

## CHAPTER 18

190, MT, January 17th

Thomas watched the landscape go by, his mind buzzing with so much he couldn't fix his gaze on anything long enough to take in what he was looking at.

"Well?" Grant asked.

"I'm great!" the rat answered, grinning maniacally. There had been so many guys, so much sex, and there had to have been some sleep, but even if there hadn't been, he was fully awake even after two hours of sitting in the kangaroo's pickup with nothing to do other than watch the scenery pass by.

"So, doing it with strangers isn't something to be afraid of, then?"

"Of course not." Thomas immediately replied. He was going to do strangers all the time now, the more the merrier. He would —

Having to consider the mechanics of arranging groups of guys, since he no longer had the frat to rely on, took down his buzz enough, he could consider what he'd done and how it was leaving him feeling, and he was reaching an unsettling conclusion.

"Did I steal their life force or something?"

Grant stared at him. "Why would you think that?"

"I'm bursting at the seam with energy. I have to have taken that from somewhere, and they were the only ones I was with." Maybe if he considered the number of guys, he probably hadn't taken a lot from each, but he had called Henry a vampire and now he had... yeah, the buzz was definitely gone.

"That's not how it works for you," Grant said. "You don't take, when you have sex, you create." He glanced at Thomas and the

rat's expression had to convey his confusion because Grant because thoughtful. "Okay. Keep in mind that each faction is a little different and that my knowledge comes mainly from personal research. For you, sex is an act of worship. Don't overthink it, this is magic. The act creates an energy that powers your god, but you get to keep some of that energy. Because his domain includes vitality, it manifests in you as being energized. It's not the same as a proper night's sleep, so don't think you can just fuck your way through every night, but it is why you're able to have so much sex."

Thomas rubbed his temple. Worship of a god, magic, getting some of that because he'd had sex. It was impossible. It should be impossible. So why did it feel... right? Right, beyond the energy he still felt, even if the buzz was gone.

"Okay. So this god of mine—that feels so weird to say—it wants me to have sex. What else?"

"He. That's one thing the Society is unabashedly clear about. Your god is male." He grinned. "Extremely so, to hear the stories going around. Beyond that, there isn't much I can tell you. Male vitality and potency are his domain and sex between guys is the purest expression of that. Oh, and don't be surprised if you hear them capitalize the 'h' when they refer to him. They can't seem to help it."

The way Grant said vitality and potency made them sound like ingredients in a list, or materials needed to craft something. That made Thomas wonder something. "Have you actually talked with anyone from the society? Other than the parking lot stand-off," he hurried to ask as the kangaroo was opening his mouth with a twinkle in his eyes. "Or me."

He closed his mouth. "I'm not aware of having been with someone from the Society. Considering who slept with, there has to have been at least one—from more than that faction," he mumbled, "but I've yet to hear one scream they're Society as they orgasm."

"So no one screamed something that sounded like a god's name?" Thomas asked. "I mean, I think I should know my god's name, don't you?"

“And we have the first step toward acceptance,” Grant said in a tone full of fabricated rejoicing. His smile died away as he thought. “You know, no one I’ve spoken with ever said what the name of your god was.” He frowned. “Actually, I think I remember someone saying something about him not having a name.” He shook himself. “It’s probably just that the Society is secretive about it. Most factions tend to not proclaim their god’s name, using something of a descriptive. For example, Baterilmamir is referred to as The Green Man.”

“Maybe it’s because no one can pronounce his name,” Thomas said, trying to wrap his head around how Grant had said it so casually. “So what does the Society refer to Him as?”

Grant glanced at Thomas.

“What?”

“Nothing. And I don’t know they refer to him as anything. At least no one I’ve been with who was telling me about the Society ever used even a title when referring to their god.”

Thomas tried to think of another question about his god’s name, but if Grant didn’t know, asking more wouldn’t make him suddenly learn it. And his comment about who he’d been with made him curious about something else, so he tried to come up with a way to ask that wasn’t tactless.

“You said, ‘considering who you slept with’, and then mumbled about more than one faction. That makes it sound like there’s been a lot of...” he looked for the right word, “variety.” That could have been a lot smoother. He decided.

“I don’t discriminate,” Grant answered, chuckling. “Just about the only thing I look for is an ability to hold a conversation. Not that once we’re horizontal, I expect talking to happen.”

Thomas looked outside, thankful Grant had stopped there. Any more more than it would have fallen into Royer level of disclosure and while he’d gotten used to that among the guys in the frat, coming across yet another person who was too free with their sexual talk would have been too much.

“Okay, since you told me about my god—” that still felt weird. “—can you tell me something about yours?”

“I don’t have one,” Grant answered.

“Oh, okay.” Thomas stiffened and looked at the kangaroo as he remembered something. “Didn’t you say that all magic came from gods the other day?” He tapped the armband. “Unless you’re lying to me, this is magic. And that staff sent Yating flying and called down lightning. That was the best special effects I’ve ever seen if it wasn’t magic.”

“To every rule, there is an exception,” Grant recited. He glanced at Thomas. “We, that is the people who use magic the in the way I do, are beyond gods. If we follow anything, it’s more akin to the raw concept of the universe, of the possibilities it represents. It’s why I’m not limited in what I use.”

“Beyond gods?” Thomas asked doubtfully. It was either too much, or the deal he’d rather be on. Thomas wasn’t sure which at the moment.

“Think of it this way. The universe is a spotlight. So everything gets that light, but for just about everyone, it’s too diffused to even notice. Some can notice it and manipulate it.”

“You and me.”

“Not quite. I ‘see’ that light. You are receiving a channeled version... okay, the gods are like a combination of colored filters and magnifying glasses. They focus the light so you can perceive it, but in the process, they tint it, therefore limiting what you’re able to do. Yours color is sex, another is nature, another one information. There are a lot of them, each changing the light a little so their followers can make use of it.”

Grant seemed rather proud of his explanation, and Thomas smiled. “I’m sold. Maybe I should go for that instead.”

“And give up sex?” Grant replied, chuckling.

“What?” Thomas demanded. “You can’t ask me to give up sex.

You had sex.”

“Oh, I had sex, but I think what you had qualifies as needing to be capitalized. You get that because of your god. The rest of us have to settle for the normal brand of sex. The once and I need a long breather. You...” Grand smiled. “Had the guys taking bets as to when you’d drop from exhaustion.” He handed Thomas two twenties. “That’s your cut.”

Thomas stared at the physical money. “You’re serious?”

The kangaroo shrugged. “I knew you don’t have to stop.”

“And forty is my cut? Didn’t I do like all the work?”

“I’m not rich, you know. And I never bet everything I have, even on a sure thing.”

Thomas took the bills and considered what Grant had said. What would it be like to have a normal sex drive? And what did that even mean? His mom’s sex drive was nowhere near normal, and his dad kept up, so.... Considering how genetics worked, he was bound to have something that would let him go at it a lot, anyway.

“Before you’ve convinced yourself that you can give it up,” Grant said, “you can’t.”

“What do you mean, I can’t? Isn’t it just about learning how to do the stuff you did?”

Grant smiled. “First off, I saw the way your eyes glazed over when I started describing what it is I do. You’re smart, but you lack that spark that lets those like me think the way we do. But,” he continued, keeping Thomas from protesting, that he had whatever that spark was. “I’ve heard stories of people switching gods, but I have never heard of one about someone becoming godless. That’s a story that would be told, trust me on that. I can’t think of one thing someone could do that would make a god willing to let them go.”

Thomas looked outside, a sigh escaping him. “Then, do you know of a faction who’d taken in an undecided freshman who’d only good at sex? And probably wouldn’t even be good at that anymore,

since it sounds like His the only reason I'm so good at it." He rested his head against the glass and, after a few seconds, felt Grant's gaze on him. "I'm just saying that since the Society is after me for one reason or another, they wouldn't have a reason to bother if I was part of another faction, right?"

Grant didn't immediately reply. "There's quite a few things wrong with your assumptions here, but the big one is that you're mistaking rejecting your god's followers for rejecting him. And let's say that it does work. What's to keep them from chasing you, anyway? Or what if they see what you did as heresy, even if he doesn't care about it?"

Thomas sighed again. "I guess that means we have to keep running." He leaned back in the seat, and quickly the silence became overbearing. "What made you choose the universe?"

There was what could have been a flash of anger there before Grant shook his head, his expression fully neutral.

It had to be linked to his family and how he lost them, Thomas realized. "Should I expect to run into anyone like you in Denver? Or had your wandering good samaritan routing made you drift away from all of them?"

This shake of the head was only accompanied by a tightening of the lips.

Well, that didn't bode well. The silence was now filling with awkwardness. It was already there, so he might as well. "Okay, then I have to ask—"

"Thomas," Grant said plaintively, "stop asking questions. In fact, forget what I said about the universe being spotlights and the filters. Don't mention it to anyone, definitely not someone who follows a god. It's not going to endear you to them."

"Okay... I'm going to make a note of that." Thomas stared at the kangaroo. That was quite the dam to have burst inadvertently. "But what I was going to ask was if I could blow you."

Grant gave him the side-eye. "Kid, I'm driving."

"So? It's not like you're going to have to do anything."

"I'm going to have to keep control of the car," he replied, disbelief in his voice.

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Minneapolis, September, 22th

Thomas bobbed his head on the armadillo's cock, massaging the balls with a hand.

"Oh fuck," Laurence said, spreading his legs as much as the foot well let him. "I am so glad I won the toss to help you move your stuff to the frat." The hand held Thomas in place as he thrust a few times, then released him. Outside, he heard the sounds of other cars on the highway.

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Minneapolis, November 27th

"Fuck," Thomas groaned as Paul deep throated his cock. He was so glad the traffic was at a standstill because trying to hold the car steady would be impossible right now. When the golden tiger pulled off, Thomas placed a hand on his head and fucked his mouth hard until he came.

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(needot find out the town with the shooting range and the timeframe Laurence took him and Felix there for the challenge)

"Okay," the otter said in a dreamy tone as Thomas sucked him off, "You aren't entirely horrible at this."

The rat gave him the finger, which made Felix chuckle but didn't stop or slow the blowjob. He knew they were on back roads by the number of turns, slows, and stops. Thomas could just imagine them stopped at a light and the driver in the next lane noticing his bobbing head.

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I90, MT, January 17th

"It's not that hard," Thomas said.

(it probably uses a few more snippets, but I can't think of who had a car in the frat)