

Chapter 50

Thomas sat on the couch with Limbani on one side and Madoc on the other, and there was not even the hint of something sexual about to happen. Olavo sat opposite them on a love seat with Yating next to him. Felix and Laurence were on the third seat. Gavin sat in the lone seat that didn't allow more than one person on it and watched Gilbert pace the length of the living room, reading from his phone.

That was seven of his frat brother, eight Society men, naked, and not one hard cock. Thomas didn't know if it was a first for this group, but it certainly was one for him.

"Okay." Gilbert stopped before the archway and faced them. "Thomas, you're not going to know about some of this, but this all started with the war against the Gray Church five or so years ago."

Thomas thought back to when he was thirteen. "That's when the bump up in antigay rhetoric happened, right? That died down pretty quick."

"That was part of it. One of us can explain it in more details later. But with every family in danger, a lot of them figured sending sons away would help increase the chances our lines survived no matter what happened. Some of my cousins were sent to study overseas. Uncle Colby was in Denver and one of Dennis's son was sent to San Francisco Bay. Dad sent me to Minnesota to study at UMn. That's where I mean Hubert Heindrick."

"You mean Henry," Madoc said.

"Hubert was the guy in charge of the Frat then. Not that I knew that when I arrived. He was just some friend of Steven's over to enjoy the new meat. We fucked, and by the time it was done, as far as I was concerned, I'd always known a bat was in charge of the frat, and there was nothing odd about there being a bat family. I met Henry a few months later, at his Ceremony of Dominance."

He rubbed his temple. "That's where things get... weird, even for us. It was the thirteen of us and Henry. We were in the basement. Where we... initiated you, Thomas, but Hubert had written one hell of a phrase around the altar. I recreated what I remember, but I didn't see all of it. I was... busy."

"Henry fucked each of us, as usual, with Hubert last. You know how that last fuck of the ceremony goes. It's balls to the wall for you and Him. There's nothing but that ass and—"

"Gilbert," Gavin said. "We have all gone through it, and going into too many details now might lead to unnecessary distractions." He motioned around at the erection. No one was reaching for them, but Thomas was eying Madoc's, wondering if he could suck it and still pay attention to what Gilbert said.

"Right, sorry. As Henry climaxed, Hubert bit down on his neck."

Thomas looked up, the memory of Henry biting his neck fresh.

"At that point, my memory said he'd explained everything. How biting was a thing in his family, being bats and all that, and that blood wasn't a thing we even thought about." He became quiet for a few seconds. "In seconds, Hubert went from a healthy, virile man to a literal husk of one. We freaked out. Balls, did we freak out. But Henry started giving instruction and while it didn't make us stop freaking, it got us controlled enough could fuck us. Then, Henry had been the house leader from the moment I'd arrived. There hadn't been a ceremony or a Hubert. Hubert was still his father, but he was off somewhere running Heindrick Industries."

He shuddered and began pacing again. "The two days after that are a mess. He screwed up with my memories of those two days so much that even remembering everything, especially because I remember everything, I can't tell what he actually told me versus what's a memory of that day he planted there. I tried counting the number of different memories I have of those two days and gave up when I hit thirty. If I had to guess, he switched things around on an hourly basis. He'd tell me something, then it would be a bunch of memories, then sex again and he'd tell me something else, and it would repeat. Or he made me remember the sex and what he told me and the rest is actually what happened. Honestly, if Donal hadn't confirmed those were all memories, I'd have decided Henry had put some kind of memory bomb in my head to drive me insane on the off chance I saw through what he did."

"Wait," Gavin said, raised his hand, and Gilbert stopped pacing. "Donal saw what you remembered?"

"He did for me too, Grandpa," Laurence said.

"Same here," Thomas added, remembering the state his memory had left the two of them in.

"He and Grant talked before and after," Gilbert said. "They think it has something to do with Donal having to somehow go and 'get' what's lost. I didn't get half of what they said. But it makes Donal a sort of 'outside observer' and it gives a 'view' of the change as they happen in my memory. The way he said they spill out of Henry when he came into me. And while I couldn't tell you which memories in those two days are mine or his, Donal confirmed that the times Henry told me his story are my actual memories. The rest's him fucking

with me.”

Gavin nodded and motioned for the armadillo to continue.

“Heindrick isn’t a surname. He is Heindrick Stoker. Henry is Heindrick, as was Hubert before him, Hector before that, and any other one. The phrase he wrote around the altar lets him dump his memory and power into his son. He’s been doing it since back in the early nineteen hundreds.”

He looked at Thomas. “You’re going to need the short Wiki for you to get anything else, so here goes. The Stoker, yes, of the Bram Stoker, was a family of bats who abused the drinking of blood. Bram did what he could to avoid it, but the addiction was deep in his bloodline. Dracula’s a cautionary tale, or maybe a way to ease his guilt, no way to know. He died not long after sonless... or so we believed. The O’Boland elder convinced him to sire one. He promised to keep him away from any Stokers and that they would wean him off the blood. That way, his family didn’t have to be erased. After a few generations without touching blood, they would be able to return to the Society.”

“Are you sure it’s the O’Boland?” Gavin asked, frowning. “I know Sean. He’s never given an indication they had anything to do with the Stoker, other than the part they played in handing them over to the Church.”

“He probably doesn’t know. I’ll get to that,” Gilbert replied. “Heindrick is the grandson of that boy. His father and grandfather were, by Heindrick’s own accounts, upstanding men who would have made the Society proud. The tone was far from respectful when he said that. He had his Ceremony of Dominance, got his power, that of absorbing and injecting memories through cum. He couldn’t do all that much, a recent event. The alterations were flawless though, if he had the time to compose them before reinjecting them. It was enough the O’Boland made use of him. Oh, there was no craving for blood at that point.

“His first taste of blood was accidental. He scraped the skin while fucking, barely got a drop of it. It was enough to be assaulted by memories. They were clear and the bump in energy from the blood made processing them simple. And it was enough to awaken his addiction, so he kept going. By the time he was caught, he’d worked out that the shorter the time between him ingesting a memory and injecting it back, the stronger and further back it could reach.

“They might have caught him, but they couldn’t keep him. In his escape, he ensured no one could follow him by removing any memory one of them could have of him. That’s why Sean O’Boland never mentioned the Stoker boy. None of them remember there being one.”

Gilbert tapped his phone. “I had Colby get some of our sifters looking into Heindrick’s father and grandfather. Henry didn’t say what he did with them, but he mentioned when he got on the boat that took him to America. They found two bats, clearly father and son, delivered to a hospital, with no memories. Utterly wiped.”

Thomas shuddered along with Gilbert. Remembered the glee with which Raphael had talked of wiping Thomas’s mind and making him someone else.

“Once in America, Heindrick drifted for a while before landing in Minneapolis, taking Sigma Theta Gamma as his personal palace.” Gilbert let out a slow breath.

“Is that everything you remember?” Gavin asked.

“It’s the ground shaking stuff. After that’s mainly him grooming the frat members into his little royal court, turning them into his playthings, or a parody of who they were when they arrived.” He opened his hand and a golf ball size sphere of light appeared over his palm. “Using me as an example. He noticed how I used my power felt different when he experienced the memory from other firestarters’ memory he’d sampled, so he pushed me to train until I figured out this is what my power was. And as soon as I did, he took the memory away, leaving failure after failure and him comforting me each time. Every so often, he’d let me remember, and then he explained that he did it in part because he was worried that if you knew how powerful I was, you’d recall me, but that ultimately, it was more because it was fun to watch me feel impotent compared to my more powerful frat brother, and watch the misery when I relearned what he’d done to me, right before taking it away again.”

Gilbert frowned. “You know, having said that, and remembering those memories he covered, I’m realizing something. He’s a damned possessive bastard. He had Benjamin fail one year just, so he’d keep him around. He had Charley go for a second major for the same reason. I think that’s why he’s using the Richard for protection, instead of pulling an easy disappearing act.”

“You maybe right,” Gavin said, “on both counts, especially how easy it would be for him to disappear. He can make anyone who catches up to him forget did they.” He sighed. “Raphael is going to send him running when he goes in there, guns glazing. Or worse, he’s actually going to catch him and gain the clout to demand you be handed back to him.”

“As well as borrow a mind wiper,” Olavo added. “Doesn’t this mean we should hurry to go in before he

does?"

"We?" Gavin asked with a chuckle. "I hope you aren't including the lot of you in there." He raised a hand and Thomas closed his mouth. "I know you want to rescue your family, Thomas. I even understand it. But you have no training with your power. My understanding is that saving Owen left you someone winded. That isn't something that can be risked in the middle of a battle. I swear I'm not going to let Raphael make a mess of this. And he isn't in a position to be jump on the next flight to Minneapolis and drop a squadron of men there. As of the last conversation I had with Byrnwood, there is nothing wrong happening in his city. I know it isn't true, because we have captured men Henry send to bring you back and Donal had them remember what his happening."

"Raphael had Ettore," Thomas said. "That's how he knows Henry controls the Richards."

Gavin nodded. "But the word of one man, even that of an elder, isn't going to outweigh that of an entire family agreeing on what is happening. I've had anyone who's had contact with Richard reach out and get a sense of how Minneapolis is faring. They all saw one form of 'it's business as usual' or another. So we have time. I promise that when the time comes, you'll all be appraised of how things are progressing, or if you want, Thomas. I'll see to it you are in the command center so you can watch what is happening."

"But I can help," Thomas insisted. "Base on what we've worked out of how my power works, my bedroom in my parents' house has to be a spot I can land at. And at the frat, there's—"

"Thomas," Gavin cut him up in a 'this isn't up for discussion' tone, "Olavo explained how your power works. I will not authorize an operation that involves going in blind, and results in your being unconscious, therefore leaving the team going in without a way to extract if things go bad. I will not be someone who deprives your father of his son simply because it might simplify things. Am I clear?"

Thomas closed his mouth and swallowed the lump that formed in his throat. Then he nodded.