

Chapter 40

Denton groaned. "Someone tell me it doesn't hurt this much when your dead." He opened his eyes.

Maximilian was checking him. "Where are you hurt?"

"Everywhere. Fuck Damian hits hard."

The cougar looked at him with worry. "Did you hit your head? He didn't get anywhere close to you."

Denton looked to Fred's crumpled form Maximilian was pointed to.

"Out of body," Denton explained. "He got pretty pissed when I hurt him."

"What happened to him?"

"I think I killed him. Which makes me wonder how come I'm still alive. I poured every ounce of energy I had into burning his thread."

"This place is a focus for the God's energy. We're recharging automatically."

"So no one's going to fuck me?" Denton sighed in disappointment.

Maximilian offered him his hand. "No to keep you alive anyway."

Denton took it and stood, a bit woozy. "Might take a minute for me to be able to move. How come it hurts so much if my body's fine."

"Must be psychosomatic. You're in pain because your mind thinks you should be, after the beating you took."

"Joy."

He looked up at the sound of clapping, then cursed as he watched the tigers enter the cave.

"I've got to say," one of the twins said. "I'm impressed you all survived."

"Did you all survive?" the other asked. Behind them Denton counted eight other tigers, all looking to be in their late teens. he recognized Arnold and Adam, as well as the other tiger who'd been there in their first meeting.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" Denton asked, forcing himself to stand straighter.

"We're here to collect our brother."

"Are you people fucking insane?" Maximilian let go of Denton, who almost fell, and stormed toward the tiger. "What was the idea, trapping him in the God's Hearth?"

"The God's Heart?" one of the twins asked.

"The Hearth," Maximilian corrected. "It's... never mind. Who had the bright idea to put him here?"

"Wasn't us." The other twin answered. "Our dad and his brothers were the one to trap him here."

Denton forced himself to join them. All he wanted to do was

sit down somewhere. "How did you know where to find him then?"

"Oh, we had a talk with good old dad." The smile the tiger gave him wasn't friendly at all.

"It took some... convincing," his brother continued, "but in the end, he was more than happy to tell us where our brother was. We got here in time to watch most of the fight I think. Quite entertaining."

"And you didn't think to help?" Frank had joined them, Helping his brother stand.

"Why? You seemed to have the situation well in hand. Your brother seemed to be having a good time beating you up."

"That was Damian," Denton said. "He possessed him."

"So we heard you yell at some point. And where is our brother now?"

"Gone, I think. I burned the thread to his body. I figured it would prevent him from replenishing his power, but he dissolved into nothing."

"I see." The twins looked at each other. "That's... fortunate I suppose. Well, we'll take his body then, and get out of your way."

"No." Maximilian moved in front of them. "You're not taking him."

"Oh, yes we are. Don't be an idiot, old man. There's ten of use, eight of you. We're rested and you're tired from the fight. I'm sure your powers are as strong as ours, I can feel it here, but your bodies are tired. If you get in our way it's going to be child's play to take you down."

"Try it," Fred pushed his brother away. "I have a good idea how you Orrs think, now. I had your brother in my head, I could hear him go on about how much power he had and what he was going to do with it. I'm not letting you have it just so you can get him to give you his power."

"Please, like we'd want anything to do with him. Damian was insane, but our father dotted on him, instead of knocking some sense into him. We want his body so we can dispose of it properly."

"No," Maximilian said. "We're giving him to the church."

"Absolutely not. I'm not letting those zealot get him. there's no telling how they are going to desecrate his body."

The younger tigers murmured agreement.-

"I don't care. that's what he deserves for what he's done."

The twins smiled. "Oh, and exactly what did our brother do?"

"He killed Denton's line, and three of the Lewiston. There's no telling how many other he would have killed if we hadn't stopped him. That kind of murderer goes to the church."

"Bullshit," one of the teens said.

"As far as I know, Damian hasn't killed anyone outside the Society, since we worship the same God, that makes it an internal matter. The church has no business being involved. And they already have the murderer for the Lewistons. You handed him to them, if I'm not mistaken." He nodded to Denton.

"There's still the matter of the Stentons."

Denton put a hand on Maximilian's shoulder. "Max, drop it." The cougar stared at him in shock.

"I don't care who get him, or who claims to have stopped him. He's stopped, that's all I give a damn about." Denton looked at the twins. "I don't know what you're capable of doing, how you powers really work, but let me warn you. If Damian somehow resurfaces to causes us trouble, I'm going to come after you personally and there isn't going to be anything left of you two by the time I'm done."

One of them chuckled. "You should be careful of the threats you make, Stenton. They could come back to bite you in the ass."

"But don't worry," the other continued, "We have no intentions of keeping him alive. He's going to be well and dead by the time we are done with him."

Denton eyed them for a moment before nodding. "Fred. Are you okay to break that thing?"

"Should be, it's my body that's hurt, not my magic." The lion turned and limped toward the body, stopping his brother from helping him. He pressed his hands against the invisible wall, and Denton watched him concentrate.

Nothing happened for a minute, by which time the tigers were starting to mutter among themselves. Then something hit Denton's shoulder. Other grunted as he reeled from the impact.

Pain blossomed in his shoulder as the blood started flowing. He couldn't see anything in the wound, but when he tried to cover it with his hand to stop the blood, he felt something sharp. he carefully closed his hand around it and pulled it out, then it seemed to dissolve as he held it. He already had blood on his fingers so he traced the healing sigil on his palm. The wound closed almost immediately.

He looked around and almost everyone had wounds. Denton had a moment of satisfaction as seeing all the tigers hurt, but couldn't take much time to enjoy it. Fred was on his knees.

"I really didn't need this," the lion said as Denton reached him. He was bleeding from multiple cuts and Puncture wounds.

"What happened?" Denton traced the healing sigil on Fred's palm.

"It exploded." Fred's voice was dull, exhausted. "Normally the magic just stops, but this was harder than others. I had to work at breaking it. When it broke it shattered."

Denton checked to make sure the lion's wounds were closing. Only after that did he go check on the tiger lying in the middle of the room. His pulse was steady and he didn't have any wounds. Pulling his eyelids open, his stare was vacant. Hopefully Damian was really dead, and whatever the tigers were planning on doing wouldn't work.

He stood and turned. "Here's your brother. Take him and get out."

The twins glared at him as they walked by. They picked up the limp tiger and then left the cave, the rest of their family in tow.