

## Chapter 44

Thomas watched the stretch limousine drive away, unsure what to make of the flight to Houston, the drive to Gilbert's family ranch, or this heat, pressing down on him. He took off the jacket that had been bought for him once they landed in Houston.

It wasn't the sex that had made the trip odd. By now, Thomas expected the sex anytime his Frat brothers were involved, or their families it seemed. It hadn't even been that if he believed Olavo, Thomas had had sex with the future ruler of Argentina. That had been an experience in and of itself.

Ezequiel was a forceful man, but not in the 'I'm Evil' way that dripped off Raphael. If the capybara elder wanted something, he didn't resort to threats to get it. He offered so much to the person who had it that saying no became very, very difficult. He'd offered Thomas what felt like the world.

A country where he and his family would be safe from Raphael or anyone who might want to use them against Thomas. The protection of the entire Medeiros family where ever they traveled to and, of course, sex.

Fuck, did these guys like to make sex part of every deal with made. And if his experience with Olavo and his father was an indication of the rest of the men in that family, that was quite a promise.

What left Thomas confused was that other than a demonstration for his ability to teleport, before they took off Yellowstone International, his power had never been mentioned, or made part of the deal. Ezequiel hadn't even demanded an answer. He'd handed Thomas a phone and ask that once he made up his mind, call him to let him know what the answer was. The phone was his to keep, regardless of his decision.

The phone had more functions than Thomas would ever need, and one number in its memory.

"Well," Gilbert said, zipping up his light jacket, "I can now say I've had sex with two elders."

"Only two?" Limbani asked, pulling his own jacket tighter against him.

"My family doesn't go around having sex with every visiting dignitary," The armadillo said, turning and heading to the house.

The monkey scoffed. "I didn't wait for them to visit." He grabbed Thomas by the arm and pulled him along. "Think of it, Thomas. Once you're used to your power, you'll be able to drop into any bedroom in the world. You'll have sex with every elder." He lowered his voice and leaned closed. "Just remember to drop by my bedroom so I can go along with you."

"What?" Thomas asked, a nervous chuckle escaping. "I don't think I'm going to get to appear all over the world, especially not with a passenger. Just getting through a door wipes me out."

"Ah, but did you notice how it didn't seem to take any more sex to get you functional after you teleported through that door than when you teleported all the way to Montana with three passengers?" Limbani smiled. "So I'd say that so long as you'll be fucked on arrival, there are no limits on where you can go."

"I'm limited by having to know the place I'm teleporting to intimately," the rat replied, looking at the house. It was one story, but wide, like many of those he'd seen in westerns, it had a porch wrapping around the front. It looked more modern, with the array of solar cells on the roof.

"That isn't the problem you think it is," Yating said. "It won't be long until you are invited to all those bedrooms. Now that two elders, soon to be three, well, four." He looked at his mother. "I'm certain mother had told father who will tell our elder. News of you will get around and they will all want to get to know you." The red panda smiled. "Intimately."

"Can we keep this a secret?" Thomas asked. The idea of everyone knowing what he could do made him groan.

"Not unless you want Raphael to be the only one who knows," Madoc said gloomily. "Him, you can be sure isn't going to tell anyone until he has you firmly under his control."

"What are you all doing still back there?" Gilbert called from the steps leading up to the porch. "Hurry up, before Lim's cock freezes off!"

"Very funny, Gil," the monkey replied, decisively unzipping the jacket. "This is no more than a cool day for me."

Thomas shook his head in amusement at the bravado on display. All the money in the world, and they still had to prove one was tougher than the other.

Gilbert had told them, in the last stretch of the drive, as he, Limbani, Thomas and Yating had dressed, that ranching was the Rowling's core business, with any other one relating to that in one form or another. More than half the families did actual ranching, just like his did. His dad, he'd said proudly, managed nearly ten thousand heads of cattle.

Olavo and his father hadn't bothered dressing since they were going to be on the road for a while

longer before they reached the Elder's house. Limbani had complained about the need to dress, since there would be going to be out of them the moment they stepped inside. At the suspicious looks they all gave him, he shrugged.

"Who stays dressed inside their own house?"

"My father could have guests over," had been Gilbert's reply.

Limbani had pointed to Yating's mother, as if her presence while the men had sex in the car or the plane meant clothing was irrelevant. She had been quite unperturbed by it all, as far as Thomas was concerned, reading on her phone or watching a Taiwanese movie, or engaged in conversation with Grant and Donal. With being so less sexual, the kangaroo and Squirrel had taken it upon themselves to make sure the lone woman in the group didn't feel so alone.

It had even led to one instance of Yating pulling Grant aside for a talk about the rule for courting his mother. It was amusing how protective the panda was of her.

The armadillo and simply continued glaring at the monkey until he was dressed.

"Dad!" Gilbert called out as soon as he stepped inside the house.

Thomas made it inside just before an armadillo appeared out of a doorway. "You're home!" then Gilbert was on his back with the other, naked, armadillo on top of him.

"Get off of me, Charlie!" Gilbert yelled, trying to dislodge the surprisingly agile, if shorter man, boy? Thomas judged him to be around his own age.

"Fuck no," Charlie replied. "I haven't seen you in months. I owe you a solid topping."

"Ha," Gilbert snorted. "Like you can even get it up. No topping for you until your ceremony." Gilbert pushed him off, and Thomas stared. Not only was Charlie sporting one hell of an erection, but he was a wall of muscle. If that was what it took to join the NFL, no wonder his dad was pushing Roland so hard.

"That was two weeks ago, dork," Charlie replied, crossing his arms over his chest. "Uncle Gav told me and dad about the head scramble thing, so you're forgiven, but I will be fucking that ass of..." he trailed off as Gilbert looked at him, stunned. "Bert?"

"No." Gilbert shook his head. "No," he repeated, more firmly. "It's in three weeks. I only agreed to go looking for Thomas once I was assured I'd be here for it, no matter what happened. I was going to be your first after dad."

Thomas saw fear and hope in his friend's eyes. The hope died as Charlie shook his head.

Gilbert shook as he stood. His face turned hard, then his fist slammed into the wall. "I am going to fucking kill that bastard!"

"Hey, Bert, it's okay," his younger brother said. "We'll make it up."

"It's not okay," Gilbert snapped, then forcefully took control of himself. "I wanted to be here with you on your special day."

"I know. If you'd been able to, I know you would have been here." Charlie put a hand on his brother's shoulder. "You okay?"

Gilbert forced a smile. "Yeah. I'm just..." he sighed. "Anyway, that's Thomas, Madoc, Yating and his mother."

"Ma'am," Charlie said, tipping an imaginary hat, utterly undisturbed that a woman was seeing him naked and hard. She nodded in return without even looking him up.

Thomas just couldn't get used to how casual everyone was with nakedness. It had been one thing within the frat, but this was some other person's house.

"That's Felix, Grant, Donal," Gilbert continued, "and the monkey, in the process of getting naked and eyeing your ass, is Limbani."

"Oh, no you don't," the buff armadillo said, rounding on the monkey. "After four years as the family bottom, I am exclusively a top right now."

"That works for me." Limbani turned and raised his tail coquettishly.

"Before you two get at it," Gilbert said. "Where's dad?"

"He's at the plant," Charlie said, running a hand on the offered ass. "They're processing a few hundred cows next weeks so they're going over the equipment." He paused and look at his brother. "She's not here, but Mom's in town. Probably at the elder's house. There's supposed to be some visitors there today, so they can use the help."

"Why?" Gilbert asked, shocked.

"Because she's mom, and she likes to help?" then Charlie rolled his eyes. "Why else would Dad invite her over for a visit?"

"I'm getting a brother," Gilbert said, a goofy smile forming. Without a need for him anymore, Charlie threw Limbani over his shoulder and was headed deeper in the house.

"Your brother did not have to leave on my account," Ru said, snapping Gilbert back.

"We've been raised better than to have sex in front of visitors. Come on in, I could use a snack."

"Your brother made it sound like the elder's house will be busy," Yating said.

"Grandpa and most of his sons are addicted to talking, so they enjoy their shindigs," Gilbert said. "Once Ezequiel tells Gav about you, he's going to want to meet you, Thomas, but he'd going to wait until most have gone back home." He pause by the room in which his brother had vanished with Limbani. His smile fell slightly. "Miss Guan, you can have the guest bedroom. The rest of us can spit between mine, Charlie, or my dad's."

"Your father's room?" Donal asked. "Won't your mother mind?"

The armadillo stared at the squirrel. "Oh, no, with the party she'll probably she'd come here after dad's done with work and he'll call her to let her know we have guest. She might come by, but she'll be sharing the guest bedroom with you, Miss Guan, unless that's going to be a problem?"

"The company of another woman would be appreciated," she answered. "After all this great company you have been."

Thomas looked around to see if the dig hit the others as hard as it hit him.

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The monkey walked by Thomas with a grin and not even a glance at the rat's ass. Owen, Gilbert's father, following with a satisfied expression, seemed to be able to sate Limbani, even if for only five minutes. Thomas wasn't sure if he should be happy or scared. Clearly the older armadillo hadn't unleashed all he was capable of on Thomas over the two days he has been staying in this house.

He sat at the island and gave Courtney a smile as she worked at the stove.

Gilbert's mother had dropped by the day after Thomas's arrival, and if the visitor disturbing what should have been time for her and Owen bothered her, she gave no indication, striking a quick friendship with Ru over a love of cooking. The red panda made advances on Courtney, was rebuffed with a smile, and they'd become friends.

A knock on the kitchen door silence d the room. Grant looked at the older armadillo. "Is there an office I can borrow? Me and Thomas need to take a call."

"Of course," Owen said, standing. "You can use mine." He led them to a large room filled with binders and spreadsheets. He cleared the desk and tapped it. "Just slot your—"

"That won't be needed," the pangolin said, her face appearing on the surface.

"This is..." Owen frowned. "Unusual."

She smiled. "At least you didn't go with *weird*. Thomas, Grant told me about your family situation. I did some looking around and—"

"Which family situation?" Thomas asked. "Victor or my parents and brother?"

"I have no idea what that's about," she said calmly. "I'm talking about the whole foundling thing and the Lewistons not knowing how it could have happened. It was harder than I expected, and I'll admit the universe might have been on your side for this one, because if not for those genealogy sites and all their transcribing the historian's records looking to connect people, and how those historians have been going through orphanage records over the last decade, I wouldn't be able to help you. But I can tell you why the Lewistons aren't coming up with anything. They're looking for the connection on your father's side, when it's on your mother's side."

"That's impossible," Owen said.

"With all due respect," she replied in a tone dripping with disrespect. "You're just here to watch. So, this starts in the middle of the first millennia with the Gray Church."

"The who?" Thomas asked before she could go on.

"Don't worry about them. They don't exist anymore," she replied with a dismissive wave. "They went around and nearly wiped out everyone of you guys along with a whole lot more. Those left behind banded in tight family groups and scattered around the globe, bred like crazy, and give us those wonderful guys we have today. In all that chaos, your ancestor wasn't the only one to not get the memo about step one. Yours ended up in Spain and died on the doorstep of an orphanage with a baby boy in his arms. They took him in, named him Vincente, and put him up for adoption. He was adopted by a loving family, my guess, since that's not in the records, and I'm guessing he got married at some point and had children, not all of which were boys, since it's

my understanding that god of yours needs to claim you or some such for the rules to apply. Do you now get how the impossible happens, Mister Rowling?"

Owen almost fell in his chair. "How?" he swallowed. "How many children?"

"No idea," she replied with a grin. "Hospitals weren't much of a thing back then, and birth were tracked as seriously, or those records haven't been digitized yet. But yeah, that's one fun can of worm I'm handed you, isn't it?"

"If she's right," Owen said, his voice regaining confidence. She snorted. "The fact you're one of us means that the potential to be connected to Him was passed down to all of his children, even if he wasn't initiated. Even if the potential could only continue through the sons that descended from him, the number of potential men Raphael can claim as his across the world is unimaginable. Should he ever find out..."

"Would he really kidnap rats off the street?" Grant asked.

"I don't know," the armadillo replied. "I'm not on a level of my family that deals with those things, but even I've heard stories. And not one of them paints that elder in a good light when it comes to controlling his family and the men in it."

"He kidnapped my older brother," Thomas said. "He chain be to a bed with the promised he was going to get my mind wiped, just to make sure we, me and my brother, would be nice and pliant." Thomas's stomach dropped. "Fuck, we have to tell my uncles. If Raphael figures this out, he's going to go after them and do the same thing to Nerio he's doing to Victor."

"And on that thought," Shila said, glancing at something on her right. "Thomas, answer your phone. The rest of us will see what we can do about them."

"What?" Thomas asked, then his phone rang.