover the silence would work. He didn't want to feel the need to fill it with his story.

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Thomas jerked away to the sound of a loud metal creak. There was light from a sign for a seven eleven. And the sound was Grant exiting the pickup.

"Sorry, didn't mean to wake you."

Thomas mumbled a reply, trying to get more of his bearings. They might be back in Minneapolis for all that the sign told him.

"Since you're awake. Do you want to get warmer? We can sit while we enjoy a coffee, or tea if you prefer."

"Coffee." The thought of coffee woke him up further, and he forced the door open, cursing the cold as he slammed it shut and then hurried for the store. "Where are we?"

"A couple of hours out of Fargo," Grant answered, indicating the tables before heading for the drinks counter. He returned with two cups, a variety of creamers and sugar, and pastries.

Thomas wrapped his hands around it, wishing the heat would spread through his entire body. He didn't remember falling asleep. He'd finished the soup, put the thermos down, and had settled to enjoy the music, and here they were. He eyed the pastries and his stomach reminded him soup wasn't a meal.

"If you don't mind me saying," Grant said, placing his cup down as Thomas started on a strawberry-filled turnover. "When you said you were going to Bozeman, you didn't sound particularly certain. Is there a reason you need to go there, but would rather not?"

Thomas finished eating while he thought. He certainly couldn't tell the man everything; he was a stranger. Even if he wasn't, the truth only made him sound crazy. Still, there had to be a version of it that would satisfy him.

"I had to leave Minneapolis in a hurry," he said, trying to sound confident. "I..." he trailed off. "Got on the bad side of some people. My dad thought that me going to his father in Bozeman would be a good place for me to hide out while things quiet down." Hide out. He nearly snorted. It made him sound like he was some sort of secret agent exposed after infiltrating an evil organization. "You're not doing to ask for details?"

Grant shrugged. "I don't need to know." The small smile he had as he sipped his coffee gave Thomas he knew more than he let on, and he glanced at the door. "But even now, you don't sound like it's where you want to go."

Thomas pressed his lips together. "They shouldn't have known I was on that bus. The only people who knew were my family and if they got them to say where I was going, they've got to know about him."

Grant nodded and went back to drinking and eating the chocolate-filled croissant. "Alright, if you can't go to your grandfather, is there someone else you can go to?" he had that smile again. "Someone only you'd know?"

Thomas shook his head as he reached for the éclair and paused as someone came to mind. "Oregon."

The kangaroo waited, but instead of expanding, Thomas bit into the pastry. "Who's in Oregon?" he asked before Thomas took a second bite.

"My uncle." He continued eating as Grant looked at him as if

that was nothing like the answer he'd expected. "He and his husband live outside Eugene. I doubt anyone will have thought to mention them seeing as they live so far."

The kangaroo nodded, and his expression turned pensive. "Alright. Oregon isn't all that out of my way. I can take you there."

Thomas stared at the man, cup to his lips. He placed it down. "How exactly is Eugene Oregon not out of your way? That's like the end of the country. I'd have to take a boat to go any further west. I appreciate the help you've given me, Grant, but shouldn't your next step be putting me on a bus, or a train and sending me on my way?" Thomas was surprised at the amusement on the kangaroo's face when his voice was laced with suspicion.

"I could do that, but it's not who I am." He paused. "I'm sort of a wandering good Samaritan. Helping people is what I do."

"For real?"

Grant nodded and let out a sigh. "For real."

Thomas thought about calling the man out on it. No one wandered the world looking to help people unless it was a movie or tv show, and Thomas hadn't seen one camera trailing them. But then again, no one could teleport, either. And it was either accepting Grant's help or going back to walking in the cold and snow.

If Grant turned out to be some weirdo waiting for the right moment to do something, Thomas had an easy way out.

"I'm Thomas," he said. "I noticed you never asked for my name."

"I figured you'd offer it when you were ready," Grant replied. "It's a pleasure to meet you. Do you feel ready to get back on the road?"

Thomas looked at his empty cup and the plate, now devoid of pastries. He didn't feel ready at all. He stood. But sitting here wasn't going to get him to safety.

"I am."

\* \* \*

## CHAPTER-27

Grant didn't glance at Thomas as he drove them along the I94, and that was the most unnerving part. He'd mentioned he didn't need to know the details of how the rat had gotten 'on the bad side of some people', but who in their right mind didn't want to know how they'd come up pick some teen off the side of the road, in an abandoned industrial area in almost total darkness? Thomas didn't think he'd be able to resist for long.

Not that he had a story ready to tell, or could even think of how to come up with one other than borrowing bits and pieces from TV and movies he'd seen, and he was confident he wouldn't make them any more believable than they had been there.

He could always tell the man the truth, but that way led to the loony bin, no matter how open-minded Grant was.

Still, there had to be a limit to how long the silence could only be filled by the classical radio station the kangaroo had picked.

"How does someone come to be a wandering good samaritan?" he asked. If questions were going to happen, he might as well take control of them.

Grant glanced at him then, before returning his gaze to the road. "I'm not sure I can explain it in a way that would make much sense. Say it's a calling," he added before Thomas came up with a way to prod. "You mentioned you have family in Minneapolis, you get along with them?"

"They aren't why I'm on the run," Thomas said defensively.

"I didn't think you were. You did say it was your dad's idea to go to your grandfather. People who are the cause of your problems don't usually offer good advice."

"I guess that's true." He considered what he could say. Well, was there anything he couldn't say? "They're my family, so I get along as well as you'd expect. My dad tends to hover a little." He fell silent as

the nickname of Hellicarrier Hertz reached his lips and realized it wasn't particularly flattering. "My mom had a cooking channel she started once I came along. She was a journalist until then."

"She didn't continue that from home?"

"The way she tells it, she wasn't the investigate online kind of journalist. She needed to get out and see the story. I was kid number three and dad's... well, he tends to get hyper-focused, and with teaching, Victor, and Judith, he was already teaching Victor was already in school by then so dad spent a lot of time tailoring his studying, and he was teaching Judith to read even before she knew what books were. If not for mom distracting him, Judith would have had to read the entire Encyclopedia Britannica by the time she entered school."

"Your father sounds like a man who isn't easy to distract," Grant commented, slowing the pickup enough Thomas glanced at the dash, but from his position the needle read like they were doing seventy-five, which he couldn't imagine an old pickup like this being able to reach.

"She knows how to press his buttons," Thomas said, then chuckled, "If you know what I mean." They crested a hill and a state cruiser was parked on the side of the road.

Grant moved to the outside lane. "Sounds to me like 'press' isn't the word you want to use here, and that it's more of a stick than a button." The kangaroo grinned at him and Thomas sunk in the seat.

"Anyway, me and Roland, he's my younger brother, were mostly hover free until this year. I entered university, and joined a frat, thinking that living on campus would mean less of the overcompensating hovering, but my dad teaches there, so that wasn't as effective as I'd hoped."

Grant looked in the rearview mirror, then picked up speed. "You and your brother sound closer in age than your two other siblings. Do you get along?"

Thomas couldn't stop the images of Roland in his underwear,

of the muscled chest, of him stepping out of the neighborhood pool like some sort of swimsuit model, and immediately forced himself to see the glares and scowls his brother always sent his way.

“We’re brothers, so I guess we do.”

Grant nodded. “How much younger than you?”

“Two years, so he’s still in high school. He’s on the football team and he’s made MVP a few times in the spring.”

“Good for him. Is he thinking of a career in football?”

“I don’t know, but dad definitely thinks he will, well...” he trailed off. “He did, but we had a talk over the holidays, and he said he was going to talk with Roland to find out if that’s what he wants, instead of making the decision for him. I don’t know what came of it, or if they even talked.”

“So your dad’s a do things my way kind of guy.” There was something in Grant’s tone that made Thomas uneasy.

“No. Well, a bit. Like I said, he gets hyper-focus, and he doesn’t always realize that in doing everything he can to give us the best chances at what we’re doing, he sorts of takes over the decision making. What about you?” he asked before the kangaroo could point out more ways his father was imperfect.

“What about me?”

“I told you about my family, what’s yours like?”

“I don’t have one.”

“Everyone had a family,” Thomas said, “only one person came from an immaculate birth, and he still had a family.”

“Is your family very religious?”

“No. My mom’s side of the family always got in trouble with the local pastor when that kind of stuff was a thing.”

“How does someone always get in trouble with a pastor? Isn’t



it their job to be understanding?"

Thomas chuckled. "Back in those days, the women in her family were called 'loose'."

Grant shook his head. "Sorry, I don't get the reference."

"They had a lot of sex." Thomas looked outside to cover up the reddening of his ears. "I know granddad goes to church every now and then since it's where he picks up a lot of his girlfriends, but with religion was never something dad got focused on, so we go to Easter mass, Christmas, if we aren't visiting granddad that year."

"I thought you said he went to church."

"He lives away from everything, and it's a sixteen-hour drive to get there. We don't feel like another drive for mass by then." He paused. "So, how about your family?"

"You're not going to drop it, are you?" the glance from Grant was pained.

"Seems only fair."

The kangaroo nodded. "My parents died when I was very young. I don't really remember them. The hurricane was Jezebel. I read up on it when I was older. It's the second one to nearly destroy New Orleans."

"You don't have an accent."

Grant chuckled. "We're from Boston; we were on a vacation there. Freak hurricane the forecaster never even saw it coming, which even back then was unheard of for something that big."

"You don't have a Boston accent either."

"Don't believe television. Not everyone in Boston speaks with an accent so thick you can coat walls with it. And I was raised in the Midwest. A foster father who really did everything he could for me. He got me in the arts, singing, drawing, woodworking, clay. You name it. If I showed an interest in it, he pushed me in that direction. Your

father sounds a little like him; if a lot more focused."

"Your foster dad sounds like a good one."

Grant fell silent. "Yeah, I guess he does. It's too bad his reasons for doing it were so self-serving." He looked at his hand, and Thomas noticed faint scars. "I left as soon as I could, if not as soon as I should. Found this beauty, fixed her up and I've been living out of her since."

"You've lived out of a pickup since you were what, my age?"

"That and couches. Sometimes I'll find someone willing to let me crash on theirs for a few days while I help out around the house. Speaking of which, you said we're heading to your uncle. What is he like?"

"Nerio's a nice guy. He and his husband have a carpentry business, and I see them every few years."

"Do you think me driving you there will be enough to earn a few days on their couch, or will they need me to do work around the house?"

Thomas shrugged. "If you ask nicely enough, I'm sure you can get them to let you sleep in their bed if you're interested in guys."

Grant glanced at him, ear tilted.

"They're from my mom's side of the family." (this could be a good line to end the scene on if you don't feel addressing the major is required)

The kangaroo chuckled. "Good to know. You mentioned university, what are you majoring in?"

Thomas groaned as he sank even deeper into the seat.

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Thomas looked at the sign as they drove past it. "Are you sure we want to spend the night here? I can drive for a while if you want."

The kangaroo chuckled. "Do you have something against the

city of Lewiston?"

Thomas didn't reply. It was just a coincidence, but it made him comfortable they were spending the night in a city with Madoc's last name, especially with the way he was talking about this Raphael who wanted to meet him. When the pickup came to a stop, they were in a strip mall with a few other vehicles, mostly more pickups, but a few cars and a white van like the one Gilbert owned.

"Why don't you go get us something to eat?" he handed him a bill and indicated the Subway. "I'm going to see about finding a place to park for the night in the meantime."

"We can switch driver and just keep going."

"I appreciate the offer, but this pickup isn't like driving whatever you learned on. And I need a proper night's sleep. We'll eat, sleep and get going in the morning."

He took the bill, marveling at how a second adult gave him physical currency, and stepped out of the pickup, tightening his jacket around him. The restaurant was warm, and just for that, Thomas decided it was worth the stop.

"What will you have?" the clerk asked. He was a muscular wolverine around Thomas' age. "We have a two foot-long for the price of one special on the cold cut combo and the all-veggie sub."

"So I get two feet?" Thomas asked, realizing Grant didn't say what kind he wanted.

"That is what two foot-long means. Do you want to have two foot-long?"

"I don't know if I can swallow two feet," Thomas answered, looking at the other options on the menu. "The longest I've had at this point is sixteen inches."

"Excuse me?" the wolverine said and Thomas looked down, what he'd said registering.

"I didn't even gag," he said, his ears warming up but not

coming close to their usual burning similar situation. It was the fact he'd be gone in only five minutes that cause it, he decided, and added. "How much do *you* have to offer?"

The wolverine looked around, and so did Thomas. They were the only ones left. Not that other would have stopped him, he realized. The idea nothing he said here would affect him was liberating.

"Not that I go that way," the wolverine said, "but nothing near that. You are joking about it, right?"

"No, sixteen-inch down my gullet."

The clerk looked at where the subs waiting to be baked. "I'm nearly tempted to get make one sixteen inches just to see if it's true."

Thomas laughed. "I don't think I have that kind of time, but I'll get two cold cuts foot-long. And no, I'm not swallowing one of them either. Twelve-inch isn't be that much of an exploit."

"Just where are you from?" the wolverine asked as he prepared the subs. "I never saw anyone that big in gym class."

"I guess my frat makes them bigger."

"Is it a Texas frat?" he asked, and Thomas frowned. "You know, because everything's bigger in Texas?"

"The sixteen-inch wasn't from Texas, I can tell you that."

The clerk chuckled and finished the subs. Thomas paid, then exited. Maybe he needed to bring this relaxed attitude back home when this was all over. His family would welcome it, and Roland could be the one to be embarrassed listening to everyone else talk about sex openly.

The door to the white van slid open. "I told you, this is where we parked," the monkey said as he stepped out. "Arguing with me for twenty minutes isn't going to change what I saw, just how long it takes for us to get dinner. Now get dressed, and out of there. I want food I don't have to suck out of you."

Thomas watched Limbani glare at the inside of the van, which was shaking as people moved. "No," he whispered. "No, there's no fucking way they're here now."

## CHAPTER-28

“Fuck,” Thomas snarls as he ran. He had no idea where he was going, other than away from them. The question of how they could be here kept coming back, and Limbani’s comment of having seen them parked in this lot brought so many other memories of the monkey claiming to know things. Of him showing up out of nowhere, even when Thomas didn’t know he’d be in that room or that part of the university. The next thought was that it was impossible for Limbani to know where Thomas was, and it was followed by how impossible it was that Thomas could teleport.

Screeching tires made him look over his shoulder as Gilbert’s van rounded the corner, the monkey in the passenger seat pointing at Thomas.

“Fuck it.” Thomas looked into an alley and willed himself there. His chest tightened, the shiver happened, and he slammed into the wall. How could he have forgotten he kept his momentum? He pushed through the pain as he pushed away from the wall and started running again and he heard the van’s door at the other end slam shut.

Good, if they were on foot, there was no way they could catch up to him. He stopped on the sidewalk, searched for a suitable spot, settled on the furthest one, and jumped there, immediately ran.

Even with this being the furthest he’d gone, he didn’t feel tired. This was getting easier.

The van screeched around another corner in front of Thomas this time. The monkey was at the wheel and Madoc in the passenger seat. With a curse, Thomas teleported to the other side, and the van skidded as it tried to stop. He didn’t wait. He ran again, looking for another spot to jump to. He needed to—

Someone tackled him, and Thomas barely stayed on his feet and he got a chest full of the capybara as Olavo closed his arms around him. “It’s okay, you’re safe now.”

Thomas tried to turn his head, but Olavo had an arm around it. "Let go of me!" he yelled in the chest. He tried to teleport out, but as scared as he was, it wouldn't happen.

"We're here to help," the capybara said. "Madoc's elder sent us."

"Let me see," Thomas snarled, pushing against the man's chest, but it didn't matter how strong he was if he couldn't get leverage.

The capybara shushed him as if he was a child and that more than anything else infuriated Thomas. He got a leg behind Olavo's as he heard more people. How many of them were they? He put as much of his relatively meager weight into the push and he was enough to send the two of them falling. Olavo's grip loosened as he hit the sidewalk and Thomas turned his head enough to see the other side of the street and he was there with barely a thought.

He was on his feet and running again, this time helping himself with a series of jumps a hundred feet ahead of him. Let them catch up to him that way.

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Thomas was lost.

Not that he'd had much of a sense of where he'd been at the start of this, but he'd made so many near-blind jumps that he couldn't even get himself back to the Subway, which was the only place he could think of for where Grant might be. Not that he was going to him and dragging the kangaroo into his mess.

He paused next to the dumpster. One jump might not take much out of him, but he'd lost count of how many he'd made trying to evade Limbani and his constant showing up when he had no business knowing where Thomas had taken refuge. He had to admit there was something to the monkey's claims now.

"Ah, come on!" he yelled to the sky as a vehicle came to a screeching stop on the far side of the alley. He looked around the

dumpster and was not surprised to see Gilbert's white van blocking it. Before he turned to run, the side slid open and Madoc and Limbani stepped out, hand raised as if they had a gun to their back.

"We just want to talk, Thomas," the other rat yelled.

He peeked further and saw Olavo behind the wheel. Was that all of them? He looked at the open side of the alley and thought about running—he wasn't sure he had enough strength to keep standing after another jump—and decided not to. Not yet anyway. He'd run enough. Answers would be nice.

He stepped out from behind the dumpster. "Then talk," he called, putting as much bravado as he could muster while locating a spot behind the van. The building to its left had the top of an access visible. Even if he crumpled after teleporting there, he'd be out of sight and he refused to believe Limbani would just know where he was.

Maybe this would let him catch enough of his breath so he could run instead once he was there.

"Look, you don't need to run," Madoc said. "All you have to do is explain yourself to Raphael. He'll understand."

"Who the fuck is Raphael?"

The two of them exchanged a look before looking at Thomas again.

"He's our elder, Thomas. He's the one you ran from."

"I ran from Henry because he was going psycho on me."

They exchange another look, this one confused. Limbani shrugged.

"Did..." Madoc hesitated. "Did someone do this to you?" He sounded hopeful.

"Didn't Chima say you guys did this to me?"

The rat rubbed his face. "Thomas, look, you aren't making any sense. Just come home to Kansas City with us. Raphael had experts on



hand who will be able to figure out what's happened to you."

"No, I'm not going anywhere with you."

"Madoc, you tried," Limbani said and looked beyond Thomas, giving a nod.

It was a mistake. Thomas knew it even as he began turning his head to look where Limbani had, and he mentally cursed himself with all kinds of names for doing it. Not only was it the oldest trick in any show, it meant Thomas no longer had a spot in sight to jump to.

He'd find one the instant he confirmed there was no one there and jump before they could reach him. Except he only got an eye full of a jacket before something covered his head.

Thomas ducked, but it came with him, then a hand grabbed his arm.

Yating said something in his language.

"Don't let him get it off his head," Olavo yelled. "He needs to see to be able to pull a vanishing act."

"What do you think I am trying to do?" the red panda replied. Knocking Thomas's other hand away from his head.

He shoved questions of how the capybara had worked *that* out and focus on getting this bag off his head.

"Stop fighting, Thomas," Madoc said as a hand grabbed his shoulder. Thomas elbowed who that was and Madoc let out a pained oomph. The hand let go. He pushed forward and with a curse, Yating fell, taking Thomas with him. As they landed, Thomas grabbed the fabric bag that was over his head, but before he could pull it off, the panda had grabbed his hand.

"Let go of me!" Thomas yelled.

"No. This is for your own good, Thomas. You need to go home."

"You just wait until I tell Judith about this. She is going to fuck

you up for this.”

“Who?” Yating asked and loosened his hold enough Thomas was able to pull the bag enough for light to come in. He didn’t care what he was looking at, he jumped.

He knew he’d made a mistake as the sensation of weightlessness registered and his body slowly turn and wind picked up around him.

He should have cared where he was looking. The ground became visible under him, very far. Much too far. He saw the alley with his frat brothers seemingly frozen in place. The wind picked up as he accelerated down.

Fuck! He looked around. He needed to jump down before he had too much speed. He might already have too much. He located a parking lot with a large snowbank, prayed nothing was hidden under the snow, and jumped.

The impact hurt and snow flew up as if Gilbert had detonated one of his fireworks in it.

Thomas groaned as he pulled himself out of it, and groaned even more as Limbani, Madoc, and Yating ran out of the alley in his direction. He wished he’d picked a further snowbank to aim for. Next time.

“That was impressive,” someone close said and Thomas looked at Gilbert, approaching. “Limbani called your landing spot within three feet.”

Thomas tried to focus on another spot, but he was exhausted and he hurt.

“Not going to work,” Felix said, grabbing Thomas by the arm. “He saw me do this.” The otter turned the rat on his front and pulled his arms behind him. “And as annoying as he gets about. If he sees something happen, nothing stops it from happening.” Thomas felt ropes go around his wrists.

Brake screeched, and Thomas looked up. Considering the way

his day was going, he expected to see the white van, but an old beaten-up pickup was there. The driver's door slamming shut and a kangaroo stepping to the side, hands on the edge of the tarp covering the truck's bed.

"Let go of him," he ordered, undoing the edge.

"Man," Felix said in exasperation, "go home. You don't want to get involved in this. How did you not see him coming?" he demanded of the monkey, who was looking at the scene, utterly confused.

Grant shook his head, reaching under the tarp. "I'm afraid I can't do that. So I'm going to say this only once. Go back to your Families. That's capital 'F'. As in, I have a good idea who you represent."

"You have got to be fucking me," the otter cursed.

"You're not getting my brother," Madoc said. "I don't care what you've done to him. He'd my family."

"I'm his frat brother, nothing more," Thomas yelled, then screamed in pain as Felix bent his arm. He hoped that was a large caliber Grant was about to pull from the back of his truck because Thomas was reaching the point where shooting at his frat brothers was sounding like a reasonable idea.

"Madoc, you're the strongest here," Felix ordered. "Go kick his ass before he does anything."

The rat took a step just as Grant pulled what he'd been reaching for, and Madoc stopped in his track to stare.

So this Thomas. Instead of a rifle, as he'd expected, the kangaroo held a piece of wood of some sort. No, it was multiple pieces held together by... was that twine?

He and Madoc weren't the only ones staring. Grant had everyone's attention, and Thomas decided he had one chance to get away. He focused next to Grant and willed himself there.

Nothing happened.

Fuck. He couldn't be that tired. If he was going to lose consciousness, he'd rather do it next to the kangaroo holding the stick rather than these people. He forced the sensation, the tightening of his chest, the shiver down his back, and he had to hold it because he wasn't—

The fall of a few feet next to Grant hurt and as Thomas rolled on his back, the light seemed to disappear and he thought he was about to lose consciousness, until he noticed the clouds accumulating over them. Thick and very dark.

"I'm glad you pulled that off, Thomas. Now I need you to get in the truck."

Wind picked up as Thomas reached up and Grant grabbed his arm to pull. Holding on to the side of the truck, Thomas noticed the white van parked down the road and the capybara moving toward them from it.

"He's with them," Thomas said, and Grant glanced in that direction.

As if that was a signal, the other ran in their direction and Grant snapped his attention back to them, raising his stick, staff, rod? What was that thing, Thomas wondered. It was twine holding it together, and nails.

The wind became a roar and Thomas had to focus on his frat brothers who were losing a battle against it. The wind was moving over Grant and Thomas to hit the others as if it was solid.

Except for Yating, who, after staggering back a step, was now moving slowly toward them. The wind wasn't even fluttering his open jacket anymore even if it was pushing the other away.

"Thomas," Grant said. "In the truck."

Thomas stepped around the kangaroo, who moved the staff. It was definitely a staff, the way Grant held it, away from the rat as he staggered toward it before regaining his footing.

“Don’t do this,” Grant told the red panda, who’d reached the truck and was extending his hand for the staff. It wasn’t like he’d reach it. It might be immune to the wind, but there was a pickup between —

Yating stepped through the pickup’s bed.

“Don’t do this!” the kangaroo yelled, and the wind increased.

Thomas stared as the panda’s hand closed over the staff. How could he be in the truck? That was impossible. The tarp wasn’t even reacting to his presence.

There was the snap of a folded leather belt coming together, a flash of something, and Yating was sliding back in the snow, pushing it until he came to a stop, unmoving. Grant cursed, turning his attention toward Olavo, who’d avoided the worse of the wind being further to the side. The capybara threw himself to the ground as the kangaroo raised the staff. Lightning came from the clouds and struck Gilbert’s van.

“That’s going to keep them busy —”

The van exploded.

Thomas stared as realization sunk it. Gilbert’s van. Had there been any fireworks still in it? Considering how much he was reputed to have in there, even if they cleared it, how much gun powder would remain if it wasn’t done by a professional cleaner?

“In the truck now,” Grant ordered, sounding shaken, and Thomas climbed over the driver’s side.

The staff went between them, closer to Grant, and Thomas was careful to stay away from it as they drove away. The kangaroo grabbed the wool blanket and threw it over the staff.

Thomas looked out the back and was relieved to see Yating getting to his feet unsteadily. He hoped there had been no one in the van.

“I,” Thomas began.

“Don’t,” Grant cut him off. “I wasn’t going to let them take you. Even if I was completely wrong about you.”

“Wrong?” Thomas asked. They hadn’t known each other. How could he have been wrong about him? Could he make a jump as tired as he was?

The kangaroo sighed as he looked in the rearview mirror. “I was going to let you tell me what’s going on in your own time, but that’s not viable anymore. If I’m going to continue to keep you safe, I need to know everything.” Thomas opened his mouth, only to close it again at the look Grant gave him. “Absolutely everything.”

## CHAPTER-29

“A vampire?” Grant asked in disbelief.

“Well, he tried to bite my neck, and they’re always bats in the movies, right?”

The kangaroo shook his head. “Not always, but I get why you’re thinking that.”

Thomas yawned. He’d told everything he remembered even though he was exhausted. He’d even gone in more details than he was comfortable with about the sex at Grant’s insistence, and having to remember how he felt immediately afterward had gotten him extremely uncomfortable. The blacking out had seemed to intrigue the kangaroo.

“All right,” Grant said, glancing at Thomas. “So you’re Society.”

“And that means what exactly?”

“Families of sex magic.”

“Excuse me?” Thomas asked, that couldn’t... “No, never mind, that would explain the sex crazy frat. But just guys?”

“Yeah, there’s another god for the women.”

“You’re kidding.”

The kangaroo shook his head. “Don’t bother asking for details, I know they exist and they’re the mirror of your faction, but that’s about all I know.”

“I wasn’t going to ask,” Thomas replied, his ears burning at this idea of women getting up to what he’d gotten up to. There was a woman’s frat at the university that had the kind of reputation Sigma Theta Gamma had, right? He needed to think of something else.

“I can’t be part of that,” he said.

"I think you've already proven you are. Normal guys don't teleport."

"I couldn't before. I'd know if I could have."

"Stories are your faction—"

"Could you stop saying "my". They're hunting me. That doesn't really feel like I should be part of that."

Grant looked about the object, but nodded. "That faction. From what I know there are ceremonies you have to go through before you come into your power. The mask definitely made what they did that first time sound like it was that."

"But that was just a joke, my hazing. I'm pretty sure Felix was hoping it would scare me off. And the second time only Chima wore it and that because I dragged him down there and put it on him."

"Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why take him down to the altar and use the mask?"

Thomas shrugged. "I don't know. It just felt right, I guess. Chima's just of more than...well, just more. You should see him. And having him wear the mask made him even more so."

"More more," Grant said, and in the light of the dash, Thomas saw him grin.

"Okay, fine. It sounds stupid. But another reason I can't be part of that is that you said it's families. Well. My dad doesn't have any powers, and my brother is straight."

"Victor?"

"No, Roland, my younger brother. I know Victor's been with guy, so he's bi. And before you ask, he doesn't have any powers either."

"How certain of that are you?"



“He’s my brother. If he could teleport, I’d know.”

Grant looked uncertain. “Your sister, Judith. Are you certain she’s your biological sister? Are you adopted?”

“Yes, and no. Come man. They’re my family. Whatever’s going on I’m clearly not part of that Society thing.”

“Except that you’re definitely showing signs. Very high sex drive, an ability to do it with barely any rest in between.”

“No rest,” Thomas said without thinking and groaned.

“That’s definitely Society. There’s magic to do that, but with... them, it’s innate.” He was quiet for a few seconds. “How active is your father?”

Thomas snorted. “He can keep up with my mom, and that’s a feat.”

“You’re mother, Nadia?”

“Yeah, if my high sex drives comes from anywhere, it’s her side of the family.”

Grant shook his head.

“You’ll see when we get to my uncle’s place.”

The kangaroo pulled out his phone long enough to glance at it. “Missed them.”

“Who?”

“I need to talk with someone about this, but they stop answering their phone at nine.” He paused and took the phone out again. “Although they probably know how important this is.” He scrolled, tapped and placed it to his ear. Like the pickup, the phone was old, and repaired, but it wasn’t as old. Did they even have phones back before electric cars?

Grant put the phone away. “Not important enough I guess.”

“Now what?”

“Now you sleep. I doubt it’s going to help that much, but your body still needs rest.”

“You haven’t slept much more than I have,” Thomas pointed out before another yawn made his jaw crack.

“But I didn’t teleport all over Lewiston.”

“No, you just summoned a storm and blew up Gilbert’s van with lightning.” He rested his head against the window. “How did you do that?”

If Grant answered, Thomas was sleeping too deeply to hear.

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Thomas woke with a start and immediately closed his eyes at the bright sun. “Where?” he started and cracked an eye open. He was alone in the running pickup. Out the driver side he saw the charging station, but this was one of those placed in mall parking lots, instead of the fast charging ones at stations.

His side of the windshield was frosted over with “Stay in the truck” written in the frost. On the dash, under the frosts glass were four, still steaming, burritos. He didn’t question how they were still warm in the not exactly warm car and devoured the first one.

He started on the third when the door opened and Grant let in frigid air along with himself. Between them, where the staff had been when Thomas fell asleep, he dropped a bag with designs of fabrics on it.

“How did you sleep?” the kangaroo asked.

Thomas indicated the half eaten burrito as he chewed. Grant nodded and pulled strips of cloth from the bag. After searching his pockets he took out needle and bundle of threads he needed to untangle.

“What are you doing?” Thomas before putting the rest of the

burrrito in his mouth and grabbed the last one off the dash.

"I'm making you some protection," the kangaroo said, looking through the rough looking strips.

"Protection?" Thomas asked, eyeing what Grant was working with dubiously.

"Yes, you're safe while in the truck, but the moment you step out, they're going to be able to find you. I'm guessing that the fact they haven't shown up yet means I'm going to be done with this and that it's going to work before you step outside."

"Or maybe it's because you blew up their van."

Grant paused and his pained expression reminded Thomas that there could have been someone in it. Gilbert was usually strict about not letting anyone in it unless he was there, but Olavo had been driving the van while the armadillo had been on foot, so the situation had called for an exception.

"I don't think that's going to slow them down for long. Most folk in the magic communities who aren't at least comfortably wealthy do so by choice, and the Society is renowned for their wealth. They'll have gotten another vehicle to follow after us the moment they were able to walk again."

"But that's—" Thomas pointed to the fabrics Grant was stitching together. "—is going to stop them?"

"I'd prefer working with wood, but I don't have the time to make anything that way, and for our circumstances, fabric will work better. The flow to it means it'll be simpler to create something that's going to cause any scrying to flow around you."

"Flow? Around me?"

Grant nodded, cutting strips and braiding them together.

"Care to explain?"

The kangaroo lifted what he was working on, let one end

tangle and wiggled it about. "Flow." He gathered it and stitched the braiding in to it.

"That still doesn't make sense."

"The wards in the truck use the concept of being in motion to throw off scrying. No matter how hard they try, we're not going to be where they're aiming for because we've already moved on to the next place."

"We're not moving right now."

"The concept of motion not the action of motion. Don't think too hard about it, it's not that kind of magic. I have something like that protecting me when I step outside, although mines connect to the truck, because he's mine and the concept of ownership means what it can do I can too. But you're just a passenger, so I'm used this to create something that will make it difficult for your friends to track you."

"Using the concept of flowing fabric," Thomas said doubtfully.

"Now you're getting it."

"Not really."

"Anyway. Once you where that, and while your near me, you'll be protected."

"Near you?"

Grant nodded. "It's my magic. I have to be there to power it."

"So you're part of that Society too?"

Grant froze and looked at Thomas before bursting out in laughter. "No," he said once he calmed down. "I'm with someone else." He paused, let out a heavy sigh and went back to work.

Thomas started to ask another question, but the intensity with which Grant was focusing on his work stopped him. If this was magic, did he really want to interrupt the kangaroo in the middle of it?

He looked outside the mall had a dozen stores, one of which

was a fabric store called Fabric Anywhere and had the same design of flowing fabric around it. There was a Subway, an electronic's store, clothing, another restaurant angles so he couldn't see the name, but it looked like they served Mexican food, based on the sombrero he could see. Next to that —

He hit the door and window, his forehead smacking into it. "Don't scare me like that!" He was scrunched against the door, except he hadn't tried to move he's just...

"Why didn't I end up at that restaurant? That's where I was looking when you scared me to death."

Grant smiled as he pushed Thomas jacket off. "I am glad to know the modifications I made work. Teleportation is a concept I've never really thought about until you explained thing." He put the band of fabric around Thomas's arm as he reached for the handle. He had no interest in being a prisoner.

"Wait until I've put this on before you run off."

Thomas swallowed. "Is that really to protect me? Or is it to stop me from teleporting?"

"It's to protect you. And what I added isn't to hold you prisoner. I was worried you'd teleport by accident and they could find you again. Now that they know about me, I expect they're going to have contingency in place."

Thomas nodded and reminded himself Grant had had no reason to rescue him from his frat brothers. If he'd left, Thomas wouldn't even have held it against him.

"It's kind of tight," he said once the armband was secured on his arm.

"You don't want it slipping off."

Thomas pull the jacket back up. "How far can I go? You said I needed to stay close to you."

"I'd say a hundred feet should be safe. So you can go in the

Subway if you want something else to eat.”

“I’m more interested in their restroom.”

“Go. I’ll still be here when you come back.”

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Thomas closed the door behind him. “Fuck it’s cold.”

“Welcome to Stanford, Montana,” Grant replied, holding his phone. “Now by quiet. I waited for you because this concerns you, but don’t speak.”

He tapped an entry and placed the phone on the dash. It rang twice then was answered.

“Yes Grant,” a feminine voice answered.

“Jules, I—”

“Have eight minutes and eighteen (this can be adjusted once we have all the questions answered) seconds before the call will terminate.”

“Good to know. I have Thomas with me. He is a Rat from the Society and—”

“Lewiston,” the person said. There was something about the voice that made Thomas unsure if it was actually a woman.

“Yes,” Grant said. “That’s who is after him, it seems. I need—”

“No, Thomas Lewiston.”

Thomas vehemently shook his head when Grant looked at him.

“His last name is Hertz.”

“There are Hertz family within the Society.”

“That...” Grant trailed off and looked at Thomas again. “That’s unexpected.” His lips became a tight line. “Alright, it’s

something for later. Right now, I need a safe place where I can take it while I get him used to his situation.”

“Define safe.”

“Where the people after him won’t find him.”

“No.”

“Jules. Help me out here.”

“I am. I need specificity.”

Thomas opened his mouth and Grant shook his head.

“Okay, I need to know where I can take Thomas so that even if they can find him, with won’t be able to come take him.”

There was a silence. “The Lewiston are in a situation of detente with Denton Brislow. Any action that can be linked to them in his city will have long lasting and harsh repercussions for the Lewiston family. Take him to Denver.”

“Where in Denver specifically, Jules, do I take him to Denton?”

“No, take him to—”

The call ended.

“Did she disconnect?” Thomas asked.

“They,” Grant said, picking up his phone. “And no, they didn’t disconnect the call.” What Thomas saw of the phone it was dead.

“Did you run out of power?”

“I must have,” the kangaroo said in a way that made Thomas think he didn’t believe that was what happened.

“So Denver?”

Grant turned his phone over, running a finger over the repairs that, Thomas now suspected, might be more than that. “Not ideal, but if Jules says that’s where you’re going to be safe, that’s where we’re

going.”

“And you’ll teach me about magic stuff there?”

“More about the generalities of your life as part of the Society. Which starts with you getting laid as soon as possible.”

Thomas narrowed his eyes. “Is now really the time for sex?”

“In your case, it could be a matter of life and death.”



## CHAPTER-30

“Is this really necessary?” Thomas asked, fidgeting behind the kangaroo. The room was dark, but not so much it was difficult to move, and it wasn’t like there was anything to see. It was the idea of what was on the other side of the door with the electronic reader.

Guys, naked guys having sex. Strangers he was expected to have sex with.

It wasn’t that Thomas hadn’t had sex with strangers before, but that had been in the environment of the Sigma Theta Gamma’s parties, and he’d become friends with good numbers of those guys. Or at least he’d thought so, now, considering they were hunting him...

The thing here was that whoever he had sex with here would go his separate way basically once they were down, never to be seen again. The idea of having sex with someone he’d never talk with again felt... odd.

“Yes,” Grant said, holding a pair of towels along with a keycard. “It is; unless you happen to know a guy in Billings we can go to for this.”

“I don’t know anyone outside Minneapolis I can have sex with, other than the guys after me.”

“You want to let them catch up with you?” Grant asked, swiping the key over the reader and holding the door for Thomas.

He recoiled slightly in anticipation of the loud noise. The moaning, the grunting, the scream of pleasure. He and Paul had downloaded a movie on Paul’s sixteen birthday after the guests had left and his mother was asleep. Instead, soft conversation, showers, and the opening and closing of locker doors greeted him.

“No,” he finally said, “I’d rather not.”

“Then in you go.” The kangaroo motioned Thomas inside, and the rat did so with some trepidation. Grant followed him.

“Wait, you’re coming in?”

“I’m paying for this, so yes, I am going to enjoy myself.”

“But there’s only guys... right?” the name of the establishment was Ride’M Cowboy and the animated digital image on the wall next to the outside door hadn’t shown the offending parts, but it had made it clear what said cowboy would be riding, and it wasn’t a woman or a horse.

“I’m well aware of that.”

A short hall opened up into a locker room with lockers on his left, benches on his right, with showers further in. He was surprised they were individual showers stalls with curtains. The movie had shown a communal shower where guys were already fucking. None of the dozen of guys here were doing that.

“I didn’t know you were gay,” Thomas said.

“I’m not,” Grant replied, waving the card over the sensor of two lockers and opening them.

“But you’re into guys?”

“I am. Put your thumb over this sensor.”

Thomas did so, and Grant ran the card again. A light flashed green. He didn’t ask other questions and mentally chastised himself for making the assumption. With Paul being Demi-sexual, and Victor being Bi, Thomas knew better than assuming that just because a guy had sex with other guys, they were gay. He hadn’t needed the high school lecture on the wide array of preferences to know that. And with how quickly Paul got annoyed any time someone figure out he wasn’t ‘vanilla’ gay and bombarded the tiger with questions, Thomas didn’t pry into what Grant was.

“This is your locker. Put everything in it. It’s keyed to your thumbprint.” Grant did the same with the other locker and began undressing. “Thomas, they expect you to at least be in your underwear.”

"Can I do that?" he removed his shirt as Grant unabashedly dropped his pants, then his underwear, plaid boxers that made Thomas think they'd been part of an ensemble set with the shirt the kangaroo had. Tibs stared at the moderately sized cock and the balls under them.

"I'm not a quad," Grant said with a chuckle and without glancing in Thomas's direction.

Ears burning, Thomas hurried to get out of his clothes. He'd never seen a kangaroo naked before, and it was stupid to expect him to be arranged like a quad kangaroo. It's still what he had done. As he put the armband in the locker, Grant tied it back on the rat's bicep.

Thomas looked at it before closing the locker and turned, his other hand over his crotch. "So..." he trailed off as he noticed a few guys looking him over. His ears went hot again, and he looked down as the bear, who looked old enough to be his grandfather, smiled at him. He tried again. "Does that mean we are going to..."

"No." Grant handed him a towel and Thomas wrapped it around his midsection. "I'm going to stay close by. The building is that large, so you're grabbing a quick shower and venturing on your own. You need to get used to this. There's no telling when you'll be able to go home bathhouses like this will be the likeliest places where you'll be able to get your batteries charged up."

"I don't know if I'll be able to get it... you know... up."

Grant didn't stop the roll of the eyes in time and Thomas's ears went back to burning. "Thomas, if you aren't hard before you get out of the shower, I will agree that you aren't Society." He grinned. "I'm telling you that you have guys here that will put some of your frat mates to shame both in equipment and how well they can use it on you."

Thomas swallowed as images built in his mind.

"Are you hard now?"

Thomas nodded slowly.

“I rest my case. Go shower, then go have fun. Just remember that is what this is, fun. The rest is incidental.”

Life and death incidental, Thomas thought, using Grant’s own words. He eyed the stalls. He could jack off there, that would... what was he thinking. He could spend an hour jacking off and with the idea of what could happen here, his cock wouldn’t go down. He squared his shoulder, remained aware of the surrounding people, and walked to the showers.

Grant had warned him against accidentally teleporting before they left the pickup, and the kangaroo had had the grace of folding his ears back as he realized the uselessness of the warning. It wasn’t like Thomas planned on teleporting by accident. He’d asked if Grant could do something with the armband like he’d done to the pickup to keep him from teleporting, and the kangaroo had thought it over and finally shook his head.

“The flow of the fabric will make it difficult to do that kind of magic.”

“But doesn’t the motion of the pickup make stopping teleportation hard too?”

Grant had smiled and explained about the pickup, various parts, and their implications of what it meant to be a pickup and, at that point, Thomas had zoned out. In the end, Grant had told him that the simplest way was to avoid being surprised, since that seemed to be his easiest trigger. That meant being aware of what happened around.

It was why he saw the grandfatherly bear approach as Thomas reached the stall.

“Hello, young man.” The man’s voice was deep. “I couldn’t help noticing how uncomfortable you were. Is this your first time?”

“I’ve had sex before,” Thomas blurted out, and barely stopped the groan.

The bear smiled. “Good. A place like this isn’t really where

you want to learn, and I'm not in a teaching mood. What I can do is help you relax." The bear ran a hand along Thomas's shoulder until it was at the back of his neck while reaching behind to pull the curtain aside.

"Aren't I young?" Thomas asked, breathing in the man and glancing down. Next to the tent his hard cock formed, the bear's stood at attention.

The man raised Thomas's head with a finger under his muzzle. "We are all men here. You tell me no, and I'll sadly let you be."

"It's..." Thomas swallowed and backed into the stall. He couldn't believe he was doing this, but the man was there, offering. "Are we allowed to do that here?"

The man closed the curtain behind him. "It isn't forbidden, just considered in bad taste to do it in the open among the lockers. Too many pornos make younger men think places like this have no decorum."

Thomas blushed. "I was—"

The man kissed Thomas, and the rat closed his eyes. The tongue pushed his lips aside, then was in his muzzle. Thomas moaned. His towel fell, and a callused hand closed around his hard cock. He felt the bear smile in the kiss before he broke it.

"Eager, I like that. What do you want to do?"

Everything, his mind screamed. And he couldn't voice an answer.

The man chuckled. "Can you say artichoke?"

The strangeness of the question derailed his thoughts so hard he expected a news report about the accident it had caused. The man looked at him expectantly, so he said, "artichoke."

"Good. That's your safe word. You seem to be at something of a loss, so I'm going to do things to you. I don't plan on hurting you, but if you need me to stop at any point, you say that word."

Thomas nodded. Letting the man take the lead felt like the easiest.

“Artichoke,” Thomas said in a hurry as the man reached for the armband.

The bear raised an eyebrow.

“It stays on, okay?”

“Is it some mark of ownership? I saw the man you came in with put it on you.”

Thomas shook his head. “I’m sorry if it feels weird, it’s...” a finger on his lips silents him.

“You used the safe word and explained what I was about to do to wrong. That’s what it’s for. Oddities are what make life interesting. Shall I continue?”

Thomas nodded.

The bear pressed Thomas against the wall, his hands running up and down the rat’s sides, stomach, chest, and neck. Thomas responded but touching the bear, but he didn’t have the patience and he was wrapping his hands around the balls and cock while the bear was still playing with his nipples.

“Fuck me,” Thomas whispered.

“Are you sure?”

Thomas nodded, and the bear took a condom and packet of lube from a plastic bowl stuck to the wall next to the curtain. Thomas started to protest they didn’t need it. He’d had his shot, but he stopped. It didn’t matter and if the bear had taken them, it made him feel better about it. He handed the condom to Thomas, who dropped to his knees and licked the balls and swallow the cock to the hilt.

“Oh dear God,” the bear said. “I don’t object, but if you want me to fuck you, you’ll have to stop.” Thomas grinned as he looked up and took the condom out of the package. “That is a talented mouth you

have there." Thomas stood after covering the cock with the condom and took the packet of lube, slicking it, then his hole before turning and raising his tail. "Do you need me to loosen you?"

Thomas shook his head. He'd been taken so often by one of his frat brothers without preparation that to take the time for that felt like wasted time now. The bear put his weight against Thomas until he was pressed against the wall and then felt around until Thomas felt the finger on his hole. Then something else pressed and stretched him. Then with a spike of sensation that might have been pain, the first time he'd taken a guy, the bear was inside him, hissing softly in pleasure.

"You're surprisingly tight for not being in discomfort."

Thomas pressed back, suddenly needing the bear to fuck him, to cum inside him. He was hungry for it; as if he hadn't eaten in days.

The bear moved, initially thrusting back and forth slowly, then picking up speed. Thomas tightened his ass and with a curse, the bear tensed and the cock spasmed, and... something was off. Thomas didn't know what, but something was missing. The bear panted in his ear and pulled out.

Before Thomas thought about it, he turned and dropped to his knees. He pulled the condom off and swallowed the cock again. It tasted wonderful, better than it had when he'd done it before the condom. The cum added such flavors. What did the man eat for his cum to be that good? He began sucking, wanting more.

"You need to stop," the bear said with some urgency and pulled Thomas up. "I'm afraid that at my age, I need a rest after this and it gets too sensitive."

"You taste amazing," Thomas said.

"I'm glad you enjoyed it. Do you need me to help you with your shower?"

"My what?" Thomas looked around and remembered they were in a stall.

The man smiled. "It always warms my heart to know I can have that effect on a young man. If you don't need my help I'd go sit down."

"Can I fuck you?"

The bear tilted an ear. "Do you top? With how quickly you were to offer your ass, I thought you were a bottom."

"I'm versatile."

"Then how about this? I'm going to head to the bar while you have your shower. I don't promise to still be there, but if I am, we can find a bench and you can fuck me."

"Okay."

The bear left, and Thomas hurried to shower and dry off as much as he could with the absorbent towel. The bar, when he finally found it, was a better-illuminated room with a counter and stools, where naked men sat, towel on the stool. And enjoyed a glass of something. A few booths were occupied, but the bear wasn't there.

Thomas went to the bar where an antelope mixed fruit juices in a tall glass. "What can I get you?" he asked Thomas, looked at him more carefully. "Before you ask, there's nothing alcoholic, but I can make a virgin version of anything you can think of."

"Did you see a bear? Old enough to be my grandfather, brown fur with some gray in it?"

"Bruce? Yeah, he was here a few minutes ago, stopped by only long enough to get the attention of some guy around your age. They're probably in a room somewhere."

"Don't waste your time on him," the man on the stool next to Thomas said. He was a dalmatian in his late twenties. "He never fucked the same guy twice."

"Oh," Thomas said and immediately realized how misplaced the disappointment was. This was a place where he could find anyone he wanted to fuck. What did it matter if not that one specific guy? The



dalmatian was looking him up and down. "Want to get fucked?" he asked.

The man stood. "As a matter of fact, I would." He escorted Thomas to another hall, then a room with low beds. Of the half dozen, one other was occupied. A lion slowly riding a tiger. Thomas pushed the man onto his back and raised his legs over his shoulder and lined up his cock.

"Whoa there, hold your horses," the dalmatian said, handing Thomas a packet. "There's some prep needed." Thomas started to protest, but noticed it was lube. Blushing, he took it and slicked himself and the man's hole, slowly pushing a finger in.

Remembering the bear's question, Thomas asked. "Do you need me to loosen you up?"

"No, I'm good with just lube. You aren't my first guy today."

With a nod, Thomas realigned himself and pushed in slowly.

"Oh yeah," the dalmatian said. "No need to be overly gentle. I can take some abuse."

"Okay," Thomas answered, whatever the comment had been. Fuck, this felt right. Flesh against flesh, heat on heat. He was amazed that after being fucked, he wasn't coming from simply this. He bottomed and pulled back, bottoming again. He grabbed the guy's cock and stroked it and he thrust.

Had it always felt *that* good? How was he still not cumming?

He fucked harder, felt his pleasure approached. The man under him said things, tensed and as Thomas came, the ass tightened around his cock. He held himself there as his cock pulsed, then shuddered.

This left amazing. He felt great. His hand was covered with the man's cum. He licked it clean.

"Never get enough of this," the dalmatian said.

Thomas looked down. "Really?"

"Yeah. Cock up my ass, filled with cum. That's the best way to fill an afternoon."

"Hold on then." Thomas went back to thrusting.

"You're still hard?" the man asked in surprise, then let his head fall back.

This felt just as good, all the way to the orgasm, even if this time the dalmatian didn't reach his at the same time. The smile on his face said he enjoyed it, but he was still soft. Once Thomas came down from his second orgasm, he pulled out.

"Man, I miss being young," the dalmatian said.

"You could do this when you were my age?"

"I could never do that. I've never been one for topping, but my back could take a dozen guys before I needed a rest. Now, I'm going to have to stand and walk around before I lay back on it again."

Thomas nodded. "Maybe I'll fuck you again then."

"Sure, you never know."

The hall had a dry sauna on one side which reminded Thomas of Madoc, and his room of worship, which took on a brand new meaning, with Grant's talk of gods and how sex was like worshiping for Madoc and the frat. Thomas joined the men there and was sitting on a cock the instant the offer was accepted, then he pulled on to his muzzle. When he was done with that, he fucked the one he'd suck off while someone fucked Thomas.

After that, Thomas found a communal shower to put to shame the one in the movie he and Paul watched, and he joined in the sex there. Being fucked, fucking and sucking and being sucked. He was no cleaning leaving it then entering it, but he felt much better.

Then there was the wet sauna, the gym room. Where on top of sex, he impressed a few of the guys, and himself, with how much he

could press.

At some point, Thomas must have slept. It might have been while he was being fucked, or he was fucking someone. He wasn't sure. But everything took on the surreality of a dream, or what he imagined being high was like. It didn't stop the sex. Thomas was also certain of that.

But he must have slept, right?

## CHAPTER-31

“Well?” Grant asked. They’d been on the road for two hours. Two hours during which Thomas buzzed mentally, watching the landscape go by. There had been so many guys. So much sex and only a little sleep. Still, he was awake. Not only that, but he was ready to run.

“I’m great,” he answered, grinning.

“Not something to be afraid of, then?”

Thomas opened his mouth and found it difficult to answer. Had he taken advantage of the men he’d slept with? If he had all this energy, what did that have left?

“How does this work?” Thomas asked. “Am I stealing their life force or something?”

The kangaroo shook his head. “You didn’t take anything from them. For you, the sex you had, it’s more than that. It’s an act of worship to your god. Various factions have a variety of explanations for what that actually means, but the end result is that your god, in return for the worship, grants you energy. It’s not the same as getting a good night’s sleep, so you’re going to want that tonight, but in a pinch, it’s going to keep you going on top of powering your magic, so long as you don’t exhaust yourself again.”

Worship, magic, gods. It should sound impossible, but it felt like the right thing to Thomas. The right explanation for this buzzing still running through him.

“Okay, so this god that’s mine, it wants me to have sex. What else?”

“He. That’s one of the things the Society is clear about. Your god is male.” He smiled. “Extremely male to hear the stories going around. Beyond that, I can’t tell you much. Sex with guys, vitality, potency, those would be His domain.”

“Did you just capitalize ‘his’?”

“When dealing with gods, it’s best to be respectful. They’re not supposed to be able to affect me, but why take the chance? Being polite doesn’t cost anything.”

“Have you been with one of them?”

“Society?” Grant shrugged. “Not that I know of. Considering who I’ve had sex with, there’s probably been one, but they didn’t orgasm screaming they were Society.”

“Not even their god’s name? Well, my god? That’s going to be weird.”

Grant was quiet for a few seconds. “No. Not that anyone I’ve been with went around scream a god’s name when they came, but... again, I just know stories. But he might not have a name.”

“How can a god not have a name? Didn’t someone name him?”

“Again. I just know stories. Maybe he has a name and they’re keeping it secret. It’s been known to happen.”

“You said ‘considering who you’ve had sex with,’” Thomas hesitated. “That makes it sound like there’s been a lot of... variety.”

“I don’t discriminate,” Grant answered with a chuckle. “About the only thing I ask for is an ability to hold a conversation. Not that we’ve always been in a condition to converse by the time we got horizontal.”

Thomas nodded and looked outside to let the mild discomfort at the sex talk pass. It was mild, so that was an improvement. He chuckled. Of course, this was a guy he knew. He still hadn’t put this seemingly new found confidence to the test by opening up to a woman.

His ears burned at the idea.

“You’ve told me about my god.” Man, that felt weird to say. “What can you tell me about yours?”

“I don’t have one.”

“Wait, didn’t you tell me all magic was divine the other day?” he tapped the armband. “Unless you’re selling me a crapload of shit, this is magic, and that staff of yours called down lightning.”

“To every rule, there’s an exception,” Grant said in a tone that made it sound he was repeating something. He glances at Thomas. “We, the people who use magic like I do, are beyond gods. If we follow anything, it’s the raw concept of the universe, of the possibilities it represents. That’s why I’m not limited in what I use.”

“Beyond gods?” that sounded either like too much or a much better deal. Thomas wasn’t sure which.

“Think of it this way. The universe is a spotlight. The gods are colored filters placed before the light so that when you’re under it, everything is shifted to that color. Yours is that of sex with guys. Another might be of nature, of information. There are a lot of them. But we don’t bother with the filter.”

“Maybe I should go for that instead.”

Grant chuckled. “And give of the sex?”

“I wouldn’t have to give it up, would I?”

“Not the sex itself, but you’d be like the rest of us. Once and you’re done for a while. When I checked in on you, you seem to be having a lot of fun not having to stop.”

Thomas considered it. What would it be like, having a normal sex drive? And would he? His mom certainly didn’t, and his dad could keep up. Genetics had to mean he’d still be above average.

“Before you convince yourself you’d be fine giving it up. You can’t.”

“What do you mean I can’t? Isn’t it just having to learn something like the stuff you did with the armband?”

“No, it’s not that simple. You didn’t have to join a religion to get this power, you didn’t decide to follow this god. He’s in you. Your blood, your energy, your cum.”

“That makes it sound dirty.”

Gran shrugged. “Gods are possessive. If you break with him, you break completely. I said you wouldn’t have to give up the sex, but the truth is, I don’t know. I’ve never heard of someone from the Society leaving that completely. At best, there are a couple of stories about guys having enough of the politics and going off to live someplace the rest of the people weren’t. There are stories with other factions, but usually from those where joining is already more fluid.”

“Is that why you went with the universe?”

The kangaroo’s lips tightened, then gave a small shake of the head.

“So is that something like the god I’m with? Were you born in it?”

Another small shake of the head. Was this going to be twenty questions?

“Okay, then is—”

“Thomas,” Grant said, his voice pained. “Don’t ask more questions. In fact, forget what I said about the universe and the spotlight and the filters. Definitely don’t mention it to someone who does follow a god. It’s not going to endear you to them.”

“Because that puts you above them?”

“Something like that, yes.”

Thomas nodded and went back to looking outside, but that turned boring quickly. They’d passed a town a few exists ago and now it was all hills with various rolls, with mountains in the distance. Montana was boring to look at.

“Can I suck you off?” he asked the kangaroo.

“I’m driving.”

“So? It’s not like you’ll have to do anything.”

"I have to keep control of the car."

"It's not that hard." Alright, Thomas hadn't been driving that fast, and they had been on small roads specifically in case Paul blowing him would cause a problem. But it hadn't.

"It's not that hard," Grant repeated, shaking his head. "That had got to be a Society skill or something." He smiled. "That's a no thank you. I'll pass. Unlike you. Last afternoon and night at the bathhouse will last me for a while."

Thomas went back to looking out the window. The scenery hadn't gotten any more exciting. "Can I at least drive for a while?"

Grant looked at him. Stared for long enough Thomas was worried they might drift onto the shoulder, only for Grant to get them back in the lane and burst out laughing.

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The charging station was an hour north of Casper, Wyoming. Thomas had asked why they hadn't waited until they reached it for their pit stop and Grant had shaken his head. Charging here would let them reach Denver by nightfall and without having to stop in Cheyenne. He seemed nervous and in a hurry, so Thomas had taken the money handed to him, grabbed the plastic container that served as their trashcan and gone inside to dump it and get the supplies for the road.

"Hi," Thomas greeted the cashier as he placed the purchases on the counter, a marmot who looked like he could barely stay awake. He wondered if they were the only customers to stop here.

"Hey."

"Must get pretty boring here," Thomas said.

The guy, he couldn't be more than a year or two older than Thomas, shrugged. "It's just me and whatever customer shows up. It can be hours before anyone comes by."

"Hours? Really?" Thomas smiled as an idea formed. "So you



could get up to fun stuff and there wouldn't be anyone to stop you?" How long had Grant's pickup taken to reach a full charge the last time, and would the kangaroo actually mind if Thomas took longer? He was the one who'd said the rat needed to get in the habit of having sex regularly.

"Like there's anything fun to get up to by myself," the marmot scoffed.

"You aren't by yourself right now," Thomas offered with a smile. When the marmot looked at him, he licked his lips in what he hoped was a seductive manner.

The cashier looked around. "Is this a joke? I mean, are you actually offering to blow me?"

"If that's what you want." He gave a casual shrug. "I'm open to more, if you want." He decided the marmot had given him enough of a yes to at least get behind the counter, so he did and pressed against him. Yep, he was interested, Thomas confirmed as he ran a hand over the tented crotch.

He rubbed with one hand and reached behind to undo the tail strap with the other. Then his hand was inside the pants and didn't encounter underwear on the way to the hard and leaking cock. It was enough of a surprise that it made him smile. Outside of the frat and their insistence he went commando, this was the first guy he'd encountered not wearing underwear.

He squeezed and the marmot's moan was accompanied by something hitting the window. Thomas looked up in surprise as the wind dragged an outside trashcan through the parking lot. The sky was so dark the lights were coming on.

"Fuck." Thomas ran outside wishing he could at least apologize to the marmot for the state he left him in, but blue cloudless skies didn't turn this black this quickly without help. That meant his frat brothers were back and, just like Grant had predicted, they'd gone for him first.

The pickup was still at the charging station, the bed's cover

only holding on by one side. Where was Grant? Thomas ran to the side of the building and froze. In the field, Grant was standing up to three people Thomas didn't know, and each held something that made him think of the kangaroo's staff, even if they looked nothing like it.

One, holding a foot-long transparent cylinder with a bulbous head in her hand, waved it over her head and light trailed after what Thomas realized wasn't a ball, but a lens. When she pointed it at Grant, the light shot at him, only to be caught in the wind and deflected.

Wind deflected light? In what world did that happen?

A man moving to Grant's left raised his hand, and a metal drum pulled out of the ground and launched at the kangaroo on focused on it and another burst of wind sent it flying in another direction.

Right, magic.

The one holding a... shovel? Planted it in the ground and it heaved, sending Grant stumbling back and needing to use his staff to maintain his balance.

"No!" Thomas yelled as the one with the glass rod brought it down. He ran for them, then stumbled when the ground rolled under his feet. He regained his footing to find it caught. The earth climbing up his leg.

"You've lost Summer!" the one holding a metal staff made of smaller pieces, each with one end painted red, yelled in the wind. "I know how you think. If you don't do it, right now, the kid's dead!"

They were after Grant? Somehow the fact the pickup had warded to keep anyone in it from being found hadn't registered as being for someone other than Thomas's protection.

"Thomas!" Grant yelled as the wind intensified. "Get to the pickup, go to Denver!"

"You know him?" the metal staff holder said in surprise. "Vincent, bring him here. We're going to make him suffer until

Summer gives himself over.”

The ground pulled on Thomas’s now fully covered legs hard enough his other dragged as he moved.

“No!” Grant yelled and slammed his staff in the ground. Instead of something happening there, a funnel descended on the man with the shovel planted before him, pulling him up. The man hung onto the end of the shovel and it kept him dangling upside down until it came out of the ground and both went flying in the air.

His leg was freed and Thomas fell.

“Go!” Grant yelled as he raised his head.

“You think that’s going to save the kid?” the woman mocked. “Knowing you, Vince is going to land in a lake somewhere. You’re too soft, too scared. You should never have been given the honor of a staff.”

“I wasn’t given anything,” Grant snarled back. “Thomas, run! I’m going to hold them back.” He twisted the staff, and the wind shifted, heading toward Grant instead of away, pulling his two adversaries closer.

Thomas looked the way he’d come. The pickup was waiting for him. The wind wasn’t as strong here so he could stand and get to it.

“I’m going to be fine!” Grant yelled.

“Oh, bullshit.” In every movie he’d watched, that was what the hero said when he didn’t want the others to know he was planning on dying in the fight. Grant has saved him from his frat brother. The least Thomas could do was save Grant from whoever these assholes were.

With a thought, he was next to the kangaroo, getting to his feet and taking hold of him.

“Don’t let them run off!” the guy with the metal staff yelled.

“What are you doing?” Grant snarled. “I told you to run?”

“I’m doing that,” Thomas yelled back, “but my way.” He really hoped this worked, that it wasn’t just because Yating had been fucking him that he’d come along. That it was because a part of Thomas hadn’t wanted him to get hurt in the fire. He looked around for a destination as a light flared so intensely the back of his eyes hurt. Grant let out a yell that also sounded pained.

No! Thomas hung onto the kangaroo as the wind intensified. He couldn’t see anything. They couldn’t stay here. They had to leave right now! They had to go somewhere safe!

The wind stopped abruptly, as did all sounds.

“What?” Grant said, confused.

And then Thomas’s consciousness decided that it, too, had had enough.

## CHAPTER-32

Faith

CHAPTER-32

Thomas grunted and mured a, "don't stop." As the guy fucking him did just that, the cock in his ass twitching a last time.

"Fuck, I thought you were going to die on me," Grant said, rolling off.

"Did I fall asleep?" Thinking was difficult. But Thomas didn't understand why he'd slept on the floor. And a cold floor at that.

"You passed out. What is this place?"

Thomas tried to look around, but this head was too

comfortable, resting on his arms. "Dunno," he slurred.

"You brought us here, Thomas, you have to know where this is."

"I did? Cool. I'm going to nap now, we can fuck again after." He closed his eyes, only to open them again at the slap on his head. "Ow!"

"Don't you dare fall asleep on me."

A hand took Thomas's muzzle and used it to turn his head until he was looking into the kangaroo's searching eyes. "I guess the stories aren't all true. Society guys aren't 'one fuck and ready to go again.'"

"I can fuck you if you want." He tried to put a hand under him and push himself up, but someone had put a ton of something on his back. "Roll me over and you can sit on my cock."

"Is it going to help you?" Grant asked.

"It's going to feel good, I promise." His head shook.

"Don't fall asleep. Thomas, does fucking a guy give you energy?"

"Yes," he answered, since he figured it was what the kangaroo wanted

to hear.

1

"You don't even know, do you?" Grant took off his pants and placed them on the ground before rolling Thomas on them. "You did say you were able to fuck guys without stopping, so I'm going to hope it means yes." He looked at the crotch. "Not that I'm not going to enjoy this anyway, but the goal here is to keep you alive and get you awake enough you can answer my questions." He straddled Thomas's waist. "I'd fuck you again since I know that works, but I'm just a normal guy when it comes to that. I'm going to need time I don't think we have."

Thomas's smart comeback to that was taken from him as the kangaroo lowered himself and his cock entered the hot, slick ass. It would have been a really smarty come back too.

But this was way be er.

He tried to grip Grant's hips as he undulated on his cock, but his arms weighed a ton. This felt so good he didn't want Grant to be doing all the work. He wanted to be the one pounding the ass, not just have the ass grind on him.

"This is a good cock," Grant whispered, and Thomas grinned. With another effort, he got a hand to grab a hip and give a thrust, then he moaned deeply.

Taking a hand in it was so much more fun. He thrust again and again.

"Feeling be er?" Grant asked.

"No," Thomas answered, getting his other hand on the other hip. "I'm going to have to do this a few times."

"I don't know that!" Grant's voice raised as Thomas changed the angle as hit the sweet spot. He'd learned quite a few things as part of Sigma Theta Gamma. Shu ing up guys he was fucking was one of them.

He thrust harder, and Grant grunted every time. Thomas clenched his teeth and bucked as his orgasm hit. He unloaded into the kangaroo and was left panting, but able to think.

"Fuck, I needed that," Thomas said.

2

Faith

"You sound more coherent," Grant replied. "Enough to tell me where we are?"

Thomas looked around at the stone wall, the uneven angles. "How did we get here?"

"You took us. Where is here?"

"You didn't cum." Thomas noticed the flaccid cock on his dry stomach.

"Focus Thomas. Where are we?"

"It's the gro o on my grandfather's property." He frowned. "It should be colder." The place had always been warmer because of the hot spring running under it, but this was almost comfortable.

"I was able to get something going before I started waking you up."

Thomas snickered. "Is that what they called it in your day?"

Grant glared. "I am not that old. And it's what I call fucking a Society guy to nearly killed himself taking us here. Your grandfather, the one in Bozeman?"

Thomas nodded and held on to the kangaroo's hips as he started to get off. "I want to fuck you again."

"Unfortunately, my ass needs a rest."

"You're still soft."

"I'm not from the Society," Grant said. "The rest of us have to deal with that."

"Can't you do magic to get in hard again?"

Grant dislodged Thomas's hands, and they dropped to the ground, too

heavy again. Then he stood and the cool air make Thomas's cock shiver. "I could, but that's all in my truck, which is hundreds of miles from here." He stretched. "How did you do this? I thought you could only do line of sight."

3

"Never done it before." No, that wasn't right. "I don't know how. Hey, my eyes work again." He remembered the flash of light, the pain, being unable to see. Needing to take him and Grant somewhere safe. "I wanted us to be safe."

"You probably did save my life. So thanks." Grant offered him his hand. "Let's see if you can stand on your own two feet."

Thomas threw his hand up for Grant to catch, then he was pulled up, and immediately the kangaroo had to support his weight.

"I'm good," Thomas said as Grant lowered him back to the ground.

"You were, but you can't stand yet. I wish I has more of those packets of lube from the bathhouse."

"You stole lube?" Thomas burst out laughing.

"You know that. Put this in your muzzle and get me hard again. I don't need to listen to you mock my supplying habits." He knelt around Thomas's neck when shoved his cock in the muzzle as the rat was about to reply. Thomas moaned in appreciation and sucked hard.

"Fuck," Grant exclaimed and Thomas grinned. The soft cock was getting hard as he'd been told to make happen. "Is this more Society magic?"

Thomas shrugged and let go. "You can fuck me now." He rolled onto his stomach, hissing at the cold stone floor and shoving a pair of pants under his crotch.

Grant was on top of him and in him, moving fast and hard. It felt as if he wanted to hurry this along. He should relax and enjoy the fuck, Thomas certainly was. Too quickly. The kangaroo grunted and came. Thomas sighed in pleasure as he was filled. His mind cleared.



“Who were those guys?” he asked.

Grant lay on top of him, panting. “Are you really going to ask me to explain that now?”

4

Faith

Thomas tightened his ass on the softening cock, making the kangaroo grunt. “I don’t think you’re able to fuck me again.” Once Grant was off him, Thomas turned and sat. His body was sore but seemed to be back to its normal weight.

He threw the pants to the kangaroo and pulled his to himself, putting them on. He’d take them off when it was time to fuck again, but the stone was fucking cold.

Grant leaned against the wall once he had his on, too. “They are the Chamber.”

“That would be one of the factions.”

Grant rolled his eyes. “They’re parasites, nothing more.”

“But they do magic, right? That lady was throwing light with that rod. The guy with the shovel did stuff to the frozen ground. What’s with the shovel, anyway? I get the rod and the metal staff, but a shovel?”

“It’s a staff too. And they steal magic, not use it,” Grant said before Thomas commented. “Those staffs used to belong to people like me, we call ourselves Practitioners. We use magic. We fashion our staffs, then they show up, get us to burn out and steal our power for themselves.”

“Burnout?”

Grant looked to the side and Thomas saw his staff was there. Next to a red spot of— “is that a drawing of a fire?”

“We needed heat, and I don’t have a lot to work with. Remember when I told you we deal with the concept of the universe, its potential?”

Thomas nodded. "The spotlight, not the filters."

"That's a lot of energy. The gods, they present limits to what you can do. You can still kill yourself doing magic, but it takes more effort to screw up to that level. For us. If we channel too much of that raw energy, like I was doing powering the storm, we can simply be

5

burnt out by it. Then they can take the staff and use it." "Can they burn out too?"

"Yeah. They're still dealing with the raw potential of the universe, even if they stole it."

"So they are after you because of your staff?"

"Among other things." Grant smiled. "I've been making a habit of getting in their way."

"The good Samaritan thing," Thomas said, the new

information changing the context of their meeting. "We didn't meet by accident, did we?"

Grant considered the question. "No, and yes." He smiled. "I was looking for someone; I just didn't know it was you. I have a... let's call it a spell for the sake of simplicity. It's set to find someone new to magic and in way over their heads. Because of how the factions work, that means a new Practitioner who is being targeted by the Chamber. Everyone else tends to have better controls over how they take in new members." He chuckled. "I certainly didn't expect someone from the Society, since you have to be born into it. Or so the stories go."

Thomas nodded. "What does it mean now? If I'm not who you wanted to protect, shouldn't—"

Grant shook his head. "I knew you were Society when your frat brothers showed up and the rat said you were related."

"Just because one of my grandmother's sister's married into his family."

"It doesn't matter. I didn't abandon you then. I'm not... look let's start by dealing with the here and now, then we'll work out the next step, okay?"

"So... fucking?" Thomas asked hopefully.

"Yes, but only once. Then we need to move."

Thomas grinned. "I'll be sure it's a great one then." 6

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Faith

Thomas leaned back against the side of the shed, muttering curses. He glanced around it again. The gray van didn't belong to his grandfather. Under normal circumstances, he'd assume it was someone making a delivery, a friend for a visit. One of his many girlfriends, over for some fun. His grandfather had said he was taking a break, but come on. Thomas's father had to get his sex drive from somewhere.

These were not normal circumstances.

He looked at Grant looking at the house from the other side of the shed. "So," he whispered, "the town?"

Grant shook his head and joined him. "It's still too far. Even if we can't get your grandfather to help us, we need supplies." He pushed Thomas down as the back door to the ranch house opened and Olavo stepped outside. Felix and Limbani followed him.

How? Thomas mouthed to Grant, who shrugged.

The three were talking, but too softly for them to hear at this distance.

"How about you just blow them away like you did in Lewiston?"

Grant looked around. "How do you feel about the risk of a tree through your grandfather's house?"

“Not very good, why?”

Grant hefted his staff. “This isn’t made for precision. I can’t just target a few people.”

“The funnel?”

Grand snorted. “You have no idea how lucky we were with that one. If the weather had been just a li le less nice when we arrived. I might have taken out a quarter-mile instead of that guy.”

Thomas looked at the way the trees were already waving in 7

the wind. He didn’t think there was a storm coming, but this wasn’t calm weather.

“We are kind of out of luck then,” Thomas said, “because I don’t see them leaving anytime soon. Not unless they get confirmation we’re elsewhere.”

Grant motioned Thomas to the other side of the shed as the three frat brothers went back inside and pointed to a window with a light in it. “How do you feel about commi ing some larceny?”

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Thomas appeared in the bedroom and ducked. It was silent. He looked around, over the bed, then made his way to the a ached bathroom. Also empty.

He cracked the door open and listened to the house.

Conversation came from the living room. His grandfather and someone else, too faint to recognize who should be here or what they were talking about.

He went to the closet and took two of the overcoats and laid them on the bed. Neither Grant nor him were dressed for a winter walk. At the back, he took his grandfather’s hunting backpack and emptied it of its contents, and took it with him to the door. He listened again; Still only the conversation from the living room.

He stepped out and crept toward the back stairs that led into the

kitchen. His goal was the pantry his grandfather always kept well stocked. He paused as grunts came from the partially opened door ahead, only moving forward again when he identified what it was, if not who was doing it.

He peeked in. Olave was fucking Yating hard, a hand over his mouth to muffle the sounds. Thomas wanted to demand to know what they thought they were doing having sex in his grandfather's house, but counting on them being distracted for a while served him better. He passed it and immediately picked up more sound. Voices this time.

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Faith

That door was closed, so he pressed his ear to it.

"Why can't we just leave?" Gilbert asked plaintively.

The sigh was pure Limbani having to explain something obvious. "I saw us here until tomorrow night."

"But why?"

"I don't know. That isn't how it works."

"Fucking precogs. I hate the lot of you. Never a straight answer when we need one."

Limbani snickered. "Oh really? You want something straight from me? How about I straight up fuck you?" Thomas moved on. So he and Grant had until tomorrow night before they needed to worry about them.

He moved down the steps carefully, freezing when one creaked. When nothing changed after a few seconds, he continued, only to stop at a voice.

"Damn it, Henry," Madoc said, his voice coming through the kitchen window. "Did Raphael tell you anything about this guy? I get Limbani's visions are accurate, but you know what he looks for. He got us the address and the fact we're here for a while, but he didn't see

Thomas being here and I can't exactly go in and demand to know where Thomas is without getting some information on this guy first."

Thomas carefully looked out the window. Madoc paced while listening.

"Grandfather? Are you sure? I met his grandmother, and I didn't get a sense there was a man in her life. No, not like that, just not one. I thought he'd died. So Thomas is still close to him then? No, he never mentioned family out here. Didn't he show up in any of the searches Raphael had done on him? No, never mind," he immediately added. "That man would never consider Thomas's mother's side of his family to be of interest. If it doesn't have a dick, it's only good to pop out sons. Fuck, I wish someone else took over. Don't tell him I said that." Madoc chuckled at what Henry said. "I know. He's doing the

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best he can. Okay, so let me get back in and discreetly ask what he knows of where Thomas is. I'll call you tomorrow for an update unless something happens."

The rat shook his head and reached for the door.

Thomas looked around in a panic. He'd been so focused on listening in, he hadn't moved. Now he had to hide. He looked at the open pantry and willed himself there, then moved back and prayed Madoc didn't look in too closely. There was only so much the shadows could do to hide the white of his fur.

"Are you finally going to explain yourself, young man?" his grandfather demanded.

Madoc answered quiet enough Thomas couldn't hear from the back of the pantry. The tone was enough to calm him and soften his voice enough Thomas had no hopes of learning anything unless he got closer. He stepped forward.

"Where are the cleaners?" Felix asked, stepping into the kitchen. Thomas backed again and looked around. Were they in here?

"Under the sink," his grandfather answered.

"Where did he get these?" the o'er whispered, awe in his voice and Thomas had to step forward to know what had Felix this amazed.

The o'er was running a hand on the wood table, then looking the chairs over, no, studying them. Chouteau was what... a fan of wood furniture? That... Was not something Thomas ever expected to learn while on the run from the man. The o'er opened the cabinet under the sink and searched through the content before taking out a can of wood polish, then a polishing cloth, and returning to the living room.

"I really hope you don't mind," the o'er said. "I just noticed the bookcase there could..." the rest was too faint.

Thomas took a step forward, then reminded himself he wasn't here to spy, but to supply. He filled the backpack with jerky, water

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Faith

boles, the handful of old heating pads he came across. Cans of fruits he carefully placed in so with wouldn't knock together and all the trail mixes in the pantry. Once done, he looked at the distance between the door and the stairs. What were the odds he could make it there without anyone walking in?

He shook his head in annoyance at himself. He needed to stop thinking like the old him. The odds were one hundred percent because he didn't have to cross the distance by running.

He teleported to the bottom of the steps, then the top, then the door to his grandfather's bedroom. He gathered the overcoats and looked out the window, and stood next to a startled Grant.

Thomas raised both hands. "Larceny accomplished." 11

## CHAPTER-33

Faith

### CHAPTER-33

The sun was dipping behind the mountains as Grant opened the door to the fast food place and Thomas rushed in and out of the ever-worsening cold.

"I am never walking in winter again," he stammered, clacking teeth breaking up the words.

"You're going to need to move south then; because winter's a reality this far north," Grant replied. Thomas glared at him. Had the kangaroo lived in Minneapolis? He knew what cold was. It wasn't this. Bozeman was worse than cold. It was.... Frigid! "Grab us a table and I'll bring you a coffee to have with the trail mix."

Thomas took a table in the center of the eating area, away from anything that had a chance to let in cold air or even show him the cold outside. Grant returned with two large mugs and sat opposite him.

"Are we allowed to eat food we brought in ourselves?"

Grant looked around at the empty restaurant. "So long as we drink what's supposed to be their coffee and don't overstay our welcome, we should be fine. Eat up, you need the energy." It had been the first place they'd come across after hours of walking on the side of back roads. The last sign Thomas had seen said they were still five miles from Bozeman proper.

"I thought I got mine doing the horizontal mambo?"

"I won't be surprised if there's a way you guys can survive off sex, but a full belly is its own pleasure."

Thomas passed a pack of trail mix to the kangaroo and opened three of his own. "We going to talk about the plan?" he asked before dumping a full bag in his mouth.



Grant slowly opened his, taking a few of the nuts from it and popping them in his mouth. Just as Thomas resigned himself to yet

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another lack of answer to the question he'd asked nearly a dozen times during the walk, Grant spoke.

"Having the Chamber show up changed things."

Thomas hurried to look around and said in a hushed tone. "Should you be saying their names out loud in public?"

"It's not like saying the word will tell them where I am." He grins. "Can you imagine if anytime someone said the word 'chamber' some magical light lit up in front of their face? They'd be blind. I'd say avoid talking about stuff that'll get you looked at strangely, or get the cops called on you. Otherwise, you just have to get used to people edging away from you and thinking you're weird."

"Okay, low key on the mumbo jumbo. What does having them involved change?" He took a sip and made a face. Grant had been right. If that was supposed to be coffee, they'd missed the mark. He added a few sugars. He didn't normally care for them, but this needed all the help it could get.

Again, Grant was slow to respond. "They aren't after you."

Thomas waited. "And?" he asked when nothing more was volunteered.

"It's best if I make sure they don't have a reason to pay attention to you."

"Grant, I took you and we vanished right out from under their nose. Do you think they'll forget about me anytime soon?"

"No, and that's why it's even more important that we aren't in the same place. You can't afford for them to find you while they're looking for me. You're able to do something I'm not aware anyone's ever managed before."

"But with me there, I can get you out of whatever trap they set for you. I saved you from them. I can help keep you safe the next time."

"Thomas. You can't keep me safe. I've made myself too much of a

Faith

a nuisance to them over the years. Maybe, if you could take me on the other side of the world, I'd have a couple of weeks without having to worry about slipping up and letting them find me, but they would. Magic, the chamber, none of the factions, aren't limited to the United States. They're a worldwide thing. The weeks I'd get would only be because they wouldn't think to look that far until they were sure I wasn't on this side. And considering the state getting me here left you in, I'm not sure you could get me that far."

"Not right now," Thomas protested. "But with practice, I have to get better at this, right?"

"Practicing while under fire isn't how you want to do it. It's only good in the movies. In reality, it's going to get you killed."

Thomas wrapped his hands around the hot mug, but it did little for the kind of cold that was now seeping through him. "So you're dumping me."

"I'm not dumping you, and really? Mellow drama? I'm maximizing your chances of survival. You need to go to Denver to be safe from that Raphael fellow. That means I can't be anywhere near there."

"Where are you going to go?"

"I don't know yet. I have to figure out what I have to work with, what I can get. I'd love to get my truck back, but that's definitely under surveillance now." He shook his head. "I don't know."

"How will I get in touch with you?" The answer Thomas expected didn't make him feel good.

"You don't Thomas."

“What if I need help?”

“You can’t count on me. I swear, I’m not abandoning you, but right now I’m more of a threat to your safety than your friends are. At least they want to bring you home for your protection, but the sound of it. If the Chamber gets their hands on you... Trust me, Thomas. You don’t want that to happen.”

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Thomas nodded resignedly. He eyed the rest of the trail mix, but his appetite was gone. He knew Grant wasn’t his friend, but he’d been someone who came to his rescue. Other than his family, he’d been the only one. Losing him left him feeling more alone than when he’d started his journey.

He nodded again, resolutely this time. He couldn’t change the situation, so he needed to look forward. “Once I’m in Denver. Where do I go? You mentioned... a Benton?” he tried to remember the name.

“Denton,” Grant said. “Denton Brislow, but you can’t go to him. They said no when I suggested it. I just wish they’d said where you should go instead before my phone died.” Grant ate a few more nuts from the mix. “There’s another family in Denver, but for the life of me, I can’t remember their names.”

“So, not Denton Brislow, and whoever else I might do to, you don’t know the name of. Should I just hang out around bathhouses and wait until one of them accidentally does something magical?”

The kangaroo chuckled. “That’s not likely to happen. The Society is wealthy. I doubt they frequent the bathhouses you’d be allowed to approach.”

“Then what? I’m not exactly in my element here, Grant. The experience with being on the run kind of amounts to movies, and according to those, someone always shows up at the last minute to rescue the protagonist. Sort of like you did,” Thomas added. “I don’t think I want to count on that, do you?”

Grant shook his head. “Relying on the kindness of strangers isn’t a

good plan. Without more information, I'd say go to Denton. Whatever the reason they wanted you to go to someone else, can't be worse than doing nothing."

"Okay, where does he live?"

Grant opened his mouth, then closed it. He pulled out his phone and stared at it. He showed Thomas the blank screen. It still wasn't working. "You're going to have to look him up when you get there."

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Faith

"Look him up how? I don't have a phone either, and I can't afford to get one if I'm going to last any amount of time on my own with the money I have."

The kangaroo smiled. "Why there are those magical places in every large city called a library. Not only can you find books to read. But you can use the computers to do things like searches for where people live."

"Is that a joke?"

Grant sighed. "Where is the world going when kids no longer believe in libraries? They're still around, Thomas. Not for a lack of tries from idiots in power. They might not have the collections of books they had when I was a kid, but they'll still have computers you can use. Ask the older folks you meet in Denver for where it is. The kids are probably like you and believe their phones are the only place information can be found on these days."

"Okay, I look for a library. Use that to find Denton Brislow and go to him for help. What do I tell him?"

"As much as you're comfortable telling him." Grant sighed. "Look, I don't know the guy. There are stories floating around, and they sort of all agree on the fact he's one of the good guys out there. But they're only stories. I'd say tell him the Lewistons are after you even if you don't tell him why."

“Okay. What if that doesn’t work?”

“Thomas—”

“No, Grant. I was supposed to take the bus to my

grandfather’s, only I was intercepted on the way there. We were supposed to drive to Denver, and we got intercepted. When we ended up at my grandfather’s, the guys were there. I think I’m entitled to believe some backup plan is required here.”

Grant smiled. “All right, you make a valid point.” While he thought, Thomas went back to eating the trail mixes and drinking the swill in his mug. The kangaroo search a pocket and came out with a

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scratched-up pen, then an envelope. He wrote something inside the envelope, then closed it and handed it to him. “Okay. This is your in case of fire break glass envelope.”

Thomas stared at the man, trying to figure out what he’d just said.

“I swear, I can’t be that old,” Grant complained. He pulled the envelope out of Thomas’s reach when he went to take it. “Don’t open it. If all hell breaks loose, the first thing you do is head to San Francisco. I don’t care how, but you have to be there before you open this envelope. You can’t enter the city limits knowing the information in here. Am I clear?”

Thomas nodded and once Grant handed him the envelope, he put it in the overcoat’s pocket.

“What I can tell you is that I wrote instructions in there that will take you to someone who can protect you. She isn’t going to do it for free, but once you’ve demonstrated what you can do, she’ll be incentivized to keep you safe.”

“So I’m going to be the payment?”

“Thomas, I’m not kidding when you say you can do

something no one else can, as far as I know. Once you know what your

limits are, you will probably be the most in-demand person within the magical community. As in, name your price in demand. You just have to make sure you stay alive until then.”

Thomas nodded. He wasn't sure he wanted to be any more in demand. All being popular seemed to have granted him was being hunted.

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The bus wasn't packed; it had that going for it. It was also warm. And it had entertainment in the form of a TV screen on the back of the seat in front of him. A screen that didn't need a phone to activate or for him to pay to use. The downside of that was he couldn't turn it off. At least he needed to put the headphones attached to it to

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Faith

hear what was going on. It was set to a news station that, based on the scroll, Thomas had no choice but to look at occasionally, reported news from all over Montana.

The low occupancy meant that Thomas had privacy, except for the man seated across the aisle from him. A whole bus and the guy picked the one seat that meant Thomas couldn't even jerk off.

He eyed the guy again, who was watching something on his phone. He wasn't that bad looking. A fox in his early forties, so not the oldest he'd had, not after the grandfather at the bathhouse. And he needed the sex. What did he have to lose by offering himself to the man?

The scene that ran through his head of the man exploding in outrage and Thomas being kicked off the bus put a stop to where his mind had been going. He was a day and a half ride to Denver. The man would move seat eventually, right?

He eyed the back. There was the restroom if he reached the point where he couldn't hold out anymore.

He got up.

Who was he kidding? He reached that point before he'd boarded the bus. Hopefully, it was spacious.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas smiled at the fox as he walked past his row and sat two further ahead, one without any neighbors. If he couldn't expect the fox to move, Thomas could do the moving. The bus was practically empty, after all.

The screen was on here too. And Thomas considered looking for a seat with a broken one, instead of one that afforded him privacy for his next self-pleasuring session, but the scene displayed switched to something that made him stare.

The image panned from clouds so thick they were black to the view of a field where four people had a standoff. At the edge, part of a charging station was visible with the tailed of Grant's pickup. The

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camera shifted and a fifth person entered the scene, pushing against the wind.

Thomas didn't remember the wind being so strong he had to push against it. He'd been so focused on Grant and the trouble he was in. The him on the screen stopped moving, pulling on a leg. The earth climbing up it and holding him in place wasn't visible. When it started pulling him toward the man with the shovel, it was easy to think it was him hopping toward him instead, as he tried to stay standing.

Then the funnel happened and what had felt like a handful of seconds to Thomas was over in less than two. The man and his shovel flying away. When the camera was back on the people. Thomas was next to Grant. There was a flash of light intense enough the camera took a few seconds to see the scene again, and it was only the two remaining Chamber people there as the cloud melted away and blue skies returned.

Thomas noticed the scroll and hurried to grab the headset to hear

whatever else could be said. It read "Government tries and fails to prevent broad daylight alien abduction?".

"What do you think, Maggie?" the man asked, an aardvark in a pale gray suit. Maggie was a poodle with her frizzy fur neatly trimmed into multiple bobs on her head.

"Well, you have to give the guy props for production values. Looks like it's recorded on a phone, outside. Those clouds look as real as I've ever seen. Did you see that guy picked up by the funnel? I'm talking Hollywood-level effect right there. The guy posted that yesterday and he's already close to two million views. He should be getting job offers soon. That will take out of that dead-end job and into a cushy one making movies."

"Or in a padded room," the man said. "He insists it's real, that the guy we see running toward the "conflict" was just in the store talking with him, a rat. And that after the flash of light, him and the kangaroo just vanished."

"Come on, even if he'd recorded that using people on the first 8

Faith

next to where he works. The terrain is so uneven they just have to lie down and the vanishing act is done. Kids today, the things they want us to believe."

"You said it, Maggie. After this advertising, did the sun actually disappear over Bu<sup>e</sup> last week, or was it just a case of bad water-caused vision impairment? We'll have our experts discuss."

Thomas sighed in relief. At least they weren't taking it seriously. He wished he had his phone so he could look up more information. Were all news stations not taking it seriously? Had any other ones even showed the clip? And if someone who knew magic was real, would they come looking to find out what had really happened?

Part of him was surprised the Chamber people had left without destroying the evidence. The way Grant talked about them, killing the clerk didn't sound like something that would even give them pause.



Did they not notice he was there? Not believe a recording of a magical battle was a problem?

Was there such a thing as magical police? What could the clerk tell them about Thomas? Rat, black and white fur which, unless the marmot could describe the patterns on his face, would describe a fifth of rats out there. Would he talk about the way Thomas hit on him? Would that tell them what faction he was from? There had to be more guys out there than the Society who'd hit on other guys. He was in the clear, he decided. What about Grant?

They'd been the only ones there, so the pickup would belong to one of them. Had the chamber even left it there? Maybe they'd taken it in hopes of using it to find Grant.

He hoped Grant would be okay.

He tried to sleep. He closed his eyes; if only so he wouldn't have to look at the people around a table talking about something, but as soon as he did so, images of the bus being stopped police officers boarding it, coming to arrest him for breaking magical law by hitting on a guy for the purpose of powering himself off his sexual energy made him open them.

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There were days when he hated his imagination. 10

## CHAPTER-34

Faith

### CHAPTER-34

Thomas hurried inside the library. How could it be this much colder in Denver than it had been in Bozeman? He'd traveled south. The dozen or so blocks it had taken to get here from the terminal had left him feeling more frozen than the walk to the fast food place. Now he regretted deciding to save a few dollars. He should have taken a bus.

The library was warm, and he let that soak in. The lobby was large, with a placard talking about the damage the library sustained during the 2031 earthquake and thanking the families whose donations had ensured that it could be rebuilt. One name jumped out at Thomas from the list. Lewiston. He momentarily feared he'd made a mistake, then remembered Grant's information saying they had been chased out of the city.

Columns broke the space, and he followed the signs to the public computers, mildly surprised at the lack of scanner on for the ID Grant had given him. Like the library at the university, a hushed silence reign despite most chairs and tables being occupied. When he found the computers, most were occupied, which surprised him, and the one he sat before was older and lacking a slot of a scanner for his card.

That surprised him more than the lack of scanner needed to enter. The university kept careful records on who accessed what. Not the details, unless it was a document that was part of the university's research records, but websites were logs, with programs looking for flags that warned of mental or health issues, or ever of someone about to do something violent.

His Studies for Success class had explained how that had become standard practice after the epidemic of school shootings in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. There had been protests and lawsuits, as usual, the teacher had said with a smirk, but for once the government had fallen on the side of keeping children safe, rather

than gun owners happy. That it had coincided with the crackdown on police violence, they'd added, might have had

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something to do with it.

The computer asked his name to log in. The field for his date of birth was optional, as was a phone number. Since he didn't need to prove who he was, he decided to be safe and used Thomas Heeran. Paul should be okay with him using his last name.

The next page was a list of public email sites, as well as instructions on how to access his existing email account via an anonymous portal.

Frowning, he looked at the other people using the computers, the way they were dressed, and noticed the bags many of them had at their feet. The lack of requirement for IDnow made sense. If they let the homeless use the computers, how many of them were able to prove who they were?

When one glared at him, he went back to his screen. He was tempted to check his messages. Maybe send one to his family to find out how they were, but he resisted it. If his mom asked him to come home. Would he be able to say no? Even knowing she might be doing it

under duress, or someone else was using her account. If he was confronted with how his being in the run affected them. Would he be able to stop?

It was easier to not know.

He hoped to God they were okay.

He paused. Could he pray? Grant said his ability came from a god, Thomas's god. That he was real. Did that mean he listened to prayers? Did he answer them?

I don't know if you hear this, he thought, pushed them out to the... where ever gods hung out, but please keep my family safe. He hesitated. Amen.

That had felt weirder than it had a right to since it had been in his head.

He'd done what he could for his family. Now he had to move on to finding this Denton Brislow fellow.

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Faith

There was no way this was the right place, Thomas thought as he walked to the house. It was a nice enough house, and the yard was probably nice too; when it wasn't buried under two feet and a half of snow. But Grant said people in the Society were rich, and that wasn't the house of a rich family. It was more like his parent's house, minus the large front yard. His parent had a large one at the back.

There weren't a lot of Brislovs in Denver, and no one listed by the name of Denton, but this couple had caught his attention when he'd done a search on the people he found because their houses had burned down months before the Lewistons had left the city. He'd come across a news story about the prominent Denver family relocating after the tragedy months before, around the same time as the house burning down, suspiciously enough. He'd read a bit about murders the police investigating, the killer caught.

Thomas didn't doubt that had happened, but he also had no problem imagining this rich Denton, finding out this Raphael Lewiston had burned down his family's home, going to great lengths to make sure they didn't stay in the city.

It's what Thomas would do if he had money and someone threatened his family.

He'd also buy them a better house.

He hesitated. What was he going to say? Ask if he could speak to their son Denton? No, he might have the wrong house, probably did. But he

couldn't find out just standing here. He pressed the bell.

The door opened after a few seconds and an older bull looked down at him. "Yes?"

"Hi," Thomas said. "I'm... Tom, I'm looking for.... I mean, do you have..." he rubbed his face. Was mind reading something magical people did? Why couldn't he have gotten that instead?

"Who is it Stanley?" a woman called from deeper into the house.

3

The bull, Stanley, studied him without replying.

Thomas tried and failed to ask again. Despite the cold, his ears were burning.

"Well?" the woman asked, much closer this time. "Who is it?"

"I don't know," Stanley answered, tone grave enough Thomas swallowed.

"Well, don't just stand there not saying anything," she said and moved him out of the way. The woman smiled at him as she looked him over. She was in the same age bracket as the bull. Around his grandfather's age. "Hello, are you lost? Come on in."

"Aileen," Stanley warned. "You can't just invite a stranger in."

She shooed him away. "He's just a kid, and he's probably freezing to death. Come on, I'll have a kettle with water already hot. A cup of tea will do you some good on a cold day like today."

Thomas hesitated, but when she motioned again, the need to warm up won. He sighed in relief. She escorted him to the kitchen, past a wall of pictures. Younger versions of her and her husband. A young bull with a cow and three children at their feet, pictures of those children a couple of years older, the grandchildren. Pictures of a young bull with a younger Stanley. The son, probably the one with the children. They seemed like a nice family, if not close. There were no pictures of everyone together.

She sat him at the table and quickly had a cup of tea before him with a porcelain container of sugar cubes and one of milk. He added a couple of cubes and a splash of milk and sipped it. It was good. The heat might account for a large part of that.

“Now, why don’t you tell me what has you knocking at our door in a day like today?”

“I’m in trouble,” Thomas said, deciding to tell them as much as he safely could. Maybe, even if they weren’t the Brislow he was looking for, they’d be able to help him.

4

Faith

“Oh, I am so sorry to hear that. Stanley, isn’t it sad? So young and already in trouble.”

“Yes, it is,” the bull said in what sounded to Thomas like a suspicious tone. “I’m curious as to why that brought him to our house.”

Thomas took a breath. “Well, I sort of feel in with this group at university. They’re nice guys, or at least I thought they were, then I kind of did something and now there’s this other guy who I hadn’t heard of before, this Raphael Lewiston, and he got them—”

The gasp that escaped Aileen’s mouth as she put her hand over her mouth stopped him.

“Who did you say?” Stanley all but growled, slowly standing and leaning in on Thomas.

Thomas was out of there so fast he wasn’t sure he hadn’t teleported to the door. Then he was running.

That had been such a bad idea.

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Thomas had found Denton Brislow.

He’s found him on a financial website, of all places, when he just put

his name in a search engine to see what might happen. The first thing he learned was that he had definitely been at the wrong house. Denton Brislow was a cheetah, not a bovine. The second was that getting to seem might be impossible. The man ran one of the more successful private security firms in the state, Steel Link. The piece spoke of it, an attack on it a few years before, how Denton had rebuilt it as a more secure building so his people would never have to fear another attack.

From across the street, he could see people moving about in the lobby through the glass door of the entryway and then the one opening into the lobby. The men and women were all muscular, some had what looked to him like body armor, others in business attire, a few in jeans and shirts, and he thought he'd seen someone run by in

5

underwear, but that could have been in imagination. There was enough beefcake in there, it would be powered for a while.

The cold made him move. Fuck, Denver was cold. How did anyone live here?

The entryway was claustrophobic, even with the two glass doors. A third was metal, and he caught the glance of a stairwell as he passed it. The door to the lobby open and along with the heat, noise collided with him. There were a lot of conversations going on at the same time. As well as motion. Everyone moved, it seemed, some running, but even those who walked seemed in a hurry.

The corksider spaniel seated behind the counter caught his eye because she was looking over her shoulder at him. Her desk had her back to the door. He took a step toward the counter. She'd be able to tell him where he could find the owner. Her, or the black and white rabbit who was talking with an officer in body armor; it was body armor after all.

"Lewiston!" someone yelled across the room, the word distorted by a thick Russian accent. "Mikael not work with Samson! Samson pig!"

The yellor was a giant officer with body armor wrapped around so

much muscle Chima might be smaller in comparison.

“I know what he is, Yakovich!” someone replied, and Thomas search for the speaker. It could be a coincidence. Lewiston had to be a somewhat common name. He had no reason to be— a rat stepped out of an office and pointed at the o)er. “He’s also one of our be)er drivers and your wife said you wanted the best!”

Thomas had to get out of here. That had to be why he wasn’t supposed to come here.

“You asshole!” the o)er replied as he turned away.

“Tell your wife to fuck you for me!” the rat replied.

Move, he told his body. Move before he sees you and— the rat turn and looked straight at Thomas.

6

Faith

This time he knew he didn’t teleport because he ran straight into the glass door when it refuse to open. Fuck, they weren’t going to let him leave.

Tough luck. He thought. Looked at the other side of the street through two sets of glass doors and that’s where he was.

He didn’t wait to see who they’d send to chase him. He set his sight on a deserted intersection two blocks away, and he was there. He did it three more times before he felt he was far enough he could start running.

Fuck. What the fuck was he supposed to do now?

7



## CHAPTER-35

Thomas stared at the screen as the announcement the library was closing sounded. He didn't move. He had a few minutes before someone would come around and force him off the computer and into the cold. He was shivering at the idea of going outside. What was it going to be like to step into that deadly cold?

There was no other Denton Brislow, in Denver or anywhere else in the country, as far as any searches told him. The fact there was a Lewiston there, and that they'd tried to capture him seemed to indicate it was the Denton he wasn't supposed to go see, so Grant's informant was right, too bad they'd been cut off before telling them who he was supposed to go see instead.

What was a Lewiston doing there? If the two families hated each other, why would one of them work there? He couldn't be a spy, not with using his last name. Was it a coincidence? Some other rat with Lewiston as a last name? Thomas was believing in those less and less. What did that leave? An attempt at reconciliation?

"Did it have to come now?" he grumbled. Couldn't they have waited until after he was through here to become friends?

So Denton was out. Whoever he should have met within Denver was unknown. Backup plan it was. He tried to schedule the trip and stared at the screen when the price came up. That was... at least twice the money he had, if not more.

How was he going to get himself to San Francisco? Teleport there? He still had no idea how he'd go on himself and Grant to the gro. in Bozeman from wherever they'd been before that, and he was alone. If he made the jump to San Francisco, who was going to fuck him back to health? (really

want to make a “Fuck to death” comment/ joke here, but the mood isn’t right for it.)

Maybe he could teleport onto the bus? No, the windows were 1

dark. And if they weren’t, he wouldn’t be able to tell where everyone was. It only took one person to see him appear for his life to become worse than it was.

Hitchhike?

Now, how many horror shows could he think that started with that? Too many.

Someone cleared her throat. An older boar was looking at him. “Just a minute,” Thomas said.

“We’re closing, young man.”

“I just—”

“We are closing.”

“Fine.” Where had compassion vanished to?

He tightened his overcoat as he stepped outside. It was dark, of course, it was dark. It was January, and he’d stayed in the library until it closed. He hadn’t made it to the end of the block that he was already cold.

He stepped into the convenience store and his stomach reminded him he hadn’t eaten anything today. He looked at the prices of what was on offer and immediately knew he’d continue to go hungry.

If it was hard for him to afford a bus ticket now, it wouldn’t get any easier if he spent that kind of money.

He moved to a spot where he could see outside through a clear section of the window, then at what was within reach. If he grabbed and teleported, who’d be able to tell what he’d done? He noticed the camera in the corner. It wasn’t pointed in his direction, but was there one he didn’t see?

Was the clerk eyeing him kind of intensely? He walked out as casually as he could. Did convenience stores talk to one another? If he was caught teleporting on camera, how

long did he have until the

Faith

government was on his tail? No, if he was going to steal, he couldn't target places as small as convenience stores. No, he had to go big, and then vanish.

He was scanning around when he realized what he was considering.

Robbing a bank? His stomach turned. It was one thing to steal from his grandfather--. That was more borrowing, but a bank?

Thomas wasn't a criminal, and this wasn't a movie where he could return the money when his problems were over and explain how desperate he was and have everyone understand him.

And even if he had the lack of mental fortitude to do that. How was he going to recharge after the fact? Fuck, where was he going to recharge now? He should have searched the closest bathhouse. He couldn't very well ask the people around him.

Fuck, he so wasn't cut out for this. He just wanted to go home.

He found a nook out of the wind and huddled. He had to admit defeat. Without help, he sucked at surviving. When the library opened in the morning, he'd email his parents. Madoc or someone else had to be watching that and when they came to take him. He'd go willingly.

He straightened. He didn't feel better, but with a plan, even a bad one, he at least knew what he had to do. He needed food, then he had to find a place to spend the night. There had to be a cheap motel somewhere. There were everywhere in movies.

He got moving. Cheap food would be where? Fast-food places? Did he have to go that cheap now that this was ending? He'd like something a little more like actual food.

Under a spotlight in the parking lot across the street was a food truck with a lineup of people. Weren't those usually cheap? And the lineup would indicate the food should be okay. Of course, a lineup meant demand, which meant higher prices.

His stomach grumbled.

Fine, he could see what the prices were like at least. If they weren't reasonable, he wouldn't be worst of than now. Well, he'd be hungrier.

The truck advertised Polish food, and the prices were reasonable, so he got into the lineup. He didn't protest when people moved closer since it mean body heat. He put a hand on the pocket he had his wallet in and moved with the line.

He was close enough to make his selection from the pictures on the side of the truck when he's shoved aside by someone and ended on his ass.

"Asshole!" He yelled at the runner and regre.ed his outburst. He got up and dusted himself and his pocket was thinner. He put his hand in it. His wallet was gone. "Son of a bitch!" He couldn't have his wallet stolen. He literally couldn't afford to have that happen.

He took off after the back of the runners. The thief had distance over Thomas, but Thomas had one hell of an advantage. He crossed the light of a street lamp and as soon as he was out of it, he teleported three ahead. He did it again and was close enough to see the runner round the corner.

When Thomas rounded it, he teleported a full block, a few more, and he'd have—the asshole turned into an alley. Thomas stepped out of a light and he was in front of the alley, nearly skidding on his ass as he tried to turn suddenly.

He was in the alley and the thief was further away than Thomas thought. But that was easily fixed. He threw himself in that direction and teleported.

What was it Grant had said about trying something new

under duress? Right, bad idea.

Thomas appeared higher than he'd expected and only clipped the thief's shoulder as he crashed down. He ignored the pain in his shoulder and pushed himself to his feet.

"That's my wallet," he said through gri.ed teeth, "give it back."

Faith

Thomas couldn't tell much about the thief in the dark alley,

but he was lanky. "I'm afraid you're mistaken, buddy."

"I've had a really bad couple of days now," Thomas growled. "You really don't want to piss me off."

"Is that so?" he asked, sounding cocky. Thomas was going to show him how wrong he was. "I'm afraid things ain't going to get any be.er for you then, buddy."

Thomas readied himself to jump him when the fist smashed into the side of his head.

His head rang before he hit the wall. He tried to steady himself when a fist collided with his stomach. He made out a form, a bulky one, between him and the lanky thief, then another fist hit him. He slid against the wall.

"Don't bother," the thief said. "Just grab the backpack." Hands ruffled through his pockets. "I told ya, things weren't going to get be.er. But I'm going to be a nice guy and leave you that nice-looking overcoat. You're gonna need it to survive our nice Denver nights."

Thomas tried to curse. To yell for them to come back with his things. He even tried to stand, but all that happened was that darkness claimed him.

\* \* \* \* \*

A hand was on Thomas's neck as he woke up and he shoved the thief away with a yell, then groaned in pain as his stomach protested the sudden movement.

“Careful there, friend.”

Thomas glared. “I’m not your friend, you—” The man before him wasn’t the thief. He was too wide. And he didn’t think his burly friend would bother talking. “Sorry.”

“You’ve gotten a serious trashing,” the man said. “I’m sorry I couldn’t get here soon enough. I’d have given those two something to remember me by.” He shook a cloth-covered fist in the direction the thief had left in. Thomas realized that some of his burliness was because of the number of jackets he was wearing.

“You saw?” maybe he knew who they were?

“I was rounding the alley when they were searching you.” The man rifled through the snow on the ground and smiled as he picked up something.

“Fuck!” Thomas tried to sit up and his stomach nixed the idea. He reached into the inside pocket. Please let them have missed it. There was nothing in the pocket. His backup plan was gone. “No!” he wailed.

“What’s wrong?” the man asked. He now had a stone in his hand.

“Shit!” Thomas crawled away from him.

“What?” he looked at what he was holding. “Oh, it’s for your eye. You want to put something cold on there early to reduce the swelling, and out here in winter, this is better than an ice pack.” He offered it to Thomas.

The stone was smooth, its sides rounded. It was the size of a flattened egg and, as the man said, it was cold. It felt good through the sting as he placed it on his eye.

“I’m Donal,” he said, offering his hand. “Donal Hines. Now, what’s wrong?”

The hand Thomas shook had to have three pairs of gloves over it. “Thomas. And I’d need all night to tell you.”

“How about you keep it to that wail?” He reached into the multiple jackets and pulled out a thermos.

“That’s just the last stay on an already broken back. I had an envelope with vital information on it.”

“Oh, right!” Donal handed the thermos to Thomas. “Server yourself. It’s tea. I hope you like tea. I can’t stand coffee.” He searched through the pockets of multiple layers while Thomas unscrewed the cap. Except for the cold, being outside instead of in a truck, this felt eerily familiar.

He paused as he was about to pour some in the cap. “I can’t pay you back for this.”

“No surprise there. There!” He pulled something and offered it to Thomas. “That’s why I was running after you. That’s quite the pair of legs you have on you.”

Thomas stared at the envelope poking out of the cloth covered hand. In the low light, it looked suspiciously like the one Grant had given him. His backup plan.

“Where did you get that?” he asked cautiously.

“It fell out of your coat when you ran by me.”

“And you chased me to return it?”

The man shrugged. “Call it doing a good turn ahead. Despite what just happened to you, maybe my kind act will make it more likely that you’ll help someone in need the next time you across one. It’s a harsh world we live in. I try to smooth its edges when I can.

Thomas put the thermos down and took the envelope. “Thank you. You don’t know what this means to me.”

“I’m just glad I was able to help.” He filled the cap as Thomas put the envelope away, then offered it to him. The heat on his fingers as he held it in both hands was almost painful. “Do you have someplace to go?”

Home, he desperately wanted to say, but not it looked like he wasn’t even going to make it through the night. He shook his head.

“That’s what I thought. You sort of have that lost look about you. How about I help you some more?”

Thomas finished the swallow of tea he'd started and looked at the man over the cap. "You brought me back the envelope, and now you're going to just help me more?" He couldn't help the bitterness that followed. "That's awfully convenient."

Donal laughed. "Convenient would be some sugar daddy stopping his car at the end of the alley and offering to take care of you for the rest of your life just for a piece of that sweet ass of yours." He stopped and looked at the street at the end of the alley. After hesitating, Thomas looked, too.

"Nope, not showing up. So I'm the never best thing. What I have going for me is that I know these streets and alleys very well, and, more importantly, I know where the warm places are. What do you say?"

Thomas took another long swallow of the tea. "You aren't going to make it conditional on getting some of my ass?"

Donal smiled. "I'm not in the habit of making my help conditional on anything."

Thomas handed him the empty cap. "What if I ask really nicely?"

Donal stared at him, then burst out laughing.



## CHAPTER-36

Thomas found out that warm was relative.

The abandoned building certainly wasn't as cold as outside, but Thomas didn't think he could fall asleep. On the best of newspapers and under the old blankets. Until he did, halfway through Donal explaining something about never sleeping directly on a cold floor.

He woke up groggy to enough light to see Donal already moving around. Seeing awake, he got Thomas moving. They needed to be out since today was the day this building had guards check it for squatters. As they stepped outside, after blinking away the sunspots, he saw Donal's face fur was reddish-brown and his muzzle had a definite rodent cast to it.

As they waited in line with other people dressed like Donal, Thomas glanced behind the man.

"You checking me out?" Donal asked.

"No," Thomas replied, blushing. "Well, I'm trying to find your tail. You're a squirrel, right?"

Donal grinned as he patted his stomach. "I am, did you think I was this rotund?" they reached the front and instead of a food truck, a woman dressed for the cold was serving coffees out of the back of her minivan.

"Thank you kindly, Mirabel," Donal said as he took the paper cup she offered him.

"I'm just glad to see you made it another night." She handed a cup to Thomas. "Who's your friend? I haven't seen him before."

"He's new," Donal said before Thomas could work out how to answer it. "I think he needs more time before he starts handing out his name."

She nodded. "I'm Mirabel. I'm here every Thursday morning

with coffee.”

“If I’m here next week, I’ll tell you my name.”

She studied him. “Then I’m going to hope you’ve gotten yourself back where you belong before then.”

Donal pulled Thomas away. “She’s a bit nosy, but she’s harmless.” He sipped the cup and made a face.

“Didn’t you say you couldn’t stand coffee?” Thomas asked, drinking his. He wasn’t bad.

“If you trust where it’s from, never refuse free food or drink.” He motioned to a vent not entirely covered with people standing over it. On one side everyone was well dressed, on the other... Thomas was one of them now. The air that came was warm and help combat the breeze. “She is right on one thing. If you can go back where you belong, I highly recommend it. This isn’t a life you want to be in if you have an alternative.”

After a night of sleep, and a decent coffee, the idea of turning himself over to Madoc didn’t sound like his only option. “Is it possible to earn money in this situation?” he motioned to the two of them and the others on this side of the vent. He got the evil eye from a few but was mostly ignored.

“You can’t ear much of a living if that’s what you’re after. If you have the right set of skills and aren’t too particular about who you work for, it’s possible to get a few dollars here and there.” The squirrel watched him.

“I need to go to San Francisco. There’s someone there who can help me.”

“Can you call them?”

Thomas considered if that information might be in the envelope, then remembered Grant’s warning. “I don’t have their number.”

“Can you call your parents?”

Thomas shook his head.

“Are you running from them?”

Thomas opened his mouth then closed it. He looked around and hesitated. “It’s more complicated than that.”

Donal nodded. “Right, the camel’s back’s already broken.” He finished his cup and crumpled it before putting it in a pocket, and walking away. “Let’s get breakfast.” Thomas followed him and finished his cup.

“You kept yours,” he said indicating his empty cup. “Should I?”

“Only if you can think of something to do with it.”

Thomas threw it in the next trashcan they came across.

“Now what we’re on our own, are you willing to give me details? I’m not asking for the entire story, just what you’re comfortable telling me.”

“I fell in with the wrong crowd,” Thomas began. He’d rethought his story after how it had gone with the Brislow couple. Simple, no lies, but no details either. “I did something wrong and it caused them to hunt me. My parents helped me head west to family, but they sent someone to stop me. Since the only way they could have know is if they got my parent to tell them, I can’t risk contacting them.”

“If San Francisco was family, you’d have their number,” Donal mused. He turned into an alley and Thomas hesitated before following him. After another turn came the smell of food, along with that of garbage. “Look. I’m going to tell you upfront that you’re better off going home. No matter how bad it might be, it’s a hell of a lot better than living on the street.” He stopped and picked up something off the ground before walking again. “But if you do want to stick this through, you need to know that it’s going to be near impossible to get a lot of money. I have no idea how much it costs to go to San Francisco, but you aren’t going to have it easy.” Donal stop next to a dumpster

and leaned against the wall, using it to block the wind. He pulled something from a pocket and started working on it.

Thomas nearly gagged at the stench coming from the container. "Are we going to be dumpster diving?" he asked cautiously?

"Think you're too good for that" the squirrel didn't look up from what he was playing with. He'd taken off his gloves and it looked like he was adding a button to a collection of items.

"I'll do it if I have to," Thomas said, remembering the question.

"You might have to, but not today. The breakfast crowd should be thinning soon, so the leftover is going to be thrown out. Those will be on top of the pile. No diving needed."

A few minutes later a door opened something was thrown in the dumpster and the door was closed. Donal put away what he'd been working on, put his gloves back on and pulled himself up, then came down with a garbage bag.

"You want to eat here or should we find a place more appropriate?"

"I'll settle for one that isn't quite as odorous."

Donal looked at the dumpster and sniff, seemingly surprised at the smell, then he led Thomas to another alley.

\*\*\*\*\*

The next days were rough, the nights rougher. Donal brought Thomas with him to his job, doing the books for some people who didn't use computers to do their accounting. Thomas didn't need the warning not to ask why. The squirrel mentioned Thomas could do manual labor, and he was put to work moving crates along with a group of people who looked worse than he did.

A day earned him a couple of dollars and when Thomas started to argue, Donal pulled him away. No two nights were in the same buildings, usually abandoned, and with a variable level of warmth. Thomas got in the habit of picking up any paper left lying

around crumpling them and stuffing them inside his overcoat.

He had a ziplock bag with his backup plan in it. Grant had been baffled when Thomas told him he didn't have a phone, since that was what the bag was for. And a backpack that had cost him half the money he'd been able to make up to that point. He considered not getting it, but by then he'd gotten his hand on a thermos of his own he was able to fill with bad tasting coffee when he left the warehouse, and having to carry it in his hand meant his fingers froze. Under his arm meant risking getting it stolen. And he knew he'd blankets of his own, so something to carry them in. He couldn't rely on Donal and his hiking backpack for everything.

The evening he had to do his first dumpster dive, he considered going home. The day had been bad for food. All the places Donal took him already had someone staking them and ready to defend their spot aggressively. They even tried the shelters, which were out of food by then. The dumpster had been picked nearly clean, and what Thomas did find, he wouldn't eat.

Hunger was a bad wake-up call to fall asleep to.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas stood by the restaurant door hugging himself and doing his best to soak up the heat radiating from it. He sighed in annoyance as he heard the steps approaching from the alley. He'd already had to chase two other people, he didn't feel like doing it a third time. But he'd learned that if he didn't defend his spot, he wouldn't eat and while hunger was basically constant, going hungry wasn't something he looked forward to.

He squared his shoulders and wished he had all the extra jackets Donal had and looked bigger, but he'd only found one he'd be able to afford and the eight dollars had been nearly all the money he had. He couldn't wait for spring to come.

Right, it had barely been two weeks. He still had a long way to go before warm temperatures came back.

He stepped around the dumpster and froze as he stared at the

monkey in the thousand-dollar winter overcoat and the otter in something that had to be worth at least five times that.

“I told you he’d be here!” Limbani yelled victorious, pointing at Thomas.

Thomas turned and ran without even uttering a curse. They weren’t supposed to come to Denver. He was supposed to be safe here. How the fuck had they found him? The alley opened only an unused parking lot because the snowplows had close off the only drivable entrance with more snow than anyone was willing to deal with, leaving only two pedestrian exits, as Thomas ran for one, considering if the other was the better choice and how the fuck was he could to find Donal after this. He stopped. Sliding on the icy ground and turned

Felix had taken the lead and was exiting the alley.

Fuck running.

Thomas teleported three feet in front of the otter and clothed lined him. With Felix gasping for breath, Thomas was by the alley He tried the same trick, but Limbani slid under his arm. He had a cloth bag in one hand. And as Thomas took a step in his direction, the monkey looked into the alley.

Thomas teleported to the other side of the parking lot and Yating nearly tripped as he overbalanced, bag coming down where Thomas had been. He was behind the red panda and swung as hard as he could, only for his fist to go through Yating, pulling him along with it and Thomas was the one to fall, through the panda, then on the ground. As he touched it, he glanced to the side and he was away from them.

“Thomas,” Limbani said. “This isn’t—”

Thomas wound up the swing, teleported next to the monkey, punched him, then was away again, his first hurting and his balance thrown. He was on his ass again. The so was Limbani. Only Felix was getting back up.

Nope, not today.

Thomas was next to the otter and extended a foot in his chest. It didn't have as much strength as Thomas wanted, due to sliding back as he made contact, but the otter was on his back again, arms over his chest.

Thomas came to a stop close to Yating, who smiled.

Thomas was a foot over the panda, dropping onto him, then through him to hit the ground. This time he teleported to the other side. He wasn't trying that again with someone who could turn into a ghost.

Fuck, what was his life turning into? That hasn't even sounded ridiculous.

He got to his feet, ran, blinked closer to Yating, letting his momentum push his elbow into—through—the panda. Thomas cursed as a hand closed on the back of his overcoat and teleported away. How was he going to end this? He couldn't get answers so long as one of them was in a position to get that hood over his head.

He was next to Limbani and grabbed the hood before teleporting away. At least that was one out of their reach, and if he could get it onto Yating's head, maybe the panda was like him and needed to see to use his power. Or at least know to expect a punch.

Thomas was planning his move when someone cleared their throat. He glanced in the direction, then stared. Gilbert had Donal in front of him.

"I'm sorry," the squirrel said, "seems I was too late again." He spoke carefully as the armadillo pushed him again. "I saw the fighting from across the road and was on my way to help when this guy shoved this against my chest and told me to do what he said." Donal indicated the grenade the armadillo had pressed against the squirrel's chest.

## CHAPTER-37

"Are you insane?" Thomas and Yating yelled to the armadillo holding the grenade at the same time?

"You're calling me insane?" Gilbert replied. "After his friend fried my van?"

"I've never seen you before now," Donal said.

"Not you, the kangaroo." He looked around. "Now. I am done with this shit. Thomas. Put that hood over your head and you're coming with us."

"Gilbert," Olavo said, "please ease up on the threats."

"You want him to vanish on us again?"

"Will someone tell me with the fucking big deal it is?" Thomas yelled. "I get that teleportation is a big deal, but come on! We were friends." He paused and rolled his eyes at the glare Felix sent his way. "Most of us, anyway. We were frat brothers. Now you guys are chasing me across the country for some Raphael person."

"Look," Olavo said, stepping in front of Gilbert and Donal. "You can't betray your family like you did and not expect people to react, but—"

"Hey! It was my dad's idea for me to get out of the city!"

"Your father?" the capybara asked, confused. The others shared in Olavo's confusion.

"Yes, he and my family are who sent me west. They figured it would be safer if I was away while they worked out what had happened. But you keep showing up and making my life more and more difficult." His answer did nothing to stop the confusion. In the quiet that followed, Thomas noticed someone was missing.

"Where's Madoc? Why isn't he here yelling at me about upsetting that Raphael guy, when I don't even know who that is?"



Now the expressions went from confused to embarrassed.

“Don’t you all speak up at once,” Thomas said.

“He’s been kidnapped,” Gilbert said, pushing Donal around the capybara. “That’s why we’re after you now.” The following words seemed difficult to say. “We need your help.”

Part of him wanted to yell this was a trick, that they were appealing to his love for the frat to get him to lower his guard. Only that love had been burned out, and they had to know it.

“I’m going to need some really good explanations from you to even consider helping the lot of you.” He raised a hand to stop Olavo. “With coffee. The good stuff. And you’re paying.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas didn’t think his frat brothers had ever been in this low class of a coffee shop outside of the university grounds. And even then, he couldn’t remember one of them frequenting those. Felix had suggested something as he looked at his phone, but even before Thomas vetoed that, Limbani said “two blocks up the street.”

The otter looked about to complain, but Olavo started walking. Thomas was fine with anything that kept him out of the armadillo’s van.

They attracted attention as they entered. All of them for the way they were dressed. Maybe if they’d come separately, they wouldn’t have been as noticeable. Gilbert let Donal to a semi-circular booth at the back and Thomas went in on the opposite side to ensure he was next to Donal who smiled at him before taking off his gloves and pulled at his assembly of items he worked on every so often.

Now, it seemed to Thomas it was nerve related. Some fidget toy maybe? So long as the two of them were close by, Thomas didn’t mind. Hopefully, they’d forgotten he could take someone with him when he teleported. He kept the grotto in his mind. Since it was the only place he’d been able to go to that he couldn’t see. He’d do his best to explain what he needed Donal to do before passing out and pray to

that god of his the man was willing. Other than the initial joke when they'd met, there had been no talk of sex since.

Being homeless was way too much work to have the energy left to fuck.

"Couldn't you have seen us at an upscale place?" Felix demanded of Limbani as he sat.

"You know what?" the monkey replied, "I'm done explaining how this works." He turn and headed for the capybara at the counter.

"So you're Thomas's friends from university," Donal said, not looking up. "You aren't what I imagined."

"And just what did you imagine his friends were like?" Gilbert asked.

"Not totting grenades, for one thing."

Gilbert looked at the rat. "You didn't tell him about me?"

"I told him you were hunting me for no good reason. There wasn't more that was needed. Definitely not your obsession with fireworks. Do you keep grenades in your truck?"

"Are you kidding? If I had, there wouldn't be anything left of it." He patted his pocket. "This is my good luck charm."

Olavo returned with a tray of coffee and teas. So Thomas was spared commenting on the absurdity of a good luck grenade.

The capybara and monkey sat and Thomas as to squeeze tighter against Donal. So much the better. He breathed in the coffee's aroma before taking a slow sip. This was heavenly. As much as he appreciated Mirabel's weekly coffee, it was only good compared to the swill he got the rest of the time.

He placed the cup down. "Alright. Start from the beginning. Don't even make that joke, Limbani. I'm not in the mood."

The monkey closed his mouth.

“We were at your grandfather’s place for nearly two days,” Olavo began, “waiting for you to arrive. Even if you’d left with that kangaroo—”

“After he fried my van.”

“—We figured you’d head there since Limbani saw us there.”

“Why do we keep going when he ‘sees us?’” Felix asked. “It got Gilbert’s van blown up. That old man wouldn’t even put out and—”

“You hit on my grandfather?” Thomas demanded, then turned to Limbani accusingly. “You?”

“Of course, Limbani hit on him,” Gilbert said. “He’s Limbani.”

Thomas turned his glare on the others.

Gilbert rolled his eyes. “He’s old.”

Olavo shrugged. “He told these two no, I didn’t expect to get a different answer.”

“Anyway,” Limbani said, “that’s about when we saw the news show. Felix recognized your truck and a couple of calls got us the location. It was clear you weren’t coming there, so we packed up and headed in that direction.”

“We kept him from seeing anything,” Yating said, nodding to the monkey, “so we wouldn’t be sent on another wild goose chase. We figured that either you or the kangaroo were going to try to get the truck out of impound.”

“I could have told you there weren’t going to be there,” Limbani said, then primly drank.

“Well, while we were there, a van showed up, guys jumped out and grabbed Madoc, then they drove off.”

“Wait. Some guys grabbed Madoc?” Thomas asked. “Our Madoc? Lifts close to three hundred pounds, Madoc?”

“The guys who grabbed him were bigger than he was,”

Gilbert said.

Thomas looked at Limbani.

The monkey sighed. "You know how this works."

"No, I don't."

Limbani rubbed his face. "I've had to explain it to you a dozen times, Thomas. At this point, I have to think you're doing this because you know how aggravating I find it."

Thomas looked at the others, who didn't seem surprised by the outburst. "Limbani. Until I teleported away from the frat, I didn't even know there was such a thing as magic. Now I get how you kept showing up to places so we could have sex, but no, you never explained it to me."

The confusion was back.

"What can I do?" Olavo asked.

"Dress better than Felix," Thomas answered.

Snickers erupted, except for Felix, who glared more intensely at the rat.

"I'm serious. We all gave you a demonstration before the holidays."

"Unless you're referring to all the sex we had, I don't know what you're talking about."

"That kind of counts," Limbani said.

"You're serious?" the capybara asked. "You have no memory of us showing you what our powers are?"

"I only know Yating's because he walked through the truck. And Limbani from hearing you bitch about his visions."

"Well, at least we know why you're running so hard," Olavo said. "That kangaroo messed with your memories."

Thomas narrowed his eyes. "Don't go accusing Grant of anything. He saved my life. If anyone had their head thrown in a blender, it's the lot of you. Now let's get back to Madoc. Limbani, why didn't you see it coming?"

The monkey sighed. "Fine, on account you don't remember. I have to focus on when I want to see, and I only see me and my surroundings. I wasn't looking at where we were. I was glancing later, seeing as little as I could as to not lock myself into a set of action but still be able to determine we'd found you."

"Okay. So why didn't you look where they would be?"

"I've tried. But before I saw them, I saw you. In that alley."

"You saw me running, which is why you had Olavo and Gilbert outside the lot. Why didn't you see me knocking you on your ass?"

Limbani smirked. "Who says I didn't see that happen and just figured you needed the boost to your morale?"

"You didn't bother," Thomas said, working things out, "because you already knew we would be here, talking."

"I knew you were a smart ass on top of being a really fuckable one."

Thomas rolled his eyes. "Sure. So why even bother asking me? You know I'm going to say no. After the way you've made my life hell, Madoc can get fucked by these guys for all I care."

The others turned to Limbani. "Oh, now you want me to share what I saw? I thought you were all, never tell us anything ever again."

"Limbani, we're here because you saw us here," Olavo said. "I'm happy we found Thomas through your visions, but get off it, okay. You have to go save Madoc. You are the one who saw that. Now unless you want to prove your visions don't have to come true so we can stop having to do what you say, you have to convince him to help."

The monkey smiled at Thomas, who considered teleporting him and Donal. That was the smile that usually preceded Limbani announcing they were about to fuck. This was way too public for that. "You're going to help because I've already seen us doing it."

"Not happening," Thomas said. "Why would I want to help? You can see what's going to happen. Why do you even need my help?"

"Thomas, Madoc is your frat brother," Gilbert said.

"Don't even think of using that," Thomas snapped. "You invaded my grandfather's home. Fucked in his rooms, probably held him hostage like you are my parents."

"Look," Yating said. "I understand we can't ask you to do this out of the goodness of your heart considering the way your memories have—"

"You're the one with the scrambled memories, not me."

"Fine. Still, don't you want answers? Even if we're the ones whose memories have been altered so, we'll chase you. Don't you want to know why? Why would Raphael go to those extents?"

"Who is that Raphael?"

They looked at each other.

"He's Madoc's elder," Olavo said.

"Like village elder?" Thomas asked.

"Family. He's the one making all the decisions for what the Lewiston family will do."

"Okay. Having answers would be nice, I will grant you that. But I don't trust you. This is just some elaborate trap."

"Then leave," Olavo said. "We can't stop you."

Thomas looked at the large window. If he didn't go too far, he should be able to take Donal with him and have enough strength to jump on his own again.

He looked at the men seated around the table. Limbani wasn't as good as he thought he was at hiding his worry. Olavo and Yating didn't bother trying. As usual, Felix was pissed at him, and Gilbert looked worried and tired.

It was a trap, Thomas told himself.

Only, what if it wasn't? What if Madoc was in trouble and Thomas could help? Regardless of how they'd hunted him. What kind of person did it make him, if he didn't help when someone came asking?

"Let's say, for the sake of argument," he told the monkey as the smirk formed. "That I'm willing to help. How can I even do that? I'm not some action hero. I don't have training in how to rescue anyone. You have money. Can't you pay someone qualified to go rescue him?"

The look of discomfort that passed among them was answer enough, but Thomas had trouble believing it. There was something money couldn't buy?

"Okay, why can't you pay for his rescue?"

"Because it would make the situation worse," Olavo said. "Probably."

"The city they took Madoc to is controlled by a family no one wants to piss off," Gilbert said. "Anywhere else, and one of us could ask for support from our family, but..." he shook his head. "Things are too dicey with them."

"So you think I have a chance?" Thomas asked in disbelief.

"You can teleport," Yating said. "You can take him out of where they'll be holding him, then we run like crazy and deny ever being there if someone asked."

"Wait, are you saying those people everyone is scared of took Madoc?"

"Oh, Sweet cum I hope they aren't involved," Felix said.

"They aren't," Limbani said. "I'd have seen one of them if they were. I'm sure of it. And the only tiger I saw was the one who was in the van when they took Madoc. He wasn't an Orr."

"I'm going to guess that's the family you're all terrified of and want me to risk my tail against."

"No against. Just in their city."

"And what city is that?" Thomas asked. Reconsidering agreeing to this.

"San Francisco," Olavo said, placing his phone on the table. On it was the website of a gym. The logo was the silhouette of a man with his arm at his side, in front of a golden shield. Some flexing pose Madoc had shown him as part of his training.

'Hot Muscle' was the name of the gym.

Thomas looked at them. "So, a bunch of jacked-up guys kidnapped Madoc, and they took him to a gym? Are you sure he didn't arrange it to get out of having to do what Limbani says?"

"There's no way Madoc went to San Francisco willingly," Gilbert said. "Not after what took place between their families."

"Not the time for gossip," Olavo said as Felix opened his mouth. "But yes, the Lewistons aren't welcome in San Francisco these days."

"Hey, look at it on the bright side," Felix said, smiling. "Since no one knows you're a Lewiston, even if they do catch you, what's the worse they can do?"

"I am not a Lewiston," Thomas replied, ignoring the way the others wince at what the otter said. That couldn't be good.

"You should go," Donal said, and Thomas joined the others in staring at him. "Look, he needs help. So you should help. Pay it forward, and I mean." He grinned at Thomas. "Come on, it's San Francisco. How could you not want to go there?"



His backup plan. Thomas had completely forgotten about it in the weeks he'd been here, working to survive. If this was a trap. He had someone he could go to for help there.

"Alright, I'm in."

"Told you," Limbani said, smiling proudly.

\* \* \*

## CHAPTER-38

Thomas banging his head on the metal floor of the van didn't stop Limbani from banging him. Thomas would complain of the one if he wasn't enjoying the other so much. He had miss this part.

"Next," Limbani said dreamily as he rolled up Thomas, then cursed. "It's cold!" he grabbed the blankets his fucking Thomas had moved and threw them under him.

"Hey Gilbert," Thomas called to the driver. "How come you're still driving this thing? You're rich. Wouldn't it have been easier to just buy a new one?"

The armadillo turned in the seat. "This is my van. I'm not going to let some asshole of a wizard take it from me just because he threw lightning at it. It survived that, it's going to survive anything else you want to throw at it."

"Eyes on the road," Yating said.

"Don't tell me how to drive. I let you drive my van once, and look what happened to it."

"I wasn't in it when the kangaroo blew it up."

"Look," Thomas said, "Grant wasn't trying to blow it up."

"How do you know?" Gilbert demanded.

"Because plenty of truck have been hit by lightning and not blown up."

"Like you didn't tell him what I normally carry."

"I didn't. Fuck, I didn't even know you were after me. I just ran I didn't have a long conversation about it when he showed up."

"Aren't you happy that Henry didn't let you hit the road with all your explosives?" Limbani said, reaching for Thomas's cock.

“Doesn’t look like these two are going to move, how about you fuck me?”

“Hey,” Gilbert snapped. “If I had had my stuff, there wouldn’t have been any running around after him. You saw how effective my good luck charm was.”

Thomas gave into Limbani’s demands, and rolled him on his stomach and proceeded to fuck him.

\* \* \* \* \*

“I want to talk to Donal,” Thomas told Limbani, who was in the passenger seat. Yating was snoring next to Thomas after a long fucking. The red panda made for a surprisingly comfortable pillow to lean against. “Hand me your phone.”

There had been one pit stop in the last eight hours, both to use the rest room and so Gilbert had a turn at Thomas’s ass. The armadillo had nixed any suggestion someone else drove while he and Thomas had fun.

Limbani looked at Gilbert, who shrugged, then placed the call before handing the phone to Thomas.

“What do you want?” Felix answered, and Thomas glared at the monkey. Couldn’t he have called Olavo instead?

“To talk to Donal.”

“Oh, it’s you. You can’t take to him. I figured we didn’t need him anymore now that you’re on your way, so I threw him out our hotel room window. It was nice listening to him wail as he fell twenty-six floors”

“I’m okay,” sounded a distant voice before Thomas could let his anger out on the otter. “Was that necessary?” the squirrel asked, closer now.

“I’ve got to get my fun in somehow,” The otter replied. “You are letting me fuck you anymore.”

"I need a rest," Donal said, his voice clear enough he had to be holding the phone. "I swear, don't you guys ever stop?"

"Not really," Thomas answered. "So you're into guys?"

"And girls," Donal answered. "I figured you realized it when I mentioned the sugar daddy."

"When I offered you my ass, you laughed at me."

"I wasn't laughing at you, just at the situation. How are you holding up?"

"I'm on my way to catching up to all the sex I've missed in the last two weeks. You have no idea what you missed out on when you didn't accept my offer."

"I think I do. But my ass wouldn't have been able to take it just because it's you."

Thomas rolled his eyes. "Felix's just being his usual asshole if he isn't letting you top him. But seriously, how are they treating you?"

Donal laughed. "Do you have any idea when is the last time I've stayed in a luxury hotel, let alone the penthouse? Never. I had a shower, an honest to God shower with fur soap and all that. It's been months since I've been able to get one, and that was more me standing under broken rain gutter. Olavo did something weird, I mean it's all been kind of weird since watching you bounce around and through that panda in the parking lot, but I never had someone cum on me and then write in."

"He what?"

"Relax. It's all good. I've had this rash for weeks. It's not mange, just some chemecal that got in my fur and I couldn't get out. Also he couldn't let me shower without doing that first. Something about how using soap after my time on the street could be dangerous, anyway, it all went away. My fur looks amazing. I know I'm a hostage and all that, but honestly, I could get used to being this kind of prisoner."

Thomas had trouble saying anything. "That's good," he finally managed. He'd been scared of what Olavo and Felix would do to his friend what he was away. He hadn't wanted to believe they'd hurt him, but the way they acted differently in small ways from who he remembered them being had worried him. The way Olavo had categorically refused to let the squirrel go when Thomas had asked him to had felt only the capybara he knew.

The royal treatment for his friend hadn't been something he'd expected.

"Are you there yet?" Donal asked.

"We're someone on the on the eighty, west of Salt Lake City."

"Halfway there," Gilbert said.

"Halfway there," Thomas repeated.

"And what's the plan once you get there?"

Thomas looked at the guys in the van with him. "I don't know. Figure it out once we're there, I guess."

A door closed. "Are you talking to Thomas?" Olavo asked.

"Olavo wants to talk to you."

Before he could protest, the phone changed hands. "Are you satisfied we haven't tortured him?"

Thomas sigh. "What the fuck did you expect me to think, Olavo?"

"That you shouldn't try to bluff a master poker player for one." Now it was the capybara who sighed. "We aren't the monsters you seem to thin we are, Thomas."

"You literally chased me out of the frat, out of Minneapolis, out of the state, no, two states. What am I supposed to think?"

"Alright. It doesn't look good when you say it like that."

Yating stirred under Thomas's back. "Looks like I'm about to get put to work again," he told Olavo, to the red panda's snickers. "You take good care of Donal."

"Oh don't worry, we'll have him screaming for more in no time. I know a few *phrases* that he is just going to adore." Olavo disconnected, leaving Thomas confused as to what he meant. The way he'd said phrases seemed to mean something other than just writing something down, but he's also sounded like Thomas knew what he meant.

With a shake of the head he lobbed the phone back to Limbani. "Yating, how about seeing which one of us can get the monkey to howler the loudest?"

"I—" the panda began.

"Yes!" the monkey said excitedly, jumping in the back.

"Watch how you rock my van," Gilbert warned. "The suspension has seen better days. And record him. That way, when I show you how to really get him screaming, you won't be able to say he was louder with you."

\*\*\*\*\*

"Well?" Yating asked Limbani. They were parked in a lot opposite Hot Muscle, which was in a strip mall. For the last fifteen minutes the monkey had been staring at it, concentrating.

"We're not going in."

"What do you mean, we're not going in?" Gilbert demanded. "We're here because you said we were going to rescue Madoc."

"I saw us driving down here with Thomas," the monkey snapped. "So what else are we going to be here to do?"

"I don't fucking believe it." The armadillo let out a long breath and started the van. "Fine. Where are we going?"

Limbani hesitated. "I don't know."

“Limbani,” Thomas said. “Isn’t your range two days? Can’t you see anything of what we’re doing?”

The monkey closed his eyes. “In forty minutes or so, we’re driving down...Pennsylvania avenue. Then nothing.” (this is when I figure Shila worked out someone was a precog and she set script in motion to blind them. The effect is that Limbani can’t use it while he’s in the city.)

“Does that mean you... die?”

Limbani shook his head vehemently. “No, I’d...” he shuddered. “I hope not. But this felt more like that fuzziness when you jump from one cell region to another. I can tell there’s something there, but I just can’t get it. And it’s like that for the next two days.”

“How are we going to do this without your vision?” Yating asked. They looked at Thomas.

“Don’t look at me. I told you I have no training in this.”

Limbani handed him his phone.

“What’s that for?”

“You’re going to make a call.”

Thomas took it. “To who?”

“I— don’t know.”

“Again?” Gilbert said in disbelief.

“When I tried to focus on the conversation, that static was there.”

“Okay, but that still doesn’t tell me who I’m calling,” Thomas said. “I don’t know anyone in San Francisco.” He reflexively put a hand to his breast. His backup plan included calling someone once he was in the city.

“What is it?” Yating asked.

He didn't want to use it. He might need it to escape them after... only was there going to be an after at this point? If something could keep Limbani from seeing what they'd do, didn't that mean they were screwed?

He pulled the envelope from the pocket and out of the plastic bag. He opened it and was initially surprised not to find a piece of paper there. Then he remembered Grant had written on the inside of the envelope.

*Call first*, the words said, above the phone number. Below that was an address.

He entered the number. It rang twice then.

"Who's this?" a woman asked.

"Hi?"

"Who is this?" she asked again.

Thomas hesitated. "My name's Thomas, Thomas Hertz, I—"

"I don't know you."

"No, Grant Summer gave me your number. He said to call you when I was in the city. That you could help me."

"Did he now? Kind of presumption of him to think that."

"Please?" Thomas said. "I can..." he's contemplated selling his body while on the street so he'd have money to eat. Why was this feeling even more degrading? "I can sort of pay."

"Kid, a sort of payment only gets you a sort of help."

"He said that you'd consider it worth while when you saw what I could do."

She sighed. "Can't say I've ever needed muscle, but since Grant sent you, we might as well at least meat. I'm at—"

"Oh, I know where you live."



“Do you now?”

“Yes, Grant gave me that too.” Thomas read the address.

The call terminated.

“What just happened?” Yating asked and looked at Limbani, who shook his head.

“Was that some sort of code?” Gilbert asked. “Telling her not to trust you?”

“Don’t be stupid,” she answered, her voice coming from the van’s sound system.

“I thought the speakers were blown,” Limbani said.

“They are,” Gilbert replied.

“It’s like I can do magic, isn’t it?” she asked spookily.

\* \* \* \* \*

The address she had them drive to wasn’t the one Grant had given Thomas. It was one on Pennsylvania Avenue. Limbani indicated the moment his vision had stopped working as they drone in, five blocks from their destination.

She lived in a building that didn’t impress anyone, not even Thomas. Grant has said that everyone who did magic was wealthy, so he’d expected a house, not an apartment building. The unit number has figured meant some townhouse complex with security guard who would have to let them in.

The building didn’t even have a lobby, just a bank of elevators they took to the seventh floor. Seven-nineteen was a door on the left side at the end of the all. It opened as Thomas was about to answer and a pangolin in a pink bathrobe, matching pink slippers and holding an electronic cigarette looked them over. She blew mint smelling smoke at him.

“Yep, don’t look anymore impressive in the flesh than you did on a screen.” She motioned them in. “I’m Shila, by the way. Don’t

bother with your names I already know them.” Thomas immediately shivered as he stepped in. The apartment wasn’t cold compared to the last few weeks, but the drop was noticeable when compared to the heat in the hall.

“Gotta keep the place cold for these.” She said, indicating the wall of servers that lined the living room wall. Before them flower pots hung from the ceiling with colorful plants. “Don’t touch anything, and sit down.” On the coffee table before the flower print couch and two other seat in the same pattern was a tea set that looked too delicate in the pangolin’s hands as she filled the small cups.

“We,” Thomas started.

“Yep,” she said and he stopped, half way in the seat. “So, I looked around where you were park, and what you were looking at and let me tell you. You boys really know how to get yourself in deep shit, don’t you?”

Thomas looked at the others, who were looking at him as confused as he felt.

She laughed, then took a drag on her cigarette. “Oh you don’t even know who you were looking at? That gym, Hot Muscle? It’s Dietrich Orr’s main place of worship.”

Gilbert sank in the couch, cursing softly. Limbani had his head in his hands and Yating was looking at hhe ceiling.

Thomas raised his hand. “I take it that one of those Orr you said we weren’t going to be dealing with?”

“What is this, high school?” Shila asked. “Lower the hand kid.”

“What is a place of worship?” he asked. “I mean, I’m guessing you don’t mean a church, since it’s a gym.”

“I guess it is king of like a church,” she said. “Especially considering the way that one loves to have guys worshipping him.”

“You know how we bring a lot of guys at the frat?” Yating

asked. "Well, the Orrs do that with some of their businesses. Turn them into place where they can fuck anyone who walks in."

"They mostly own clubs of some sort," Shila continued, "but this one's into muscles, so he has a gym where the guys go to do more than pump iron."

"So, we're supposed to get in there, get Madoc and not piss off those Orrs?" Thomas asked.

"I'm guessing this Madoc is the other rat?" Shila asked.

"Yes," Gilbert said cautiously. "How do you know that?"

"I backtracked your movements until I found something that would get you here an interested in that gym. Got to say, if they wanted to start a fight between you an the Orrs, they were smart about it. Otherwise those guys weren't particularly bright. I mean use a van with the business logo on it? Then I followed them as they drove back to the city and I'll tell you this for free. They didn't go to the gym, or any place one of the Orr frequents."

"Where did they take him?" Limbani asked.

"I gave you what I would for free. Someone said something about sort of being able to pay." She looked at Thomas. He nodded and stood. She raised a hand. "I'm going to stop you right there. Even if your bi, I'm not interes—" she slowly turned her head to look where Thomas now stood, by the entrance door. "What's your range?" she asked. He expression turning speculative.

"Line of sight," he said walking back to his seat. "There's been twice when I did longer, but it left me drained close to death. Grant had to... errr."

"I know how you guy work. No need for details."

"The line of sight has been getting easier the more I do it, so I'm hoping the other will too."

She nodded. "I'll give you the rest, on the conditions that one, you keep me up to date on how you're progressing, and two, when I

call you and tell you to move me, you do it without question or hesitation.”

“Are we talking taxi service?” he asked.

She snorted. “Do I look like the kind of person who goes out for any other reason than an emergency?”

Thomas didn’t say what he thought she looked like. A trailer park out of the old movies he watched was where he’d expect to see her, now that he knew her a little.

“We have a deal. Do we shake on it, do I sign something in blood?”

“No blood,” Yating and Limbani said at the same time.

“It’s recorded.” Shila motioned around the room. “That’s plenty for me.” She took a date chip from a pocket of her bathrobe and placed it on the table. “That’s the address where they are, along with the blueprints to the warehouse. I’d tell you what is going on if I could, but there’s no camera or microphone in there. So I can only tell you what I saw from the outside.” She motioned and an image of a warehouse with a section converted in a store. “Health store,” she said as Thomas peered at it. With another motion pictures of men replaced it, each walking into the store.

“Those are the ones I can confirm are involved.”

“That guy was one of those who took Madoc,” Gilbert said, pointing to a muscular fox.

A swipe of the hand and now they were looking at pictures of them exiting the store. Thomas frowned, trying to identify what was different. Same guys, dressed the same.

“Oh fuck,” Gilbert said as Thomas realized what it was. The shirts were much tighter on them.

“So they gained muscle mass between visits.”

“That’s them coming out an hour after going in,” Shila said.

“No one gains that kind of mass in an hour,” Thomas said. Madoc had had him work out, enough to know what to expect from one session.

“It does,” Yating said, “if Madoc is fucking them.”

Thomas looked at them. “What does Madoc having sex with them have to do with them being bigger?”

“That’s what he does,” Gilbert said. “Give you muscle.” He motioned to Thomas. “You don’t remember him explaining that to you before you started training you?”

Thomas shook his head. “But me and him had sex a lot. Shouldn’t I be like Mister Universe by now?”

“It only happens if he wants it to happen,” the armadillo said.

“Which means that they are forcing him to make it happen somehow,” Limbani said

“Can they do that?” Thomas asked.

“I really wish you hadn’t forgotten everything,” Yating said with a sigh. “Where magic is involved, a lot can happen.

## CHAPTER-39

“Yes!” Limbani ran into the suite’s eating area. “We’re going to succeed!”

The squeal from the puma as she dropped the plate she’d been moving from the cart to the table made Thomas look away from the naked monkey to her and only then did it register she was ogling before turning her head away.

“Oh, hello,” the monkey said, moving to the table and grabbing a toast on which he added a poached egg, then roasted sausage before folding it and taking a bite.

A barely awake panda walked into the room. “What’s with running off?” he asked.

The puma squealed again. Yating was also naked, but he didn’t seem awake enough to register her presence.

“Maybe you two should get dressed?” Thomas suggested.

Yating looked at him and said something unintelligible and Limbani’s reply was as incomprehensible, but due to the food in his mouth. Thomas was surprised at that since the monkey could talk around a cock.

No one else commented on the situation and he was left wondering if offending hotel staff was so common a thing they no longer acknowledged it. The Marriot wouldn’t have been Thomas’s first choice, and he still had no idea what the snickering had been when Gilbert had picked it, but for a hotel chain whose reputation was that it was affordable, they had some high-end rooms.

“Thank you,” the armadillo told the woman. “We’ll handle the rest ourselves.” He gave her a hundred-dollar bill. She bowed and thanked him profusely before leaving. What would she have the most to say about? Seeing two hot naked men, or the tip?

“So this is going to work?” Gilbert asked, visibly relaxing.

“That’s good to know.”

Limbani nodded. “In two days we’re driving on the I-80 and Madoc’s with us.”

Yating sat and forked a steak off the cart and onto his plate. “How do we do it?” he asked around a jaw-breaking yawn that had Thomas echo it.

“No idea.” The monkey made himself another rolled toast. “That’s when my vision kicks back in.”

“So...” Thomas trailed and when no one picked up on it. “Do you guys think I’m ready?”

“You’re familiar with the room. You’ve jumped to it from the park across the hotel,” Gilbert said, then took a slow sip of his coffee. “And you didn’t die.”

“That’s because Limbani was there to fuck me,” Thomas said.

“And I’m going to be there this time too.” The monkey smiled at him.

“You are enjoying this too much,” Thomas said.

“You ass, my cock. What’s not to enjoy?”

“And Madoc’s going to be there too,” Yating said, filling his cup from the carafe of green tea. “I wasn’t affected by the teleportation, and the odds are good that whatever they did to him will still be affecting him, so getting him to fuck you isn’t going to be hard.”

“Is it ever?” Limbani said.

“Except they’re using him to get buff,” Thomas pointed out. “I’ve got no interest in ending up looking like some roid abuser.”

“That won’t happen,” Yating said. “What did you and Laurence say it was? A week’s worth of training?”

The armadillo nodded. “Around that. It’s not like it was

extensive research. So you'll end up with a month or two of muscles. You could use it."

"I'm perfectly fine as I am." Thomas didn't share their confidence.

They'd been appalled that when they suggested having Thomas pop into the warehouse, grab Madoc, and pop back out, the rat had pointed out all the ways in which he couldn't do it. From not being able to teleport some place he couldn't see, never having teleported a second person and not nearly die, to line-of-sight teleportation still tiring him if he needed to do many in succession.

Somehow, the first question from Gilbert was "why didn't you practice it more?"

So this last week had been that. Thomas teleporting across their suite instead of walking, then figuring out how to get him to teleport to the bedroom that was his 'landing' spot. No matter how much studying of it, he did. How he visualized it, he went nowhere when he tried for it.

Pointing out that the two times he'd ended up in the grotto, he hadn't been thinking about it or had even gone to it in years of the first time, had only made Gilbert ask questions about how he'd felt, before and after.

Thomas decided that giving the problem to the scientist of the group hadn't been the best thing if he'd wanted to get out of it.

The armadillo's questions and experiments had worked. Thomas had isolated a sense of security and comfort with the grotto, and why, when he'd needed to be saved, he would have gone there.

Yating asked why he hadn't gone back home, since that had to be a safer and more comfortable place.

"You've never lived in the Hertz house," Thomas had replied. "Comfortable or safe with my sister isn't something you have when she can burst in at the most inappropriate time. You remember the chaos she caused when she burst into the frat, right?" The look of



confusion that had come over them had been a reminder someone had done something to them.

Then, Gilbert ran experiments—mostly involving more and more sex—until the bed became a place of comfort. On the third day, Thomas had focussed on that sense and ended up in the bed. And was fucked back to consciousness.

The previous day had been the experiment with taking Yating there from the park. He'd been fully mobile after two fucks. When he'd pointed out it had taken a lot more with Grant, Gilbert listed the distance as a factor, as well as the fact Grant wasn't part of the Society, since it was documented that each of them gave a stronger boost than someone from another faction or no faction at all. And lastly, the training they were doing.

So Thomas ate well, both because he wanted the energy and because it was easier to do than stress over what was coming.

\* \* \* \* \*

The first part of the plan was easy. Thomas entered the store, walked to the back, looked into the window leading to the storage, and teleported there when no one was looking. Gilbert and Yating were outside, keeping track of him through the phone the panda had gotten for him as well as a piece of magic. Something Gilbert had written on a strip of leather with his cum, let dry, then had covered it with a spray-on sealant.

That, the armadillo explained, was a *phrase*. Special intonation and all that. So it was kind of like Grant's talisman, except it was cumming instead of crafting. Thomas couldn't decide which was better. Which one was more fun, was easy, but better?

Step two was simple, in that it only required Thomas to not be seen as he jumped about and located the door leading to the warehouse. It proved as simple in execution. At the back of the storage for the health store was an open door leading to a cavernous space.

Step three. Find Madoc. Signal Yating with the phone, which would get phase four started.

Finding where Madoc was being held proved simple enough. On the left, some guys with enough muscle on them to no longer need the gym were seated by a door, talking and laughing. Occasionally referring to the fun they're having with the guy in the back.

He got himself as close as he could, then texted Yating, *I'm as close as I can get. On the left side, two hundred feet ahead of me. Two guards, no idea how many inside. I'm going to wait for the distraction.*

He put the phone away and waited. Five minutes later, a commotion from the other side of the door caused the two to call out. Then they stood and, as the first one reached for the handle, it exploded off its hinges.

Not the explosion he expected, Thomas thought as he ran for it. For the talk of Gilbert and his love of fireworks, and the grenade he carried for 'good luck', Thomas had expected the door to fly across the warehouse. Instead, it just fell down as the two guards moved away from it.

Thomas looked in, ready to initiate phase five, which would have him teleport the Madoc back to the hotel while Yating phased himself and Gilbert out. Then, by the time the two would be back at the hotel, Thomas would be mobile and they would hightail it out of the city, well ahead of schedule of Limbani's vision.

He looked down the length of the hall beyond the fallen door and teleported there as the chaos registered. He appeared among muscled men trying to grab Yating as the panda moved through them.

"Over there," Yating said, pointing to three men standing in a line. Thomas saw motion behind them and teleported to the other side.

"Madoc," he said as he reached for the naked rat. "We're—"

Madoc backed away. "Don't!"

"We're here to rescue you," Thomas replied, just before jumping away as a man grabbed for him.

"Will you all stop?" Madoc yelled. Somehow, everyone

stopped.

Thomas didn't question it. He appeared next to Madoc, only for the rat to throw himself out of reach. "Please tell me they didn't scramble your mind too."

"Just stop!" Madoc yelled at him. "Don't blink closer."

"I'm trying to save you!"

"I don't want to be saved!" Madoc yelled back.

"Are you fucking insane?" Thomas replied, louder. "They kidnapped you!"

"Have you looked at them?"

"Of course I have. How can I not? They're so big I'd have to be blind not to see them."

Madoc grinned. "Exactly. When I fuck them, they start getting bigger way faster than normal, and anyone else." The glee in the rat's eyes made Thomas nervous. That couldn't be normal.

"We don't have the time for this," Yating said, stepping next to Thomas. He agreed and Teleported behind Madoc. They could figure out — the rat jumped away, and a man grabbed Thomas's arm.

"Gilbert!" he yelled to the armadillo who was walking into the room from the hall, but before it registered, he was shouldered aside by Madoc, who disappeared toward the no longer standing door.

Thomas teleported out of the hold as Yating ran after Madoc, through the men, trying to keep him from following. Thomas appeared by the hall, only to be tackled to the floor. He teleported before hitting it, but now he was in the air. He glanced and appeared on the other side, hitting as hard, but with no extra weight. He was up and in the hall in time to watch Yating grab Madoc's arm, only for one of the men by the door to grab the Panda and pull. He phased out of that grip, but it allowed Madoc to get out of his.

Madoc was making a line for the open door Thomas had come in through. Thomas was there before Madoc and grinned as he crossed his arms over his chest. The rat skidded to a stop, and his eyes grew wide.

Take that, Madoc, Thomas thought, please at impressing the— Some behind Thomas cleared his throat. He looked over his shoulder, ready to inform them they were all busy, but the wall of muscle covered with striped fur smiled at him. Thomas backed away, surprised he didn't simply teleport to the grotto. That was not a pleasant smile.

The men who ran out of the hall came to a sudden stop and were pushed ahead by those behind them. Yating ran through them and he too stopped, fear on his face.

The tiger looked the scene over, his gaze slowing on the muscular men, more than Thomas, Madoc, Yating, or Gilbert, who stopped partially through pushing his way through, and curse on seeing the tiger.

So Thomas didn't imagine the shit they were in. At least that was good.

"I count twenty-three of them," someone said, and Thomas looked at the baboon standing next to the tiger and holding an extended phone, going down it with a stylus. There was a sense of a secretary to the man; if those came in a three hundred pound of muscle format. "That leaves eight of them unaccounted for."

This was feeling like a bad movie. He caught the erection Madoc was sporting. A bad porno at that.

"You're Dietrich Orr," Madoc said with awe.

What were the odds this wasn't one of those super dangerous Orrs they weren't supposed to have to tangle with?

"You aren't one of mine." The tiger's voice was deep. "What is your part in this?"

"You were Mister Universe in twenty-three, four, and five,"

Madoc said, instead of answering the question. "Before that, you won the San Francisco Bay Master Muscle for four years. You were the youngest one to ever win."

Thomas was surprised by how the tiger straightened as Madoc mentioned the awards. He took a step toward Madoc. They needed to—

"Young man," the baboon said, "I strongly recommend you stay where you are. You are in enough trouble as it is. You don't want to anger Mister Orr."

Thomas froze, and the words seemed to remind the tiger there were other people here, that he was here for a reason. "I am going to ask this once. If no one answers me, you will all be kicked out. You will all lose the benefits that come with being part of my gym. All of them. Am I understood?" Thomas didn't hear or see the men behind him, but the tiger nodded. "Who is responsible for the muscle mass you've gained?" the anger in the voice made Thomas step back.

"I did it," Madoc answered with pride.

The tiger looked at him and narrowed his eyes. "You expect me to believe a kid came up with a steroid that's undetectable and creates the kind of results in a few days anyone can notice?"

"No, not steroids. It's my power. When I fuck a guy, I can give them the equivalent of three or four intense training sessions."

"That would explain why the drug tests came back clean," the baboon said.

The tiger nodded. "You aren't off the hook," he growled, looking around. "You did this behind my back." When he looked at Madoc again, some of the severity was gone. "Which family are you from?"

"Yours," Madoc replied breathlessly.

The baboon snickered.

Thomas didn't like where that was going.

The tiger canted an ear. "I'm talking about the Society. That's who four are with, right? So which of those families are you from."

"They don't matter," Madoc replied, "Please take me."

"You have got to be kidding me," Thomas let out in exasperation, turning on the rat. "How can you say your family doesn't matter?"

"Fuck off, Thomas. You don't get to talk to me about family after the betrayal you pull in Raphael."

"I don't even know who the fuck that it! Shut up!" he told the rat. "I don't give a fuck who he is. What I want to know is how you can say your son doesn't matter."

Madoc stared at him. "What son?"

Thomas caught the look Yating, and Gilbert gave him from the corner of his eye. The same confusion. How had they all forgotten Madoc had a son?

"Alright," the tiger said, and Madoc looked away from Thomas. "You're all—"

Thomas had his arms around the rat and then they were falling. Space wrenched around them hard, and instead of hitting the concrete floor of the warehouse. He and Madoc bounced off the bed.

"Don't let him leave," Thomas said, then lost consciousness.

\* \* \*

## CHAPTER-40

Thomas cracked an eye open and a naked rat seated on the chair glared at him. "I'm going back to sleep." He turned on his other side. "Roland put something on before I do something about it."

"And what are you going to do about it?" the rat asked.

"Get you in—" Thomas sat so fast his head spun. "You aren't Roland."

Madoc's grin wasn't pleasant. "And what would you have done to your brother?"

"Kick him out of my room!" Thomas yelled and buried the imaged of him and Roland in bed together. What was he doing fantasizing about his brother after all the sex he'd had? "This isn't my room."

"No, it isn't. You're lucky I'm a good guy, Thomas, because I was really tempted to let you die."

"Lim bani?"

"Isn't as strong as I am. What the fuck were—"

The monkey burst into the room. "You're okay!" He jumped onto the bed and ran his hands over Thomas.

"Get off of me, Lim bani," Thomas ordered.

"Okay." The monkey grabbed Thomas's cock. Thomas grabbed the arm before it could move.

"You know damned well that's not what I mean."

"You can't stop it, I saw it happen."

"We're not on the road yet. Your precognition isn't back."

"Come on," Lim bani whined. "It's been nearly an hour."

“Madoc, how about you take him off me so I can get dressed?”

The rat looked like he considered not intervening. Then he grabbed the monkey by the scruff and pulled him off, and dumped him on the bed next to Thomas. “That’s all you’re getting from me.”

Thomas was out of bed. “Where are the others? And how the fuck did you get Limbani to go an hour without sex?”

The monkey rolled his eyes. “I’ll have you know I can go hours with sex.”

“Oh yeah, and after that, you’re running after me to fuck your ass.”

“Anyway, it hasn’t been an hour since I’ve had sex. It’s been one since I’ve had sex with you. You still need some powering up, I’m sure. After you pulled mister grumpy balls over there out from his problems.”

“Where are Gilbert and Yating?” Thomas demanded, cutting off Madoc’s reply.

“We’re here,” the naked armadillo said, stepping into the room. “What’s with getting dressed?”

“Yating?” Thomas looked around Gilbert.

“In the living room. Getting himself back together. Phasing us out of the warehouse took more out of him than getting us in. We didn’t expect how much work getting Madoc here would take.”

“Didn’t anyone of you thought to call and ask if I needed rescuing?” the rat demanded.

“We would have,” Gilbert said, lobbing a phone at Madoc. “If someone hadn’t dropped his when he was kidnapped.”

“I need to eat,” Thomas said, to which Limbani waved his cock at him. “Solid food.”

“It’s not hard enough for you?”



With a roll of the eyes, Thomas was past the armadillo. "Yes." He rushed the food cart, shoving a handful of crackers in his mouth while piling the cold cuts and cheeses on others.

"Glad to see you're okay."

Thomas looked at the panda seated on the couch. "You look a bit out of it."

"Pushed myself harder than I'm used to. I should as trained while you were. Never phased this much, let alone with someone else."

"You have a superpower and you don't use it?" he showed a cracker sandwich in his mouth.

"It's not a superpower, it's a gift from our god. It's to be treated with respect."

"You mean respect, like cutting through rooms to get to the kitchen faster? You and your talk of shortcuts. I thought you meant secret passages, you know." He ate another one. Then grabbed a dried sausage and threw it at the red panda. "Eat. If you're like me, you're also hungry."

"Yes, eat my sausage," Limbani leered.

Gilbert filled cups with coffee and passed them around, and the other sat in the living room.

"Shouldn't we get going?" Thomas asked. "You know, before the really big, bad, Orr comes looking for us."

"We have time," Limbani said. "Plenty of time."

"Not that plenty," Gilbert said, "but enough we can make sure we're in fed, and that we address something you said, Thomas."

"That the really big, bad Orr is probably on his way here? You're the ones who said messing with them was a bad idea."

"We're leaving without problems," Yating said. "Limbani saw it. What I want to know is what's this thing about Madoc having a

son.”

“It’s something that kangaroo must have put in his head,” Madoc said.

“You brought him to thanksgiving,” Thomas said. “You do remember that, right? You came with Ettore and my aunt. That’s when they announced they were engaged.”

“Wait, one of the guys in your family’s getting married?” Limbani asked. “Liked to a woman?”

“I’d like to point out that Thomas also made a claim I had sex with his sister,” Yating said.

“Won’t be the first time you’ve had sex with a woman,” Gilbert said.

“I still don’t get why you’d do that,” the monkey asked with a shudder. “You could—”

“Grow up, Limbani,” Yating said. “We’re all different. Deal with it.”

“Can we get back on track here?” Thomas asked. “I’d like to resolve this and leave.”

“None of us,” Madoc motioned to them, “remember me having a son. So clearly, you’re the one whose memories have been altered.”

“Call Ettore, he’ll tell you about your son.”

“And if he says Madoc doesn’t have a son?” Gilbert asked.

“Then it’s going to be clear I’m the one with the screwed-up memory.”

“I don’t know his number.”

Thomas stared at the rat. “You don’t have your cousin’s number?”

“I had too many of them,” Madoc said. “And it isn’t like I had a

reason to call Ettore. We traveled together, that's all."

"Then call that Raphael guy. Someone said he's your elder, he'd know about your son, right?"

"Do you really think I have the number to my family's elder?" Madoc asked incredulously.

"But your family contact can put you in touch with him, right?" Yating asked. "Raphael is who tasked you, and us with getting Thomas back to him."

"That's not certain. I only have the job because I know Thomas. Raphael doesn't have a reason to speak to me directly."

"But you have nothing to lose by asking, Right?" Limbani said. "I mean, what's the worse that's going to happen? You get your fucking privileged revoked?"

"Is that a thing?" Thomas asked before he stopped himself.

"No," Madoc answered, scrolling through his contacts.

"Do you mind putting that on speaker?" Thomas asked. "If you do get that guy, I have a few words for him."

Madoc sighed. "Thomas, I know you don't remember him, but he's your elder. If you do talk to him, please keep the tone respectful."

"You mean the way you did when you wished someone else would have his job?"

Madoc stared at him.

"You what?" Limbani said, snickering.

"I was tired after that trip to his grandfather, okay?" Madoc said. "You were there?" he glared at Limbani.

"I never saw him," the monkey replied. "How was I to know?"

"Yes, I snuck in, took a few things, and left. Can we get on with it? We can discuss how I pulled it off while we are driving away from

this city, which really, we should be having this entire conversation in Gilbert's truck."

"What time was it when you saw us on the road?" Gilbert asked.

Limbani closed his eyes. "Late afternoon."

The armadillo pointed to the clock, which indicated it was only past noon. "Plenty of time."

Thomas couldn't believe how unworried they were after how they talked about the Orrs. Madoc placed the phone on the coffee table as it ran.

"Madoc," a man answered, and Thomas stared. He knew that voice. "Do you have good news?"

"I have news." The rat hesitated. "I need to speak with Raphael."

"Raphael's a busy man. That's why he made me your contact. He—"

"Henry?" Thomas asked.

Madoc stared at him in the silence.

"Thomas?" Henry replied.

"You remember Henry?" Madoc asked.

"Of course I do, he's the one who started all this shit."

"What are you talking about? Henry's Raphael's right-hand man, he doesn't start shit."

"Henry, what did you do to them?"

"Nothing," the bat replied. "But how are you? We were all so worried when you ran off."

"When you chased me off, you mean."

“Ah yes, I’m afraid I might have overreacted to the revelation of what you can do. I do apologize.”

“Really? Sending these guys after me was just an overreaction?”

“You scared us, Thomas. We just want you to come home.” He paused. “Or, if you will be more comfortable with it, how about I come to meet you somewhere? I don’t normally go too far from the house, but for your comfort, I will make an exception.”

Madoc’s frown kept Thomas from outright accepting, and in the pause, he remembered the only way they could know about his grandfather was where he was headed.

“What did you do to my family?”

“Why, they’re with you, Thomas.”

“Don’t play dumb, Henry. You know fucking well I’m not talking about the frat.”

The bat sighed. “Your father and brother are fine. More than fine, actually. I’ve been spending time with both. You never told me how good they were. Shame on you for keeping them to yourself.”

Thomas had the phone in his hand. “What have you done to them?”

“How would you feel about having two new frat brothers? Thomas.” Henry chuckled. “I’m kind of curious how being related to them will change how you act. Will they teach you new things, or will you?”

“Henry,” Thomas threatened, “if you even think of touching my family, I will—”

“Now, now, Thomas. There’s no need to bother with threats. I’m not threatening anyone. I’m taking excellent care of your family. Even the women aren’t complaining. But really, it’s your brother and father who are the best cared for. The frat doesn’t feel quite as empty with them here. It will feel even better once you are here too, Thomas.

So please don't make me wait too long?"

Thomas's screams were incoherent and to a disconnected call. When he wound up to throw it, Yating took it out of his hand and handed it back to Madoc.

"Did any of that make any sense to you?" Limbani asked, subdued.

"Madoc?" Gilbert asked.

The rat shook himself. "That's can't have been who I've been calling. I mean, it sounded like him, but he's got nothing to do with the frat."

"He's the guy in charge of it," Thomas said. "The administrator or something. He's majoring in history."

"He didn't deny being the reason Thomas ran off," Yating said before Madoc could protest. "That means he lied to you."

Madoc shook his head. "Raphael was there when he told me about Thomas running off. Raphael didn't speak with me, obviously, but he was there. There's no way he'd have let him lie like that... unless he's in on it too?"

"Wait, Henry's related to you?" Thomas asked.

"Of course."

"There's a bat in your family tree?" Thomas chuckled.

"No, of course not. Henry's a rat, like you and me."

Thomas shook his head. "He's a bat."

"He can't be a bat," Gilbert said. "There isn't a bat family in the Society." He looked around, "Right?"

Limbani shrugged.

"I don't think so," Madoc said.

"What's Henry's family name?" Yating asked.

"Heindrick," Thomas said.

As Madoc said, "Lewiston." He shook his head.

Yating's phone was on the coffee table. "Yat, please tell me you rescued Madoc," Olavo said.

"Not that I asked for it," Madoc replied.

"Olavo, I need to know about the Heindrick."

"The who?"

"Bat family."

"Then you mean the Stokers."

Yating looked at Thomas, who shook his head.

"No, he's a bat called Henry Heindrick."

"There are no bats in the Society, Yat," Olavo said. "What's going on?"

"I'm not sure. Are you certain?"

"Yat, you know about the Stokers, right? You know the disaster they were. Trust me, if even one of them had survived the clean-up. We would know about it."

"Okay. I'll call you back in a bit." He disconnected and looked around.

"So.... Someone passing themselves off as one of us?" Limbani offered.

"If Thomas's memories are right," Yating said.

"That's still a big if," Gilbert added.

"Is it?" Madoc said. "You heard what Henry said. He has Thomas's brother and father at the frat. I remember them. His dad's kind of intense, his brother's going to be a hunk when if I can—"

"Don't you even think about it," Thomas warned. "I told you. Roland's straight."

"I remember the frat," Limbani, "but no Henry in charge of it. Laurence is in charge."

"So, did someone do something to our memories?" Yating asked. "Did that Henry do it?"

"Okay, what are the odds one of the other factions could have put someone among us?" Gilbert asked.

"If we take into account a memory alteration power, anything's possible, I guess," Yating replied.

"Could someone from those other factions keep up with you?" Thomas asked. "He's just as sexual as the rest of the frat."

"It doesn't matter, does it?" Madoc said. "He's either a bat from the Society, which means he's a Stoker, which should impossible, or someone how infiltrated our frat, which means there's a faction trying to hurt us." He looked at them. "I need to tell Raphael about this."

"If he's a Stoker," Gilbert said. "We all need to tell out Elders."

"But we won't know that until he's captured," Yating said. "Can you call your elder to tell him?"

Madoc shook his head. "That isn't something I can do over the phone. He's going to have to bring in someone to check out memories." He frowned. "I think we have one of them in my family."

"Okay, get dressed, grab a snack and we're leaving," Yating said. "We need to get to Kansas City as fast as possible."

"It's too early," Limbani said.

"Maybe we'll hit bad traffic," Gilbert said. Grabbing clothing off the floor. "This is San Francisco. It's basically impossible not to hit bad traffic."

"What about my family?" Thomas asked. "Shouldn't we go



save them?"

"Thomas," Madoc said. "We will save them, but we're just five university students. We're going to need help. And if there is one thing my family's good at, it's kicking ass."

Within five minutes, they were in the elevator and on the way to the lobby. The door opened.

"I'll check us out," Yating said, "and meet you at—"

"I don't think so," the tiger standing before the elevator said.

"Dietrich," Madoc said in awe.

"Yes, Dietrich Orr. And if you think you get to barge into my city and just leave without explaining yourself, you are going to be sorely disappointed."

"How did you know we were here?" Gilbert asked, then swallowed. "Sir."

The wall of muscle that was the tiger rolled his eyes. "I had you followed. Unlike those nephews of mine, I'm not an idiot. As satisfying as it would have been to grab the two of you and shake you until you told me everything. I'm not looking to start a war with the rest of your people. Now. You have two choices. We go to the conference room I rented and you explain yourselves, or you try to run and I have to explain to my nephews why I had to kick Society ass. Your choice."

"I'll go with you," Madoc said.

"Not again," Thomas grumbled. The tiger was smirking. "Can we make this quick?" He pointed to Madoc. "He needs to go talk to his elder about a bat and his son so that we can then go and rescue my family. It's been a really busy time since we broke into your warehouse and ran."

Dietrich nodded. "You don't seem as scared of me as they are."

"Oh, I'm plenty scared." He motioned up and down the tiger.

“You can probably crush the elevator with us in it, and they’ve implied some pretty nasty stuff about you. But someone threatened my family and I’m finding out that that makes being afraid of you stupidly manageable. Where’s that conference room?” he added before anyone protested. “Tell me you have something to drink.”

“Are you even legal to drink?” the tiger asked.

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## CHAPTER-41

“Another Marriott?” Thomas asked, looking out the windshield as Gilbert stopped the van.

“Where else did you think we were going to go?” Olavo asked from the back, pulling out of Yating.

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He and the others joined them once they reached Denver. And from there, the others had shuffled from Felix’s(or someone else’s) car to the van at every pit stop. Except for Donal, who remained in the car the whole time, and Thomas, who had to stay in the van.

He’d been overjoyed at seeing Donal again, especially since he looked healthier, but had been surprised when Olavo insisted he was accompanying them to Kansas City. Thomas had argued there was no point, and the copybara hadn’t budged. He didn’t want to discover Thomas had abandoned them halfway to their destination. Since Thomas could take one person with him, he and Donal hadn’t been allowed to be within touching distance.

Leaving San Francisco had been simple, after explaining to Dietrich Orr Madoc’s kidnapping, and the steps they’d taken to find him, focusing on Limbani’s precog ability rather than the help they received from Shila, as that had been one of the prices for her help. He and Madoc had talked in private, then they’d been allowed to leave.

It was late afternoon when Limbani joyfully pointed out things were as he’d seen them.

There had been a talk of getting Thomas to teleport them to Denver. Even with having to fuck him back to consciousness after each one, it would still be faster. In their eagerness to save time, they’d forgotten one detail Thomas was quick to point out.

He didn’t have an arrival point in Denver. And no matter how good that script Gilbert had, it wouldn’t let him get the sensation of a room that far away.

And one Gilbert pointed out. Thomas couldn't teleport his van, and he wasn't leaving it behind.

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"Our family owns the chain," Madoc said, holding Limbani down on his cock. "Which is why they were staying at the one in San Francisco Bay. And if we want to talk with Raphael, this is the one we need to come to. Home base and all that."

"Lots of sex," Limbani said around the rat cock.

Thomas waited, looking at Madoc.

"We hire men who are okay with having sex with us," the rat answered. "You can't just grab the first guy in a hotel uniform, but for the guy traveling alone, he can order 'room servicing'."

"So... it's like a whorehouse?"

Madoc rolled his eyes. "Don't let another of the Lewistons hear you call it that," Gilbert said, chuckling.

"We don't sell the guy's services," Madoc said. "And the service is only available to Society people. Not everyone has the luxury to travel with friends." He thrust hard, holding the monkey's head, and Thomas considered the ass.

"How far behind us is Felix?"

Gilbert checked his phone. "Less than five minutes."

Was that enough time? Would Felix wait if Thomas took longer? The otter had spent only long enough in the van to get fucked. Then he and Thomas were arguing. The otter was simply too full of himself. And with his memories scrambled. Most of the accusations he threw at Thomas meant nothing to the rat. Felix hadn't accepted that, and Thomas had lost his cool at the baseless accusations. They'd pull on the side of the highway and Felix had moved to the car.

No, the otter would start complaining again.

Thomas could wait to get more of that ass until all this was

resolved. He had just spent the better part of three days fucking, after all.

The car stopped next to the van, and Gilbert lowered the window. It'd opened the door panel and rewired it to bypass all the burned-out wiring the lightning strike had caused.

"What are we doing with him?" Felix asked.

Olavo leaned over the armadillo. "One of us can stay with him in the lobby."

"I'm not doing it," the otter replied.

"I don't need a babysitter," the squirrel said. "I'm a grown-ass adult."

"You okay?" Thomas yelled over the capybara.

"I'm good," Donal sighed. "But I think someone needs to take Felix and have sex with him. He's been eying me for the last ten miles. I need a rest."

"I'm sorry, Donal," Olavo said, "but I can't afford to have you run off."

"Where am I going to go? Unlike the lot of you, I can't do hocus pocus stuff."

"Just think of it as more of our hospitality."

"Then whoever it is better be willing to walk," Donal grumbled. "I'm tired of being cooped up."

"We'll work out who stays with him once we're in the hotel," Olavo said.

\* \* \* \* \*

The rat seated behind the sleek metal desk looked at them. He seemed both tired and annoyed. "Okay, so exactly are you?" he demanded.

Reaching the... Thomas didn't know if he should consider him infamous or not... Raphael hadn't been a straight line. Madoc had had to talk with the hotel manager, who had brought in a man, another rat, who had asked for their identities, then made a series of calls. Then had come another man, again a rat. Who had asked about how they'd come to be here, and they had recounted the kidnapping, the rescue. Dietrich Orr was not mentioned.

Thomas's teleportation was, but only received a roll of the eye and a 'who are you again?' glare.

Then had come the fourth rat and when he asked about Madoc's kidnapping, Thomas had had enough and teleported in his face, and told him they were here to see Raphael and teleported back to his chair.

That had sped things up.

"I'm Madoc, sir. I was (insert father's name here) son." He indicated the others, naming them and including the family names. Finishing with Thomas and stumbling over Hertz.

"And you all study at the same university. You're part of that chapter of Sigma Theta Gamma."

"Yes, sir."

Raphael looked at Thomas. "And you claim to be one of us and being able to teleport."

"I don't claim anything." He then added. "Sir. I was told I'm one of you because of how fucking me gave me this power."

"Teleportation," the rat said, dubious.

"Give me a door with a window in it," Thomas said with a sigh, "and I'll prove it."

"Why a window?"

"I need to see where I'm going. The only places I can go to that I'm not looking at are in San Francisco and Montana, and it basically

leaves me dead unless I get fucked.”

“Dirk,” Raphael said and pointed to the door on the side. The rat in question touched it and it became transparent. Thomas stared. “Well?”

Thomas teleported to the other side of the door. A bedroom and when Raphael motioned, he teleported back. The rat studied his desk, moving his fingers on it. The tiredness left his face.

“You actually did teleport.” He looked at Thomas. “I was half thinking it was a trick of some sort. Teleportation isn’t supposed to be possible.” He smiled. “And you’re one of mine.”

“I’m a Hertz,” Thomas said. “As far as I know, other than Madoc’s grandmother being my grandmother’s sister, my family has no link with yours.”

Raphael nodded. “We can figure out how that happened later. Now, you told Vincent that you’ve had your memories altered by a bat.”

“Maybe,” Madoc said. “We’re not sure which of us has had their memories altered. Thomas was in the company of a kangaroo who did magic.”

“One of the Longner?” Raphael asked.

When everyone looked at Thomas, he sighed. “Summer is his last name. I’m not giving you his first. He saved me and I’m not risking you deciding to make his life more difficult.”

“What faction is he from?”

Thomas shrugged, remembering Grant’s warning about mentioning he was a Practitioner. “I don’t know any of that stuff.” A pause. “Sir.”

“He had a staff and called down lightning,” Madoc said.

“A staff? Can you describe it?”

Madoc shook his head. “Yating is the one who got close

enough to see it.”

“Yating Xu,” Raphael read on his desk. “The one you left with Donal, and who are walking about the city?” There was some incredulity. “He really should be here, since he has important information.”

“I didn’t know the staff was important, sir.”

“It might not be, but all of you should have been here. Now, about that bat. What faction is he from?”

“If I may, sir,” Olavo said. “He’s Society.”

“There are no bat families, Mister Medeiros,” Raphael replied.

“I know, sir, but I’ve been going over everything, and it’s the only way any of this works.”

The rat sighed but motioned for the capybara to continue.

“It’s been bugging me that Thomas is one of us because the only way he could have been initiated by the frat is if thirteen fully initiated Society members have sex with him. Except, there are only twelve of us in the frat. Until you add this Henry. According to the conversation Thomas had with him, it’s clear he’s part of the frat, and with him, there are enough men to initiate Thomas.”

“There’s only ever been one bat family, Mister Medeiros,” Raphael said. “They were wiped out.”

“I know, sir. And yet the information points to him being a Stoker.”

“Curse Ass, I don’t need that.” Raphael ran a hand over his face. “And not one of you remembers him?”

“I do,” Thomas said, “sir.”

“Stop with the sir if you aren’t comfortable with it. Dirk, pull a team together, I need them to discreetly look into the Minneapolis chapter of Sigma Theta Gamma.”



“Yes, sir. How do you want to deal with their memory situation?”

“So we have any mind readers?”

Dirk consulted his phone. “No sir.”

“Don’t the Mercier have one?”

“I’d have to check with them, sir.”

“Do that. They have two of their boys in that chapter. It should encourage them to lend him to us.”

“Sir?” Thomas asked and continued once Raphael nodded. “I’m not sure why you need a mind reader since we’ve established they’re the ones who had their memories changed. Madoc said you could help rescue my family. Henry has them.”

“Dirk, have that looked into also. Thomas, I can’t let you leave.”

“But—”

“How long have you been staying at the frat?” Raphael asked.

“Since September, but I don’t see what it has to do with anything.”

Raphael nodded. “So for about five months, you’ve lived with someone capable of altering memories.”

“I guess, but he didn’t do anything to me.”

“How do you know, Thomas?”

Thomas opened his mouth, but the words couldn’t come out. Of course, his memories hadn’t been altered. He’d know if something had been changed. He was sure they were fine.

Just like the others had been sure their memories were intact too, until now.

\* \* \*

## CHAPTER-42

Thomas cracked the bathroom door open and immediately smelled something burning. He cursed and forgot about Limbani and his stalking. He was probably already busy with one of the other guys any way. He made it to the kitchen in time to watch Donal closed the lid over a burnign pan. Yating shoved Gilbert in a chair at the kitchen table and glared. On the counter were a variety of products that Thomas was confident should be under the sink.

“Did you try to burn down the house?” Thomas asked.

“I’m bored,” Gilbert replied. “I can’t go to the lab to pass the time.”

“I thought you guys had sex when bored,” Donal said, opening the pan and releasing a cloud of fumes. “Is this safe to have water poured over it?”

“Should be,” Gilbert said. “Nothing in here’s overly reactive with oxygen or hydrogen in any combination.” Donal looked at the armadillo dubious and set the pan by the sink.

“One of your can deal with it.”

Thomas left them and walked around the house, looking to alleviate his own boredom. Two days with nothing to do by the other guys to pass the time had ended up getting to everyone except Donal, it just fiddled with his toy, although now it look larger, with parts of a toy car attached to it.

When Raphael said he’d put them up in a safe house, Thomas hadn’t expected an actual house. Too many movies had taught him that a safe house was a dingy Motel room on the outskirts of the city where, withing five minutes of arriving, the bad guy would find the people hiding there. So the house had been a pleasant surprise, and a relief since seven of them wouldn’t have been comfortable in one motel room.

Limbani's moaning and screams for Felix to fuck him harder came from the living room. Within half the first ay, the monkey had had sex in every room in the house. That was three bedroom, two bathroom, a laundry room the kitchen and dining room as well as the garage and the unfinished basement. So he'd decided he was going to have sex with everyone in each room before they were done here.

Thomas glanced in the living room. The monkey was pressed against the frosted window with the otter pounding his ass. Did frosting keep the people on the other side from seeing a cock if it was pressed against it and rubbing up and down? How about leaving a trail of cum?

Thomas suspected those were the reason this had been picked as their safe house, along with the high privacy fences. He also thought it was a recent purchase, or at least had never been used before. When he sat on the bed for the first time, the creases in the sheet had been so sharp he nearly cut himself on them.

He went up the stairs and reached the second floor as Olavo exited the groups bedroom, naked, hard and wiping the cum off the side of his mouth with a finger.

"What's the smell?" the capybara asked.

"Gilbert's boredom. He played chemistry set with whatever the cleaners were under the sink. If you know of anything in there that could cause fumes that could kill us, I'd like to know."

"Chemistry isn't my thing." Olavo smiled. "But don't worry, if you start feeling bad, just tell me and I'll fuck it out of you."

Thomas shook his head in amazement. Of all the powers the others had, Olavo's healing cock was the one that took the most getting used to. "How is he?" He motioned to the doorway Olavo exited.

"He let me suck him off," the capybara said, "so he could be worse."

Madoc had had the worst time dealing with the revelations.

Raphael confirming he had a son hadn't been the boost Thomas had expected it to be. Instead the other rat had fallen into a depression deep enough he hadn't initiated any of the sex he'd had.

"I'm going to keep him company," Thomas said.

"If you need me," Olavo replied, swatting the rat's ass, "I'm going to be at the computer. There's an online tournament I'm planning on winning."

Everyone had fallen into a routine of sort. Olavo played online poker, Felix complained about the poor quality of fake wooden furniture, Limbani had sex, Yating did a lot of online reading, Gilbert had been doing research online too, Thomas had thought it was to continue working on his doctorate. Now he wasn't so sure. Donal had his toy....

Thomas felt wrong calling it a toy with the care the squirrel to of it. He'd thought it was a coping thing with the homelessness, but now it seemed to be something Donal cared about deeply. Maybe a memento of his time before being homeless. Thomas should try to find out if he had anywhere to return to when this little adventure was done with.

It leaf him and Madoc. Thomas wandered the house, doing his best to avoid Limbani since he had no interest in fucking in the basement, and that was the only room the monkey hadn't dragged him to, and making sure the others were doing okay. While Madoc sat in the chair unless someone pulled him to the bed for sex.

"Hey," Thomas greeted the other rat. He sat on the bed. "I've been meaning to ask, but this is your city, right? Wouldn't that mean you have a home here."

Madoc shook his head.

"Come on. Where does your family live? The way you're all having sex together, don't tell me you can't stay there."

"My family's dead," Madoc snapped, "and if you have to know. My home's in Denver, not if this forsaken place Raphael moved

us too just so he wouldn't have to deal with that cheetah."

"Cheetah?" Thomas raised his hand defensively at the anger in the glare. "I don't remember the same things you do, remember?"

"I so can't wait for that Mercier mind reader to get here and fix all of this."

One of Raphael's man had informed them they'd confirmed the Mercier family had a mind reader, and that they had accepted to help, but that he was currently on assignment. So it would be a few days.

Once the call was terminated, Olavo had told Thomas that was probably code for 'the elders were trying to get the best part of this deal'. Elders were always playing politics, he said sourly.

"Until then, mind enlightening me? You never mentioned Denver before."

"I—" he closed his mouth and ran a hand over his face. "Just so you know, I know I told you what happened to my family. A few years ago, this cheetah appeared out of nowhere. Something about the last surviving member of a dead family. He started shoving his cock in Denver's politics. Sucked off the Cormorans to the point they did whatever he told them, and that included getting my family out of Denver. And that was not even months after we lost nearly three quarters of them to some crazy killer who his family pissed off. And Raphael being the coward that he is forced us to move here instead of fighting for our ancestral home. Alistair would never have tucked tail like that. He was our elder before Raphael." Madoc said as Thomas was about to ask.

"I love my father, three brothers, more cousins than I can count, all because of that cheetah, and as if that wasn't enough, Raphael then pissed him off to the point that if one of us shows up in Denver, we get arrested and sent back out with a record."

Thomas swallow. "Someone can do that?"

"Money gives power," Madoc said tiredly. "Every family uses

it. But it's not supposed to be used against each other. We have enough problem without turning against one another."

Thomas tried to find something to say in response. He had no idea how he'd deal with being kicked out of Minneapolis, but he wouldn't like it. and that was without the deep family history Madoc clearly had had in Denver. He thought about leaving the rat be, but it felt wrong to leave him to sulk alone.

Well, maybe their memories weren't entirely accurate, but Thomas remembered more than one time when one of his frat brothers helped him get over a bad day, and he could do the same of Madoc.

He got off the bed and ran a hand along the rat's arm. "Thomas," Madoc said tiredly. "I'm not in—"

"Don't you think I look kind of thin?"

Madoc closed his eyes. "I know what you're trying to do."

"I mean, it's been close to a month since I was able to work out, and my nutrition... you don't want to know what I had to eat while on the street. I have to have lost what... fifty percent of my muscle mass in that time?"

The rat looked him up and down. He didn't get off the chair, but he did get hard.

"Look, Mad, I remember someone saying he could turn me into mister universe. Do you?"

"You said you weren't interested."

Thomas chuckled. "To be honest, I thought you meant by getting me to lift weights all day long. If I'd known it was you fucking me, I would have been more likely to say yes. And more honesty here, I'm missing the strength. So if you aren't going to fuck me so you can adore my muscular body, let me at least use you so I won't have to start hitting the gym again." Thomas pulled him off the chair and had him lie on the bed.

He slicked the rat with the lube each bedside table had, and straddled him. "Do I need to do something special?" Thomas asked. "I wasn't exactly paying attention when you fucked me in the sauna."

"You just have to make me cum. The rest is all about me willing it. And so you know. I bulked you up more of then than just at the gym."

Thomas lowered himself on the cock. "Figured aahhhhs much." He paused with it completely inside him. "Roland's been looking at me with some jealousy at how quickly it happened."

Your straight brother's been eying you?" Madoc smiled.

Thomas rolled his eyes, tightening his ass around the cock and making the other rat moan. "No, he noticed I was starting to compete with his physique and didn't like it." He began undulating on the cock. "Don't tell anyone, but I like it like this. Nice and slow." He leaned back and his cock jumped as Madoc's pressed deeper. "The hard and fast is fun, but this, this I can take more of."

"There you are!" Limbani screamed in pleasure and he ran into the room. "Oh, this is the perfect way to perk up out depressed rat." Limbani climbed onto the bed and offered his cock to Madoc. "Let me help."

With a shrug Madoc took it in and Thomas picked up speed. There was only one speed with the monkey got involved, and slow wasn't it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas took a step back from the entrance as it opened the moment he reached for the handle. He'd intended to take a walk outside after the marathon sex him trying to help Madoc turned into. He didn't know if he was allowed, but no one had said he couldn't either. Since the people after him were now rooming in the same house he was, he figured there was no harm.

Now it looked like he was about to find out he was an actual prisoner.

A rat in a blazer looked at Thomas, surprised, but Thomas's attention was on the boy in the man's arms.

"Hello," the man said. "I'm Trevor, you must be Thomas. This is —"

"Pryce," Thomas said. "We've met. Hello buddy, are you here to see your daddy?"

"Daddy!" the boy said, extending his arms.

"What's going on?" Madoc asked, before Thomas could worry about being confused for Pryce's father.

"Madoc, I'm Trevor, I was instructed to bring you your son." He stepped into the house and Thomas closed the door.

Madoc watch the two approach, and when Trevor offered him Pryce, he seemed unsure what to do.

"What's the cutie?" Limbani asked, then made faces at the boy Trevor held. Pryce ignored him, arms still extended toward Madoc.

"Are you going to take him?" Trevor asked.

Madoc did, and looked utterly uncomfortable. He searched the boy's face, while Pryce chewed on the end of Madoc's whiskers, as he could find answered there. When he looked up at Trevor, he looked ready to hand him over, but someone knocked on the door.

"Are we expecting someone else?" Thomas asked, the closest to it.

"Yes," Trevor answered.

Thomas opened it and a badger looked back at him. "I'm Samuel Mercier. Yes, that's exactly who I am," he added. And Thomas stared. He smiled and made a shooing motion. "You were thinking I was the mind reader once you heard my last him. I am. If you'll let me in, I'd appreciate it."

Thomas realized that he was right, as he moved out of the way. It had just occurred to him that the only Mercier who had a



reason to be here would be the mind reader, then—

“Yes, I answered you before you asked. I find it saved time.” He turned to Madoc. “Now, I’m sorry for engineering this encounter. No, Pryce is your son, I didn’t bring some stranger. I did it so I could get a sense of how deep the mental alterations go. Of everyone here, you’re the only one with any kind of emotional triggers I could play with.” He raised his hand as Madoc opened his mouth. “I did say I’m sorry. And for the others, yes, you all have altered memories. No I can’t tell the extent yet. Yes Thomas,” Samuel said. “You too.”

Thomas closed his mouth.

“Yes, I know how annoying it get.” Samuel grinned at him. “That’s half the fun. And—” outside a car door closed. “—that’s Ettore. We’re going to need an office. I think one of the two unused bedroom will do, right?”

Ettore entered and looked at Thomas. “Going somewhere?”

Thomas looked at himself, then the others. Only he, Pryce, Trevor and Samuel were dressed. “Well, I was going for some fresh air, but then Trevor got here with Pryce, and Samuel came in and put on something of a mind reader’s show.”

Ettore frowned.

“I got in early, so I gave your elder a call and arranged to have Trevor pick me up with Pryce.”

“He likes doing that,” Thomas said as Ettore’s frown became one of annoyance.

“I’m not going to stop,” Samuel replied to an unasked question. “No, I’m not going to be your mouth piece. The only way I can answer you mentally is for me to rummage in your head, and I don’t think you want me to do that. Second floor, bedroom on the left.”

Ettore sighed. “Madoc, Thomas, if you’ll come with us. I was hoping to have time alone with the two of you to explain what would happen, but it seems we get to jump right in.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas exited the bedroom rubbing his head. That had been the longest three hour of his life. He'd had to go over thanksgiving dinner along with Madoc, with Ettore there as a reference point since he'd never met Henry, so couldn't have had his memories altered. When Samuel found out Ettore had also been at the christmas dinner, Thomas had had to recount that. Then had been some of the few events Madoc had shared with Ettore.

Thomas had learned much more about his new uncle's sex life in that recounting he was comfortable knowing.

He stopped as he saw Limbani at the top of the stairs, looking down warily. The monkey noticed him and whispered. "There's a woman down there."

Thomas didn't hear one, but he still needed to go there. Madoc, Samuel and Ettore followed him.

In the centered of the living room a woman did stand, a red panda that looked enough like Yating Thomas figured he knew who she was. He stared at Yating, the panda looked sunk in.

"Finally," Felix said on seeing Ettore. "Tell that woman to leave. She has no business being here, telling us what we're supposed to be doing."

"Which one of you his Thomas?" the woman asked. She had a thick accent.

"Mother," Yating whispered. "We are guests."

"And poorly treated one at that."

"Miss Guan?" Samuel asked.

"Oh now you aren't reading a mind?" Ettore whispered.

Samuel smirked. "I'm Samuel Mercier. I asked that you come."

The panda raised an eyebrow. "I was told my son was in trouble, and I came to see to him. No one asked me to come, young

man.”

The smirk vanished from Samuel’s face and appeared on Ettore once he noticed that.

“Now which one is Thomas,” she asked again.

“I’m Thomas,” he answered.

“I’m told you know how to cook.”

“Well...” he trailed off looking at the others from the frat. “Yes, I can cook.”

“Could you—”

“Actually,” Ettore said, “I’ll take care of food. Thomas should stay here.”

She nodded. “That is acceptable, thank you.”

“Oh, come on,” Felix said and stormed for the stairs. “I’m not hanging around a woman who’s going to tell me what to do.”

“Ignore him,” Thomas said. “You’re Yating’s mother?” he offered her his hand.

“Ru Guan,” She shook his hand.

“What’s with Yating?” Thomas asked.

“I have a twin brother,” the panda said. “My mother says he came to study in America with me so we wouldn’t have to be apart, but I don’t remember having a brother. Did you know I had a brother?”

“No, you never mentioned your family.”

“What about me?” Gilbert asked. “Do I have relatives I don’t remember?”

“You have a brother who’s destined to be in the NFL to hear you tell the stories.”

"I remember him. I meant anyone else."

"I don't know," Thomas replied. "We were friends, but it's not like we told each other everything. Like other than 'family issues' Yating never said why he didn't go home over thanksgiving, same with Firmin."

"But you have to remember something," Olavo said, "something we can compare and—"

Trevor's phone rang and they all looked at him while he listened to it. "So they're sure?" he nodded. "I need ten to wrap up here, and I'll be on my way, we can take off as soon as I'm there." He put the phone away. "I need to leave. Samuel, call the office when you need someone to drive you to the hotel."

"I'll Share-Ride my way, no worries. You go rescue everyone in Minneapolis."

"You're going home?" Thomas asked. "Can I come?"

Trevor glared at the badger, who simply smiled. "No, Thomas, you can't come. This is a mission. The prelim team made their reports and there's enough there to warrant action. If you say one word, Mercier, they will be the last ones for a while."

The badger raised his hands in surrender.

"But I can help," Thomas said, "I know the area, and I can teleport."

Trevor looked about to object, closed his muzzle and started again. "It's too dangerous, Thomas. There are too many unknowns. This isn't about who has what power. It's about tactical precision. I promise, we will look after your family. We are among the best."

"I can't just sit here and do nothing!"

"Then talk with Raphael. See if he can arrange for you to get the training you need so you can help the next time something like this happens." He turned and headed for the door.

“Trevor?” Madoc called. When the man turned back, he held his Pryce. “What am I supposed to do with him?”

“You take care of him,” Ru said, before Trevor opened his mouth. “That is what a father does.”

“With all due respect,” Olavo began and stopped when she turned her gaze on him.

“She’s your mother,” Gilbert whispered at Yating. “Do something.”

“I am,” the panda replied. “I do what my mother tells me.”

“Like a good boy does,” She said.

Madoc looked at the boy he was holding, looking utterly lost.

## CHAPTER-43

(something tht isn't made clear in the outline is if anyone's memories have been unlocked at this point. I'm working wit hthe assumption that Samuel hasn't done more than confirm their memories have been altered. The unlocking was coming)

"Coming through!" Thomas yelled, running after Pryce. How was the kid so damned fast? Thomas was the one who teleported and, somehow, Madoc's son was the one always in the lead. Someone had to be wrong about powers only coming in at eighteen.

Legs went up and Pryce kept going while Thomas had to navigate around them. One of them smacked his ass as he passed. "Shouldn't you all be fucking?" Thomas said, then had to run out of the living room as Pryce vanished around the archway.

Once in the hall, Thomas froze. Pryce was nowhere to be seen. The closes door, partially open, led to the basement. Who had left that open? Dreading what he'd see, he looked down the stairwell just as Olavo cooed.

"What this pretty boy doing here? Why yes, you are a pretty boy."

Thomas didn't question how Pryce had made a left out of the living room and ended up in the kitchen, to the right. Maybe infants could just do that kind of stuff.

The capybara sat at the table, bouncing and an infant rat on a knee while holding a half-eaten sandwich in the other hand. His phone was on the table, projecting a page of text above it.

"Thank you for catching him," Thomas said, dropping into the opposite chair.

"What are you doing running after this guy?" Olavo asked. "Should that be Madoc's job?"

“We fucked for it, and he preferred keeping the other infant busy, so I got to handle Pryce.”

Olavo thought about it. “Limbani?”

Thomas nodded. “I think Madoc’s still freaked out about having a son. Which is weird as fuck, considering how dotting he was at Thanksgiving.”

The capybara nodded and returned to reading.

“How are you handling the messed-up memory thing?” Thomas asked. Yating was still down from the revelation he had a twin brother. Felix was sulking somewhere. Like Thomas, he’d been certain his memory was intact, but the otter was being stubborn about accepting the reality.

Olavo shrugged. “Unless this mess, as you call it, hides that this Henry got me to betray my family, I’ll deal with things when I know what I’m misremembering. Until then, I have my courses to focus on.”

“You know, now that I know about your power, I’m kind of surprised you took an econ as your major. Wouldn’t medicine make more sense as a healer?”

The capybara sighed. “It’s okay,” he said as Thomas was about to apologize. “It’s not you I’ve had to explain this to before. It’s just about everyone else.”

“You don’t—”

“It’s fine. My power only seems impressive to you because you don’t remember about sigils and *phrases*. There’s a healing sigil, which is simply a symbol you apply to yourself in cum, and it will heal you. It’s easy and safe to use, if not particularly smart. It won’t clean a wound before closing it, for example. Compared to that, my power is impressive. I’ll heal you smartly. Worst injuries first, and because it’s magical, nothing’s going to stay in there to spread infection. I don’t even have to think about what needs to heal. My power just knows. That’s one reason why studying medicine isn’t all

that interesting. It's not going to make me a better healer. If you want a second right there, not a lot of patients at a hospital will let someone fuck them with the promise of a healing out of it."

"Would it work on a woman?" Thomas asked.

"I've never tested it, but I don't see why not. I might have to fuck them in the ass, but the biggest problem there would be getting me hard. There's a phrase for that, but I'm going to keep it for when it's time for me to have a son. And speaking of phrases, which is simply a combination of sigils, so they'll interact together and create a more directed result. There are a lot of them about healing. But most are still simple to write, and even the simplest will heal better than me because there's no need to spend the time having sex. As fun as that is, when it's really needed, you rarely have the time for it."

"I guess I hadn't thought of that."

"Few people do. And most healers do benefit from knowing how the body works, so the assumption my power works the same is understandable. Even if the idea that it isn't because I have a healing power that I have an interest in healing people doesn't seem to be."

"So... ecom?" Thomas wanted to move away from the sore subject, but other than walking out, he couldn't think of a tactful way.

Olavo nodded. "That and politics as well as... something else."

"Three majors? I didn't know. Why? I mean, if you like that stuff, sure, but isn't it better to take just one?"

"If my goal was to go into business, or straight-up politics, yes. Unfortunately, I expect my future to be less traditional, so I'm planning accordingly."

Thomas tilted an ear and opened his mouth to ask.

Olavo sighed. "Not like it's a secret at this point among the frat. But I'm pretty sure my father will take over the country by the time I've graduated."

Thomas snapped his muzzle closed. "Not this country. You're



talking about Argentina. Your dad's a dictator?"

Olavo winced. "It's more complicated than that. Now that we no longer have an agency watching our every move, we can take a more direct hand in rescuing our country. Unfortunately, with the current unrest and the political upheavals around South America. It's going to take a firmer hand than that of the current government to make the changes required."

"That seems kind of extreme."

The capybara shrugged. "Argentina isn't the United States. What works here isn't going to work there. But I'm studying what I am because I was to do all I can to ensure that my father's actions won't make the situation worse, despite his good intentions."

"I guess that's good. I wouldn't want to—"

"Thomas," Gilbert called from the living room. "You're going to want to come here."

(I am purposely not handling Felix here because 1) considering the animosity between him and Thomas, I can't see how to create a situation where some of the otter's background would come up. That might work better if we include it when Thomas is still at the frat. And 2) with Felix being so underused overall, I don't have much of a handle on who he is, other than 'hating Thomas'. Feel free to add what you feel with work)

Thomas looked at Olavo, who shrugged. Thomas headed to the living room. "What's—"

"There you are," the pangolin on the television screen said. "Why weren't you with the rest of them?"

"I—" he motioned toward the kitchen, but stopped the rest. "What are you doing on the television, Shila?"

"Talking with you," she replied before taking a drag of her E-cig.

"There are phones, you know."

She snorted smoke. "Too easy to spy on them. No one's going to expect me to use this."

"Especially since there isn't a microphone on it," Gilbert said.

"You know, I'd think you bunch wouldn't be too surprised by what magic can do," Shila said, then looked at Thomas. "As for why I want to talk with you specifically, well, that's got to do with that favor you owe me."

Thomas looked around at the others. "I'm kind of in the middle of something."

"Oh, I know, but that can wait."

"What's going on?" Madoc asked and frowned at the television. "How?"

"Magic," Thomas said before Shila could. "Look, I know I said I'd move you, but you realize I expected to be better at it by the time you needed me. You kind of implied it wouldn't be anytime soon."

"It's not for me," she replied. "Grant needs a rescue."

Thomas stared. "Grant needs a rescue?" he shook his head. "The guy who can get lightning to fall from the sky and a funnel to send someone flying off, needs a rescue?"

"Yes. Unless you've come in contact with another Grant Summer with a staff that lets him do that, he's the one who needs a rescue."

"If you'll excuse me," Olavo said, entering the living room, "but how do you know he needs help?"

She hesitated. "Okay, I don't *know* know. My conclusion is based on a lot of inference, but there's been chatter on the net for a while about Chamber agents on the hunt."

"Chambers?" Gilbert asked.

"Internal names," Shila replied, "don't worry that genius head of yours over it. Anyway. Magnet and Light were the only ones to

walk away from your encounter. Shovel didn't survive the—"

"Wait," Thomas interrupted. "Magnet and Light? Is that really what they're called? Are we dealing with some bad super-villain group or something?"

"It's what I call them, on account of them being assholes who can't leave the rest of us to live in peace. Can I continue?" she looked the room over. "Thank you," she said when no one said anything.

"Shovel didn't survive the fall, but the Chamber still has his staff." She sighed as Thomas raised his hand. "Go ahead."

"I remember a guy with a shovel, so I'm guessing that's who you mean, but how is a shovel a staff? I mean, I didn't see him using anything else."

"Do you see anything in my hands?" she asked, bringing them into view.

"No."

"Well, I'm using a staff, too. It's what gives us our power, just like sex gives you yours."

"Actually," Olavo said, "a god gives us our—"

"Kid, we so don't have the time to argue over who's belief system's the right one right now, especially since you are going to hate the answer." She took a drag. "Can I continue? Okay. Shovel's out of play until they can find a wielder. No, I'm not taking more questions." Thomas lowered his hand. "But they have Heat Wave on the way to join up with Light and Magnet as well as Lullaby. The only time there's reinforcement like that is when they think they're getting close to their target."

"Okay, where is he?" Thomas asked.

"I don't know."

He stared at her. "You don't know where he is? Then isn't it easier for you to go out and look for him than ask me to do it? I can't

teleport anywhere if I don't know where I'm going."

"Kid, I don't leave my house for anything short of the end of reality. I owe Grant, I owe him big. I'm repaying him by giving him the favor you owe me. Trust me when I tell you that wasn't the easiest decision I've ever made. As for where he might be. I figured you'd have a better chance of knowing since you were the last person I know to have been with him."

"You're magic can't find him?"

She shook her head. "Grant's got some of the best wards on his truck."

"He lost that."

She paused and looked at something off-screen. "Okay, that would weaken them some. He had them run mostly off the concept the truck represented. But whatever he's using is keeping me from triangulating him."

"Wouldn't that mean the Chamber can't find him either?"

She snorted. "When you've pissed them off the way Grant has, they don't limit themselves to one of two seers. They've got the whole damned collection of them looking for him. You should be impressed he's still on the run and not consumed by now."

"I don't know where he is," Thomas said in exasperation. "He specifically said it was better if I didn't know." He paused. "He did say something about Canada being a quiet place this time of the year."

She smiled. "I knew I could depend on that kangaroo to give me a clue." She looked at something. "Okay, Canada makes sense. I have Light and Magnet on a camera in Grand Falls, Montana." Looking on the other side. "And Lullaby is on a flight landing at the Calgary International Airport in eighteen hours. Looks like the Chamber also thinks he's up there. You better get moving."

"I'm in Kansas City. How the fuck do you expect me to get to Canada?"

"I can get you there," Gilbert said.

"In what?" Thomas asked.

"Okay, I'm offended you have to ask," the armadillo replied. "It's been in better shape, but it got us here from San Francisco. It'll get us to Calgary."

"You do realize there's a border between here and there, right?" Thomas asked. "Last I checked, crossing it still required a passport. I don't own one."

"That doesn't have to be the problem you think it is," Olavo said. "We have magic after all."

"You guys are all idiots," Felix said, getting up. "I'm not risking my fur for some kangaroo who got on the bad side of his people. He fucking blew up your van, Gil. How can you even think of helping?"

"Because he helped Thomas," the armadillo said. "Me and him are going to have words about what he did, but he still helped a brother when he didn't have to. Fuck, he protected him from us. He deserves our help only for that. I'd hate to think what would have happened to Thomas if we'd brought him to that Henry guy."

The otter looked at them. "You're all going? Since when do we get involved in other faction's problems?"

"Since one of them got involved in ours," Yating said. "Like Gil said, this Grant rescued Thomas. The least we can do is return the favor."

"I'm not going," Madoc said. "I'm sorry, Thomas, but I have to stay here. I have this kid who thinks I'm his father, and I don't even feel a kinship to him. It's killing me to think I should. I have to be here for when Samuel's ready to unlock those memories."

"I understand," Thomas said. "Really, I do. If I had a son, I'd—" Thomas looked at Olavo. "Where's Pryce?"

"I left him in the kitchen with Limbani."

“You left an infant with our monkey?” Thomas exclaimed and ran out of the living room before anyone said anything else. He skidded to a stop in the kitchen’s archway. Limbani was seated on a kitchen chair, gently rocking Pryce in his arms while singing something in his native language.

While the monkey’s gentle treatment of the infant was surprising, the fact Limbani was dressed was what kept Thomas from saying anything. It was a form-fitting t-shirt and jeans that would put short shorts to shame, but he was dressed.

Limbani stopped singing and looked at the rat. “What?” he asked in a whisper.

\* \* \*

## CHAPTER-44

(one detail I realized I forgot once I reached the end. I never had Shila give them pictures of the Chamber people.)

Thomas looked at the border receding behind them. It had worked.

"How the fuck did this work?" he demanded. He stepped over Limbani and Olavo because, Limbani being who he was, didn't stop fucking just because the magic didn't need to be powered anymore. Thomas sat in the passenger seat and added a glare toward Gilbert to his question.

"Magic," the armadillo replied, glancing at Thomas's naked body and smiling. Of the three only Gilbert was dressed. He'd ordered the three to fuck as hard as they could until he gave the signal as soon as they'd gotten on the road from the rest area half an hour south from the border. They'd been parked there for nearly two hours, jerking off and the armadillo writing on the inside of the truck with the cum.

"Yeah, I got that. But how? Limbani can't be quiet to save his life, and Olavo didn't try very hard."

"I remember you being more euphoric to date on *phrases* than that."

"You remember wrong. I didn't ask while you were writing that stuff because I didn't want to distract you, but you're just driving now."

Gilbert sighed. "Okay, at the core, what I write is just a misdirection *phrase*. One of the 'there's nothing interesting here' kind of thing. I purposely went overboard because none of those are meant to turn away someone actively looking for something. I don't know actual 'ignore us' *phrases*. I've been managing with getting people to ignore my work without it. Border agents are trained to look for stuff, and there's always the possibility they'll have quads sniffing for drugs. Our magic's iffy around them so some reason."

“Maybe because you can’t have sex with—” Thomas noticed the glance the armadillo gave him. “Nope. I don’t want to know.”

“That’s not it. Man, loosen up. I mean, I don’t have sex with a woman, and the magic still affected her.”

“So...” Thomas trailed off, finding his curiosity peaking.

“What do I look like, a mind reader? You should have sekd Samuel if that’s what you want to know.” Gilbert shuddered. “I wouldn’t want to do that. And I don’t want to know if someone around me has done it. That includes you, Limbani!”

A scream of pleasure was the answer from the monkey.

“Are you serious?” Thomas asked. “Him?”

“Fuck, you don’t remember any of the stories about the Adesida?”

“I sort of remember jokes about Limbani fucking anything that moves and has a cock.”

“Exactly. Stories are his family has absolutely no restraint.”

“Lies!” Limbani screamed between other kind of screams. “My grampa had a dungeon!”

“See what I mean?” Gilbert said.

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“Fuck it’s cold,” Thomas said running back into the van. “I thought Minneapolis was cold.” The van’s heat enveloped him. They’s stopped for lunch south of Calgary, and the quick run to the restaurant, then back, was enough to make him wonder the existence of warm weather. At least the van was warm; more than it had any right to be, considering the state the walls were in and the lack of insulation.

Magic again.

“We’re at a higher elevation,” Olavo said, stepping in after



Thomas.

Limbani threw himself into Thomas's arms. "Hold me. I'm dying of the cold." The monkey started undying the rat's pants and Thomas chuckled until he screamed in surprised as cold hands wrapped around his cock and balls. "Oh," Limbani sighed. "You're so hot."

"Great," a dry woman's voice sounded through the van. "I really though you'd get that out of your system before you got back in the truck."

"This is the only private place we have," Gilbert replied, while Thomas fought to get the monkey's hand out of his pants. The result of which left the rat hard and leaking and since he'd yet to get new underwear, exposed until he pulled his pants up. He really hoped Shila didn't have a way to look in the back.

"I didn't know you guy cared about privacy."

"We do when we aren't in a Society business," Olavo replied. "I hope that your call means you've located Grant."

"More like narrowed down where he probably is," she said. "Lullaby and Heat Wave landed in Calgary half an hour ago. They rented a car and that they're dropping off in Red Deer."

"Why are they dropping a rental off?" Limbani asked. "Won't they need it to drive back to the airport?"

"Only if that's their plan, and Magnet and Light do have a vehicle," Shila said. "I can't read their minds, just tell you what I see on the internet, they're going to Red Deer."

"It's about two hours from us," Gilbert said, looking at his phone, before slotting it in the dash and starting to drive.

"So we're still behind them," Thomas grouched. "What do you have arranged for me once me and Grant appear in San Francisco? I don't want to count on him to keep me alive, for all we know he isn't going to be in a state to perform."

"I got in that hotel's system and the room is mine until you need it. As for the performing part, do you have any preference?"

"Guy, cock, able to fuck me."

"That's it?" Gilbert asked in surprise.

"I'm going to be dying," Thomas replied, "I don't think that's the time to be picky."

Limbani smiled at the front of the van. "Give the guys good muscle. Our Thomas like them with solid meat on their bones, and good think boners."

Shila sighed. "Now I'm regretting agreeing to handle that part of the rescue. I'll have two guys there at the hotel in the adjoining room and the moment you and Grant show up, I'll have them there."

"There's a connecting room?" Thomas asked. He didn't remember that.

"No officially," Olavo answered, "but it's a Society hotel, so being able to move from room to room is expected. Not every party to room there fits in one suit. Shila, any idea how we can go about locating Grant? You know him better than we do."

She took a few seconds before replying. "He's going to be on the move. He knows they're after him so he isn't going to rely solely on his protection. Other than that, you're monkey's got better chances of seeing with his precog. Without his truck I don't think it's going to be as effective."

"I'm not charged enough," the monkey said with a theatrical sigh. He smiled at Thomas. "If you plug yourself in me, I might be able to see something."

Thomas looked at Olavo for help.

"Hey, I didn't see you volunteering to fuck him after the border," the capybara said. "It's your turn to keep misted insatiable sated."

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas slammed the door to his hotel room. His room, his alone. The trip here from Kansas City had taught him two things. One, if he couldn't teleport somewhere, he was flying. He didn't care if it was going to be coach or even in a container, but he was not driving anywhere again, ever. And two. He was never, ever going to South Africa.

Limbani had been quick to reassure Thomas that his family didn't to *that*. But it had opened the door to him talking about his family, and how they took the saying 'it takes a village' to something of an extreme, with the entire clan raising the boys. And starting way too early on the sex for Thomas's comfort, and Limbani wanted to introduce his great friend Thomas to the entire Adesida with all that it entailed.

A door opened and Thomas looked at the adjoining door in horror. Gilbert was visible on that bed, behind the capybara standing in the doorway, fucking Limbani.

"I said I want to be alone for a while," Thomas stated.

"I'm just letting you know that as soon as those two are done, we're ordering food and figuring out a plan."

"Once they're done?" Thomas asked, his amusement eclipsing his annoyance. "You're really planing on waiting until the heat death of the universe before eating?"

Olavo looked at the two of them. "Right. Once Gil's done. Limbani can go without for a while."

"I order the food," Thomas said.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas sighed as he ate the slice of pizza. When he'd said they were eating pizza, Olavo had agreed, but taken over the actual ordering. Thomas had been worried he'd have to eat some super fancy, one strand of cheese on a cracker kind of pizza. But while the quality was definitely higher than the pizza joint Thomas and Paul ordered

from, the pizzas had been real to goodness pizzas.

He looked at the map projected above the table and some of his enjoyment vanished. "That's a lot of park space." He indicated the green. "Even if he wants to stay close to the interstate access point, it's going to be easy for him to losses himself in them. He's used to roughing it, I think."

Limbani moaned as he sucked on his cheese fulfilled crust, but they were used to him doing that after the sixth slice.

"I think this weather is beyond roughing it," Olavo said, looking up from his phone. "Even with magic, I don't know how he's going to survive minus thirty-five degree Celsius?"

"What's that in real temperature?" Gilber asked between bites.

"It's suck my cock, cold, Rowlings," the capybara replied, grinning. "The city has a thriving housing market. It would be easy for him to squat in anyone of them. Even if it won't have power, having walls to insulate between the cold will make whatever magic he's using more effective."

"That's if he's bothering with a house." Gilbert said.

"You have an alternative?"

"Depends, you going to suck the heat out of my cock for it?" He grinned at the capybara and turned in his seat to expose his hard cock.

"Can you two sixty-nine later?" Thomas said. "After we have a plan of actions?"

"How about we one-thirty-eight it?" Limbani asked.

Thomas stared at him.

"Come on, it's not that hard." The monkey snorted, "unlike me. If two guys sucking each other off is a sixty-nine, then the four of us daisy chaining it is one-thirty-eight."

"Someone needs to shove their cock in his mouth so he can't

spout stuff like that.”

“After we have a plan of action,” Thomas reminded them.  
“Which means you need to spill, Gil.”

“He’s going to need a minute to crank it before anything spills,” Limbani said.

The armadillo raised an eyebrow. “I can cum under thirty second if I’m jerking off”

“Big words from —”

“I swear to God,” Thomas said. “If you don’t stop side trackig us, Limbani. I am throwing you outside for the night.”

The monkey grinned.

“I wouldn’t,” Olavo said, “I think you’ve pushed Thomas to his limit.”

Limbani shrunk in a little. “Sorry, I was just trying to keep things lighter.”

Thomas took a handful of breaths before speaking. “Gil.”

“Speaking as someone who spent a lit of energy on his van. What I saw of Grant’s truck tells me he did a lot to it. Someone like that would either do everything he can to get it back, or get himself a new one. We know the truck is still impounded, so...”

“Actually, that makes sense,” Thomas said, recalling things the kangaroo said. “Some of Grant’s protection works on concepts his truck represented, being on the move, being ahead of the people chasing him. I don’t know how much work it would take him, but he would want to get those concept working for him again.”

“So we can ask around the shops in town,” Gilbert said. “I doubt kangaroos are that common.”

“Craft stores too,” Thomas said. “He prefers working with wood, but arts and crafts seem to be part of how his magic work.” He looked at the others and their lack of reaction. “I expected more

surprise out of this.”

“We power our magic by putting our cock in other guys,” Limbani said. “We know how odd magic can get.”

“I guess I’m just not used to it enough.” He drained the can of coke. “Okay, so tomorrow as soon as it’s light, we split into two and go around looking into the housing situation for indication someone’s squatting and into shops and crafts stores for a kangaroos buying parts. Agreed?”

“Yes!” Limbani exclaimed and stood. “We have a plan of action. Now it’s time to get you used to sex powering our magic so you won’t be surprised when the weird stuff come up again.”

Thomas glared at the smirking capybara as the monkey pulled him to the bed. “You are so taking him tomorrow.”

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“Well?” Thomas asked Gilbert as he exited the very respectable looking garage that the rat couldn’t imagine someone like Grant being able to afford.

“He was here.”

“What? When?”

“Yesterday. He picked up a rotor assembly for a twenty-forty-seven Intrepid.”

Thomas looked at the shop again. “It can’t be Grant, he doesn’t have that kind of money.”

Gilbert smiled. “Oh it didn’t cost him all that much. The model’s one of those anti-theft enabled system. This guy couldn’t use it on anything, so he was more than happy to be rid of it.”

“Stolen parts?”

Gil nodded. “Yep, never let how a place look fool you into thinking they’re honest.” He motioned. “The guy said the kangaroo in question walked that way.”

“And you knew this place sold stolen parts?”

“No, but I don’t know this guy like you do, so I don’t have preconceptions as to where he’d go.”

They walked around the cover of the building and all they saw was more trampled snow. Too many vehicles had come by for them to pick one out even if they’d know what the tired on an intrepid left as marks.

“I need to warm up,” Gilbert said. “How about we head in there for a snack, heat and I can update the others.”

“Please,” Thomas replied. After three hours of walking around in the cold, Thomas was ready for heat.

The restaurant had the feel of an old place to it. Booths out of the aughts, with their plush seats and solid wood tables. They grabbed food, and sat. Gilbert called and updated the others, who agreed to meet them at the restaurant as soon as they could. Thomas didn’t mind having to wait inside. Once they were together, they would formulate a new plan of attack.

The door opened with the electronic ‘ding-dong’ that let the person in the back know a new customer arrived and Thomas glanced up.

“Fuck,” he cursed as the man Shila called Magnet entered the restaurant with a woman at his side. Gilbert turned to look and cursed too. As the man and woman locked eyes with Thomas.

## CHAPTER-45

Thomas went over his options as quickly as he could as the woman leaned toward the man to whisper something.

Running was at the top of Thomas's list. With his power, it was simple; if he was alone. Fighting? He couldn't fight magic. So running it was.

She headed for the counter while the man walked toward him and Gilbert.

Fuck. Gilbert. Thomas could vanish, be outside on the other side of the road with a glance and thought, but he couldn't take anyone with him yet. An extra person meant utter exhaustion for him, even if it was a line-of-sight jump. San Francisco would be a better choice; guys waited there to revive him.

Fuck, that left the others and Grant at the Chamber's mercy.

"Mister Hertz," the man said in a deep and rich voice with a slight English accent. "May I and my companion sit with you and Mister Rowling? I would like us to discuss the situation you have unfortunately found yourself in." The gray furred vole was dressed in an expensive overcoat to go with the refined language.

Thomas had trouble finding his voice in surprise. He'd expected them to whip out their staff and... where was the staff? He leaned over and the woman didn't carry anything either.

"As you can see, we are unarmed," the man said, smiling. "All I am interested in is a friendly discussion."

"Ah guess," Gilbert said, "Tha if all ya want is ta talk, we betta have a drink ta go with it." He motioned to the counter, "Honey! Bring tha bottle oh the best whiskey ya got!"

Thomas stared at Gilbert. Where had that accent come from? The two Texans barely gained one even when they were drunk.



"That's alright," the vole said, "my companion is getting us tea."

Gilbert snorted. "If ya gonna be friends, we ain't drinking water."

The raccoon who'd entered with the vole joined them, holding two cups. "Are they giving you any trouble?" she asked, her accent making Thomas think she was from the east coast.

The waitress squeezed between them and placed a bottle along with four shot glasses on the table before hurrying away.

"No," the vole said, sounding annoyed, "but it seems Mister Rowling is looking to get us drunk."

"If all ya can take is one drink." The armadillo took a shot glass and sneers as he looked it over. "Then ya can have just one." He poured the brown liquor in it before sliding the glass to the man. The next full shot glass went to the woman, the third to Thomas. Gilbert down the water in the glass that came with the food and filled it to the three-quarter mark with whiskey.

He took a small sip. "What ya wanna talk about?"

The woman sipped her shot glass while the man eyed it distastefully before sipping his. Thomas felt like to odd one out, so he sipped his and did his best not to choke on the burn. How was Gilbert drinking this like it was nothing more than beer?

The vole pushed the glass away from him. "Mister Hertz. You have inadvertently found yourself in the middle of a situation that you do not belong in. I do not know what Mister Summer has told you, but I can promise you that none of it will be accurate."

"You attacked him for no reason," Thomas said before stopping himself. The alcohol couldn't be affecting him already, right?

"Did he tell you that?" the man asked, while the raccoon smirked. As refined as Magnet seemed, there was something sleazy about Lullaby. "Have you considered that we might be justified in wanting to bring Mister Summer to justice?"

“So da kangaroo’s a criminal?” Gilbert asked, sounding too interested for Thomas’s comfort. Grant wasn’t a criminal. He had two independent people telling him the Chamber was bad news, so... they didn’t know he’d talked with Shila. They might not even know she existed. They thought all he had to go by was whatever Grant told him. Could he use that to get himself and Gilbert out of this? They were unarmed, after all.

Or were they? His friends could do more than just use their powers. Grant could make talismans. Could the Chamber? He couldn’t remember if Grant said anything about it. Anyway, he couldn’t take the risk.

“I hate this,” He grumbled, then sipped the whiskey and choked on it.

“Yes,” the man said, amused. “Mister Summer has put you in a bad position, but I want to reassure you that you hold no interest to us. You are merely a bystander. If you tell us where Grant is, we will take him and leave you and your friends be.”

Thomas looked in the glass, searching it for answers. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Gilbert watching him. He couldn’t believe them. He knew that. The other two were probably out there, looking for Grant or his friends, since they didn’t seem surprised to find Thomas and Gilbert here.

How weren’t they surprised? At the very least, Gilbert should have caught them by surprise. Then there was his teleportation. Something no one thought possible, according to Grant, and even if he questioned that the kangaroo was an expert on the matter, Henry was after him because of it and Shila’s reaction supported teleportation was at the very least rare.

He sighed. He had to be careful and hope Gilbert wouldn’t contradict him. “I don’t know where he is. We split not long after I took him away from you.”

“Mister Hertz, I find this difficult to believe considering you are in Red Deer at the moment.”

"I'm in hiding," he replied. "I figured that if you decided to hunt me down for helping him, you wouldn't think to look for me in his frozen place." He shuddered at the idea of having to step outside again.

"Kid," the raccoon said. "Don't play this game, okay? The roo's not worth it. He'd drop you the moment things got hard. Just tell us where he is and we're gone. You'll never even hear of us again."

"I don't know where he is," Thomas said, the frustration real.

"I am asking you, politely, to reconsider your answer, Mister Hertz," the vole said. "While I am not in a position to do any lasting damage to you, I have the ability to inflict a lot of pain on you and Mister Rowling."

"Why can't you kill him?" Gilbert asked, frowning, his accent gone.

"Part of an agreement with a third party," the vole answered with a dismissive wave of the hand.

"Like we're going to do that guy's bidding," the raccoon snorted and was glared at by the vole. "What do we care what his plans are for the kid? You plan on letting the only known teleporter go?"

"I think you just tipped your hand," Gilbert said, raising his still mostly full glass to his mouth. "Thomas, get ready to run." He took a quick drink and raised his other hand, palm up, to his face. As the vole opened his mouth, a flame appeared in the palm, a few inches in height, then the armadillo blew his mouth full of whiskey through the flame and it exploded into a fireball in front of the vole and raccoon, forcing them away. "Come on!" Gilbert yelled at a stunned Thomas as he rushed the door.

"What was that?" Thomas demanded as he caught up to the armadillo.

"Not important!" Gilbert shouldered the door open, and cold air blasted at them. Fuck. Thomas had forgotten how cold it was. "We

have to. Oh, fuck." On their right was Heat Wave, holding Magnet's staff along with one made of black metal. Only, as Thomas watched, one end began glowing red. "Other direction," Gilbert ordered, skidding as he tried to do the one-eighty.

Thomas turned. "We need another plan." Light stood there, grinning, the transparent shaft of her staff resting on her shoulder. Where could they go? Get in one of the trucks parked along the fence? Did Gilbert know how to drive a big rig? The armadillo grabbed Thomas's arm and ran away from the building toward the road.

"You are wasting your time!" the vole yelled. "You can't run from us."

"Gil?" Thomas asked.

"You might have to get us out of here."

"I can't. It's going to leave the others alone."

The armadillo looked around. "Fuck, why couldn't the switch to electric have taken another century? I can do stuff with gas." He grabbed a metal bar off the ground. It had one end broken into jagged points and Gilbert aimed it at the four Chamber agents.

Magnet took his staff from Heat Wave and gave a flick. The bar flew out of Gilbert's hands, nearly pulling him off balance.

"Do you understand how serious your predicament is, Mister Hertz? This isn't a battle you can win."

"Thomas," Gilbert said, just as a wave of hot wind struck them from the side, then warm rain fell and steamed on the cold ground.

Thomas first looked at Heat Wave, who seemed surprised by what happened.

"Grant!" the vole yelled, smiling. "I'm so glad you finally joined us."

"Get the fuck away from the kids, Kingsley!" Grant stepped

around the building, staff raised. On one side was Olavo, and on the other —

With a war cry, Limbani ran straight at Lullaby, inexplicably dodging the lances of light her staff sent his way. He jumped, kicking her in the face, then landed, grinning like a madman. He looked around in time for the flying metal bar that had been in Gilbert's hand only seconds before hitting him across the face and sending him on his back.

"Someone get the monkey!" Olavo yelled as Thomas ran toward the fallen Limbani.

"Get everyone together!" He yelled back. Could he do a group? He was going to find out soon enough.

He skidded and fell as he reached the monkey. The warm rain on the frozen ground was creating a surface where friction wasn't much of a thing. He grabbed the unconscious monkey and thanked the workout and recent sex sessions with Madoc for the added muscle mass as he pulled him up and then over a shoulder.

Pain erupted in his side and his legs buckled under him. Limbani rolled away from him as Thomas sprawled.

"Hey, it worked!" a woman said, and Thomas had a tough time turning his head to see Lullaby grinning despite her broken and bleeding muzzle. He fought to look at Limbani and reached for him, but his arm weight a ton. He willed himself next to the monkey, but nothing happened.

It finally registered he was exhausted, drained. He couldn't remember ever being this tired, not even after the end-of-year exams. He looked around and tried to cry for help, but he couldn't push the air through his throat. Even breathing was getting hard.

Thomas saw Olavo exchanging blow with someone he'd never seen before, someone without a staff. Grant was using wind and water to stop jets of heat from Heat Wave's staff while Gilbert had... how was there a fireball two feet in diameter between the armadillo and the vole? Gilbert's joke when he'd explained his power was that

he was nothing more than an ambulatory lighter.

The pain in his side reminded Thomas there was something there that didn't belong and he exerted whatever strength he had left to move his head and look. The wooden grip of a knife poke out of his overcoat, on it were symbols in red that seemed to glow.

"NO!" someone yelled and Thomas looked up as Grant brought his staff down on his knee, breaking it in to two. A wave of energy passed over Thomas as the kangaroo looked at the two pieces with utter loss. And he realized that not only had the rain stopped, but the sun now shone on them.

"That was mine!" the same person yelled, then screamed in pain.

"What did you do?" Magnet demanded.

Grant squared his shoulders. "What I had to. Now you have no reason to stay, Kingsley. Leave."

"You think you can commit this blasphemy and we'll just let you go?" the vole demanded. "Harrison, take him down, but don't kill him. He needs to be properly punished."

Heat Wave grinned, then raised his hands to block the pieces of the staff flying at him. Grant was right behind them and as the coyote brought his staff down, Grant grabbed it with both hands.

Thomas closed his eyes and waited for the crackle of energy and Grant's scream of pain as he was thrown away, but he opened them when nothing happened. Grant and Heat Wave were staring at the staff, both of them held. Then Grant pulled, and the coyote pulled back, each trying to pull it out of the other's hands.

Thomas couldn't do anything to help them, and watching the battle, he remembered that glowing and symbols probably meant magic, so what was stabbed in his side had to be the reason he was too weak to teleport.

Something cracked loudly, then metal clanged on the asphalt. Then heat spread, melting and drying the asphalt around them.

Grand and Heat Wave were now staring at the pieces of the metal staff each held. Both looked baffled.

“Kingsley, what’s happening?” Lullaby demanded.

“Help!” the vole yelled in a strained voice. The fireball was now three feet in diameter and Gilbert took another step forward, his expression one of deep focus.

A note rang out, something soothing, suggesting sleep, rest, comfort. Thomas’s eyes were closing when it stopped with a cry.

“That’s enough,” Grant said.

Thomas saw Gilbert staggering back, the fireball gone.

“No!” Lullaby yelled just before the snap of wood breaking, then a wave passed over Thomas and all sound vanished. He could see Light gesticulating behind Magnet, her mouth moving in a silent yell. Magnet was looking in Grant’s direction, fear replacing anger.

“... Before he gets his hand on our staffs too!” Light grabbed Magnet and turned him to face her. “Get us the fuck out of here, now!”

The vole looked at Grant, the broken staffs on the ground, and wrapped an arm around her waist, raising his staff over his head. Anything metal on the ground started sliding in their direction and Grant ran at them, but he only made it five long steps before the metal was flung away and the two of them took off in the air.

Thomas looked up as they shrunk until they weren’t visible, and he smiled. Wouldn’t it be amazing to be able to fly?

Then darkness claimed him.

## CHAPTER-46

Thomas moaned as a wave of well-being pulsed through him in time with the cock in his ass. "Wha?"

"Not yet," Olavo whispered in his ear. "You made a sound and Limbani's going to want in on this. I think you need further healing."

Healing?

The capybara pulled out, then pushed back in, his thrust quick, but not hurried. A hand reached under Thomas, and closed around his cock, the slickness causing him to thrust in it.

"That's it," Olavo said. "Move with me." He picked up speed, forcing Thomas's cock to move in the grip faster.

"Oh Fuck," the rat groaned, and came in the hand.

"Oh yeah," the capybara gasped, the cock pulsing again against the spasming ass.

Thomas felt more awake, but there was no wave of well-being this time.

The door opened. "I herd him!" Limbani yelled. "It's my turn, he needs all the energy he can get."

Before Thomas could voice an opinion, Olavo was out of him and he was rolled on his back, legs moved over the monkey's shoulders and the cock in his ass. "Welcome back," Limbani said, then started fucing him,

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Thomas staggered out of the shower, a grinning Armadillo in tow. He was going to need Olavo to heal him again, after that session. Gilbert had to had dislocated Thomas's sternum or something.

"Now that everyone had a turn," He said, eying the naked



guys in the large bedroom, only Grant was dressed and hadn't had sex with him. Thomas remember him, breaking his staff over a knee. He wanted to go ask how he felt, but was more pressing matters. "How the fuck am I still alive?" when he'd passed out, he'd thought it was for good. He'd had a knife in his side and had no energy left.

Olavo raised his hand. "You might remember me fucking you."

"I doubt you did it in the parking lot where I fell." Thomas motioned to the room. "You got me here."

"The truckstop's across the road." Gilbert said and pointed to the window. Thomas looked, had to search, but then saw it. Across the road was an exaggeration, but they were much closer than he'd expected. No more than a block.

"And they let you drag a bleeding man in and didn't ask question, or call the police?"

"This is a Marriott Hotel," Olavo said.

"Okay, so we were lucky enough there was a hotel Madoc's family owns, why would they let us in?"

"Every hotel has one person who knows what it means to be Society," the copybara said. "I explained who I was, and we were escorted to the back, and then to this room. If we'd needed it, they would have provided medical assistance."

"So you can go anywhere and find help at a Marriott?" when Madoc had told him his family owned the chain, Thomas hadn't expected it meant every hotel was set up as a safe house.

"Pretty much," Limbani said. "World wide franchise, no where in the world a Lewsiton can be and not have a place to go to for help. We're just lucky they didn't lock the rest of us out like two families we could mention."

"Okay, fine," Thomas said before Olavo could reply. "You have safe houses everywhere if you're on the Lewiston's good side. What happened to me? When that knife went it, if was like I'd

teleported to San Francisco, but I wasn't allowed to lose consciousness until the fight was over."

"That was due to blood loss," Gilbert said. "Not the *phrase* on the knife." He lobed something in Thomas's direction and the rat made out the wooden handle before reaching for and moved away.

"Are you crazy? That thing nearly killed me." He glared at the armadillo, then the knife. Even the blade was wood, and the dark red inscriptions stretched along its length.

"It's can't hurt you," Gilbert said. "It needs to come in contact with blood, and the magic won't kill you either. It's designed to sap nearly all your energy and keep you there."

"You sound like you know a fair bit about it," Thomas said cautiously and reminded himself that altered memories or not, it wasn't that long ago they were trying to capture him. It made no sense they still wanted to, but after the constant reversals, he was having trouble not imagining another one around the corner.

"Because that's our magic," Gilbert replied angrily. "That another faction used against you."

"That doesn't happen?" Thomas asked.

"Not often," Olavo said. "I mean, we tend to be insular. We have no reasons to work with other factions since we follow different gods. And to get one of them to work against one of us..." the capybara shook his head. "Look, I can't speak for everyone in the Society, obviously, but to those in power, it would be considered bad form to go to someone outside the Society for that kind of help."

"Not to say of the fact that not a lot of people know Thomas is one of us," Gilbert said. "That thing would be useless against any other faction or without magic. Even if somehow they had that in their arsenal for a while. They had no way to know to use it."

"Unless someone told them," Limbani said.

"I can think of two people outside of us who know Thomas is part of the Society," the armadillo said and looked around.

“Raphael,” Olavo said.

“And that pangolin chick,” Limbani added.

“Shila,” Olavo corrected and the monkey shrugged. Out the corner of his eye, Thomas saw Grant take his phone out and mover away from them.

“And Henry,” he added.

“The guy who Madoc thought was his contact —” Gilbert cursed. “The guy you said ran the frat.”

Thomas nodded.

“Alright,” Olavo said. “I refuse to believe Raphael would stoop to hiring outsiders even if he had a reason to send anyone after you. Shila knows, but you basically have a deal with her, so she’d have nothing to gain by hiring them.”

“And the chick from the east coast said they didn’t care what ‘he’ wanted,” Gilbert said.

“So it’s Henry,” Thomas said.

“As far as we can tell,” Olavo said.

“What happened to the Chamber people who didn’t fly off?” Thomas asked. He remembered two broken staffs, but not what happened to the man and woman themselves and had there been someone else?

Olavo nodded toward Grant, hunched over, phone to his ear.

“I don’t know Shila,” the kangaroo said, voice flat. “Yes, I know.” Pause. “I didn’t plan it.” Another pause. “Yes, Kingsley is angry.”

Thomas took the phone out of Grant’s hand and the kangaroo didn’t react. “Shila?”

“Thomas, put Grant back on,” the pangolin snapped. “We have important things to talk about.”

"Maybe you haven't been paying attention to the tone in his voice, Shila, but Grant needs a minute here." He disconnected her mid angry retort. He put the phone in Grant's jacket and motioned him to a chair.

"How are you?" he asked.

"It's fine," Grant replied in the same flat tone.

"Grant, look at me."

The kangaroo didn't react, so Thomas grabbed his shoulder and shook him. Grant looked at him.

"How are you?"

"It's fine." His eyes were unfocused.

"What's my name?"

"It's—"

Thomas shook him. "My name, Grant."

The kangaroo's eyes focused on him. "Thomas."

"Now. How are you?"

"I'm—"

"If you tell me you're fine, Grant, I'm unleashing Limbani on your ass."

"I don't do straight boy!" the monkey replied.

"Bullshit!" Gilbert yelled. "You'll do anyone you can talk into it."

"I'm bi," Grant replied, then frowned.

"Oh Good!" Limbani exclaimed

"You should have kept that to yourself," Thomas said, "now he's definitely not going to give you a chance to say now." He paused.

“How are you, Grant. Really.”

The kangaroo took a long shuddering breath.

“I don’t know,” he said.

“Okay. Why did you break your staff?”

“I...” his gaze unfocused, and returned after a few seconds. “I didn’t.”

“I saw you break it over your knee, Grant.”

“That wasn’t my staff anymore. I’d let go of it.” He trailed off and frowned. “I didn’t know it would work. But I wasn’t going to let it fall into Kingsley’s hands. I thought that giving up what I am, then destroying it would make that point.”

“Giving up what you are?”

“The staff’s my connection to the universe. There can be staffs without practitioners, but no practitioners without a staff.” He looked at his hands. “Except...”

Thomas waiting. “Except what?” he finally asked.

“I took Harrison’s staff. I wrapped my hands around it and grabbed it.”

“That shouldn’t have happened?”

Grant shook his head. “You saw what happened to the panda. A staff won’t let a stranger touch it.”

“Then you’re still a practitioner, right?”

“But I don’t have a staff.” There was fear in Grant’s eyes. Thomas wished he knew what he was afraid of, could just ask. But— Oh, fuck it.

“What are you afraid of, Grant?”

The kangaroos swallowed. “There’s only one group able to take a staff that doesn’t belong to them. What if I’m one of the

Chamber now?"

Oh, he so shouldn't have asked. How was he supposed to answer that? He didn't know anything useful about them other than they assholes.

"You can't be one of them Grant, you're one of the good guys. And you broke their staffs."

"You don't understand, Thomas. I can't have broken the staffs."

"I saw you do it."

The kangaroo swallowed. "Have you read about Hiroshima?"

Thomas had to think back. "Yeah. The Japanese city on which we dropped the first nuclear bomb?"

Grant shook his head. "That's just the story that was built to hide what happened. From what I learned, it was the first and only active attempt at destroying a staff. Some remnant of the Nazis, and something about bringing the fuhrer back, or some crazy shit like that. The details are vague since no one survived it."

"So breaking a staff is like unleashing a nuclear bomb?"

Grant shook his head again. "No, they unleashed a nuclear bomb hoping it would break the staff."

"Did it?" Thomas asked, awed.

"I don't know. Again, no one survived. If it did, it's never been seen since." (okay, this is my attempt at reinforcing the link for the three books. In my head it's the staff that shows up again in the 3rd book, Joan of Arc's sword I think it was. If you're okay with it, when I do the second draft I'd make it more clear it was a sword) but it doesn't matter, that's what it took, so I can't have done it with just my hands."

"Isn't anything possible with magic? I mean I can teleport, right?" Thomas offered the kangaroo a smile.

“That isn’t how it works, Thomas. I’m not a destroyer.”

Thomas raised an eyebrow. “Didn’t you tell me your wind magic isn’t precise, that you could have leveled my grandfather’s house using it close to it?”

Grant took a slow breath. “That’s not what I was going for when I made my staff. It was supposed to be about hope, not the storms. I made it from what was left behind. From what people used to rebuild. Somewhere in there, there was supposed to be this kernel of never giving up. Instead, I ended up with this tool of mass destruction.” He shook his head. “In the wrong hands, Katrina would look like a spring shower compared to what it could unleash.”

Thomas swallowed. He’d seen a documentary about Katrina and the damage it had done to New Orleans. Even nearly fifty years later, it was still one of the most destructive hurricane to hit the US. And Grant had had something more dangerous in his hands? How could he even consider himself to be similar to the Chamber if he’d never given into the using that power?

He opened his mouth to tell Grant exactly that.

“Fuck yes!” Gilbert yelled from the bed, and Thomas looked in that direction, catching sight of the armadillo with the Capybara’s legs over his shoulder, and then the hard cock, basically shoved in his face.

He looked up at the grinning monkey. Well, Grant did seem to be better, so Thomas did deserve a reward. He opened his mouth.

“Hold that thought,” Shila said, appearing on the screen hanging on the wall. “Since it looks like story time’s over, we have more important things to take about.”

“No we don’t,” Limbani replied. He motioned to his cock nearly in Thomas’s muzzle. “I’m about to get sucked off, whatever you have to say can wait until after.”

“Not if you want to get back to the US without too much trouble. I have Grant’s and Thomas’s passport waiting at the front

desk, and I've inserted the details of how he entered the country with the lot of you, but border security's being increased because of some terrorist threat. So you have twelve hours at the most before they start looking at everyone entering the US with more attentiveness than you want directed are you."

"Are you telling me I have to give Thomas's muzzle up because of some terrorist?" Limbani demanded.

"Are you for real?" Shila demanded back.

Thomas chuckled. "Yeah, he most certainly is." He swatted the monkey's ass as he stood. "And there's a long trip in the truck during which I can make it up to you." Thomas knew he was going to regret the offer, but it had the effect of getting the monkey going.

(I'm cutting it there because appearing in Kansas city feels too much of a break for a simply Scene change.)



## CHAPTER-47

“Are you sure you want to go with them?” Grant asked, indicating the van. The trip back to the US and Kansas City had been devoid of surprises, if cramped. On top of Him, Grant, Olavo, Gilbert and Limbani, the three captured Chamber agents had been packed in the van, and unlike the kangaroo, who’d looked at the non-stop sex with amusement, and participated a few times, those three hadn’t enjoyed having that happen in close proximity to them,

“Yeah,” Donal added. “I know they don’t mean you harm anymore, but you’re welcome to stay with us.”

The introduction of the kangaroo to the squirrel had gone well, and they’d agreed to share the hotel room Olavo got for Donal before they left for Canada since without Thomas there, the squirrel hadn’t been comfortable staying the safehouse.

“Unless you know anyone who can fix my memories, they’re my best bet.”

Grant shook his head. “That doesn’t mean I can’t find you someone. Someone who didn’t hunt you for a while, even if it’s based on false memories.”

“If they haven’t found someone by the time the situation in Minneapolis is resolved, I’ll come see you. But until then, I want to be close so I can get news about my family.”

“Okay, you take care then. You have my number.”

Thomas chuckled. “Yeah, but still no phone of my own. Don’t worry, I’ll be fine. We’re just going to the safe house to meet up with the others there. We were just gone a few days, so no one probably even noticed we were gone.” (and here I’m realizing I never establish how long they were gone for)

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas stood with Olavo on one side of him and Gilbert on the other in the living room's archway, frozen in place by the man seated on the other side from them. Raphael glared at them—him. (how do you want to handle Limbani? Considering he's in the habit of checking ahead all the time, he'd know something up)

"What the fuck were you thinking?" the rat demanded and Thomas swallowed. At least the man was alone. He was scary enough without having a bunch of people around.

"A friend of my was in—"

"A friend?" Raphael demanded. "You abandoned your family for a friend?" He stood. "Do you have any idea the problem you gallivanting away caused? Didn't you think I had enough to deal with the mess Minneapolis turned into?"

"Mess? What happened? Is my family okay?"

"We are—" Raphael closed his mouth with a visible effort. "This Henry managed to get the Richard on his side, on top of the boys in the frat. So, when my team got there, instead of having to deal with a handful of kids. They were dealing with prepared security forces. We're lucky Ettore's power let him escape, because the reports I've been getting from the team tell me everything's fine, this Henry's a figment of your imagination, and the Richards are very understanding of their presence in their city."

"But what about my family?" Thomas asked.

"I don't have any—"

"Find out!" Thomas ordered.

"I think," Raphael said, hands clensing into fists, "that you need to be reminded is you is the elder, and who is the boy. And I do hope you learn your place faster than that brother of yours."

"But you said..." if he didn't mean Roland. "What did you do to Victor?"

Raphael smiled. "Why? I brought him into his family. I made

sure he knew the privilege it was to be one of us. That our god did want him, in spite of having been so long away. He doesn't understand the chance he'd gotten yet, but he will. He might be stubborn, but he's a Lewiston, he's going to love it, just like the rest of us."

"You son of a bitch!" Thomas was across the room as he raised his fist and had slugged the older rat across the muzzle before he'd even blinked. "You been let—"

Someone wrenched Thomas away from Raphael, and before he could react to that, there was pain at his wrist, and then he crumpled to the floor, utterly drained. He saw the bracelet around the wrist, blood dripping along the inside. Feet, a lot of them. Where had they come from.

Men in body armor grabbed his friends. A foot rolled him on his back and Raphael looked down at him, wiping the blood from his lip. "I figured you'd get uppity."

"Unhand me," Olavo ordered.

"Shut up," Raphael yelled. "Take them with the others. Him, I'll deal with myself. I have—"

"Oh, they weren't kidding," a new voice said, "you are looking to piss everyone off, aren't you, Raph."

"What are you doing here?" Raphael demanded.

Turning his head exhausted Thomas. A badger in a blazer stood in the archway, looking the scene over. Samuel, that was his name.

"See, when I heard Ettore was back, I figured I'd check in with him, you know, find out how it went, how my family members are doing. You did remember about the two Mercier in Minneapolis, didn't you, Raphael? I mean that was the deal, right? I help out here, you get them out. Did you? Don't bother lying, I can read that you didn't even give instructions about that. My elder's going to want to talk about it with you once I report. And don't even say what you're

thinking, you're in already enough shit as it is."

"Are you threatening me, Mercier?"

"Do I look like the kind of guy who makes threats?" He grinned at Thomas. "Okay, to you I do, but you're a kid, give it a few years. No. I'm not making threats, I don't have to. Because while I was looking for Ettore, who I wasn't allowed to see, by the way. What do I happen to over hear but that you have two Xu and a Chouteau in custody? Now you're going to add a Rowling, a Adesida, and a the son of the Medeiros elder to your collection. Tell me Raphael, do you have a death wish of some sort, or are you on some quest to become more hated than the Orrs?"

"They broke my rules," Raphael replied. "Covered up for them. They needed to be punished."

"Oh, you have no idea how lucky you are did haven't had time to move on to what I'm seeing. Because solitary confinement if way beyond what you have the authority to do to them."

"This is my city!"

"And you kick the other families out!" Samuel yelled back. "That's what you do when once of us pisses you off. You don't throw them in a dank basement with promises of abstinence. What are you looking for here, Raph? A war? Because that's what your about to start with five families."

Raphael glowered, and after a few second, Samuel opened his mouth, only to close it, and grin. "Well?" he then asked.

"Get the fuck out of my city," Raphael ordered. "And take the kids with you. But this one's staying." He pointed to Thomas.

Thomas pleaded with Samuel. He couldn't leave him here. He had to rescue Victor.

Samuel's expression fell. "Sorry, kid. You're his blood, as wrong as I think what he's planning to do is, I don't have the power to stop him. Don't even think of acting on that thought," he instructed Gilbert. "You want to help him, you take to your Elder. They're who

have the power to talk this asshole down. My apology. This Elder down." Samuel grinned toothily at Rapheal.

"If you aren't—" Raphael growled.

"We're gone," Samuel cur him off and pointed to the door.

Olavo looked at Thomas, but as he opened his mouth, Samuel grabbed hi mand pulled him to the door.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas groaned as the man on top of him climaxed. How many did that make today? This week? At least he was on a bed. The last one had dumped on him the ground after helping him shower, and helping himself to his ass. This one had fed him food, then fucked him.

During the first few days of his imprisonment, no one had touched him. When one of his guards had suggested letting them use him, Raphael had exploded about how powering him would allow him to escape. But it seemed he'd learned that it couldn't happen while the bracelet was on. Thomas didn't know if it was because the man hadn't known how the magic he'd used worked or hadn't bothered asking who'd made bracelet this for the details.

It didn't matter.

He hadn't minded it at first. After a couple of days without sex he'd needed it. But it hadn't done anything to his need. He was still drained, so he still wanted more sex. Now it was the pure disregard for his situation that was pissing him off. They used him and left him there, cum dripping out of his ass, or matting his fur. The showers were they only times he was clean. Even his bathroom breaks were embarrassing since he didn't have the energy to deal with it without help.

Fuck being an invalid sucked.

The door opened and closed and Thomas sighed. Here he went again. His muzzle was pulled up and he looked in Raphael's face. "And how are you doing? In need of another charge?" the rat grinned. "Don't

say I don't give you the royal treatment. It's not everyone in my family who get to have me fuck them multiple times a day." He patted Thomas's ass. "But you have such a nice ass, how can I resist."

He let go of the muzzle and moved over Thomas. He pushed in and Thomas groaned. Raphael was thick. Not Chima thick, or even Laurence thick, but enough he felt it each time the other rat penetrated him. It wasn't a bad sensation. Being stretched like that was nice actually.

"You know," Raphael said, as he started thrusting. "There's something to be said for a docile guy." He pounded his ass, then slowed. "It's be nice if you could tighten you ass or something." Thomas didn't. Even if he'd wanted to accommodate the rat, he had no energy for it. "I guess I can't ask to much of you, being a kid and all. I'm sure I'll find a way to get you properly trained." Raphael chuckled, then picked up speed. "You make a nice rest for your brother, with his whimpering and crying and asking to be left alone. Was he trying to be a monk or something?"

Thomas's rage was deadened by the lack of strength. He wanted buck, get the rat off him, strangle him for what he was doing to Victor, but he simply didn't have the strength, so he fantasized.

Raphael grunted and came. Then sighed contentedly. "You know," he whispered in Thomas's ear. "You will be trained. You and that stubborn brother of yours. I've finally located someone with the power I need to make it happen. Do you know what that power is? You're going to like it, considering how your memory's already been messed with. Because this guy is going to fix that completely. No more messed up memory. No more memory at all, in fact. A nice blank slate for me to reeducate into all the proper ways of serving your elder, with your body and your power. You are going to make me the most powerful man in the Society. You just wait and see."

Raphael pulled out, stood and left.

Thomas didn't even have the energy to wail. He didn't want to believe him. He wanted it to be a trick, but why bother? Magic was real, so someone with the power to erase him completely made sense.

The real question was why he bothered with someone at all. Couldn't he just write a magical phrase with his cum and make Thomas obey him.

Crying he could do, he found out. Crying didn't take any strength at all.

\* \* \* \* \*

The door opened and Thomas barely noticed it. It was easier to ignore the outside world, he'd discovered, and focus on inside. In his mind he was with his family, they were happy. Roland glowered at him, Judith teased him. Victor asked about his studies. In his mind, there was no Sigma Theta Gamma. No magic. Just him and his family.

"Thomas?" someone whispered, but he ignored it. In his mind it was thanksgiving with Grandma. No Ettore, no Madoc. Just his family. It was a wonderful time. "Fuck. I think something's wrong with him."

"I thought you said they wouldn't use magic on him," another voice said.

"Look, can we talk about this another time?" a third voice said, "like once we're away? Grant, can you get that thing off his wrist?"

"Give me a minute. This is different from the knife and it's more your department than mine. Donal, can you keep watch?"

"Sure, but I don't know how good I'll be."

"Maybe you can make sure they don't notice us in here?"

Donal snorted. "I don't think that's what I do."

"Madoc, what does this say?" Grant asked.

"That's a phrase to keep anyone for the person with the code to take it off."

"Code?"

“Genetic, cum. Probably Raphael.”

The voices were invasive. Usually they didn't say anything, only used the body.

“Okay, it's still a key.” Metal jingled and Thomas opened an eye. Next to him, a kangaroo was looking through junk he pulled from the pocket of his jacket. “I know I have one.”

“Grant,” Donal said. “Catch.”

The kangaroo caught the item and opened his hand. “Where did you get a key? You know what, never mind. It's on par with the rest of what you've done.” Grant noticed Thomas looking at him. “Are you with us?”

“Are you real?”

“We are,” Madoc replied, getting into his line of sight. “We're getting you out of here.”

“Technically, you going to get us out of here,” Grant said, adding liquid to the key.

“What's that?” Madoc asked.

“A key, for the idea of unlocking something, jelling because it's both liquid and sticking, so it slips in and adhered to thing, like the right combination.”

“Okay, one, your magic's weird as fuck,” Madoc said. “Two, it's not number, is DNA. Do you know the number of permutation you'll have to search through?”

Grant touched the key to the bracelet and it fell off. “None. The universe works on concept, not math.”

“You still have magic,” Thomas said.

Grant smiled. “Seems like it. Don't ask me to explain it because I don't get it myself.”

Madoc traced something on the raw skin of his wrist and the



places where the inside barbs of the bracelet had cut him healed.

“Okay, Thomas,” The other rat said “I know at this point you’re probably fed up with guys fucking you, but—”

“Do it,” Thomas said. “I can’t stand being this exhausted.” He’d thought that with the bracelet off he’d immediately regain what it had taken, but he still felt like was near death exhaustion.

“How much until he can get us there?” Donal asked as Madoc took off his pants.

“Is anyone coming?” Grant asked.

“Not yet,” Thomas grumbled.

“No, I think we got more time, this still feels like... I don’t know how to explain it. We’re in a zone where we’ve been forgotten. I don’t have a sense of when it’s going to end.”

“It’d explain where there was no guard,” Madoc said, inserting a lube finger in Thomas’s ass. “How did you even know?”

“Donal’s staff puts him in tune with lost things.”

Madoc entered Thomas, and he already felt better. “Tell me later, I don’t need the distraction, and to answer your earlier question. I don’t know how much we’ll have to fuck him, the others said that after being drained from teleporting, it took three times to get him functional, but we need to get him teleporting again.” Madoc started fucking him. He wasn’t particularly gentle about it, but Thomas did what he could to help him along, tightening his ass, moaning. When Madoc came, Thomas’s moan was deep and meant. He finally felt alive.

“You’re turn,” Madoc said, “I’ll take over watching.”

“Use this,” Gran said.

“I don’t need any help.”

“You need all the help you can get. We don’t have the time to you normally take.”

“Have you two fucked?” Thomas asked, turning his head to watch as Grant put a cockring on Donal’s cock.

“What do you think?” Grant said. “Go at it.”

“Won’t it be better if he enjoyed it longer?”

“It’s not about how much pleasure we get out of it,” Madoc said. “It’s about the orgasm, you’re orgasm.”

“Fuck your magic’s weird.”

“Says the guy’s whose power if lost things,” Madoc replied.

Donal pushed in and the two of them sighed. He was gentle for the first thrust, then was moaning and picking up speed.

“Fuck,” Thomas groaned and Tightened his ass as tight as he could.

The squirrel let out a strangled cry and orgasmed. Once he was panting, Grant moved him aside, took the cock ring off the squirrel’s cock and put it on himself.

“On my back,” Thomas said and he pushed himself.

“Should I get dressed?” Donal asked. “Or are you going to do the thing to me so I can go again?”

“How much time do we have?” Madoc asked.

Thomas didn’t hear the answer. Grant was in him and fucking hard. Thomas’s eyes rolling back. The kangaroo had fucked him on the trip back down, but this was much better. Maybe it was because—

Grants came and Thomas breathed easier.

“Donal thinks we have the time for two quickie,” Madoc said, taking Grant’s place.

“That’s not what I said.”

“I’m sorry, but ‘it feels like they’re about to remember he’s here’ doesn’t exactly translate well.” Madoc was in him and thrusting.

Under two minutes he was cumming and Thomas felt like he could move again.

“Okay,” Grant said, “I’ll—”

“We’re out of time,” Donal hissed.

“You said—” Madoc started.

“Well, someone realized they’re forgotten to put a guard on, or something,” Donal replied. “This thing it turns out I can do, it’s not an exact science. We need to get out of here now.”

“Thomas,” Donal said. “You need to take us out of here.”

“San Francisco?” he asked.

“No, Montana. They others are waiting for us at the grotto.” Grant took one hand and Madoc his other.

“What do I grab on?” Donal asked. “And if you say his crotch, Mad, I am smacking you.”

“You’re coming?” Thomas asked.

“I am not staying in a city where the guy in charge can kidnap someone willy-nilly.” He grabbed onto a foraeam. “Take us out of here.” He looked at the door. “Like right now.”

Thomas put aside how much this was going to suck; he was still tired. He focused on the grotto, the sense of safety he’d felt when he’d found himself there the first time. Waking up to Grant fucking him.

He heard the door open, someone curse, then the world shifted around him.

## CHAPTER-48

(okay, I will freely admit this chapter is all over the place. It will need a lot of tightening in the second draft.)

Thomas wrapped his legs around the capybara's hips, as Olavo came, and held him in place. "One more, you know, to make sure I'm fully healed."

Olavo rolled his eyes, but took Thomas's legs and put them back over his shoulders. Then he was fucking him again. When he was done, Limbani demanded another turn, then was Gilbert, Madoc, and even Felix took one.

As the otter came and rolled on his back, and no one immediately took his place, Thomas had time to consider how, after a few weeks of being used sexually, he still enjoyed it.

There was the aspect of the god he was a follower of. He needed the sex to power his teleportation. But he thought there was more to it. Before he'd mentally checked out, there had been a forcefulness to the sex that Thomas hadn't noticed. It wasn't about cumming faster or harder, Laurence could fuck forcefully and it wasn't anything like what he'd felt in that room. Even when Raphael was gentle, there was something about it that made the gentleness a farce.

"You care," he said.

"Excuse me?" Felix said, sounding offended

"That's the difference between you and the prison. You guys care about me."

The otter snorted. "Someone's brain is still scrambled."

A breeze made Thomas shiver. The fire in the center of the grotto was doing down. He also noticed he and Felix were the only

ones in it. "Where's everyone?"

"The Kangaroo at the entrance's been sending everyone to your grandfather's house when they finished."

"And you weren't the first to head there?"

"I wasn't going to have anyone say I didn't do my part to ensure you didn't die." Felix stood. "And since you're being smart, I guess that means you're well enough to get up and out. There's clothing over there."

The clothing in question was still in its packaging. A shirt, pants, socks from a store Thomas had never heard of, but by the gold lettering, wouldn't be cheap. Unsurprisingly, there was no underwear included. Everything fit him well, and the overcoat and boots were warm.

"Glad you're back among us," Grant said, standing. He had a folding chair with red and orange garlands attached to it. He shivered as he folded it. "I hadn't realized how cold it'd gotten."

"You've been sitting out here for hours and you didn't realize it was cold?" Felix asked.

Red and orange. "Color theory," Thomas said, thinking back to his high school art classes. "Warm colors."

The otter stared at him. "Are you telling me you understand something of how his magic works?"

"Thomas traveled with me for a few days," Grant said. "There was time for me to explain a few things." He started walking. "How do you feel?"

"He means you," Felix said as Thomas opened his mouth.

"I know that. He knows you're feeling miserable. People can tell miles away with you. I'm good," he told Grant, cutting off the otter's snark. "Who exactly is here? When you told me to take you and Donal here, I wasn't expecting him, or Yating to be waiting."

"I wasn't waiting," Felix said.

"All your friends are here," Grant answered, "along with Yating's mother. My understanding is that there was an attempt to convince her to go home, and that she won."

"Yeah," Felix growled. "I've never seen grown men fold so fucking easily under a woman's demand."

"You have issues with women, don't you?" Grant said.

"I don't have issues. Women have their place, but it isn't as part of the decision-making."

"You do you know it's the twenty-first century, right?" Grant asked. "Not the mid-twentieth."

"I'm not justifying how my family runs things to an outsider," the otter snapped and picked up speed along the well-throated trail.

"It's a family thing?" the kangaroo asked Thomas, who shrugged.

"How is everyone here? Better yet, why? I thought after they were freed they'd all go home."

"The how is called being coordinated. Once me, Madoc, and Donal were ready to rescue you, we informed everyone; they drove here to wait. It took a few days after that before Donal got a sense it was safe for us to get you."

"His lost thing, you called it."

Grant nodded.

"He's one of you. Did you send him to look after me?"

"I didn't know about him until you introduced me, Thomas. But yes, he's a practitioner. Didn't you know? I thought that was why you brought us together. You saw his staff."

"I brought you two together because we only had one place to put you and him. And I don't know what staff you're talking about."

Grant looked at him but remained silent. Once they reached his grandfather's house, Gilbert's van was in the driveway, along with two other vans.

"Thomas," His grandfather hugged him as he entered. "I am so glad you are alright."

"Thanks, Grandpa. How has everyone been behaving?" he asked, concerned about the number of his frat brothers in the house.

The older rat laughed. "I was your age once, Thomas. They aren't doing anything I haven't done."

Thomas narrowed his eyes. "With guys?"

"I have experimented, like every virile your man."

Thomas shook his head. Was everyone around him bi or something? With all the women his grandfather kept around, he hadn't expected him to have fooled around with guys. Wait, the guys had hit on him, had he—

"No," someone called from the kitchen. "He hasn't done anything with any of us. Of course, I'm here. What did you think?"

"Stop it," Olavo ordered.

What was Samuel doing here?

"You have some rather unusual friends, Thomas," Magnus said.

"I'm not sure that one counts as a friend. He left me behind."

"I couldn't do anything about you. He voiced the question, I'm not reading his mind."

"Thomas," Olavo said. "Maybe you should come here. Not being able to hear what you say makes it tough to keep Samuel from just replying to what you're thinking."

"So, what did they tell you?" Thomas asked as they headed to the kitchen.

"Magic is real," Magnus answered, "and for most of them, and you, sex powers it. And you can teleport."

"Are you even a little freaked out by that?"

"I was, but your friends have been here for a few days. They've shown me some of what they can do, so I had to get over it." He leaned in and lowered his voice. "And that red panda's a great cook. Do you know if she's seeing anyone?"

"She's seeing my father," Yating said as they entered. "And yes, if you are interested in her, you'll need to get his approval, and before you ask, it will involve demonstrating to him that you can perform to a level that will satisfy her."

She snapped something in their native language, and Yating replied with a roll of the eyes. During the exchange, she looked Magnus up and down and smiled, which seemed to annoy Yating.

Samuel looked like he was having trouble not commenting.

"Where's Victor?"

"We couldn't get to him," Olavo said.

"We can't go back," Samuel said before Thomas could give the order. "With you gone, Raphael will have him under much tighter security, and—" his mouth snapped shut and his ears folded back. Olavo was silently glaring at him.

The capybara let out a breath and looked at Thomas. "I asked my father to help, but you and Victor are Lewistons."

"We're Hertz, not Lewistons."

"Only there's never been a Hertz family in the society, so, somehow, your family's founded by a Lewiston people lost track of."

"Is that a thing?"

"There have been schisms, which lead to the formation of a new family, but they've always been well documented with other families backing them. A family appearing out of nowhere..." the



capybara sighed. "No, at least not as it is with you."

"He means the Orrs," Gilbert said. "They weren't part of the Society, but they knew about our god, and their magic has the same sexual basis. It's the fact you knew nothing about it. If your ancestor had purposely split, he'd have still kept the traditions alive. Balls, you'd have been initiated properly, so you'd have had your power before joining the frat." The Armadillo rubbed his temple.

"Fine, but we still need to get my brother before Raphael his that mind eraser thing and makes him forget about me and my family."

Samuel opened his mouth, only to close it and look at Olavo, who sighed. "Go ahead."

"One, it's a person, not a thing. Two, said person isn't someone Raphael can simply order to come to do the work. I don't know him myself, but as someone who has a mind power, I have heard of him. Mind wipers are treated with care, to have on go rogue is a dangerous proposition. Before Raphael can get his family to agree to lend him, he needs to demonstrate his credibility, which has been rather destroyed by how he handled the Denver situation. So there is time, more importantly, there is a way to ensure he can't get the credibility he needs to ever manage to get this man to work for him. He can't get another one. There isn't one. Mind powers are among the least common of the powers within the Society, and among those, mind alteration power is the least of common." He closed his mouth with a snap, then grinned at Olavo.

Samuel was older than the capybara, so why was Olavo ordering him about?

"He's an elder's son," Samuel hurried to say. "He way outranks me."

"Not that it helps," Olavo said, massaging his temple.

"Okay, so then what do we do?" Thomas asked. "Sit here and wait?"

"I am not sitting here," Felix stated. "This state is too fucking cold. If we're going to wait somewhere, how about we do it somewhere warm? Like in St-Louis?"

"If we want warm, I suggest Cape Town," Limbani said. "At this time of the year, it's amazing."

"One," Gilbert said, and Thomas was relieved someone other than him had an objection. "Getting out of the country right now isn't something we should do. Two, I am not setting foot in your city, Felix. One of you is plenty, and that would mean leaving Miss Xu behind."

"I could take care of her," Magnus offered, smiling.

"Not before my father gets here," Yating stated.

"We should go to my home," Gilbert said. "It's warm and we have no problem letting women walk around like it's the twenty-first century. And my family enjoys meeting new people."

"Are you saying my family's exclusionary?" Felix demanded.

"Yes, I am. You guys run your city with a fist nearly tighter than the Lewistons right now." He looked at the otter. "Well, are you going to protest?"

"St-Louis isn't Houston," the otter said, resignedly. "We do what we have to."

"Why don't you simply stay here?" Magnus offered. "The house is big enough, and I'm sure we can agree on a certain level of discretion when it comes to the sex you want to have."

"Bad idea," Samuel said. "Raphael's going to send people to check this place out, eventually. This is in the middle of nowhere, with no defensive capability. Guns aren't going to help you against Raphael's men. They have paramilitary training and powers. And some are on the ruthless side. Your best bet is to tell them we dropped by and left. If we're at a Society family, it at least ensures that he has to go through channels to get his hands on Thomas, and considering some of the Rowlings' connection with Denver, they would be more inclined not to agree to Raphael's demands quickly."

“If you’re talking about Uncle Colby,” Gilbert said, “maybe you didn’t hear about the fallout he had with the Brislows.”

“Regardless, he was there when Raphael was kicked out and for the subsequent incidents. I’m sure he can at least talk his father into slowing the negotiations for Thomas down. (I can’t remember if I implied Colby was an elder at this point. If I did, I’m changing it. The warehouse incident had happened, but it’s going to be a few years before Colby becomes elder) and no, you can’t protect him. Actually, you should come with us too. Raphael might force you back to Kansas City, the way he’s desperate for men.”

“Wait, isn’t he Thomas’s grandfather on his mother’s side?” Felix said. “Why would Raphael care about him?”

“I’m Eric’s father,” Magnus said.

“Meaning Society magic runs through your cum,” Samuel said. “I wouldn’t be surprised if Raphael tries to initiate you despite your age. Like I said. He’s desperate for men. And you are certainly still able to breed.”

“Initiate?” Magnus asked.

“Sex with guys,” Thomas said. “Lots of guys.”

“I’ll pass. I did my experimenting.”

“Raphael isn’t going to care.”

“Maybe you could visit one of your girlfriends that moved out of state?” Thomas suggested. As much as he wanted his grandfather to be safe, having him around with all the sex Thomas was going to have wasn’t something he wanted. The guys might talk of having sex with their family, but he wasn’t interested in having that.

“Yes,” Olavo said, and Samuel closed his mouth. “If you aren’t coming with us, it’s best that you are not here when Raphael comes looking.”

“Fine, I’ll make arrangements.”

“Good. Then all that’s left to do is for me to make arrangements to get us to Houston.” Olavo took his phone out.

“We can drive, you know,” Gilbert said.

“I have had enough of driving,” the capybara said. “I want the trip to be quick and uneventful.” He stepped away, phone to his ear and speaking in another language.

Before Thomas could consider doing something, Samuel was next to him. “I’m going to give you a piece of advice, free of charge,” he whispered. “When his father makes his offer to you. Say yes.” Then he walked off.

## CHAPTER-49

Thomas watched the stretch limousine drive away still unsure what to make of the flight to Houston, the drive to the ranch house where Gilbert's family lived.

It wasn't the sex. Thomas had expected the sex, even if having sex with the next ruler of Argentina, if Olavo could be believed, had been an experience. Ezequiel was a forceful man, but in a less 'I'm evil' kind of way than Raphael. When he wanted something, he got it, but he hadn't resorted to threats. He'd basically offered Thomas the world. A country where he and his family could be safe from Raphael or anyone else who might want to harm them. The protection of the Medeiros where ever he went. And of course, the sex.

Fuck did these guys like to use sex as part of everything.

What left Thomas confused was that Olavo's father hadn't required an answer he hadn't even make Thomas' power part of the discussion beyond asking for a demonstration before they took off. He'd given Thomas a phone. One with more functions than he expected he'd ever know what to do with, with only one number already in it. Ezequiel's. When Thomas was ready, regardless of what the answer was, he should call him to let him know. Regardless, the phone was his to use.

"Well," Gilbert said, "I can now say I've had sex with two elder,"

"Only two?" Limbani asked.

"My family doesn't go around having sex with every visiting dignitary," the armadillo answered.

"I didn't wait for them to visit," the monkey replied. "Think of it, Thomas, once you are used to your power, you'll be able to drop into any bedroom in the world. You'll have sex with every elder. Remember me when you do and take me along, alright?"

"What?" Thomas asked, looking away from the disappearing

limousine. "I don't think the world is in my wheel house. Even getting through a door with a passenger wipes me out."

"Ah, but it seems to me you weren't any more wiped out getting three people to Montana that you were getting one through that door." The monkey smiled. "I think that means you can go anywhere."

"So long as I know the place and there's someone there to fuck me."

"That's why the bedrooms are the best destination. There is always a guy there to fuck you."

"Not that you'll need to resort to dropping in uninvited," Yating said. "With two other elders knowing about you, you can be sure they will all want to meet you."

Thomas groaned. "Can't we just keep this our secret?"

"Not unless you want Raphael to be the only one who knows," Gilbert said. "He isn't going to tell anyone until he has you in his control. Come on, lets get inside before Limbani freezes to death."

"Very funny, Gil. This is only a mildly cool day to me."

The house was a large ranch house with a long driveway leading to the road. Like every ranch he'd seen in movies, this one had a sign over the gate proclaiming this was a Rowling Ranch. Gilbert explained ranching was his family's main business, with more than half the families, like his, directly involved in it. His father managed nearly ten thousand heads of cattle.

The inside was thankfully cool. "Dad!" Gilbert yelled. "Mom?"

"There you are!" someone replied, before an armadillo tackled Gilbert to the ground.

"Get off me, Charlie!"

"Fuck no, I haven't seen you in months. I owe you a solid topping."

“Ah,” Gilbert snorted. “Like you can even get it up. No topping for you until your ceremony.” The armadillo pushed his the other off and Thomas stared. Not only was the naked armadillo sporting one hell of an erection, but he was massive. If that’s what it took to get into the NFL, no wonder his dad was pushing Roland so hard.

“That was two weeks ago, dork,” Charlie replied. “Uncle Gav told me and dad about the memory scramble you went through, so you’re forgiven, but I will be fuckign that ass of yours.... Bert?”

“No.” Gilbert shook his head. “No, it’s in three weeks. I agreed to go looking for Thomas only after I was assured I’d be able to be here for it no matter what. I was going to be your first after...”

Charlie shook his head.

“Fuck!” Gilbert punched the wall. “Fuck. I’m going to fucking kill that bastard!”

“Hey, Bert, it’s okay, we’ll make it up.”

“I wanted to be there for your special day.” Gilbert leaned against the wall.

“I know, and if you’d been able to, you would have been here. You okay?”

Gilbert forced a smile. “Yeah, I’m just...” he sighed. “Anyway, that’s Thomas, Madoc, (speaking of which, where is his son?) Yating and his mother.”

“Ma’am,” Charlie said, tipping an imaginary hat. She nodded in return.

“Felix, Grant, Donal, and the monkey already naked and planning on fucking your ass is Limbani.”

“Oh no you don’t.” Charlie rounded on the monkey. “After four years of bottoming, I am exclusively topping right now.”

“That works for me.” Limbani turned and raised his tail.

"Before you start, where are the folks?"

"Mom's at uncle Gav. There's an elder visiting so they called in the cavalry to get stuff ready. Dad's at the plant. They're slaughtering a few hundred cows next week, with they're going over the equipment." Charlie tackled the monkey, threw him over his shoulder and vanished in an adjoining room."

"Then it's a good thing we missed that," Gilbert said.

"You brother did not have to leave on my account," Ru said.

"We've been raised better than to have sex in front of visitors," Gilbert replied.

"Sounds like it's going to be quite a party," Yating said.

"That branch of the family is loud, like talking all the time," Gilbert said. "Once Ezequiel tells Gav about you, he's going to want to meet you, but by then there should be less people at the ranch." He looked at the room where his brother vanished and the smile fell slightly until he forced it back. "With my dad and mom not here, I'll put you, Miss Guan into the guest bedroom. The rest of us can split between mine, Charlie and dad's room."

"Your father?" Donal asked. "Won't your mother mind?"

"They have separate bedrooms. They only shared it when they wanted son's and after that one, they agreed two was plenty." (forget if Gilbert and his brother are the only children or if there are older brothers involved)

"Your parents don't have sex?" the squirrel asked.

"Oh they do," Gilbert replied with a chuckle. "Just not with each other."

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The monkey walked by Thomas with a grin and not even a hint of wanting to have sex with him. Gilbert's father seemed to be able to sate Limbani for at least five minutes, Thomas wasn't sure if he



should be happy or scared, but clearly, the older armadillo hadn't unleashed all he was able on Thomas over the two days they'd been in his house.

Gilbert's mother, Courtney, had struck a quick friendship with Ru over a love of cooking and living among men who never stopped with the sex. The red panda's advances on Courtney were direct, and rebuffed with a smile. Misses Rowling liked men, and they had plenty of ranch hands for her to call on.

There was knock on the kitchen door and once silence fell, Grant looked at Owen. "Is there an office I can borrow? Me and Thomas need to take a call."

"Of course," the armadillo said, standing. "You can use mine." He let them to a large room filled with binders and spreadsheet. He cleared the desk and tapped it. "Just slot your —"

"That won't be needed," the pangolin said, her face appearing on the surface.

"This is..." Owen frowned. "Unusual."

She smiled. "At least you didn't go with weird. Thomas, Grant told me about your family's situation so I've been doing some looking around. It —"

"Wait, what situation? You already know about the guys chasing me and Raphael, and Henry."

"The, you're related to the Lewiston, but you're a Hertz, situation. And it took a lot more work than I expected, and really, the only reason I found anything is because some enterprising scholar documented church supported orphanage going back to the early nineteenth century, and one of them had oral histories going back even further. First off, you're related to the Lewistons not through your father, but your mother."

"That's impossible," Owen said.

"All do respect," she replied in a disrespectful tone, "you're just here to watch. So, back in oh, the middle of the first millennia, the

Gray Church did—”

“The who?” Thomas asked.

“Don’t worry about it, they don’t exist anymore,” she replied. “So they went about and nealy wiped out everyone of you guys. Those that were left banded in tight family group and scattered, they bred like crazy and we got what we have today. Except that your ancestor didn’t get the memo about getting with the others. He ended up in Spain, and according to the information I found, died on the doorstep of the orphanage, with a baby boy in his arms. That’s how you get the impossible, happy now, Mister Rowling?”

“How many children did that boy have?” Owen asked hesitantly.

Shila grinned. “Yeah, that’s going to be fun isn’t it?”

Thomas looked from one to the other. “Can someone explain what this is about?”

“If she’s right,” Owen said, and Shila snorted. “The fact you are one of us means that His power has been spreading through every son that boy had and their descendant. If Raphael finds out about it, there’s not telling what he’ll do.”

(so, that is potentially a LOT of society lost-boy running around. If that is a problem, we could make that boy going in the orphanage tale place in world war 2, have him be the resultof a fling a lewiston fighting in europe had and the mother dying with just enough information on the father for Shila to piece it together. That bring the number down significantly)

“Would he really start kidnapping guys off the street?” Grant asked.

“I can’t know,” the armadillo replied. “I’m not on that level of my family. All I know are the stories I hear, and they have him being pretty extreme when it comes to controlling his family.”

“He has my brother prisoner and is planing on getting him and me wiped so we’ll be nice and obedient.” He paused. “Fuck. We

need to tell my uncles. If Raphael figures this out, he's going to go after them and do the same thing to them as he's doing to Victor."

"He won't figure it out," Madoc said from the doorway. "I didn't mean to listen in, but you guys need to come, Donal's gone a tad weird."

(I'm bypassing the Orinda section because I can't work out the point, other than going over things the reader already knows.)

In the living room, the squirrel was pacing, his fidget toy—his staff, Thomas corrected—turning in his hands.

"Slow down," Grant hurried next to Donal but didn't touch him.

"I think—"

"Slow down, Donal, you aren't ready for something this deep. How did you even figure this out?"

"What's going on?" Thomas asked.

"Oh, Donal somehow worked out how to talk with the universe."

"Did you say universe?" Owen asked.

"Their magic's weird," Felix said.

"We can discuss this later," the kangaroo cut them off. "Donal, stop." The squirrel stopped and Grant seemed unprepared for that.

"I think I have it."

"Have what?" Grant asked cautiously.

Donal smiled. "Their lost memories."

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"Okay, run that by me again," Grant said. Thomas and Owen were the only others there. Owen because it was his house and Thomas because Donal had dragged him to the kitchen when Grant

had pulled him there.

“You said that my thing—”

“You’re staff. It’s not a thing, it’s a staff, Donal. You need to treat with respect and reverence.”

“You’re being a lot weirder about this than I expected,” the squirrel replied. “But my staff is about lost and misplaced things. So I started thinking—”

“Never a good thing,” Owen said. “You were both thinking it,” he added as Thomas and Grant glared at him.

“And I wondered,” Donal picked up. “There’s so much lost knowledge, I know, Knowledge isn’t a thing, but you also told me what you do is more about concept than being literal, and as such—”

“Breath, Donal,” Grant told him. “You went looking for lost knowledge and found something.”

“A lot of somethings. There’s so much out there.” He started spinning his staff again and Grant took hold of his hand, stilling it and the staff without touching it.

“Don’t go there again.”

“But—”

“You aren’t ready for it. You were nearly taken. Stick with what’s left, what’s relevant to us and now. We we have the time, I can guide you through through proper lessons so you can do this safely.”

“What do you mean, taken?” Thomas asked. At worse, Donal had looked like he might pace a hole in the floor, nothing more.

Grant sighed. “Power is dangerous. The more power you have the higher the danger. The more you have on hand, the easier it is to over reach and have the power take you. We call that reaching apotheosis, and it’s the last thing a Practitioner does. It’s what the Chamber pushes us to do when they attack us. It leaves a staff without a Practitioner, and they can then take it.” He looked at Thomas. “It’s

why they sent four people to get my staff, instead of one to put a bullet in my head and take it. If the Practitioner doesn't reach apotheosis, the Chamber can't take the staff."

"But there are none of those Chamber people," Owen pointed out.

"Apotheosis can still happen. They don't create it, they just engineer the situation for it to happen. It's the Practitioner who makes it happen. Like you almost did, Donal."

"Okay." The squirrel took slow breath. "The thing is that I didn't figure it out through what was there. I don't even remember any of it, I don't think. It just occurred to me that Thomas's memories are misplaced. That's basically the same as being lost, right, and that's my thing. My staff."

"That doesn't make any sense," Owen said as Grant leaned back in his chair, thinking.

"No more than writing a symbol in cum makes magic happen," the kangaroo said. "Every faction is different." He looked at Thomas. "I think he's right. The concepts match, lost and misplaced basically just mean you can find what you're looking for."

"Okay, then we should get Madoc in here so you can do it to him. Not remembering his son is killing him."

"It should be you," Donal said.

"But—"

"He's right. Of everyone here, we know your memory is the least altered, but because you were at the frat of a shorter amount of time and because they had their memories altered as part of getting ready to hunt you."

"But doesn't that mean you'll have more to work with?"

"More like I'm going to have more to screw up," Donal said. "I am not entirely sure what I'm doing here, Thomas."

“Oh boy. I get to play guinea pig. Okay,” he said before he could talk himself out of it. “Whatever you need to do, do it now.”

“I don’t —”

“You hear him,” Grant said. “It’s now.”

“But —”

“You know how to do this, Donal. You’ve been finding things for years. It’s why you have your staff, why you made it. It’s the personification of finding things. Just let your instincts guide you.”

Donal looked at the kangaroo. “Really? You’re going with ‘use the force Luke?’”

Grant grinned. “Don’t knock the classics.” He motioned to Thomas and Donal took his staff in one hand and placed the other on the rat’s temple.

“Do I need —” Thomas started asking, but the question was cut off by a memory, as clear as if it had happened to him seconds before, but it was of darkness being replaced with light, warmth with cold. The calming steadiness of a beat replaced by cacophony. They he was wailing.

He was up and away, panting. “What the fuck?” he swallowed, pieced together what he remembered. “Did... did he erase my memory of when I was born?”

Donal and Grant looked at one another.

“That seems excessive,” the kangaroo admitted.

“Can I offer a theory?” Owen asked.

“I’ll take all the help I can get,” Donal replied.

“I won’t claim to get how you do what you do, but you said what you do is about lost things. The thing is that when it comes to memories, were always losing them. Can your magic tell the difference between one Thomas just forgot, and one that was taken away, or lock away, I think you said it was.”

“Misplaced,” Grand said.

“It looks like I can’t tell the difference,” Donal admitted.

Thomas sat back down. “So that means I’m going to remember lot more than just what Henry took away?”

“Potentially eighteen years worth of small events you’ve forgotten.”

Tomas nodded. “Okay, if that’s the price to confirm you can do this, Donal, and give Madoc and the others their memories back, do it.”

“Are you sure, you had a rather extreme reaction,” the squirrel pointed out.

“That was mainly because it took me by surprise. I wasn’t expecting to remember that, or for it to be like I was reliving it, or more like it happened five minutes ago.” He took Donal’s free hand and placed it on his temple. “I’m ready for it this time.”

The squirrel nodded and closed his eyes.

Thomas closed his too, and immediately he was in a cradle, noises around him, shifting light, smells. A series of those scenes, with him at the center of them. Everything around him becoming ever clearer until he saw, heard, smelled. The scenes move quickly, but remained clear. The wonder of that just taste of strawberry ice scream. The first time trying peanut butter, chocolate. So many firsts he’d forgotten about. He grew up, school, guys. He heard a voice, outside his memories. Grant, speaking to Donal softly, advice and warnings. High school and guys. Graduating, going to university, Sigma Theta Gamma.

He winced as instead of remembering one event, he remembered two. Walking in the living room where Jacques was arguing with Thomas, only Thomas was also in the doorway, watching them. Henry wrapped his arms around Thomas as he freaked out, pulled him away. Then they were in bed, having sex. Thomas confused. Henry biting his neck after sucking him off.

Over imposed in was him pausing by the closed door, hearing

an argument and continuing on. Encountering Henry in the stairwell, inviting him to his bedroom, the sex, but this time comforting, the orgasm, the biting of his neck.

Yating appeared through a wall in the kitchen and locked eyes with Thomas, cursed and called for Henry, who stepped in seemed amused at Thomas freaking out and guided him away, saying he'd explain everything. Instead, there was sex, an orgasm, the biting of Thomas's neck.

Over imposed on it was an uneventful homemade lunch and then sex with Henry.

Then another, and another, and another.

"Ouch," he said as Donal let go of his temple.

"Did I hurt you?"

Thomas shook his head and regretted it. "I have too many memories. I thought you were going to fix them, instead I have two sets of memories. What happened, and what Henry made me remember happened."

"I—" Donal started.

"I guess that makes some sense," Grant picked up. "Bringing back the memory doesn't remove the existing one."

"I wish it had."

"Can you tell which is the real one?"

Thomas recalled one set, Chima zooming from one side of the frat, unaware Thomas was there, watching him. When the hyena noticed him he came to an immediate standstill and looked saddened before calling for Henry. There was sex, an orgasm and the biting of his neck. The other set of memory was utterly ordinary except for the sex, which was always amazing. Before and after the alteration.

"I can figure out which one should be the real one, but they both feel real enough."



“Do you think that’s better than not remembering?” Donal asked.

“Oh, definitely,” Thomas replied, then looked at Owen. “You know, if you guys are hoping magic will remain secret, you need to have a talk with these guys, because as far as I can tell, the only thing Henry changes is all the times one of them did magic in front of me.”

“Even my boy?”

“Yes, even him and the arsenal he keeps hidden with magic. He actually got me to provide the cum one time saying it was for a special project, until he activated it early and I saw the stuff vanish.”

Owen sighed. “I thought I’d raised him better than that. I’ll—”

An explosion shook the house and Thomas looked at the armadillo. “I think you need to teach him not to do experiments in the house.”

The armadillo was on his feet. “I know my son. I don’t keep anything in the house that can blow up like that.”

Thomas looked at Grant and Donal before cursing and running after the armadillo.

## CHAPTER-50

Thomas was only a step behind Owen in stepping out on the porch, and Felix was behind them, along with Madoc. In front of the house were two vans, their side doors open with men in black body armor and one armadillo in jeans and a shirt.

“Laurence,” Owen called, “what is the meaning of this?” He pointed to the overturned pickup smashed against the garage doors.

“Shit,” Thomas whispered. “Laurence is under Henry’s control.” In body armor, Thomas made out two rats and five margays.

Owen glanced at the rat, jaws tightening, as Laurence called.

“Uncle Owen, I don’t know what Thomas and Gilbert told you, but you can’t trust them. They tried to kill the Richard elder.”

“Then have them call Gav. This is a matter for elders, not for thugs to come to my house and throw my truck around. You know the work I’ve put into getting it working again, Laurence, it’s a classic!”

“I can’t do that, uncle. They’re with a kangaroo with mind control power. There’s no telling what he’d already done to you. Just turn any of them over to us and we’ll take them back. We have someone who can fix their minds.”

Thomas didn’t think any of the men holding machine guns looked intent on taking anyone back anywhere.

“Fuck this,” a margay said, raising it.

“No!” Laurence said, as Thomas grabbed onto Owen and teleported them to the other side of the porch.

Glass shattered.

“That was a fucking mistake,” Owen growled as Thomas caught his breath. The armadillo ran toward the men still aiming at the door. Madoc and Felix were back inside.

“Scatter!” Laurence yelled and jumped out of his uncle’s path.

“Why?” one of the men in armor replied. Planting his feet as Owen twisted so his shoulder impacted the margay. The armadillo didn’t slow as the armored man was flung aside. He connected with the one behind and the next jumped out of the way. Then Owen impacted the van, which skidded a couple of feet from the impact. Then Owen fell to the ground and didn’t move.

“I told you my uncle’s got momentum!” Laurence yelled, running toward the downed armadillo. “Fuck, do you have any idea what my family’s going to do if he dies?”

“Blame the kangaroo,” a rat replied. “He’s the one who mind fucked them.”

“What’s going on?” Yating asked, stepping out of the door.

Thomas was next to the panda as the gunshot sounded and felt the impact on his back before he could teleport them away. They were on the ground, and hands pulled them out of the doorway.

“I’ve been shot, I’ve been shot,” Thomas repeated over. His back had to be ripped open by the pain he felt.

“No Blood,” Madoc said, and Thomas yelled in pain as the other rat prodded his back.

“Rubber bullets,” Felix said. “At least they don’t want us dead.”

“You really think being handed over to that Henry is a good thing?” Madoc demanded.

A door being kicked open deeper in the house cut off the otter’s reply. Thomas forced his head up enough to watch a pissed-off Gilbert walk into the hallway, a light in his hand. No, not a light.

“Since where can Gil produce a miniature sun?” Felix asked, wincing away from the heat as the armadillo walked by them. Thomas pulled himself off Yating, who was stirring, and ignored the pain to drag himself into the doorway. He wanted to see what he

could do with that.

“Gil,” Laurence called. “Stand down. You don’t know what you’re doing. That kangaroo—”

“What the fuck did you do to my dad?” Gilbert demanded through clenched teeth.

“He did it to himself,” Laurence hurried to reply. “You know his power doesn’t protect him—”

The sun in Gilbert’s hand flashed so intensely Thomas wasn’t sure he’d heard the gunshot or the way he went blind had caused him to imagine it.

“I swear on His cock, Lau, if my dad’s dead, I am going to rip you apart even if you don’t know what you’re doing right now.”

“He’s alive! I checked. He’s breathing, but I think he broke his collarbone. Stand down and Nanko can look him over. He’s—”

A scream started inside the house, then was outside as Yating ran through the wall and at the closest margay. More gunshots, and now Thomas saw enough through the spots to see the bullets pass through the red panda. Gilbert stepped off the porch, a second sun appearing in his left hand. He closed his fist around it and for a moment, the extra light was gone. It reappeared as a lance of intense light over the armadillo’s fist.

Had Gilbert just made himself a fucking light-saber?

The impact of the butt of a machine gun in Yating’s face brought the panda down, but Gilbert was in range of the men, and he swung his sword with abandon. Thomas looked away when he realized it wasn’t only pieces of machine guns that fell to the ground.

Unfortunately, he couldn’t block the screams that followed.

(so. I doubt this is what you expected, but I honestly couldn’t figure out anything more. We have a group of university students with only 1 truly offensive power among them against a group of trained mercenaries. If not for Gilbert, they were going to lose this.)

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas wished he'd gotten more than the sigil as healing. He would have preferred Olavo's cock, but the capybara had been first pressed into healing Owen and then seeing to the men Gilbert had taken on.

Fortunately for them, the armadillo had only cut off limbs, and not heads, and the plasma blade had cauterized the injuries, and while it was talking multiple fucking, Olavo's healing could cause them to reattach. Which, the older armadillo who'd arrived with Olavo and his father said, was a good thing, considering two of Gilbert's victims were the rats.

A discovery that had surprised them all, was that one of the margays had been Firmin, who'd taken the form and powers of the telekinetic on the team, only that had been the first man Gilbert cut and Firmin didn't have the combat training not to be shocked into stillness by the loss of limbs he'd witnessed. It had led to him not losing any as he surrendered.

"Thomas, right?" the armadillo asked, then looked him over. "Ezequiel tells me you're at the center of all this." Gavin had introduced the armadillo next to him, as Colby, his son, and the man had tipped his cowboy hat to Thomas but remained silent. Based on Gilbert's description, he'd expected the two of them to never stop talking, but Colby hadn't said one word and Gavin spoke no more than normal.

"Yes, sir. I can teleport, I can show you if you want."

"That won't be necessary. You aren't a bull that's being put on display to be sold. I want to know how you're handling things. Having grown up being readied to be an elder in tumultuous times, I know a little of what it's like to have much happen simply because of who you are. It can be draining."

Thomas snorted. "That's one way of putting it. I've barely stopped moving since I discovered I had this power. First, it was from the frat, then Raphael got involved, now this. I so can't wait for all of this to be over so I can have one good night's sleep without having to

be afraid someone's going to break down the door and drag me out."

Gavin nodded. "I know Ezequiel made you the offer, but I want you to know you have a safe place in Texas if you need it." He raised a hand. "This isn't an 'or' situation. You can accept Ezequiel's offer and you will still be welcome here."

"I'm too precious of a bull to scare off?" Thomas ask, then chuckled.

"I guess the analogy comes back to gore me. Yes. The only person able to teleport is someone I'd like to have as an ally, not an enemy."

"I'm not looking to be anyone's enemy. I just want to go home to my family, get back to my studies and forget about all of this."

"I'm afraid that last part is something you can't have."

"You guys have people who can erase memories, right?"

"Unlike Raphael, I'd never allow something like that. And it wouldn't keep you safe. You simply wouldn't be aware of the danger you were in, so unable to protect yourself and your family, properly."

A door opened and Laurence stepped out of the office, where Donal and Grant were set up to restore memories. The armadillo looked tired as the red panda entered the office with his mother. Laurence saw them and hurried to join them, tears falling as he hugged the older armadillo.

"Grandpa, I'm sorry."

"It's okay Laurence." Gavin wrapped his arms around Laurence. "You're home now. I won't let anything else happen to you. It's okay." Thomas was getting choked up just watching them. Colby tapped his shoulder and nodded to the door leading to the hall.

"I want to ask Laurence."

The armadillo shook his head and urged Thomas toward the door. The rat looked over his shoulder, debating teleporting back

where he'd been, or calling to Laurence, but he saw the two men were kissing, with the older armadillo having a hand inside the pants of the younger.

Right, they brought sex into everything.

"You guys are really casual about the sex thing, aren't you?" he asked Colby once the door was closed.

The armadillo shrugged, opened another door, looked, then motioned inside. Thomas saw the bed and raised an eyebrow.

"You're seriously suggesting sex now?"

The armadillo grinned, looked Thomas over, then licked his lips.

Why not? It wasn't like he had anything else to do until Laurence was done with his grandfather.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas decided that while no one could hold a candle to Chima when it came to sex, Colby was a close second. The armadillo had left not long after they were done, and a phone call where he'd mostly listened. Thomas had retreated to the kitchen, where he'd set about making a sandwich.

"Do you mind making more?" Gavin asked, entering with Laurence. Both naked. Thomas stared. The older armadillo was leaner than Laurence, but better hung. He might only be a little smaller than his son. "After I've eaten, we can have a go at it."

"What? No, I didn't—" Thomas smiled at the smile Gavin gave him.

"I am."

Laurence couldn't look at Thomas. And the rat didn't think it had anything to do with his grandfather hitting on him.

"Lau?"

"I'm sorry," the armadillo replied.

"Okay, what for?"

Laurence hesitated.

"If you want me to give you two privacy —"

"No, Grandpa. I think you need to be here for this. Henry's gone and.... Fuck, he went and made me part of it, do..."

Thomas handed the armadillo his sandwich. "Eat. You can tell me once I've made your grandfather and myself one." He took his time making them, but even then, by the time he sat at the table before Laurence, the armadillo had only taken one bite.

"When you ran," Laurence began. "Henry got the other to go after you. The rest of us, he had mainly cover for their absences, which was mainly telling a calling parent that his son was busy fucking someone. Then, Firmin would call back, pass off as them. Even without shifting, he's good at imitating voices. And they'd be appeased. Then there was this weird guy over and the two of them talked for what must have been an hour in his office. It must have been important because he changed my memory of that right after the vole left."

"Vole?"

"You know who he is?" Laurence asked.

"No, but Grant might. There was a vole after him. Still is, he and another escaped."

Laurence nodded. "That was not long before you called, and after that Henry went all DEFCON 1 on us. He had Kuno talk his dad into coming over, and I restrained him while Henry sucked him off, then bit him. And they were best friends. Looking at it from the outside, it is freaky how much someone can change. But with Kuno's dad, Henry got himself invited onto the Richard estate, and... well. He's basically in charge now. I think it took him less than twenty-four hours from the moment he hung up on you to when he moved into the estate."



“Is that where he is now?”

“Maybe. For some reason, he kept going back to the frat, so maybe he moved by there since he has the Lewistons who went there on Raphael’s orders as his personal bodyguards. Where ever he is now, when he sent us here he was getting ready for a fight. Battle down the hatches and all that.”

“It’s Batten down,” Gavin corrected.

“Okay, that all sound bad,” Thomas said, “but not really something you’d have to apologize to me for.”

Laurence nodded and took a breath. “First, he didn’t harm your family. So you don’t have to worry about it.”

Thomas stilled. “But he did something to them?”

“He put your brother through the Ceremony of Vitality and of Submission.”

“Okay, what does that mean?”

Laurence frowned. “Right, we never actually told you what the ceremonies were. It’s going to take me a while to straighten out all those memories. You remember the first party, where you went around and basically sucked off every guy in the building?”

“I actually sucked off everyone?” Thomas wasn’t sure if he should be proud or scared. He quickly thought back to his clearer memories, but even if he now remembered each guy he’d sucked off, he’d never paid attention to how many were there, so that was something he still didn’t know.

“I don’t know, but you got around. You did suck off all thirteen of us.”

“Ah,” Gavin said.

“Does that mean something?”

“Thirteen is an important number for us,” Gavin said. “But please continue, Laurence.”

"Then the initiation..."

"Hazing?"

"Laurence," Gavin said, offended.

"It wasn't bad." Thomas blushed. He now remembered the entire thing clearly, even if being high on sex had distorted the memories somewhat, and not bad was an understatement deserving of an Oscar.

"Was it something this Henry promoted?" Gavin asked.

"No, it was Felix's idea. He was thinking it would scare Thomas away."

"So, thirteen, fully initiated men, fucked Thomas."

"Yeah. That's the Ceremony of Submission."

"Okay, but I didn't—" That this started with the mention of Roland undergoing the ceremonies slammed into Thomas. "You?" he accused Laurence.

"Yeah. I was one of the men who participated. The rest of the frat and some of the Richards to round off the numbers."

"I am going to kill him," Thomas growled and stood. "I'm going to rip his fucking ball out and feed them to him." He walked around the table, only to find Gavin before him.

"Please come down."

"Get out of my way. That fucker had thirteen men rape my brother. I don't fucking care how he screwed with his memories so he'd want it. Roland's straight."

"Thomas, if Roland is one of us—"

"He's straight!" He shoved the armadillo out of his way and exited the kitchen in time to see Firmin step into the hallway too. Thomas had to stop. At least, he thought it was Firmin. The badger looked like Firmin, wore the same clothing, but he looked aghast, there

was none of the fun and daredevil energy that now Thomas saw had come from Firmin being able to get away with just about anything on account of being someone else if he wanted to. The man before him looked like he'd survived a war and might have left part of his soul behind.

Other heads poked out of doorways, one of which was another badger. (Just realized I forgot to account for Samuel in all this. Sending him off to see Gavin with Olavo and his father could be plausible.) Samuel took one step toward Firmin and froze. His mouth worked, but he couldn't seem to get words out.

Thomas wondered what could be in Firmin's mind that would cause Samuel to be unable to say anything.

"Yes," Gilbert said, phone to his ear as he stepped into the hall, stopped, and looked at what was going on. "Just send me the file, Colby. I think we have a situation here." He disconnected.

"I'll—" Samuel started. "Firmin, I'm on your side." He looked in Gilbert's direction. "You bring them up on the Stoker's history, while I talk with Firmin." (what would be Samuel and Firmin's relationship? How closely are they related?)

\* \* \*

## CHAPTER-51

(so the location vague on purpose so it isn't locked into being Owen's house since in draft 2 it will get trashed)

"Okay," Gilbert said. He stood in the living room, while Thomas sat in the large couch, Limbani on one side, and Madoc on the other. Next to them was Gavin with Laurence. On the love seat Yating and his mother, on the other side Felix and Olavo. (if I'm missing anyone, feel free to add them) "you won't know the details of this, Thomas, but it starts with the war against the Gray Church. It put every family in danger so one of the decisions I took, was to send me and a others to study away, so that if everyone here got wiped out, there were be enough Rowlings left to keep the family going. I was sent to the Minnesota University, and that's where I met Hubert Heindrick."

"Don't you mean Henry?" Madoc asked.

The armadillo shook his head. "No, Hubert was who was in charge of the frat. I thought it was weird a guy in his late thirties was still studying, but everyone else there seemed okay with it, and after the first time we fucked, well, he screwed up my memories and I believed he was on his third doctorate. I met Henry a few month later, for his Ceremony of Dominance, and that's where things get..." Gilbert shook his head, as if the act could make the memories fall into place.

"The ceremony was nothing like what we do. There was Henry, and thirteen of us, and He had a go at us in turn, as usual, but he'd written one hell of a phrase on the floor around the altar. I wrote what I saw of it down, Grandpa," he told the older armadillo, "but I didn't see all of it." He shuddered. "Hubert was the last one, on his back on the altar, Henry going at it with abandon. You know how it is, but as he came, he bit down on Hubert's neck. He had us believing he'd explained everything, how it was a thing in his family. He also had us

not know what blood does to us. Still, as Hubert went from a healthy virile man to a literal husk of one, we did freak out, but Henry was quick to take charge, fuck us and well, we no longer remembered anything had happened.”

He shuddered again and started pacing. “There’s two days after that that’s really jumbled for me. I think he screwed me and my memories on an hourly basic. It was like he was drunk on being eighteen again and he couldn’t stop talking and fucking. If Donal hadn’t confirmed the memories are real, I’d have thought Henry has made me believe he’d said all of that.”

“Wait,” Gavin said. “Donal saw what you remembered?”

Gilbert nodded. “He’s kind of there as it happens. Not in how I remember it, but like it’s a show he’s watching. It doesn’t stick with him, like it did for me, but he confirmed that Henry telling me his story is what happened, and everything else is him altering my memories afterward.”

“Alright, continue.”

“Heindrick isn’t a surname. It’s his real name. Heindrick Stoker. And is it who Henry is, who Hubert was. Something about how he did the Ceremony of Dominance let him dump his memory and power into the younger bat. He’s been doing it basically since the early 1900s.”

He took a breath. “Okay, here’s a quick Wiki for Thomas’s benefit. The Stokers were a family of bats who abused the drinking of blood to power themselves. Bram tried not do it, but he was already addicted since it’s that deep into their bloodline. He wrote Dracula as a sort of warning, or to alleviate his guilt, and he died not long after that. What you won’t know. What no one knew, was that he had a son. The O’Boland Elder talked him into one, saying that away from the rest of the Stoker, they’d be able to wean him off the blood and that in time, his family could come back within the Society.”

“The O’Boland?” Gavin said, frowning. “Are you sure? I know Sean, and he’s never given an indication they had anything to do with the Stoker other than take part in handing them over to the Church.”

“It’s what Henry told me, Heindrick is the grandson of that boy. Both his father and grandfather were good upstanding men who’d have made the society proud, is the way he said it, with plenty of mocking tone. Heindrick didn’t feel much of a craving even after his Ceremony of Dominance and his power came in. He can absorb and inject memories though cum. Nothing much that way. Maybe one event, something recent. It was still enough the O’Boland made use of him.

“The first time he tasted blood was an accident. Scraping of the skin while fucking. And he was assaulted by memories, clear and easy to process. That his the dormant addiction had him doing it again and again until he was caught, then he did it and found out the memories he injected after that would more powerful, could reach farther. It’s possible Sean never mentioned the Stoker because those who took part were made to forget entirely. Henry said he’d made sure no one would ever be able to follow him. The only detail he gave me are about his father and grandfather. Those two he wiped entirely and dumped in a hospital before getting on a boat for America. Here he moved about for a while until he settled unto Minneapolis, and the Sigma Theta Gamma frat as his hidden palace.”

“Is that all you remember?” Gavin asked.

“All about Henry. The rest’s about me, well, him too, but not really relevant.” He raised a palm and a point of light appeared. “He’s who pushed me to practice until I could do this, then immediately made me forget about it. He was afraid that he dad or you knew what I can do you’d call me back home once the war was over. Actually, looking at that and other stuff, there’s something else about him. He’s pretty possessive of what he considers his. He hung on to anyone who was in the frat as long as he could. I think it’s also why he’d using the Richard for protection. He wants to keep the frat.”

“That may be,” Gavin said. “But he can still run, and if he does so, he will be impossible to find since anyone that trail him could easily be made to think they lost the trail.” He sighed. “And Raphael is going to go in there with guns blazing, I have no doubt. He’s going to have to do that if he wants any changes to force the rest of us to hand you over back to him.”

“And afford the mind wiper,” Olavo said. “Shouldn’t we hurry to go in first?”

“We?” Gavin asked with a chuckle. “I hope that doesn’t include you lot. I know you want to go rescue your family, Thomas, but you have no training with your power. My understanding is that keeping Owen from being shot left you pretty winded. I will not let Raphael make a mess of this, I promise you, and he isn’t going to barge in there immediately. Right now, the Richards are saying everything’s fine, and we hold two of the men who can contradict that.”

“Raphael has Ettore,” Thomas said. “That’s how he knows Henry controls the Richards.”

Gavin nodded. “But the word of one man against an entire family, including an elder, isn’t going to be enough. We have time. And I promise you that when the time comes, we you all be kept apprised of how things do. If it assuages your fears Thomas, I’ll make sure you’re in the command center with me and you’ll be able to hear and watch everything”

“I can give valuable information,” Thomas insisted. “That’s my city.”

“It’s the Richards’ city,” Gavin corrected. “And any information you can provide, you can provide it from here, at my side, instead of there, where you could get hurt.” The armadillo stood. “This is final, Thomas. I will not be the one who has to tell your father you were killed while under my care.”

Thomas closed his mouth and swallowed. Then he nodded.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas wandered the house. The last information he’d received, directly from Gavin, was they had tried to talk the Richard elder into coming to Houston for a meeting, but that hadn’t worked. So they were gathering intel. Thomas didn’t particularly care about intel from the men Donal had finished with, he wanted to be there, rescue his family. He had enough of being out of the action. It had felt good to rescue Madoc, to go after Grant to rescue him.

Yes, neither cases were a great mark for his success rate, Dietrich had found them, and Grant had ended up rescuing Thomas from the Chamber. But he'd been doing something not sitting around and having sex.

He walked by a room, stopped and backtracked. Felix saw in a small library hand moving back and forth on the wood coffee table. There was a mechanicalness to the motion that felt odd. When it came to wooden furniture, Felix was usually passionate. He should leave it alone, Thomas told himself. It wasn't like Felix would want him to intrude, but he'd been the first to undergo Donal's treatment now that he was done with the men Henry had sent to capture him.

"You okay?" he asked and readied himself for the snark. Instead he got a shrug and a glance. Curious at the reaction, Thomas stepped into the room and sat opposite the otter. "So, did you find out Henry had you forget your were the elder's son and you'll inherit an entire city once you graduate?"

Felix snorted. "I wish."

Thomas waited. "I know this is weird, considering our history, but do you want to talk about it?"

The otter started to shake his head and stopped. "We are better," he stated.

"Yeah," Thomas replied, stretching the word. "You've kind of made sure I knew that in my months in the frat."

"No. We're better, period. All of us, all the Chouteau. All of them, except me." He said, throwing the polishing rag on the table. "I'm just a weakling with a good for nothing power, from a weakling father. I'm the fucking opposite of an elder's son. I've had more sex outside of my family than I've had within it. And that's because of Henry. It isn't like I had the guts to approach guys before that. Do you have any idea how infuriating it is to know that this guy I should be. This perfect example of who a Chouteau is supposed to be is a creation of someone like Henry because when I was shipped to the twin cities, he thought it would be amusing to have a this Chouteau be his court jester. Make him perfect and perfectly unbearable. And unlike Gilbert,



I wasn't sent there for my protection or because my family wanted someone in a worse case scenario. I was sent there because the Richards demanded an Chouteau in their city after what my family did to them. Don't ask, I have no idea. So they send the worse one they could think of. Me."

"That's..." Thomas didn't know what to think. "You don't have to let them define you, you know."

"If only he'd let me be that person when I went to visit them. If I could have shown my fucking family that I don't fucking care what they think of me, but no. The bastard couldn't afford to have me act any differently, so every goodbye fuck came with a reset to poor little miserable me. And you want to know what to fucking worse part of all of that is?" Felix demanded

"Okay?" Thomas replied, unsure if the otter even heard him.

"That mockery of a Chouteau that I was? He would have gotten along with you amazingly well. You're nice. You care. You'd have taken one look at him and you would have been his best friend. I would I have had the first teleporter in the whole fucking world as my best friend. But because Henry needed his fun my family's going to rip my balls out for having alienated you. He's the one who though I should see you as lower than dirt, not me, him!" He slouched back in the chair. "Watch them pull me from uni after that and sell me to some higher Chouteau as a house cleaner or something."

"They wouldn't do that would they?"

Felix shrugged.

"Well, on the plus side, I'm sure that whoever's house you'd end up cleaning will have a lot of good quality pieces." Thomas winces. "Or is that something Henry gave you?"

The otter shook his head. "It was on one of the rare visit to a relative. Some big gathering where they had no choice but to invite us. It was boring, so me and my brother we snuck out, explored the mansion. We'd never been in a mansion before. And well, I was nineteen he was eighteen, two full blooded Society men. It didn't take

long that we were fucking in one of the room. It wasn't a bedroom, but a lack of bed never stops us. We were going hard at in on a table when one of my cousin, one of those whose house were were in came in with other relative. You'd think they'd have joined in. Instead they he livid that we were having sex on his grandfather's favorite table. My brother let me take the entirety of the blame, and my dad handed him over to be punished as they saw fit. I got lucky in a way. No chastity belts were involved. But I spent the entire summer polishing and fixing hardwood furniture."

"And you still do it? Considering it was a punishment, I'd have never touched the stuff after that."

Felix smiled and ran a hand lovingly over the table. "This is something I can fix; unlike my life. It doesn't matter the kind of mess it is when I start. With enough work, enough care. I can make something beautiful out of it again."

"You can fix your life Felix," Thomas said. "You remember everything, how you were and how Henry made you. Now you can pick which of the memories you want to base your life on." Thomas chuckled. "Fuck, you never know, maybe we can be—"

A door slammed. "Don't fucking tell me to calm down!" Madoc yelled.

Thomas was out of the room, saw Limbani and threw him at the otter. "Sorry, I'll make it up to you later." He ran and caught up to the rat as he was about to slam another. Donal was stepping away, hands raised, so Thomas had an idea what this was about."

"What else did Henry take from you?" He asked, catching the door and nearly getting his hand caught in the jam.

"Pryce's Mother. Raphael fucking took her away!"

"I'm sorry." Thomas hesitated. This wasn't the direction he'd expected. "But I didn't think you guys cared all that much about the mothers."

"He doesn't give a fuck! She's my best friend! Who else was I

going to have a son with? Some strange woman he assigned me? Only now she isn't picking up. I called her parents and they have no idea where she is. She was going to come to move to Minneapolis and we were going to figure something out about Pryce, get him out of Raphael's grasp. Fuck! Henry made me forget about her, but Raphael made her disappear!"

"Why would he do that?"

The rat glared at Thomas, but he didn't back away.

"Not a Lewiston, remember? I don't actually know your family history."

Madoc took a few breath. "Before Raphael, our families were basically the same as everyone else. I had a mom. She lived with us. The main difference would be they kept separate bedrooms, and didn't have sex together after me. I think they needed a rest, but she died when I was still a kid so who knows. I want that for my son. Jennie wants it too. But Raphael isn't interested in families. He's interested in a family. His family. He wants all the sons to look up to him. The only reason why he doesn't have them in a building being indoctrinated is that there's too many of the older generation still alive. They'd fight him and it would break us apart even further. But it's coming. He's making sure the men loyal to him have the most access to the women, so more sons for them and they'll let him raise them however he wants."

Thomas didn't mention the mind wipers. Madoc had to remember him. If Raphael got his hand on him, would he stop at only wiping Thomas and Victor? And then an ever scarier thought occurred to him. If Raphael got his hands on Henry. Would he look for a way to control him instead of just stopping him?

"How about we lift weights?" Thomas asked. "It's going to be a better way to spend your anger than trying to break door."

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas and Madoc stepped out of the bathroom after and after-workout shower and sex only to be walked through by a

mumble Yating.

“Remember, remember. Come one, you have to remember too.”

“What—” Madoc started, but the panda’s phone ringing stopped him.

“Yahui!” Yating yelled into the phone. “Thank his balls you remembered too.” The rest was in their native language.

“Isn’t Yahui his brother?” Thomas asked. “And isn’t he missing?”

“Thomas,” Grant called him to the room he and Donal were using. The squirrel reclined on a couch, hand over his eyes. He lifted it only long enough to see who was there and covered them again.

“What’s with Yating?” Thomas asked.

“Twins are even more magical than the rest of you,” Donal said. “Tell me that was the last one. I’m going to do that apothecary thing if I need to work on one more person.”

“Yating was the last,” Grant said. “What do you mean about twins being more magical.”

“I’d have thought you’d know,” Donal replied.

“Do you need an aspirin or something?” Thomas offered.

“Olavo’s cock is more effective.”

“I’ll take the aspirin,” the squirrel replied. “I’m not like you guys, there’s only so much sex I can have.”

“You haven’t had any in like four days.”

“And after the drive down from Montana, I’m good for a few more.”

“The twin thing?” Grant asked,

“From what I saw when I found Yating’s memories, what

happens to one of the twin happens to the other when magic's involved. Yahui was initiated. And Yating got his powers too. Henry found a way to alter their memories independently, but it took him a lot of work to get there. He's hoping that now that he has his memories back. Yahui had them too."

"He just received a call from him," Madoc said, "so I'd say it happened."

"Good. Now turn of the light and leave me alone."

Thomas found Yating in the living room, his mother was on the phone talking. Again it was in their native language.

"How is he?" Thomas asked.

"He's fine. Henry's been treating him well, other than the mind fuckery. He had him looking after Horst in a secret section of the frat."

"Wait, who's Horst?" Madoc asked.

"Henry's son. Yahui's basically his nanny."

Henry had a son? The revelation stunned Thomas, but thinking back on what he'd learned about Henry, it made sense. He'd need to have one as soon as he could so he'd have someone to transfer himself into.

Wait. Henry had a son, that meant—

"Yep," Samuel said, stepping in the living room, phone to his ear. "We now have something to grab that bat by the balls with."

## CHAPTER-52

Thomas wished they'd hurry, he was getting tired of being cramped at the top of a stairwell waiting for the signal to go. As if the lack of maneuvering room wasn't enough, he was in it with a margay at the door, a monkey behind him and a squirrel at the read.

The margay was one of the Richards who'd come after Thomas in Houston, his memory now restored, and with an earpiece connected to his phone. He was who would hear that the other team had started their part of the assault. He also held a machine gun. There had been a discussion of using stunners, but the Richards had confirmed that everyone who protected the man they were after wore interference vests. So rubber bullets was the ammunition of choice.

The monkey behind him was Limbani, who was alleviating his boredom by grinding against Thomas's ass. He was slow and Thomas was reaching the point where he'd pull both their pants down and tell the monkey to get on with it. The last was Donal.

They were the smallest team Samuel had conceived on the flight to the St Cloud Airport. Donal was needed because of what he could do, Thomas to get him in, Vincent Richard for protection and Limbani, well, the monkey had been the first to point out Thomas's limitation and to offer to be there to recharge him. Samuel had been fine with it.

The whole plan had been the badger's idea, with the approval of his elder, not Gavin Rowling. While Samuel hadn't mentioned a payment, he had been clear that one part of the mission was rescuing Thomas's family, so he expected the Mercier would be clamming his services at some point. The badger had simply smiles as Thomas debated with himself arguing right there and making it clear he wasn't a commodity to be used, which would probably mean his family would go back to being low on the list of priority, or after the fact once his family was safe, but then Samuel had the leverage to encourage Thomas to agree.

Thomas felt Limbani reach around, hand moving down to the rat's crotch and rubbing it. "You know," he whispered, "it's probably going to take the other a while before they're ready, I should start charging you right now."

Thomas bite his lower lip to keep from moaning. He could feel how wet the front of his jeans were. He leaned back and opened his mouth to agree—

"Go!" Vincent called. "It's started!" he shoved the door open and the cold air chased all thought of sex from Thomas. He pushed away from the monkey and crouched to the edge of the building, the other three close around him. He raised the binocular to his eyes and looked at the building on the other side of the street. It was a four story one in the north end of St-Paul it looked more business like and in one of the room he could see from here, he would find Byrnwood Richard, family elder. He'd memorized his markings, and Vincent had marked the most likely locations. His elder loved his view of the city so his office was at the corner, but if his security felt he was in direct danger, he'd be moved to one with a smaller window on the east side.

Thomas cursed when he didn't see the elder in either room. Not that he had a great view of the panic room, only the office desk and part of the bed. He panned again.

"Got him," he hissed. The elder walked into his office, phone to his ear and speaking agitatedly. "Four men are with him," Hands took hold of his arms, three of them. He was momentarily surprised the monkey hadn't gone for his crotch.

"We're good for insertion."

At least he hadn't said penetration, Thomas thought and willed himself and them into the elder's office.

\* \* \* \* \*

"It won't matter," Samuel had said. "Look I know you have your doubt, but you always feel the same level of exhaustion. None if you're alone for line of sight, out of breath if you have passenger in the same situation, and you're knocked out if you warp to a safe place. You

were knocked out when you did it with one, the same knock out when you did it with two or with three. Trust me on this. You can take three people in line of sight and it won't do more than knock the breath out of you.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas was on all four as chaos erupted around him. At least he wasn't unconscious, so Samuel had been right. Not that he was happy about it. His pants were pulled down and a cock went in his ass. He felt the pull of Vincent's power as he used it to throw the men protecting Byrnwood off balance, literally, as he created zones of vacuum. There was gun fire, heat, cold, then quiet, broken by Limbani cumming.

"I have the door," Vincent called. "Go do your thing to him and make it quick. We only succeed if Mister Richard calls the security off. I am nowhere near the strongest of them."

Thomas thought it off Vincent referred to his elder as 'Mister Richard' none of the other elder's he'd met demanded that kind of formality. Even Raphael was okay with 'sir'. Further thought on the subjects were interrupted by limbani turning Thomas on his back, pulled his legs over his shoulder and plowing his ass again.

"You are enjoying this way to much," Thomas commented, tightening his ass on the thrusting cock.

"Are you kidding? Fucking someone in the middle of a firefight's always been a fantasy of mine."

Of course it was.

Quickly enough, Limbani was cumming again.

Thomas glanced at Donal and the squirrel was still focused on the margay, so he pushed the monkey on his back started fucking him.

"I hate to rush you," Vincent said.

"Working as fast as I can," Donal replied through gritted teeth, "Henry went deeper than we thought."



Thomas pounded Limbani's ass and the monkey grinned at him, wrapping his legs around his hips and encouraging him to go harder.

Thomas shoved his cock in deep and grunted his orgasm as Donal said. "Done!"

"Sir," Vincent said. "Elder, I'm Vincent, you need to tell security to stand down."

"Why are you here? Who? Where is he," The margay demanded angrily.

"We're dealing with him," Donal said as Thomas pulled out of the monkey. "What we need you to do and play along with Henry until this is done."

"And who the fuck are you to tell me what to do?"

"He's the man who freed you from Henry, sir," Vincent said. "With all due respect, there is an operation underway. The Mercier are in charge," he added when the elder indicated Thomas and Limbani. "He's transportation. The Adesida is power."

"You know, being referred to at the car isn't doing much for my self-esteem," Thomas said. "Tell me my landing location is ready."

Vincent looked at his phone. "The house is secure, no one was harmed."

"How did you get in here?" the elder demanded.

Thomas grinned as Donal and Limbani took hold of him. "The same way we're leaving." He willed them home.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Come on," Limbani said as Thomas got off the bed. "Just one more, to be safe you're fully powered up."

"I'm fine." He pulled a pair of jeans out of the closet. "And it isn't like I'm going anywhere for a while. You'll get plenty of changes to fuck me again."

“Fine,” The monkey pouted. “Then at least send in Madoc to keep me busy.”

“How about Felix?” with them on he grabbed a t-shirt. “I think he could still a distraction from... well, all of this.”

“Both?” Limbani replied.

“I’ll see which one loses the draw and send him.”

He headed down the stairs.

“No,” Olavo said. “Shila, that isn’t how this works. We need your —” He was rubbing his muzzle when Thomas entered the kitchen. “I’m well aware what my father agreed to, but —” He made a strangling motion with his free hand. “No —” he said something in his native language and looked around, his gaze stopping on the fridge. “Fine, yes, you are exasperating. Happy? Now, will you tell me how the chaos is going? What is Henry doing now?”

Thomas left the kitchen. Food could wait until Olavo was done coordinating.

He found Felix in the living room, feet on the formica coffee table and watching something on his phone. “If you’re bored, Limbani need to be fucked.”

“Not up to the task?”

“You know, I was really hoping I’d get a Felix that’s at least a little bareable out of this.”

The otter smiled. “Go on, I’ll deal with the insatiable monkey.”

He went the bedroom and stared at the doorknob. When he’d told Samuel all they’d need to do to secure his family was put doorknobs with locks on them, he hadn’t expected his house would end of with three hundred dollar crystal doorknobs on each of the bedroom doors. Samuel had men walking the house’s perimeter. Primarily to prevent anyone from assaulting the house, but also to keep his family members in the house from escaping. Unlike the houses where Society men lived, his didn’t come with security

features behind locks on the front and back door.

He knocked on the door. "Mom?"

"Thomas? Is that you? You're home? Henry did it, he brought you back home."

Thomas's heard sank. He'd hoped that Henry wouldn't bother with her, since she was a woman. But she too thought Henry was the best thing under the sun.

"Look. Mom, I know this isn't the best time, but I think you need to the that Victor and Orinda have been kidnapped. And that Raphael is—" he rested his head on the door. How the fuck was he supposed to his his mother her eldest boy had been, and probably still was being raped?

"Tell Henry, Thomas, he'll fix this. He brought you home, and he will bring the rest of our family back together."

"Yeah," he replied bitterly. He wished he could talk Donal into finish his mother's memory, but she didn't hold any strategy value, so she was at the bottom of the list. But at least she was home and safe. There was no way Henry could get to her, or Roland. The two of them had been the only ones in the house when it was secured. His father was still at university, so the Mercier were keeping an eye on him from a distance, while Judith was still unaccounted for.

He left his mother's door to face another problem, and was distracted by Yating fucking him in the guest bedroom. Thomas stared. He'd seen Firmir take his shape at the start of all this, but it was unreal to watch himself being fucked. A little hot too, but mainly unreal.

Two doors down, he knocked on it. He knocked again more forcefully. He thought about calling out, but as happy as his mother had been to hear his voice, he had no idea what Henry had done to his brother beyond raping him. He seemed to enjoy making people silently suffer, so maybe he'd given memories to Roland of Thomas abusing him.

He listened for sound of movement. Nothing. Someone would have told him if Roland had gotten out through a window, right? He unlocked the door and slowly pushed it open, looking for his brother and not seeing him. He stepped in. "Ro—" something hit the side of his head and the room spun. He fought to stay standing, then hands were holding him, guiding him. A voice resolved itself.

"Thomas, I'm sorry, I thought it was one of the goons. How did you get by them? Are you here to rescue me?" Roland hugged him tightly. "I knew you'd come back for us. You're too tough to need Henry to rescue you."

"Roland?" what was going on?

His brother beamed at him, then hurried to put the little league trophy behind him. "Sorry." His ears went back and looked bashful.

What the fuck had Henry done to his brother? Where was the anger and the bluster anytime Thomas looked in his direction.

"I—"

"You guys okay?" Madoc asked, stepping in and Roland moved away from Thomas. "Sorry. I heard something and the door's open. I thought you might have escaped Roland."

"I... err, I was planning on it, but.... Wait, aren't you with the people who kidnapped Thomas?"

"What did Henry tell you?" Thomas asked.

"It wasn't Henry, it was some cop who told us you were kidnapped by someone from the Lewiston family." He glared at Madoc. "Your family. Grandma was right. Nothing good comes from the Lewistons."

Madoc raised his hands. "I had nothing to do with that, I helped him escape."

"And more of what you remember isn't true," Thomas added. "Henry can change your memories, but we're going to fix that. Donal

will get to it and you'll be fine."

"Things aren't going to go back to how they were Thomas," Madoc said.

"I don't want to hear about it," Thomas replied.

"Thomas, you have to face this. Roland went through two of the ceremonies."

"That's been a while," Roland replied dismissively, then grinned at Thomas. "Come on, you were waiting for me afterward and we—"

"Stop." Thomas swallowed the bile. "That didn't happen, and Madoc. I don't want to hear about any of this. My brother isn't part of this."

"Thomas, he is."

"Of course I am."

"Thomas," Madoc cut him off. "This isn't something you can wish away. He, as in our god, claimed him. You don't just walk away from that."

"Thomas, what's wrong?" Roland placed a hand on his thigh and squeezed. "Look whatever it is, it's going to be okay." His brother smiled sweetly and Thomas bolted up.

"I can't—"

"Thomas?" Roland looked hurt.

"That isn't who my brother is," he snarled, glaring at Madoc's hand on his chest, keeping him from leaving.

"I know. I remember him. But that's who he is right now. And he's going to remember this when it's all done. Do you want him to remember you just walking out on him? What ever you think your Roland thinks of you, this one adores you. He wants to be around you."

Thomas closed his eyes. The hand on his thigh had felt nice. Putting his hand on top of it was so fucking easy to imagine. At least when Roland hated his guts, he had that to keep his feeling at bay.

He turned. "I'm sorry, Roland. It's been a rough few day. How has it been since I left?"

"It was rough at first," Roland said. "But you know how the team is. They rallied around me. They kept me from missing you too much, Neil's been over almost every night and—"

"Oh fuck." Thomas closed his eyes.

"What?" Madoc and Roland asked.

"Henry got to the football team."

Roland looked confused and Thomas decided that was his perfect excuse. "I need to go deal with something, Ro. I'll be back."

Madoc followed him out.

"What did you mean?"

"Roland football team the way he said they'd rallied around him, I'm pretty sure he meant they had—"

"And for the entire team to have sex with your brother, Henry would have to have changed their memories too. I've got to give it to the man, he is thorough."

"He's a fucking rapist. Look what he did to my brother."

"Will you stop it, Thomas?"

"And what the fuck is that supposed to mean?"

"Stop shoving your bother in the closet just because you don't know how to deal with having the hots for him."

"I don't!"

Madoc rolled his eyes. "I'm not blind, and you aren't as subtle as you think."

“How I do or don’t feel about him isn’t the problem here. He’s straight. Always way.”

“He never was,” Madoc countered. “He can’t be, because he’s one of us and we’re never straight.”

“Victor is—”

“Bi, remember? And you want to know something else?”

“No.”

“Too bad. Because your brother never hated you.”

“You haven’t seen the way he looks at me.”

“Wrong. I was here for thanksgiving. And I saw plenty. What you didn’t see how the way he gazed on you when you weren’t looking his way. The adoration you’re seeing in him now? That’s how he looked at you then. It only turned angry when he you looked at him. Don’t ask me why. I grew up in a family when if I felt like that about someone I did something about it instead of bottling it up.” He raised a hand and Thomas closed his mouth. “I’m not saying you need to go in there and have sex with him. I’m telling you that the lust you feel for him, it’s fine. You’re brother is hot. That’s got to be a family thing. Because I’d have happily pulled you, him and your dad in bed on meeting the three of you.”

“My dad?” Thomas asked disgusted.

“I won’t, but he’s a hot guy too. Look, you and your family, you’re no longer governed by the moral code of general society. You’re Society. It means that if, I said if, you decide you want to express what you feel for your brother, you’re allowed. It’s your decision now. Not that of some arbitrary government. You have a god telling you it’s okay. Raphael’s not the norm, not even in my family. Our god tells us we have the choice. Intent matters you have to want it, both of you.”

“I definitely didn’t want Raphael raping me, Madoc. That didn’t change anything to what he did to me.” Except, he’d enjoyed it. It was the lack of care and attention that had worn him down.

Someone cleared his throat and Thomas looked down the hall at a naked himself nodding at behind the two of them. Dreading what he'd see, Thomas turned. Roland's head was poking out of the partially opened door, his eyes wide and looking so very young.

"What do you mean you were raped?"

Thomas froze. How the fuck was he supposed to—

Madoc shoved him against the wall and kissed. When the rat pulled away, expression serious, Thomas was so stunned to question it.

"I'll explain what happened," Madoc said. "It's my family who did it, so it's my responsibility, not yours. Why don't you go enjoy yourself in the mean time?" he nodded to the other Thomas and was leaning against the all.

By the time Thomas was able to protest, Madoc was in the room with Roland. With Firmin wearing his naked body watching him. Thomas watched him back, then frowned as he took him in. He stepped closed and Firmin moved away from the wall and crossed his arms over his chest.

Thomas walked around him, taking in the muscles thighs, firm ass, defined pec and abs. Of course he was hard by the time Thomas was in front again and he had a good looking cock too. Nice length and thickness.

"You can so something to the bodies you double, right?" Thomas asked.

Firmin shook his head. "What you see is what you have."

It was Thomas's turn to shake his head. "No, I don't look anywhere that hot."

His double snorted. "You have got to get as reality check. You have had guys drooling after you the moment you join and Madoc started beefing you up. Do you have any idea how infuriating it was for Felix to know you drew more of the fuy's at the party than he did." Firmin paused, looked embarrassed. "Okay, I might have had



something to do with that. I might have gone and slept with a few guys as you."

"Why would you do that?"

Firmin motioned to himself. "Have you looked at this? How could I not take advantage of it?"

"That isn't what I mean. What are people going to think of me?"

"That's you're pretty how and great in bed."

Thomas protest dies as he realized something. "You aren't all depressed and emo anymore."

His double shrugged. "Felix, of all people, pointed out that I don't have to let my real memories define me. I know what it's like to have enjoyed what I can do, instead of being shamed into never doing anything." He shook his head. "There's a sordid history with people who've had my power. Considering how Henry used me, some of how my family treated me is justified, but I think that now I get to decide how I'm going to live. And being one of two teleporter in existence will help me get that."

"I'm going to regret agreeing to letting you copy my body, aren't I?"

Firmin stepped in close and leaned next to his ear. "I will honor this body as if it was our god. I will see to it that is it treated with pleasure and orgasm." He let out a slow breath and Thomas shivered. "And I will gie you the best spot in my bed if you ever want to find out with it's like to to fuck you."

What was it with—

A commotion sounded in the entrance. "Let go of me," Judith exclaimed. "If I swear on His balls, my boyfriend is going to rip yours out."

"She does mean His balls," a man answered smugly, "and yes, one word from her and yours are gone, Mercier."



## CHAPTER-53

Thomas ran down the stairs. “Judith!”

“Thomas!” His sister took a step in his direction and the bear in body armor on her right reached for her. Before Thomas registered what happened, the rat on her left had the bear on the floor with a knee at his back. Had that been super speed? He recognized the rat, Trevor, but couldn’t remember anyone saying what his power was.

Judith kissed the rat. “Thanks, Hun.”

“His balls?” Trevor asked.

“I’ll decide after I’ve hugged my brother.” She hugged him tight. “All mighty Cum, Thomas, what is going on? You’re kidnapped, Henry said he had people off to find you, now you’re here and there an army in the house? Who are these people?”

“Well...” Thomas trailed off. How was he supposed to explain this to her.

“We’re Thomas’s personal bodyguard,” Samuel said, stepping into the living room and zipping himself up. “As you know, he’s a teleporter, which makes him valuable, so we’re here to make sure nothing happens to him, again. I’m Samuel, you’re his sister, and you’re Trevor Lewiston, it’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance. No, Thomas we’ve never met before, yes, I’m a mind reader.”

“Stop! For God sakes, Samuel, shut up!” Thomas couldn’t believe he’d been the one to say those words, but he wasn’t done. “Do you get off on pissing people off like that? Because I’m this close to kicking you out of my parent’s house. You really want me to dumb you in San Francisco?” he said as the badger opened his mouth.

Samuel closed it. Tomas didn’t entirely believe it had worked, but he was going to make sure Firmin was handy in case he needed to make good on the threat.

“Wow, Thomas, look at you bossing people around.”

“You,” he told Samuel, momentarily ignoring his sister, “only answer spoken questions.” Samuel nodded. “You,” he told the Trevor, “let go of... Sorry, I don’t remember your name.”

“Dumier. Francois Dumier.”

“Right, let go of him. Was that super speed? I didn’t see you move.”

“Martial art,” Samuel answered before Trevor opened his mouth. “Trevor’s power is learning, and he’s learned a lot. You asked a question.”

“Answer questions that are asked at you. Not for other people.”

Judith smiled at him. “I like this new take charge you.”

“Where have you been?” he demanded of his sister. “You weren’t in class.”

“Me and Trev were out and about enjoying...” she grinned. “Each other.”

Thomas rolled his eyes. Had Henry made her forget his sex life was no longer theoretical? “You know he’s a Lewiston, right?”

“Oh, balls yes.”

“What’s with the swearing?”

“Trev’s been teaching them to me, so I can show him I respect his beliefs.”

“I didn’t know you were bi,” Thomas told Trevor.

“I’m not.” The rat looked at Judith lovingly. “I’m gay with a Judith bias. I’ve never met a woman like her before. Strong, who loves fucking me and watching me fuck guys.”

Was the voyeurism something Henry had given her, or something he’d never known about his sister?

"You're going to love having him fuck you."

"Excuse me?" Thomas asked.

"He's Society, just like you."

"I'm not —"

Samuel cleared his throat.

Right. It might be best not to rock what she thought she knew.  
"I'm not sure me having sex with your boyfriend is a good thing."

"That's because you haven't had sex with him yet." She grinned. "Come on, we can take care of that right now."

"Thomas," Samuel said, "If I can interject."

"Please," he replied.

"Both of you are away Thomas was kidnapped? Good. Then you'll understand that we can't simply let him wander, and that until we've ascertained that neither of you have been compromised by the people who took him, it's best if we make sure he isn't alone with either of you."

"Are you offering to join in?" Trevor asked.

"No, I'm saying you aren't having sex with him right now. I'm sure you understand security measures."

"Look there," Judith said.

Trevor took her hand. "It's okay, Dear. They're making sure he's safe. I'll make it up to you until you have a change to properly introduce me to him." He looked Thomas up and down.

"Francois, make sure they're settled in her room," Samuel instructed.

The bear nodded and escorted them.

"If you see another one of me," Thomas called, loud enough so Firmin would also hear, "do not hit on him." His sister's question

went unanswered. Once they were up the stairs he opened his mouth.

“Before you ask,” Samuel said. “Henry didn’t arrange them. He made her more receptive to our ways, but they hit it off on their own, way more often than I thought possible.”

“Great. I hope it doesn’t hold past Donal fixing their memories because I don’t need Raphael having another way to reach me.”

“I don’t think Trevor is someone that you need to worry about, but we—”

“Have a couple of problems,” Shila said from the television.

He face was replaced by the image of a collie and badger walking with a golden tiger.

“Didn’t anyone tell Paul about any of this?” Thomas demanded. He acted like Jacques and Hubert were his best buddies.

“It’s not all,” Shila said and the image changed. In his his father was walking along with Chima. The angle of the camera showed the Sigma Theta Gamma house they were heading toward. Samuel walked away, cursing in what Thomas thought was French and putting his phone to his ear.

“I can see to it that the tiger doesn’t get to the frat house,” Shila said, “but there’s strong chance this Henry’s going to realize you have other people helping you. Right now, he thinks all he’s got to deal with is you, the boys he sent to get you initially and possible a few others. You vanishing away from the Rowlings like you did made sure they were pissed and Henry won’t think they’re part of this. Samuel only has a handful of Dumier here and everyone else is borrowed from people who have no reasons to be associated with you or him.”

“And if he starts to worry, he might look at the Richards closer and nothing things aren’t as they should be,” Thomas added. “He isn’t stupid.”

“Okay, we’re not screwed,” Samuel said, returning. “The men I had on your father lost track of him. So Henry isn’t aware they were there. I spoke with Burnwood, and it’s looking that he’s going to have

full control of his family within a day.”

A day was a long time to be in Henry’s grasps. Thomas took his phone out, but Samuel had his hand on it before he could enter the number.

“He has my father, Samuel.”

“And you offering to turn yourself or his kid over in exchange for him is exactly what he’s counting on. Look at everything he’s done. You know he isn’t going to respect whatever agreement you reach with him. This is an act of desperation on his part, which means we have him where we need him. I know it’s hard, but I promise, Thomas. Whatever harm Henry inflict on your father, I will personally see to it that it’s undone. Whatever the cost.”

Thomas nodded. “One day, Samuel. I’m not sitting here not doing anything any longer than that.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“You ready?” Samuel told the ten of them.

“Can I even do this?” Thomas asked as Gilbert, Laurence, Yating and his twin, Thomas’s double and four Margay who’d come back from Houston with them. Samuel had seen to it they were properly equipped.

“I told you, Thomas, numbers don’t—”

“I’m talking about taking us to the frat. It’s not like I had Gilbert’s script anytime I was fucked there. Firmin should be doing it.”

“I don’t have your training.” His double said. “I don’t gain your knowledge of your power. You nearly died the first time you teleported with someone else. I can’t be in that state in the frat, and I did get Gil’s phrase while getting fucked in the bedroom, so I have that as a solid return point.”

Samuel put an earpiece in Thomas’s ear. “This is so you know if things change in the less than a minute you’ll be gone.”

"You took me to your bedroom when the oil fire happened, remember?" Yating said. "So you have that spot."

"Something larger would be better," Samuel said, and immediately added. "But anywhere in the Frat works."

Larger. That meant the showers. Thomas smiled, remembering the multiple orgies that had taken place there. It was nearly impossible to have a shower in the frat without it turning into —

"I've got you," Firmin said as Thomas's legs buckled under him. He watched the others move. The Richards with precision while his frat brothers followed. Then the world twisted around him and he had a moment to be amazed at how odd it felt when he wasn't the one triggering it, then they landed on a bed.

"I have Thomas," Grant said, turning him on his stomach.

"Me too," Felix said.

"You have Firmin, he needs Society sex if we're going to have him functional in anything resembling fast." The kangaroo pressed against Thomas's back.

"Maybe we should get Trevor in here," Felix said. "He seemed to really want some of that ass."

"I am not having sex with my sister's boyfriend," Thomas said, then moaned.

\*\*\*\*\*

(okay, so the whole chase is extremely rough. Some of the details are things that occurred to me on the moment as problems each side would have to deal with. I know you were hoping for a 'teleporter on speedster' fight, but this is the best I could give you for the first draft. Feel free to alter as you like)

Thomas appeared on the rooftop, cradling his bundle. "In position."



"In position," Firmin answered in his ear.

"Thomas," Shila said, "you're first. On my signal stand and look in at the frat. We want Henry to see you and his son so he'll come running. Remember, the goal between you and Firmin is to pull him to the trap while making sure he can't work your limitations."

"I know," Thomas hissed. He'd been there when the plan had been established. He and Firmin pulled Henry toward the trap while the Richards both took down whoever the bat had protecting him and storm the frat to support those Thomas had brought in. That was the real variable. No one was certain how many men were inside on top of his father, Paul, and the frat guys Henry still had under his power. The others were supposed to report with a number, but nothing had come and they hadn't wanted to wait any longer.

"Thomas, go."

Thomas stood and searched the windows until he found Henry.

It was obvious when Henry saw him. His face was against the glass, anger and hate in his eyes. He pushed away and Thomas readied to drop on Shila's signal.

The door to the frat opened, and Thomas only caught a glimpse of Chima as he stepped outside, then it was flying snow in his wake.

"Fuck!" Shila cursed.

Thomas was on top of the frat and a few seconds later, the stairwell door on the roof he'd just been on was kicked open and the hyena stepped outside.

"What is the hyena doing here?" Shila demanded. "Samuel, I thought you said he was across town!"

"That's the report I received. How come you didn't know he was inside, don't you have eyes?"

"I only have access to cameras and the one in that building

have some many blind spot it's a miracle I see anything."

"I thought you Practitioners did miracles for breakfast," Samuel snapped.

"Oh, do you want me to leave you to handle this on your own?"

"No!" Thomas yelled, and Chima looked in his direction and immediately vanished. "Fuck, we don't have time to fight, Fir, get up, I'm dropping the moment I land." He picked a rooftop as far as he could, appeared there and dropped.

"Firmin," Shila said in a calm voice. "Stand. Thomas, you can't be that far."

"This is fucking Chima, I didn't see him do a lot, but there's a reason we wanted him on the other side of the city. I think he can break the sound barrier."

"He can't," Olavo replied. "His body can't take the stress. He also has to stop to open doors. His body can take more abuse due to his speed than Owen can, but he isn't indestructible. Even at a quarter speed and impact will still break bones."

"Can we use that?" Samuel asked as Thomas glanced over the brick half wall. "Trick him into running in a wall? It's winter, get him to slip at top speed?"

"Get back to the agreed location when I tell you Thomas," Shila instructed. "I have the rest of a discussion on a different channel so you won't be distracted."

"I could use the—"

"Now."

He stood, located it and dropped.

"Stand."

He did so and four rooftops away Chima saw him and was gone.

"On three, two, one, now."

He was on a different roof and crouched.

"Now," She said, and he stood, located the hyena and teleported on her instruction while Firmin took his position.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas had no idea where he was in relation to the frat. Or how many jumps he'd done, but they were in trouble.

"I can't do another one," Firmin said. "Fuck how did you stay ahead of everyone that first time, Thomas?"

"I didn't have to do this many jumps. How many are we at anyway?"

"Seventy-eight each," Shila replied.

"I am never letting go of your body, Thomas. Starting at zero again is going to suck."

"No idea what that means," he replied, "and really not the time. Shila, what's the status on the frat?"

"No idea. Someone in there realized I had access to cameras and trashed all but three and nothing's going on in any of those closets."

Firmin chuckled. "Right, we never did take those out."

"Okay, so Henry's out of the question, can the trap handle Chima?"

"So long as he stands still long enough to be hit, yes," She replied.

"Okay, then I'm going to take him there, and then you guys can storm the frat or something."

"Sure," she replied dryly. "I'll pass that along."

He stood and looked around. Chima saw him and

disappeared. Thomas waiting.

“Thomas,” Shila warned.

When the door opened, he teleported. He turned and all that was visible on the other roof was a wake of snow. He searched through it, but couldn’t see Chima. Where—

The door on his roof opened and Thomas startled, teleporting out of the arms closing around where he’d been. Before he could pick another roof, Chima returned and Thomas had to teleport again. And again. And again.

Fuck. He was nearly teleporting blind with all the snow Chima’s running kept in the air. He could make out the edge of the roof and that was about it. He got it and didn’t wait, making out the next one through the snow.

Arms closed around him as he willed himself there and he was rolling from the momentum. His breath coming hard.

“Finally,” the hyena said, and came into view, blocking Thomas’s field of vision. “You shouldn’t have left, Thomas. Sigma Theta Gamma’s family. It’s the only real family anyone of us has. It really hurt that you betrayed us like that.” He smiled. “But Henry’s merciful.”

Thomas didn’t see the fist that knocked him out.

## CHAPTER-54

Regaining consciousness was hard. He felt like he was fighting through molasses. Opening his eyes was a chore, and his body was heavy and listless. He still moved enough to feel the pain in his ankle and the resistance. He did the unsurmountable and raised his head to look down his naked body. There was a leather band around the painful ankle. From the angle, he saw the points piercing into his skin and could barely make out symbols on the leather.

His head dropped back and the thoughts that he knew how he was too tired and that it had been a particularly well-crafted piece were interrupted by the pain of the back hitting something hard. Stone hard.

Once the stars cleared, he realized he was in the frat's basement, and he could just make out sounds of violence in the distance. No matter what else was doing on, the fighting wasn't over. He couldn't decide if that boded well or not for his side. Looking to the side, his eyes fell on a man's cock and balls. Nice ones too. Not hard, which surprised him, but with girth Thomas knew he'd feel entering him. Soft it didn't look that long, but the guy could be a grower. Despite the situation, Thomas hoped he'd feel it in him and raised his gaze to tell the man and his blood froze.

His father looked down at him, smiling gently. "Welcome back, kiddo. I was starting to worry." He ran a hand along the side of Thomas's head. "But everything's going to be alright now. Whatever they did to you, Henry's going to fix it, and then we'll be able to be a happy family again."

"Dad?"

"Of course." The smile faltered. "You remember me, right? Please say you remember me. If they took that I—"

"I remember you, Dad," Thomas answered. "I'm just surprised you're here." *Naked, looking at me with an expression I really don't think a dad should have for his son.* He remembered Gavin and Laurence

kissing and—but that wasn't something he wanted to think of when his father had love and lust in his eyes.

"Where else would I wait for my son but in the place where I was part of making him a man?"

Thomas was going to kill Henry. He was going to strangle him with his bare hands for giving those kinds of memories to his father and his brother. He kept the anger out of his voice as best as he could.

"Dad, you need to help me get out of here. Can you take off that thing around my ankle?"

"I'm sorry Thomas," Eric said, sounding saddened, "but that has to stay on." His father ran a finger along the line delineating the black of his upper body from the white that ran the contour of his bicep. "Right now, you think Henry's the enemy, but he isn't. He's one of your best friends. You were the one who brought him to my—"

"Can we not?" Thomas cut his father off. As if the idea he thought the two of them had had sex already wasn't enough. He also thought he and Henry had... Fuck, they had had sex. It wasn't just an implanted memory.

His father's hand reached his stomach and kept moving down. He was now hard, and as Thomas had suspected, his father was a grower. He did what he could not to react to the approaching hand, to the lowering head, the muzzle approaching his, the desire in his father's eyes.

"Well, seems our favorite rat's finally awake," Henry said, entering the room, a golden tiger pressed against him on one side and a brown bear on the other. The bear was in the same body armor as those who had assaulted the frat, while Henry and Paul were naked and hard. Thomas thought that was one of the Dumier guys, and if it was, did that mean they were losing badly? How else would Henry have had the time to give him new memories?

At least the arrival had caused his father's hand to stop reaching for Thomas's erect cock, and the lips from touching as he turned his head and straightened. There was nothing in his father's

behavior that said he'd been caught doing something he shouldn't. He was simply respectful of someone who had more authority. Or was it a prior claim to Thomas?

"Hey Thomas," Paul greeted him happily. "Glad to have you back. Fuck, have I missed you. And missed fucking you."

"Francois," Henry told the bear, "please stay by the door. You know how desperate our enemies are to take Thomas from us. You're all that is keeping us safe."

"I will not fail you," the bear answered, adoration in his eyes as he pulled the machine gun in front of him and took position.

Eric made space for Henry by Thomas while Paul stay a few steps back.

"Thomas, Thomas, Thomas," Henry said with a long-suffering sigh. "Do you have any idea of the problems you've been causing me?"

"I'm not the one going around biting people like a bad vampire stereotype and screwing with their memories," Thomas replied.

Henry smiled. "Is that supposed to be a did at my family? It would hurt more if I actually knew any of that. All I know about them is what was in the book, and it's more implications than anything else." He grabbed Thomas's muzzle hard enough the pain should have caused him to cry out, but the bat kept his muzzle shut so only a whimper escaped. "I really should—" Henry stopped and took a breath, then gently let Thomas's muzzle go.

"That hurt," Thomas snapped.

"I'm sorry. The way you left was hurtful. The fact you managed to turn my boys against me. That..." Henry patted his chest. "That was a knife through my chest. That you took my son?" The bat's hands shook, and it took him a few seconds to regain control. "So you'll fucking forgive me if I'm having trouble being as gentle as your father."

"Henry," Eric said, warning in his voice. "That isn't his fault."

They turned him and the others against you. That's on them, not my son."

"Of course," Henry said with an annoyed roll of the eyes. "And don't worry. By the time I'm done, neither of you will remember my anger and what I almost did." His smile became nasty as he looked at Thomas's hard cock. "I can't wait to make you remember all the things you and your father got up to. Considering how I know you feel about that stuff, I'm going to the memories nice and slow so you can really appreciate the craft I put in it. Oh, and you taking your brother for the first time? I can't wait for his ceremony of dominance so he can return the favor."

"You're fucking sick."

"Thomas, language," Eric chastised.

"Oh common, Dad, he's talking about me having forced myself on Roland, don't tell me to watch my language on that."

Paul snickered. "Force yourself? They really did a number on your memories if you think you had to force yourself on him. Your brother had to have been one of the most eager bottom I've ever known. Makes me want to get to know more Society guys who are at that stage."

"Never fear Paul, I'll see to it that you do." Henry grinned at Thomas's hateful glare. "Now think about it. Of course, their memories match. I can't have people who interact so often have conflicting memories. Paul remembers everything Roland and your father do." He smiled at the tiger. "Took part in a lot of it, didn't you Paul."

The tiger stroked himself. "Yeah, and I can't wait to get Thomas home so me, his dad, and Roland can celebrate his return."

"Stop that. Keep it for later. You don't have our stamina." He looked at Thomas again. "Neither does your father. Which I couldn't understand until I had Francois's memories. Your mother's side, I would never have thought about that." He smiled and leaned in. "But now, I think it's time for me to find out what you've been up to while



you were away.”

“Don’t,” Thomas warned angrily and tried to pull away, but his glaring was all he had the energy for.

“Come on, Thomas. Don’t you remember? You love this part.”

Thomas winced at the bite and opened his mouth to protest, but suddenly there was a distance between himself and his body. As if he floated in a space and watched events from his life. He felt Henry suck on his neck and at the same time, those events stretched and separated, like two identical images projected on the same spot, then one moved away. It felt like all his memories were being pulled like that.

Then he slammed back into himself as Henry disengaged.

“Wow,” the bat exclaimed. “That’s vivid.” He shook his head. “Okay, give me a moment.” He chuckled. “Oh I need to get my hands on that squirrel, definitely am not letting the Chamber get him.” He looked at Thomas, his expression hurt. “I am so sorry, Thomas.” He placed a tender hand on his cheek. “I can’t believe someone calling himself your elder would ever do that to you. I... I’m going to give you your revenge, Thomas. You have my word. The ways I was going to punish you for abandoning me as you did wouldn’t even register against that.” He drew a symbol on Thomas’s shoulder he couldn’t see, then the stinging of the bite went away.

“You think I fucking want revenge?” Thomas demanded, and he saw his father shake his head in reproach. “I’m not you. I don’t want people to suffer just because they screwed me over. If there’s a justice system in this thing, you can be fucking sure I’m going to drag him in front of it, but that’s justice.”

Henry smiled. “How so very magnanimous of you. I’m going to have to make sure that isn’t something you remember. I can’t have you going holier than thou on me when I have you taking me around and changing so many people’s memories.” He stepped away. “But I need to refresh the memories so I can be sure they match.” He stepped behind Paul, and without prompting he offered his neck to the bat.

“Leave him alone!”

Henry looked amused as he kept his eyes on Thomas and bite into the offered neck. Paul shuddered and moaned, leaning back against the bat who ran a finger against the trembling hard cock.

Thomas wrenched his gaze away. If the bat had touched him like that, he was — Eric was looking at him. Fuck there was so much love in those eyes. Thomas wasn't sure what hurt more, that his father had never displayed those emotions or that it took Henry screwing up his memories for him to do it.

Of course, the lust, he could do without.

“How are you doing?”

Thomas groaned in annoyance. “Like I've been violated, how else do you think I'd feel Dad?”

“They had no right doing that to you,” Eric replied angrily.

“Not them, him.” His head bob toward Henry, still holding Paul, only had enough strength to be a nod. Thomas lowered his voice. “Dad, he's the monster here. The things you remember they're wrong.”

Eric smiled. “So you're saying I don't love you more than life itself? That after your mother, you, your brothers, and your sister are the most important people in my life?”

“No, of course, I'm not saying that. But come on, Dad, those memories? You and...” He couldn't get himself to even say it.

Eric rubbed his head. “They really messed you up if you don't remember how things go in the Society.”

Thomas closed his eyes. A mix of not showing his annoyance and of enjoying his father's touch. He couldn't talk his father into going against Henry, that was clear. No matter how he cared, the bat had made sure he saw Henry as one of the good people in their lives. Still, his father cared, so maybe he could use that to escape.

“Dad?”

“Yes, son.”

“That thing around my ankle, it hurts.”

“I’m sorry, but it’s needed. You’re not yourself. Once Henry brings you back, we’ll take it off.”

Fuck.

Thomas nodded. “Can you at least sit me up? This stone’s hard on my back.” His father placed a hand behind him and raised him. Then Thomas let himself fall forward, pulling his hand up and onto the leather band. He started pulling at it and ignored the pain or the blood that started pouring around it.

“Thomas, stop, you’re just hurting yourself.”

The leather was harder than it should, he thought, so he pulled harder and cried out in pain. Eric pulled his hands away.

“Let go of me.”

“You’re hurting yourself, Thomas. I’m not going to let you do that.”

“No, but you have no problem letting some crazy bad do it, don’t you?”

Eric sighed. “You know that’s not true. Henry only has your best interest in mind, just like I do.”

“Oh, fuck you.” Thomas tried to shove his father away, but couldn’t muster the strength. “You only have my best interest in mind when they line up with yours. The rest of the time I’m just someone you need to fix.”

“What? That’s not true, Thomas. I love you exactly as you are. Henry—”

“So what’s your constant pushing me to find my major then? You loving me the way I am? I swear, Dad. Sometimes I don’t even know if you know who I am, instead of who you decided I have to be.”

\* \* \*

(okay, if you keep this, the scene between these two back in the grotto will have to be altered because the way I remember it, there's too much of a resolution of this aspect of their relationship there, and I think we need the anger here the way the outline called for it.)

Eric pulled away in shock and horror.

Before Thomas could lay into his father some more someone clapped. Thomas glared at Henry. Paul was still leaning against the bat with a symbol on his breast. Thomas thought it was the one for healing, but the angle and fur were making it tough to be sure.

"Well," Henry said, "I'm glad you got that out of your system. It's going to be so much more satisfying when I make you forget about it. Maybe I'll leave that nagging doubt in there that you're never quite living up to your father's expectation, that you can never entirely believe that you deserve the love he showers on you."

"Why don't you just erase me and turn me into a perfectly obedient little doll for you to use how you please?"

"You mean like Raphael was going to do to you?" Henry shook his head. "I'm far more imaginative than that. You'll be obedient, but it'll be because you want to be. Not because I told you to. We are going to be the best of friends. Growing up together, I'll have shown you the pleasure of sex. Been first in your ceremonies. Then, when the time comes, you'll be the one who shows me the pleasure of sex. After you've helped me rescue my son, of course, but Francois knows where he is, so I do to and with your teleportation, it'll be simple to get him."

Thomas started to object and point out his power didn't work that way, but he caught Eric's frown, and everything Henry said fully registered. Did he realize he was contradicting things his father remembered? Did he not care? When he could simply rewrite someone's memories to his liking, being free with what he said was probably easy.

“What about what I want out of life?”

Henry snorted. “What do you want, Thomas? Some liberal arts degree that’ll mean you get to flip burgers at a local joint? Be realistic, you don’t want anything.” Henry was next to him, obstructing Thomas’s view of his father. “When I’m done with you, you will finally want something. You’ll finally be able to decide, instead of meandering through life like some lost quad looking to be made happy. You’re going to decide me. I will be what makes you happy.” He grinned. “Well, maybe after watching you suffer, but in the end, you’ll be happy. You and your father and your brother. You’ll finally get to fuck him and not feel this constant guilt for wanting me.” Henry was stroking himself. “Do you have any idea how thankful that brother of yours would have been if you’d just snuck into his bed and taken him? How many times he jerked off to that idea? Well, I gave him that. You taking him in the middle of the night, showing him just how good his big brother was.”

The bat took Thomas’s muzzle and used a finger to part it open while still stroking himself. “I’ll even have you remember that too. That’s the nice thing about what I can do. I don’t have to make you suffer right now. Anytime I fuck you, anytime you suck me off, maybe that’ll be when I decide to alter your memory. Maybe I’ll take Roland out of your life, maybe, I’ll turn that night of ecstasy into you raping your baby brother. And the best thing about it,” he added with a moan, “is that once you’ve swallowed this load, you won’t even know to fear it coming. Each time it’s going to hit you utterly by surprise and that is going to be so fucking good, Thomas. You and your family are going to be so fucking entertaining.”

He put the head of his cock in Thomas’s mouth. “Not get ready to—” A loud thwack sounded and the bat fell sideways. Eric stood there, panting heavily, a broken mask in his hands with a bit of blood on it. The mask of a predator with long incisors and a prey’s antlers. The mask Chima wore both times.

The mask Thomas had learned since was the representation of the god the Society followed. That he followed now.

“Way to go Dad!”

“What did you do?” Paul called.

Eric rounded on the brandishing both halves. “He was going to hurt my son,” Eric snarled. Paul took an immediate step back. The bear was looking at the situation, confused. “Maybe I didn’t do right by him, but I swear to Him, that no one will ever hurt my son again.” He glared at the bear. “Is that clear?”

The bear nodded. “I... I’m not sure what I remember’s right.”

“Maybe he didn’t do a good enough job with you in the rush to get you on his side,” Thomas said. “You were part of the people trying to stop him this morning.”

The bear looked at the machine gun, then took the magazine out and leaned against the wall.

“Aren’t we going to need that to get out of here?” Thomas asked. In the distance, there was an explosion and the ensuing fighting sounded closer.

“I can’t know what else he did to me, if there’s some memory of an order to kill you if you try to escape, I can’t risk it. And I was hoping you could teleport us out.”

“That isn’t going to happen with that on me.”

The bear unsheathes a giant knife and cut the leather off. Thomas didn’t feel any different, as the bear traced a sigil with the blood, but he still felt better. “I’m not going to be able to get us anywhere without being fucked.” He stared at his ankle as it healed.

“I can take care of that,” Eric offered.

“No!” Thomas protested.

“Are you okay if I do it?” Paul asked hesitantly, as Eric looked shattered by the refusal.

“Yes, but it’s best if it’s Francois. I get from Society cock, and I don’t think we want to linger.”

Henry moaned on the ground.

“Fuck, tie him up first. We don’t want him getting away. Gag him too. If you know where the chastity belt is, put that on him.”

The bear looked horrified at that idea, but he did gag and tie the bat. By the time he was done, the fighting was far too close for Thomas’s liking. The bear was up and undoing his pants when rushed steps down the stairs sounded. Francois looked at where the machine gun was, but before he could react, a margay with a gun ran in. He skidded to a stop, raising it as the bear took a step forward.

“Whoa, it’s me, Firmin,” the margay said, hand not stopping until the gun pointed at the ceiling. “This was one of the Richard still under Henry’s control. When you were captured, we couldn’t fuck around anymore, so this was the idea we had. I freed the others, who, thank His cum Henry hadn’t screwed over again, and we were able to let the others in.” He looked around. “Where’s Henry?”

Francois grabbed the bat by the nape and pulled him up.

“Good. Now we need to get out of here.” The fighting sounded even louder.

“I can’t do it,” Thomas said. “Henry had me drained, and it doesn’t sound like there’s time.”

The margay undressed and changed into a badger in the process. Firmin grinned. “Lucky for you, I’m here and there fresh blood as your DNA.”

“Isn’t using blood a no-no?” Thomas asked.

“No, it’s just something to be very careful around,” the bear said. “There’s a lot of power in blood.”

A finger through a wet smear of blood and seconds later the badger was changing into a rat. He moved to the center. “Hold on everyone, and once we arrive. I’m going to need to be thoroughly fucked.” He looked Eric up and down. “Definitely by you after Francois.”

Eric looked from one Thomas to the other, then shook his head. “I don’t think it would be appropriated for me to have sex with my

son, even if you're not really him." There was sadness when he said it, but also determination.

"Oh well, I'll survive I guess." Something exploded in the stairwell and the world shifted.

\* \* \*



## CHAPTER-55

Thomas tested the door and smiled as the handle turned. It seemed they hadn't thought to lock it. He cracked it open and soft voice came from down the corridor, out of sight. That would be where those people making his life difficult would be. He glanced left and right and other than a couple of inmates shuffling along, no one else.

He slipped out of the room and quietly closed the door, then hurried toward... where could he go? Dressed the way he was, it wasn't like he could escape. Anyone looking at him would know he belonged in this place. And this gown did nothing to hide his erection.

Fuck, less than twenty-four hour in here without sex and he was going crazy.

If he couldn't get out, maybe he could find someone. That marmot who'd brought him lunch had been cute, well, he was a guy, at this point Thomas didn't get too much beyond that, but he had looked Thomas over, so maybe he was interested? Could they fuck on one of the beds, or was there rules against that?

Why had he been dumped here? It wasn't like they could do anything for him that Olavo couldn't or hadn't already. Thomas was perfectly fine.

Except for needing sex.

That was starting to be a problem.

He was even considering jerking off.

Where was that nurse?

He turned a corner and nearly walked into someone. Golden fur with brown stripes.

"Thomas?" Paul asked.

"Paul?"

“Should you be out of your room?” they both asked together, then snickered.

Thomas grabbed his arm and pulled him through the closest door. Not a bedroom, but not a storage closet either, so it would do. This looked to have been a coffee station at one point, the machine still on the long counter by the sink, but without the carafe. There was plenty of space, and chairs. So he could make this work.

He pulled on to Paul and sat on the other. His hand on pushing his gown up. The golden tiger glanced at it as he sat and smirked. “How come the first words out of your mouth weren’t for me to bed over?”

“You’re seriously asking that after everything I put you through? Donal did restore your memories, right?”

“He did.” Paul crossed a leg over the other, which moved the gown he wore just enough Thomas saw the bottom of his balls. “Which is how I remember that I’m the one who convinced you to come to that first frat party, the one that turned into your first ceremony, and introduced you to your frat brothers. If I hadn’t pushed, none of this would have happened. So if someone’s to blame, it’s me.”

“Except that if I hadn’t run like I did, Henry wouldn’t have—”

“Again, it wouldn’t have happened if I hadn’t pushed you.”

“You didn’t push, you nudged. I was more than willing to get laid by a bunch of hot guys, just too nervous to outright say yes.”

“Then how about we stop trying to take the blame?” Paul asked. “How are you doing?”

“Horny,” Thomas replied, exasperated. “Can you imagine this? They dumped me in a normal hospital without one guy here to help me out.”

“Wow, that hurts.”

“What?”

Paul grinned and pushed himself off the chair and in Thomas's face. "I'm here." A hand closed on Thomas's hard cock, "and I can help."

The door opened. "I knew I'd find you two going at it," Judith said.

"We aren't, yet," Thomas replied. He looked around Paul, he grinned and didn't move his hand, at all. "Now go away so we can get to it."

"Oh, is my little brother worried I might see him get off?" She patted herself. "Now where's my phone, I need to show Trev what you look like down there so he can anticipate it."

"I am not having sex with your boyfriend," Thomas exclaimed. "Start already," he told Paul he just shook his head and chuckled. "Why are the two of you still together anyway? I know Donal fixed your memories."

"And our love survived knowing the truth," she said theatrically. "We are meant to be. And do. Guys. Lots of them. Paul, how do you feel about getting to know Trevor so you can join us?"

Paul looked over his shoulder. "I don't know you well enough for that to happen. So if I get to know Trevor that well, you'll have to be content with watching."

She nodded. "So the date's got to be with me and him, then the dance floor. Got it."

"You are not having sex with my sister," Thomas warned the tiger.

"Who's holding whose cock, Thomas?" Paul countered.

"Fine. Now go away, Judith."

She sighed. "Can't. There's a bunch of men at your room and looking around for you. The kind of men who aren't going to be happy being made to wait, no matter how much they like your ass."

“Oh now there someone here who can take care of this,” Thomas complained. “Where were they eighteen hours ago?”

“Keeping a certain rat from jetting into Minneapolis, I expect,” Paul said, letting go of the cock.

Thomas cursed. Right, it wasn’t like his problems were over. He stood and consider taking off the gown so they’d know what state he was in, but decided that the other patient on the floor probably didn’t need the chock. He stood and moved the gown over his cock. There was nothing he could do about the tent.

“Before you head there. Any idea where Yating and his twin brother are? Me and Trevor are in the mood for a four-way.”

“No,” Thomas replied. “And if I did, I wouldn’t tell you.”

“I can give you Yahui’s phone number,” Paul said.

Thomas glared at the smirking tiger and mouthed, “traitor,” before exiting the room and heading to confront his torturers.

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“Are you certain you wish to do this?” Ezequiel asked. “You don’t have to. He can’t hurt you anymore.”

Thomas nodded. “I need him to know that. I need him to know that how he tried to hurt me though my family didn’t work.”

The men what had been waiting for him had been Byrnwood Richard, Ezequiel Medeiros, and a quietly angry Gavin Rowling along with a set of bodyguards each. They’d explained the situation with Henry, as well as Raphael, who, in spite of all road block put before him would be in Minneapolis soon to claim what was his. i.e. his wayward family. Then Thomas was finally fucked and fucked well.

After that he’d received clothing, and had been escorted here by Ezequiel. Other than still being in Minneapolis, Thomas had no idea where here was. The capybara nodded to the guard standing by the door, and it opened.

“If you are even slightly afraid, Thomas, use the app I showed you and I will be in there instantly.”

Thomas nodded and entered.

The door closed behind him, and it was only him and Henry. As well as a three inch sheet of bullet proof glass separating them. Henry was secured to a cross, arms away from his body, legs right together. He wore a muzzle and someone had put a cock cage on him. One that looked a lot like the one Henry used as punishment at the frat. Wouldn't have be poetic justice.

“Thomas,” Henry called, “I am so glad you came to see me. Be a dear and untie me so we can properly celebrate our reunion.”

“You really thing I'm that stupid?” Thomas replied.

“More like hoped you were. Enjoy your freedom, I'll have you back soon enough, and there. There won't be any playing around. I'll make you mine and you're going to help me take over. I tried disappearing. Trying to live quietly, under everyone's radar, and see what that gave me. This time I'm not going to bother. I will be king of this Society, and you will be my favorite fuck toy.”

“Dream on.”

“Oh know, it isn't a dream. You think this is going to hold me? One little cut and I will have a servant, and with that, freedom, and then you. Or maybe that's why you're actually here. You need my protection. He Raphael here already, ready to claim you? Are you ready to go back to that room he kept you in? I'm actually looking forward to finally meeting him. Sample his memories. If I'd had that, this fiasco would never have happened. It's his fault I lost. Well, having to try to get him right in Madoc's memories without knowing the man other than from his memories. I didn't realize erasion his son would cause him to unravel like that and decide to help you.” He sighed. “Live and learn, I supposed. Speaking of which, Here is Horst. Where is my son.”

Thomas saw it then, the glimmer of fear in the bat's eyes. Was it for Horst's safety? Did he actually care for someone other than him,

or was it for the loss of the future he represented? The idea he'd have to grow to be more than in his mid-thirties before he could be a teenager again. The why didn't matter. Thomas saw how to hurt him then. How to stab a figurative knife in the bat's heart and twists and twist it again. Make him feel a fraction of the pain he'd inflicted to Thomas and the people around him.

It was so tempting to be that petty.

"He's fine," Thomas said. "Not that you're going to see him again. Tell me something. Is there anything left of Henry or his Heindrick the only person left in that skull of yours?"

The bat rolled his eyes. "Henry was always just a place holder for me. For the real owner of this body. Same as Horst. Don't make the mistake of thinking he's a person, of getting attached to him. He's me, and when I get my son back, I am going to make you pay for ever taking him away."

"You're not going to get him back," Thomas said. "This is your last day. Last few hours actually. Then have someone on his way, and once he's here. Your life ends. For good."

Henry snorted. "They aren't going to kill me. I'm the last of my line. They wouldn't dare wipe a line away. You'll see. They're going to put me in a comfortable room, do their best to make sure I don't subvert the men they send to satisfy me, but they'll fail. I am so much better at taking care of others than they are. You'll see, once you are in my care again."

"You aren't the last of your family, Henry. Horst is. With him alive, they don't need you." Thomas wished his words were literal, that someone would come here to kill Henry, to remove all possibility of him ever hurting someone again, but the bat was right about the others not wanting to end his line. It had already happened a few times, and they were willing to do a lot to keep it from happening again. Like put the bat in stasis until Horst was an adult and a father.

Still the silent shock on the bat's face was satisfying. And Thomas smiled. That was enough for him. Others would deal with him from this point forward. When he left them, Gavin and

Byrnwood were arguing about who had the stronger claim to Henry future prison. Gavin stated that two Rowlings had been directly hurt by the bat, while only one Richard had been in the frat. By that standard, the arguing was going to get a lot louder when the other families got involved.

Thomas turned and exited as Henry began screaming for him to come back. The door closed on promised of giving Thomas everything he wanted. And the bat was, at least in part. Having Henry out of his life forever was part of what he wanted.

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Thomas stepped into his parent's house to chaos. Nadia was directing people carrying boxes; most were margays with a few bears and one badger, which meant Firmin was in the crowd, somewhere, as someone else.

"Thomas!" a man called, then he was hugged and kissed, one the mouth, with tongue.

He pushed his father away. "Dad!"

Eric stepped back, confused, then shamed. "I'm sorry. I keep forgetting you don't remember how we were."

"Forgetting or hoping?" Thomas replied, and was happy he kept the accusation out of his tone. Henry had inadvertently given Eric something he hadn't realized he'd wanted until he had two set of memories to compare. A life where he and his son never had real conflicts. Where his narrow focus on making sure his children had the best they could get out of life hadn't cause low level stress that culminated with Thomas running away from his father more often than toward him.

"We talked about this, Dad. We need to work on our relationship. And that means we haven't had sex, we aren't lovers. I love you, but as my dad."

He saw the pain in his father's eyes, but also the determination that made Eric Hertz such a force to be reckoned with.

His father had a plan, and he would see it through and Thomas was certain he knew where it would put the two of them, and he hope to God, no to his god that he'd be ready when that happened.

Nadia called, and Eric gave Thomas tender smile before turning away and going to help his wife direct the helpers clear the house. He needed to go take care of his things. He turned for the stairs and a margay stood before him.

"You don't have to leave, you know that right? My family can protect you and yours."

"Kuno, I already explained it to Byrnwood, the only thing my family staying here causes is more death. Raphael is going to declare war on your family if you're the ones keeping him from me. If not for my power, then for the kick in the balls I'm about to administer him. The best thing we can do is disappear for a while. Let Raphael cause some other disaster he needs to deal with. But we will be back. Minneapolis is our home, that isn't going to change."

The margay nodded. "And we'll have the house ready for you when you do. The deed's been transfered, what you aren't taken will be put in storage and.... I wish I could help."

"I know, none of this is your fault, Kuno."

"It isn't yours either."

"So I'm told, but what Raphael did is because of me. You just got pulled into it because Henry controlled what you remembered. Look, I have to go pack my stuff. I might have to move with little notice and I want to make sure the stuff I need to go with my parents will be ready. Look, I can literally appear in your bed, so we will talk again. I'm still your frat brother."

Kuno nodded and stepped out of the way.

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Thomas only had one box of stuff he wanted to go with his parents to their new place. The rest... when had the things of his childhood stop meaning the world to him? There was stuff at the frat,



but he wasn't allowed there. No one was until the building had been thoroughly checked out. At least for the rest of the semester, Sigma Theta Gamma wouldn't exist as a place for guys to get all the sex they could stand, and then some. When they opened it up it would probably be an entirely new set of guys moving in.

There was a knock and Thomas looked over his shoulder. Roland stood in the doorway, looking uncomfortable. Thomas readied himself for a variation on what happened with his father, except he and Roland hadn't spoken. This was the first time they were face to face since his brother had tried to knock him out.

"I'm not coming in," Roland said. "I want to, but I won't. I still have stuff to sort out," he tapped the side of his head. "But there's something I need to tell you, Thomas."

Thomas nodded and readied himself. Considering what Henry had had his brother remember, this was not going to be pretty.

"I want you."

"Wait, what?" That was not what he'd expected to hear. He couldn't be hearing that. "No, that's the memories Henry gave you, your—"

"This is me, Thomas. Fuck, stop projecting what you want on me, okay? That's Dad's thing. Yes, the stuff that Dad did to me change things, but it's made me realize what I was so fucking pissed at you all the time. I've wanted you. I think since that first time I caught sight of you naked in the shower, but I didn't know what to do with how I felt. How you made me feel. I'm not supposed to want to have sex with my brother. Well, that's what the rest of the world says anyway. Now it turns out I'm part of a group who thinks that's perfectly normal. I think it's normal too, part of the time."

Thomas sat on the bed. He wasn't sure what hurt more. That Henry had been telling the truth when he spoke of how Roland felt, or that his brother had just said he was acting like their Dad.

He let the breath out. "Okay. Moment of truth then. I needed you to be straight, Rol, because that way, how I feel about you would

never lead to anything.”

“So this thing between us isn’t as impossible as I thought it was?” Roland asked, and the hope in his brother’s voice hurt.

“It’s not that simple. For one thing you’re fifteen.”

“Like that stopped anyone else.”

“Please don’t talk about that. The idea you’ve had sex is one I’m having a tough time dealing with and definitely don’t tell me with whom. My imagination had an easy enough time driving me insane with the possibility. It doesn’t need conformation. For another, I don’t have a set of memory where it’s normal for me to contemplate having sex with you. All I have is a bunch of people telling me it’s fine, but when some of them have no problem taking advantage of situations, it makes what they’re saying tough to take to heart. I want it to, Rol. But with me, there’s baggage that comes attached.”

His brother nodded. “I’ll work out my shit, and you work yours and hopefully we can meet up in the middle, get naked and have hot sex?”

Thomas groaned. “I did not need that image in my head, Rol.”

“I can’t be the only one with it stuck there.”

“Roland!” someone called. “Come on, stop fucking your brother, I’m your favorite one.”

Thomas swallowed. “You and Neil?”

“It got complicated once we both had two sets of memories to parse, but not as much as the rest of the team. How not one of them is suing the pants out of the the school for what we got up to I have no idea. Not to say of them now remembering not having been gay. Coach quit, that’s going to be rough for the playoff. It’s going to suck not being part of it, but not worth the shit storm that’s coming.”

“That’s about to be here,” Madoc said, head poking in the bedroom, phone to his ear. “Shila just confirmed his jet landed at the airport. If we’re doing this, now is the time. The Medeiros can get your

family there and you'll just them."

"Sorry, Rol, I have to jet." Thomas stepped by his brother and paused. He hugged him then followed after Madoc. "Gil?" he asked.

"He and Laurence are already in Kansas City, they're hoping it's going to be quick, because they're already under house arrest for coming with us. They really want be back before either of their fathers realizes they left."

"How..." he didn't bother. How the two Rowlings could be away for at least a day and no one realize wasn't his problem.

"Ettore confirmed he's on board, as did Trevor. The guy is really in love with your sister, I've never seen one of us willing to switch side over a woman before," Mados opened the door to the ground floor guest bedroom and Yating and Yahui were waiting for the two of them, along with Olavo, Jacque and Firmin, in some bear's body, and, of course. Limbani."

"Out of those," the monkey ordered, pointing to Thomas's pants.

"Won't your dad have a problem with you helping us?" Thomas asked Olavo as he took them off.

"My father is a believe in plausible deniability. So I haven't mentioned our little excursion."

"Firmin, how much trouble is this going to cause you?"

"Too much," Jacques answered, glaring at the bear. "This is exactly what they're afraid of, you know that, right? Whoever that is is who the Lewistons are going to blame."

"You don't have to come," the bear answered.

"It's my job to make sure you don't do anything wrong." Jackal replied, then grinned. "And I wouldn't miss hurting the guy responsible for the pain Madoc's felt for the whole world."

"I wish Chima was with us," Thomas said. "His speed would

come in really handy.”

“He’d want to help,” Madoc said, placing hand on Thomas’s arm. “But his family called him back the instant they learned about the memory manipulation.” The others took hold of Thomas with Limbani being last, and taking hold of Thomas’s cock.

“You couldn’t help yourself, could you,” Thomas said.

“There’s no where else,” The monkey replied innocently.

Thomas rolled his eyes and focused. He may have hated what was done to him in that room, but if there was one thing that being raped on my nearly hourly basis had done was imprint it in sharp details in his memory. The room right inside Raphael’s base of operation.

Thomas grinned. This was going to hurt the elder like nothing else.

“I’m coming Victor,” he whispered. “I’m going to get you out of there.” You and whoever else wanted to leave. Raphael wanted to have total control over his little family? Well, Thomas was going to let him have that by keeping an out to those who wanted nothing to do with it.