

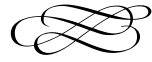
HORUS

SPEED DATING WITH THE
DEPIZENS OF THE UNDERWORLD

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR
LAURA GREENWOOD

HORUS

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UNDERWORLD
BOOK THIRTY-TWO



LAURA GREENWOOD

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HORUS
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THANK YOU FOR RESPECTING THE HARD WORK OF THIS AUTHOR.

HORUS

The last thing this witch expected was to find out that her hot boss was a literal god.

Adelaide has always dreamt of working with animals in need of a safe place, making her new job at the Horus Sanctuary the perfect fit for her. The only complication is just how hot she thinks her boss is.

Horus is content living a life dedicated to the animals at his sanctuary, but when a gorgeous witch starts working there, everything changes, and he discovers there might be more to life than just work.

The workplace is heating up for them both, but will they give in to the temptation?

Horus is book thirty-one in the Speed Dating with the Denizens of the Underworld shared world, featuring a hot boss, a beautiful and passionate witch, adorable animals, and more.

CHAPTER 1



ADELAIDE

THERE WAS something surreal about walking down the path that led through the Horus Sanctuary and to where the veterinary building was. I wasn't sure if it was the various animal calls that punctured the air, or the fact that it was still sinking in that this was my actual job, especially when I was only just out of veterinary school.

But I'd always wanted to work somewhere like this, with animals who needed care because they'd otherwise been treated badly, and I'd jumped on the job offer as soon as it had been made.

I swiped my ID card through the reader at the front of the building and let myself inside. The sharp sting of antiseptic filled the air, but I ignored it, more than used to it by this point. There was even something comforting in the familiarity.

I headed to the front office and poked my head around the door. "I'll be five minutes, Gladys!"

"Five minutes for what?" a deep voice answered.

The world stopped spinning as I registered the man that definitely wasn't Gladys sitting at one of the desks with a bundle of blankets in his arms.

"I'm sorry," I murmured, trying not to get too flustered about my boss being in the room when he wasn't supposed to be. "I thought you were Gladys."

He chuckled and offered me a friendly smile. "I got that. She's out on a

call to the wild dog enclosure.”

“Oh.” I tucked a strand of hair behind my ear. I stepped into the room. “Is that why you’re here?”

Horace shook his head. “We had a new arrival last night and I wanted to make sure he was doing okay.” He lifted up the bundle. “He seemed agitated, so I brought him in here away from the noise in the other room.”

“That’ll be Rose, she’s in for a thorn removed from her paw,” I said. The lioness was being a bit of a baby about the whole thing, which was probably why she’d never be able to be released into the wild. I was surprised a thorn even warranted coming here rather than being treated in her enclosure, but apparently, she had a habit of making it worse which meant she had to be monitored.

Horace chuckled. “Again?”

“Does it happen often?”

“At least once a month,” he responded. “You’ll get used to it.” His dark eyes met mine, making my heart skip a beat despite how inappropriate that was.

“I’m sure I will.”

“How are you getting on?” Horace asked.

“With Rose?”

“At the Sanctuary in general,” he responded. “This is your first job, isn’t it?”

I bit my lip and nodded. “Yeah, it’s good. Everyone’s great.”

“Good. You should come see me if there’s anything you need. My door is always open.” The way he said the words made it sound like an excellent invitation, even if I knew it was all in my head.

A small chitter came from the bundle of blankets in his arms.

“Can I see?” The urge to see whatever animal it was overrode all of my nervousness about being near my boss, and the thoughts that brought.

He nodded.

I headed over and looked over his shoulder, trying to ignore just how good he smelled. It went along with the chiselled jaw covered by a short beard, and the deep voice. It was hard to ignore him, especially when in such close proximity.

I gasped as I noticed the tiny black and white face looking up at me from the bundle. The lemur chattered again, my heart melting at the sound and at the sight. There really was nothing like animals.

“He’s a rescue,” Horace said by way of explanation. Not that I needed one, most of the animals here were rescues.

“Where did he come from?”

“He was part of an exotic pet collection.” His voice hardened as he said it, and I could tell from the set of his mouth how angry he was about it.

“Are the other animals he was with here too?” I asked, a combination of hope and horror flooding through me. It was good if they were here and safe, but I knew that the reality of what they probably had to face was far worse than I could probably imagine.

“No. We’ve only got this little guy because one of the maids at the estate where he was kept took him to the vet not realising that he was an illegal pet. But I suspect they’ll be launching an investigation and we’ll end up with the others too.”

“Is he in good health?”

“Relatively. I’ve certainly seen worse. He has an infection in his tail, I think he might have caught it on something,” Horace responded. “I think it might have to be amputated to stop him from getting blood poisoning.” A sad note entered his voice.

Feeling bold, I reached out and touched his shoulder, hoping it would convey the comfort I wanted it to. It was easy to see how hurt he was about the whole situation, and how much he cared. Then again, that was obvious by the fact he was sitting in the veterinary office at six in the morning just because he wanted to check up on the little guy.

Horace met my gaze, a myriad of emotions within them. To my surprise, he offered me a small smile in response, as if he appreciated the gesture.

The lemur reached out its hand from under the blankets, distracting us both.

Without thinking about it, I reached out a finger and he curled his around mine. A sniffle escaped me as I thought about the conditions this little guy had come from.

Horace gave me a strange look.

“Sorry, I...”

“You don’t have to explain,” Horace said, looking at me with a strange look in his eyes. For a moment, I thought he was even going to reach out and comfort me in return.

I extracted my finger and stepped back, wiping away my tears. “I should go get ready for work so my boss doesn’t get mad.”

He chuckled. "I wouldn't do that," he assured me.

"I know." The words slipped out without me meaning them to. I hadn't spent much time around him, other than our initial interview and the introduction he gave me to the Sanctuary, But I'd heard enough from the other vets and staff members to know what kind of boss he was.

He smiled at me, the corners of his eyes crinkling as he did and giving away more of his age than his face did. Not that I knew how old that was, but considering I was a witch and knew dozens of other paranormals, he really could be any age.

Including a god. Though that seemed unlikely.

"I'm going to go." I gestured to the door with my thumb.

Horace smiled at me and nodded. "Good to see you again, Adelaide."

The way he said my name sent a funny fluttery feeling through me, but I couldn't put my finger on why. Maybe because he looked the way he did, and loved animals. There really was something extra hot about a handsome man with a cute little monkey in his arms.

I could feel my cheeks starting to flush from the embarrassment of my thoughts and took it as an indication that it was time to leave the room.

I hurried out of the office and into the changing rooms, my heart racing.

"Pull it together," I muttered to myself.

This was my dream job. I was not going to ruin it by crushing on my hot boss.

CHAPTER 2



ADELAIDE

I LEFT the zebra enclosure and bolted the gate, already running through everything I needed to put in my report. Normally, I'd wonder whether the boss would even bother reading something like that, but even in the limited interactions I'd had with Horace, I knew that he would.

I turned around, muttering under my breath so I didn't forget anything, only to walk straight into someone. They reached out a hand to steady me, which was appreciated. Even with the sturdy steel-capped boots I was wearing, I almost lost my balance.

I jolted and looked up, though I didn't need to in order to recognise the person I'd run into.

"I'm sorry," I blurted, meeting Horace's gaze.

"Are you all right?" he asked, genuine concern in his voice.

I nodded. "Are you? I didn't mean to run into you."

"I'm fine, you seemed lost in thought though." His gaze slipped to where we were still touching and he dropped his hand.

I immediately felt the loss of connection and was more disappointed by it than I should be. "I was thinking about the zebras," I admitted.

He chuckled. "Ah yeah, I've had that happen to me before."

"You've run into yourself because you were thinking about zebras?"

"It was a mirror."

I let out a small laugh, then covered my mouth with my hand. "Sorry, I

was just imagining it.”

“In my defence, I’d just gotten out of the shower and it was all fogged up,” he said.

My mouth went dry as the picture in my head changed. I’d be distracted by something completely different to zebras if he’d just gotten out of the shower.

I cleared my throat. “I was just going to go write the report.”

He nodded. “I’ll walk with you, I was going to go see Richie anyway.” He gestured for the two of us to make our way down the path towards the veterinary building.

“Richie?”

“The new lemur. He had the operation on his tail yesterday and I want to check how he’s doing.”

My heart squeezed tightly at the thought. Not just because he wanted to check up on the tiny creature, but also because of what Richie the lemur had gone through in order to end here.

“Do you think he’ll be okay?” I asked.

Horace nodded. “I hire the best veterinary team I can with the budget the sanctuary has, he’ll be fine. And he’s young enough to adapt to life without a tail.”

“I guess that means he can’t ever be released into the wild, though.”

Horace looked at me, an intrigued expression on his face. “No.”

“That’s a shame.”

He waved to one of the keepers. The other man didn’t even pause before waving back, confirming that it was perfectly normal for Horace to be walking around the sanctuary at this time. He was just as hands-on at the sanctuary as everyone kept saying he was. It was nice to have a boss who actually cared as much as people said he did.

Maybe even more. He seemed to be at the sanctuary almost all day, every day, no matter how early or late it was.

“I knew when I opened the sanctuary that I wouldn’t be able to release as many of the animals into the wild as I wanted to,” Horace said.

It took me a moment to process the words. “Would you do it if you could?”

He nodded. “We arrange releases any time we’re able to.”

We approached the front of the veterinary building and he pushed open the door, gesturing for me to make my way through.

“Thanks,” I responded, brushing past him far more closely than should be truly appropriate.

Despite wearing the same uniform as the rest of us, and clearly having been out in one of the enclosures, he smelled amazing, and it was all I could do not to linger.

But that still wasn't appropriate.

“Thanks,” I said, flashing him what I hoped was a grateful smile.

He returned it. “Do you want to come with me?” He gestured to the door that led to the animal holding bay.

I nodded before I had a chance to think about it. “So long as you're okay with my report being a little late.”

He chuckled. “I think I can forgive you for that.”

We headed through into the large bay. Most of the enclosures were empty, which wasn't a surprise. They'd been that way for the entire time I'd been here. I suspected that most of the time, treatment was attempted in the enclosure of the injured animal to minimise disruption.

Horace led me to the small enclosure at the far end and looked through the gate, a concerned look on his face.

I picked up the chart attached to the clipboard in front of the enclosure and scanned it. “Looks like he's doing well,” I said, holding it out to Horace.

“How do you know I can read this?” he asked.

I raised an eyebrow. “Are you telling me you're not a qualified vet? Because I'm not sure I'll believe you if you say no.”

“Oh?”

I shrugged. “Just a feeling.”

“I hope you're not going to tell me one of your witch gifts is being able to read minds.”

I froze. “You know I'm a witch?”

“You're projecting the information,” he responded. “Anyone who knows how to sense paranormals will be able to read it on you.”

“And that's you...” I could already sense that he wasn't human himself, even if I didn't recognise what he was, so I didn't know why this was quite as much of a shock as it was.

“Yes.” He took the clipboard from me and scanned through it, making an appreciative noise as he took note of the important things on it. “Ah, you're right. All good. Though I'd feel better if I could see him.”

“I think he's in the nest at the back.” I leaned in and pointed to where I

thought Richie was sleeping. “I might not be able to read minds, but I do have a spell that might be able to help. If that’s okay?” I had no idea what his policy on using magic around the animals was.

“Will it hurt him?” There was genuine concern in his voice.

“He won’t even know it’s there,” I assured him.

“Okay.”

I pulled magic through me so that sparks danced on the tip of my hand. I summoned a magical looking glass, sending one end over to where the lemur was sleeping peacefully, and making the other big enough that we could both look through it.

Richie’s chest moved in a steady rhythm as he slept, his tail much shorter than it had been before, but he was clearly peacefully asleep.

Horace let out a loud sigh. “Thank you.”

I dismissed the spell.

“I promise it’s not that I don’t trust the notes,” he said. “I trust all of my vets.”

“I get it. Reading about how an animal is doing just isn’t the same as being able to see for yourself,” I said.

“Exactly. This sanctuary is my life,” he admitted. “I want the best for every creature living here.”

I reached out and put a hand on his arm. He looked at it, and for a moment, I thought he was going to shrug me off. Instead, he placed his hand on top of mine.

I took a sharp breath, not expecting the result of the connection there. It was nothing to do with the fact that I found him attractive either. It was something much more than that, though I couldn’t put my finger on exactly what it was.

He smiled at me. “Thank you, Adelaide. I knew you were going to be an asset to our team.”

I beamed, pride filling me. “I want to be.”

Something crossed his face, but I wasn’t sure precisely what it was, nor was I sure that I wanted to ask.

Thankfully, I was saved from as much by his phone ringing. He sighed. “Sorry, I need to get this.”

I nodded. “Of course. I’ll go write up my report.” Though I was going to spend most of that time thinking about my boss, and not in the way I should be while writing a report for him.

He nodded. "I'll see you around."

I waved at him, certain that I was going to, and strangely looking forward to the next time we ran into one another.

CHAPTER 3



HORUS

THE MORNING SUN illuminated the sprawling sanctuary in front of me and I took a deep breath, enjoying the crisp air and the sense of peace. Most of the animals were just waking up to start their days, or just going to sleep at the end of theirs, and the majority of the staff were yet to arrive. There weren't any people around and I could just enjoy the solitude that came as part and parcel of running a place like this. Which made it perfect, at least to me. I realised that might not be the case for people who had more going on in their lives than I did.

A brief pang of guilt travelled through me as I thought about the message I sent Baal last night declining yet another invitation for the two of us to meet up and have a drink. It was bad to ignore my oldest friend, but there were so many other things that needed my attention that it left very little time for a social life.

I pushed the thoughts aside and focused on the sounds of animals waking up around me. They were the reason I did this. I couldn't let myself forget that.

I turned the corner to get to the falcon enclosure only to stop in my tracks at the sight of someone already standing there. That was unusual, normally I was the only one leisurely strolling around the sanctuary at this time in the morning. Most of the night staff had gone home or were in the breakrooms.

I didn't even need the woman to turn around to know who she was, but

the moment she did, something unnamed sprung to life inside me.

“Hi.” Adelaide’s voice came out breathy, almost as if she’d been caught doing something she shouldn’t.

“Morning.” I smiled at her, hoping she wouldn’t think that I was upset about finding her here. I normally came alone, but there was something nice about having her here. “I didn’t realise you were on the early shift.”

“I’m not,” she admitted. “I’ve just been trying to come to see the falcons since I started, but there’s never enough time. When I saw the weather, I figured why not come in early and finally get to see them. I can go, though.” She started to turn.

I reached out and caught hold of her arm. “You don’t need to.” I didn’t know where my response was coming from, but the idea of her walking away didn’t sit well with me. No doubt it was just because of the affection I felt towards the falcons, and how nice it was to have someone else feel that way about them too. “Why don’t I show you my favourite spot to watch them?” The offer was out of my mouth before I had time to consider it.

“I’d love that, they’re beautiful.” She looked into the enclosure and sighed wistfully. She clearly cared a lot about the birds, even if she’d never met them. She seemed that way about all of the animals, or at least the ones I’d seen her interact with.

Or the ones I’d read her reports about. I didn’t think I’d ever been so excited to read a report about zebras until the one she wrote appeared on my desk.

“Come on.” I gestured for her to follow me before I could talk myself out of showing her my spot. I opened the gate and led her inside, expecting to feel nervous about bringing her inside, but it just felt right.

Adelaide shut the gate behind us and didn’t say a word as we made our way to the other side of the enclosure and up the slight hill in strangely comfortable silence. I couldn’t remember the last time I’d felt like this around someone.

“Here we are.” I sat on the low stone wall that had been here when I first bought the land and waited for her to sit down next to me.

She smiled and did, stretching out her long legs in front of her. “It’s beautiful,” she said as she looked out over the falcon enclosure.

“It is,” I agreed.

“Do you often come here?” She looked at me, her piercing gaze looking right through me as if she could see all of my secrets, though I could tell from

the way she was speaking that she was barely thinking about me as her boss, it hadn't even crossed her mind that I might be a god.

I nodded. "I like to start my day in peace."

"And that's the falcons?"

"I've always felt connected to them." Which wasn't even a lie. Though I supposed it was omitting the fact that I was capable of turning into one myself. I supposed I could tell her that I was a falcon shifter without revealing that I was also a god, but I didn't like the idea.

"I get that. When I was younger, I used to wish that I was a bird shifter instead of a witch."

Now that was surprising. And endearing. I'd never heard someone say they wanted to be like me when it came to shifting into a falcon. "That's an unusual choice. Don't most people want to be a dragon or a wolf?"

She shrugged. "No idea. But I knew that every time I saw a bird of prey flying I used to feel this tug inside me, like seeing them connected to a part of me I can't quite explain."

"Do you still feel it now?" There was something curious about her. Maybe that was why I was finding myself more drawn to her than I had been to any of the other people who worked here.

To my surprise, she nodded. "Sometimes. I've felt the pull towards this enclosure every time I've passed it." She searched the surrounding area for the falcons who were busy preening themselves in one of the nearby trees. "It's bigger than I expected."

"It's the oldest," I responded to the unasked question, finding it far easier to talk to her than expected. Perhaps Baal was right and I'd spent far too long on my own, he was always telling me I should get out more. "I've never wanted to move it because of how old Reaper is." I pointed to the oldest bird who was sitting on a low branch and looking out with beady eyes.

"How old is he?"

"He'll be twenty in December."

She let out a small gasp. "That's impressive."

"Even in the wild, peregrine falcons can live up to fifteen years. In captivity, it can be more like twenty-five."

"I think I read that somewhere," she said. "If I could have specialised in avian medicine, I would have done."

"You still can. There are courses for that."

"There are, but they all require money," she pointed out. "My parents set

aside funds for me to study with, and I worked throughout veterinary school to supplement that, but I don't have enough to continue, hence why I'm here."

"Ah." It was on the tip of my tongue to offer to pay for the courses for her, but I knew better than that. I couldn't be seen as favouring one vet over another, and the budget for the sanctuary just wouldn't cover it. "How are you finding working here?" I'd asked her before, and I hoped her answer hadn't changed, but I wanted to be certain of it.

"It's good."

"Are you just saying that because I'm your boss?"

Adelaide snorted. "Now you mention it, I'd actually forgotten that."

"That's good." I liked hearing her say that a lot, though I wasn't sure why. I didn't care one way or another with anyone else.

"Is it? What if I'd said something entirely inappropriate?"

"Such as?" Something inside me stirred at the suggestion.

She looked at me with an intensity I hadn't seen in a long time and cleared her throat. "Would you tell me more about the falcons?" she asked instead of voicing the thoughts that were making her blush.

I didn't press her to share them. No doubt I could guess precisely what they were, and there was a part of me that was responding to her the same way. I was never like this with people, but something about Adelaide was awakening things within me that I had thought were dormant.

"What about them?" I asked, not wanting to pressure her into revealing whatever it was she was thinking about. And her choice of topic happened to be a favourite of mine.

"I don't know. Where did they come from?"

"Ah. Well Reaper here was the first, he came from a bird of prey centre that closed down unexpectedly. There was no one to take him, so I offered to."

"Was that when you set up this place?"

I shook my head. "Reaper was still a hatchling at the time, no one had anywhere for him. I took him home with me and raised him there for a few years. Then this place came up for sale. It was another bird of prey centre that I'd been serving as a vet, and they were closing down too. Most of the birds found new homes, except for a couple of elderly falcons. They couldn't be used for shows, but were being looked after by the centre still."

"So you bought the whole centre?"

I nodded. "I converted the old vulture enclosure into this one. It was the biggest and not in use, so I figured that it was the best choice for the three falcons I had."

"When did the rest happen?" She shuffled closer to me, but I reckoned she didn't actually know she was doing it.

"Very slowly. At first, it was a case of other vets telling me about older birds in need of rehoming, they were all so used to humans that they couldn't be released. And their age would mean that they would die soon if they were. So I started saying yes to everyone who asked. After that, it was a couple of old racehorses, and before I knew it, I had people contacting me from all over the country with rescued exotic pets, elderly animals that had been in captivity too long, and even some circus rescues."

"You really love it, don't you?" There was awe in her voice that I hadn't expected to be there.

I nodded. "I've been around a long time, and I've seen a lot of animals suffer. I've seen a lot treated well too, but they don't need my help as often. I like that I'm in a position where I can give animals homes that wouldn't otherwise have them. I wish I could release more of them into the wild, but sometimes, it's kinder not to."

She nodded. "It's why I've always wanted to work somewhere like this."

"You probably expected there to be more money in it though, right?"

She let out a light laugh, the sound going through me in the perfect way. "No, I knew what to expect from the money. I don't really care about that so long as I have enough to live off. I didn't become a vet because it pays well. But you get that."

"Maybe I don't."

"I don't believe that. You can claim you came into this for the fortune you could make, but I can tell it's not true. The way you talk about the animals here, and the way you look after them, makes it clear that you're far more interested in their well-being than any money you could make off them. If that was what you were after, you'd open the sanctuary to the public."

I sighed. "Some of it is."

"Yeah, twice a week and only a very few exhibits."

"Sometimes I think I should open more of it. We could increase admission prices, and attract more visitors, which would mean more funds."

"It would also mean more costs," Adelaide pointed out. "You'd have to have more staff tending to the public, more security to protect the animals,

and just more of everything.”

“You might be right there.” I was surprised she’d realised as much, I didn’t think anyone else had. Even so, it was probably still something I was going to have to do in the future if I wanted to continue running the sanctuary the way I was.

Her walkie-talkie crackled before she could say anything in response and she let out a loud sigh. “I guess that’s my peace for the day gone.” She got to her feet. “Thank you for sharing with me, Horace.”

It was on the tip of my tongue to get her to call me my real name, but that was a conversation that would take more than a moment. “Have a good day, Adelaide.”

“You too.” She waved and headed back out of the falcon enclosure, leaving me alone.

I watched her go, captivated by the way she moved. And by her. It was a long time since I’d told anyone nearly as much as I’d told her this morning.

But there was something about the new vet that was chasing some of the loneliness away, even if I hadn’t realised it was something that I wanted gone.

CHAPTER 4



ADELAIDE

I CHECKED my watch and cursed inwardly. I was so late to the staff meeting that I didn't think it would still be going on. It wasn't entirely my fault. One of the horses had needed a time-consuming treatment for their hooves and had almost kicked me four times in the process of me trying to give it.

In any other job, I might have worried about not being on time, but I knew Horace would forgive me as soon as he found out that I was treating one of the animals.

Even if I had another reason, I was sure he'd be reasonable about it.

I was quickly becoming a big fan of my new boss, and not just because he was easy on the eyes or because he'd shared so much of himself with me while we'd been sat by the falcons. There was something about him that just drew me to him, like he was magnetic.

I turned the corner and ran straight into someone, almost knocking myself over.

A strong hand reached out to steady me, accompanied by a scent that I shouldn't find familiar, but I did.

I looked up, unsurprised to meet Horace's warm gaze. "You really should stop running into me."

"I'm sorry," I murmured, even though the way he said it almost sounded like he didn't mind at all.

"There's no need, Adelaide," he responded, his voice low and inviting in

a way that it shouldn't be.

Why was he so irresistible?

"I missed you at the staff meeting," he said.

"You did?" My question came out as more of a squeak than I hoped it would.

He only smiled in response.

I cleared my throat and pulled away from him, disappointing myself in the process. There was something nice about his presence so close to me, even if I couldn't fully put my finger on why that was. "I'm sorry, I was dealing with Star, she has an abscess and she doesn't like it being treated."

"Ah, no, she doesn't. If I'd realised, I'd have done it myself. She can be a bit funny around new people."

"I got it done."

An impressed expression crossed his face. "She let you?"

"Eventually. It took a lot of coaxing and it was slow going, but she should be okay until her checkup later."

"Interesting." He tapped his chin. "Anyway, I'm heading for a coffee, want to join me? I can fill you in on what you missed in the meeting." He gestured towards the nearest kitchenette.

"Are you sure? I don't want to keep you from anything important."

"Filling you in is important, Adelaide."

I snorted at the potential double entendre in his words, then covered my mouth with my hand. "Sorry."

Horace chuckled. "That wasn't what I meant."

"It's what you said though." I smiled at him in the hope that he knew I wasn't upset about his slip of the tongue. "If you're sure it's not too much trouble, I'd like that. I don't want to be out of the loop."

"There isn't much you missed," he admitted.

"Ah, so you're just using the meeting as an excuse to spend more time with me."

Surprise flitted across Horace's face as he seemed to give my statement consideration. "I have been enjoying our conversations." He turned in the direction of the kitchen and fell into step beside me.

"Me too," I agreed. "So, what did you cover in the meeting?"

"Oh, I was just telling everyone about the new vet we hired."

"Ah, so that she's super cute and looks good in the sanctuary's uniform?" I cursed inwardly. What was wrong with me? I couldn't just go around

saying things like that.

Horace looked me up and down. "I should have added that."

"Wait, so you seriously did talk about me?" That was almost distracting me from the fact he'd admitted I was cute.

He chuckled. "Only in saying that you should be fully on all of the rotas now," he replied. "Your probation period ended yesterday."

I tucked a strand of loose hair behind my ear. "Oh, right."

He pushed open the door to the breakroom and gestured for me to head inside.

I slipped past, brushing against him as I did without even meaning to. My whole body responded, a warmth rushing through me that I didn't think I'd ever experienced with anyone else.

Horace froze, his gaze lingering on me in a way that could mean he was as affected as I was.

He cleared his throat. "What would you like to drink?"

"Just a black coffee," I responded.

"Coming right up." He headed towards the machine and popped in the first pod.

"You don't have to do that."

He shrugged. "I don't mind. It's a nice change from having my hands you-know-where on an elephant."

I snorted. "I can safely say that I've never been in that situation."

"It'll only be a matter of time until that changes. One of the elephants was pregnant when she arrived about eighteen months ago, she's due within the next couple of weeks."

My eyes widened. "I'll get to see an elephant being born?"

"If you want to." He pulled the mug out from under the spout and handed it to me.

I took it, my fingers brushing against his as I did. Sparks travelled right through me, as if I was doing magic.

Something seemed to come over me, and I didn't know what to do or say.

Horace cleared his throat and pulled his hand back. "Anyway, I can make a note in the file that you want to be called when it happens."

"Huh? Oh, right. Thanks, if that's okay, I'd like that. But I don't want anyone to think that you're playing favourites."

"Believe it or not, most people don't want to be anywhere near an elephant giving birth. It can be messy."

“But you’ll be there, won’t you?”

A pleased smile spread over his face as if he enjoyed the fact that I’d noticed. “Of course.”

“I’m not surprised. You really care about the animals living here.”

“I care about my staff too,” he responded.

“I know, everyone says as much.” Which was true. I hadn’t met one person at the sanctuary who had a bad word to say about Horace, other than the odd complaint about wishing that we were all paid more. But that was normally followed up by an understanding grumble about why that was. Maybe he had us all in his thrall with whatever magic he possessed, but I didn’t think so.

He turned his attention to making himself a coffee too and I took the opportunity to study him while he wasn’t looking. The short beard he wore looked neat and was something I’d never considered myself finding attractive on a man before, but there was no doubt that on him it was.

He turned and I looked away a moment too late.

“Like what you see, Adelaide?”

“Mmhmm.” I took a sip of my coffee and tried not to think about how much he seemed to be appreciating my appreciation.

“Good to know.” He said it so quietly that I wasn’t sure if I was supposed to hear it or not. His phone rang and he grimaced. “I have to get this.”

“That’s okay, I need to get back to work anyway,” I responded. “But thanks for the coffee.” I lifted the mug.

“Any time.” He smiled and pulled out his phone, sighing and hitting the answer button. “Hello?”

I waved and left the break room, hating that our time together had been cut short, but also grateful that it had been before I said anything that I shouldn’t.

Because one thing was becoming clear, my feelings for my boss weren’t entirely appropriate.

And I was pretty sure that he knew that.

CHAPTER 5



ADELAIDE

I KNOCKED on my sister's front door and waited impatiently for Chelsea to let me in. She probably wasn't ready yet, despite me being twenty minutes late. I was still trying to get used to the public transport in the city and had managed to get on the wrong bus despite checking several times.

The door swung open, but it wasn't my sister on the other side. A handsome black man stood in the doorway.

"Hey? Erm...is Chelsea here?"

"Ah, you must be Adelaide," the man said.

"Yes, but I don't know who you are," I admitted.

My sister hurried to the door. "Addy!" She pulled me into a hug, only to pull back and gesture to the man. "This is my boyfriend, Baal."

My eyes widened. "This is your boyfriend?" She'd mentioned one in passing a few times, but she'd failed to mention exactly what he was like.

"Good to meet you," he said, holding out his hand.

I took it and gave it a shake. "Adelaide," I said despite the fact he already knew my name, but I was distracted by the way he felt. There was something familiar about him, almost like the same way I felt when I was with Horace, just without the attraction. Maybe this was what my boss meant when he was talking about being able to sense others' magic, and I was better at it than I thought.

"I was just on my way out," he said. "I hope you have a good evening."

He leaned in and kissed Chelsea quickly.

She waved goodbye to him and let out a dreamy sigh.

“Am I interrupting?” I asked, unable to hide my amusement.

“No, he had to go meet his friends for dinner anyway,” she responded. “Come inside, we can have some wine.” She nodded to the bottle in my hand.

I followed her inside her flat and to the kitchen, grabbing two glasses so I could fill them. “So, things are going well with the boyfriend then?”

She sighed and put the traybake she was putting together for us in the oven. “Well is an understatement. He’s been hinting that I should move in with him.”

“Wow, that’s gone fast. I didn’t even meet him until today,” I pointed out.

Chelsea shrugged. “I guess we’ve been dancing around each other for so long that it feels like it’s been longer,” she admitted. “And it just feels right.”

“Are you going to do it?” I handed her one of the glasses.

She took a sip and leaned back on the counter, chewing her lip as she did. “I don’t know.”

“Okay, pros and cons?”

“The pros are that I love him, and that he has his own photo studio,” she said. “The cons are that people might say that we’re moving too fast.”

“You’ve never cared what people thought before, why start now?” I took a sip of my wine and considered how big a step this was for her. She didn’t seem nearly as panicked as I thought she would given the seriousness of what she was talking about. But that made sense. It wasn’t a decision to be made lightly.

She sighed. “I don’t know. Is it too fast?”

“I can tell from your voice that you want to tell him yes. Are you worried he’ll think it’s too soon too?”

She shook her head. “He was a lot more aware of his feelings than I was.”

“Then follow your heart. You know I’ll support you whatever you decide.”

“Hmm.” She gave me a strange look.

“What?”

“Nothing.”

“It’s not a weird thing to say,” I pointed out. “You’ve encouraged me to do things before.”

“Yeah true.” She took another sip of her wine. “So tell me, how are things going with Horus-the-hot-boss?” Chelsea asked, a teasing note in her voice.

But that wasn't what I was focusing on. She'd pronounced his name slightly differently from how I'd been doing it. Maybe most people wouldn't have noticed, but then, most people weren't trying to impress their boss the way I was.

I frowned. "How did you say his name?"

"Horus, why?"

"I think I've been saying it wrong, I've been saying Hor-ace, not Hor-us. Eurgh, he must hate me." I didn't like the idea that I'd been saying it wrong this entire time and he'd had to listen to me.

She stared at me. "Oh."

"Oh? Why does that sound like I'm missing something?" I studied my sister intently, trying to work out what was going on.

She sighed. "Okay, so how to put this...Horace is his human name."

"Oh, right, just some weird paranormal thing. I already knew he wasn't human." More or less. He'd never outright confirmed it, but he'd said enough for me to work it out.

Chelsea closed her eyes and took a deep breath, setting her wine glass down. "I shouldn't have said anything."

"You know something, spill, now."

"Think about it, Addy. Like really think about it. He's called Horus, he has an affinity for falcons, he's been alive a long time..." She ticked off the things on her fingers as she did.

I gasped. "Oh my..."

"God?" Chelsea cut me off with a loud laugh. "Yep, you're there."

"How did you not tell me that I've been drooling over a god?" I demanded.

She shrugged. "I assumed that you knew. It's not like he does much to hide it, you work at the Horus Sanctuary."

"I just thought he called it that because he loves falcons." I rubbed a hand over my face. "I'm such an idiot."

"You're not. I had no idea Baal was a god until Anise told me to search for him online."

"Wait, Baal is a god?" I guessed that explained the familiar feeling I got from him.

"In more ways than one." She gave me an exaggerated wink that I knew only came from the amount of wine she'd drunk.

"Boundaries, Chels."

“I’m just saying. But yeah, he’s a storm god.”

“He doesn’t seem like it.” Even from our brief interaction, he didn’t seem as wound up as I’d expect from a storm god.

“I presume because he’s had several thousand years to develop a personality.”

Which made sense. I’d certainly never gotten the idea that Horace was arrogant and egotistical like I’d expect a god of kingship to be.

Wait. Horus. Not Horace. I needed to get that through my head.

“What do I even do about this?” I asked, trying not to let worry over the situation consume me.

“Would it be cheesy for me to turn your own advice on you and say you should follow your heart?”

“Eurgh, not helpful.”

“Maybe it’s not your heart you should be following,” she muttered.

“I am not going to have a one-night stand with a god, if that’s what you’re suggesting.”

“I wasn’t,” she assured me. “But good to know what you’re thinking about.”

I drained my wine glass and poured myself another one, I was going to need it. “I wasn’t thinking about that.” Though it wasn’t entirely a lie either. It was clear that I wasn’t able to ignore Horus’ physical appearance.

Was knowing that he was a god going to make that even harder? It was impossible to know.

CHAPTER 6



ADELAIDE

DESPITE KNOWING that I should use my new knowledge to put some distance between myself and the handsome god, I still found myself making the trip to the falcon enclosure for the fourth time this week. I wasn't sure precisely why this had become a habit, but I enjoyed my morning talks with Horus. I didn't really want that to change in light of Chelsea's revelations.

I turned the corner, my heart skipping a beat at the sight of him waiting. A part of me was screaming that I should turn around and walk away, that I shouldn't put myself in this situation when I knew it couldn't go anywhere.

Horus turned the moment he heard my feet crunching on the gravel and a warm smile spread over his face as if he was genuinely pleased to see me.

"Morning," he said in a low, inviting voice.

"Morning," I responded.

He held out a travel cup to me. "Black coffee, right?"

"You brought me coffee?" My voice came out slightly squeakier than I intended it to.

"I left home a bit late today, so I stopped by my favourite coffee shop." He lifted his own cup. "It didn't feel right to get one for me and not you."

"Thank you."

"No problem."

"Is it weird that I thought you lived at the sanctuary?" I asked as he unlocked the falcon enclosure and the two of us headed inside.

I wasn't even sure how this had become a habit for us. Or how he knew that I'd be coming today, but it had.

And it was one of the best parts of my day.

"I have a studio flat above one of the storage rooms, it's supposed to be for when there's an emergency or one of the animals needs monitoring overnight, but I do stay there a lot."

"Mmm, a studio isn't where anyone wants to live for longer than they need to."

He shrugged. "My life is here. I don't mind."

We arrived at the bench and the two of us sat down. I fiddled with the sleeve around my cup and tried to think of what to say. There was a part of me that wanted to bring up Chelsea's revelations from last night, but I didn't know whether that was acceptable or not.

"There's something on your mind," Horus said.

"How can you tell?"

"Normally you don't stop asking questions while we're up here. Usually about the falcons, but the other animals get a look in too."

"I found out the truth about you last night," I blurted.

"Ah. I didn't realise you weren't already aware."

"How would I have known?" Though I supposed that explained why he hadn't told me himself.

"Your sister is dating one of my oldest friends, it was reasonable to think she'd have clued you in."

"Oh. Well, she didn't. But she did accidentally let it slip last night," I said. "I...don't really know what to do with the information."

"You don't have to do anything with it," he pointed out. "Nothing has changed."

I frowned. "Hasn't it?"

"I think that's something you have to decide for yourself," Horus said. "Is there anything I can explain?"

I looked down at my coffee cup, a surge of affection for him going through me. Where to even start? "How did you end up here?"

He raised an eyebrow. "You mean why am I not in Egypt?"

I nodded.

"I spent several thousand years tending to my duties there. Once people stopped believing like they once did, I started to travel around the world to try to figure out who I was without all the things I had to do. And eventually,

I found my way to this.” He gestured around the enclosure.

I took a sip of my coffee to give myself a moment to think, delighted but not surprised to find it to be a particularly good one. I had no idea where he’d gotten it from, but I wanted to go there myself. “Is it weird? To have lived so long? Or is that too personal to ask?”

“You can ask me anything, Adelaide.” There was something in his voice that made it feel as if it was true. “But I don’t think I’m going to have the answer you want me to. It’s not something I think about very much. The years kind of fold in on themselves after a while and then things are suddenly different.”

“Ah, I guess that makes sense.” I took another drink.

“But it has taught me that it’s important to take hold of the moments that matter.”

“You mean to stop by and visit the falcons every day?”

“And to bring beautiful vets coffee when I think they’ll like it,” he responded.

I blinked a few times and brushed a strand of hair away from my face. Did he really just call me beautiful?

“It’s good coffee,” I responded.

“I’m glad you think so. It’s from one of my favourite coffee shops.”

“It’s weird to think of the gods of having anything like favourite coffee,” I admitted.

“What if I was the god of coffee? Would it be weird then?”

“Is there a god of coffee?” I tried to think if I’d ever heard of one, but I couldn’t recall ever having heard of one before. Not that it meant anything. Despite the current situation, I wasn’t particularly well-versed when it came to mythology.

“There is. Great guy. Maybe I’ll introduce you at some point.”

“You’d introduce me to other gods?”

“You already know other gods,” he pointed out. “Unless your sister failed to tell you about Baal.”

“She told me.” Which was probably a good thing. “Does he really just go around calling himself by his godly name?”

Horus nodded. “Many of us do. People never believe that they’re in the presence of a deity.”

“I suppose I prove that,” I murmured. “I didn’t put it together until Chelsea told me.”

“I’m sorry, I thought you knew. Maybe not when you first applied for the job, or even when you arrived here, but after I found out Chelsea was your sister, I figured she’d have told you.”

“It’s okay. I guess it answers a lot of questions.”

“And leaves a lot more.”

I nodded. “Can you shift?”

“I can.”

Silence fell between us for a moment. I wasn’t sure where to go after that question.

“Would you like to see?” he asked.

My heart skipped a beat even at the idea of that. “You’d show me?”

He cocked his head to the side in a very bird-like gesture. How hadn’t I noticed this before?

“If you’d like,” he responded.

“Do you just show anyone?”

“I think you know the answer to that.” He held out his coffee cup.

I took it from him, my heart racing as our fingers touched.

He cleared his throat and got to his feet.

I stared at him, uncertain about where I was supposed to look while he did this. I’d never actually seen anyone shift before, and I didn’t know the protocol. I set both of our coffees down on the bench.

“Do you want me to look away while you…” I gestured up and down him, hoping that he wasn’t going to make me say anything out loud.

“I don’t need to undress to shift,” he said.

“Oh.”

A bemused smile quirked at the side of his lips. “Disappointed?”

“I didn’t say anything.”

“You didn’t need to, it’s written all over your face. Unfortunately for you, my god magic helps the clothes shift with me.”

A furious flush rose to my cheeks, but not because I was thinking about what he might look like naked, but because he’d caught me thinking about it.

The man in front of me disappeared before my eyes, shrinking in size rapidly and growing the beautiful brown and tawny feathers of a peregrine falcon.

A small gasp escaped from me. He was the perfect example of the bird, with a proud puffed-up chest and the most beautiful plumage I’d ever seen. He stretched his wings, allowing me to take in the beautiful curve of them.

And it made it real. The truth of his nature truly started to sink in. My boss was Horus, the falcon-headed god of kingship.

He hopped a few feet away and jumped into the air, flying gracefully through it.

My gaze never left him. How could it when he was so magnificent? Every movement showed his grace and the power behind his wings.

Something changed within me, or maybe it had been different for a while and I hadn't noticed. Now it wasn't just about the fact my boss was hot, it was so much more than that.

He swooped back down, transforming into a man with a smoothness that I had to assume came from years of practice, otherwise I saw no way that he'd have been able to pull it off.

"You're amazing," I said.

"Thank you." He sat back down beside me and picked up his coffee. "Any more questions?"

"I have one," I admitted. "But you don't have to answer if you don't want."

"Ask away and I'll tell you if I don't want to."

"So your head..."

He chuckled. "You want to know if I ever walk around with a falcon head?"

"Well, yes."

He closed his eyes, and everything changed. It wasn't exactly that his face was replaced by that of a falcon, but it did look like all the pictures I'd seen of him from paintings on temple walls. The swoop of his beak and the deep blue of his feathers was impressive, but completely unlike any bird I'd ever seen before.

He transformed back. "Is your curiosity satisfied?"

"I'm not sure," I responded. "Can you talk when your head is like that?"

He nodded and took a sip of his coffee before answering. "I can, but I'm out of practice, I haven't shown anyone that part of me for a very long time."

"Then I'm honoured you've shared it with me."

The way he smiled at me made that feel even more true. My heart constricted at the thought.

Our mornings together had become something I really enjoyed, and this one had changed everything. Though I wasn't sure precisely what to do with this, because now I didn't just have the hots for my boss, I seemed to be

catching feelings or a literal god.

CHAPTER 7



HORUS

DELUX CAFÉ WAS SURPRISINGLY busy for a random Monday night, but maybe that was a result of the speed dating events they'd been having here. From what I'd heard, rumours were starting to get around that gods hung out here, though I supposed I wasn't doing anything to dispel them.

I headed over to the bar where Baal was waiting for me, looking forward to catching up properly with my old friend. I hadn't had much time since he'd done the charity photo shoot for me, and I definitely owed him a drink or ten to say thank you for doing it. Especially when he hadn't charged me a single penny.

"Evening," I said as I got to him.

"Ah, Horus, you're here." He pulled me into a bear hug.

"I said I would be." I nodded to the bartender who already seemed to be in the process of getting us drinks.

"Yeah, but it wouldn't be the first time you've cancelled on me because of some kind of an animal emergency. What was it last time? The alligator got out?"

"It was a crocodile," I corrected. "And he did. We found him eyeing up the flamingos."

"You'd have thought they'd fly away before they became his meal," Baal mused.

"They can't fly."

He frowned. "Is that normal?"

I sighed, glad a pint appeared in front of me. "Put them both on my tab?" I said to the bartender, indicating to Baal's drink as well as my own.

He nodded.

"The flamingos used to belong to a billionaire who clipped their wings," I explained. "That's why they're with us and why they can't fly away from the crocodile."

"Ah. I see." He took a sip of his beer. "Should we go sit down?" He gestured to one of the empty tables.

I nodded and headed over that way, only pausing when I noticed a couple in one of the booths. It wasn't the fact they were there that surprised me, it was the who.

"Hey, Baal," Menhit said, waving the two of us over with a wide smile on her face. There was no doubt that the Nubian war goddess was beautiful, but I was much less affected by her than whenever I was with Adelaide. There was something about the witch that spoke to me on a far deeper level than her appearance. Though there was no doubt she was just as beautiful as Menhit was.

"I didn't expect you to be here," Baal said brightly. "Or to have company."

"Hey, Uncle Seth," I said, unable to help myself.

The dark-haired man raised an eyebrow. "Horus." If I wasn't mistaken, there was even a hint of affection in his voice.

Baal chuckled. "You're not even going to chastise him? Love has changed you."

My uncle let out a laugh and gave Menhit a look that said it all. He was head-over-heels for the goddess. "It's certainly changed things for me."

"And for Baal," Menhit put in. "You should be careful, Horus, or you'll be next."

I could hope.

Baal gave me an intrigued look, probably because I wasn't denying it. I was sure he'd have plenty to say on the matter once I actually asked him for advice on what to do about the Adelaide situation.

"We'll let you get back to your date," Baal said.

Menhit nodded. "Are you and Chelsea still coming for dinner on Friday?"

"Yes, she's got it off work already," Baal responded. "We'll see you then."

Seth nodded to the two of us, and we took our leave to make our way over to the table we'd originally been intending to sit at.

I sat back in my chair and took a sip of my beer.

“So, want to tell me what that was about?” Baal asked.

“Hmm?”

“You’re not denying what Menhit was implying. I know Chelsea said that you’ve been spending a lot of time with her sister...”

“Only at work,” I lamented.

Baal chuckled. “And you want to change that.” It was a statement and not a question.

“I do. But I don’t know how.”

“You could just ask her on a date.”

I sighed. “I’m her boss. What if she feels like she can’t say no because of that?”

“Hmm, that’s tricky. I guess I didn’t feel that way when I asked Chelsea on a date while we were on the shoot.”

“That’s because you weren’t the one paying her,” I pointed out. “You were both doing that for free, and you only asked her to help you because you wanted to spend more time with her.” Even I could hear the amusement in my voice. It had been a good plan, and considering how happy the two of them seemed, it had worked perfectly.

“I asked for her help because she’s an excellent photographer,” Baal corrected.

“I’ll admit that there’s no doubt about that, but it doesn’t change the fact that your motivations were almost exclusively about spending time with her. I know you far too well for you to deny it.”

“All right, fine. I wanted to spend more time with her. But I would have asked her to help with the shoot even if that wasn’t true,” the other god responded.

“Good to know. But that’s my problem. I hired Adelaide to be a vet, not because she’s a good vet and I wanted to spend more time with her. I don’t even know if she’s interested in me like that.”

Baal snorted. “Really?”

“What?”

He shrugged. “Chelsea said she calls you hot all the time.”

I perked up. “She does?”

“Why are you so surprised by that? You’ve looked like this your whole

life.”

“Yeah, but I didn’t know she thought it.” Sort of. I’d seen the way she looked at me, and sensed the way she responded when we touched, and it was much the same way that I felt. But that didn’t mean I’d been sure. “I showed her my shifted form,” I admitted.

Baal let out a low whistle. “Really?”

“It was a spur-of-the-moment thing.”

“I’ve never known you to be a spur-of-the-moment guy.”

I shrugged. “I suppose it was coming. We’ve been spending our mornings in the falcon enclosure.”

He chuckled. “And you’re worried about asking her out on a date?”

I took a drink to avoid answering.

“All right, well if you’re really that worried about it, then come here on Wednesday night,” he said.

“Isn’t Wednesday speed dating night?”

“Yep. So make sure you’re here, and then you can have your answer. And a date without having to ask for one, but without tricking her. You’ll be able to flirt over the table when it’s your turn, and then tick your card. If she ticks hers, then you know she’s interested.”

“Do you think that’ll work?”

“I don’t see why it wouldn’t,” Baal responded.

“All right, then I’ll do it. But only if she agrees to come to speed dating knowing what it is. No tricking her into coming.” As much as I wanted to see her outside work, I didn’t want her to be forced into it.

“You have my word that she’ll knowingly walk into it,” he promised.

I nodded, satisfied for now. It wasn’t quite the date I hoped for, but until I found the right way to ask Adelaide on one, it was going to have to do.

CHAPTER 8



ADELAIDE

I DIDN'T KNOW whether to be more nervous or excited as I made my way through the sanctuary and to the elephant house. Horus might have said that he was putting me down to work with the pregnant elephant, but I hadn't considered the fact that he might have actually gone through with it. Especially as I was still so new to the sanctuary.

But I supposed what he said was right. Not everyone wanted to deal with a pregnant animal that was big enough to crush them.

Now that I thought about it, maybe I was starting to second guess the decision myself. But I knew this was the right thing to do. I wanted to get all of the experience I could. And it was also the kind of thing I was probably only going to have the opportunity to witness once in my life.

I entered the enclosure, expecting to find Gladys attending in her role as head vet.

I stopped in my tracks at the sight of Horus reading a clipboard with his sleeves rolled up and a serious expression on his face.

He looked up and smiled when he saw me. "Good, you're here."

"I was summoned," I pointed out.

He chuckled. "You still might not have shown up. Maybe you've changed your mind about this."

"No." But now I was seeing the elephant up close, I wasn't so sure that this was actually my best idea, though she looked rather peaceful. "What's

her name?" I asked.

"Nellie, she came to us about eighteen months ago when one of the circus bans meant that she couldn't be kept by them anymore."

I nodded. "She's lucky she got a good home."

He smiled sadly. "She is. I know that a lot of them are still in private hands, even ones that are no longer being used to travel and perform."

"Was she pregnant on purpose?" I wasn't well versed in exactly what went on behind the scenes when it came to circuses and elephants, though I was grateful to learn about the bans that came into place around the world.

"It was common practice for circuses to breed their own elephants."

I lifted my hand and patted the side of the magnificent animal in front of me. She was being surprisingly docile, but I suspected that was because of all the training she had. Even so, I couldn't believe that I was standing in the same room as a creature of this size.

This was not what I expected when I started applying for jobs.

"Is she going to give birth today?" I asked.

He shook his head. "She's been showing some signs that it might be time soon, so I came to do some checkups. I figured that if you wanted to be around for the birth, then the two of you should meet now."

"Thanks, I appreciate it. Hi Nellie, I'm Adelaide, I'm one of your vets today."

She gave a soft trumpet.

"I think she likes you," Horus responded.

"Apparently. What about Horus? Do you like him?"

She didn't make a sound.

"Ah, sorry, it seems like you're out."

He chuckled. "Well, you're out of luck, Nellie. I'm the one who has experience with elephant births."

"How many have you done before?"

"Three, but this will be the first one at the sanctuary."

"I'd say that's exciting, but I'm not sure that's the right way to think about it, all things considered."

He nodded solemnly. "I know what you mean."

"What will happen to the calf?" I asked. "Will it be able to be re-released?"

He sighed. "It's not impossible, there are some studies being done on the chances of it, and I hope they're successful, but it seems unlikely that she'll

be able to be released into the wild any time soon. Family is so important to elephants that it's impossible to know if they can be re-released successfully without their herd."

"That's sad."

"It is." I could hear in his voice how much he believed what he was saying. "But we're going to do everything we can to make sure they both have a good and healthy life. It would be better if they were in the wild, but as far as I know, Nellie was born into captivity herself, there's a chance neither of them would be able to survive."

My eyes pricked with tears. "It seems so unfair."

"It does." Horus reached out and rubbed my back, the gesture both sincere and comforting. "But they'll do okay here. This will be Nellie's last calf, and her other daughter, won't ever be entered into a breeding program."

"She's had more than one?"

"Judging by her age and her position in the circus' breeding program, I'd say she's had three to five calves."

"Where are they?" I asked.

"One is out in the paddock." He gestured. "She's six years old and hadn't been moved away from Nellie yet. As for the others, I don't know. They might have died, or been sold to other circuses. They didn't think to give me access to her full records when she was sent here."

"Because that would have been helpful," I muttered.

Horus gave me a sad smile. "I think it's likely they didn't bother keeping them. Their main priority was getting themselves more elephants, not the health or gene pool."

I bunched my hand into a fist. "It's so unfair." I knew I'd already said that, but I couldn't think of any other words to describe how I was feeling.

"It is. But the laws are changing. In another five years, there might not even be any elephants for us to accept from circuses."

"Somehow, that seems sad, even if it's a good thing."

"It is a good thing," he agreed. "It's too late for elephants like Nellie, but it's saved her children from having to go through the same thing she did."

"Better late than never, I suppose." But it still hurt my heart to think that this was the kind of thing we were dealing with. I knew when I came to the sanctuary that I'd be dealing with animals with horrible pasts, but it still hit me hard whenever I learned one of their stories.

I reached out and touched Nellie's side. She didn't even flinch, probably

because she was used to the human touch. It made our jobs easier now, but it was horrible to think of the reasons why that might be.

A tear rolled down my cheek and I tried to wipe away the next one.

Without saying a word, Horus stepped closer and pulled me into his arms. My hand dropped away from Nellie as I nestled against his chest. His arms tightened around me and I let out the sob that had built up within me. He rubbed my back gently.

I had no idea how long we stood there for, but once the sobs had subsided, I pulled back and wiped all traces of tears from my face. Not that it helped. I imagined my eyes were puffy and my skin blotchy. Just how I wanted to look in front of my hot boss.

“I’m sorry,” I murmured.

“Don’t be,” he responded gently. “It’s probably not going to be the last time you end up crying over one of the animals. I used to think it would get easier over time, but it hasn’t. Every time one of them is admitted from somewhere with a sad backstory, it gets me.”

“Are you trying to tell me you’ve cried over Nellie?” Even as I asked the question, I knew what the answer was.

“And her daughter, and the cheetah we have with no tail, and the flamingos, and the crocodile with no lower jaw. Sometimes, we’re lucky and we get an animal who has been well cared for despite where they came from, but that’s a rarity.”

“Which is why you don’t let the public see most of them?”

He nodded. “It wouldn’t be fair to them. They’ve been through so much already, I don’t want to put them through more just because it would be beneficial to the sanctuary. But it’s a hard decision. If we had more money, we’d be able to help more animals, but I can’t see the advantage to that when it comes at the cost of their distress.” The truth behind his words was written all over his face. He believed what he was saying with every fibre of his being, and it just made my feelings towards him all the more complicated.

How was I supposed to ignore the way he made me feel when he was not only handsome, smart, and charming, but also at his core a decent human being? Well, a decent god. I wasn’t sure where the lines were there.

“I think what you’re doing is amazing,” I said. “And you have things like Chelsea and Baal’s calendar to raise money, right?”

He nodded. “Unsurprisingly, it’s raised a record amount already.”

“That’s because there are lots of sexy gods in it.”

He made a strange sound that was almost like a growl.

I raised an eyebrow.

Horus cleared his throat. "Sorry."

"If I didn't know better, I'd say you were jealous." The words were out before I meant them to be.

"Hmm." He gave me a look that I couldn't quite distinguish the meaning of. Not that it mattered. I knew nothing could happen between us, no matter how much I wanted it to.

"Will you take me through what needs doing for Nellie?"

"Yes, right." He went to push his sleeves up even though he'd already done it.

Apparently, something about the end of our conversation had him flustered. But I didn't mind too much, not when it drew my attention to how toned his arms were. It was a nice change of thought from the sadness surrounding Nellie and how she'd ended up at the sanctuary.

"Let's get started." In an instant, he'd changed from the somewhat flirty god to a vet who meant business. I flipped the switch within myself too. It was one thing to be crushing hard on my boss while I was in meetings or doing paperwork, it was quite another when there was an animal's wellbeing at stake. Right now, I needed to work with him in order to do what was right for Nellie, and not get distracted over whatever it was brewing between us, even if I was certain that it was something.

CHAPTER 9



ADELAIDE

“COME ON, we’re going to be late,” Chelsea’s friend called as she hurried towards the entrance to DeLux Café.

My sister laughed. “We’re fine, Delia, there’s plenty of time.”

The wolf shifter shrugged and disappeared through the doors.

“Remind me why we’re here?” I asked Chelsea as we followed. The atmosphere inside was buzzing, and it certainly felt like people were having a good time.

“Speed dating,” she said brightly, directing me to the stairs. “We’re heading down.”

“But the event’s up here.” I waved over to where two rows of chairs were sitting waiting for the participants who were milling around already.

“The human one is. But we’re heading to the paranormal event.”

“Okay, but why? You’re all loved up, aren’t you? And if you tell me that you and Baal are looking for a third...”

She laughed good-naturedly. “I can assure you that we’re not. We’re here for you. And to support Delia, she’s still looking for her mate.” She gestured back to the stairs where I assumed Delia had disappeared.

“I don’t need to go speed dating,” I murmured, my thoughts immediately slipping to Horus.

Chelsea chuckled. “Trust me, you do. Go sign up.”

I gave her a funny look. “Why do I get the idea that you’re plotting

something?”

A bemused smirk twisted at her lips. “Maybe I am, maybe I’m not. Just trust me?”

“All right, but only because I know that when you’re up to something, it’s usually for the greater good.”

“Mmhmm. You’ll be thanking me later.” She pointed towards the registration table where a gorgeous blonde vampire was waiting with a welcoming smile and far too much perk. I supposed it went along with the pink balloons and the general atmosphere that this place was about love.

If I didn’t know that speed dating had been helpful for Baal and Chelsea, I’d never have believed that people could actually find something serious here.

“Welcome to DeLux Café Speed Dating,” the vampire said. “I’m Eve.”

“Adelaide.”

“Are you here to sign up?” She gestured to the stack of forms on the table.

I looked back at where my sister was chatting to Delia. “Erm, yeah, I guess so.”

“All right, fill this in, grab yourself a name tag, and then wait for the bell to sound,” Eve said.

“That’s it?”

She nodded. “You’ll have a sheet where you can tick if you want someone’s details. If they tick you in return, then you’ll be given it.”

“Right, thanks.” I picked up one of the forms and filled it in before writing my name on one of the tags and sticking it to the top of my dress. Was I really going to do this? I knew Chelsea thought it was a good idea, but did that mean that it was?

I sighed and smiled at the organiser. It wasn’t her fault that I was a little apprehensive about the whole thing. But I needed a drink if I was going to go through with this.

I weaved my way through the surprisingly large crowd. Who knew that so many people were into speed dating on a Wednesday night? I supposed that knowing gods were here would be enough to bring out the curiosity in a lot of paranormals.

For a fleeting moment, I wondered whether Horus would be among them. I pushed the thought aside and flagged down the bartender. “A glass of white wine, please.”

“Put it on my tab,” a familiar voice said from behind me.

I turned around a lump forming in my throat as I took in the handsome figure of my boss standing a few feet away and answering my dismissed question. Despite seeing him most days, he still had the ability to take my breath away.

I cleared my throat. “Horus.”

“Hello, Adelaide. Mind if I join you?”

“Well, you are paying for my drink.”

He chuckled. “Maybe I do that every time I see one of my employees at a bar.”

“Do you?”

“This is the first time it’s happened. I don’t normally come to events like this.” He used the same tone he normally did, making me certain that it was true.

“Probably because you don’t have any difficulty getting dates,” I pointed out, a small sprig of jealousy jumping to life inside me.

“And you do?” He drew his gaze over me in a way that made my whole body heat up.

“I haven’t tried.”

“And yet you’re here for speed dating,” he said.

“It was Chelsea’s idea,” I responded quickly, not wanting him to think that I was here because I wanted to find someone who wasn’t him.

“I think you’ll find it was Baal’s,” he responded.

My wine appeared in front of me.

“You knew about this?” I asked, surprise spreading through me.

“I suspected,” he responded. “I might have mentioned something about you to Baal and he said to come tonight.”

“You talked about me with him?” I leaned in without realising I was doing it. My heart raced and hope built within me as I considered all the implications of that. Especially as he knew Baal was dating my sister and it seemed as if the two of them had been talking about us.

“Surprised?”

“A little. I suppose I just assumed you didn’t think about me much.”

He stepped closer, his scent filling the air and doing funny things to my stomach. “I think about you a lot, Adelaide.”

Hearing my name from his lips when we were standing so close together caused my pulse to race.

“I don’t show my shifted form to just anyone,” he reminded me, his voice barely audible above the noise of the bar.

“When was the last time?” I asked.

“Four hundred years ago.”

My eyes widened as the realisation of exactly what that likely meant. “Thank you.”

“It was my pleasure.”

My gaze dropped to his lips as he said the words. Pleasure was certainly something I thought about a lot when it came to him. “Should we sit down?” I asked.

He nodded. “I saw a booth over there.”

I turned and his hand landed on my lower back, the heat of his touch almost too much to ignore. I felt like I was hiding something from everyone around us, even though no one was really paying us any attention. I couldn’t even spot Chelsea among all of the guests. No doubt she’d disappeared the moment she’d seen me with Horus, especially if this was a plan that she and Baal had hatched together.

I couldn’t even pretend to be mad at them about it. I’d been unsure about whether I really wanted to come to speed dating from the moment Chelsea said that was where we were coming, but I was starting to see the appeal.

CHAPTER 10



HORUS

IT HAD BEEN a long time since I'd wanted to spend this much time with someone, but every moment with Adelaide took my breath away, and that wasn't just because her dress was a lot lower cut than anything I'd seen her in before.

She leaned forward and I had to clear my throat and tear my gaze away.

Adelaide let out a light laugh. "Is that normally how you look at your employees, Horus?"

"You know it's not." She just had an effect on me unlike anyone I'd ever met.

"I guess I don't look at you the same way I normally look at my boss either." She drew her gaze down my chest. "Though the view isn't nearly as good as the one you're getting."

I chuckled. "Maybe not, but it can be arranged."

She took a sip of her wine, but it did nothing to hide the slight blush on her cheeks.

I was about to ask her another question when something odd caught my eye. I frowned as a man with a warlock tattoo pointing down towards his eyes surveyed the room. I didn't have much to do with my friends' plight against the Sons of Seth cult, but I knew that they were bad news, and that if one of them was here, it was bad news. There were far too many gods in attendance for it to be totally comfortable for him to be around.

A woman sauntered towards him with an easy confidence that came from centuries of knowing she was desired and I let out a small groan. Of course Kuaket was getting involved with this. The goddess attracted trouble like no one else could.

“Horus?” Adelaide asked, touching my arm lightly and making me wish I didn’t have to deal with this. “Is everything okay?”

I let out a sigh even as the man and Kuaket disappeared into the corridor that led to the kitchens. “I’m sorry, I just need to go and stop a friend’s sister from making an awful mistake,” I said.

Adelaide frowned. “Okay?”

“I promise I’ll be back in a couple of minutes.” I reached over and touched her hand, hearing her breathing hitch in response.

At least I wasn’t the only one who was so affected by whatever it was between us.

“I’ll be right back. Please don’t go anywhere?” I met her gaze, hoping that she could see how much I meant it and that I wasn’t just trying to escape.

To my surprise, she nodded. At least I wasn’t going to mess up my chance with her just because I wanted to stop Kuk’s sister from making things harder for us all.

I shuffled out of the booth and headed in their direction, hurrying at the sound of Kuaket’s laughter. She was trouble at the best of times, and now she was getting herself into more.

My eyebrows raised as I turned the corner and found her pinned to the wall by the warlock, though it didn’t seem as if she was in any kind of distress after all.

“Kuaket,” I said.

She turned her head in my direction and gave me a knowing smile. “Come to learn something, Horus?”

“No.” I folded my arms and gave her a look that I knew would get my point across.

She sighed. “That’ll be all,” she said to the warlock, pushing him away.

A frustrated look crossed his face, but he didn’t say anything as he hurried past me and away.

“Did you have to ruin my fun?” she asked, straightening her shirt as she asked.

“He’s with the Sons of Seth,” I pointed out.

“Eurgh, you sound like my brother. Kuk’s always telling me what I can

and can't do," she retorted.

"They're trying to kill gods, Kua, this is serious."

She shrugged. "They're an empty threat."

"They're not. They managed to kidnap Ptah about six months ago."

She sighed. "Don't be so dramatic, Ptah is fine, I saw him last week, he and Bastet are all loved up again."

"Just...be careful, all right." I should have thought this through better. She wasn't my responsibility and we'd never had the kind of friendship where I could say anything meaningful to her.

"Thanks for the big brother act, Horus, but I'm fine." She patted me on the arm as she went past. "And I already have a brother. I don't need another one." She sauntered off without saying another word.

That couldn't have gone worse if I tried. I pulled out my phone and typed out a quick message to Kuk. I wasn't convinced he'd be able to do anything to talk any sense into her, but the least I could do is warn him. Normally, I wouldn't care what kind of mess the other gods got themselves into, but I knew the cult unfairly named after my uncle was a whole other matter. They could cause us serious trouble, especially with Kuaket just casually inviting one of them among us.

But there was nothing else I could do other than to warn Kuk and let him deal with his sister. Not that he was going to be able to, but if anyone could talk sense into him, then it was her.

I sighed and put my phone back in my pocket, heading back to where I'd left Adelaide and hoping she hadn't thought I was bailing on her.

To my relief, she was still there, and her face lit up as I approached.

"Everything okay?" she asked.

I shrugged. "As it can be. I'm sorry about that."

She nodded.

A bell sounded throughout the bar, taking us both by surprise.

"Oh, that's the start of speed dating." The disappointment was clear in her voice, and was the same as I was feeling myself.

"So it is."

"Maybe we should give it a miss?" she asked, looking at me with eyes full of promise. "I know a salsa bar near here that I've always wanted to go to..."

"You want to go dancing with me?"

She nodded. "If you want to."

The thought of her body pressed up against mine in any way was almost too much for me to deal with, but I knew my answer straight away.

“I’d love to.”

A wide smile spread over her face and she got to her feet.

“Lead the way,” I said, gesturing to the stairs that would take us out of DeLux Café.

She smiled and went ahead, moving in a way that suggested she knew how impossible it was for me to tear my gaze away from her.

Maybe dancing was the wrong thing for us to do.

Or perhaps it would be just what we needed.

CHAPTER 11



ADELAIDE

EXCITEMENT BUILT in me the closer we got to the bar. I knew it was bad that we'd skipped out on speed dating, especially when we'd both signed up. But the thought of going through a dozen five-minute dates just so I could have some time talking to Horus was overwhelming. Especially when this was an option.

My heels clicked against the pavement and it was ever so tempting to reach out and take his hand with mine, but I knew we weren't there yet, even if our occasional touches were still seared into my mind.

"I guess I don't need this any more," he said, pulling off his name tag and dropping it into the bin.

"Mmm, true." I took my own off and got rid of it. "Were you really going to sit through a load of dates just for a chance to talk to me outside the sanctuary?"

"Yes."

Warmth filled me at his instant response. "You could have just asked."

"I didn't know if you were interested."

I raised an eyebrow. "So cornering me at speed dating was your plan?"

"It wasn't a very good one," he admitted. "I should have thought it through."

"Well my plan was just to ignore what I was feeling, so I don't think it was really any better." It actually sounded like a really terrible plan now I

was saying it out loud.

He chuckled. “No, maybe not. How was that going for you?”

“Other than a brief wobble when I found out how out of my league you are...”

“You’re not.”

“That’s a matter of opinion,” I pointed out. “You’re a literal god, Horus.”

“And you’re a witch, what’s your point?”

I sighed. “People have worshipped you.”

“I’m sure they’ve worshipped you too,” he responded with a teasing glint in his eyes. “And if they haven’t, then we should change that.”

A flush rose to my cheeks in response. I couldn’t say I was opposed to what he was suggesting.

We reached the club, which was probably a good thing given the direction of my thoughts and how serious the conversation was getting. I couldn’t avoid my feelings forever, but I wanted just a little longer to come to terms with them.

Or that was what I was telling myself. In reality, I knew all it was probably going to take for me to give in to my instincts was a momentary touch from the man beside me. He had me on the edge of something big without even trying to.

I pushed open the door to the salsa bar, letting the music wash over me. The beat almost felt like it synced with my pulse, though that was already racing with being so close to Horus, especially when he was making it incredibly clear that he was interested in more than just a working relationship.

“Have you been here before?” I asked.

He shook his head. “I don’t know any of the steps either.”

“I can show you.” I reached out and took his hand in mine. My breathing became shallower as I enjoyed the touch I’d been thinking about for the entire walk here.

“I’d like that,” he responded.

I drew him onto the dance floor. “It’s all in the hips.”

A mischievous smile quirked at the side of his lips. “Show me.”

I wasn’t sure whether he was being serious, or if he was testing me, but I could see an opportunity when it presented itself.

I took his hands and placed them on my hips, feeling the heat of them even through my dress. I put my own on his shoulders, bringing us closer

together than we had been before. Something hung in the air between us, growing with each passing second and becoming impossible to ignore.

“Now feel the music.” My voice came out breathier than I intended it to.

“Oh, that I can do,” he murmured.

I swayed back and forth with the music, aware of how close we were, the heat of his body, and the way it felt to have his hands on me. I knew we were just dancing, but all it could make me think of was what it would feel like to have his hands elsewhere. To have them undress me, touch me, make me call out his name.

My heart beat raced faster just at the thought and blood rushed around my body.

I moved closer, giving in to the temptation that was almost too much to bear.

Horus slipped his hand to the small of my back.

I looked up, my gaze meeting his. For a moment, I was consumed by the amount of desire in his eyes. It was clear from the way he was looking at me that he wanted me, but I could also tell that it was about more than just a physical connection.

My attention dropped to his lips and I started to wonder what it would feel like to have them pressed against mine. Would they worship me the way he promised they would?

He lifted his other hand from my hip and brushed my hair away from my face. The tension in the air around us thickened and the whole world faded away. There was only one thing left that I could think about, and it was the overwhelming need to kiss him.

I knew it was coming. I could feel it with every fibre of my being, and I wouldn't have been able to resist even if I'd wanted to. Luckily, it was something I desired above everything else. My eyes fluttered closed even as his lips brushed against mine. I tightened my arms around his neck, giving in to everything this was. It was like nothing I'd ever experienced, no one had ever kissed me like this before.

I pressed against him, able to feel every part of him. He pulled me closer with the hand on my back, and hunger grew inside me, one that wouldn't be satisfied with anything as simple as a single kiss. It no longer mattered that he was a god, or that he was my boss. The only thing that mattered was this. I couldn't deny any of what I was feeling any longer.

We broke apart and stared at one another.

Without saying a word, he leaned in and kissed me again. This time the kiss was gentler, almost tender. As if the two of us had managed to expel some of the tension within us so we could get to what was beneath.

If anything, this just made me want him more.

Someone jostled into us, breaking our kiss and causing us both to laugh.

“I suppose that serves us right for still being on the dance floor,” he said.

I laughed “Shall we get something to drink?”

He nodded.

I took his hand, pleased when he laced his fingers through mine, and led him to the bar.

There was a giddy feeling inside me that had everything and nothing to do with the kiss. It made sense that this is what had happened, everything we’d been doing since the moment we first met had led us to this, but that didn’t stop it from feeling like I was walking on air.

Now all I needed to do was figure out how to make sure that I didn’t let this opportunity slip away from me.

CHAPTER 12



ADELAIDE

GOING about my day and trying not to think about the evening before was harder than I expected it to be. No matter what I did, all I could think about was the way it felt to have Horus' hands on my hips and his lips against mine.

And when I'd get to see him again.

It was hard to ignore the urge to walk right up to his office and step inside. But I knew that wasn't fair to either us, or the animals we were supposed to be tending to. One of the reasons I liked Horus in the first place was because of his dedication to the animals he cared for, I wasn't about to ruin that by distracting both of us from our jobs.

Maybe I could go now that I was on my break. I could take him a coffee and we could...well, I wasn't sure what we'd do. But getting to spend some time alone with him was my main goal, and I supposed that would achieve that.

I let out a frustrated groan. Since when had I been this person? All through veterinary school I'd managed to stay focused on what I was supposed to do and only let myself get mildly distracted by matters of my heart. But now I was out in the real world, it seemed as if I was doing a whole one-eighty on that. I needed to get myself under control.

My coffee finished brewing and I grabbed the mug, heading over to the free table at the back and dismissing any notion of going to Horus with a drink. He was probably busy, and for all I knew, he wasn't even in his office.

I didn't think he spent much time there with how often he was out and about tending to the animals.

My phone buzzed and I pulled it out of my skirt pocket, cursing how small the thing was as I did so. If only I hadn't gotten dressed this morning while thinking about how good I might look for my boss, rather than from a practical standpoint. But with meetings for most of my morning, it had made sense to forgo my uniform overalls in favour of something more form-fitting.

Especially if I was going to see Horus today.

Disappointment filled me as I noticed the notification was from my sister and not my boss, but I clicked on it anyway.

< Spill the deets! >

I rolled my eyes. < Nothing to spill. >

< Nonsense. You disappeared before speed dating even started, poor Delia had to sit on her own. >

< I've met Delia, she'll have been fine. > Though I did feel a little guilty about that. I knew the wolf shifter wanted to find her mate, and I hadn't helped her do that by disappearing. And with only just having moved here, I was short on friends, I needed to make sure that I kept the ones I had and didn't mess them over for a man.

< She was, she went home with a gorgeous pixie, I was a little jealous. >

< You're in love with your god, you're hardly jealous. > I chuckled to myself as I typed back the response.

< And you? Are you in love with your god? >

< Of course not, we barely know one another. > Though that was something I had every intention of changing.

< All right, maybe I'm getting ahead of myself. >

< You are. >

< So what did happen between you last night? >

I sighed. If I didn't tell her now, no doubt I'd go home to find Chelsea camped out on my doorstep. Or worse, she and Baal would start plotting again. Not that I was too annoyed about how that had worked out for me so far. But it was best not to let it influence them too much.

< We went dancing, and we kissed. > Several times, but I was going to leave that part out.

< You did what?! >

< Went dancing. Do you know the salsa bar on Main Street? >

< I was referring to the kissing part. >

I leaned back in my seat, amused by my own teasing of my sister. I'd been well aware of what she meant, but that didn't mean I couldn't mess with her a little.

< Isn't that what you meant to happen when you two set us up? >

< Ah. You know about that? >

< Horus told me. > Though now that I thought about it, it had been fairly obvious and I probably hadn't needed the help to figure it out.

< I still need the deets. What was it like? As good as you imagined? >

< I'm not going to kiss and tell. > Partly because I didn't want to say anything until I'd had a chance to talk to Horus about the situation. Especially when it seemed as if Chelsea and Baal were already in the tell-each-other-everything stage of their relationship. The last thing I wanted was for Chelsea to tell Baal I was infatuated only for him to tell Horus the same thing and make Horus feel as if he had to continue something with me because of it.

Somehow, this was even more complicated than I expected it to be with my sister and Horus' friend in the mix.

< Boo! I want more than that! >

"Adelaide?"

I looked up to find the head vet heading in my direction. "What can I do for you, Gladys?"

"I was wondering if you'd be able to run a report to Horace's office for me after your break?"

My heart skipped a beat.

This was it. The opportunity I'd been waiting for was coming my way. I nodded. "They can't seem to stay out of it. I can do it now, if you want."

Relief flitted over the older woman's face. "Thanks. You don't know how much this helps. I'd do it myself, but I've just been called to the emu enclosure. Two of them have had a fight again, you know what they're like."

"It's no problem." Especially because she has no idea how much I want to go to Horus' office anyway.

"Great." She set the report down on the table. "I'll see you later."

"See you. Good luck with the emus." I smiled and waved her off.

I downed the rest of my coffee, barely noticing how hot it was, and certainly not tasting it. I threw my phone into my bag, enjoying that this was also the perfect excuse to ignore my sister's message too. Chelsea could ask all she wanted, but for now, everything between me and Horus was going to

stay right there.

CHAPTER 13



ADELAIDE

A SLIGHT HINT of nervousness overcame me as I approached the open office door. I wasn't entirely sure what to expect when I went inside. Would he be happy to see me? Or was he already regretting what had happened last night?

I took a deep breath. It didn't matter what his reaction was, I knew that I needed to see him in order to figure out how I felt.

I knocked but didn't get an answer.

"Horus?" I called, stepping inside and finding the room disappointingly empty. I supposed that answered my earlier question about whether or not I should have brought him a coffee, I'd have been left standing in his office alone then too.

A small part of me was conspiring to take the report back with me and to return later in the day, but I knew that wasn't right. I had no idea what was inside the envelope Gladys had given to me, it could be a time-sensitive important matter, and me having the hots for our boss wasn't a good enough reason for me to want to delay that.

I headed over to his desk to put the folder on his desk.

"Adelaide?"

I spun around, my heart beating faster at the sight of the handsome god leaning against the doorframe.

"I was just dropping off a report." I waved it as if to demonstrate what I was talking about.

He nodded.

“I should...” I gestured vaguely to the door but didn’t finish the sentence. Partly because we were both well aware that I didn’t want to go, even if I should.

I cleared my throat and headed towards him.

Horus reached out and pulled me to him the moment that I was within reach, causing my heart to beat faster and for me to become increasingly aware of his presence.

He leaned in, his lips brushing against my ear. “Do you have any idea how much I’ve been thinking about coming to find you today?” he asked.

“About as much as I’ve been looking for an excuse to come here,” I responded.

He chuckled. “Is that even a real report?”

“It is. Unless there’s something you need to tell me about Gladys.”

“There’s nothing,” he responded, leaning in to kiss my neck.

I let out a small whimper at the touch, trying not to think about how much I was craving it. How much more I wanted.

“Tell me to stop,” he murmured as he peppered kisses along the sensitive skin.

“Please don’t,” I responded, my voice little more than a breathy whisper.

“Please don’t what?” he checked.

“Please don’t stop, Horus.”

He let out a soft groan.

“I want this.” I probably didn’t need to tell him, but it felt good to say the words out loud.

He didn’t wait another moment and captured my lips with his, kissing me deeply.

I responded instantly, my whole body singing with the sensation.

He moved us inside and shut the door behind us without even breaking the kiss. My pulse raced and the only thought I had was more. More of him, more of this. More of everything.

“Horus,” I murmured against his lips.

He broke the kiss, making me regret saying anything.

Instead of waiting for reason to set in, I reached out and grabbed hold of his shirt, pulling him over to his desk. I set the report down, but didn’t pay any attention to where it landed.

I sat on the desk and tugged him closer. He kissed me deeply, not

seeming to have any more reservations about what was going on between us.

His hand landed on my leg, sliding up until it played with the hem of my skirt.

“This doesn’t seem like a very work-appropriate outfit,” he whispered against my lips as his hand slipped higher.

“I had meetings,” I responded, my breathing hitching as his fingers brushed against a particular sensitive patch of skin.

“Mmm.” His lips trailed kisses down my neck, making me moan slightly.

“And a hot boss to impress,” I admitted.

He chuckled, the vibrations whispering against my skin in the most sensational way.

With my inhibitions completely gone, my fingers flew over his shirt buttons. I undid them faster than I had ever undone a shirt before, but all I could think of was finding out what was hiding beneath. I pushed it from his shoulders and let it fall to the floor.

My mouth went dry at the sight of the hard muscles and I ran my hands over them, exploring until I hit his waistband.

A flood of desire rushed through me and I fumbled with his belt, even as he moved his hand further up my skirt. Neither of us said anything as we lost ourselves in the intensity of the moment.

His hand slipped between my legs and I let out a low moan as his fingers found my entrance.

Horus groaned and pulled back, heading to the jacket he had slung over the back of his chair.

“What...” I didn’t know exactly what question I actually wanted to ask. Did I want to know what he was doing, or why he’d stopped? Or did I just want to ask him to continue? It was hard to tell over the haze of desire within me. I’d come here knowing that the two of us needed to talk, and somehow, we’d not managed that.

Not that I was complaining.

He held up a small foil packet, causing heat to deepen within me.

“Do you always carry condoms in your jacket pocket?” I asked, half wondering what I’d gotten myself into.

Horus chuckled deeply. “Only when I’ve been enchanted by beautiful witches.”

I bit my bottom lip. “Does that happen often?”

“Once.” He returned to his position in front of the desk but didn’t touch

me. “We don’t have to do this.”

“I don’t know how you have the power to resist,” I say, raking my hand through my hair. My shirt gaped open, though I had no idea how it had found itself in that position. With the way he was looking at me, I couldn’t bring myself to regret the decision.

“I barely am, but that doesn’t mean I’m going to force you, Adelaide.”

The way he said my name sent something unnamed through me. “You’re not forcing me.” I reached out to touch him again.

Horus closed his eyes, a look of pure bliss on his face. He wanted this as much as I did, there was no hiding the way he was responding to me.

“I spent all of last night thinking about this.” I bit my lip and looked up at him.

He opened his eyes and studied me intently. “How exactly?”

My cheeks heated as I tried to work out what I was supposed to say and how much I should admit. If this was about getting what I wanted, then I saw no problem in stating exactly what happened.

“You really want to know?”

“Would I have asked otherwise?” His voice was low and full of an unnamed promise.

“After we said goodnight, I went home and got ready for bed. Which isn’t hard when I sleep naked.” I expected more nerves to overtake me, but there was just desire instead.

I got to my feet and reached out to touch his chest properly. “I couldn’t sleep, and I kept replaying what it had been like to kiss you, and how it had felt to have your hands on me.” My pulse raced, and it was clear that Horus was being held captive to my description too.

“But in my version, we weren’t at the club.” My voice had dropped to barely above a whisper and I could feel the effect my own words were having on me. “You walked me home and we kissed at the door. But it didn’t stop there. I invited you inside.”

“I’d have said yes.”

“You did in my imagination too.” I looked up at him, pleased to see the need in his gaze. I pulled my touch away from his chest and focused on my own clothing, shrugging off my shirt and letting it fall away, feeling strangely bold despite the fact it was the middle of the day and we were standing in his office. I unclasped my bra and dropped it to the floor along with my shirt.

“I imagined what it would feel like to have your hands on my skin,” I

said, drawing my hand across my chest and cupping my breast with it. I pinched my nipple, causing a small whimper to escape from me, and for Horus' eyes to darken with desire.

He swallowed hard. "And then?"

Without saying anything, I moved my hands down my body and pushed my skirt to the ground, taking my panties with it. Heat welled up within me at the idea of being so exposed in front of him, but it came along with something else. A feeling of power and control I'd never experienced before. His reaction to me was making me feel this way. It was impossible not to feel sexy and powerful when he was looking at me the way he was.

I sat back on the desk and spread my legs, baring myself to him in a way I'd never done to anyone else before. No one else had ever inspired anything like this in me, but there was no doubt that I was enjoying it. "Then I touched myself," I whispered, trailing my hand up the inside of my thigh while keeping eye contact with him.

I let out a small whimper as my fingers brushed against my entrance, hardly believing just how turned on I actually was.

Horus groaned and stepped forward. "How did it feel?"

"Not as good as this," I responded in a breathy whisper. "Touch me, please."

He nodded and stripped off the rest of his clothes, making it clear that he was just as affected by my show as I was. I found it difficult to focus on what I was doing when he was looking at me like this.

"Show me what you like." He reached out and put his hand over mine.

My breathing hitched.

How was this happening?

I guided his hand into position, letting out a low moan as he brushed against me. This was too much. But in the best way. A rush of need flooded through me as I showed him precisely where to touch. No one had ever asked before, and it was more of a turn-on than I'd ever imagined. My hand fell away, mostly because I wasn't able to continue thinking straight enough to not as Horus sent me closer and closer to my release, but partly because he didn't seem to be having many issues with precisely where to touch me in order to make me moan.

I grabbed hold of his wrist as my body began to shake and pleasure ripped through me. He removed some of the pressure, but not all of it, keeping the sensations rippling through me as a result.

Slowly, my awareness came back to me and I looked up to find Horus' gaze boring into me, clear desire written all over his face.

"That didn't happen last night," I murmured.

"You didn't come while thinking of me?" he asked, a satisfied smile on his face.

"I did, but not like that."

"Is it wrong to say I like that?"

I let out a lazy laugh. "I'd be disappointed if the real thing wasn't better."

"Mmm, true." He leaned in and captured my lips with his, only breaking away so he could trail kisses across my skin until his lips were by my ear, his hot breath brushing against it and only reminding me of what was to come. "I spent all night thinking about how it would feel to be inside you."

My breathing hitched. "You did?"

"Mmm." He stroked himself as he spoke, and I wasn't sure whether I wanted to watch his hand or his face.

I picked up the condom from where he'd dropped it on the desk. "Hopefully that will feel better in reality too."

"I have no doubt it will." He watched intently as I opened the packet and pulled out the condom.

I put it on him, rolling it down with exaggerated slowness in order to get a response from him. He groaned loudly, a true reward for me.

"This is not how my office is supposed to be used," he said as he stepped between my legs, guiding himself to my entrance.

"Does that mean you want to stop?"

"Not unless you ask me to."

"I'm not going to," I assured him. I didn't think an earthquake would be able to stop me right now. I wanted him more than I had ever wanted anyone before. Thoughts of Horus had been consuming me for weeks and it had all been leading to this. I knew that it wasn't just about the physical connection either, we'd spent far too much time getting to know one another for that. This was just the way it was all coming together.

He groaned as I wrapped my legs around his waist and he thrust into me. The angle made everything more intense, and it was difficult to focus on anything other than the way it felt to have his skin next to mine.

In the back of my mind, I was dimly aware that we hadn't locked the door, and that anyone could walk in at any moment, but that only added to the thrill.

The thought was chased away soon enough as another release overcame me.

I dug my nails into Horus' back as pleasure wracked through my body, making me forget everything, even my own name.

It was safe to say that work was never going to be the same again.

CHAPTER 14



ADELAIDE

THE END of the work day was almost here, and despite the hours since being with Horus in his office, my whole body was still singing from the high. Could everyone tell what we'd been up to? I didn't think so. As far as I knew, no one was aware that we'd been spending so much time together, and none of the other people working at the sanctuary had been at the speed dating event to see us there either.

Though I wasn't naive enough to think that we'd be able to keep this secret if we actually did start something official between us.

I pushed the thought aside. He might not even want that. For all I knew, he might just have wanted me physically and now didn't want anything else to do with me.

Even as I thought it, I knew that wasn't true.

Which was why I'd come here.

I looked into the falcon enclosure, searching for the birds I knew were probably resting after their latest meal.

"I thought I'd find you here."

My heart skipped a beat and I turned to find my boss walking towards me with two coffees in hand. A small thrill went through me. He really had expected to see me.

"Here. I went out for them." He held one out to me.

"Thank you." My fingers brushed against his, giving me flashbacks of the

way they'd felt on other parts of my body. Perhaps I should have sought him out in his office rather than out here in the open.

But no. We needed to talk about things, having more sex wasn't the answer, even if it would be enjoyable.

"Want to go inside?" He gestured to the enclosure.

I nodded. In there was our spot, though I knew from what he'd told me that it was really his spot, and I'd just joined him there. Even so, it felt like a special place and one where I wouldn't mind spending more time with him.

He unlocked the enclosure and the two of us headed inside. The peace of the place instantly washed over me and I was grateful that I'd thought to come here.

Especially as it seemed as if Horus had the same idea.

We sat on the stone wall, close enough together that we could touch if we moved slightly.

"So about earlier," I said.

"I'm sorry," he responded.

Surprise flooded through me. "For what? Really great sex? Not something to apologise for."

He chuckled. "You thought it was great?"

"Did you not?" I hadn't considered that as a potential complication.

"It was amazing," Horus responded. "You are amazing."

"Oh." I tucked a loose strand of hair behind my ear. "Then what are you apologising for?"

"Because believe it or not, I actually intended to ask you on a date when I saw you today. I didn't intend to just rip your clothes off."

"Technically, I took my clothes off. Very willingly, I might add."

"Something I won't be forgetting in a long time." The way he looked at me left no doubt that he was doing just that.

A blush rose to my cheeks. "I've never done anything like that before."

"I would never have known."

"I actually intended to talk to you today too," I said. "I didn't go to your office to seduce you."

"Then perhaps we should do that."

"Talk? Aren't you the guy? Shouldn't you want the sex without the talking?"

He snorted. "I think we both know I'm old enough to be past that phase. I'm not looking for a fling, Adelaide. If sex is all you want, then this isn't

going to work.”

“It’s not,” I said quickly. “I want more than that.”

“Okay, then I’d really like it if you’d go on a date with me.”

“I’d like that too,” I responded. “Somewhere public.”

He raised an eyebrow.

“Just so we don’t get distracted.” My blush deepened.

Horus let out a bemused laugh. “Should I point out that it didn’t stop us earlier?”

“Your office isn’t public. It’s public-adjacent.”

“Ah, I see. That’s the line.” He stretched out his arm and put it around me.

I took the invitation for what it was and shuffled closer, leaning my head against him. “Will you tell me more about the falcons? You’ve only really talked about Reaper.”

“What do you want to know?”

“Everything.”

“Of course you do. Well that over there is Talon and Cleo. They’re a mated pair and almost inseparable. Cleo was found by the side of the road badly injured after some kind of predator attacked their nest.”

“What was it?”

“No way to really tell. Probably a weasel of some kind. Talon refused to leave her even though she can’t fly like she should. She can make small distances, but she’d never survive in the wild,” Horus said.

“That’s so sad.”

“It’s just the circle of life, to some extent,” he said. “But the person who found the two of them had worked with me before and brought them to me. They’ve been living here ever since.”

“Have they had another chick?”

He nodded. “Unlike some of the other animals, we were able to re-release the chick into the wild. It felt like a real victory. I still visit him sometimes, though he doesn’t recognise me.”

“Do you go in your human form or your falcon?” I wasn’t sure which of the two would make more sense.

Horus chuckled. “My human one. I’m not interested in getting into a territory fight with the equivalent of a teenage peregrine falcon.”

I let out a bemused laugh. “Okay, yeah, I can see why that would be a good choice. It’s probably a good thing you’re not female then.”

He smiled. "Trust me, more than one falcon has made the mistake and tried to get me to build a nest with them."

A snort escaped from me without meaning to. "Do you have the wrong markings or something?"

"I think it's more that I don't feel right."

"Ah, so like you don't feel human to me."

He raised an eyebrow. "I don't?"

I shook my head. "I could tell there was something different about you when we met, but I didn't know what it was, and I've felt that around some kinds of fae too so I just dismissed it. I really had no idea you were a god until Chelsea told me. Though I had figured out that you and Baal were the same thing about five minutes before she let it slip."

"Interesting. Well, I assume it's the same for falcons, they sense that I'm not actually one of them, and a couple of younger birds have thought that might mean I was a good mating partner."

"I can't say I disagree with them." I nudged him gently with my elbow.

"Is that so?"

"Mmm. I'm just glad you didn't turn me down."

"I may be a god, but even I didn't have the power to resist you."

I sighed and moved closer to him, setting my coffee down on the wall next to me so I could smooth my hand over his chest. "It's a weird feeling to have a god on his knees for me."

"That hasn't happened yet," he murmured. "But give it time."

"How much?" Because I didn't imagine I was going to be able to wait too long before I gave in to the desire within me.

"That's up to you."

I bit my lip. "Maybe after our date?"

"Then I'm going to have to ask what you're doing tomorrow?"

"Hopefully, having dinner with you. And as you know, Friday is my day off, so you can have me the whole day after too." I felt brazen saying it out loud, but we were both aware that this wasn't something fleeting, so there was no need to pretend otherwise.

"I like the sound of that." He turned and cupped my cheek in his free hand.

I knew what was about to happen, and I welcomed it with open arms, my eyes fluttering closed as his lips brushed against mine.

The heat from earlier still lingered within me, but this kiss was different.

It was full of the promise of a future and the feelings that would only grow between us. I already admired Horus, I liked him, and I clearly desired him, but this kiss made me certain that I was going to feel so much more than that.

And that the feelings were entirely mutual.

CHAPTER 15



ADELAIDE

AS MUCH AS I loved my job, today was the kind of day where I couldn't wait for my shift to end. I checked my watch. Two hours to go. I could get through that, especially as I only had a few checkups on the horses to do. Though sometimes, it was better to be busy while I was distracted waiting for something.

My walkie-talkie crackled. "Adelaide Stewart to the elephant house," Horus' voice said.

My heart skipped a beat. Nellie.

It was still too early for the baby, wasn't it?

I pulled my walkie-talkie from my belt and pressed the button. "On my way. I need someone to take over the health checks in the stables."

The line crackled. "I can do it, I'm by the paddock now anyway," one of the other vets said.

"Thanks," I responded, reattaching my walkie-talkie to my belt and hurrying through the sanctuary towards the elephant house. I wasn't sure exactly what was going on, Horus hadn't sounded very worried, but I knew that didn't mean anything. He'd had thousands of years to work on staying calm under pressure.

No one else seemed to be paying me any attention, which confirmed what I thought I already knew. This was Nellie giving birth and not some other problem at the elephant house that needed attention.

I headed inside, stopping at the sink to scrub my hands and forearms before I went into the enclosure. I didn't know how immediately I might be needed, and it was better to be safe than sorry where these things were concerned.

I pushed the door open and stepped inside to find Horus waiting in overalls of his own, the sleeves rolled up like they normally were when he was working.

Somehow, he was even more attractive to me like this, though I wasn't sure precisely what it was about it that made me feel that way. Maybe it was simply that I was seeing him do something he loved, in an environment I'd always wanted to work in myself.

"Good, you're here," he said. "I don't know how long it's going to be, but today is the day." He nodded towards where Nellie was standing with her trunk entwined with her older daughter's.

"What's she doing?" I asked.

"She's asking for support," Horus responded. "It's normal behaviour, sometimes the older relatives will also form a circle around the mother to give her protection, but..."

"Harriet is all she's got."

He nodded.

"How long is it going to take?"

"Once she's actively giving birth, it'll be over really quickly, though we'll have to monitor the baby for a few days." He grimaced. "Which is unfortunate timing."

I frowned. "Why?"

"Our date, Adelaide."

"Oh." I hadn't even thought of that, I'd been too distracted by what was happening. "That's okay. Didn't you say you had a studio flat here at the sanctuary?"

He nodded. "I'll be staying there tonight so I can keep an eye on the feed from here."

"So what you're saying is that you need to stay awake all night?" I raised an eyebrow.

He chuckled. "I guess so."

"Then why don't we just change our plans?" I didn't want him to think that I was too eager, but I also didn't want to wait longer for our date. "We can have some food delivered."

“I’ll be checking on the elephants every half an hour or so,” he pointed out. “That’s rather disruptive to a date.”

“I don’t see it as a problem. In fact, wouldn’t it be helpful to have another vet on standby if something does go wrong?”

He chuckled. “Devious.”

“And also true,” I pointed out. “I might have suggested it anyway even if we hadn’t had plans.”

“That would just be you trying to spend more time with me.”

“It would, I’m not even going to pretend otherwise,” I responded.

He grinned widely at me. “Okay, well we’ve probably got a little while to wait first, so why don’t we get the cameras set up properly.”

“Are they not already up and running?”

He shook his head. “We have one up there, but it’s not going to be enough to monitor everything we need to. The mortality rate for baby elephants in captivity is high, so we want to do everything we can to try and minimise the chance of that.”

I nodded. “Just tell me what to do.”

He handed me a box containing one of the cameras with instructions on precisely what to do. Every now and again, my gaze kept flitting over to where he was setting up his on the other side of the elephant house. He worked with a practised ease that only made me admire him more.

A trampling sound came from the direction of the elephants, calling my attention to them. Worry filled me as I considered everything that might be about to go wrong.

Horus gestured me over to him.

“Is everything okay?” I asked.

He nodded. “She’s about to give birth.”

“Oh.” My eyes widened as my gaze fixated on the situation in front of me. “How do you know?”

“She’s making sure the ground is free of any kind of dangerous obstruction.”

“What do we do?” I thought back through all of the things I learned at veterinary school. Was this going to be like cats? No, that didn’t seem right. But neither did thinking about it in terms of cattle.

“Nothing.”

“Nothing?” I repeated back to him, not seeing how that was really a choice.

“We’ll try to do as little as possible to interfere. We’ll only step in if something goes wrong.” He watched the scene in front of us with concentration unlike anything I’d ever seen before.

The sky was starting to darken, and I knew my shift was well and truly over, but neither of us said anything about me leaving. The only thing I’d planned on leaving work for was to spend time with him, so why should I go? Here was exactly where I needed to be.

Especially because I was getting to see something I’d probably never get a chance to witness ever again. And, from what Horus said, that was going to be a good thing and not a bad one.

He reached out and took my hand in his, giving the first indication that he was nervous about what was going on. I entwined our fingers together and gave him a gentle squeeze. “They’re all going to be okay,” I whispered.

He nodded, but I could tell from the set of his jaw that he wasn’t completely convinced.

A loud thud sounded, drawing my attention to Nellie.

And to the tiny-for-an-elephant form that had just landed on the ground behind her. My eyes widened. That was such a long way to fall. I’d read about this during my research on elephant births, but that hadn’t prepared me for it.

Nellie pulled away from her eldest daughter and nudged at the baby with her trunk.

I stepped forward without meaning to, worried about the fact it wasn’t moving yet. Nellie kicked gently at her calf, making me gasp.

“It’s okay,” Horus assured me. “She’s supposed to do that, she’s trying to break the sack so she can breathe.”

“Oh.” I watched with rapt attention as she managed to hit it at the exact right spot, sending it flying everywhere.

Including right towards us.

“Ah.” I closed my eyes just in time, but still felt some of the elephant birthing fluid hit me. I supposed this was what Horus had tried to warn me about when he said that not everyone wanted to be around for this.

I opened my eyes, noticing that he was just as covered as I was, but was also grinning.

“You could have warned me about the splash zone,” I murmured.

“And miss your face when it happened? No thanks.”

I shook my head in bemusement. “And for that, I’m going to clean myself

magically, and not you.” I snapped my fingers and sent magic all over me, cleaning my overalls to the best of my ability. Even with magic, they’d still need to go in the wash, I wasn’t that confident in my ability.

“That’s a pity. I was going to suggest a very different way to get clean.”

“Hmm, were you?” My lips quirked up into a smile. “Well for that, I guess I can change my mind. Hold still.”

He frowned but did as I asked.

I held my hand out to him, my magic tingling as it left my body and jumped over to his, effectively cleaning most of the elephant gunk from him.

Feeling a little mischievous, I sent an extra tendril of magic to brush against his skin in a more alluring way. I knew I shouldn’t, especially with us being at work, but it was fun to see his eyes darken as he took me in.

“Do we need to do anything else here?” I asked.

He shook his head. “We’re all done. The cameras are set up, so all we need to do now is keep checking in with them to make sure they’re getting on okay. We’ll only come back down if we’re absolutely needed.”

“So that means I have a whole night of you to myself, and looking at elephants? Sounds like my kind of evening.”

He chuckled. “I’ll have to send out an email to the sanctuary staff so they know about the new arrival, but that can wait until after a shower.”

“We could save time on that,” I suggested.

“I like the way you think.” He squeezed my hand and led me out of the elephant house.

I looked over my shoulder as we were about to leave, affection towards the little elephant family spreading through me as I do. They might not have the life they should have been living, but at least we could make things as safe and comfortable as possible for them here.

And that’s something I was glad to be part of.

CHAPTER 16



ADELAIDE

HORUS UNLOCKED the door to what I assumed was the studio flat he'd told me about, and gestured for me to go inside. I brushed past him, lingering a little longer than I should. Though I supposed now we'd moved past flirting, there was no should.

"It's nice," I said, taking in the space. "Bigger than I expected."

He chuckled. "I'm glad you think so. You're the first person to ever actually see it."

I turned to him, surprised to discover that. "I am?"

"It isn't exactly somewhere for two people to stay, there's only one bed."

I stepped closer to him and started undoing the buttons of his overalls. "That's not going to be a problem for me."

"I hoped not." He drew me closer with a hand on the small of my back and kissed me gently.

"But maybe we should shower before we do anything else," he said once we'd broken apart.

"Or, we could choose the fun option and do some multitasking. I'm good at that." I pulled away from him and stripped off my overalls so I was only wearing the tank top and shorts I had on underneath. I threw them into a pile by the door, knowing that we needed to take them down to the laundry room at some point.

His gaze fixated on me as I pulled my tank top over my head and dropped

it too. It didn't make me feel self-conscious being like this though, if anything, it made me feel more desired than I ever had before.

"I can be on board with multitasking," he murmured.

"Good." I shimmied out of my shorts and panties and headed into the room that I assumed was the bathroom.

It was fancier than I expected it to be, with a large shower that'd easily fit the two of us. I turned on the water and stepped beneath, tipping back my head and letting the droplets flow over me. Despite my magic, I definitely still felt like I needed to get clean.

The door shut and Horus stepped inside with me, gloriously naked and clearly appreciative of the situation.

He stepped closer, caging me against the wall and sending a flood of desire through me in response. "This wasn't how I intended our date to go," he murmured.

"It's not far off where I wanted it to end, though," I responded, wrapping my arms around his neck.

He leaned in and captured my lips with his. Despite the fact we were completely naked, and water was raining down from the shower onto us, there was something sweet about the kiss, as if it had a whole new meaning to our relationship.

If that's what this was. I didn't know whether it was too early to use words like that, even in my head.

He broke the kiss but didn't move away from me. I imagined he couldn't. The invisible force that kept me craving him was probably working just the same on him.

"Where was it you wanted me?" he asked. "On my knees?"

My breathing hitched and I let out a small whimper even at the thought of it.

He took that for confirmation of what I wanted and sank down so he was in front of me. He looked up, his eyes full of desire. He reached out and smoothed a hand up the inside of my leg, the touch leaving a trail of fire in its wake. Every fibre of my being wanted him. More than I had ever wanted anyone before.

I parted my legs without thinking about it as his touch skimmed over my thighs. He slipped a hand between my legs, his fingers finding my entrance.

My eyes closed and I leaned my head back against the cool tiles, but it did nothing to tame the heat rising within me.

His breath tickled against my skin, and the moment he kissed the inside of my leg, I completely lost all reason. How could I keep focused when I knew exactly what he was going to do?

I dug my fingers into his shoulder as he sent me higher and the need for release built within me. It coiled tighter with every flick of his tongue.

He held me steady and pushed two fingers inside me, curling them upwards. Warmth spread through my entire body, like I'd been dipped in a warm bath, and I knew that no matter how good I thought the sex in his office had been, this release was going to be even more intense.

As if summoned by me thinking about it, pleasure ripped through me, making my whole body shudder and shake. Horus didn't stop even as my nails dug into his shoulders, prolonging the sensation.

All thoughts vanished from my mind and the only thing I could possibly focus on was how good it all felt. How he'd made me feel. And it wasn't because he was a god, or because he was hot, even though both of those things were true. He'd managed to make me feel this way because this wasn't just about sex, it was so much more than that.

I slumped down and he pulled back, standing in time to steady me.

I wrapped my arms around his neck, partly because I didn't think I'd be able to stand otherwise.

"You can worship me any time," I murmured.

He chuckled. "I intend to." He leaned in to capture my lips with his. He pulled back and shut off the shower.

I let out a disappointed whimper.

"Don't worry, I'm not done with you yet." He scooped me up into his arms and I let out a small squeal. "But I didn't think this through, so I need you to open the door."

"Ah, so you didn't design the bathroom with romantic conquests in mind?"

"Surprisingly, I didn't."

"Why is the shower so big? Not that I'm complaining?" It had been the perfect size for the two of us.

He carried me out into the studio, the cool air hitting my warm skin and making it tingle.

"Because I knew that sometimes, I'd be too tired to do anything other than sit in the shower."

"Ah."

He set me down on the bed and leaned over me.

“You’re not going to ask me if I want to stop, are you?” I asked, seeing the expression on his face.

“No. I trust you to tell me if you do.”

I bit my lip, mostly because I realised that I trusted him to stop if I said as much.

It was a good thing for us both that I had absolutely no intention of saying that.

“I want you,” I said, meeting his gaze so he could see just how much.

“I hoped as much.” He captured my lips with his, kissing me deeply and reminding me of just how intense my last release was.

He reached out and fumbled with the drawer in the bedside table until he had a condom in hand. A part of me wanted to tell him that it was fine, I was a witch and that came with certain potions and spells that could protect me from unwanted pregnancy, but it was too early for that. We needed to be as careful as possible until we were in a position where we didn’t have to be.

He sheathed himself quickly and guided himself to my entrance.

His gaze locked onto mine as he pushed inside. It was less desperate than when we were in his office, and I could read the tension between us for what it was.

I gave myself over to the connection growing between us, enjoying every moment for what it was, hoping that there would be a lot more of them in my future, and certain that there would be.

CHAPTER 17



HORUS

THE SCREEN HANGING on the wall of the studio played the feed from the elephant house, reassuring me that everything was going to plan there. Not that there really was a plan other than letting Nellie do what she needed to now she'd had her baby.

Which was just fine by me. It gave me plenty of time to enjoy the company of the gorgeous woman currently sitting on my bed with her legs crossed and only one of my shirts on in the form of clothing.

Adelaide was glowing and I didn't think she'd ever looked so beautiful.

She met my gaze and smiled. "What are you thinking about?"

"You."

A blush rose to her cheeks. "Oh."

My stomach rumbled loud enough for her to hear and she let out a light laugh. "Time to feed you?"

"I could think of something I'd like to eat," I joked.

Her blush deepened. "Real food," she stressed.

I chuckled. "All right, we should order something." I sat down at the table and booted up my laptop.

"You should write the email to everyone too," she said.

"Yes, I got distracted." I dragged my gaze down her form. She could distract me any time she wanted to and I wouldn't complain one bit.

She swung her legs around and got up from the bed, coming over to

where I was sitting and smoothing her hands down my chest from behind. “I can help, if you want.”

“Thanks, but I have a template. There is something you can do for me though.”

“Oh?” She paused but didn’t pull away. I reached up and touched her hand with mine, hoping to tell her without words that I liked the affection.

“You can name the new arrival.”

“Really?” Excitement filled her voice and she pulled away to sit on the chair next to mine. Maybe I should have waited for this bit so I could keep her touching me longer. “Are you sure?”

I nodded. “You were there for the birth, it’s only fair.”

“But I didn’t really do anything.”

“You helped,” I said. “And you kept me company.”

“That’s one way of putting what we did. I hope to keep you company later too.” She quirked an eyebrow to go along with her words.

“I’d very much appreciate that. But I don’t want you to name the baby elephant because we had sex.”

“Twice. Though now I’m saying that out loud, it doesn’t sound like many times,” she mused.

“Should I ask what I’ve unleashed?”

She shrugged. “I’m not sure. I’ve never felt like this before. Normally I’m much more able to control myself.”

“That’s fair. I feel the same.”

“At least that means we can be insatiable together.”

“But only after you’ve named the elephant,” I reminded her. “I do need to send this email out.”

“Okay, let me think about it.”

“We should order food too. What do you fancy?”

“You.” She gave me an exaggerated wink.

“The feeling is mutual. But I meant to eat.”

“Still you.” She could barely keep a straight face as she turned my own joke against me, and burst out laughing anyway. “I’m sorry, it was right there.”

Amusement bubbled up within me alongside a surge of desire. I wanted her more than I’d ever wanted anyone. “As good as that sounds, I think we need proper food first,” I said.

“Mmm, maybe. What’s good around here? I haven’t had much time to

explore the local takeaways. My boss keeps me on a pretty tight schedule,” she teased.

“I’ve heard that about him. Apparently, he’s a tough man to please.”

“I don’t think so at all. He’s the best boss I’ve ever had. And I’m not just saying that because of the orgasms.”

I snorted. “Aren’t you?”

Her expression turned much more serious than I expected it to. “No, Horus, I’m not. I mean, they’re great, I’d very much like more of them. But that’s not why you’re the best boss I’ve ever had. I think technically, sleeping with me means you’re the worst boss I’ve had?”

I raised an eyebrow. “You have an interesting way of complimenting me.” I drew my hand up and down her back, enjoying the way she leaned into my touch.

An amused smile lifted at her lips. She got to her feet and made her way over to me.

I pushed my chair back to give her the space she needed as she leaned over, bringing her face close to mine. Her hair fell around us like a curtain, cutting us off from the world and making it impossible for me to focus on anything other than her scent. She should smell of the body wash I kept in the shower, and she did, but underneath that there was more. It was something that was uniquely her, and it made me want her more.

“You’re a good boss because you care,” she said. “About the animals living here, about your staff. About everything. You don’t overwork people, you try to make sure that everyone is treated fairly. And you do the dirty jobs yourself. I’ve seen you mucking out the stables.”

“Have you been watching me, Adelaide?” I asked.

“Mhmm. I’ve been doing lots of things I shouldn’t when it comes to my boss.”

“He’s not complaining.”

“Neither am I.” She leaned in and kissed me, awakening my need to be with her all over again.

We broke apart and I smiled at her, feeling a surge of affection in response.

My stomach growled again. “We really should order some food before we end up perishing though.”

“All right, but you have to pick. I really don’t know anything around here.”

“There’s an Italian down the road that does the best stone-baked pizza in the city,” I suggested.

“Hmm, okay, I could go for pizza, but we’re sharing. I’m not eating anything you’re not. I’m not risking garlic breath.”

I chuckled. “All right. Anything you don’t eat?”

“When it comes to pizza, just olives.”

“Okay, leave it to me, you just name an elephant.”

“You’re bossy, did you know that?” she responded.

“I am the boss.”

She shook her head in bemusement and headed over to the screen to look at the calf, making my heart swell several sizes. It was one thing to find a beautiful woman, another to find a beautiful woman who loved animals, but one who felt the same way as I did about the need to care for them was something else entirely. I didn’t stand a chance of resisting her from the very moment she walked into my life.

I pulled myself out of my thoughts and made the order, adding into the notes to leave off any olives just in case. Satisfied we weren’t going to starve, I pulled up the email template announcing the birth of Nellie’s calf.

“Do you have a name?” I asked when I got to that part.

“Ophelia,” she responded. “Don’t ask me why.”

I shrugged. “Sometimes, the names just come to you.” I typed it into the spot where her name should go and hit send. “Okay, all done.” I got to my feet and turned to her.

“How long until the food gets here?” she asked.

“About half an hour.”

“Oh good.” She closed the gap between us and put her arms around my neck. “So the elephants are fine, the email is done, and food is ordered. That leaves you all for me.”

“It does.” I captured her lips with mine, feeling more content than I have in years.

Adelaide was everything I’d ever wanted and more, and I was going to make sure she knew how lucky I was to have her.

EPILOGUE



SEVERAL MONTHS LATER

Adelaide

THE BRIGHT MORNING sun warmed my back as I made my way through the sanctuary. I let out a contented sigh, loving how it felt to be here. I definitely understood why Horus had been coming to visit the falcons all these years, there was something calm about this spot that didn't exist anywhere else in the sanctuary.

I shifted the cup holder I was carrying so it was balanced in one hand and slipped my key into the falcon's enclosure, still feeling a little sneaky that I had one of my own that wasn't attached to the sanctuary's master set. Somehow, having this felt more personal than having a set of keys to Horus' home.

"Morning," I said to the falcons residing within the enclosure.

They didn't respond, which was perfectly normal, I figured they were used to me by this point.

I made my way up to the wall where I met Horus almost every morning for coffee, something that had quickly become our ritual, and one I looked forward to more than I ever thought I would. Though it was better when we got to walk up here together, that hadn't been possible today as Horus had been called in early.

I sat down and stretched out my legs, waiting for him to arrive.

A falcon swooped down and it took me a moment to realise that it was the

man I was waiting for.

He transformed right in front of me with the grace only a shifting god could have.

I got to my feet and kissed him hello.

“Sorry I’m late,” he murmured against my lips.

“I only just got here. With your coffee, you’ll be glad to know.”

“Thanks.” He kissed my cheek and took a seat.

I passed him his coffee cup and he took a sip, letting out a satisfied sigh.

“You don’t normally come as a falcon,” I said.

“I flew over from the elephant house.”

“Are Nellie and Ophelia okay?” I asked, panic building inside me as I thought of all the things that could have befallen them.

“They’re fine,” he promised. “Ophelia is just discovering how to use her trunk and she got it stuck in a barrel.”

“Is that normal?” I asked.

“The barrel? Not really.”

“No, that she’s only just starting to use her trunk.” I’d looked all of this up, several times, but somehow, I always found myself fretting about how the little elephant was doing, as if something about the fact I’d named her made her more of my responsibility.

Horus put his arm around me. “It’s perfectly normal.”

“Oh, phew.” I leaned into him, letting the potential stress of a sick elephant sink away from me. “I was worried she wasn’t developing properly.”

“She seems to be fine at all her checkups,” Horus assured me.

“No doubt because Nellie was here for most of her pregnancy.” I imagined that it would give both the mother and calf a lot of advantages in the health department. Though not as many as if they’d been in the wild, but I knew there was nothing we could do that too.

He nodded.

“So they’re okay?”

“They’re okay.” He gave me a strange look.

“What?”

“I love you, Adelaide.”

My heart skipped a beat. “You what?”

“I love you. I think I’ve felt it for a while, but the way you were talking about the elephants right now just drove it home. I love you, more than I have

ever loved anyone.”

“I love you too,” I responded, knowing that the words were more true than anything I’d ever uttered.

I reached out and cupped his cheek in my hand, feeling the soft hair of his short beard against my hand. I drew his face to me and kissed him tenderly.

When I came to the Horus Sanctuary, I never expected to find love, especially not with a literal god, but that didn’t change how pleased I was to have found it, or that I got to spend most of my days caring for animals who needed me, and spending time with someone who felt just as strongly about it as I did.

To say life was perfect would be an understatement. I had everything I’d ever dreamt of and more, and I looked forward to finding out what the years ahead had in store for us.

Thank you for reading *Horus!*
I hope you enjoyed it!

If you enjoyed this story, please leave a review. Even a few words can mean the world to an author.

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ABOUT LAURA GREENWOOD

Laura is a USA Today Bestselling Author of paranormal, fantasy, urban fantasy, and contemporary romance. When she's not writing, she drinks a lot of tea, tries to resist French macarons, and works towards a diploma in Egyptology. She lives in the UK, where most of her books are set. Laura specialises in quick reads, whether you're looking for a swoonworthy romance for the bath, or an action-packed adventure for your latest journey, you'll find the perfect match amongst her books!