

Chapter 25

Paul sat this time, instead of standing, in the same conference room as the previous time. Arnold had pointed to the comfortable chair set to the side and he and Adam had arrived, telling him to sit. How the tiger had managed to imply with that one word that if Paul didn't comply, there might be chains involved, he didn't know.

Or it might have been his imagination, based on the amount of threatening the brothers did among each other, and none done in jest.

"You'll be happy to know," Arnold said in a tone that made clear Paul's opinion didn't matter, "that I've figured out what to do with you."

Alex coughed and was ignored.

"You, Paul, will be the family representative in this little war that Practitioner roo is dragging the cheetah into. Because you just know that he's going to come asking us for help."

"I don't think Grant is forcing any—"

"Are you saying you aren't interested in helping him," Arnold cut him off, "and his ragtag group? I thought they were your—" The next word seemed to catch in his throat. "—friends."

"Of course," Paul said, as it looked like Arnold was going to throw up, and that might have been too quick of a response, base on the satisfied smirk his... well, cousins was the correct biological term, shared.

Not that taking the time to think about it would have changed his answer. Paul had no idea how he'd help, now that the 'big guns' were involved, but the idea of sitting at home, waiting for news of what happened to Thomas, or the others, to reach him didn't sit well.

"Then you're going to be in charge of a deployment of some of our best Royal Security men," Arnold said, looking over something on the tabletop.

"Of course," Aaron complained, "you're sending my men into this mess."

"Change of plan," Arnold said without looking up. "Aiden, call Brislow and let him know Arnold's not interested in playing his part, so I might not have everyone he needs by the time he—"

"I didn't say I wasn't willing!" Aaron yelled, as Aiden put the phone to his ear. "I just don't appreciate you taking for granted my men are yours to play around with. It's been ten fucking years. When are you going to accept that Royal is mine? You fucking gave it to me!"

"What am I telling the cheetah?" Aiden asked.

"Put that thing away," Aaron said dismissively. "We all know you're not on the phone with him. It's just Arnie's attempt at manipulating me."

Aiden looked at Arnold, who shrugged.

"I'm sorry for disturbing you for nothing, Louse," Aiden said. "Seems that thing are resolved here. Whenever Mister Brislow needs our support, we will have a list of operative for him." He pocketed the phone and ignored the horrified look Aaron gave him.

Paul couldn't figure out if the call had been real. He didn't know these people well enough to read their tells. But he didn't put it past any of them to do exactly that to mess with the other. He knew them well enough for that.

All it took was watching the interact for fine minutes to learn that much.

"I don't mean to sound...impertinent," Paul said as smirks were exchanged, "but do you need me to be in charge? I'm a biochemist. The extent of my experience of combat comes from the last week and amounts to: I lose consciousness a lot."

"We're going to address that in a bit," Arnold said. "But yes, there has to be an Orr in charge, and it can't be one of us, so it's going to be you." He ground he ground his teeth. "I fucking help save the world, and fucking Society still treats us like second-rate criminals, demanding there be one of there to ensure our people won't get out of hand."

Paul couldn't tell if the anger was because they were treated like criminal, or them being considered second rate.

"And why can't it be one of you?" he asked cautiously, trying not to think about how they were more than willing to sacrifice him.

"Because someone's an ego filled idiot," Anakin said. He too was looking at the tabletop, but by the way his eyes flicked about, there was a lot of motion there.

"I didn't—" Aiden started. "Oh. You're not talking about my ego this time."

"I'm referring to horse dick," the older brother said.

"Our brother," Alex said in a disparaging tone, "got it in his head, for some stupid reason, that he wasn't hung enough."

"Like anyone in our family has a small dick," Adam said.

Albert looked at Paul. "Are you the exception?"

"No," he protested. He'd felt small next to Dietrich, but that was because everything about the man was oversize. And a lot of his Society friends were bigger than he was, but number didn't lie, and those said he was above average.

"Anyway," Alex continued. "Because that can't be reversed anymore. Our sons' initiation couldn't be done two years ago like it was supposed to, and we can't take a chance on one of us dying before that happens. Who fucking knows when that's going to be." He glared at his brother.

"Oh fuck off," Aaron replied. "You guys are just jealous of my cock." He stood, grabbed the amble package in his jeans and shook it. "You all love getting fucked by it."

"No, I don't," they replied in unison.

"I understand," Paul said in the ensuring glaring.

Since in this family the father was needed to initiate the son, one of them dying meant that child wouldn't have access to his power, or even magic. Considering the level of testosterone in the room, he understood how none of them wanted to have their son be the one left out. Just how big was Aaron that they had to wait so long?

"Good." Arnold glared at Aaron for a few extra seconds before focusing on Paul. "All that's left to do then, before we make sure you're ready to take charge, is find out what your gift is."

"My gift?"

Arnold nodded. "As one of His men, you have been gifted with power. They at least told you that, right?"

"Yes, I can power the phrases, not that I know any, and there's my aura thing."

"How come I'm not feeling that?" Aaron demanded. "I thought any guy you wanted felt it."

"And that's my genius of a brother," Albert muttered.

"That's the base family power," Arnold said. "Brislow confirmed that. Although why yours' broken like that, I have no idea. We have the version that works. But on top of that, we all have a gift, which means you have one too."

"Okay," Paul looked at them. "What is it?"

"Whatever you're great at." Aaron grinned. "I kick ass."

"You studied biology," Alex stated. "Is that your passion? It would be good to have someone like Arthur."

"Biochemistry," Paul corrected, then was interrupted by Albert.

"When has there ever been to gifts that are the same?"

Alex shrugged. "Never know. Arnie here proved there's an exception to all those set in stones rules in our family."

"My name," Arnold said through clenched teeth, "is Arnold, Alex. Use it, or I'm going to melt all your guns."

"Good luck finding all of them." Alex looked at Paul and tilted an ear.

Passing is too strong a word. I mean, yes, I want to help men reach their full physical potential, but I went with biochemistry because it seemed the most effective way to go about it.

"Then maybe his gift is getting men to reach their full potential?" Aiden asked.

"That seems too indirect for one of our gifts." Albert read something. "If it was going to relate to his studies, then I'd say that's his gifts, but what I'm looking at here shows his scores are good, but not significantly high enough to make that a passion."

"It wasn't," Paul confirmed, shuddering at the memory of those late night studies session that, if not for his friends using magic on him, might have resulted in him burning and crashing.

"Okay then," Adam said. "What are you passionate about? If you dare tell me it's driving, I'm killing you right here."

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"I don't know!" Paul snapped.

He was getting tired of repeating it. It felt like hours of him answering everyone of their questions with it. He rubbed his temple and tried to fight off the sense of utter futility of what they were doing. "I don't know if the idea of flying a plane appeals to me; I've never thought about it before."

The questions had started mundane enough. He'd answered Adam's challenge with a no. He wasn't passionate about driving. Someone had suggested cooking, which he'd shrugged off, then office work, and he'd almost gagged at the idea of being stuck in a cubicle. Building something? Tending gardens? Sculpting?

With each no Paul answered, the suggestions became more extreme. Adam had thrown out the idea of Paul flying a jet with a sense of annoyed desperation.

"Look." Paul stood, still rubbing his temple. "Clearly, I'm not like you. I don't have some innate gift at doing anything. When I do something, it's because it needs to be done. I wouldn't even say I'm passionate about sex, and considering who's my god, you have to admit that puts me outside the norm."

"So, you're saying there's nothing you like doing?" Albert asked, ears tilted quizzically.

"No, of course not. With the right guy, I love the sex. Fuck, I'll dance at the drop of a good beat. I look good food, and—"

"This is such a fucking waste of time!" Aaron yelled, getting up fast enough his chair flew back.

"Aaron," Arnold threatened.

"Fuck off, Arnie. I'm not going to sit here, listening to this wannabe bemoaning that fact he isn't good enough to be one of us."

"I'm not bemoaning anything," Paul protested. How had anything he'd said come across as that? He was too tired to deal with this shit.

"Boo-oo-oo." Aaron mocking rubbed his eyes with his fists. "I don't have a gift. What do I have to do to be one of you because you guys are the greatest."

Paul strode forward, his headache pushed aside in surprise. "Are you fucking kidding? Wanting to be like you? Who in his right mind would want to be related to a thug like you? If Dietrich wasn't my father—" Paul stepped to the side and the fist missed him.

"What the fuck did you call me?" Aaron swung again, instead of giving Paul a chance to answer.

Paul sidestepped that fist, too. "A thug."

With a scream, Aaron came at him, but not very well.

Paul had to be light on his feet not to get hit. He'd give him that, but for someone who claimed to kick ass, Aaron was on the slow side. But then again, Paul had figured out early on that this tiger's gift was boasting.

Each miss made Aaron angrier, which did little for his accuracy. Paul ducked and weaved. He was tempted to grab the tiger's arm and do a proper dip, but he figured that would be too much for Aaron's ego.

"Stop moving!" The tiger came at him, foaming at the mouth.

Paul obliged, stopping long enough to catch the tiger by surprise, drop, and kick his legs out from under him. He stood and looked down at the stunned tiger.

He caught the motion as he opened his mouth and moved. When he felt the tug, he pirouetted out of his jacket, leaving it in Arnold's hand. Before he could ask what was going on, the tiger came at him.

Unlike Aaron, Arnold was fast, and he didn't throw himself at Paul blindly. He attacked with jabs, swings, kicks, and a move that had the tiger to a one handed head over flip that looked right out of an old breakdancing video, and that nearly connected with Paul's head. If that one, or any of the other attempts had, Paul would be on the floor in a lot of pain.

Only none of them connected.

He danced out of a feint.

Shouldn't one of them have by now?

Another difference between the brothers was that Arnold wasn't getting angry. His expression

remained calculating with each miss. Paul could believe he'd simply avoided Aaron's wild swings, but how was he staying barely a step ahead of Arnold's methodological attacks?

"I think you made your point," Alex said, sounding impressed. "This wasn't Aaron messing up."

"I don't mess up," the tiger said, pushing himself off the floor. "I don't see Arnold touching him either." The fist opened, turned into a grab, and Paul jeteed out of reach.

"That's the point, Genius. Anyone think Art took away a few brain cells anytime Aaron pissed him off?"

"Daily," Anakin replied.

"Not possible," Albert said. "Aaron would be a drooling idiot if that was the—oh, I see what you mean." Arnold stopped and raised his hands. "You good?"

"What just happened?" Paul asked, remaining ready to move.

Arnold smiled. "What happened is that we found out what your gift is."

"I so fucking want it." Aaron undid his pants.

"What?" Paul stared at the far too big cock, his question forgotten.

"Pull your pants up, genius," Aiden said with an exasperated sigh.

"You telling me you don't want his gift?" Aaron pointed to Paul.

Aiden grinned. "Oh, I have plans for it. I want to see what those moves look like on one of my trained dancers. I will definitely have him fuck a few of them."

"What?" Paul asked again. "Are you talking about?" he couldn't be serious about Paul fucking strangers.

"But only after this Practitioner debacle is done with," Aiden said, ignoring the question. "I'm not getting fucked just to have his gift vanish when he dies." Aiden gave Paul a shrug. "Sorry if that sounds callous, but I have business to run and I don't let anyone fuck me unless I'm actually getting something out of it."

"Me neither." Aaron already had his pants up. "I don't let anyone top me for nothing."

"Your gift will still be useful for the men who are going with you," Arnold said, handing Paul his jacket.

"I could die there," Paul said. Or course he could. Why had it taken someone stating it for him to realize? Whatever Grant had to do to reforge Excalibur, the Chamber wasn't going to stand by and let happen. There'd be fighting, and with the Chamber involved, there was going to be dying, too.

"Don't worry." Arnold grabbed his arm, and Paul realized he'd almost fallen. "You're going to get the best combat package anyone can get."

Paul wrenched his arm out. "What are you going to do? Turn me into some fucking super ninja fighter with magic?"

They wanted to send him to his death? What kind of family were—

"No. You're going to get strength, stamina and a solid resistance to just about every sickness and drug that's out there from me. Despite appearances, you're going to get combat adaptiveness from Aaron. If he'd bothered doing anything with it, I'm not sure you'd have managed to stay out of his reach."

"I have gotten to him if you hadn't stepped in," Aaron protested.

"Alex's a master shooter. If it comes out of a barrel, he'll hit his target, you'll get some of that."

"I'm gifting my some driving skill," Adam said. "I'm not letting him drive off a bridge again because "it was all I could do""

"Come see me in a few years," Anakin said, eyes still on the screen, somehow. "And it's a solid pass on your gift. Unlike these idiots, I have bodyguards to fight for me if it comes down to."

Aiden considered Paul. "If you come back, I'll give you a great voice, along with a fair contract."

Paul staggered, realization hitting. The gifts, the gifting. Aiden's mention of him fucking dancers. They were going to—

"That's enough." Arnold was holding his arm again, holding him standing. "Go to your clubs, work off that energy on your customers."

"I'm fucking him, Arnie!" Aaron yelled. "After that fight, I earned it."

"Are you claiming you won that fight?" Arnold asked. "He gets to fuck you. But you'll get your turn. He needs your gift to survive. But right now, we're scaring the shit out of him."

"You're not—" Paul stopped trying to get out of the tiger's grip, then realized seven sets of eyes were fixed on him and he had to fight not to attempt to escape again.

Oh yeah, he was terrified.

"If you aren't going to your clubs," Arnold said. "Go to the lounge and work it off on the employees

here. We have a new member of our family. How about we show him we aren't the savages everyone claims we are?"

Only two of them didn't protest as they left. Then Arnold let go of Paul, clearly ready to grab him again, but Paul wasn't running off. The tiger led him to a bedroom a few doors down. If the comment about the others going to the lounge to have sex hadn't been enough, this demonstrated they were definitely part of the Society.

"You guys are scary." Paul sat on the edge of the bed.

"And we are the softer, gentler version of the Orrs," Arnold replied, leaning against the closed door.

"You're kidding right?"

Arnold shook his head. "You don't get this level of screwed up overnight. It takes generation after generation of absolutely no sense of morality to get here."

Paul wanted to protest no one could be that bad, but there had been mention of the father's willingness to kill a baby if they'd been aware Paul existed, so maybe it was possible to have such a lack of a moral center.

"So..." Paul trailed off, and Arnold stepped forward. "What if I don't want your gifts?"

"You're not getting a choice in the matter. Unlike what Aiden might have made it sound like, I'm not sending you into the middle of a war without putting all the odds of you surviving it on your side. That means you get all the relevant gifts. I know this isn't how you like it, but it's a sacrifice you're going to have to make."

Paul swallowed and nodded.

"Hey, if it makes it easier on you, I'll dance." Arnold did a few, horrible, tap dancing steps and Paul chuckled.

"You've been talking with my friends."

"I like to hold the upper hand. We Orrs leave playing fair to everyone else."

Paul looked up at the tiger. "You get it's not actually about the dancing, right?" He was muscular in the way of someone who trained practically, instead of only using weights. "You can only dance well if you've gotten to know your partner." Paul had no trouble envisioning the two of them, a few weeks down the line, after a few dates, having great sex.

"You saying you can't get hard unless you know the guy?" he asked in incredulity.

Paul laughed. "Oh, I can get hard anytime I want. It's probably easier now, too. It's simply easier for me to let my guard down and be intimate when I know the guy."

Arnold reached down and unbuttoned Paul's shirt. "Look. You're an Orr now. You're going to have to learn how we do things. This, what we're about to do, it's got nothing to do with pleasure, or intimacy. It isn't even about domination; no matter what Aaron might act like." He pulled the shirt off Paul. "This is a transaction. It's one of the few things we have the Society considers valuable, these gifts we can grant. And trust me, we milk them for all their worth."

Arnold took off his suit jacket. "You're still going to have your intimate times. Not with us, since I doubt anyone in our family has the patience to get to know anyone. But I'm not taking your friends away. You'll get to meet more guys, get to know them. On the whole, you'll live your life the way you want." He took off his shirt, then pulled the tank top off, revealing deep orange and black fur on each side of the vibrant white on his chest.

He started on his pants. "Are you going to take yours off, or do you want me to do everything?"

Paul hesitated, then removed them.

He swallowed as he looked Arnold over.

Paul couldn't remember ever feeling inadequate. Fuck, not even Dietrich had, or Chima, whose monster of a cock would make even Dietrich look small. But it wasn't only how big Arnold's cock was. How thick, or how hard. The guy had power, was power.

And he knew it.

He could force Paul. He wouldn't even have to touch him. A thought, and Paul would beg to be fucked. And there was a sense to him, to all of them, that he had no issues making use of that power.

Only Arnold wasn't. That he stood there with that power and waited was disconcerting.

Paul stretched on the bed.

"You want this done and over with?" Arnold asked, climbing between his

That Arnold wasn't, that he just stood there with that power and waited, was disconcerting. Paul stretched on the bed.

“You want this done and over with?” Arnold asked, climbing between his legs.

“I prefer enjoying it.”

“Then you’re in luck.” Arnold chuckled. “Guys I know, who just will not leave me alone, have made strides toward teaching me not to be a selfish asshole.” He leaned down and paused, his muzzle over Paul’s cock. “Word of warning. They’ve had more success with the selfish part than the asshole one.” He licked the soft cock, then sucked it in his muzzled as it hardened, using his tongue until it was hard. Then he bobbed his head up and down.

Paul panted and raised his ass reflexively when he felt the finger between his cheeks. He had no idea where the lube came from, but he was glad for it. He bit his lower lip when the finger pressed against his ring, then gasped as Arnold tightened his lips and sucked harder, using the distraction to push the finger in.

“Asshole,” Paul whispered, and the tiger chuckled.

Arnold moved the finger in and out as he sucked Paul off, and occasionally sideways to stretch his ring. Paul grunted when his prostate was massaged. Then a second finger entered him. His panting became heavier, his cock twitched in the muzzle. He whined lightly, closing his eye and readying himself to—

Cold air on his cock had him with his eyes open. Arnold was repositioning himself. He took Paul’s legs and placed them over his shoulders. When he noticed Paul watching in dismay, he smirked.

“I told you I’m an asshole.”

Before Paul could reply, the tiger was pushing his cock in his ass, then he was thrusting. Paul gasped as the slick hand wrapped around his throbbing cock and pumped. The cock in his ass moved in a fast, but steady rhythm, while the hand kept switching tempo.

“Fuck.” The word stretched as his prostate was hit multiple times. Then Paul tensed and roared. As he came, Arnold jerked him off faster, and Paul cursed louder until the tiger let go. He used both hands on his hips to hold Paul in place as he pounded his ass hard.

Arnold muttered something Paul didn’t make it, then let out a stretched, “Yes!” as he hilted himself deep in Paul’s ass and came.

Heat pooled inside him, then spread throughout his body.

Arnold dropped next to him with a tired grunt.

Paul felt... good. Awake, aware. Was that what having sex with a follower of his god would be like from now on? Thomas had explained how they gained energy in the act of sex, but he’d never described it like this.

Next to him, Arnold closed his eyes.

“You know,” Paul said. “I was under the impression you Orrs were unending pools of sex. Watching you now is sort of underwhelming.”

“Two things,” the tiger said, raising a hand. He lifted a finger. “One. Stop referring to yourself as different from us. You’re family, whether you decide to use Orr as your last name or not.”

“I’ll do my best. What’s the other thing?”

“You just wait until you’ve granted your first gift, and then you come tell me about seeming tired right now.”