

Chapter One

Niel woke to a headache, pain in his shoulder and his wrists, and being bounced about. A violent one caused his arms to be pulled back and woke him fully. He tried to lower his arms, only they were held in place. His wrists were manacled together, and that was tied to the wall of the van.

What was he doing here? The last thing he remembered was him and Erwin, then that doberman and—He closed his eyes at the memory of the rabbit on the floor and fought to keep his stomach from heaving its non-existent content. Maybe, hopefully, he'd seen wrong.

So he would have something else to think about. He studied his surroundings. The van was on the long side; he was restrained closer to the front, and the radio was playing soft music. He could make out someone in the passenger seat, but no details from this angle.

That back had a few sheets spread on the floor, under him, and—there was someone else near the doors, restrained to the opposite wall by one wrist. Niel opened his mouth to call to them and closed it. The driver and passenger hadn't noticed he was awake yet. It might be best to keep it that way.

Which meant there was no way for him to talk with the other guy. Other naked guy, like him. Did it mean anything that they were both naked? Niel had been attacked in the middle of sex, and the... Pallas cat been too. If they could talk, he could find out.

He rested his head against the wall and whispered under his breath, "fuck." What was this about? There was no way this was pissed off fans. Niel hadn't been involved in any of the winning plays.

The pallas cat was looking at him.

He knew him, Niel realized. What was Fedor doing in the back of the same van as him, also restrained?

Niel opened his mouth to ask, but Fedor shook his head. Right, they weren't alone. The cat touched his ear and lowered his hand. He did it again.

Ear-low? Was it some kind of charades Fedor was hoping to sue so they could talk? What did ear low mean? The cat did it again. He felt it was important then. Low hear? Low hearing? No, Niel knew Fedor heard perfectly well. He narrowed his eyes. It couldn't be. What were the odds?

He kept his voice as soft as possible. "You can hear low sounds?"

The pallas cat smiled and nodded.

How come no one had told him Fedor was Society? Or was he? They weren't the only magical community out there. He didn't know who they were, so that wasn't going to be an easy conversation. Still, he could confirm or eliminate one.

"Society?"

Fedor shrugged and wobbled his hand back and forth. Not really? Almost? Maybe? This would be so much easier if Niel had the same power as the pallas cat.

No, way.

"Survivor?"

The stunned expression on the cat was confirmation enough. He pointed to Niel, who nodded. Fedor went to speak, but closed his mouth. They were in the same boat of not being able to have an easy conversation.

"What happened?" Niel whispered.

Fedor shrugged. He made a ring with the thumb and index of the restrained hand, and more the other index back and forth through it. Sex. He rubbed the back of his head. Hit there.

So same as Niel. "How many?"

One finger.

Not exactly. Then again, Erwin had—he closed his eyes and fought the memory, but the whine escaped anyway.

"What are you up to back there?" the passenger asked, with a faint accent Niel thought was German. He leaned in the opening to look at them; a dalmatian.

"Keep your mouth shut," the driver said. "Unless my cock's in it."

"Fuck off," Niel exclaimed. "You don't get to kidnap me and then expect me to do what you fucking want."

The dalmatian grinned. "Actually, we do." He tapped something on his phone and Niel screamed in pain. When it stopped, he was panting. "How about you, kitty-cat? You need a demonstration, too?"

Fedor shook his head energetically, eyes wide in fear. More like terror, Niel thought.

"Good. You two do what you're told, and this will be uneventful."

"Unless I need some relief," the driver said.

"No sex with either of them. You know the orders," the dalmatian.

"You going to tell them?"

"You're fucking right, I will. I do what I'm told. And I've been told that they can't have sex while they're in the van."

"Fine, then when we stop for lunch, your ass is mine."

Did that mean they knew both of them needed sex to live? And if they weren't going to let them have some, were they going to let them wither away? Fuck, how long were they going to be traveling?

Niel considered yelling at them, but he looked at the manacles where the pain had originated from and thought better of it.

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The hose's water was fucking cold, Niel thought as it hit him, but he didn't try to get out of the jet. He was weak from the long two days without sex and filthy. He hadn't eaten a lot with his teammates, but he had to eat something when they went out after the first victory to celebrate. His body hadn't reacted to the food, then, and he'd gone to the bathroom normally, so the next morning he'd had a more normal breakfast with the team, and then had been the game and then the post-game celebration and his kidnapping.

His captor hadn't been considerate enough to make a pit stop when he had to go.

The driver turned out to be the doberman who'd nearly choked him.

He forced himself to move so his backside was hosed down thoroughly since he only had the water pressure to scrub him. They hosed down Fedor the same, not that he'd done anything. Maybe the pallas cat didn't care to fit in and eat, or they'd gotten to him after he'd already emptied his bowels.

"You're late," the doberman called to someone out of sight.

"You try crossing the border without anyone finding out what you're carrying," the unseen man replied, "let alone do that without any warning you'd have to do it."

A wolf stepped into view and looked in the van. "Couldn't you be neater about it?" Niel forced himself to look beyond them to get a sense of where they were. Two days of driving without stopping could put them just about anywhere within the US. It was warm so, somewhere south.

A boat sounded its horn, forcing the canines to stop talking.

"I wasn't given the details, only that the ship mine was to be on got stuck being inspected and this one's the only alternative, since they aren't interested in waiting."

"Then let's get them packed so we can get out of here," the dalmatian said. "I hate this country."

"Watch it," the doberman said. "This is my country."

"This place isn't the Fatherland, and you should be fucking happy about it," the dalmatian replied.

"You two need help with them? Mine's nice and pliant at this point."

"Probably should," the doberman said. "It's only been two days for them and this one was having sex right before, and he might still be a problem."

The moment they undid his restraints from the wall, Niel shouldered the wolf aside, but the doberman planted an elbow in his back and Niel dropped and didn't have the strength to get up again.

"Told you."

Two of them carried him around the van and into an open shipping container. He was dropped on a pile of blankets, then his restraints were attached to the wall. Fedor was restrained the same way. This time both his hands were over his head, at the front, and when Niel's sight adjusted to the dim light, he saw there was a third kidnappee.

They locked eyes and recognized each other.

"Dario?"

"Shut up," the doberman ordered. Then closed the door, sealing them in darkness.

"Niel?" the capybara asked. "How are you here?"

"I should ask you that. How did they get you?"

“I go to Buenos Aires with father for meeting. Meet wolf, talk, have sex, wake up tied in trunk of car.”

“Same, and for Fedor too. From when they said, it sounds like they know we need sex.”

“Yes. Wolf makes sure to fuck me only every few days.”

Something dropping on top of the container made Niel look up, but it was pitch black inside, and he was inside. Grinding and metal against metal. Were they going to crush them? That was a lot of work if all they were going to do was kill them.

The container shook, then moved.

Fedor said something in Russian.

“Shevet?” Dario demanded, as if he hadn’t noticed him until now. “They send you out to get good blood to put cum into? Or you so…” he let out an exasperated sound, then said something in Spanish.

“Not speak Spanish,” Fedor replied calmly. “I not sent out. I leave. I not want make same as father and mother.”

“You left family?” Dario exclaimed, his accent getting thicker. “How you do that? What of brothers and sisters? You not honor…” Another exasperated sound, then a string of Spanish. “You should be home!”

“Home is wrong,” Fedor snapped back. “Stay, do same wrong thing. Thing change, or—”

“Family!” Dario yelled. Then he continued in Spanish.

“Enough!” Niel yelled over him. Now he was happy Spanish wasn’t the language he’d picked. “Not to point out the obvious here, but we’re in trouble. Arguing can wait for after we’re out of it.”

“Da,” Fedor said. “Want escape.”

“I do too,” Dario said.

“Good. Can either of you magic us out of here? Maybe use the magic to get those manacles off? If we can fuck, we should be ready for whoever opens that door.”

Fedor sighed. “Not know magic. Not trusted. Fedor too… independent.”

“I have no cum,” Dario said.

“Can’t you use blood?” Niel had a conversation, somewhere in the many memories the bat had given him where that had come up. He couldn’t bring up the details, but he was confident there had been something about blood being used too. This was the first time Niel wished the clarity of the memories that had been there when Donal had pulled them from where they hid in his mind hadn’t faded with time.

“I…” Dario shifted. Strained. “Cannot write *Fraser* to open. Too long for what I reach.”

Niel sighed. It had been a long shot. “Do either of you have any idea?”

“In the silence that stretched on and on, the container shook loudly as it was set down.”

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