

Non Human 641

Chapter 641 Vim – Proximity

"You sure...?" the young Fizz asked a bit awkwardly, and I could feel her stare even with my back turned as I nodded at Tressi.

"Three days... unless something happens, of course," I said to Tressi, confirming to her we'd be leaving soon.

The two of us were standing out in the hallway outside of the Chronicler's office. As were Renn and the young dog, Fizz who were a few paces away having their own conversation. I'd just got done spending a few minutes with the Chronicler and a few others, such as Mapple and Tressi here, to let them know that what had just happened a handful of hours ago had indeed been personal and not to worry over it. I of course don't think my attempt at calming anyone had worked, but at the very least none of them were freaking out or really asking questions so it was a win in my book for now.

"Okay, sounds good Vim," Tressi said with a small smirk as she glanced past me, likely at the young dog who was not too quietly wondering why Renn wasn't willing to join her and the rest to hand out food to the needy tonight.

"I have some stuff to do with Vim, though maybe if I can finish in time I can come help if even just for a short bit," Renn said.

"Okay..." Fizz answered a bit meekly, to the point it was actually a tad concerning. What was bothering her more, I wonder, the fact that Renn wasn't going to join her in what she likely considered a boring task or the oddness of Renn turning down such an invitation in the first place?

Likely the latter. Renn loved doing stuff with those she cherished and Fizz was definitely amongst those members. Though if that was because Fizz was genuinely a good kid or just the mere fact she was a kid in the first place I didn't know.

"Later then!" Fizz then bid Renn farewell, finally, and I heard her scamper off. I dared a small glance behind me as Renn sighed and walked the few dozen paces over to me and Tressi.

I bit back an apology as I saw actual dissatisfaction on my wife's face. She did not like turning Fizz down at all, it seemed.

"I'd have teased you, Renn... but it seems you actually do have something to do? You look utterly devastated that you can't go help the young pup hand out freebies," Tressi noted.

"Freebie...?" Renn slowly said the word that she'd likely never heard before, and I gestured lightly at Renn and interrupted her before she could say anything too odd.

"It's my fault. I asked for a few hours from her, but then took her to dinner instead of just handling what we need to. Thus I cut into her time with her friends," I said.

Tressi glanced at me for a moment, and then looked back at Renn with a smirk. "Your own husband has to ask for attention, does he? To us ducks that would be quite a topic of gossip!"

"Oh...? I get what you're saying, but he does the same you know? When we visit places? Usually I'm busying myself in such ways because he too is off doing something himself," Renn said, defending herself.

Tressi chuckled at that. "I've no doubt! I myself hadn't liked my husband much either! I lucked out with one who did what he needed and then gave me space, which I prefer!"

Renn obviously found that very amusing based off her grin. "I likely need to learn from you then, so it's a good thing I'm going to get a chance to! I look forward to spending time with you and your daughter on our way east... My plan is to get her to like me so much she can't even pretend to hate me anymore by the time we're done," Renn said.

"Ah, she'll get over it... I think... eventually... hm..." Tressi at first smiled as she spoke, but it eventually died into a worried grimace... and I knew why.

Ducks were weird. Really weird, especially when it came to things like romance. So...

"Is it really that bad, Tressi?" I asked carefully.

Tressi sighed and nodded, and out of the corner of my eye I saw that Renn had nodded too. "Yes... I fear it might be. I'm not sure what you did, but she's indeed very interested in you. I kind of hope this trip will indeed nip that weirdness in the bud. I can't imagine how badly I'm going to be teased by Nasba and the rest otherwise," Tressi said.

Renn laughed at that. "So terrible, for your daughter to fall for him of all people!"

"You have no idea..." Tressi groaned.

Actually Renn might... and not just because she had too. She was actually really good friends with Nasba's... "Oh, did I mention that Renn's good friends with Merit?" I asked.

Tressi tilted her head at me and smiled as Renn chuckled. "Yes, Vim... When you introduced her to me just the other day. By the way..." Tressi then focused on Renn, and went about asking the last time Renn and I had been at the Weaver's Hut. As to hear about her family members, and notably Nasba.

I stayed standing here, as if a part of the conversation, but mentally I took a step back and allowed them to just... chitchat. Especially since it seemed the two might become good friends.

Tressi was a hardheaded duck, but a kind one. I had been surprised that she had chosen to go to the other continent with the others, but odds are it had been because of her family. Her husband and his extended lines had likely been the main reason. Otherwise she, like most of the other ducks, would have stayed behind here.

Personally I was looking forward to watching the two, and of course Fressi the young duckling, all mingle and get to know one another better. Renn's little circle of family and friends growing was... a good thing, in my opinion. The more the merrier.

Though...

"Vim." I blinked and nodded as I was forced back into the conversation, and in a way that told me they both had noticed I had not been paying attention. Renn reached over and gently patted me on the forearm. "Coin left you a message, it seems," Renn said to me.

Hm...? "What's this now?"

Renn glanced at Tressi, letting me know to look at her. The duck nodded. "She was here a few days ago, left already but before she did she asked a few of us to let you know when you next arrived that she left you a letter at some mailroom?"

Oplar's. "I see. Thank you for telling me, Tressi," I said. She was the first to have brought it up.

The duck shrugged lightly. "Almost forgot about it until Renn mentioned Merit's letters."

Right... I'd given Tressi a letter from Merit, back when I had first encountered her and the rest on that ship a few months ago. I of course had no idea what the letters had been about, though. "It might be important, so I'm going to go check that right now then," I said.

Renn sighed at me. "Sorry, Tressi. We'll continue this conversation later," she said, in a way that told me I had likely just paused an important topic. It wasn't often Renn sounded so genuinely annoyed with me.

"It's okay! We'll have plenty of time here soon anyway! If you see my little bundle of feathers running around let her know I expect her back to our room before dark," Tressi said with a smile as she turned away.

"Of course..." Renn agreed, and would likely make an effort to do just that, as I too turned around as to head for Oplar's mailroom.

Wait... "How'd she know you'd join me so readily?" I asked quietly as Renn joined me.

"While you were lost in thought I told her I have to stick near you for a short time, that it was related to what happened earlier. She understood," Renn said simply as we headed down the hallway.

Ah... "Sorry, I have a lot on my mind Renn," I apologized.

"You do, and I know, it's fine. Why's Coin leaving you messages?" Renn asked, changing topics a little to ones more important.

I smirked at her. "Upset that they're the wrong twin's?" I asked.

She blinked and frowned at me in a way that told me she had no clue what I was hinting at... but then it dawned on her and she gave me a wry smile and almost a laugh. "Vim...!"

Glad to see her no longer upset with me, for again having interrupted her precious time with those she deemed friends, I nodded as we rounded a corner. "I don't know what it's about. She had a worry that she mentioned before I had left SilverCreek, but I had also asked her for a favor as well. It could be about those things or something else entirely," I told Renn.

Coin had been upset, likely rightfully so, that the Society had started taking away her and her brother's responsibilities. Their jobs, basically, were being given to others... and as such she was worried about them and had asked me to look into them. And now that I was in here in Telmik, I needed to do so...

"Worry?" Renn asked softly.

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"A similar one that Brandy currently has... and one I promised to check in on for her. I'm glad Tressi mentioned her, I'd completely forgotten about her what with..." I went quiet, and didn't say Renka's name aloud as we passed a younger priest. He looked tired.

"Hm..." Renn hummed, and was likely searching her perfect memory to remember what I was alluding to. Not the recent gods, but instead Brandy's issues... which were the same as Coin's. They felt their positions in the Society were at risk thanks to all the new, and returning, members from the other continent.

Honestly I wasn't sure if their worries were totally justified just yet. The Society's population was basically tripling, nearly overnight, and as such there was to be growing pains... and those pains typically included jobs being restructured or even removed and replaced. It was just a part of life. But...

At the same time...

"Is it because she's not religious?" Renn asked quietly.

"Light and the rest choosing to entrust those in their own orders is possible... but Brandy is one of them too, yet she's having similar issues. So it's something else," I said.

"Prophecies?" Renn wondered.

I wanted to flinch but didn't. "Likely..." I admitted.

"Hm..."

She hummed in thought for a moment as we rounded another corner and entered a more busy hallway. One full of not just those in robes, but outside visitors. I paid none of them much heed as Renn followed me through the hallway and into the section of the Cathedral that Oplar's Mailroom was located.

"Have you been there yet?" I asked as I thought about it, and those we'd likely find within.

"Where?"

"The mailroom."

"Oh. No. You're right though I probably should have gone and told them that Nessa is okay and doing fine," Renn said as she remembered.

"Hope you remember their names, because I don't."

"Gosh Vim..." Renn groaned at me as we rounded another corner and reached the hallway that led to the mailroom.

"I've been forgetful lately," I said softly, admitting something I'd likely never have done willingly to anyone else before now.

"You have been... but I figured it was because of what's been going on. Were you like this back then...? During your uh... wars?" Renn asked with a soft voice.

A bit glad for her understanding, I slowed a little as I thought of her question... and realized I didn't remember.

"I uh... might have been. I honestly don't remember," I said as I thought of those years.

I'd led a nation, hadn't I? Ran it, even. I had been not just king but warlord... then I had made not just armies but a republic too once it got so big that it took my attention from my main goal at the time, slaying gods. Odds are I might have been. I remembered my faithful attendants, such as the generals and those who directly served me... but...

"Well... please just don't ever forget my name, okay? I think I'd cry if you did. Terribly. Like you've never seen me do before," Renn warned lightly, and although she did so with a small smile I could see and hear the truth of her words. She had meant it.

"I'll not forget you, Renn. I promise... if you need proof, look at our more recent encounter. I remembered that witch's name even all these years later, thousands of them, so that tells you I can do so," I said, speaking of Renka.

"Rude."

I stopped walking, as did Renn who jumped and spun around.

"Renka...!" Renn shouted in shock what I already knew as I too turned around... though did so slowly.

Sitting on a bench that had not been there when we had walked past a moment ago, alone, was Renka.

I gritted my teeth and kept my calm, barely, as Renn calmed down as well next to me. She glanced around, a bit worriedly, though I wasn't sure if she did so to make sure we were alone or if to make sure Renka hadn't either put us into another illusion or brought another present.

"Before you do anything, I'm not really there. I'm a few kilometers away," Renka said to me... but not directly at me. She was looking down, at something in her hands, though I could not see what it was.

"Huh...?" Renn of course didn't understand, but I did.

She had not been hiding there as we walked past. But instead was projecting herself from wherever she was. Odds are she was sitting on that bench there, not here. It though did look similar to the many

benches scattered around the Cathedral... maybe she was closer than she was hinting at? Somewhere else in the church, maybe?

"What do you want?" I asked, speaking the first word through clenched teeth but I relaxed enough to say the rest normally.

Renka chuckled at me. "I had planned to reach out again after you were done with Casper... but something came up. I need to go busy myself for a couple days, so I'm just letting you know I'll be gone."

Even Renn didn't seem to believe her. She glanced at me, and I glanced back at her to let her know I too found her statement odd. "Why uh... why say so at all?" Renn asked.

"Because while I'm gone, I can't fully shield Renn's existence. Which means my entire bargaining chip is now in danger... in a way..." Renka then sighed, and then glanced upward. She seemed to focus on something in front of her, but we were angled to her right. Odds are she was looking straight at us, or at least whatever image she saw of us from her perspective, but to us here it made her look a tad odd. She was talking and looking up at nothing, since the hallway before her was empty. As if she was talking to a ghost in front of her. "Don't let Renn leave Telmik. If she steps foot outside of it while I'm gone, there's a chance one of the others will notice her. Because of how we operate, one of us is always actively watching this location... which means while I'm gone another will be watching."

Renn shifted, rather awkwardly, and I frowned at the stupid god. "Sounds like I should take her out right now and make as much ruckus as I can," I said.

Renka scowled at me. "Please, Vim. Do so if you wish, but if I you do I'll not be able to interfere with what happens afterwards."

"Like I need your help," I said.

"Vim..." Renn groaned at me, but I ignored her for a moment as to glare at the stupid god who was either making a fool of herself or being... well...

Honest.

And the idea of one of them being honest made me sick to my stomach.

I gestured at Renka as I glanced at Renn. "It's a ploy. They might be amassing..." I stopped talking as I realized how I was now being the stupid one.

"Then why would I sacrifice Casper, Vim...? Really," Renka asked with a sigh.

Right... they needed as much as help as they can get. All of it, in fact, to face me... so...

Rolling a shoulder, I sighed as I had no choice but to admit Renka was likely telling the truth. "Disregarding the holes in the logic... why now?" I asked.

"Casper's death, Vim."

Oh...

Right...

"What does she mean...?"

I blinked and glanced at Renn, and felt a tad awkward for a moment as she gave me a weird and accusing look. "They know when one of their own die. They likely all are panicking over Casper's death," I said.

"Oh," Renn frowned but nodded. Even she realized how much sense that made.

"Yes. So I need to go and play the part, as I want you to do for me. Keep her in Telmik, Vim, and the one who will be monitoring in my absence won't notice her. I need at least two days."

Two? Well... "How won't they notice me...?" Renn asked before I could say anything.

"My illusions are wrapped all over certain locations. Telmik is one of them... For so long as you're within them, they'll shroud you as I've built them to do so. Much alike how I have them shroud us from Vim's senses. Just reversed."

Oh...? That was... "A lot of information for no reason," I said aloud as I pondered her statement.

"As you've been saying lately, Vim... I'm trying my best here."

I flinched at that, as Renn perked up and glanced between her and me. "You've been listening!" Renn shouted upon realizing.

Renka smirked at that and nodded. "Two days. Don't let her leave the city, Vim. For both our sakes," Renka said... and then like a misty bubble she popped.

Renn jumped again in shock, grabbing my arm in the process as she did, as Renka's form and the bench she had been sitting on both exploded in a tiny burst of what looked like water and steam. The area near where she'd been became slightly misty as the stuff dispersed, and it sizzled for a moment, but it only took a few seconds for it all to disappear completely.

"Vim...!" Renn tugged on my arm as she stared wide-eyed at the sight, and I sighed and shook my head.

"See? Now you know why I so despise them, Renn... They don't just break the laws of the world they act so self-important as they do so!"

Renn gave me a frown as I turned around, as to finish what I'd set out to do. I would get Coin's message and find something to focus on before I did something... far worse. Far, far worse.

Damn them. Damn her and this whole situation!

"Honestly it was rather nice of her to give us such a warning, wasn't it?" Renn asked as she hurried to follow.

"Don't even start."

A window nearby cracked, then shattered... causing Renn to yelp in shock once more. I closed my eyes and held my breath as I listened to each and every little piece of glass land on the stone ground and bounce all over the place.

"Vim..." Renn sighed at me, having obviously understood it was my fault. I had stepped down a tad too harshly.

Reaching up, I rubbed my eyes as I groaned and wondered what I was going to do with not just myself... but this whole world around me.

This was happening too fast. Even for me. How can I go hundreds of years, if not nearly a thousand, without any of them showing themselves like this... and now all of a sudden it feels as if I was running into a god each time I rounded a random corner? It was ridiculous! Even more so because of the reason behind their sudden arrival...

I almost wish they'd just attack straight out, if anything to end this insufferable farce... this was far worse than anything they'd done before, and they'd not even done anything too bad yet all things considered...!

"I'll uh... get a broom, I guess," Renn said with a sigh as I heard her step around me so as she could get a better grasp of the mess I'd just made.

"I'll deal with it... you go get Coin's letter, or message or whatever, for me while I do," I said as I lowered my hand and opened my eyes. The glistening of the tiny shards of colored glass all over the floor nearby made me hate myself.

"Oh...? You sure? I thought you didn't want me leaving your..."

"It's fine, Renn. Renka can obviously come and go around me as she pleases. I don't have any clue how she's doing it, but she can do it and does so flagrantly. Her having such abilities means..."

"She can kill me any time she wants, really, so there's no reason for us to be too foolishly overprotective? Good, I was thinking the same even before just now but was way too worried how to say it, so I'm glad you brought it up first!" Renn said happily as she stepped past me and walked around the shards as to head to the mailroom down the hallway. She did so with a small wave at me as she hurried away. "I'll get you a broom too, just wait a bit!" she shouted as she ran off with a hurry... as if she was thrilled to finally be given permission to leave my vicinity.

Feeling a bit odd, as if I should be insulted, I decided to just shake my head and accept it all... and went to gather up the window I'd just destroyed.