

LOVE'S LANDSCAPES



Don't Read in the Closet 2014

FLEECE, FLEAS, AND FLIRTATION

Ava Penn

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Love's Landscapes

An M/M Romance series

FLEECE, FLEAS, AND FLIRTATION

By Ava Penn

Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love's Landscapes* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

What Is Love's Landscapes?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what these authors do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love's Landscapes*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, you are in for a delicious treat.

Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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[Arizona sunrise](#), [Yellow sunset with boats](#)

[Poollicht](#), [Perfect white beach](#)

[Sunset in Prague](#), [Purple mountain sunset](#)

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FLEECE, FLEAS, AND FLIRTATION

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Photo Description

A dark-blond, nude man, visible only from his belly-button upward, lays on a sheet-draped couch with his right arm bent to rest his hand on the arm of the couch. His green eyes catch some of the light streaming in through the window behind him, and his plump lips are parted slightly. He has a close-trimmed beard and lightly haired chest and abdomen. He isn't extremely muscular, but his arms and core muscles are well-toned.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

Did you know that satyrs and other ancient creatures exist? I didn't know, of course I didn't know because they're disguised as humans. Now I do and I don't know if that's a good thing. So I saved that satyr from suicide, so he's kinda cute, so what! Didn't know it at that time with a lot of his body already under water but now I know—like I know now that my boss at the garage is a minotaur and he better know nothing about my connection to the satyr. Got the impression that this brute is the reason for the suicide attempt. Satyr's afraid of him.

What do I do now and how come that I find this goat guy cute and even more sexy than his female roommate?

Of course a HEA would be fine anything else is up to you.

Sincerely,

Achim

Story Info

Genre: fantasy, Greek mythology

Tags: blue collar/mechanic, masturbation, switch/versatile, mythical creatures, humorous, contracts/debts (strict, binding), gay for you, tail fetish

Content Warnings: sexual interactions between a Satyr and a human

Word Count: 20,340

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Thank you event mods and volunteers for all the hard work you put into the event as a whole and into each and every manuscript.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to Alishea, my event editor, for being so wonderful at what you do!

FLEECE, FLEAS, AND FLIRTATION

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I didn't think about it at all as I dove into the chilly water. I just knew that I saw cinnamon-colored hair disappearing under the calm surface of the lake; and the next instant I was running over to the shore, barely taking enough time to yank my shoes off and toss my cell phone next to them. I thanked whoever was listening that I hadn't slacked off over the winter, and my muscles were in decent enough shape to make cutting through the water easy.

I saw the shape of a person ahead of me, and I strained to swim faster. I was almost there when something cut me off. It was green and scaly but looked almost like a monkey, if you could ignore the smile full of sharp predatory teeth. The resistance of the water weakened my momentum, but I kicked at it anyway. As it floated away, I closed the gap between myself and the drowning person.

I was surprised to feel a glancing kick against my shin when I began working my way toward the surface. The person in my arms began thrashing, making it difficult to hold on while swimming. When the movement stopped, my heart accelerated in panic.

I surfaced seconds later. The adrenaline coursing through my veins made it easy to move quickly. Once on shore I began the basic emergency care I remembered from lifeguard training so long ago. Tilt the head back, clear the airway, and check for a pulse. The pulse fluttered so weakly beneath my fingers that I almost didn't feel it. I tried to remain calm as I alternated between forcing breaths into the open mouth that was so cold against my lips and making hard compressions to the chest. It was just as I was beginning the third round that it happened.

There was a forceful impact to my abdomen, and I went flying through the air. I landed several feet away, dazed from the incident. Relief flooded me when I heard coughing and sputtering. *I did it. I saved someone.* My body ached as I sat up, trying to focus my vision on whoever I had just rescued.

It was a man. He was short but well-muscled. And his chest was covered with curly hair. I continued my visual assessment, wanting to make sure he was uninjured, and didn't really believe what my eyes were seeing.

Starting at the top of his hips and covering his legs all the way down to the cloven hooves where I expected to see feet, there was fur. I could feel my left eye twitching as I directed my gaze to his groin. The fur was still present but noticeably thinner at the apex of his thighs. That, at least, looked very human.

Funny, but that was the last conscious thought I had before my vision went black. When I came to, it was with a startled jerk that resulted in the sound of something breaking against what sounded like a tile floor. I could hear muted conversation approaching, and I tried desperately to open my eyes.

“So you brought him *here*?” The voice was clearly female and definitely sounded upset.

“Where else could I take him? It’s not like I could walk into the hospital like this right now!” a male replied snippily.

“I suppose it didn’t occur to you to just leave him there,” she snapped back.

“You know I can’t. I owe him now, whether I want to or not.”

I groaned, and the conversation abruptly stopped. I was finally able to bring a hand up to rub at my eyes. When I opened them, it was to see the man I had rescued staring at me from the vicinity of my feet, which were hanging over the edge of a couch. He extended his hand toward me; and I panicked, falling to the floor since my legs weren’t responding to my brain yet.

“I won’t hurt you. I can’t.” He tried to soothe me with his words.

“Like fucking hell,” I groaned, wrapping my arms around my stomach where it ached sharply. It must be bruised very badly to hurt like this. “You kicked me!”

“That was a reflex. Look, let me help you.” He pleaded with me, and I could hear the tap of his hooves on the tile as he approached.

I scrambled backward until I was pressed against a wall. He let out an annoyed huff, stomping one hoof down angrily. We stared at each other for a moment, until he finally spoke again.

“At least let me see how bad it is. Just pull your shirt up.”

I slowly pulled the hem of my shirt up with trepidation. I sucked in a sharp breath as the skin of my stomach was revealed to display the red, swollen impressions of hooves surrounded by mottled purplish bruises that radiated outward for about three inches in each direction. My head snapped up when he let out a distressed bleat and trotted over to me.

“Shit. Karen, I need a favor from you.” He looked over his shoulder to speak to the woman I had heard him talking to earlier.

“What do I get out of it?” she asked while inspecting her nails as though she were bored.

“I’ll give you my silver chalice.”

“Done. What do you need me to do?”

“Take him to the hospital. He might be bleeding internally. When they ask about the injury, tell them he works for you at a goat ranch or something.” As he spoke, his fingers were gently exploring the wounded site.

“Um, he’s kind of awake. What if he tries to tell them the truth?”

“I’ll take care of that.” He looked up at me. “Sorry about this.”

“About wha—” I started to ask. His forehead connected with mine, and I slipped into unconsciousness once more.

I blinked my eyes open to the stark, sterile whiteness of a hospital room. I hissed harshly at the sensation of an IV in my arm. I could feel the low burn, as whatever it contained was being pumped into my bloodstream.

“You’re awake. Good, that means we can leave soon.” The woman from before spoke, coming into view on my right side.

“Who the hell are you?” I’m sure I sounded a little rude, asking this so suddenly of the person who had been kind enough to get me proper medical treatment.

“Karen. I live with the dumbass you saved. Just answer their questions with whatever will make them let you go when they come in.” As she said all this, she pressed the call button on the side of my hospital bed.

“That thing in the water...” I wasn’t sure what I was trying to ask exactly, but Karen must have had an idea because her reply wasn’t instantaneous.

“Probably a kappa. Now shut the hell up and wait for the nurse,” she snapped, glaring at me in warning.

It didn’t take long before a perky, young nurse rushed into my room. She cooed delightedly upon realizing that I was conscious. Looking back, I suppose I could have tried to tell the truth; but that would have been a one-way ticket to a mental hospital. Instead, I just did as the lady had asked and answered all the

questions with the answers that would get me discharged from the hospital as fast as possible.

Everything after that kinda happened too fast for me to protest; and before I knew it, the car was parked by a waterfall that spilled into a wide, shallow river. I just sat in the passenger seat, blinking stupidly at my surroundings. Then it occurred to me that I had no clue what was going on.

"Where are we?" I questioned the woman who had yet to open her door.

"My house. Get out of the car. I have to go to work," she practically barked at me.

I was too confused to argue, so I got out and watched as she drove away. I was startled by a low bleat that drifted out from behind the waterfall. My curiosity piqued, I wandered over to the rock cliff the water fell from. I could see a ledge wide enough for me to walk on leading behind the curtain of water.

I stepped through an opening in the rock wall and heard a crunch. My heart started pounding in my chest, and I cursed myself for being afraid. There was another bleat followed by another crunch. I crept forward, willing my feet to tread lightly and remain silent.

I breathed a sigh of relief to see the guy I had saved earlier sitting on the couch. He had his hooves resting on a coffee table and was holding a bowl on his lap. I watched as he picked a celery stick out of the bowl. Crunch, bleat. Well, that explained that.

I cleared my throat and stepped forward. He gave a startled bleat; and the bowl went flying in the air to crash against the rock floor, shattering. I winced at the sound because it reminded me of earlier.

"Hades! That's two bowls in one day," he griped as he stood up from the couch.

"Sorry," I mumbled, unsure what else to say.

"Yeah, well, you should be. First, you ruined my suicide. Then, you broke my bowl. Now, you made *me* break my other bowl. Who do you think you are?" His pale green eyes sparkled with fury as he berated me.

"I'm Jace. Jace Kosta," I replied awkwardly, even though I knew his question had been rhetorical.

He paled instantly. I wondered why, but was saved from asking when he spoke up. "Jace isn't short for Jason, is it?"

"No. My name is just Jace. J-A-C-E." I spelled it for him out of habit.

"Thank Zeus." His relief was apparent.

"Ah, could I ask what your name is?"

He leveled a fierce scowl at me before answering. "Aegidios."

"What-ios?"

"Aegidios."

"I'll never get that right. Can I just call you Dios?"

"Sure. Whatever. It's not like I can tell you no." He snorted and stamped a hoof on the floor.

I had the impression he was annoyed by something, and I couldn't just ignore it. "What's the matter?"

"What's the matter, you ask? You saved me. That is what's the matter. Now, I'm indebted to you. Until I can repay you in kind, I am obliged to acquiesce to anything you ask of me." His frown was sour, and I wanted to replace it with a different expression.

"Okay. Well, then I want you to forget about it."

His eyes widened in shock, and his mouth fell open. It was a little comical actually. To me, that solved the problem. If he had to do what I said, and I told him to forget about the "debt", then everything was fine. Right?

"Are you stupid? That's not how it works! Athena must have missed you when she was delivering common sense." His words were like acid, hurtful and lingering.

My mouth opened and closed several times, doing a good imitation of a goldfish. Before I could begin to argue, he trotted over to where I stood. I caught a glimpse of horns peeking through the cinnamon curls of his hair, then he tilted his face up to look me in the eye.

"I apologize. That was uncalled for," he sighed, and continued speaking. "You should stay here for a few days or at least for tonight."

"I have work tomorrow. I can't stay here." I still didn't know where *here* was.

"Where do you work?"

"Taron's Auto Maintenance and Repair." At my reply, Dios paled again. I could see the fear in his eyes from this close; and, for some reason yet unknown to me, I wanted to protect him from whatever made him so afraid.

"You... Did he send you for me?" Dios took a step back from me.

"Huh? No. I didn't even know you knew him until now."

"Don't tell him. Please, don't tell him about me. He can't know that you saved me. That would be bad." Dios was staring at me, like he was waiting for me to attack him or something.

I shrugged. "Fine by me. Um... This is probably a stupid question to be asking now, but what exactly are you?"

I was revisited by the look of disbelief and shock from just moments ago before Dios replied, "You never heard of satyrs?"

"Fraid not." I shrugged again.

"That's what I am. Part man and part, well, goat."

"Oh." That explained the hooves and fur I supposed.

"Anyway, you need to call in to work for a few days. Tell Taron you got a bad case of food poisoning." I could only nod my agreement and watch as Dios abruptly turned his back to me, walking toward the only other door in the room. "Follow me. I'll make dinner for us, then I'll show you to your room."

I did as he ordered, ending up in a kitchen and dining area. I felt more than a little foolish while I sat at the table, waiting for Dios to finish preparing dinner. After maybe half an hour of letting my eyes wander around the dwelling, I noticed something that I had previously missed about Dios' body. He had a tail. It was short and fluffy, just like a goat's tail would be. It twitched occasionally, making me chuckle.

I hadn't realized I was staring until Dios turned around with a large bowl in his hands. The bowl actually went unnoticed for a few seconds, as my eyes were focused in just the right place to be graced with an unhindered visual of his flaccid cock. I recalled having seen it after he kicked me at the lake, and it still struck me just how human it appeared compared to the rest of his body from the waist down.

"Salad okay with you? I'm not a big fan of meat," Dios checked, setting the bowl in the middle of the table and walking back over to the counter.

"Yeah. Salad is fine."

He returned with two small bowls, setting one in front of me and holding on to the other. Dios served himself from the large bowl with his hands and began picking up small bunches of the salad with his fingers. I guess he wasn't a fan of silverware either. Too shy to ask for a fork, I followed his lead.

When he was done eating, he carried the large bowl over to a refrigerator; and I wondered how exactly he had electricity in a cave behind a waterfall. Childhood habit kicked in, and I picked up both of our bowls to take to the sink. Another mystery, running water and sewage systems? I automatically reached for the dish soap and rag to clean the bowls; but I was stopped by a small, thick hand shackling my wrist.

"I'll clean those later. You really should rest. It'll help you heal faster," Dios explained to me.

"I can do it. It's not difficult," I argued.

"You need to rest."

"Dios, let me clean the bowls." I tilted my head to the side and raised my eyebrows pleadingly.

He huffed and crossed his arms over his chest. "Since you put it that way, I can't exactly refuse. Clean the damn things then."

"You mean because of what you told me earlier?" I had no idea such a simple statement could count as *asking something of him*.

"Yes. If you ask, desire, or demand it then I have to do it."

"So if I told you to jump off a bridge..." I voiced the thought carefully, not wanting it to come out the wrong way.

"I would have to do it. Please, if you want me to die just stick with drowning me." Dios grimaced bitterly as he said this.

"I don't want you to die. Wait just a moment while I wash these, okay?"

"I have to, one way or another," he replied snarkily.

I winced upon realizing it had come out as a request. I really didn't want it to be this way. I'd have to be really careful about what I said from now on. With a grimace of my own, I started washing the bowls.

I lay on the bed in what I supposed was Dios' room. There was a cabinet full of wine glasses, goblets, and such against one wall. Next to it was a wine

rack filled with wines of all colors from all around the world. Without anything to distract me, I fell asleep in very little time.

I woke much later to an ear-splitting screech coming from somewhere else in the house... uh, cave. It took me a bit to get out of the bed, and I stumbled along the hall trying to find the source of the noise. The screeching abruptly cut off.

"He works for Taron, and you just invited him to stay here for however long he wants!" The furious voice belonged to the woman from earlier. What was her name? Kate? No, Karen.

"It's not *however long he wants*. It's just until he recovers. Besides, I owe him. Once he leaves, I'll have to go with him. Who will protect your treasure hoard while you work when I go?" Dios came to my defense, but the rest of his words left me curious.

I stepped into the living room where I saw a bird-like creature perched on the back of a chair by the entrance. I figured it must be Karen, but she looked so... different. Menacing. Her body resembled a large bird of prey, like a vulture, while her chest and faced remained human-like. Just how many half-human creatures are there around here?

"Um, look, I don't know what the big deal is about my boss; but I promise that I won't cause any trouble for either of you." I finally spoke up.

Karen focused on me immediately and launched from the chair, bringing her taloned feet forward as if to attack me. I flinched and closed my eyes in anticipation of the pain, but it never came. I heard the muted thud of flesh meeting flesh and then another thud as a body hit the floor. I opened one eye, wary of what I might see.

The sight was so unbelievable that I began to laugh uncontrollably. Dios was sprawled on top of Karen in a graceless heap. They struggled for several minutes to disentangle from each other. I had managed to rein in my laughter by the time they succeeded. I watched in amazement as Karen shifted back into her fully human appearance, her lack of clothes kept my attention for a mere split second.

"Whoa! Dios, can you do that too?" He had to be able to. There was no way he could walk around looking like he did right now.

"Not anymore. Yesterday my seal was taken from me. There's no way I'll get it back, so I have to ask Hephaestus to craft a new one for me." He sounded

irritated, but I detected an undercurrent of fear. I wondered if it was because of whoever took his seal thing or if it was because of this Hephaestus person.

“What does it look like?” I held no illusions that I’d be able to find it, but I figured it was polite to ask.

“It’s a necklace with a silver charm in the shape of reed pipes,” he sighed and shook his head.

“I’ll keep an eye out for it.” I replied and then turned to Karen. My next question mimicked the one I had asked at the hospital. “What the hell are you?”

“My, aren’t you the rude one? ‘Who the hell are you?’ ‘What the hell are you?’ A lady could be offended.” She studied her nails as she spoke. “I’m a harpy, you idiot.”

“Oh.” It was a lame reply, but I couldn’t think of anything else to say.

“You’re going back to bed. You still need rest. Goodnight, Karen.” Dios grabbed my arm as he passed by, dragging me behind him like a lost kid.

I obediently went and lay down on the bed, scooting over to the side against the cave wall. It was cool against my back, and I found it soothing. I grew anxious though when I didn’t feel the bed dip with the extra weight of Dios. I propped myself up on my elbow only to see that he was curled up on a blanket on the floor.

“That can’t be comfortable. Why aren’t you sleeping on the bed?” I had a guess, but it was better to outright ask.

“That would be because you’re in it,” he grumbled in answer.

“This bed is huge. What is it, a queen? That’s more than enough room for both of us. I may be on the tall side, but you’re not exactly a behemoth.”

“How observant of you.” Dios snorted and rolled over so that his back was to me. I guess he considered this the end of the conversation.

I bit my lip, debating whether to give voice to the idea banging around inside my head like a marching drum. It could worsen his opinion of me, but I really didn’t want him to wake up with a cramp or a cold. “Dios, get on the bed with me.”

I ducked the pillow he threw at me but smiled warmly when he clambered onto the other side of the bed. He glared at me as he reached over to yank the pillow away from where it landed across my hip. He flopped down with a frustrated bleat, and I hoped he would forgive me in the morning.

“Goodnight, Dios. Sleep well.” I curled my right arm up under my pillow and drifted back to sweet sleep.

When I woke up, I couldn't quite tell what was going on; but I do know that I liked it. Something was teasing my semi-hard shaft through the silky material of the basketball-style shorts I was wearing. The soft, arrhythmic twitching had me fully erect just seconds after the last wisps of sleep disappeared. Then I made the mistake of opening my eyes.

Dios was laying less than a foot away from me. Dios, who was a satyr. Dios, who was a goat from the waist down. Dios, who—I recalled—had a tail... that twitches. I groaned, covering my face with my left hand. The satyr in front of me yawned and stretched, his tail twitching faster.

“Fuck!” It was either curse or moan in ecstasy, and there was no way I wanted to moan because a goat's tail was about to get me off.

“Aaaaha!” Dios yelped and promptly scrambled away from me, falling off of the bed. “Damn, are you capable of not causing things to hit the floor?”

“Sorry,” I apologized. I hoped he would mistake my blush for embarrassment caused by his comment and not by my current predicament.

Dios waved off my apology as he pushed himself up from the floor. I'm sure it must be hard to wear clothes when one's lower half was that of a hooved animal; but when Dios finally stood, I really wished he had been wearing something, anything, to hide the thick, hard cock jutting up towards his navel. I swallowed nervously.

“Are you okay? You're really... red.” Dios leaned in to study me with concern.

“Fine. Fine. Just, uh, still a little sore is all.” It wasn't entirely a lie. My abs were throbbing with dull pain where he had kicked me yesterday.

“Hmmm. Alright.” He looked as if he didn't believe me, but shrugged and walked out of the room.

I reached into the pocket of my shorts in search of my cell phone, panicking when I didn't find it. Then I remembered that I had thrown it in my shoe yesterday and not seen it since. I recalled having worn them yesterday on the way back from the hospital. Just as my feet touched the cold, stone floor, I heard the opening notes of my ringtone very faintly from somewhere down the hall.

"My phone!" I lurched forward, falling to my knees when my abdominal muscles screamed in protest of the sudden movement.

"Jace, are you alright?" Dios rushed through the door to stand at my side.

"Yeah. I moved too fast. I heard my phone go off. I need to call my boss."

"Your... phone. Is that what was in your shoe at the lake? Shiny, silvery case around it?" Dios asked timidly, giving me the idea that I might not like what he was going to tell me next.

"That's the one."

"About that..." He scuffed one hoof on the floor. Holding out a hand to help me up, he continued in a soft voice. "Uh, Karen has it."

"Why would harpy-lady have my phone?" I frowned. She wasn't exactly a bitch, but she wasn't Sister Theresa either.

"Because she's a harpy." Again with that look of shock and disbelief. Dios was starting to give me a complex.

"Okay..."

"Harpies like shiny things. Gold, silver, diamonds. Hell, it can be a piece of tinsel; and Karen will add it to her treasure hoard." Dios snorted; and even though he was facing me, I just knew that his tail twitched when he did.

"So how do I get it back?"

"You have to see if she'll trade it."

"I don't have anything to trade with!" My voice was creeping up in volume in direct relation to my frustration, which was not helped by the fact that I still had morning wood.

"Well..." Dios' eyes momentarily flicked to the side.

I looked over at his cabinet. One particular item caught my eye immediately. It was a crystal-studded figurine of a unicorn.

"Dios..."

"Just say it already," he sighed, expecting the inevitable.

"No." I smiled when he looked up at me. His plump lips parted in surprise.

"Why?"

"I won't do that to you if I can help it."

“So ordering me to get on the bed last night was an accident?” He arched one finely sculpted brow.

“No, that was intentional. I wanted you to be comfortable.”

Dios made a sound halfway between a bleat and a laugh, eliciting a chuckle from me. “You’re a strange human.”

I was about to argue that I wasn’t strange *because* I was human, when a screech filled the cave. It only took seconds for a very angry Karen to appear in the bedroom doorway. I swore tiny feathers were starting to peek out from her skin.

“Make it stop!” she screeched, holding up my phone. “It keeps making noise. Noise! I’m trying to get my beauty sleep!”

“You have to give it to me if you want me to make it be quiet.” I held out my hand, trying not to let it shake.

“Just take the stupid thing back!” She threw my phone at me and stormed off.

I barely caught it, just in time to press my finger to the “answer” icon blinking in green on the touchscreen.

“Kosta, why is it already nine in the morning; and you aren’t here yet?” Taron’s deep bass rumbled, carrying every single bit of menace which his very tall, very muscular frame was capable of in person.

“I’m sorry, Taron. I went out to eat last night and ended up with food poisoning.” It sounded so hollow, but maybe that’s because I knew it was a lie. “I’ve spent the last twelve hours in my bathroom. There wouldn’t be a point in me coming today. You’d just end up paying me to sit by the bathroom door.”

“Fucking useless. If you’re not here tomorrow, you’re fired.” My phone beeped, signaling that the call was disconnected.

I gave a short laugh. “So much for calling in for a couple days. I’m fired if I’m not back tomorrow.”

“That’s okay. Just don’t do anything today. Rest.” Dios’ face was drawn and pale again. The worry and fear in his eyes upset me.

“I can do that.” An awkward silence hovered between us until Dios motioned to the doorway.

"I'll show you where the bathroom is." He walked off, not waiting for me to reply.

I slowly shuffled to the bathroom, both to avoid pain and to prevent my cock from bouncing against my abdomen. Ah, the downsides to freeballing. It felt like it took forever for me to reach the bathroom, but I decided it was definitely worth the trouble.

It had to be the biggest room in the cave. The floor sloped gently downward toward the far end, creating a serene pool that was being filled with water spouting from a crack in the wall. To top all of that off, vibrant foliage provided decoration and color. Vines hung from the ceiling, creating a curtain around the pool that was tied off to the side with another vine. Flowers poked merrily up from cracks in the floor.

"Wow..." That was the only response I could muster at first. "This is amazing, but don't you dislike water? You can't swim right? I mean, that's why..."

"I don't have anything against water; but no, I can't swim. Goats can, even if they don't like to. Humans can. I can't. Something about the mix of the two makes it almost impossible." Dios sounded like he was focused on something other than answering me.

I gave him a sideways glance, only to see that he was looking at me; or, more specifically, he was looking at the erection still tenting the front of my shorts. His attention was completely riveted on my cock. I shuffled my feet nervously, and he finally looked up at my face.

"Dios, could you, uh, could you go... somewhere?" I knew I was blushing, and for some reason his stare and my embarrassment made my cock harden to the point of pain.

"Sure. Just call me if you need anything." Dios licked his lips, and my cock twitched at the sight.

I didn't trust myself to speak, so I only nodded in reply. He finally turned and walked away, leaving me by myself in the cavernous bathroom. I sighed in relief and started to undress.

I spotted a toilet tucked in a corner along the same wall as the door. After emptying my bladder, I set my clothes on a moss-covered log off to the side. When I was ready to wade into the crystalline water, I steeled my nerves for the cold. My member had already begun to soften at the mere thought.

Imagine my surprise to feel warm water lapping at my toes. A blissful smile spread across my face the further I got. I slowly worked my way over to the waterfall, noticing the water was still fairly shallow.

The wonders of this little hideaway still didn't cease to amaze me. There was a set of stone shelves carved right in to the rock wall which held shampoo, conditioner, body wash, and shaving razors. I took a mental note to ask Dios how all the modern conveniences of comfort existed in this place as I worked some shampoo into my short, black curls.

The water spilling from the wall was even warmer than the water in the pool. It felt so good battering the tense muscles of my back and shoulders. Sadly, the more relaxed my muscles became, the more demanding my dick became for the attention it had thus far been denied this morning.

I curled my fingers around myself, stifling a moan. Images played through my mind like a slideshow. My ex-girlfriend, the really hot barista at the coffee shop, Karen—as a human, of course. Then everything came to a shuddering halt when Dios took center stage, the way he had looked after falling out of bed. Eyes still a little clouded with sleep, lips soft and pink, and his hard member practically begging to be teased.

I could feel the orgasm building, and I was powerless to stop it. Guiltily, I tried imagining what Dios would look like in a completely human form. He would have a pert, grope-able ass and toned legs with just a little more hair than would be normal. I couldn't hold the vision, and it was again replaced by Dios as he was.

I imagined him lying on his side in that huge bed with me standing at the end, watching as he stroked himself in time with me. His tail twitched as he came. That did it, sent me right over the edge; and I heard the soft plunk of my jizz landing in the water.

I rinsed off and made my way to the edge of the pool. Towels were hanging from a large root that emerged from the wall and burrowed its way back in several feet away. I grabbed one to dry myself with, then realized that I had no clean clothes. I wrapped the towel around my waist as tightly as possible, tucking a corner into the top to secure it, and left the bathroom in search of Dios to ask if he happened to have a washer and dryer.

“Washer, yes. Dryer, no,” Dios informed me.

“Okay. That’ll work. Thanks.” I smiled, knowing the dimple in my right cheek would show.

Dios blinked at me with wide eyes before getting up from the couch. He shook his head as he walked toward me. I turned on my heel to follow him when he passed by and was led all the way to the end of the hall. Directly in front of us was a heavy wooden door like you would see in an old castle, and to our left was an arched doorway and staircase carved into the stone.

He started going up the stairs without saying a word. They spiraled on and on. By the time we reached the top where I could see daylight again, I was a little dizzy. We emerged into a field surrounded by forest. The presence of a clothesline in the middle was so incongruous with the unspoiled nature around me that I began laughing.

A cave with electricity and plumbing, a heated spring for a bath and shower, and now this. Dios would be answering a lot of questions today. I hoped he wouldn’t mind.

“Jace...”

“No, it’s just... This has got to be a dream. Or maybe I’m the one that drowned. Satyrs, harpies, caves with electricity and plumbing... Ha, wow.” That was it. That explained everything. I was dreaming, or I was dead. “Ugh!”

A kick from Dios disproved both ideas. To the best of my knowledge, you can feel pleasure in dreams but not pain; and if you’re dead you can’t feel anything. Was it my imagination, or did Dios look... hurt?

“Once your clothes are washed, we can hang them up here. Come on, we better put them in before Karen wakes up.” He turned to go back down the stairs, and I couldn’t help but notice that his tail was completely still.

I wondered about that as I followed him back down the stairs. Why did it twitch sometimes but not others? That was a question I was definitely NOT going to be asking with all the others.

I grabbed my clothes from the bathroom on the way by, and Dios led me to the laundry room which was through the kitchen. I turned around to go back to the living room and almost knocked him over. I hadn’t realized he was standing right behind me.

“I’m sorry! Are you okay?” I blurted, reaching out to steady him.

“Yeah. Come on, we can watch TV or something while we wait for your clothes to wash.” Dios wouldn’t meet my eyes, and his tail still lacked the twitch to which I had become so accustomed.

We had been sitting on the couch for about half an hour, watching some crime show about two women in the Boston Police Department, when Karen came sashaying in. She wiggled into the space between me and Dios, ending up with her leg pressing against mine. I leaned back and shot Dios a questioning look. He replied with a shrug.

“Jace, was it?” Karen batted her eyelashes at me.

“Yeah.”

“Since I gave you my little trinket earlier—” she began.

“You mean MY phone?”

“—I’m going to need payment, handsome.” Her hand settled on top of my thigh.

“I’ll buy you some tinsel for Christmas.”

Karen cocked her head to the side, confused. “I don’t know why you would do that, but no. Your payment is going to be moving in.”

“To where?”

“Here, silly.”

I just stared at her, unsure if she was serious.

“It won’t be so bad you know. You don’t have to sleep in the satyr’s room,” she purred close to my ear as her hand crept up my thigh.

“Thanks, but I’m not into bird-women.” I gingerly picked her hand up from my leg and settled it in her own lap.

Her seductive smile changed instantly to a frown, and little feathers poked out from the skin at the outer corners of her eyes. “Look, if you leave, Dios leaves too. I can’t let that happen. Your payment for me giving up my trinket is for you to live here. If you don’t, I will make your life VERY unpleasant.”

I looked over to Dios, who just offered another noncommittal shrug. “I’ll think about it.”

Karen huffed and got up from the couch, leaving me alone with Dios once more. Talk about strange. Now I could honestly say that I had a harpy hit on me, at least I think that’s what she was doing.

“You really should stay here,” Dios piped up.

“Why?”

“It will be easier for both of us. Your neighbors might have issues with a satyr living with you, for one thing.”

“So I’ll just stay here until you can get a new seal thingy.”

Dios snorted. “Harpies are not creatures you want to cross. She can curse you with bad luck if you piss her off badly enough.”

“What woman can’t?” My turn to snort. Three ex-girlfriends had given me sufficient experience for that comment. “I’m just curious, what does Karen do anyway that she gets home at four in the morning and sleeps all day?”

Dios smirked. “She’s a stripper.”

My jaw dropped. Harpy-lady, a stripper? I shuddered at the mental image. As a human she was actually kinda hot, but knowing what she looked like when she didn’t look human just killed it.

“Ugh, wrong question to start with.”

“Start?” Dios raised his eyebrows at me in question.

“Yeah. I’ve been wondering about a lot of stuff.”

Dios sighed, “I wondered how long it would take. Surprised you waited so long, actually.” He waved one hand in the air, giving me the go ahead, I suppose.

“How is it that you have electricity and stuff here? How is the water in the bathroom so warm?”

“Well, it’s thanks mostly to Zeus, Poseidon, and Hephaestus. Oh, Athena and Apollo too. Zeus provides electricity on a closed grid with a few of his lightning bolts. Poseidon handles the plumbing, including the waste water and filtration. Hephaestus is responsible for heating the water and keeping dwellings warm in the winter. Athena drew up all the plans for the dwellings, and Apollo provides artificial sunlight in ones like this.” Dios gestured to the ceiling of the cave where there was what I had thought was a light bulb.

“Dwellings?”

“For the others like me and Karen.”

“Others?”

“Nymphs, centaurs, and whatnot. The half-humans and humanoid nature spirits.”

"Right." My brain really wasn't able to comprehend what he said, so I focused on something else. "You keep mentioning Zeus and Hephaestus. Who are they?"

"You're joking... right?" Dios asked dryly.

I shook my head.

Another sigh from Dios. "Did you not study Greek mythology in school?"

I shook my head again.

"Great. Just great. I got saved by the one person on the face of the earth that doesn't know a damned thing about my culture!" Dios bolted up from the couch and marched off. When he returned, he was holding a thick leather-bound book. He held it out to me and plopped back down in his seat.

"What is this for?"

"That will explain most of what you need or want to know. It will also occupy you for the rest of the day."

Just as I opened the front cover, the washer beeped, signaling that it was finished washing my clothes. Dios hopped back up and disappeared through the door to the kitchen before I could even get up. I wanted to hang my clothes myself, but at that moment I couldn't think of a way to say so without it coming out in a way that would take away Dios' choice.

I swung my legs up onto the couch and started reading the first story in the book. It was about how Zeus saved his siblings and killed their father. I learned that Dios had been referring to Greek gods this whole time, and I felt more than a little foolish for not realizing it until now.

I was halfway through the second story, something about Zeus trying to choose a wife and marrying his sister in the end, when Dios returned. He eyed my feet warily, like they were poisonous snakes that would strike out if he sat down. He turned around and went back into the kitchen, coming back just seconds later with a bowl full of celery.

Dios sat down as far away as he possibly could from my feet, which wasn't all that far, and put his hooves up on the coffee table. He picked up the remote and flipped the channel to the Food Network. I continued reading, and I figure I must have read about five or six stories before I passed out.

I had some of the strangest dreams I've ever had in my life. One included Dios and Karen competing for tips at a strip club. Another featured Dios giving

me a lap dance in a VIP room, but with human legs and feet although his tail was still present.

I drifted toward consciousness, wriggling my toes. Bringing one hand up to rub at my eyes, I realized someone had covered me with a blanket; but a blanket was not what I could feel at the soles of my feet. Whatever it was, it felt coarse, but still somehow soft, and warm. I carefully lifted my eyelids, trying to be discreet.

Dios was still on the other side of the couch, but he was leaned over the arm and using his arms as a pillow. It dawned on me that my feet were pressed against Dios. I couldn't tell if it was his hip or his thigh, but my toes were comfortably burrowed in the thick fur. Guiltily, I kneaded them against his warmth.

Dios let out a sleepy bleat, startling me; and I yanked my feet away. He stirred, shifting around until he was laying on his stomach. I knew I should have kept my hands to myself; but my curiosity overrode my common sense, and I reached out to touch the tail that had captured and held my attention from the moment I saw it.

The fur was softer than I expected it to be. Dios snorted and twitched his tail. I flinched back, expecting him to wake up and tell me off. When he didn't I reached out again, this time to touch his hooves. The tactile proof was cementing what I had already been told by Dios.

Fascinated, I ran my hands up the length of his legs. The muscles were well-defined and thick. No wonder his kick to my stomach still hurt so much. I noticed my hands getting shaky as they approached his hips. My tongue darted out to lick my lips as I reached out to stroke the tuft of his tail again.

Dios groaned and shifted his hips. At first I thought he was trying to move his tail out of my reach, but something about the movement was familiar. I brushed his tail again, causing another roll of his hips.

The light bulb finally clicked on in my brain. Dios wasn't trying to get away from me. He was trying to get friction.

I bit my lip so hard that I thought I would taste blood any second. It was mesmerizing, in a weird sort of way; and I wanted to continue petting him just to see what would happen. It was right about then that my common sense made a comeback.

Instead of acting on my impulses, I pushed myself up from the couch and flipped the blanket over Dios. The book he had given me fell to the floor with a muffled flop, and I half-expected him to wake up. I sighed in relief when he remained asleep and left to check on my clothes.

About halfway up the stairs, the towel I had wrapped around my waist after my shower came undone, nearly causing me to bite it. I grumbled as I readjusted it and continued up the spiraling staircase. I reached the top and took a moment to just soak up the warm sunlight filtering through the trees.

The sun was riding low on the western horizon. I figured there might be three hours, tops, until sunset. It surprised me to know I had slept most of the day away.

I walked over to the clothesline and unpinned my basketball shorts. They were warm from the sun and smelled like fresh, mountain air. I hurried to put them on, almost falling in the process. It felt great to have clothes on again. A seriously evil corner of my mind whispered that it didn't feel as great as Dios' fur, but I ignored it.

I pulled my shirt from the line and tossed it over my shoulder. Holding the towel in my hand, I descended the stairs. I walked into the bathroom to hang it up on the tree root, only to see Karen bathing under the waterfall.

"Change your mind, handsome?" She leered at me, giving me the chills.

"No," I replied bluntly. "I just wanted to hang up my towel."

She pouted. "Too bad. I've never invited a human to my bed before. You'd be the first."

"I've never slept with a half-human, mythical creature either. If I ever do, it won't happen with you. Sorry."

I realized I might have said too much when her eyes narrowed menacingly. "You're good-looking but not THAT good-looking. If you plan on holding out for a nymph or demi-goddess, then you'll be waiting a long time."

"Nope. Dios is really interesting though." My bad habit of speaking before I think made an appearance again.

Karen's eyes widened in surprise. She stared at me speechlessly while I stood there awkwardly, not sure if I should try to cover up my statement or just act like I HADN'T said something totally weird.

"Well, if you're not interested in women then at least I can honestly say you have good taste in men," Karen finally quipped back.

I just turned on my heel and left. My stupidity knew no bounds, apparently. I groaned inwardly, hoping that Karen wouldn't repeat what I said to Dios.

When I entered the living room, aforementioned satyr was sitting up with the blanket draped across his lap. It was doing a horrible job of hiding his erection. I could have sworn that it was even larger than the one he had this morning.

"You're awake," he stated.

"Yep."

"Good. We're going to go with Karen when she leaves for work. She's going to drop us off at your house," he informed me.

I nodded in agreement while wondering how Dios planned to walk around without being seen. Absently, I wandered back into the kitchen. My stomach growled, reminding me that I hadn't eaten anything since sharing the salad with Dios the night before.

Unfortunately, Karen came in right then. "Let's go. I don't have all day. I have to be at the club in an hour."

I stuck my tongue out at her retreating figure. Childish, I know, but I just couldn't help it for some reason. Dios had gotten up from the couch and wrapped the blanket around his lower half like a sarong. He followed Karen out of the cave, and I trailed behind him like an obedient pet. I walked around to the driver's side and slid into the backseat, figuring Dios would sit up front with Karen.

No. Dios joined me in the backseat. It almost felt like we were in a taxi cab as I directed Karen to my house after she pulled out onto a highway that I recognized. Or at least it would have if most cab drivers were bitchy, sarcastic harpy-women.

Karen tapped her fingertips impatiently on the steering wheel while Dios and I got out of her car. "You could have told me it would only take fifteen minutes to get here. Now I have over half an hour to kill."

"I didn't even know..." I let my words trail off, since the car tore away from the curb the second Dios shut his door.

I stood in the street, clueless as to what to do next, for a moment. Dios cleared his throat, and I launched into motion. I grabbed his arm, dragging him

along with me to the front door. I shoved my hand roughly into the pocket of my shorts for my house keys; but they weren't there, which I already knew in the back of my mind.

"My keys..."

Dios gave me a pained look. "Karen..."

"Right, harpy. Shiny keys. Gotcha." I sighed in frustration, raking my fingers through my hair. I crouched down and picked up the flowerpot with fake orchids, revealing the spare key on the saucer underneath it.

I unlocked the door and pushed it open, gesturing to Dios to precede me into my home. He stepped forward warily and promptly tripped over the threshold. I reacted instinctively, reaching out to wrap my arms around him and keep him from falling on his face.

Dios cleared his throat after several seconds passed with me just holding onto him. I noticed that while one arm had wrapped around his chest, the other was situated lower. Like around his hips, lower. My hand was splayed across his abdomen, pressing his very hard dick against his stomach.

Scenes flashed through my mind. Dios dry-humping the couch as I fondled his tail. Dios sitting on the couch with the blanket tented over his erection. Dios dropping the blanket from his waist and grasping his cock in one of his thick hands.

The last one wasn't a memory, but a daydream; and it served to snap me out of my stupor. "Sorry, I didn't want you to fall."

"It's okay." I couldn't see his face, but Dios sounded like he was embarrassed.

"You can sit on the couch while I pack, if you want to." I made sure that my suggestion hadn't come out as a binding decree.

Dios nodded and hobbled over to the couch. It occurred to me that he might be having trouble walking on the plush carpet. I furrowed my brow, thinking about the possibility, while I made my way to my bedroom.

It took me quite a few minutes to find my duffel, but I already knew which clothes I needed to pack. I was ready to go, but I was still thinking over the dilemma of Dios and my carpet. My stomach rumbled loudly, reminding me that I still had yet to eat.

I walked back to the front room and dropped my duffel on the floor by the couch. "Dios, are you hungry?"

“Yeah. If we go back—”

“I’ll fix something before we go. I’m sure I’ve got something you’ll eat.” I smiled, coaxing my dimple to appear again.

“Oh. Okay.” Dios blinked at me from where he sat on the couch.

I entered my kitchen and made a beeline for the refrigerator, where I knew I had a sirloin tip steak waiting for me. I needed protein. I began the process of cooking my steak while wondering if I could persuade Dios to keep some meat in the refrigerator back at his cave.

I turned the heat off and placed a lid over the skillet after searing both sides of my steak. Opening the refrigerator again, I peered into the crisper drawers. There was half a head of lettuce, some carrots, and a cucumber. I grimaced. It was better than nothing, but I had wanted to give Dios a really good meal.

It didn’t take long for me to chop the lettuce, grate the carrots, and slice the cucumber. I tossed it all together and pulled a plate and cutlery out of the drainboard for my steak. Bowl in one hand and plate in the other, I returned to the living room. I handed Dios the salad and sat down next to him on the couch.

It was a stretch, really, to call it a couch. It was more like a loveseat; but that never registered until that moment, because that was the first time I had someone else sitting on it with me. I was so close to Dios that I could feel the shift of his muscles through the cushion every time he reached for a handful of salad.

I had just taken the first bite of my steak when Dios reached over and deposited some of his salad on my plate. I looked at him, but didn’t bother to rush chewing my steak. I took my time, savoring the flavor and the texture of the meat in my mouth. Dios wasn’t paying me any attention. It seemed he had only thought of me enough to want me to share his salad, because he was now engrossed in what was playing on the TV.

“What else do you like to eat, besides salad?” I asked, pleased when he finally turned to look at me.

“Fruit, nuts, and salted fish.” Dios paused, then waved a hand at the TV. “Is this really how people think satyrs look?”

I glanced at the screen. The animated Disney version of Hercules was playing. My lips quirked in an amused smile when Philoctetes started grazing the field, followed by a herd of goats. “Well, considering that most people don’t know satyrs actually exist, can you blame them?”

Dios didn't reply except to harrumph when Phil went flying through the air, getting his horns stuck in an archery target, thanks to his demigod protégé. I mentally made comparisons between Dios and Phil while I continued eating my dinner. Where Phil was extremely short and a little on the pudgy side, Dios was roughly the same height as an average human male and had more muscle than fat. Where Phil had very exaggerated goat features, Dios' horns were unobtrusively short and hidden by his hair. Of course there was no hiding the legs, tail, or hooves; but they seemed to fit with him so perfectly that it didn't even seem strange to me any longer.

We watched the movie without saying anything else as we both ate. I took just enough time to wash our dishes before hauling my duffel out to my hunter green Chevy S-10. When I came back in, Dios was repeatedly struggling to lift his right leg from where he stood in front of the couch. I instantly recognized the action from having grown up with several Jack Russell terriers as a child. A part of his hoof must have gotten caught in the fiber of the carpet.

"Here, let me help you." I crossed the room in just a few long strides and knelt at his feet, er... hooves.

I instinctively steadied him, placing my left hand against his lower back, as I ran the fingertips of my right hand along the edges of his hoof. I found the rough split that had snagged a loop of the thick carpet and deftly freed it. I looked up at Dios and was surprised to see him gaping at me, a bright pink flush gracing his high cheekbones.

"Sit back down for a moment. I'll get a file and smooth that hoof out some, okay?"

Dios snapped his mouth shut and flopped back onto the couch. It was then that I noticed his erection either hadn't gone away before or had just now returned. Though he was still wearing the blanket as a skirt, I could clearly see in my mind's eye what it must look like right now. Feeling my own dick start to grow hard, I promptly got up and left to find a file.

I knew exactly where my file was since I had just had to use it last week. Being a mechanic was rough on fingernails; and I had learned in trade school that unless you wanted to lose one to any of the many moving parts of a vehicle, then you had better keep your nails trimmed and smooth. I grabbed it off my bathroom sink and hurried back to Dios.

He was sitting on the couch with his hands tucked firmly under his thighs. I didn't waste any time walking over to him. I sat with my feet flat on the floor and my legs bent so my knees were tucked close to my chest. Gripping his ankle, I pulled Dios' hoof forward until it rested atop my knees.

"Jace, you don't—"

"Shhh. Just let me take care of this, and then we'll go home." I quickly set to work smoothing away the rough spots on his hoof. After finishing his right hoof, I gently guided it off my knee and back to the floor before replacing it with the left hoof. It wasn't as bad as the other had been, but it still needed some work. I helped Dios get his hoof safely off my knee and then shifted so I was kneeling between his knees.

"Will you stop that!" Dios griped at me.

"Stop what?" I had no idea what I had done wrong.

"You insist on getting just a little too close to something you don't need to."

I frowned in confusion, placing my hands on his knees. It was when the muscles under my palms jumped and tensed that I finally understood what his problem was. The tell-tale shift of the blanket caused by his cock twitching was the last clue I needed to piece the puzzle together.

Since we had arrived at my house, there had already been three instances where I had been in a rather intimate situation with him. First I had palmed his hard-on. Then I had knelt right in front of him and practically groped his ass. Finally, here I was, kneeling again, between his legs.

"Dios..." I wasn't sure what it was that I wanted to say. *It's okay. I don't like dudes, but that's not a problem since you're a satyr. Or maybe, I think I should tell you that I'm developing a kinky fascination with your tail.* Of course there was always the old college standby, *I'm curious. Will you let me fool around with you so I can figure out if I can get off with another dick instead of a pussy?*

"Jace, please don't." While his cock was begging for my attention, Dios' face had a different story to tell. His brows were drawn together as though he were in pain, and I could see the glimmer of tears gathering at the corners of his eyes.

"Hey. Hey, what's wrong? Tell me, Dios." I scrambled to my feet and sat next to him, slinging an arm around his shoulders and pulling him up against me to try to comfort him.

"I... I wish I didn't have to tell you." He frowned sadly. "I can't let myself hope for anything more from you than what I already have."

"What do you think you have?"

"A savior. A master."

"That's all?"

"How can there be more?"

"We can try for friends, at least. Can't we?"

Dios pursed his lips, choosing not to reply.

"Dios, don't make me force you to explain." My words were a threat, but my voice lacked the proper firmness to make them sound dangerous.

He shifted on the couch, freeing his hands from where he had purposely trapped them. "If we become friends, I might think that more would be possible."

"Would that be so bad?"

I had to bite my tongue to stop a laugh from escaping at the way Dios snapped his eyes up to meet mine, filled with disbelief. "Are you...?"

"I hadn't thought so, but lately I've been rethinking what I thought I knew about myself," I answered his unfinished question. When Dios simply stared at me, I continued speaking. "I rescued a satyr, was driven to the hospital by a harpy, and will soon be living in a cave-house that was created and is provided for by Greek deities. I broke up with my last girlfriend over a year ago and haven't dated since."

"That doesn't have anything to do with this."

"I disagree. See, even if you and Karen were both completely human, I'd still rather sleep in your room."

Dios eyed me like I was some rabid, wild animal about to pounce on him. "With the way things are, it's not like I have a choice. What are you waiting for? Get on with your little experiment already."

I shook my head as I stood up. "I won't do that. I told you this morning that I won't. And it's not an experiment, not like that. It's this thing called pursuing an attraction."

"So you won't...? If I don't want to...?" Dios ventured. I shook my head again. He was silent, staring down at his lap. Dios didn't look up when he

spoke again, and his voice was so quiet I had to strain my ears to hear him. "What if I do?"

"Then you should stand up." I replied and waited to see what he would do.

Dios reached up to scratch behind his ear, then he slowly pushed himself up from the couch. I stepped forward and wrapped my arms around him, pressing our bodies close. I let loose a low chuckle at his sharp intake of breath when I rolled my hips forward, grinding my desire against his abdomen. His hips jerked against me in return, rubbing his stiff cock against my thigh.

"Jace..." My name spilled from his lips as a heated plea.

"Hold on," I warned before hooking one arm under his shoulders and bending down to hook the other under his knees. Again, I was thankful that I was more or less in shape. Dios was heavier than he looked, the weight of his compact muscles belied by his frame. It proved a little difficult to keep his legs securely draped over my arm with the anatomical differences, but fortunately my bedroom wasn't far.

It only took a few seconds for me to stride down the hall and deposit Dios on my bed. My hands trembled as I reached for the knot at his right hip that was securing the blanket in place. He surprised me by covering it with his hand.

"Are you sure?" A glimmer of fear flickered in the depths of his green eyes.

I nodded slowly, and Dios easily undid the knot with a quick tug from his fingers. I slipped my left hand under the edge of the blanket, caressing the firm flesh of his thigh. His cock twitched, causing the blanket to shift and slip. I grabbed a handful of it and flung it aside, wanting to see him laid bare to my gaze.

Memories from college danced at the edges of my mind. Parties with too few women and too much booze, where members of the gay frat on campus would show up at the end of the night and "take care" of the guys that hadn't snagged a chick. I hadn't ever consented to an offer, mostly because I never was quite sure who was actually taking advantage of whom.

My blood was rushing in my ears, drowning out all other sound as it sped through my veins to feed my own growing erection. I bit my lip and slid my hands up to Dios' hips. Yanking him forward, I dropped to my knees so that his throbbing dick was mere inches from my face. Tentatively, I traced the veins and ridges of his member with the tips of my fingers.

“Please!” Dios begged me, flexing his hips into my touch.

I gripped him, excited by the feel of his cock in my hand. It was so different from touching myself. He was shorter than me, but thicker. He was uncut, and watching the hood of his foreskin slide back and forth over his head fascinated me.

A drop of precum oozed from the tip. My mouth watered with curiosity. I leaned forward and let my tongue dart out to swipe the bead of liquid from the slit. Dios shivered and gave a choked moan.

Guided by instinct and aided by memories from college, I enveloped the smooth head of his penis with my lips. I pressed my tongue flat against his shaft and slid down until I made myself gag. Dios shivered when I bobbed back up his length, and my teeth scraped slightly where the tip flared.

“Jace, maybe we should try something more simple,” Dios suggested, preventing me from swallowing him again by fisting his hand in my black curls.

“Like what?”

“We could just jack each other off, or rub against each other maybe...,” he ventured.

“No.”

“But you don’t—”

“I want you, Dios. I want this with you.”

“Uh, maybe we should—that is, er—so I don’t kick you...”

I understood what he was trying to get at, but that wasn’t really what I had in mind. No matter how fixated I was on his tail, I knew there was no way I could top him without feeling like I was committing an act of bestiality. Which is why I said, “Don’t worry about it. You can’t kick me if you’re behind me.”

Dios stared at me in confusion as I licked from the base of his cock up to the tip, smiling like the Cheshire cat. I continued sucking and licking, waiting to see if he would figure out what I meant. I pulled away when his muscles started to tense.

Dios grunted and tried to guide me back to his stiff, swollen dick. I shook my head. “You can’t come unless it’s inside me.”

I almost laughed; I couldn’t help it. I think Dios’ eyes might have fallen out if it were possible. Seconds later his jaw dropped, but he still hadn’t said a

word. I stood then and leaned forward, pressing my palms into the mattress on either side of him, caging him.

He looked into my eyes, and I could see desire swirled with confusion and something else I couldn't quite put my finger on. I dipped my head, melding our lips together. I realized this was our first kiss, and my heart swelled in my chest. It was tender and sweet and all of the things I never felt until this single moment in time.

Then I slipped my tongue easily between Dios' lips to glide against his; and it changed, becoming intense and all-consuming and burning me up from the inside out with the need for release.

I broke away, gasping for air. I looked at Dios, his lips erotically bruised from our kiss. "Fuck me."

"I thought—"

"I can't. Not yet. So I want you to fuck me."

Dios actually growled as he surged to his feet, gripping my waist and twirling around so that we exchanged positions. He didn't stop there but spun me about so I was facing the bed and pushed me forward. I fell to my hands and knees on the mattress, then his fingers hooked into the waistband of my shorts and yanked them over my hips and down my thighs.

I held my breath, waiting for Dios to actually touch me. When his thick hand wrapped around my aching cock, I thought I was going to explode. That was nothing compared to the first touch of his tongue to my ass. He swirled a lazy pattern over first my right and then my left cheek before licking along the trail from the seam of my balls up to my hole.

"What—" I started to ask.

"We don't have lube, and I don't want this to hurt. Just relax," Dios assured me.

He licked and laved until I became accustomed to the sensation, and then I felt the tip of his tongue stiffen and push inside me. My muscles clenched on reflex, and I focused on keeping my breathing even and trying to relax. In and out his tongue speared me again and again. I think I might have actually whimpered when he finally stopped.

I should have known what was coming next, but I wasn't expecting it. He pressed one thick finger deep into my passage. The ring of muscle around his finger clamped tight, and then he rubbed my prostate. I had learned about it in

human biology classes, heard about it from a couple different sources, and even thought once or twice about what it might feel like to play with it a little. Now I knew.

It was like a jolt of lightning arcing to my balls and racing up my spine. Dios rubbed it until I started rocking my hips back against his hand. He slid a second finger in next to the first, stretching me, and gently started pumping.

I could feel an orgasm building slowly, but I wasn't ready yet. I wanted to know what Dios would feel like inside me first. "Dios, fuck me now!" I demanded in my lust-blind haze, knowing he would have no choice but to comply.

"*Ilíthios*," Dios hissed in my ear as he lined the head of his cock up with my entrance. He pushed in all at once until his hips were pressed firmly against my ass.

I felt a tear slip from the corner of my eye and roll down my cheek. I knew it would hurt, but I didn't know it would hurt this badly. Before I had a chance to adjust to the pain and the feeling of Dios filling me so completely, he started thrusting. I sobbed out a harsh cry.

My erection faded in the onslaught of the agony, and still Dios went on. I knew it was my own fault. I should have waited for Dios to finish what he had been doing, but I was impatient. Not even the sporadic caress of his shaft against my prostate could revive my arousal.

What felt like an eternity later, but I'm sure was only several minutes, Dios came inside me. I could feel myself being pumped full of his seed, and it was a very strange sensation. I was frozen in place until Dios collapsed to the side of me and pulled me down with him, still connected at our hips.

"I'm sorry," he whispered in my ear.

I don't recall drifting off to sleep, yet that is exactly what must have happened. When I next opened my eyes it was to a night-darkened room. I shifted, reaching for the lamp just a few feet away on my nightstand; and that was when I realized Dios was still buried inside me. A sharp ache stabbed through my abdomen; and I held back a groan, not wanting to wake Dios.

Right, almost forgot about the dreadful experience of being skewered from behind. I found it hard to believe that gay men actually find that enjoyable. I braced myself for the promise of fresh pain and shifted completely away from

Dios. I felt empty suddenly, and the remnants of his release trickled down the inside of my thigh.

I eased from the bed and gingerly stood. I flicked the lamp on, my gaze immediately focusing on Dios. His lips were set in a frown, and his eyebrows were drawn close together.

I leaned down and brushed a kiss across his forehead. His face softened into the relaxed way a sleeping person should look. I shuffled slowly out of my bedroom and across the narrow hall to the bathroom. After half an hour of soaking in water hot enough to leave my skin bright red, I didn't ache as much.

I took my time toweling off while I mulled over what exactly I felt for Dios. He was sweet, funny, caring; and I realized that I liked him. Not like I like a buddy or a family member, but more like how I would like a girlfriend.

I could see myself taking him out to dinner or to see a movie, see us going on road trips and spending holidays together, and the most proving thing of all was that I could see us living together. Not just for the period of this short-term arrangement due to circumstances, but for the rest of our lives. I knew these were crazy kinds of thoughts to be having about someone I'd only known for a few days; but for all I knew, Aphrodite had decided to entertain herself by screwing with this mere mortal's love life.

I must have been attracted to Dios from the start, from the very moment I saw him sinking to the bed of the lake in the sun-dappled water. That was the only way to explain why I hadn't *completely* freaked out when I woke up on his couch after he knocked the air out of me with his hooves, why I hadn't tried to tell the truth at the hospital, and why I had insisted on staying in his room despite the offer to share with a harpy who was actually very beautiful in her full-human form. It definitely explained why, after enduring the torturous experience from a few hours ago, all I wanted was to go back to where Dios lay on my bed, wake him up, and try the whole thing all over again—without rushing him this time—that way I could have one more intimate moment with him to myself before we went back to the cave.

I didn't bother getting dressed. When I got back to my room, I draped my damp towel over the rail at the foot of the bed and easily settled back down next to Dios, pulling a blanket over us. I nearly jumped out of my skin when Dios' voice rumbled sleepily near my ear.

"Why did you want me to do that?"

"I, uh, I was kind of uncomfortable with the whole tail and fur thing."

"*Ilithios*." I wasn't sure if it was an insult or endearment, but Dios smiled when he said it this time.

"What does that mean?"

"Greek for 'idiot.'"

"Oh."

"We should go back. Karen will be furious if she gets home, and we're not there."

"Can we just... just for little longer. I want... I don't want to stop yet."

"Just a few minutes, then," Dios consented, snaking his arms around my waist and pulling me up against him.

He was hard again, and my semi-hard length brushed against his as we both thrust against each other. We kissed, slow and sweet. No teeth, no tongue, just breathless parted lips and the need for more than just a physical connection.

As my orgasm built, I craved some amount of dominance, of control; and I rolled so that Dios was beneath me. I rutted against him, bringing us both closer and closer to what we were after; but it wasn't quite enough for me. With a frustrated growl, I hefted his legs up around my waist, spreading him open so I could move against him harder. One hand shackled both of his wrists, pressing them into the pillow above his head, while the other tenderly cupped his bearded cheek.

Our kiss never broke, and I was starting to get dizzy from lack of air. I came hard; so hard that my vision went black, and my balls felt empty afterward. Dios was panting under me. I waited for my vision to clear and was rewarded with the sight of his face flushed and pupils blown wide with satisfaction. We shared one more kiss before Dios pushed me to the side.

"Jace, we really need to go. Karen—"

"Yeah, I know. Harpy-lady will throw a bitch fit. Come on. Let's get cleaned up, get dressed, and go."

It took me quite a few trips back and forth from the bedroom to the bathroom with a washcloth before we were both clean. It was more difficult than I anticipated to clean the result of our second round from Dios' torso. The coarse body hair impeded my and the rag's ability to wipe him clean in one go.

When I had finished cleaning us both, Dios asked for the restroom. I showed him to the door, then went to put my duffle bag in my truck. I returned

to find Dios struggling to walk down the thickly carpeted hall. I walked over, picked him up, and carried him out to the truck. He sputtered angrily in my ear the whole way, but all I could do was smile.

We ended up getting back to the cave around three in the morning. No sooner were we done unpacking my duffle into a set of drawers that Dios had cleared out for me than Karen showed up. She dragged a trunk in behind her, leaving us wondering just what she was up to.

Dios and I were curled up together on the couch—he was watching the show about the Boston PD again and I was reading up on my Greek mythology—when she came back in from her room and tried to drop between us to sit. I put my arm around Dios' shoulders and pulled him close while pointedly looking at the empty seat on the other side of him. She finally flopped down with a huff.

"Well aren't you two cozy," she observed.

"Yep, we are. Cozy, comfy, and rather satisfied this way," I goaded her, though I don't know why. Was I rubbing in the fact that I was more attracted to Dios than to her, or was I just getting revenge for her making off with all my shiny personal possessions?

"I hope you brought enough stuff with you for your stay. Dios won't ever be able to repay you for saving his life you know. You're stuck here," she prodded back at me.

"Nope, actually I couldn't get into my house. No keys." I gave a half-shrug.

"Why you—"

"Karen, what were you doing with that trunk?" Dios asked. I was amazed as I witnessed Karen go from vicious harpy-lady to gushing diva in five seconds flat.

"Leda quit!" She grinned widely, eyes gleaming; and it was similar to how a scavenger might look upon discovering a fresh carcass that was all theirs for the claiming. "Missy has seniority, but Dave said she's too old to become the next lead dancer. She'll be retiring in just a few years, and he offered me lead! ME! I have to go through the trunk, see what fits, what doesn't, and then tell him what I want to throw away or have modified when I go to work tomorrow night."

"Congratulations," Dios offered with a smile but no real excitement.

“Cool. Does that mean you’ll spend less time here?” That was my own contribution to the subject at hand.

Karen narrowed her eyes at me. I could almost see smoke emitting from her ears as the gears of her brain turned, trying to figure out why I was asking. “Yes, I will; which means that Dios will have to spend more time here, guarding my treasure.”

“Cool, ladyhawk. Don’t you have sparkly outfits to try on?” I don’t know why I just couldn’t resist taunting her.

Karen screeched at me, then got up and stomped out of the front room and down the hall to her vault. Dios and I sat in silence for a few minutes. It wasn’t an awkward silence like you might think after what happened at my house. Still, I had to clear the air a little.

“Dios, I’m sorry. For earlier. I shouldn’t have—”

“Jace,” Dios touched my cheek and turned my face to his, “don’t worry about it. I know you wouldn’t have ordered me if you were thinking right. I’m sorry I hurt you. Will you be okay at work tomorrow?”

“I’ll be fine, but really I—”

“Hush.” Dios leaned in and breathed the word against my lips, effectively silencing the rest of my speech.

I pulled back and stood up, tugging him up with me and heading for his room. I clambered onto the bed, eager to hold him against me again. Dios wasted no time in joining me.

I would love to say that we spent long hours until the sun crested the horizon caressing, cuddling, exploring and affirming our mutual love for each other; but that didn’t happen. Neither of us said a word as we kissed sweetly, almost chastely. It was a little like we were both afraid. I, of forcing him by command to do something he didn’t want to; and he, of hurting me again. We fell asleep intertwined so closely that there wasn’t a centimeter of space between us.

I emerged from my sleep slowly. Just before I opened my eyes, it dawned on me that my palms were pressed against something furry. I jolted to complete awareness.

I was cupping Dios’ ass in my hands, pressing him against me while I moved against him. Dios whimpered and, before I could register what was

happening, wrapped his hand around both our shafts. The increased friction felt glorious; his dick against mine, my dick in his hand, his hand on his dick, and our hips rolling together. It didn't take too long for me to topple over the edge.

"Good morning," I murmured and kissed Dios on the cheek, enjoying the feel of his scruff against my lips.

"Jace?" I was a little thrown by the questioning tone of his voice.

"Yeah?"

"Please promise you won't tell Taron about me."

"I won't say a word." I made the promise and pressed a kiss to his forehead.

I made a beeline for the bathroom—showered in record time—and was ready to leave before Dios even got out of bed. Today was going to be a long day. My stomach was still tender and being a mechanic was no cushy desk job.

"Jace, my office. Now," Taron growled as soon as I closed the door on my truck.

I sighed and shuffled along behind the giant of a man that owned and operated this car repair garage. My coworker, Mary—yes, a woman—raised her eyebrows in silent warning as I walked past. Great, that probably meant Taron was really steamed about something that was—if not my fault—going to be blamed on me.

"Siddown." He motioned to the lone chair in front of his mahogany desk.

I complied, waiting for the inevitable ass-chewing. Taron eased into his leather rolling chair and threaded his fingers together, resting his elbows on the desk. He pinned me with a hard stare.

"How are you feeling, Kosta?"

"Better. My stomach is still a little—"

"If you hurl on the concrete today, you're cleaning it up and then going home."

"Yessir."

"Get the hell out there and work on something. I don't pay you to sit in my office."

"Yessir." I stood hurriedly and turned to leave.

That was when I saw it. A necklace was hanging on the board where we kept the keys for the vehicles we were working on. The necklace had a silver charm on it; a silver charm in the shape of a set of reed pipes.

I recognized it instantly as the one Dios must have lost. I had flipped through the mythology book when we got back to the cave the night before until I found a picture of a satyr playing reed pipes. I wanted to know what they looked like, just in case. Damn my luck that it was my boss that had the charm, though.

I spent the whole time thinking about how I might get Dios' charm back, but I did my work—replacing the fuel pump on Mrs. Torkelson's Pontiac Grand Prix, changing the oil on a Chevy Malibu I'd never seen before. I was working on replacing some belts for Mr. Hendels' Buick Le Sabre when Taron emerged from his office a little after three.

"I'm headed to the bank with today's deposit. You two watch the shop."

Mary and I nodded. This was my chance! I could sneak into the office and get the charm now.

"Mary, I'm going to hang up Mr. Hendels' keys and call to let him know the Le Sabre is ready to be picked up."

"Alright, Jace. Will you call Caroline too? I just finished rotating her tires."

"No problem."

I made an effort to not act suspiciously. I walked at a normal pace, left the office door open, and went straight to the key board to hang the keys in my hand on the "done" side of the board. I took the opportunity to snatch Dios' necklace and another set of keys that were for a car needing a monthly check-up. My next stop was the telephone on the wall.

I walked back out to the garage, whistling a country song. Mary had moved on to a car that needed a spare replaced. About half an hour later Taron returned.

I tried to not hold my breath, waiting for the bellow that would announce his discovery of the necklace missing from the key board. It never came. Closing time arrived, and I drove off in my truck to return to the cave.

My body was jittery with anticipation. I would finally get to see what Dios looked like as a human. Would he be the way I imagined, or would he look different? There were spots in my vision as I parked my truck, and I realized my breathing had become very shallow and fast.

My hands were shaking so bad that I shoved them in my pockets in an effort to mask the nervous sign. I didn't understand why I was so worked up about this, but I wanted to look calm and collected when I surprised Dios with the good news.

The cave was eerily quiet when I entered from behind the waterfall. I wandered through, not finding Dios in any of the rooms. My last resort was to climb the spiral staircase. I finally found him hanging a fresh basket of laundry to dry, including my dirty clothes from yesterday.

"Hey." I didn't even try to hide my grin as I closed the small distance between us and wrapped my arms around him from behind.

"How was work?" Dios' question was so mundane, it filled my heart with a sense of contentment—like we were a couple that had been together long enough to develop a routine. However, I knew what he was really asking.

"Work was fantastic. Taron did threaten to send me home if I threw up today, but that's all. He didn't ask about my weekend or where I had been or anything."

"Thank the gods." Dios' relief was evident in the sudden relaxation of his whole body against mine.

"I have better news." I nuzzled my face against his hair.

"Tell me," Dios replied, though he hadn't paused in hanging the wash despite my obstruction of his movement.

"I found your charm."

"Y-you what?" Dios finally stopped what he was doing and turned to face me. "You're not joking with me, are you? Please don't joke with me about this, Jace."

In response, I pulled the necklace from my pocket. I held it up in front of Dios, inviting him to take it. Yet, as he reached for it, I spoke. "Before you put this on..."

Dios cocked his head to the side, awaiting my next words.

"Your tail. I-if I could... That is, I want to... Fuck! I can't figure out how to ask without it being bound by the debt." My shoulders slumped in defeat.

"If you're asking what I think you're asking, then yes. You can touch it if you'd like." Dios was looking down at the toes of my shoes as he said it, but I used my free hand to tilt his face up to mine so I could kiss him.

Both of my hands instantly slid down the muscled plane of his back until my fingers were burrowed in the fur covering his buttocks. I stalled, groping his ass and kneading it in my hands. I wasn't sure if I was more concerned with what his reaction would be or my own.

Finally, my right hand shifted towards the center of his back; and I brushed my fingertips along the short length of his tail. Dios jerked his hips forward against me, a low bleat escaping him. I sucked in a sharp breath and stroked his tail again. The fur here was infinitely softer than anywhere else on his body.

The more I petted him, the faster Dios was coming undone in my arms. I wanted more. I forced my hands to still and stepped back, looking Dios in the eyes.

"Do you want to try again? Different this time?"

"Try what?" Dios' eyes were unfocused, and his face was pink with a blush.

"Sex." It tumbled awkwardly from my mouth.

"The charm...?" he asked.

I lifted my hand only to find it missing. My whole body was engulfed in panic until I spotted light glinting off metal in the tall grass. I bent down to pick it up and promptly undid the clasp. Dios stepped forward until he was pressed against me, looking up at my face with unabashed desire. I fumbled with it for a split-second before I managed to latch the clasp. When it was done, I took a half step back.

Dios' lower body began to glow. The fur began to shorten until it disappeared completely, save for what would pass as natural human body hair. I could only stare as his legs changed, stretching slightly and morphing into those of a human.

I had gotten several things almost spot-on in my various imaginings, but nothing I could dream up compared to the reality before me. The body hair was now sparse enough to afford glimpses of the milky skin beneath it, meaning there was still enough of it to justify using the term "lightly furred." His thighs were thick and strong with toned muscle, and his calves were perfectly proportioned to his thighs.

What I hadn't gotten right were his feet. In my mind, I had repeatedly pictured his feet to be on the small side. His feet were not small; they were wide and flat.

Dios blushed at my perusal, turning away from me. I drank my fill of the sight before me. The cheeks of his butt were rounded nicely but looked firm. I actually had a brief moment of dizziness as all the blood drained from my brain, destination my dick.

“Dios.”

“If you want the tail back, I can control what shifts to human.” He still hadn’t turned back around to face me, but I could hear the hesitancy in his voice.

I walked up to him and enveloped his smaller frame in my arms. Leaning down, I whispered in his ear. “I don’t really care that much what you look like. Horns and tail or body hair and flat feet, you’re still you. You’re still the mysterious satyr that kicked me in the stomach when I saved his life and then insisted *I* be the one to go to the hospital. You’re still the stubborn shit that refused to sleep in your own bed because I was sleeping in it. You are still the sarcastic, adorable, sexy, real mythological half-human that I want to seduce and keep by my side for as long as I possibly can.”

“Jace.” Dios took a shuddering breath as I began lightly tracing teasing circles around his navel with my fingers. “Why do you have to be so gods-b damned sincere? I could hate you, if you were a liar.”

I let my other hand slide down his side, ghosting across his hip and between his legs to cup his balls. The weight felt good in my hand, somehow. It was infinitely more arousing than the weight of a breast in my palm. A keening whine escaped Dios, and I relented in my purposeful avoidance of his erection to drop my hand from his navel down to wrap around the base of his rigid cock. I pumped up, once, twice; and he bucked in my arms.

Keeping my hands where they were wasn’t too difficult as I dropped to my knees behind him. I ducked my head, tongue darting out to lick from the seam of his testicles up along the crack of his ass. I curled the tip of my tongue to press between the flesh, seeking the ring of muscle at his entrance. Dios moaned and reached back to part his cheeks, assisting my efforts.

I pushed in with my tongue, surprised at how easily he opened up to me. I found myself wondering if it was from experience or simply physical differences. The little green-eyed monster within me roared that it had better just be physical differences.

I worked his hole with my tongue until he was helplessly riding my mouth. I pulled away and straightened up on my knees to rub my cheek against the side

of his hip. Before Dios had a chance to react, I tilted my head sideways and sunk my teeth into the muscle there.

“J-Jace!” Dios gasped, and I smiled when precum dribbled down from the tip of his cock over my hand.

“Mine.” I followed up with the same to his other hip, causing him to quiver in my grasp and his cock to jerk.

I surged to my feet, swinging Dios up into my arms to carry him over to where the shade of the trees around us fell across the clearing. I laid him down as gently as I could, sprawling beside him on the lush green. I ached to claim his lips, and Dios beat me to it—pressing a close-mouthed kiss on me.

I rolled onto my back taking Dios with me to straddle my abdomen. My tongue darted out to lick across his plump lower lip, deepening the kiss. He moaned into my mouth, sending a thrill of scorching heat to pool low in my belly. I let my hands grab hold of his ass, circling his opening with the tip of my middle finger.

I easily slid my finger inside him. The warmth and twitching muscle was like nothing I had felt before. My forefinger easily joined, and I began searching out his prostate. I wanted to see the look on his face, the ecstasy.

Dios panted into my mouth as he began to ride my fingers, grinding down and swiveling his hips for the extra sensation. He pulled back to sit up for a better angle, and the way his eyes were just slightly glazed over was making me even harder than I already was.

I almost lost it when he palmed his member, holding it against his stomach so it wouldn't bounce in the air. I watched his pink tongue swipe across his lips to leave them glistening, stared as he curled his fingers around himself and began gliding up and down his length, and went slack-jawed—just a little—when Dios slid a finger from his free hand in next to my own.

That only lasted for about half a minute before I just couldn't stand it anymore. I slipped my fingers out and fumbled with the zipper on my jeans. Dios bit his lip, rolling it between his teeth, and continued pleasuring himself while I desperately tried to free my painful erection. I couldn't help the slight growl that escaped upon my success.

I guided my sensitive head to his entrance, and Dios promptly bore down to take it inside him. My eyes rolled back in my head with rapture; and without thinking about it, I thrust upward hard enough to actually lift Dios' knees from where they rested on the ground on either side of me.

My hands clamped onto his hips while he continued stroking his dick in time to my thrusts. I was lost in the feel of him; the way his little pants, whimpers, and the occasional bleat fed some growing need in me to force more of them from him. We toppled right off the edge simultaneously. Both of us were shaking from the exertion and the residual frissons of our orgasm.

We simply lay in the clearing for quite a while in the aftermath of our lovemaking. I reveled in the way Dios fit against me so perfectly. He was just short enough that I could rest my chin on top of his head with him spooned against me.

"I didn't hurt you, did I?" I belatedly asked him.

"No. I'm used to anal sex," he replied bluntly.

"Don't tell me. I'd rather not know." I had figured that might be the case, but it did nothing to deter jealousy from rearing its ugly head within me.

Dios only grunted in response. I was beginning to drift off in a half-sleep when he spoke again. "How did you find it?"

"Find what?"

"My charm."

"Oh. That. Well... It was in Taron's office, on the key board."

"He didn't see you take it?"

"No. I waited until he left to go to the bank."

"Do you think he'll find out?"

"He's not that smart," I snorted. Taron was smart enough to run his own garage, but that was about the extent of his mental capabilities.

"I hope you're right. Now let me up. I have to finish hanging the laundry." Dios wriggled away from me, and I felt his absence even though he was only about a foot away.

I remained stretched out on the grass, waiting for Dios to complete his task. I really enjoyed watching him in his new form. I had grown so accustomed to the movements of his goat-like lower half that this change was riveting. The muscles moved and shifted differently, the thinner hair lending itself to my study of his form.

"Dios?"

“Hmmm?” he called over his shoulder without turning to look at me.

“You said you can control your shifting, right?”

“Yes.”

“Can you show your tail, please?” Okay, so maybe I liked his tail more than I should after all.

He didn't reply, but I watched the tail slowly emerge from just above the crevice of his ass. It twitched merrily from side to side, and a faintly hummed tune carried through the open air. When he had finished, I got up and walked down the stairs with him to the bathroom.

After cleaning ourselves, we fell into our usual routine. He watched his show, and I read Greek mythology. Dinner was a salad again—I really needed to remember to buy some steaks. We called it a night before Karen arrived home and fell asleep snuggled together despite the warm early summer temperature.

The remainder of the week passed in idyllic glory. I would go to work, keeping an eye out for any sign that Taron might suspect I had reclaimed Dios' charm. Dios would be waiting for me to get home, and we would touch and explore each other. I even asked him to do me again, though this time I let him take all the time he wanted.

It was peaceful, easy living—aside from the occasional temper tantrum from Karen. I figured there was no reason for Dios to stay cooped up in the cave though, now that he had his charm back. So come the weekend, I asked if he would like to go out to dinner. It took a lot of pleading and pouting, but he finally agreed.

Sunday night, we found ourselves dressing up—not too flashy or formal, just spiffy casual. I knew where I was taking Dios, but I hadn't told him. Mary had told me about this cute little place that just opened about a month ago. It was called Gyro Grill, and I figured it would be perfect since the menu was mostly authentic Greek cuisine.

A hostess showed us to a table and brought our drinks. Dios took a sip of his wine, and I took a long pull of my beer. A frown was playing at the corners of his mouth, but I wasn't expecting what came next.

“I was intended to be a sacrifice to Taron.”

I choked on my beer, drawing attention from the other diners around us. When I could finally breathe again, I asked, “What the hell?”

“My name, Aegidios, means ‘shield of goatskin.’ My mother had made a deal with Taron that her last child would become his shield. Granted that was back during the time after Theseus slayed Taron’s grandfather, but that doesn’t matter. Her contract is just as binding as your saving my life is. I’ve been trying to find a way out of it.”

“I see, I think. So what does this mean exactly? As far as you and I are concerned, that is.”

“Well, if I’ve read the scroll right then I only have to act as his shield if he is in danger.”

“Okay. What if we get him a better shield?” I voiced the question that, to me, was perfectly logical. It must not have occurred to Dios before, because his jaw practically hit the table as he stared at me incredulously.

“Can it really be that simple?”

“Worth a shot, right?”

Dios just nodded silently. Our food arrived, and we spent the rest of the evening eating while talking about the Greek myths. So far, my favorite was the one about Cupid and Psyche. Dios’ favorite was about how the god Pan came to play reed pipes.

That night, lying in bed, Dios sighed against my chest. I held him closer to me and asked what was wrong. He didn’t answer at first; but when I was just about to give up on ever getting an answer, he spoke up.

“Taron will catch on to us sooner or later. Especially if you help me look for a way out of my mother’s contract with him.”

“I don’t care. I’ll deal with him. How bad can it be?”

He shook his head and adjusted where it lay on my shoulder. He drifted off with no more said on the subject. I pressed a kiss to the top of his head and let myself fade into sleep.

When I got to work the next day, Mary informed me that Taron would be out all day. He had to drive to the next city over to pick up a part for the old Model T that someone brought in Saturday. I breathed a sigh of relief. No worrying today about him finding out I had given Dios back his charm.

Work was hectic, since it was a Monday. There were several customers insisting their vehicles be fixed immediately, because they had traveling to do

this weekend. Then of course there was the routine of maintenance and repairs for our regulars. By the time the day was over, all I wanted was to curl up in bed with Dios and doze off.

I wearily clambered out of my truck and shuffled my way into the cave. Dios wasn't in the front room or kitchen, so I continued on—up the stairs and into the clearing. Still no Dios. He wasn't in the bathroom either. It was when I opened his bedroom door that I truly began to worry.

The room was a wreck. His wine rack and shelf had been tipped over, broken glass decorated the floor. The bed sheets were pulled off. Dresser drawers and clothes were strewn about the room. I felt my knees give out, and my vision dimmed to blackness just before my face hit the floor.

I must have been out for a long time. I came to with Karen screeching at me from the doorway. At first I couldn't process what she was screaming at me, then I remembered why I ate dirt in the first place.

"Dios!" I scrambled frantically to my feet.

"Never mind him, where is my treasure?" Karen was livid, as evidenced by her transformation into her harpy form.

My fear for Dios overrode my habit of bickering with Karen, and I replied as calmly as I could. "Whoever took Dios probably has your treasure too. We find one, we find both. So are we going to get along for a bit and help each other, or is this going to be business as usual?"

Karen glowered at me while ruffling her feathers for an excruciatingly long moment. "Fine, human. I'll call Dave and have him bring his hunting hounds over here."

I expressed my concerns about bringing a human—aside from myself—into this. Karen assured me that her boss knew about her and Dios. From what I understood any creatures or demi-gods that were employed could only accept jobs from other creatures, demi-gods, or god-approved humans in the know.

It took a while for Dave to arrive, since he lived clear across the other side of town from where the cave was. He brought three hounds with him, and in only a few seconds they had caught the scent and were off in hot pursuit of their target. We followed them on foot, flashlights in hand.

The sun was cresting the horizon when they stopped at the mouth of a small cave set at the bottom of a sheer-rock cliff in a mountainside. No waterfall here. No sweetly whispering wildlife. No enchanting little clearing to hang laundry.

The surroundings were instead barren and desolate. What little vegetation there was looked parched and stunted. There were no small animals scurrying about, nor were there any visible insects—not even ants.

Karen let out a soft warble that echoed back to us from inside the cave. The hounds whimpered and hid behind Dave rather than following the trail into the dark space. I squared my shoulders and walked straight into the unknown danger awaiting me.

The cave turned out to be a tunnel, which felt like it went on for miles. I trailed my hand along the wall to my left and shuffled my feet along the floor instead of taking steps; just precautions to keep myself from tumbling headlong into an unseen crevice. The flashlight wasn't much use in such complete and utter blackness.

The tunnel twisted and turned, sometimes seeming to double back on itself. Suddenly I heard a crash from somewhere ahead. It sent a chill down my spine, but I was too determined to find Dios to even think of turning back.

I rushed ahead, abandoning my safety precautions in favor of getting to the origin of the sound as fast as possible. I saw the edges of the soft light from around the corner and rounded it with a skidding slide. My gaze immediately focused on Dios laying bound and gagged in the middle of the floor.

Yanking my pocket knife out, I dropped to my knees and immediately began cutting at the ropes immobilizing him. The second I got his hands free, Dios reached up to untie the cloth that was obstructing his speech. I sliced away the rope at his feet and helped him up. Dios clung to me, shaking.

"Taron. He found me, Jace. He found me, and he's going to—"

Dios' words ended in choked silence at roughly the same time I went flying through the air. My right shoulder slammed hard into the wall of the cave, leaving my whole arm numb and useless. I had one guess what had happened, and when my eyes finally refocused I found myself to be right.

"I knew you'd come after him. You're pathetic, Kosta," Taron growled, literally. Ok, well, rumbled—since I don't think bulls are capable of growling. What an interesting way to discover my boss was a minotaur. It was strange to see the head of bull atop his hulking, muscular body and yet not strange at all. It actually looked better on him than the human head I was used to seeing.

"Look who's talking. Took you long enough to figure it out. I thought bulls were hard-headed, but I didn't know they were dense too." There went my mouth again, just like when Karen's around.

“You...” Taron didn’t bother finishing his sentence. He just lowered his head and pawed at the ground. I knew exactly what was coming and braced myself for the pain.

I waited for the impact, the slide of sharp horn into my flesh. When I dared to open my eyes, I was thrilled, shocked, amazed, and ultimately horrified by what I saw. Dios had my forgotten pocket knife in hand, and the blade was embedded deep into Taron’s gut. Not a big deal if it were an average everyday pocket knife, but it’s a hunting pocket knife. Six inches, as opposed to the average two or three, of steel was sufficient to do enough damage to stop Taron in his tracks.

The cave suddenly filled with blindingly white light. The spots in my vision cleared to reveal a tall, elegant woman in a tunic and armor with an owl on her shoulder. Pieces of information tumbled together in my head, giving me an idea of who this was, but I couldn’t understand why she was here. With a wave of her hand, my knife disappeared from Dios’ grip and reappeared in her open palm.

“Stand before me, Aegidios of Athens. Stand before your patron goddess.”

Dios wordlessly walked over to her and bowed his head. She reached out and placed her hand atop his cinnamon curls. Dios glowed and shifted back to his satyr form despite the fact that his charm was still around his neck.

“Your bravery is commendable. I have recently come into possession of something which I wish to give you as a token of my respect for a child of my city. Will you accept?”

Dios nodded carefully, eyes still downcast to the floor.

Without further ado, Athena withdrew a shining golden length of thick fabric from her tunic. She draped it across his shoulders and then lifted his face to look at her again with her fingertips beneath his chin. He blinked at her repeatedly then stammered out a quiet, “Thank you.”

“Remember, Aegidios. I am the patron goddess of the courageous and the *wise*.” Her words echoed around us as she faded from sight right before our eyes.

Dios pulled the item from his shoulders gently. His eyes widened almost comically as he looked at it and then at me and then back at it. He rushed over to me, hooves clicking loudly on the rock.

"Jace, do you have any idea what this is; what Athena just gave *to me*?"

I shook my head in reply, in too much pain to form words.

Dios spread the cloth across my injured shoulder and then spoke again. "This is the golden fleece! It can heal any wound and protect its bearer from any attack."

At first I could only nod in agreement with what he was saying, but then I felt it. A warmth was spreading out from where it touched my skin as my arm slowly regained feeling. I belatedly remembered my boss was likely bleeding out somewhere behind Dios, but he was way ahead of me on that score.

"Jace, I think I know what Athena wants me to do with this. I think... I think she wants me to offer it to Taron in place of myself, to fulfill the contract." Dios looked into my eyes, as though he were asking for my consent.

I nodded again, eager to have Dios freed from his morbid fate. I watched as he walked over to where Taron seemed frozen in place and held the fleece to his gut wound. When Dios moved away, the wound was healed. Taron shook his head and flared his nostrils.

"Wait." Dios' voice was firm and confident, for the first time since I had met him. It sent a thrill down my spine. "Taron, will you accept this shield in place of myself?"

Taron studied the fleece for a split-second before holding his hand out toward Dios, who immediately handed it over. "Fucking satyr. Cowards, the lot of you. All you're good at is drinking and fucking. Kosta, you're fired. Go get your toolkit and clear out." He walked farther into the cave, leaving us alone.

"Come here," I told Dios without thinking.

He just stood rooted in place for the longest time, I began to think something was wrong with him. I scrambled to my feet so I could totter my way over to him. He smiled brightly at me and flung himself into my arms. After a bit, I felt him sobbing. I started rubbing his back gently before I dared to ask, "Are you okay?"

He pulled back, giving me a watery smile. "I didn't have to go to you. Just now, when you told me 'come here', I wasn't forced to obey."

I grinned like a fool when the meaning finally sunk in. Wrapping my arms firmly around him, I spun Dios around and whooped with joy. The echo of my shout faded long before we managed to make our way back to open air.

Epilogue

It's been a year since that fateful day when I rescued a drowning man—excuse me, satyr—from his attempted suicide. I can't help but smile at the way everything has turned out since then. Dios moved into my house after Dave got settled in the cave with Karen. His hounds made perfect guard dogs for her treasure.

She was livid that we hadn't gotten it back, but Dios and I have been helping her gather a new hoard. Of course, my first contribution was silver tinsel. I don't know what was more hilarious, her overjoyed reaction or Dios' uncontrollable giggles as I presented her with the package.

I have been running a car care and repair business from the garage at my house. I can't handle anything too big, but I always send those ones to Mary. She and I caught up in line at the grocery store about a month after I was fired, and she told me that Taron had been gone for two weeks after the incident because he had somehow fallen prey to fleas. Of course, she didn't know about the incident itself.

Dios and I finally came to an agreement concerning meat in the refrigerator. As long as it was beef, chicken, or pork he didn't care if I had it and understood that he wasn't expected to eat it. I'm counting today as our anniversary, so I bought him a crystal goblet. We've been working on replacing his broken collection too.

He might just kick me again when he sees this one though. It's got a hand-painted scene of Philoctetes stuck in a target by his horns.

To Télös

Author Bio

Ava Penn is an incurable bibliophile with a passion for food, romance, and nature. This often shows in most of her writing. Other interests include anime/manga, video games, horses, and Amtgard. She loves to hear from readers, so feel free to get in touch.

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