Revision Clipboard

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There is a part of me that cannot get over how weird it is to have the same name as my stepbrother, particularly in light of our resemblance, but both are a product of our breeding, a deliberate effort to produce girls with the face and form of the goddess. I honestly do not know how close I come to that ideal, but I do have a disturbing number of twins by other mothers.

The strangest part of being siblings was knowing that we were a perfect breeding pair and would probably still be matched up in spite of our parents’ falling in love and defying tradition to get married. I cannot tell you how much trouble that has caused!

Anyway, to get back to our having the same name, that can be blamed on a common ancestor revered by both of our mothers. A long time ago, ours had been a royal bloodline and we had been the champions of the goddess, and one of the most famous champions had been named Morgan. Unfortunately, the legacy passed down to us from our namesake was not a crown or a throne.

He was my first friend at the academy, the person who helped Morgan and I get over our initial rivalry. Back then, our common name and curious resemblance created embarrassment and conflict.

Actually, it was more messed up than that. I loved Morgan and he loved me, and we clicked together like magnets—but he would not betray Logan by sleeping with me. Logan wanted me, and seduced me into loving him, but when I gazed into his heart I realized did not love me. His profession was the only thing that mattered to him.

I could not give in, knowing that. So, I said no to Logan, and Morgan said no to me, and I dreaded the day this love triangle broke our circle of friendship.

I glared at him. “You know I don’t like you calling me that.”

He met it with a frown. “Since when?”

I ground my teeth and tried not to blush. “Since the very beginning. Since we stopped being rivals and became friends. Since the night we—” I cut myself off; we never talked about that night. We were not ready to face it. When my mother married his father, our relationship had become too complicated to understand.

He stared at me for a moment and then looked away. “Oh.” He caught on quick. That was one of the reasons I liked him so much. His eyes returned to mine as he apologized, “I’m sorry, Morgan. I should have figured it out when you stopped calling me ‘Dusk’.”

I sighed. “It’s not like when we were kids anymore, when we fought over having the same name, and or when our parents got married and gave us those nicknames to avoid confusion,” I countered calmly. I turned to face him. “Then it caught on at school, and ,” I pointed out with a direct look.

“No, I suppose it’s pretty obvious I don’t mean myself when I say ‘Morgan’,” he admitted with a rueful smile. “Still, I... it’s just that I really liked calling you ‘Dawn’. It’s short, simple and elegant,” he trailed off when I turned straight on and stared at him as if he had suddenly been possessed. “‘Morgan’ it is, then,” he corrected, holding his hands up to ward me off.

“That’s what I thought you said,” I responded flatly. “Not that it’s going to matter after tonight,” I conceded in a warmer tone.

“Yes, it’s in my blood, and yes, it makes me a national treasure, a living embodiment of our culture and heritage. When one of our people sees me in my uniform he—or she—usually thinks that my potential is wasted at the academy.

“I didn’t mention it, because I had no intention of becoming a courtesan,” I protested, holding my head up defiantly.

Morgan sighed. “Craig is gonna kill us if he ever finds out about this. Which reminds me, why are you sleeping with that jerk, anyway?” he asked plaintively.

I snorted. “Who said I was sleeping with that jerk?” I demanded, sitting up and turning to look at Morgan. The look he gave me made me laugh. “Honestly, I’m surprised you held your tongue this long, if you thought we were that intimate. We’re not. The thing with Craig,” I paused for a moment, realizing that the simplest explanation would have to be the truth. “I should have told you before. My grandmother’s doing the same thing she did with my mother. Even though I got into the academy, she decided I had to be trained as a muse. I can’t tell what I’m doing with Craig, but I can say that it’s my first task as a companion,” I explained, giving up one more secret.

“And you never mentioned this before because you thought we’d be upset?” Morgan asked in disbelief. I raised an eyebrow, wondering if I should be surprised that he figured it out so fast. That was exactly the reason hid my grandmother’s interference from them. “.”

“There’s nothing saying a girl can’t be both,” Logan interjected, philosophically. He looked at me. “So, a muse, huh? That would mean no license for sex, then, right?”

I blushed and shook my head. “No. I’m legal; I just can’t be contracted for sex. I can sleep with a man if I want to, but like a muse, I can’t name the father if I get pregnant,” I confided, trying not to think of why I let my grandmother push me in this direction. I shrugged, and finished my explanation. “On the other hand, if I am forced, well, I can still call a man out for rape.”

The considered that and nodded. A meaningful look was exchanged, and I did not need to peek to know where their thoughts were headed, and that made me sigh. We were coming up on another of those things I had not been brave enough to talk with them about. I had learned my lesson about staying silent, though. If I played this right, I could break the deadlock without destroying our friendship.

“,” I began, caressing their backs under the blanket, “.” They both raised eyebrows at that, but then they were biased. I grinned sadly, “Unlike you two, I can stand to hurt him if I have to; to cut him off from the group, because he was never as close as we are.” I looked carefully at them. “If I thought you two could honestly share me, I would never have pushed you off. But I didn’t want to come between you and I couldn’t pick just one of you. Do you understand?” I asked with great concern.

They looked at each other and the same thoughts passed in their eyes. They had always been just ‘the guys’ even though one of them had been ‘fortunate’ enough to have been female. They had learned about making love, and about fucking, not as boys and girls but as friends. Nothing would change the fact that physically, hormonally, they were boys and I was a girl, however. It was simple biology, and the fact was, as they had almost proved tonight, they *would* fight over her; it only needed a perceived reason. They nodded their heads unhappily.

It was hard to admit, because it was harder to submit to the consequence that they did not have the hope of me as long as they had respect for their friendship. They had not been able to accept it when I had drawn the line and ended it. *I’m sorry guys, I didn’t mean to hurt you either,* I thought, realizing that I had. I me slid a hand up each young man’s body and stopped gently to caress a face. *If only you cared for each other as much as you care for me.* I spoke to both at once, “I can never be your girl, but I will always be your friend and that’s...” I paused. I *hope we’ve grown enough to deal with this,* I reflected once, knowing where I was going, “...what makes lovers.” my head ducked down, and with great difficulty, I spoke. ”I don’t want to use you, but I *need* something... to occupy my mind... or I won’t make it through this,” I pleaded quietly. Not to their manhood, but to their honor. It was not an easy thing to do, for any of them, because they did feel love for each other, and they lived in a world where what I proposed would only cheapen me and confuse them.

Maybe even humiliate them.

I looked into their eyes, and they saw that I had already thought of that. Silently I urged them to grow past what other’s might think and realize that this was just between them and had nothing to do with the rest of the universe. I could deal with it my self in those terms—that in the private reality the three of them had shared, intimacy between them was nothing to be ashamed of, but a point on which they deserved to be proud. I only wished I had been able to face it myself without something like this to prompt it. I watched them struggle with it for a while, and felt it with them as they realized that this was about being equals, and that it had nothing to do with gender.

Morgan and Logan exchanged a look, searching each other for trust, because what I hadn’t said had still come through. I was not opening herself back up to them but asking them to open up to each other.

“This isn’t...” Logan began carefully.

“...I know,” Morgan responded, managing to keep eye contact.

Logan sat still for a moment, then gave his hand to his old friend and grinned impishly, “Hey, I’ll still respect you in the morning.” They all laughed to ease the tension.

I had to admit to herself that I had doubted they would be able to deal with what she’d implied, but my pride in them soared as they looked past sexuality and embraced naked sensuality. It might have made me my uncomfortable to consider it in the clear light of day, but locked in a barracks in a hole in the ground on the verge of losing me my mind, it made perfect sense.

Orphan Clips

“My sister did everything she could to help me get over it, but she was also a little afraid of me. The doctors called it some by kind of fancy name but it was like I had absorbed a part of my brother’s personality. I aped a lot of his habits and mannerisms; I slept in his room and played with his friends. I even did all the little things around the house he’d always done, so with me around it was like my brother never left, but had just become invisible. It hurt everyone in my family, and so no one ever talked about it or him. It was like he had never existed.”

Logan was struck, because now he did remember it. He had played with Ryan ever since they were babies. One day he simply didn’t show up to play. He remembered that everyone had been very sad, but all they told him was that Ryan had gone away. Eventually he had met Morganna and he forgot all about my older brother.

“I wish I’d known,” said Morgan softly. He had met me in the first grade too, and he’d always thought it neat that I could be one of the guys. He looked around as it all began to sink in. How much willpower had it taken for me to go with them into these dark passageways? He looked into my eyes, this time with new understanding.

“Oh my god,” he said feeling sick. What I said was true. I had been so much like Ryan that I had taken my brother’s place in his memory. He hadn’t really met me until they were about seven, but he had remembered it as if they had learned to walk together. If he hadn’t flunked the first grade twice, he wouldn’t even have met her. Not as likely, anyway.

Master Kael finally turned back to face me. “I have known hundreds of boys born into circumstances like yours. You’re the son of a courtesan, raised among women and knowing men only as unwanted intrusions into your life. Then you were introduced to your father and brought here for initiation. I know you had a hard time fitting in among boys with more typical backgrounds, but I have to say, you seemed to adapt quite well. There are many who could not overcome the influences of their environment, but most responded to their own nature. You’ve grown into a fine young man, Morgan,” he declared with a hint of pride, but then his tone shifted to concern. “Are you truly unhappy with who you are?”

Master Kael finally turned back to face me. “I have known hundreds of boys who started out in circumstances similar to yours, born to courtesans, raised among women and knowing men only as unwanted intrusions into their lives. When you were introduced to your father and brought here for initiation, I am sure you had a difficult time fitting in among boys from more traditional families, but I have to say, you seemed to adapt quite well. You’ve grown into a fine young man, Morgan,” he declared with a hint of pride, but then his tone shifted to concern. “Are you truly unhappy with who you are?”