

## 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 group's 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.

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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.”



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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 1.5-42

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, anyway.

The rat made it to the kitchen in time to watch Donal close the lid over a burning pan while Yating shoved Gilbert into 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.

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alleviate his own boredom. Two days with nothing to do but the other guys to pass the time had ended up getting to everyone. Well, everyone but Donal who just fiddled with his toy, although now it looked larger with parts of a toy car attached to it.

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Limbani's moaning and scream for Felix to fuck him harder came from the living room. Within half the first day, the monkey had had sex in every room in the house. That was three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a laundry room, the kitchen, the dining room, the garage, and finally the unfinished basement. He had now upped his goal to be having 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, rubbing up and down? How about leaving a trail of cum.

Thomas suspected those were the reasons 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 sheets had been so sharp he nearly cut himself on them.

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He went up the stairs and reached the second floor as Olavo exited the master bedroom, naked, hard, and wiping cum off the side of his mouth with a finger. "What's the smell?" the capybara asked.

"Gilbert's boredom," Thomas responded. "He played chemistry set with whatever cleaners were under the sink. If you know 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."

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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 sorts. Olavo played online poker, Felix complained about the poor quality of the fake

wooden furniture, Limbani had sex, Yating did a lot of online reading, and Gilbert had been doing research too... Thomas had thought that last one was to continue working on his doctorate, now he wasn't so sure.

Donal had his... Thomas felt wrong calling it a toy with the care the squirrel took with 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.

That just left him and Madoc. Thomas wandered the house, doing his best to avoid Limbani as he had no intention of fucking in the basement and that was the only room the monkey hadn't dragged him to. While Madoc sat in the chair in the master bedroom unless someone pulled him to the bed for sex.

"Hey," Thomas greeted the other rat as he walked in. 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?" Thomas probed. "With the way you guys have sex I can't see you all having your own private mansions spread across the city."

"My family's dead," Madoc snapped, "An if you have to know, my home's in Denver, not in this forsaken place Rapheal 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'm sorry for not specifying I meant Lewiston family instead of... other things. But remember we have different memories of how things are."

The other rat sighed, "I so can't wait for that Mercier mind reader to get here and fix all of this."

One of Raphael's men 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?" Thomas asked. "You never mentioned Denver before."

"I-" he closed his mouth and rat a hand over his face. "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 politics. Sucked off the Cormorans to the point they did whatever he told them, and that included getting my family kicked out of Denver. And this was just months after we lost nearly three-quarters of our family to some crazy killer who his family pissed off."

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“And Rapheal,” He continued fuming, “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 lost my father, three brothers, and more cousins than I can count, and all because of that cheetah, and as if that wasn’t enough,” Madoc continued with venom, “Raphael pissed him off to the point that if one of us shows up in Denver, we get arrested and sent back with a record.”

Thomas swallowed, “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 problems without turning against one another.”

Thomas tried to find something to say in response. He was pretty certain that this cheetah was talking about was the Denton Brislow that he’d fled to Minneapolis to hide from them... not something to bring up. Also, while he didn’t feel like he loved Minneapolis like an ancestral homeland, getting kicked out and told he could never return home... was kinda close to what he’s been dealing with the past few weeks.

Right. Right, no. Don’t go to either of those points. This is about Madoc and making him feel better, and while his memories were a little untrustworthy, he did recall that one time the guys saw him completely down and then did something he never thought he’d seen them do before.

\* \* \*

He got off the bed and ran a hand along the other rat's arm. "Thomas," Madoc said tiredly, "I'm not in--"

"Don't you think I look kind of thin?" Thomas whispered into Madoc's ear.

Madoc closed his eyes, "I know what you're trying to do."

"You first said I could use a little mass when I was on my back, on the altar in the frat's basement," Thomas continued as he forced a hand down Madoc's sculpted back. "When Yating forwarded you the pictures Judith sent him of Roland, you dragged my tail to the gym because you saw my genetic potential." Thomas ran his other hand down along abs to caress his adonis belt. "Then when I came back from winter break after spending almost a week in a hospital, I made a very remarkable recovery thanks to someone's secret training supplements."

Madoc chuckled at that one, and didn't resist as Thomas guided him to stand, pulling him onto the bed. Rather than mounting him, Thomas snuggled up next to him as he ran a finger along with the bigger rat's traps.

"You know, you kept saying you'd make me into Mister Universe," Thomas said, "But I think you might have been trying to get there first yourself."

The other rat outright laughed, "You said you weren't interested."

\* \* \*

“Glad we both remember that right,” Thomas said as he started cradling Madoc’s pecs. “But I thought you were aiming to get me to spend all my free time at the gym, all to get into my straight brother’s pants.” Thomas ignored the snort at the straight part. “I didn’t know you intended to just fuck me into perfection. That’s the kind of workout instructor I’d bend over for.”

Madoc rolled his eyes, “You’d still need to work out.”

Thomas raised an eyebrow. “Really? So no free drinks from the tap.” For emphasis, he leaned in and closed his lips around one of Madoc’s nipples.

Sharply inhaling, the bigger rat says, “It’s a matter of momentum. My power is separate from you working out, so if you work out on top of me buffing you, you’d just get even bigger.”

The smaller rat came up for breath and asked, “So if we want to fix all the atrophy I suffered from being on the run, we’d need to also find a gym near here?” As he asked this, Thomas crawled over Madoc and nipped down on the other nipple.

A small inhale of pleasure stalled Madoc’s response, and before he could make one the door burst open.

“There you are!” Limbani screamed, pausing as he realized what he burst in on. “...what are you two bothering with foreplay?”

Thomas sighed, only to grin sharply as an idea hit him. “OK,

forget me and Mister Olympia. What would it take to turn Limbani into a gorilla?"

Madoc frowned speculatively. "I'm not sure... we'd need to do something about the tail."

The two rats dragged a confused monkey to the bed, which was about the most resistance anyone had ever gotten from Limbani concerning sex. It did not last long.

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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 that had resulted in the monkey interrupting the Madoc therapy session. He didn't know if he was allowed, but no one said he couldn't either, and the people after him were now rooming in the same house he was, so he figured there was no harm.

Now it looked like he was about to find out he was actually a 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.

"Hey Madoc, I heard you were back in town for two whole days without requesting to see your son, so I thought I'd save you the trouble." He stepped into the house and Thomas closed the door.

Madoc watched the two approach and when Trevor offered him Pryce, he seemed unsure what to do.

"Who'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 if he could find the answer 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, “Also, sorry.”

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 name. 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 saves 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 trigger we could test.” He raised a hand as Madoc opened his mouth. “Don’t blame Trevor, this is entirely on me. And for the others, yes, you all have altered memories. No, I can’t tell the extent yet. Yes Thomas,” Samuel added looking back. “You too.”

Thomas closed his mouth.

“Yes, I know how annoying it gets,” 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 bedrooms 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 then Samuel came in and put on something of a mind reader show."

Ettore frowned.

Samuel responded, "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 more unasked questions. "No, I'm not going to be your mouthpiece. Can you imagine, me actually bothering to say all the things you're thinking? 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 hours 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 and therefore couldn't have had his memories altered. When Samuel found out Ettore had also been at the Christmas Dinner, Thomas 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 than 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 center of the living room was a woman, a red panda that looked enough like Yating that Thomas figured he knew who she was. He stared at Yating, and the panda looked sunken.

"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 is Thomas?" the woman asked. She had a thick accent.

\* \* \*

"Mother," Yating whispered, "We are guests."

"And poorly treated ones at that," she responded in a tone that reminded Thomas of his grandmother.

"Miss Guan?" Samuel asked.

"Oh, now you aren't reading minds?" Ettore whispered.

Samuel smirked. "I'm Samuel Mercier. I asked for you to come."

The panda raised an eyebrow. "I was told my son was in trouble, and I came to see him. No one asked me to come young man."

The smirk vanished from Samuel's face and appeared on Ettore once he noticed.

"Now, which one of you is Thomas," she asked again.

"I'm Thomas," the appropriate rat answered.

"I'm told you know how to cook," she stated.

"Well..." he trailed off looking at the others from the frat,

landing last on the still out of it Yating. "Yes, I can cook."

"Could you-" she began.

"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.

She shook his hand, "Ru Guan."

Thomas looked around, with everyone not as upset as Limbani and Felix were, or as shell-shocked as Yating, but there was still a tension in the air. "...so what bombshell did I miss?"

"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,” Thomas responded in shock, “You never mentioned your family.”

“What about me?” Gilbert asked. “Do I have relatives I don’t remember?”

Thomas hurriedly replied. “You have a brother who is destined to be in the NFL.”

“I remember him,” Gilbert snapped. “I meant anyone else.”

“I don’t know,” Thomas replied in exasperation. “We were friends, but it’s not like we told each other everything.” The rat scratched the top of his skull and scrunched his eyes. “Yating summarised the reason he wasn’t going home for winter break as just ‘family issues’. Same excuse as Firmin.”

Samuel frowned slightly and hummed. “When we have a moment I’d like to-”

Trevor and Ettore’s phones rang at the same time. With Ettore in the kitchen, all eyes focused on Trevor as he answered the phone. “So they’re sure?” He nodded. “We need to wrap up here, and we’ll be on our way. We can take off as soon as I’m there.” He put the phone away. “Me and Ettore 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,” the badger waved. “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 report and there's enough there to warrant action. Not one word, Mercier; this isn't what you're here for."

The badger raised his hands in surrender.

"But I can help," Thomas said, "I know the area, and can teleport."

"It takes more than a good power to be useful in the field, Thomas," Ettore said as he exited the kitchen. "A lot of us made that mistake when we were scrambling to refill our frontline ranks in the wake of the slaughter." Stopping in front of Trevor, paused and saluted, "Ready to move out, sir."

Thomas blinked, slightly surprised that this Trevor outranked Ettore, only to get whiplash when he realized that Ettore must be more than just a troubleshooter if he was being sent on this rescue mission.

Nodding back, Trevor turned to Thomas as Ettore walked out the door. "I know this isn't going to help since this is the one time you don't want to be sidelined, but really should be the one time it happens, Thomas. Raphael is going to be very interested in getting you trained up as soon as possible."

\* \* \*

“Trevor?” Madoc called to the other rat as he was turning to leave. As he turned back, Madoc held up Pyrce. “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, only to stop when Rue 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.”

“As a good boy does,” she said.

Madoc looked at the boy he was holding, looking utterly lost.

## OUTLINE-42

### Chapter 42

###

Kansas City Safehouse, Thomas, Search Squad: Mood: maybe this is my past

The safe house was a little bit more literal than Thomas was expecting. As in a literal suburban home on the outskirts of the neighborhood. Three bedroom for the seven of them, though with the amount of sex that is going to be had that shouldn't be a problem... the two bathrooms are more of an issue, as they are regular bathrooms instead of the huge things back at the fraternity. Thomas gets the idea that this place was just purchased and they're the first people actually using it. The sheets still having just purchased creases are another clue.

Still, it has frosted windows, and high privacy fences, so Limbani can finally lose his pants and be on the prowl twenty four seven again. Gilbert attempts to use the kitchen before anyone can ban him from it and immediately ~~starts a grease fire~~. Yating keeps busy doing [need to think of something]. Felix complains about the particle board furniture. Olavo squirrels away to play online poker against people twice his age and win. And Madoc...

Madoc feels like the odd one out, leaving Thomas to talk to him. There are only a few subjects that haven't been hashed to death on the ride here, and until the telepath gets here best not to scratch them open again. Instead they talk about Madoc staying with them instead of... anywhere else. Doesn't he have a home or at least a room in the city somewhere. And the answer is... no.

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Here we get a chance to dig into the Lewiston side of getting kicked out of Denver[how much of what we are going to tell the reader do we want to be true? we need to keep in mind Henry's memory work, and even if it's all true, I think Madoc should be left uncertain of what is and what isn't trueWhile very correct to remember the memory alterations, most of them would be plying around with how they impacted Madoc, not necessarily the events themselves.]. How six months after losing most of their family, they suddenly have to pick up and leave generational homes because some cheetah got uppity with their elders. This was insulting to the men in the family, but to the boys... it was salt in a very fresh wound. Madoc never really had a home in Kansas City... in fact the first place he settled down in the years since they got kicked out was the Twin Cities. At least that what he remembers, and it's progressively looking like he can't trust his memory.

There is really not much to say to that other than empty niceties. And those niceties are offered, but then Thomas remembers what people did when he was depressed at the house, so he gets to practice a bit more of foreplay again... which of course escalates as soon as Limbani finds out what is happening, but at least it's tender for a little bit.

###

Kansas City Safehouse, Thomas, Search Squad, Trevor, Samuel: Mood: And who is this pretty stranger?

The team is left alone for longer than Thomas would have expected. (A full 24 to 48 hours.) They were never told to stay here and nowhere else, but by its description as a safe house means being stationary is implied. Still... the people chasing him are literally bunking with him at the moment, and Thomas needs to distract himself otherwise he'll start ruminating about his family...

That and he needs to get away from Limbani. When the monkey found out that Thomas, at least according to Thomas's memory, was a virgin about six months ago, he suddenly got it in his mind that the rat



needed to make up for ten years of sex for his health and wellbeing. First thing, math. Second, the rest of the group says it's an Adesida thing rather than a Society thing... the being supercharged thing, not the math issues.

So Thomas is about to walk out the front door in his jacket when someone comes in. It's a pair of rats, an adult and a small kid. The adult introduces himself as Trevor, and the kid... well the kid is Madoc's.

This gets everyone's attention, particularly Madocs. Madoc holds his child, tries to smile while doing so... but from the start there is an obvious melancholic tone to his behavior. Which completely breaks down once the kid is taken away to another room. Madoc just held his own kid... and he had no idea who he was. The implications for the memory alterations have been hanging just out of sight for awhile now, and have just been brought to the forefront.[if you want Henry to be monstrous, this can be used to do so, because I can see Madoc having an extremely strong reaction to holding his own son as if he was a stranger ]

Before things break down too much, there is another knock at the door. It's a badger who introduces himself as Samuel Mercier, and he apologizes for setting that up but... when he heard Madoc returned home and didn't immediately ask to see his son he had to know what the reaction would be. And... well Madoc experienced everything Samuel observed, so words fall short in describing the genuity of the loss[If we play up Madoc's reaction, this wouldn't be quite this smooth of an interaction, the only 'saving grace' would be that Samuel would expect it and could see it as a healthy reaction.].

With that said, they still need more formal proof[with a mind reader, is there really a need for Ettore?We need him because he is assumed to

be a clean slate. While the primary reason is to check Madoc, they also need to see how trustworthy Thomas's memories are. If, and Ettore has also arrived. He's waiting for Thomas and Madoc at the main office.

###

Kansas City Safehouse, Thomas, Search Squad, Ru, Trevor: Mood: A woman in the house

Thomas and Madoc arrive back from the debriefing drained. They first went over every detail about Thanksgiving. Then Christmas, to make sure Thomas and Ettore were really in sync. And then covered the minute details of what Madoc remembered about his life. Thomas didn't need to stay for that last part, but he didn't want to leave Madoc alone.

So, eventually, the two return late. Trevor is still there, though Madoc's son is asleep... and amazingly no one is having sex, even Limbani. This might have something to do with an elderly red panda being in the room. Her name is Ru Guan, and she's Yating's mother.

There is a lot of talk about this, during which Yating is very subdued as if his world just ended, and when either Thomas or Madoc ask about it, he says he has a twin brother... which he doesn't remember despite his mother saying he came with him to America. No one else remembers him either, to which everyone looks expectantly at Thomas.

On the defensive, Thomas says stuff about anyone else's family came up at the fraternity rarely came up. He knows about Gilbert having a brother aiming for NFL, Madoc's son and an implication he lost the rest of his family, and not much else. Only thing that might come up that is relevant is how Yating stayed behind during winter break, due to "family issues"... same excuse Firmir used.

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To break up the collective shell shock sitting over the group, Trevor's phone rings... and it looks like he's being mobilized. Rapheal has gotten enough evidence to justify a search and extraction. If there is a memory alterer in the Twin Cities, lost Stoker or some other faction, they'll find out and rescue whoever they can.

Thomas's first thought is that he wants to help, but Trevor talks him down without even talking to Rapheal. Any mission is a dangerous mission, and you need more than just a good power to get you through. Rapheal can help Thomas get that, he'll likely be eager, but it won't be in time to resolve whatever is happening in the Twin Cities. Don't worry, Trevor will make sure his family isn't forgotten during extraction.

Madoc has one final question... where does he take his son?[I expect Madoc still doesn't feel like that is his son, by then] Trevor is about to answer, but Ru jumps in to say that of course the child should stay with his father. The guys look to both Yating[I think we can use family interactions with the mothers here to decide who might look to Yating expecting him to do something about how his mother is meddling.] and Madoc for answers... but Yating isn't going to argue with his mother, and Madoc just seems in a daze trying to adjust to it all. As if the gang could get any less sleep with Limbani in the house...