

Accidental Surrogate for Alpha by Caroline Above Chapter 320

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#Chapter **320 – The Cult**

Cora

About three hours later I am...over books. As a genre, in their entirety.

My hands are dusty, and I'm sick of the smell of musty old pages, and they're just so boring –

Page after

page of history

regarding shifter worship practices – who genuflected to this god, and how, and where, and for how long, and the minute changes in the practices...

I groan, pushing my twentieth book away from me and looking dourly at the stack of about fifty still left in my pile.

"Come on, Cora," Roger says, sitting comfortably across from me, smirking at me over the edge of a neat little green text. "You're supposed to be the smart one in the family. I thought you'd have more staying power than this."

"Ella's smart," I reply, immediately defensive. He nods, conceding the point. "But you gave me all the dusty books," I sigh, frowning and pulling the next one off the top of the pile and towards me. I cough when it raises a puff of dust into the air on its way.

"I gave you all the ones with more pictures," Roger murmurs, closing his book and reaching for his next as well. "Wanted to make it easy on you."

My mouth drops open in a little outrage at his implication there but then I see the upturned corner of his lip. “Liar,” I say, smiling down at my book as I open the cover. The title page reads A Complete History of the Cults of the Dark God, 1862. “You just didn’t want to get your hands and clothes dusty touching all these old ones.” Passively, I gesture to my clothes – which are indeed covered in a light layer of grey library dust.

“You’ve got a little on your ass,” Roger murmurs indifferently. “Come here, I’ll help you brush it off.”

I smirk, shaking my head, but ignore him and continue to page through the book. This one, to Roger’s point, is indeed heavily illustrated, with many pictures of occult ceremonies and practices that I find fascinating, if not a little disturbing. I’m letting my eyes drift over the description of a summoning ceremony when I turn the page and –

I stop, frozen.

Because it’s him, right in front of me.

Well, not him – not precisely, the face is not the same – but of course it’s not, then he’d be over one hundred years old –

“Roger,” I breathe, and his attention is instantly on me. “I think...I think I found something.”

Roger **is** at my side in a moment, faster than I thought he could be, leaning over – the book next **to** me. I point at the image, which takes up three quarters of a page and shows a monk with a partially shaved head striding through a forest in a dark robe, tied at the waist with a rope from which charms dangle. In his hand is **a** stick – or a staff, I don’t **know** – which he carries with reverence.

is uns what you saw, GUTA!

“Yes,” I whisper, swallowing hard. “Um – it has details... details I’m not sure I remembered in the moment. I’m sorry about that – but the charms, and the rod and and something about the hair

“It’s all right, Cora,” Roger says comfortingly, the tips of his fingers suddenly light on my lower back, not brushing against me by accident but staying there, steady. “No one expects you to

remember every detail all at once.”

I nod, and then we both lean forward, reading,

The Monastic Cult of the God of Darkness is a minor but powerful cult developed in the eighteenth. century. They were formulated in direct opposition to the Cult of the Goddesses, which professed at mission of peace between all living things. What is known of their stated mission – passed from brother to brother, never written down – emphasizes hierarchy, war, and discord between peoples. in order to honor their lord, the God of Darkness, who they understand as best worshiped by sowing disharmony as well as blood sacrifice, From the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries. the Cult developed significant magical prowess and their abilities to manipulate the elements should not be underestimated . While the most devoted members of the Cult exclusively wear the trademark black robes, many others move through the world in disguise. Devotees tend to flock to high-powered jobs amongst their enemies, particularly in the fields of law, politics, and medicine.

I turn the page, seeking more, but am shocked and disappointed to find that that’s the end. “That’s it?” I gasp.

“It’s enough,” Roger says, his hand flattening against my back. I turn to him, not knowing what to do. “Are you sure, Cora?” he asks me, turning the page back and pointing to the picture. “Are you sure that this is precisely what you saw in your hypnosis and when you were a child?”

“Yes,” I say, nodding steadily. “When I saw it – it was like déjà vu. Just an immediate return to those memories. If I had seen that image, even without the hypnosis, it would have...brought me right back.”

—

see

“Good,” he says, nodding seriously to me. “You did beautifully, Cora,” he says, pulling me against him for a moment in a quick hug and then releasing me. “Look through the rest of the book if anything else rings a bell. I’m going to go call Sinclair, get his team working on finding out anything else they can about this cult.”

I nod, turning back to the book and quickly looking through the pages, my mind whirling. What the hell was this cult? And what on earth can they want with Ella’s little baby? Why did they work so hard for him to be born if they...

If they worship the god who works in opposition his grandmother’s mission...

My eyes light again on the phrase “blood sacrifice” and my heart drops to my stomach, my breathing ratcheting up.

“Miss?” the librarian says at my shoulder and I jump, spinning towards her. “I’m so sorry!” she says, her hands out.

“It’s okay,” I murmur, laughing a little. “Just a lot of work on a little sleep.”

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Tunesta, Sie Says, K, as to make a copy of all the pages at the significant. I thank her, indicating the page with the image and the description of the Monastic Cult, and she swiftly carries the book away to a scanner so that she can print copies. I lean against the table, anxiously watching the door for Roger’s return.

He comes back a few minutes later and moves swiftly to my side, sliding his phone into his back pocket. As he reaches me, the librarian comes over with about twenty warm copies of the page.

“Thank you,” Roger says, giving her a warm smile, and I feel something growl in me as I look between the two of them. She puts on a shy, demure little expression, twirling a strand of her hair, and asks us if there’s anything else we need, but Roger quickly and politely says no, that we’ll be leaving now. I can’t help but give her a little glare that she doesn’t deserve as we head towards the door.

Roger, to his credit, doesn’t look back as we leave the library and head to the car, pressing the copies of the pages to his chest protectively against the rain that’s pouring down over us now. We both dash to the car, eager to get inside, and as we pull our doors open and throw ourselves into our seats the car with the guards, parked next to us, likewise starts up.

“Sinclair wants us home now,” Roger murmurs, filling me in. “We’ll be safer there, and more productive, I think.”

“Okay,” I say, a little guilty. Part of me knows I need to return to the clinic, to my work there. But honestly, the only place I want to be..

I think of Ella, and the baby, and solidify my determination. Roger’s watching me quietly as I turn to him. “To Ella’s,” I say, nodding. “Let me know **if** you need me to drive,” I offer. “Like, if you get tired.”

“Thanks,” he says, smiling at me, but then he looks up through the windshield at the angry sky.” But I think we might need shifter reflexes to get through this storm.”

“**This** storm,” I murmur, buckling my seatbelt. “Where did it even come from? The weather was supposed to be sunny for days...”