



Starry Night

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Category: LGBT+

Description: When Cupid is hired to play matchmaker on Valentine's Day for an internet dating site, demigod Orion has one last chance to find true love written in the stars.

Famously slain by Apollo's scorpion and set among the stars by Zeus, Orion was saved by Aphrodite, the goddess of love herself. Banished from his beloved Greece, Orion has spent the last five millennia avoiding love at all costs, but will a blind date change the course of the demigod's life?

Librarian Kaden Devereaux was gifted a subscription to a dating website courtesy of a friend who found his forever love online. He's dubious that a man dressing up in the guise of Cupid could find the man of his dreams, but decides to take a chance on love.

Sparks fly when the men meet, but Kaden has a secret, one that could end things before they start. Are Orion and Kaden a match made in Olympus, or is this relationship a Greek tragedy in the making?

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Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:03 am

Orion

It all started with an email. No, not the kind where a Nigerian prince wanted to give me all his money. I was too smart to fall for that. Again. This email was from some dating website called Heart2Heart. I almost deleted it four or five times. I'm still not sure what kept me from consigning the message to the trash. Maybe I was bored. Or wanted to believe the notion I had a romantic destiny.

Sighing heavily, I tapped on the message and read it for the tenth time.

Ready to meet the love of your life this Valentine's Day? Put your trust in Cupid!

You know that here at Heart2Heart we've helped thousands of lonely hearts find their perfect match, mate, and bond over the last five years.

Now, your romantic future is about to get even brighter thanks to the cheeky cherub themselves, Cupid. Known worldwide as the number one matchmaker, we're thrilled to partner with them for this special Valentine's Day event in which they'll use H2H's enormous database to find the magical match that's just right for you.

Ready to embrace your romantic destiny? Put your trust in Cupid and sign up today.

Until the email arrived, I'd never heard of Heart2Heart. To be honest, I hadn't thought about my romantic destiny in, oh, a millennium or so.

I know what you're thinking. Okay, Boomer! You're only as old as you feel. Let me tell you, I felt each and every one of my 5,03 years. Damn, it made me feel old when

I said it out loud.

It's probably a good idea if I introduce myself before I go any further.

My name is Orion Starborn. No, Starborn isn't my actual last name; I created it for legal purposes. Turns out you can't get a social security card, driver's license, or birth certificate with only one name here in the good old US of A. Makes me wonder if the government made exceptions for Cher, Madonna, and Prince.

I was born into the empire of ancient Greece in what is now Messina, Sicily, in the year 3008 BC, to Euryale and Poseidon. If you've read Greek mythology or watched those Percy Jackson movies, you've heard of my father. You know, the god of the sea. Euryale was the sister of Medusa. Yes, that Medusa, the one with the slithery hairdo, who could turn men to stone with one glance. Thanks to circumstances beyond my control, I'm an immortal demigod.

No, really. I am. Which makes me the ultimate nepo baby.

Anyway, back to the email I couldn't seem to delete. I hated Valentine's Day with a literal burning passion. If I could incinerate every Hallmark store, florist, and candy shop within a one-mile radius, I would have. I mean, I could, but I wouldn't.

Maybe.

I'm betting you see me as some brokenhearted loser whose only goal in life was to get through the season of love with my heart intact in its ice-encased coffin. A metaphorical coffin, not an actual coffin.

I'm magically gifted, but I'm definitely not able to remove my heart at will. That's the stuff of legend and Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom. Let's face it, Indy is legendary. Have you seen him in those tight pants and leather jacket, cracking his

whip? Mmmmm!

Where was I? Oh yeah, my literal burning hatred of Valentine's Day and my eternally broken heart.

It all started a thousand years before the birth of Christ. I really am that old. Ask me sometime about my skin regimen. I was crazy in love with Apollo, god of everything under the sun. His eyes were the deepest brown, his dark curls begged to be stroked, while his olive skin glistened like the Mediterranean on a summer's day.

Sounds promising, right? Wrong. No matter how I tried to capture Apollo's attention, he never so much as cast a glance my way. But I didn't let his attitude stop me. I had an ace in the hole, so to speak, in the form of my best friend, Cupid.

Yes, that Cupid. The very same cherub who was working with Heart2Heart, claiming he could find everyone's perfect match. The very same son-of-a-goddess who promised me my heart's desire but got me killed instead.

But Orion, I thought you said you were an immortal demigod?

Please hold all questions until the end...

Cupid told me the best way to get Apollo's attention was to ignore him. Tale as old as time. So I listened to my friend and did just that. Instead of mooning over Apollo, I went hunting with his sister, Artemis, who, truth be told, was the only person, goddess or mortal, whose talent with a bow rivaled my own.

We spent months on the hunt together. Killing wild boar, deer, hares, you name it. I threw lavish feasts in her honor. People would come from miles around to fete the goddess and to pray their own hunts would be successful. Artemis and I were having the time of our lives until Apollo got wind of what we'd been up to.

I'd finally caught Apollo's eye. He showed up at one of the feasts, practically vibrating with rage. Not only was he angry I appeared to be courting his sister, but also that I'd stopped lavishing him with all of my attention, praise, and sacrifices. Gods, am I right? Can't live with them. Can't live...at all, actually.

I did my best to explain to Apollo he was the one I was trying to impress. Whose eye I was trying to catch. He was my one true love. The man of my dreams. My sun and my moon.

Apollo was having none of my excuses and flowery words. He struck me blind, telling me I would never again be able to look upon his fair sister's face. I begged and pleaded for him to return my sight so I could hunt again. With my sight restored, I would become a hunter of even greater renown, rivaling even his sister's talents, all in Apollo's name. I promised to build temples to revere him and to sacrifice a thousand bulls in his honor, if only he would heal me.

Not only were my pleas all in vain, but vowing I would eclipse his sister with my bow and arrow was the absolute worst thing I could have said in that moment. Apollo created a giant scorpion from the sand beneath his feet. He promised to spare my life if I could defeat the beast. Without my eyes, my sword and bow were useless. When my arms tired and I could no longer stand, the creature came for me, stinging me relentlessly. I felt its poison course through my veins, burning like a thousand suns. I spent my last breath begging Apollo for mercy, which he did not grant.

Later, I found myself on Charon's ferry, handing over a coin for my passage to the Underworld, where I was doomed to spend an eternity suffering, alone and blind, mourning my own misfortune and the loss of Apollo.

Oh, stop your sniffing. Spoiler alert: I didn't spend an eternity in Hades. Artemis, grief-stricken over my death, begged Zeus to place me among the stars. Which he did, but he also placed the scorpion alongside me as a warning that no mortal,

demigod or not, could ever eclipse a god of Olympus.

Zeus always was a dick.

As it turned out, Artemis wasn't the only goddess who was in love with me. Aphrodite, unbeknownst to Apollo, sent my corpse to Hephaestus, the blacksmith god, who was able to revive my mortal body and restore my sight on the condition I leave Greece for all eternity. At the goddess of love's command, I was to be made immortal until such time as I was able to find true love and have it returned to me.

It would be a cold day in Hades before I allowed my heart to overrule my head again. I accepted the arrangement and escaped to Carthage, across the Mediterranean Sea. I was whole again, with one small exception. Instead of the cerulean eyes praised by poets, I was left with one eye green as the forest and one eye golden as summer wheat.

If I was being honest, immortality wasn't all it was cracked up to be. I'd spent the last several millennia drifting from place to place. I was a vagabond. A man without a country, never once finding a place that remotely felt like home. All the while keeping my heart safe in its ice-encased coffin.

Until today.

I couldn't help thinking Cupid owed me one. I never thought he'd amount to much, but of all the Olympian gods, he was the only one who remained relevant in this modern age. Zeus's magnificent temples lay in ruins. As did Apollo's Oracle of Delphi. No one prayed to Athena for her wisdom or to Demeter for a bountiful harvest. Cupid was all that remained of the bygone, classical era.

Clicking the link in the Heart2Heart email, I started to create a profile. Like the ad said, my romantic destiny was waiting.

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Kaden

Man, did I love the smell of old books. Yeah, I was one of those old-schoolers who thought e-readers were the first sign of the apocalypse. Kindle was a dirty word in my vernacular. Apps were chicken wings or mozzarella sticks, not something you downloaded on a phone to read a book with. Who the hell wanted to read tiny words on a tiny screen? Although, I had to admit, sooner rather than later, I was going to need reading glasses to see the tiny words in my paper books. Whose idea of a sick joke was that?

My life had a 1980s vibe. I listened to Madonna on my Walkman. I read actual books made from paper. I drove a Pontiac Trans Am. The car was the spitting image of the one Burt Reynolds drove in Smokey and the Bandit. I even had a rotary dial phone with an extra-long tangled cord mounted to the wall in my kitchen. Don't hate me because I was too cool for school.

My entire life revolved around books. As the head librarian in the Myths, Legends, and Folklore department of the Boston Public Library, I spent my days helping people research vampires, zombies, and werewolves. Oh, my!

Seriously though, books were in my blood, even though this world seemed content to bury them in the past. I loved my job at the BPL. It came with certain perks, like working in a place with John Singer Sargent murals and stunning Renaissance-style architecture. My wing of the library was the largest depository of myths and legend texts in the world. The books ranged from ancient Mesopotamia, the Holy Roman Empire, ancient Greece, and Turkey to more modern classics like Pride and Prejudice and Zombies and Bram Stoker's Dracula.

My favorite perk was a bit more personal. You see, not only were these ancient tomes old friends, but they could be the key to my salvation.

Can I tell you a secret? Promise not to tell? Pinkie swear?

I'm a werewolf. My pack's origins trace back to rural France in the twelfth century. Round about 1776, when the American colonists were preparing to declare their independence from jolly old England, my ancestors escaped to Canada, along with other undesirables . My family later immigrated to the United States in the 190s, finally ending up in Malden, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston.

Yeah, you heard me right. I'm a French-Canadian werewolf. Mon Dieu! I'm Kaden Devereaux, by the way. It's nice to meet you.

Let me start by debunking a few common werewolf myths. A bite from a werewolf will not turn you into one of us. It will require a trip to the emergency room for antibiotics and possibly treatment for rabies. Silver bullets will kill us, but, spoiler alert, they'll kill anything if your aim is true. Lastly, the light of a full moon does not make me shift into my lupine form.

Le sigh . One guy shifts during a full moon, eats half a village, and BAM! A new myth is born. No one liked great-great-grandfather Francois much anyway, or so I'm told.

But back to the ancient books in the collection being my salvation. No, I'm not being dramatic. I wish I was. Lycanthropy is a genetic trait like dark hair or male-pattern baldness. The Devereaux family had been producing virile werewolves for centuries. However, in my case, my genes or something went a bit haywire somewhere along the way.

I'm a mutant. A freak. Due to this supposed genetic flaw, I'd been shunned. I was no

longer a member of the Devereaux pack. I had no contact with my parents, siblings, or the rest of my family. That's where my precious books came into play. I'd been studying werewolf myths and legends from the moment my mutation was revealed fifteen years ago when I shifted for the first time, in hopes of finding a cure and ultimately being welcomed back into my family's loving arms.

What was this terrible trait that got me kicked out of my pack and ostracized by the alpha? I was allergic to animal dander, meaning I was allergic to myself when I shifted into wolf form. It didn't sound like a huge deal in the grand scheme of things, but life with swollen, itchy eyes, asthmatic wheezing, a drippy nose, and constant sneezes was a nightmare. So much so I was forbidden from siring children of my own for fear the mutation would be passed down to future generations.

Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the play...

I don't mean to be a Donnie Downer, but welcome to my life. Or at least what passed for life these days.

All of my free time was spent with my nose in old books, hoping I could find a cure for my condition. I'd tried over-the-counter antihistamines, allergy shots, and biologics to suppress my immune system, but nothing worked for long, and Benadryl made me sleepy. My next step was looking into magic spells, curses, hexes. My condition might not be a function of biology at all but rather the result of a terrible curse. I mean, I'd investigated science, biology, genetic engineering, and the like. What did I have to lose?

There was only one person who knew my full truth. My best friend, Jon Clifton. We'd been friends since middle school when he saved me from bullies who were in the process of stealing my lunch money. No one fucked with Big Jon, which was as true now as it was at John Quincy Adams Middle School back in the day.

His motto when it came to my parents had always been “Fuck them and the werewolf they rode in on.” He had a point. And the best parents on the planet. When Jon came out to them in the eighth grade, there had been hugs and tons of support. They marched in Pride parades alongside him. His parents fostered gay youth. They were just as supportive of me when I came out as a gay, allergic werewolf.

My parents kicked me out of the house when they discovered my mutation during my first shift when I was fifteen. It wasn’t bad enough being a teenage werewolf, dealing with zits and algebra, but to be homeless on top of everything was a blow I still hadn’t recovered from. Thankfully, Jon’s parents took me in as one of their own. His mother gave me ear scratches when I shifted and always had tissues and my inhaler handy when I changed back. They even helped put me through college.

Jon got married last year. It was a gorgeous Star Wars –themed ceremony held at a swanky hotel in downtown Boston. Paul was one hell of a guy, and he loved Jon to Tatooine and back. They’d met courtesy of the dating app HeartHeart. With a drunken arm slung around me during Madonna’s “Crazy for You,” he’d told me my one true love was out there waiting for me to find him. All I needed to do was take a chance on love like he’d done.

I sure as hell couldn’t argue with his results. After a year of marriage, they owned a house on the water in Salem and had adopted a pair of rescue greyhounds named George and Ringo, with plans for a human child to someday join their fur babies. Jon had the world on a string.

All I had were my moldering books and a free membership to HeartHeart, courtesy of Big Jon. I’d spent the last few months staring at the invitation and trying to decide if I should join or not. Finally, last week, after one too many pina coladas, I’d made a profile. I was sick to my stomach over the whole thing when I saw “Cupid” would be the one making matches for Valentine’s Day.

The only thing worse than being alone on Valentine's Day was the possibility of being set up by an equally lonely dude costumed in a wig and diaper. It was only Jon's success with meeting his husband that made me press the Join Now button.

If nothing else, it would be a funny story to tell at the old-age home one day, right?

Anyway, I clicked the button three days ago. It had been crickets ever since. I didn't even get a welcome email offering me upgrades to my standard membership. I suppose with the holiday only a few days away, the website must have been slammed with lonely people like me looking for their happily ever after.

Some of them would find true love. But as for me, I had a feeling I would be spending yet another Valentine's Day alone with sappy movies and a box of choc—

The pinging of my phone broke me out of my pity party for one. I pulled it out of my pocket and saw a single text message had been sent. After reading the message several times, I wasn't sure if I should laugh or cry.

Hey Kaden, it's Cupid. Have I got a date for you! Tomorrow 4 p.m. BPL. Are you ready to fall head over paws in love?

Paws? Nowhere in my profile had I mentioned I was a werewolf. How the hell had this Cupid wannabe found out my secret? Making matters worse was that my date was supposed to meet me here at the library. How humiliating.

All I could do now was cross my fingers and hope this blind date didn't turn into a complete catastrophe. I mean, what could possibly go right?

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Orion

What the hell kind of name was Kaden ? I rolled my eyes and scanned the email from Cupid for what had to be the twentieth time since it arrived last night. It seemed to be a form letter of sorts, introducing me to Kaden Devereaux and giving some vague details about him. Black hair, green eyes, five foot eight, librarian. To my chagrin, there was no photograph.

Christ, it took Cupid to set me up with a short, emerald-eyed dork? I could have found a man fitting his description by myself in the coffee shop near my office.

Sighing, I checked my look in the mirror. My dark hair was perfectly styled. I wore an expensive pair of dark-wash jeans and a polo shirt that was a size too small to accentuate my broad shoulders. On my feet were a pair of black velvet Jimmy Choos. I'd come a long way from togas and sandals.

As I hopped off the Green Line at the Boylston Street T stop, I couldn't help but wonder if I was about to meet the man of my dreams. He'd have to be the hottest guy on the planet to even be in the same league as Apollo. And let's face it, the chances of that were slim to none.

Even still, I promised myself I would go through with this date no matter what. I followed the signs to the Myths, Legends, and Folklore section of the library, already a little impressed with my date. Hell, I was a living legend. I was sure he knew all about me and what happened back in Greece, which, in my case, might not be the best thing. It wasn't as if I was a hero like Hercules, the over-muscled dick. Let's just say with Zeus being his father, the golden apple didn't fall far from the tree.

My date was nowhere to be found at the circulation desk. What in Hades was going on? He must have gotten the same email I did—why wasn't he waiting for me with bated breath? Scowling, I headed back through the stacks, keeping my eyes open for a short, green-eyed librarian.

I turned a corner and smacked into someone who bounced off my chest. I barely managed to wrap my arms around him before he landed on the floor. "Are you okay?" I asked, coming face-to-face with the most intense green eyes I'd ever seen in my life.

"Holy shit," the man muttered, taking a step back. His eyes traveled up and down my torso, his eyes widening with alarm and, dare I say it, desire.

As he appraised me, I did the same. The man was short, a few inches below six feet. He was dressed in jeans and a plaid dress shirt with one of those square ties patterned with centaurs. He wore a name tag on the left pocket of the shirt. Fuck me, it read: Kaden .

"I'm so sorry," Kaden mumbled. "I wasn't watching where I was going and..." His eyes widened further as he stared into mine. "Orion?" he gasped.

"The one and only," I said with a cheeky grin. I held out a hand to greet him, expecting to feel a surge of electricity and animalistic lust, but all I got for my trouble was a slightly damp and weak handshake.

"I can't believe you're real. I got the email from the dating website and thought it was a joke, to be honest." He ran a hand through his thick, wavy hair. "I'm Kaden."

"Orion," I returned lamely. "Do you have any idea where we're going tonight? My email didn't say."

“We’re going to a cooking class at the Four Seasons Hotel. It’s a ten-minute walk from here. Let me grab my coat, and we’ll be ready to roll.” Kaden’s grin was infectious. It lit up his entire face, making his green eyes glitter under the fluorescent lights. He stepped past me, heading back in the direction I’d just come from.

“Wait. What ? A cooking class?” What the hell was Cupid thinking? When I got my hands on that diapered prick, I was going to give him a piece of my mind and possibly a left hook to his perfect nose.

“I know! Sounds like fun, right?” Kaden sounded serious, not sarcastic at all.

Was he actually looking forward to this night of torture? “Do you cook?” I asked, trying to sound casual. I most definitely did not cook. You’d think after five-plus millennia on this planet, I would have picked up the skill, but you’d be wrong.

“I love to cook!” Kaden grinned, approaching the circulation desk. “I’ll be right back.” He walked behind the desk and into an office. When he returned moments later, he was wearing a dark winter jacket. “Ready?”

I nodded, my brain still stuck on the fact this date was turning into an epic disaster. The only thing that could make this night worse was if a thunderbolt-wielding Zeus showed up.

“Do you cook?” Kaden asked as we made our way down the main staircase leading to the front door.

“Uh, no. Not really, unless you count fixing a bowl of Lucky Charms as cooking.” What the fuck was wrong with me? I wasn’t exactly putting my best foot forward.

“You don’t look like the kind of man who misses a meal.” Kaden’s eyes were glued to my shoulders and arms, which were pretty impressive if I did say so myself.

“I eat a lot of takeout. Salads. Chicken kabobs. Steak.” I practically growled the last word. I’d been too nervous to eat lunch, which I was paying for now. “What about you? Don’t tell me you’re a vegetarian. It looks like one strong breeze would blow you away.” I held the main door open for Kaden, who slipped past me and immediately shivered.

“No, I’m not a vegetarian. I’m a carnivore, born and bred. I’m just cold all the time. I don’t have my winter coat.” Kaden’s eyes widened at his own words, as if he’d said something he shouldn’t have.

It was on the tip of my tongue to point out my date was, in fact, wearing a winter jacket. Maybe he was one of those guys who needed an L.L. Bean jacket rated for below-zero temperatures. I ran hot most of the time, so I was fine in a light parka. As I studied Kaden, a line of sweat trickled down my spine. “Do you have any idea why Cupid matched us together?” Maybe Kaden had more insight into our pairing.

“I have no idea.” Kaden grinned. “No, that’s not exactly true. You’re my type.” His smile turned into embarrassed shock. “I mean, you’re my physical type. Tall. Dark. Broad shoulders. I don’t know if you’re my one true love or if we’re gonna go back to your place and...” Kaden sputtered and stopped, obviously figuring silence would be better than more rambling.

I felt my blood heat at the thought of taking my date home and ravishing him. I was about to suggest skipping the cooking class and heading back to the condo, but something stopped me before I could open my mouth. Cupid handpicked Kaden for a reason. While I was sure the sex would be next-level—Kaden looked like the kind of man who let his freak flag fly in the bedroom—I couldn’t help thinking there was more to this match than just sexual compatibility. “You’re my type too.” Fuck me gently with Zeus’s thunderbolt. It was too late to take my words back, but looking at the adoring smile on Kaden’s face, I found I didn’t want to.

Kaden's eyes lit up with obvious joy. "Here we are." He pointed to the soaring brick-and-glass facade of the hotel. "Let's get cooking!"

What kind of Pandora's box had I opened? Here I was on a blind date with a man I never would have chosen for myself, about to go to a cooking class, something I would never willingly do. It was a world gone mad. I supposed the only thing I could do at this point was to see where the night took us. I'd only been acquainted with Kaden for twenty minutes. It wasn't possible to know from this brief conversation if we were meant to be together forever or just for one night.

Time would tell.

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Kaden

You might not have noticed, but I was kind of an awkward guy. Big Jon called me adorkable. Which I supposed I was. I loved science fiction shows, anime, and going to comic cons dressed as Luke Skywalker. There was absolutely nothing about me a man like Orion could possibly find attractive. Was there?

He hadn't seemed particularly keen on coming to this cooking class, but I had to admit, once he'd gotten a closer look at the tools of the trade, he seemed to perk up.

"Okay, let's get started," a man in a white chef's coat said from the front of the room. "I'm Karl Timmons, head chef here at the Four Seasons, and it's my pleasure to welcome you all to class. We're going to prepare two dishes tonight, sure to whet your date's appetite. There are aprons at your stations. Please put them on."

I practically vibrated with excitement. In my Heart2Heart profile, I'd mentioned being interested in learning to cook Italian food. The powers that be must have taken note of my interest. Grabbing the apron, I slipped the neckpiece over my head and quickly tied the straps around my back. "Piece of ca—" My comment died on my tongue as I caught a look at Orion, who was having trouble putting on the apron. He held it upside down and was trying to put his right foot through the neck loop, all the while looking deeply confused.

"Here," I said, taking the apron from him. "Let me help you." I moved closer to Orion, reaching up on my tiptoes to put it around his neck. My chest brushed against his. Electricity burned through my body, making me feel like my blood had turned to lava. It wouldn't be long before my cock joined the party. The last thing I wanted was

for Orion to notice. “Turn around.” I spun him around and tied the strings around the center of his back. His heavily muscled, broad back. I wanted to lick him until I ran out of saliva. Clearing my throat, I pulled back from him. “All set.”

Orion grinned when he turned to see my deep blush. Christ, I felt like a teenager with my cheeks flaming and my dick half-hard in my pants.

“We’ll start with spaghetti and meatballs. You’ll find the written recipe at your stations. The first step is to make the meatballs, then move on to the sauce. I’ll be around to help out if you get stuck,” Chef Timmons said. “Make sure to handle the meatballs as little as possible. There’s nothing worse than gummy, overworked balls.”

“Amen, brother!” Orion called out. He turned to me and waggled his eyebrows suggestively.

A giggle bubbled up. I slapped a hand over my face, which was beet red again. I was beginning to think a constant state of blush was par for the course with Orion. “I’ll get started on the sauce.”

“Uh,” Orion began, nibbling on his bottom lip. “I have no idea how to make meatballs.” It was his turn to blush. “I don’t know how the hell I ended up on a date at a cooking class.”

I could feel Orion’s anxiety. Been there. Done that. Bought the T-shirt. “Okay, we’ll work on it together.” Reaching for the ground meat and a glass bowl, I noticed Orion’s shoulders start to relax. I wouldn’t mind working out his knots later. He was built like a Greek god. Muscled. Solid. Drop-dead gorgeous. How the hell had I gotten matched up with this man? Was it dumb luck? Fate? The random push of a button? I didn’t know, and frankly, with him hovering behind me, our bodies millimeters apart, I didn’t care.

After giving my date a quick rundown on how to use measuring cups and spoons, Orion easily added the ingredients to the bowl. “What’s next?” he asked, sounding more confident.

“Now we have to mix the meat and roll the balls.” I winked, my dick reawakening with a vengeance. While I was nervous as hell around Orion, my dick wasn’t. It jerked in my pants, letting me know he was good to go. “First, we need to put on these gloves.”

Orion watched curiously as I snapped the gloves on. I was used to wearing them from working with old manuscripts in the library, but my date didn’t seem like he’d ever worn them before. He got them partway on before they got stuck on his thick fingers, the ends flapping like used condoms.

Taking his large, hot hand in my own, I smoothed out the wrinkles and pulled the latex up to his wrist. Taking a peek up at Orion, I noticed he was watching me with intent. Orion’s eyes were mesmerizing. I felt like he was hypnotizing me with his heated gaze. “You need to mix all of the ingredients together with both hands. Make sure to pull up what’s on the bottom of the bowl. Ready?”

With a nod, Orion sank his hands into the meat mixture. He reminded me of a kid making mud pies in the backyard. He hadn’t been kidding when he said he didn’t know how to cook. “Here, let me show you.” I slipped under his arm, my back against his chest. At least from this position, he wouldn’t be able to feel my erection. Hopefully, Orion would be feeling it later.

What the hell was wrong with me? I was on a blind date with a virtual stranger. I could think of a million horrifying ways this date could end if we ended up back at my place. I watched way too much true crime television for my own good. People survived one-night stands all the time. Didn’t they?

“You were saying?” Orion whispered in my ear. He moved against me, closing the distance between us.

His meaty erection slid against my ass. I moaned low in my throat. To my ears, it sounded more like a growl. Christ, I was way in over my head here. Taking a deep breath, I wrapped my hands around Orion’s and carefully demonstrated how to mix the meat with the egg, breadcrumbs, and grated parmesan cheese. Chef Timmons’s admonition not to overwork the meat played in my head, but with Orion doing a slow bump and grind, I couldn’t give two fucks about the food. If the meal sucked, we could call out for pizza from bed. Another giggle bubbled up.

“What’s funny?” Orion asked, his voice like a caress.

“I don’t care how the food comes out.” I turned back to Orion. His eyes glowed with naked lust. He wanted me, and I was of a mind to let him have his way, first date or not.

“Your meat is perfect, boys. Stop playing with it. Time to roll those balls,” Chef Timmons said with a knowing smirk.

Orion jolted against my back, seemingly as surprised by the chef’s appearance as I was. Reluctantly, I backed out of his arms. “Do you want me to show you how to make a meatball?”

“I think I’ve got it.” Orion grabbed a hunk of the mixture and rolled it to perfection before setting it on the cookie sheet.

“You really know your way around balls,” I said, hoping to get a rise out of Orion.

He shot me a wicked grin. One that said he wanted to eat me alive. “Shouldn’t you get busy with the marinara? If you don’t get cooking, all you’ll have to eat are my

balls.”

My cock jerking in my pants, I gave Orion a saucy look. “Fine by me.” Okay, who the hell was I? It wasn’t like me to flirt like this, not even with the few boyfriends I’d had over the years.

Chuckling under his breath, Orion kept working, leaving me free to start working on the marinara. Taking off my gloves, I grabbed the can of whole plum tomatoes. The label identified them as being imported from the San Marzano region of Italy, which meant they were the best tomatoes on earth. I opened the can and carefully poured it into the sauce pot. I was going to hand-crush the tomatoes like I’d seen celebrity chefs do on television. The sauce would be chunkier this way. Setting the can back on the counter, I felt a flash of pain in my hand. “Ow! Shit!” My index finger was sliced from the tip to the first knuckle.

“Are you okay?” Orion asked, taking my hand in his.

“I cut myself on the jagged edge of the can.” How could I have been so careless? Orion brought me to the sink at our station and turned on the cold water tap. I watched helplessly as my blood sluiced down the drain. As Orion held my hand under the water, I felt my flesh begin to heat. Not with lust the way it had earlier, but as if my finger was burning from the inside out. I grimaced, burying my head against his shoulder.

“You’re just fine. See?” Orion asked, his voice tender.

I chanced opening my eyes and couldn’t believe what I saw. My finger was healed. It looked just like it had before I’d cut it. What the hell had Orion done to me?

“Is everything okay here?” Chef Timmons asked, checking out my finger.

“He just banged it against the can.” Orion smiled at the chef. “Kaden thought he was bleeding, but it was just tomato juice on his hand.”

The chef surveyed my hand and nodded. “Get back to it. The sauce isn’t going to cook itself.”

“Yes, Chef,” I said, unable to take my eyes off my miraculously healed finger. I was cut. I felt the lid slice my skin. I saw the blood. I pulled my hand back from the water and reached for a towel.

Orion owed me an explanation about what happened, but now wasn’t the time.

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Orion

I have to say I didn't even taste the meal. Yes, I ate, but I was too focused on the crazy magnetic pull drawing me closer and closer to Kaden. All through dinner, he kept looking at his healed finger as if he expected to see it covered in blood. I wasn't in the habit of using my magic in public, but I'd made an exception for Kaden. When he cut himself, it was as if I could feel his pain. I hadn't experienced anything like that in my life. I couldn't figure out if I was more shaken over healing Kaden or my growing attraction for him.

"You're pretty quiet," Kaden said as we made our way back toward the library after class ended. A note of worry sounded in his voice.

"I was just thinking about tonight. When we first met, I didn't think we had anything in common, and now it feels like we're two halves of the same whole." I still didn't know how this was possible after only spending a few short hours with Kaden, but then it hit me. Cupid. He was responsible for my feelings of instant love toward my date.

Kaden nodded. "I was thinking the same thing. I mean, how could a gorgeous man like you even look twice at someone like me?"

A flash of anger made my heart beat faster. I grabbed Kaden's slim shoulders and pulled him into me. "Don't say that. You're handsome. Brilliant. Perfect." I bent low and brushed my lips against his. An all-consuming inferno ignited in my soul.

Wrapping his arms around me, Kaden moaned and tentatively kissed me back, his

tongue sliding against my own.

I was lost, awash in a sea of emotion I could never hope to contain. At this moment, I wasn't sure I wanted to. Content to let these new feelings burn bright, I gave in to the kiss, taking control. My hands cupped either side of Kaden's face. His freshly shaved skin was smooth under my fingers.

Bucking my hips against Kaden's, I could feel the heat of his erection against my own. All I could think about was marking him and making him mine.

"Get a room, assholes!" someone shouted as they walked past us.

I pulled back from Kaden to get a look at the man who'd yelled at us. Thankfully, he'd said his piece and was walking away. The last thing I needed was to get in a fistfight with some drunken jerk in the middle of Boylston Street.

When I turned back to look at my date, he was gone. I spun around in a complete circle, and all I saw was a mangy dog.

"Achoo! Choo! Choo!" The dog shook his head after every sneeze.

"Kaden?" I called out, keeping one eye on the dog. I know this is an unpopular and even controversial thing to say, but I didn't like pets. I wouldn't say I hated dogs, but I didn't want them in my house either.

The dog leaped up on his back legs and set his large paws on my chest. It was a lot bigger than I thought it was originally. "Nice doggy," I said, setting my hands over his paws. Getting a closer look at the animal, I realized it wasn't a dog at all. It was a wolf. A black wolf with the most gorgeous green eyes I'd ever seen. What the hell was a wolf doing in the middle of downtown Boston? Wouldn't there have been some kind of alert sent to my phone if a vicious wild animal had gotten loose from the

Franklin Park Zoo? “Good boy,” I whispered, pushing gently against his paws.

“Achoo! Choo! Choo!” The wolf backed away from me and continued to sneeze. He sat back on his haunches, looking as if he was waiting for something.

My mind turned back to Kaden. Where the hell had he gone? The wolf whined. He got back to his feet and brushed against my leg. He looked at me with what I couldn’t help thinking was longing. “Kaden?”

The wolf nodded his head.

“You’re a werewolf?” I asked, unable to believe my eyes. The man I’d spent the evening with and had started falling in love with was a shape-shifter?

Before my eyes, Kaden shifted back to his human self. It was like nothing I’d ever seen before. Hollywood movies got the transformation all wrong. “What the actual fuck?” I whispered, taking several steps back.

“Uh, yeah. I was going to tell you,” Kaden began.

“When? Back at my place? After I’d fucked you? After you ripped out my throat and I was bleeding to death? What the hell is wrong with you? There was nothing about your...your condition on the dating site.” My mind was spinning a mile a minute. I needed to calm the hell down before he shifted again and tried to eat me.

“I’m sorry, Orion.” Kaden’s gaze was on my feet. “I should have told you, but most people react like you did just now, so I kept it to myself.”

“What made you shift? Were you afraid of the man who shouted at us?”

Kaden shook his head. “No, it was from my arousal. I mean, I can shift at will, but

sometimes, when my gears are grinding, so to speak, it just...happens.”

“Acne just happens!” I half shouted. “A sneeze just happens. Not shifting into some kind of movie monster.” I gasped at the words rushing out of my mouth. Hell, I was a five-thousand-year-old demigod; I was the last person who should be judging Kaden, but fuck me blue, this was a nightmare.

“I get it. If my own family shunned me and kicked me out of my pack, what chance did I have with a total stranger?” Kaden asked. He sounded resigned to his fate. “It was nice to meet you, Orion. I guess Cupid doesn’t know what the fuck he’s doing after all.” Without looking up at me, he walked away.

I spun around to watch him go. Part of me knew I should go after him and apologize, offer to walk him back to his car, but the other part was pissed. Not at Kaden. After the kind of reaction he got from me, it was painfully obvious why he didn’t tell me he was a werewolf in the first place. I was mad at Cupid. Actually, mad was a gross understatement of what I was feeling. Bone-deep rage was a better way of putting it. When I got my hands on the son-of-a-goddess, I was going to let my fists do the talking.

Twenty minutes later, I walked back into my condo. Instead of dissipating, my rage had only burned brighter. Closing my eyes, I cast my memory back to the ancient words used to summon a god. I said them over and over in my head, knowing Cupid would be powerless to resist me.

“Orion!” Cupid said, his eyes dancing with obvious merriment. “You’re looking good. It’s been a while.”

Rushing forward, I grabbed the cherub by the throat. “It’s been a while because the last time we saw each other, you got me killed, asshole!”

Shoving back against me, Cupid freed himself from my iron grip. He raised a sardonic eyebrow as he tried to get his breath back. “It seems you’ve recovered.”

“What the fuck is wrong with you?” I challenged. “Why is it every time we come in contact with each other, you fuck me over?”

Cupid held up his hands. “How was I to know Apollo would react to you spending time with Artemis the way he did?”

“You’re fucking Cupid! Couldn’t you have zinged one of your arrows at him so he’d have known I was in love with him and not his sister?” The innocent look on Cupid’s face only served to fuel my anger.

“You know my arrows don’t work on the gods and goddesses of Olympus.” Cupid took a deep breath and walked to my fridge. He pulled out a bottle of water and handed it to me. “Drink this. You’re going to spontaneously combust if you don’t cool off.”

I hated how Cupid knew another of my weaknesses but twisted off the cap and took a long drink anyway.

“I don’t know what you think is going on here.” Cupid sat down hard on the edge of my leather sectional. “I did everything in my power to hook you up with Apollo. You know I did. What he did to you in a fit of rage should tell you more about him than anything. He was obscenely jealous. Hotheaded. Irrational. And those are some of his better qualities. The man you were in love with killed you, Orion.”

As angry as I was at the moment, I had to admit to myself Cupid had a point. All I cared about were Apollo’s looks. His dark eyes and his muscled physique haunted my dreams. I thought if he would only notice me, we could have built something to last. Instead, he made our first meeting my last day on earth. “Yeah, I remember. I’d still

be with Hades in the Underworld if it wasn't for Aphrodite."

Cupid laughed. His giggles filled the room, making me feel impossibly lighter in the process.

"What the hell is so funny?" I growled. There was nothing remotely humorous about being stung repeatedly by the scorpion, his venom coursing through my veins like wildfire, while the love of my life looked on and laughed.

"Who do you think sent the goddess of love to you?" Cupid asked, pointing to himself. "My mother knew how devastated I was over your death. She knew I blamed myself. Aphrodite took it upon herself to save you, risking not only Apollo's wrath but Zeus's as well."

Damn, what Cupid was saying had never crossed my mind. His helping to mop up after the fact wasn't enough. Not only did I end up in the Underworld, but if things had gone differently tonight, Kaden could have sent me back. I didn't need to be a demigod to know there would be no saving me a second time. "Yeah, well, whatever. My date tonight almost finished what Apollo started. Kaden could have torn me limb from limb. Don't you even try to tell me you didn't know he was a shifter." Most of my anger was gone; what I felt instead was bone-weary and lost.

"Of course I know Kaden is a werewolf. I also know he's walked a similar road as you, being ostracized from his family, living a life devoid of love. Sound familiar? He never would have hurt you. Neither would I." Cupid seemed to study me for a few silent seconds. "I spent centuries watching you suffer over the loss of Apollo. Your pain was mine. When I sent you the invitation to join the dating agency, it was because I'd found your true soul mate. I'm doing this to make amends for what happened in the past. You healed Kaden tonight; now it's time to finally heal yourself."

I looked at Cupid and could see every word he'd said was the truth. "I'm sorry I tried to kill you."

Cupid snickered. "What's a little attempted murder between friends?"

Despite everything that happened tonight, I laughed along with him. My heart felt impossibly lighter.

"I know this is a lot for you to handle, but I wouldn't have brought Kaden to you if I didn't think you could handle his unique circumstance. Take some time to think things over. Remember the way it felt to hold him. To kiss him. I know you'll make the right decision." Cupid stood up, stretching his arms. "I'll see you around. Hopefully, we won't go millennia without seeing each other again." With a wave, he began to dematerialize.

"Wait!" I shouted. "How do I know the feelings I have for Kaden are mine and not the result of your special arrows?"

"Kaden is your destiny. There were no arrows involved. Your feelings are your own. His too." Setting his hand over his heart, Cupid vanished.

What the hell had I done? I sank into the sofa, trying to wrap my head around the complete and total disaster I'd made. More than anything, I wanted to go to Kaden and beg him to forgive me, to make things right, but I wouldn't. Not yet.

I needed a way to woo back the man of my dreams. My soul mate. All I needed to do now was make a plan of action. One Kaden couldn't resist. I could win him back.

I would win him back. I just had to.

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Kaden

It was Valentine's Day. Two days had passed since my disastrous date with Orion. A day that used to hold so much hope for me but now only made my empty heart ache.

I never should have told my coworkers I was going on a blind date. They'd all been so excited for me, but they'd spent the last two days being my personal motivational speakers. If just one more person told me it was better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all, I would lose it. I should have taken a vacation day and stayed in bed, eating my feelings, but it appeared I was a glutton for punishment.

Patrons were kind enough to bring boxes of chocolates and flowers to my circulation desk throughout the day. I didn't have the heart to tell them candy and vases filled with water didn't belong anywhere near old manuscripts. Truth be told, I was happy someone thought of me. I'd eat the sweets tonight in front of the television, watching *The Notebook* for the hundredth time.

Around closing time, I walked through the stacks, straightening up and returning books to their proper place. I was on my way back to the front desk to grab my coat and treats when the lights went out. "What the actual fuck?" I whispered, pulling my phone out of my back pocket and turning on the flashlight app. That was just the latest thing that had gone wrong today. Maybe I'd pick up a bottle of strawberry wine to suck down with my chocolate.

A flickering light from the research table caught my eye. It looked like fire. Breaking into a run, I barreled my way to the front of the room. Fire was an absolute worst-case scenario. We had manuscripts in the collection dating back to before the birth of

Christ.

When I reached the table, my breath caught in my throat. There was indeed fire but in the form of candles. I counted at least twenty of them. In addition, the table was set for two with grilled steak and potatoes. “What the hell?”

“Happy Valentine’s Day, Kaden,” Orion said, stepping out into the candlelight. He wore tight jeans and a blue button-down with most of the buttons undone. The man looked good enough to eat.

My heart sank. The last thing I needed was to see Orion today. Hadn’t he already done enough? “Why are you here?” My voice sounded like a growl to my own ears. Good! Orion deserved my anger after the way he’d treated me the other night.

“I wanted to apologize to you in person,” Orion said, slipping his hands into his pockets. He rocked back on his heels, a devilish smile curving his full lips. “I was a jerk the other night.”

“I can think of a few other words besides jerk .” I crossed my arms over my chest, unmoved by Orion’s apology. It was on the tip of my tongue to go off on him and tell him just what I thought of the way he’d acted the other night, but the sadist in me wanted to hear what I knew would be a flimsy excuse at best.

He chuckled. “Yeah, asshole, prick, dickhead, and butt munch sort of fit the bill.” His good-natured smile was disarming.

I didn’t want to be disarmed. I wanted to be angry. My kicked-up emotions were the only things standing between me and flinging myself into his strong arms. I nodded. “There’s no sense arguing. When you’re right, you’re right.”

“I was hoping you’d give me a second chance.” Orion pulled out a chair for me. “I

know I don't deserve one."

"You're damn right." My words didn't have their earlier heat. I wouldn't admit it to Orion, but I was happy to see him. Stupid jerk.

Orion bit his lip and ushered me to the seat. The plates were porcelain, midnight blue with what looked like a star pattern. Probably the constellation Orion. The steak was cut expertly, and the potatoes were coated in butter and bacon.

I threw myself into the chair, scowling at Orion as I sat. "I'm listening." I might be willing to hear him out, but I wasn't going to make it easy on him. Grabbing a fork, I took a bite of the steak. Flavor exploded in my mouth. Moaning obscenely, I had another slice. I'd heard the term "foodgasm" before, but I'd never experienced one until now.

"Good, huh?" Orion's cocky grin made him even more devastatingly handsome in the candlelight.

"You realize you brought fire into a room completely made of kindling. One wrong move and this entire collection goes up in smoke." Christ, I sounded like a brat. Not that Orion didn't deserve to pay a little more for being an enormous dick, but I had to admit I was being a bit harsh.

Stepping away from the table, Orion grabbed a book from the shelf behind him. I could tell it was a well-worn copy of Homer's *Odyssey*. He held it over the fire, and the cover caught alight.

"Stop!" I scrambled out of my seat, smacking my hip against the edge of the table in my effort to get to him. What was Orion doing? What the hell had I been thinking by goading him on and practically daring him to set the library on fire? I barreled toward him, grabbing for the book when I was close enough.

Orion grinned and held the book out of my reach, letting it burn. His eyes danced with glee.

What kind of asshole was this man? My mind spun. I ran to grab the fire extinguisher, needing to put the fire out before the sprinklers turned on. Water was just as dangerous to old manuscripts as fire.

“Wait. Just watch.” Orion closed his eyes, and the fire went out. The burned pages and cover seemed to be regenerating themselves. Seconds later, the book was whole, in the condition it had been before it had been brought to the candle. He offered the book to me.

“I can’t believe this.” Too stunned at what happened to be angry, I took the tome and leafed through it. “You healed the book like you healed my finger the other night. How did you do it?”

“There’s something I need to tell you about myself. Something big.” Orion took the seat across from me. A worried look flashed in his eyes.

“Bigger than me being a werewolf?” I asked, unable to imagine there was anything more seismic than being a shape-shifter.

“Yeah, much bigger.” Orion took a deep breath. “There was a reason I chose The Odyssey . Turn to page seventy-five.”

Flipping through the book, I found the page he’d mentioned. I skimmed it quickly until I came to a familiar name. “This passage talks about Orion. How he was a great hunter and was killed by the scorpion, then brought back to life by the sun.” I gasped at the next line. “He had two different-colored eyes after being blinded by Apollo.” No. This wasn’t possible. The man in front of me couldn’t possibly be the Orion of Greek legend. Could he?

Orion blushed shyly. “My father is Poseidon. I can command the seas and communicate with animals, kind of like Aquaman. When Hephaestion restored my life, I was endowed with a little magic. That’s how I was able to heal your hand and the book.”

Orion’s secret was much bigger than me being a werewolf. I shook my head, still stunned by his revelation. “How many years have you been alive? Are you immortal?”

“I’m 5,031 years old.” Orion chuckled. “Almost, but not quite immortal.”

“What do you mean?” The man before me didn’t look much older than thirty-five. I was an expert on Greek mythology, but never in my wildest dreams could I ever have imagined meeting someone like Orion. What was really ringing my bell was the fact that these gods, goddesses, and other classical heroes were real , not just folklore and products of a rich oral tradition.

“When I find my one true love, my soul mate, I’ll begin to age again. Aphrodite wanted me to taste love before I die.” Love shimmered in Orion’s eyes as he spoke to me.

“You’ve lived all those years, and you’ve never known love?” My heart broke for Orion. He hadn’t gone years without love like I had—no, he’d gone millennia .

“I thought I was in love once.” Orion shook his head, as if to say he couldn’t believe he’d been so stupid. “It didn’t work out the way I wanted it to, but now I know why. It’s because I was meant to love you.”

“Me?” I was blown away by Orion’s words. “I can’t imagine what it must have been like for you, spending so much time alone.”

“Don’t get me wrong, I had my share of lovers, but none of them could hold a candle to you. Finding you made all the lonely nights worth it.” Orion pulled me into his chest. Wrapping his arms around me, he held me tight.

I never wanted him to let me go. “What do we do now?” My head was still spinning. I had a feeling that sensation was going to become par for the course with Orion.

“Oh, I think you know exactly what we’re going to do now.” Orion’s voice was soft and silky.

“Take your clothes off,” I commanded. “I need to touch you.” I had never wanted anyone more than I wanted Orion in this moment, something else I had a feeling was going to be a regular thing between us.

Orion laughed. “What, here in the library? In front of all these innocent books?”

“They’re not as innocent as you think.” My shaking hands reached for Orion, fumbling over his buttons. When they were undone, I pushed the shirt down his broad shoulders and off. “You’re a masterpiece,” I whispered, unable to fully catch my breath. I’d seen so many beautiful things in my life—the painted ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, the Taj Mahal—but nothing could or would ever compare to Orion. He was a demigod, after all.

His skin was hot and bathed in the golden firelight. I reached for his belt, undoing it deftly, my now-steady fingers brushing against his bulging erection.

Moaning my name, Orion hitched his hips toward me. “Hurry. I’ve waited centuries for you. I don’t want to wait another second longer.”

Quickly undoing his button and zipper, I pushed his jeans down over his hips. Orion’s thick, juicy cock sprang free. “Fuck me,” I whispered, never having seen such a huge

tool. I had no earthly idea how the hell I was going to suck all that dick, but I was determined to try.

Sinking to my knees, I reached for Orion. I wrapped my hands around him, giving his cock a few slow strokes. His hard flesh made me burn harder for him. I wanted to take my time with him, getting to know every inch of his olive skin, but I couldn't hold myself back. "We'll go slow next time. I promise." Before Orion could respond, I wrapped my lips around him, sliding as far down as I could before gagging. Fuck, he felt good.

Orion wrapped his hands around the back of my head. "Touch yourself. I need to see all of you."

Maneuvering the best I could from my knees with a giant cock halfway down my throat, I got my pants undone and pushed them past my ass, losing my mouthful in the process. My own dick had never been harder in my life.

Brushing his tool against my lips, I took him back into my mouth. He set a fast pace, fucking my face relentlessly. I stroked myself in time with Orion. I wasn't going to last long. Between the needy look in his eyes and the way he moaned as my tongue caressed him, I was a goner.

"Fuck, Kaden!" Orion roared, his hot release spraying against the back of my throat.

My own cock erupted. Hot, sticky come coated my fingers as I worked my throat, trying to swallow Orion's heavy load. When his dick was spent, I released him. Orion held a hand down to me, raising me to my feet.

Bringing my sticky hand to his lips, he licked my come from my fingers as if it were a delicacy. My entire body jolted with electricity, as if I'd been struck by one of Zeus's legendary thunderbolts. "I love you," I whispered.

Setting his hands on either side of my face, Orion grinned. He pressed a kiss to my forehead. “I love you too.”

My heart had never felt so full as it did in that moment. “Why don’t we head back to my place for round two.” I wanted to spend the rest of the night—no, the rest of my life —worshipping his sculpted body.

“You took the words out of my mouth.” Orion bent to the floor to pull his pants back up.

“Does your magic work on modern technology?” I asked nervously, my mind clear and functioning again.

“I think so. Why?” Orion shot me a curious look.

I snorted. “This place is loaded with video cameras, and I wouldn’t want the head of security to see me giving you, well, head.” The old me would have never had sex in the library, or any other public place for that matter. Thanks to Orion, I was a changed man.

Orion laughed. The lyrical sound echoed off the vaulted ceiling. “I can take care of the video footage.” He pulled me to his chest. “I promise to spend the rest of my life taking care of you.”

“Does that include you returning the favor?” I hitched my reawakened dick against his left thigh.

“Oh, yes. Many, many favors.” Orion bent to kiss me.

Warm electricity wrapped itself around me, etching Orion’s name on my soul.

Cupid had actually done what he promised. He'd matched me with a man I could love for the rest of my life and into whatever afterlife would follow.

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Orion

One year later...

I hadn't been this nervous in all of my five-thousand-plus years on this planet. My stomach twisted and flopped like an ancient trireme ship sailing the Aegean Sea. For good reason too. For the first time in a long time, I was back on my native soil.

Thanks to Cupid, I'd been able to make amends with Apollo. He no longer wanted me dead and even laughed at the miscommunication that precipitated my death. Sanctimonious prick. All the desire I'd once had for him was gone. Staring at him, I couldn't help but wonder what I'd seen in him in the first place. No one could hold a candle to Kaden, not even the Greek god of the sun. I wasn't about to share my revelation with Apollo. My former flame was a bit on the insecure side.

Kaden and I were an hour south of Athens in Cape Sounion, Greece, at the ruins of the Temple of Poseidon. Built around 440 BC, the temple was constructed in the typical rectangle with tall Doric columns and broad stairs leading to the inner shrine. Parts of the altar were still intact, while rounds of fallen columns littered the ground like a toppled wedding cake. Set atop a cliff overlooking the sparkling Aegean, the location had been a perfect spot to pay tribute to the god, my father.

I'd been in touch with Poseidon again, thanks to Apollo agreeing to bury the hatchet. He would meet us for dinner later, but in the meantime, I had some work to do.

The sun was beginning to set into the sea. Kaden and I sat, his back to my front, on the craggy cliff, ready to watch the show. I pressed a kiss to his cheek. "What do you

think?”

Kaden grinned. “I still can’t believe we’re in Greece. This has been a trip of a lifetime for me, getting to visit all the ancient sites I’d only ever read about. These last two weeks have been heaven on earth.”

“Yes, they have, and it’s all thanks to you.” I’d spent every second of the last year I could with Kaden. There had been a bit of an adjustment period and some rocky days filled with growing pains, but I wouldn’t trade any of them. Every hardship, every loving look, and hours of bone-jarring sex had only served to cement our relationship.

“I’ve never seen a sunset quite like this before.” Kaden sighed, his gaze set on the horizon, which was golden with the sun’s dying rays. Above the gold were swirls of orange mixed with shades of pink and purple.

The topic of Kaden’s werewolf side had been one of those instances of rocky days. There were times when he couldn’t have cared less that he’d been shunned from his pack and others when he was so devastated he couldn’t get out of bed. It was a touchy subject to bring up. I’d thought long and hard about what I was about to say, and I hoped my next words wouldn’t doom my plans. “I’ve been thinking,” I began, butterflies rioting in my gut.

“Always a dangerous thing.” Kaden laughed and leaned back against my chest.

“When you’re right, you’re right,” I agreed easily. My eyes were on the colors in the sky while a warm breeze stirred my hair. “I want to heal you,” I whispered.

Kaden turned to look at me with a confused look on his face. “You have healed me. I’ve had countless paper cuts, stumbles, and falls over the last year. You’ve healed every single one of my injuries.”

“I want to cure your allergy.” My breath caught in my throat as I spoke. “We’ve

talked so much about how being shunned has affected your life. If I were to put an end to your problem, you could go back to them as a whole man.”

He shook his head, looking as if he were gearing up for a fight. “I appreciate you wanting to do this for me, but if my family couldn’t accept me with my defect, then they don’t deserve to have me in their lives regardless of your being able to fix me or not.” Kaden’s voice held no anger, only a weariness I’d heard in him every time we talked about his condition.

“I hear you. Trust me, no one knows more about being shunned than me. This is the first time I’ve been back to Greece in nearly five thousand years.” Hearing the amount of time out loud never failed to make my heart ache. “My family were the gods and goddesses of Olympus. They could have sought me out at any point over the millennia, and they didn’t. Part of it was they were afraid of what Apollo’s revenge would look like, but that’s an awful lot of years for them to have kept their distance.”

“I know I sound like a whiny brat, but my answer is still no.” Kaden snuggled back against my chest.

“What if I cured you for you?” I knew I was dangerously close to inciting Kaden’s anger, which was the last thing I wanted on today of all days.

“I don’t understand.”

“I know how much you love being in wolf form. I also know what a toll the allergy meds take on you physically as well as mentally. What if you didn’t have to deal with those symptoms anymore? You wouldn’t have to tell a soul, certainly not your family. You could just enjoy running free.”

“I never thought about it like that before. Every other time we’ve talked about it, I couldn’t help thinking it was this mutation that kept me from fitting in with my family, but the real truth of the matter is I wouldn’t have been good enough for them

no matter what.” Kaden took a deep breath. “Do it.”

Pressing a kiss to the back of his neck, I set my magic free. Any pain Kaden felt hurt me double. He deserved to live his best life, and I was determined to do whatever I could to help him. “Your wish is my command,” I whispered, my eyes on the sunset and our future. “How do you feel?”

Kaden was silent for a minute. “Physically, I don’t feel any difference, but my wolf is ecstatic. He can’t wait to run free.” He turned around to straddle my legs. “How do I ever thank you for this amazing gift?”

“Oh, it’s simple. All you have to do is agree to make me the happiest man in history.” Opening my closed hand, I revealed a gold wedding band.

“Holy shit!” Kaden gasped. “Does this mean what I think it means?”

I nodded, unshed tears turning my sight glassy. “You make my entire world shine. Your love is a gift I treasure with my entire being. My heart and my soul belong to you for all of time. Marry me, Kaden. Let me spend the rest of our lives showering you with love.” I held my breath. Kaden wore a look of stunned awe. I couldn’t tell if his reaction was a good omen or a bad sign.

Setting his hands on either side of my face, Kaden kissed me. It was the sweetest kiss of my life. “I can’t imagine living for one second without you by my side. This last year has been the best of my life. I find a hundred new reasons every day to fall in love with you again and again. You’re everything to me. My sun. My moon. My stars. It would be my greatest honor to be your husband.”

“Is that a yes?” My heart pounded so loudly I could barely hear my own words.

“Definitely a yes!” Kaden held out his hand. My own shook as I slid the ring onto his finger. “It’s gorgeous.” The gold band sparkled in the dying rays of the sun.

I wrapped my arms around Kaden, hugging him tightly. For the first time in a long time, I felt free. Not defined by my past. No longer bitter or heartbroken, but whole. Kaden thought I was the one who'd spent the last twelve months healing him when, in fact, he healed me.

Above us, twinkling in the twilight, was the constellation Orion. Burning bright, like our love, for all eternity.

THE END