

## Chapter 54

“Judith!” Thomas exclaimed as he reached the floor. His sister was in the doorway with a rat in a suit next to her and a bear in body armor with his hand moving away before her.

“Thomas!” She took a step to bypass the bear, whose hand moved back to grab her. The rat with her struck the arm away, then under the arm, kicked the knee out from under the bear and had him down on the floor, held in place with a knee at his back. It happened so fast that all Thomas was left with was the sheer precision of the motions. Then he realized the rat was Trevor, but he couldn’t recall anyone saying what his power was. Definitely something combat related.

Judith looked at Trevor, smiling. “Thanks, Hun.” She kissed him hard enough Thomas looked away.

“His balls?” Trevor asked, panting once she broke the kiss.

“Let me hug my brother first, then I’ll figure out what to do with him.” Then she had her arms around Thomas in a bone crushing embrace. “All might Cum, Thomas,” she exclaimed. “What is going on? First you’re kidnapped and Henry sends people to find you, and now here you are and there’s an army in and around the house. Trevor almost refused to let me come home. Who are these people?”

“Well...” Thomas trailed off. How was he supposed to explain Henry taking over the city and then being here to bring him down?

“We’re Thomas’s personal bodyguard,” Samuel said, stepping into the living room and zipping himself up. “As you know, he’s a teleporter, which makes him valuable. We’re here to make sure nothing happens to him, again. Oh, settle down, she knows already. Henry had to make her believe something to explain why he was going to the one to save you. As far as she’s concerned, she’s watched you blink all over this house, among other things she’s caught you doing.” The badger smiled. “Now, I would love to know where the bat got that memory from. I’m Samuel, you’re his sister, and you’re Trevor Lewiston. It’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance. No, Thomas, we haven’t met before.”

Trevor groaned.

“Why, yes, I am a mind reader. And no, I—”

“Stop!” Thomas yelled. “For God’s sake, Samuel, shut up!” He nearly closed his mouth as what he’d just done registered, then decided to plow right on ahead. “Do you get off on pissing people off? From this point forward, I don’t want to hear one word from you unless it’s to answer a question.”

“Wow, Thomas,” Judith beamed. “That time on your own has done wonders for your balls.”

“I am fucking serious, Samuel,” Thomas said, ignoring his sister’s... praise? As the badger opened his mouth. “I’m going to dump on in San Francisco Bay.” Samuel closed his mouth and Thomas turn to Trevor. “You, let go of... him. Sorry, I don’t remember your name.”

“Dumier,” the bear grumbled, “Francois Dumier.”

“Let go of Francois,” Thomas repeated.

Trevor glanced at Judith, who nodded, then moved.

“Okay, what kind of super power combat thing was that?” Thomas asked Trevor, unable to keep the awe out of his voice.

“Just martial art,” Samuel answered before Trevor could. “Trevor’s power is learning, and he has learned a lot. You asked a question,” he added as Thomas looked at him.

“Question that are asked of you directly,” Thomas stated. “Or I’m dropping you in the bay. Don’t test me.”

Samuel closed his mouth again.

“I love this new take-charge you,” Judith said, and he rounded on her.

“Where the fuck were you?” he demanded. “You weren’t in class, where you were supposed to be.”

She grinned mischievously. “Trev took me out so I could enjoy... him.”

Thomas raised an eyebrow and prayed that Henry hadn’t done something to increase the world infamous Royer over sharing Judith had already inherited from their mother. “You do know he’s a Lewiston, right?”

“Oh, balls yes,” she replied, looking like she was about to swoon.

“What’s with the swearing?” Thomas asked suspiciously.

“Trev’s been teaching me all the Society swears,” she said, smiling. “So I can show him how respectful of his beliefs I am.”

“I didn’t know you were bi,” he told Trevor.

"I'm not," the rat replied, looking at Judith lovingly. "I'm as gay as it gets, with the most amazing Judith Hertz bias. I didn't know a woman like her could exist. Strong, independent, who loves fucking me as much as watching me fuck guys."

Thomas stared at his sister. Was voyeurism something Henry had given her? It had to be. With how much she over shared, he'd have known if that was something she was into.

"You are going to love having him fuck you," she said, grinning.

"Excuse me?" Thomas asked in disbelief.

"He's Society, just like you, so—"

"I'm not—" Thomas cut her off, only to be cut off by Samuel forcefully clearing his throat. Thomas nearly told him to mind his business, but the badger nodded to his sister and Trevor insistently as the thought formed, and Thomas finally understood. Until Donal had restored their memories, it was best to play along with their belief.

"I'm not sure me having sex with your... boyfriend—" he couldn't believe Judith had called a guy her boyfriend "—is a good idea."

"Thomas," Samuel said, "if I can interject."

"Please," he replied, hoping for anything to wipe that knowing grin off his sister's face.

"Both of you are aware that Thomas was kidnapped, then you have to understand that we can't let him wander off, and the until we've ascertained that neither of you have been compromised, it's best of he isn't alone with either of you."

"You offering to join in, Mercier?" Trevor asked, grinning.

Samuel looked the rat over. "While that is tempting, no. What I'm saying is that you aren't having sex with him. You are aware of all the ways you can be a danger to him and not know it."

"Look here," Judith started in their mother's patented 'you will not be dictating things under my roof,' tone.

"It's okay, Dear," Trevor said, taking her hand. "They're only looking out for him." He nuzzled her. "I'll keep you happy until they're comfortable letting you properly introduce me to your brother." He looked Thomas up and down with an appreciative smile.

"Francois, escort them to her room," Samuel instructed.

"Sir," the bear replied, not moving. "I think it would be better if someone else—"

"Oh, stop worrying," Judith said. "I'm not going to have Trev rip your balls out, just drain them thoroughly." The bear looked at her suspiciously for a second, then was leading them up the stairs.

"Oh," Thomas called after them loud enough everyone on the second floor could hear. "If you see another one of me, do not hit on him." He was please not to be able to make out his sister's question.

"Before you ask," Samuel said as Thomas was opening his mouth. "That isn't Henry's doing. He altered her memories, so she grew up surrounded by Society ways, but she and Trevor met by accident, and the relationship's all theirs."

"Oh great, like I need a Lewiston reporting to Raphael once this is all over."

"Trevor isn't someone you need to worry about on that account," Samuel said, "but we—"

"Have a couple of problems," Shila interrupted from the television. Thomas looked in her direction and her face was replaced by a collie and badger walking along with a golden tiger.

"That's Jacques and Hubert," Thomas said. "How come you didn't have anyone watching my best friend?"

"It gets worse," Shila said before Samuel could answer. This time, Thomas watched as Chima and his father walked along Greek Row. The angle showed Sigma Theta Gamma in the distance ahead of them.

Cursing in French, Samuel walked away, phone to his ear.

"I can make sure the tiger doesn't get to the frat," Shila said. "I can have the three of them in police custody in under five minutes."

"No. I'm not having my best friend arrested."

"Don't worry, once this is over, I'll have all the charges erased."

"No, he's still going to know he was arrested. And," Thomas added, remembering a detail. "All it'll take to get them out is Kuno calling the station. His dad's friend with the chief of police."

"I can complicate things for them long enough your friend's going to be kept out of this."

"Which is going to reveal our involvement," Samuel said, putting his phone away. "Which Henry still isn't aware of. The men I have on your father just lost track of him. Which isn't the disaster it would have been if your friend had taken them out to get to your father."

"You do know I can manipulate information, right?" Shila said snidely. "No one will realize it's anything more than—"

"No," Samuel said. "There are too many factors for even you to be certain of. Such as," in continued as she opened her mouth. "What memories did Henry give Hubert and Jacques before sending them to get Paul? One is strong enough to life a car, the other is indestructible. Your friends know all that. So if they believe getting Paul to the frat is more important than anything, they could do a lot of damage, not to mention raise questions we don't want asked."

"I can—" she started.

"I will not endanger the families here, or our faction, simply on your belief you are better than anyone out there," Samuel stated. "In twenty-four at most, Byrnwood will have control of enough of his family for us to proceed."

The hand was on Thomas's phone before he'd consciously realized he was taking it out.

"Don't," Samuel said.

"He has my father, Samuel," Thomas said, the thoughts that had driven his subconscious slamming into his conscious mind. "You're asking me to let Henry do whatever he wants to him in that time. You know what he's capable of. You've seen the other's minds, the mess he made of their lives."

Samuel pushed Thomas's hand down. "I know you think that handing yourself over to that bat will save your father and your friend, but that's what Henry's counting on. You have to know he isn't going to respect whatever he tells you. He thinks you took his son. That he's reacting by going after your father so directly means he's desperate, which is what we wanted to happen."

He took Thomas's head in both hands. "I know it's hard, Thomas. But this is the only course that gets Henry taken down. I promise you that whatever Henry does to your father will be undone. Fuck that," he said vehemently. "This had nothing to do with your power and my family's desire to have you on their side. This is about me telling you that when this is over, you will have your father back. Not a broken version of him. But him. I'll even make sure you don't know what was done to him, if that's what you need. I'm a mind reader, Thomas. I know who to talk to to get things done."

Thomas nodded, forcing the pain down. The badger was right. He couldn't play Henry's game, no matter how much it hurt. "Twenty-four hours, Samuel." He was done playing anyone else's game. "If this isn't underway by then, I'm dealing with it myself and the rest of you can go fuck themselves. Is that clear?"

And the badger smiled. "Kid, we're going to win this after all."