

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 newfound 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!” Grand 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.