

Samuel woke up to another day.

The man sighed, reluctantly edging himself off of the bed and beginning the morning routine. Elsewhere in the house, he could already hear movement.

Samuel showered, got dressed, brushed his teeth, and prayed. After that, he returned to his room to have some quiet for five minutes.

The room was painted green, like the forest that lay beyond the window. It was generally sparse, but quite clean. It was a bright morning, he realized.

Samuel sighed, breathed in, and turned toward the door. Composure returned.

Samuel walked outside the door.

Today was going to be a busy day. Samuel had to ensure that the ritual schedule was being followed, consult with some of the senior adepts, educate some of the neophytes, and deal with the feds, who were getting a bit curious. A year ago, Samuel never could have imagined that he would have such responsibilities. He was simply going through the elemental grades then, like anyone might. But now he ran the very magical organization that he once sought out for wisdom. That might have been heaven for another man, but for Samuel, it was frightening. He was the one who sought answers. He could scarcely provide them.

“Ah, good Jina. It is wonderful to see you this morning.” Tyler spoke, rounding a corner of the...yeah, Samuel supposed he could consider it a mansion. Tyler was one of Samuel's senior adepts, one of the mortals who was actually pretty good at magic. He was already in his black robe.

“Good morning, Frater.” Samuel inclined his head. Tyler did likewise, remembering how he was supposed to act like an equal, but Samuel could already detect the servility.

“Would you li-” Tyler was interrupted.

“I am going to fix breakfast myself today, Tyler.” Samuel spoke clearly. Tyler shrank back, almost as though hit by a wave. After bowing slightly, the man retreated from the hall, and allowed Samuel to enter the kitchen in peace.

Samuel got some cereal from the cupboard and retrieved milk from the fridge. The meal was manifested after a minute and the magician took his seat. Outside the window, the wooded mountains were gorgeous. Samuel sighed, looking down.

Just then, a word came unbidden to his mind.

*Mestizo.*

But Samuel was mixed in far more than just mortal blood. His was the legacy of the old gods – the ones who dwelt in the Primordial Waters long before the world showed its face. In him, this ancestry had awakened, and had changed his life forever, back when he was undergoing his Adeptus Minor initiation.

Everything had changed then. Before, he had just been an aspirant, being guided by the wisdom of the adepts and learning all he could of the art of magic from them. But after he became a Leviathan, that relationship was shattered. His Wake pounded against their minds, forcing them to marvel at his divinity. The once mysterious elder brothers and sisters now came to him like starving pets, begging for *his* advice. And it wasn't limited to just them. People on the street would be frightened of him, or love him in a way that was too unwholesome. He had not visited his family for a year, in fear of what might happen to them. He lost the job at the museum after the Wake played hell with his co-workers. Now he just lived off of the money his Beloved gave him.

Samuel hated almost everything about it.

Once, he had been an aspiring magician. The world was about to give up its secrets. But now he was a monster, one that had lost his poise and now drifted aimlessly through the ocean of life. Oh sure, he was a god now. But the divinity of the blood meant *nothing* compared to the divinity of the soul. Being a god was nothing compared to being God.

Samuel always reminded himself of that. Everyone was equal and ultimate, he remembered. He instructed the magical lodge in that, and forced them to tone down their servile worshipfulness. It was not entirely successful, but it was something. To the cult, Samuel was their Jina, their guide through the ocean of worldliness to final liberation. He was *not* a lord, as some cultists had claimed he was in the early days. No one was a lord. Or rather, everyone was.

Samuel finished his breakfast and got up from his seat. He walked to the front door and exited the house, aiming for the temple-complex adjacent to the building. Strictly speaking, the magical lodge itself was still stationed back in the city, but a lot of the Beloved now hung around here, so as to constantly bask in his presence.

Samuel entered the temple and the magicians inside immediately turned towards him. Conversation stilled and heads inclined toward him. A few were even bowing, but the senior adepts were weakly reminding them to stop. Samuel breathed out through his nose, and began to walk down the main carpet toward the altar ahead. His high priest awaited him.

“Ye are the Black Tree of the Void Sea, o wonderful Jina. What are we to practice today?” Daryl said, face obscured behind his hood.

“Everyone is to get their dailies done, and we shall then hold our group rituals as scheduled.” Samuel said crisply. “After that, everyone is to engage in grade-appropriate magical studies. *Everyone*. I am watching.”

“Of course, great Jina.” Daryl said, nodding his head. One of the smaller things Samuel hated about the Wake is how it made all mortals tend to act the same.

Only the neophytes really needed to get their dailies done, and so the group rituals took place soon after. Samuel was at the head of the altar, *of course*, conducting more grandiose ceremonies, as he always did. He shifted a little into his sea god form, since the cultists seemed to love that part. After receiving praise and paying respect to Nu, the Progenitor of his Strain, Samuel eased down on the ceremonies. After that, he gave a sermon on Negative Existence. This was really more for him than for them.

All in all, the observances took about an hour.

A lot of the cultists wanted to speak with him afterwards, but Samuel just flared his Wake a little more until they shied away. It was a dick move, he had to admit, but he was not feeling good today. Samuel retreated to the back of the building to consult with his senior adepts on a matter that was beginning to perturb him. His, well, *cult* was getting larger, and Samuel was not sure about how to handle the situation. The magical lodge still accepted new initiates, and it seemed like too many people just happened to stumble upon it. Granted, not all of those who joined the lodge actually fell prey to his Wake, but he still had too many Beloved for his liking. He was also hesitant to actually close admissions to the lodge, for he would not let the magical journeys of others be interrupted by his...situation. Samuel talked about the matter with his senior adepts for a while, but the meeting came to no workable solution. After thirty minutes, Samuel grew frustrated and retreated back to his house.

Samuel wished he felt more guilty about being gifted his mountain estate by one of his wealthier Beloved. He really did. But in truth, having a home in the mountains around the city had always been a huge fantasy of his. He accepted the gift really easily. The forest was full of redwoods, as befitted California. Samuel took the opportunity to breathe in the air a little.

This was a good place, all things considered. He *liked* it, it was out of the way, and it was only an hour away from the ocean. There in the waters, Samuel could assume his Apotheosis form. And basically look like a weird pasty-white shark-whale god. Samuel found it a bit ridiculous, but the cultists treated his form with the utmost respect. It was kind of like taking the kids to the beach, Samuel realized.

Ah, shit! He had an appointment!

Samuel quickly got into his car and drove off. He would have to head to fucking San Francisco of all places in order to deal with more legal matters. As a religious organization, the Hermetic Order of the White Sun was exempt from taxation, but Samuel still had to finalize some paperwork in order to get other benefits for his cultists: holy days off, some degree of respect, that sort of thing. It was kind of ridiculous, all things considered, but Samuel figured he might as well do something for the unfortunates caught by his Wake.

Samuel reached San Francisco after a couple hours. He then dealt with another hour of waiting due to delays, and spent a total of three hours going through the rigmarole. The matter was settled by the end of it all, at least, but Samuel was exhausted. By the time he began to head home, it was already dusk.

Samuel reached the estate in the early night. The home was aglow, and he could spy some of his Beloved inside preparing dinner.

Samuel was greeted by several cultists when he entered the house, but he studiously avoided them. Instead, the man walked back toward his room. He sat down on the chair before his desk and waited a few seconds, sighing to himself. Then he turned on the computer.

He went to Skype first. He scrolled over to the contact page for his family and called. After a few seconds, the whole family appeared on the screen, apparently engaged in the sort of domestic nonsense that now seemed like a forgotten memory to Samuel. He smiled a little at the sight.

Mom and dad were there, as were his brothers and sisters and the children of said siblings. The house was absolutely abuzz tonight, with dinner being cooked and TV being watched. Everyone was excited

to see him, and Samuel kept up in the usual rigmarole of family conversations. It was a good half-hour.

Then came the harder parts.

Samuel's family brought up Halloween and other holidays, mentioning what the family was planning to do for them. They were subtle about it, of course, but it was clear that they were waiting for him to reveal when he was next going to meet with the family. In-person.

Samuel gently danced around the question, but it came more difficult to avoid as time went on. He could see the faces of his family dim with each light refusal. His father, his sister, his nephew. He hated it. He hated it utterly. They probably thought he was a degenerate who did not want to spend time with his family. Samuel felt anger. He wanted to explain that *no*, he couldn't come for their own good. But Samuel remembered to compose himself. He remembered that this was for them, and not for him. And so he lightly held up the conversation and gave his goodbyes when the family sat down to eat dinner.

Samuel's stomach growled, but he had no appetite. Instead he went to another chat program.

Samuel held the cursor still over the IRC client. This was a special time for him, and one that invited mixed feelings. After a few minutes of waiting, Samuel opened it up.

The man was greeted with lines of text, lines of text that were somehow more comforting than any of the dialogues that his cultists had shared with him today. There was Orbo, and there was leetneet, and there was...oh God, she was already starting the roleplay...

Samuel felt a bit of embarrassment, but he responded to Vino's comments in kind. Everyone here was...into it, he knew. Either in wanting to be a little child, or in wanting to take care of them. Samuel, sorry, *Leaf* was kind of notorious around here for being a shy little boy. Samuel really hadn't intended for it. He hadn't acted cute or whatever. But life had been kind of stressful even before he became a Leviathan, and in here, he was different.

The chat continued as normal. After the little pleasantries were exchanged, they talked about life, about games, about books. They watched things together, exchanged crude jokes, talked about diapers, the works. It was all very worldly, Samuel knew. But somehow, this meant more to him now than it had as a mortal.

It was really kind of ridiculous. Even more so than being a normal ABDL. Or whatever term one liked to use. But somehow, this was a refuge to him. The god inside hated it, of course. Every time Samuel responded to Vino, acting as though he was a charge in her care, a voice inside of him screamed. With every line of text he wrote, Samuel felt like he was exposing his throat before a knife. Something inside of Samuel hated being debased like this. Something inside of Samuel wanted Vino to cower before him. To make her worship him. But Samuel would not let the voice win.

He really only had this chat, now. Or the internet, at least. There was no way he could engage in any in-person events with the Wake flaring. And he would not share this special thing with his Beloved. Once, when he had been more of a fool, Samuel had actually asked one of his cultists to diaper him. The man had acquiesced immediately, and Samuel immediately hated himself for asking.

As the night progressed, activity in the IRC server died down. People left. Eventually, late in the night, he and Vino switched to private messaging. Samuel shivered a little when this happened, because he

knew what it meant.

For a little while, Samuel could imagine that he was a little baby in her arms. In the arms of some random person he had met on the internet. Samuel knew it was superficial, but he still could not rip himself away from it.

They could never render it more serious, not with his Wake. And that was besides the fact that it was only a paper moon anyway.

Eventually, the private chat died down as well. Goodbyes were given. Virtual hugs. That sort of thing.

Then Vino went offline.

Samuel hated himself. Not because this dream would never be realized, but because it was ridiculous.

Samuel shut off the computer and went to bed.