

Life's visit had rattled Death. He was more on edge than usual, watching out for any other Old God who may have been planning on ambushing him with pleas to return. He had made up his mind, they knew that. He was happy, and free, and had made a friend. He had a sort of way for himself now, and he wasn't going to give it up to go back to the thankless monotony of what he had done before. He wasn't sure if he ever wanted to go back, and he wasn't sure if he cared if the humans suffered a little more than usual because he was finally giving himself a break.

Her visit had only been a few days prior, as had his last meeting with David. There apparently had been news, something that had shaken David, but Morgan was struggling to hear him talk over the rush of thoughts in his head. David had noticed that he was out of sorts, so he'd quieted about the news, and offered a very casual meet for coffee that same week, their third of four required meetings. He deeply appreciated his companion's sympathy.

Morgan was a little late to their meeting, having spent more time than usual examining his car and the parking lot he'd placed it in. He'd gotten several strange looks, but he was unaware of them in his relief that he'd found no Old God waiting for a chance to speak.

The coffee shop David had chosen wasn't terribly busy, possibly because Morgan was later than intended. It was a cozy place, smelling strongly of coffee and chocolate. The tables were scattered around the shop, cushioned booths and lower plush chairs circling them. He walked swiftly into the shop, looking around for his friend.

"Morgan!" David waved from a small table by a window, a grin already on his face. He had brought over two menus, and Morgan smiled as he noticed that David hadn't yet ordered.

"Hello," he greeted, slipping into his seat. "I'm sorry I'm late, I..." He sighed, not sure what kind of excuse he could give.

"Just lost track of time?" David offered, and Morgan nodded. "It's alright, you're only a couple minutes late."

"Thank you," he said quietly. He looked down at the menu in front of him, still focused on his anxiety. The mention of Time hadn't helped him forget about the issue of being found. He was sure his fellows wouldn't speak so brazenly in front of David, but they could still approach him, unfortunately.

David watched him examine his options without really seeing them, smiling ruefully. "Do you know what you want?" he asked, breaking the silence. Morgan blinked rapidly, once again torn from his own thoughts.

"I don't think so." He sighed. "What are you getting?"

"Coffee with two sugars and a raspberry Danish," he recited. "I come here a lot and I'm stuck in my ways." That was enough to get a light laugh out of Morgan.

"Maybe I'll get that," he murmured. "But I've never had coffee."

"There's a first time for everything," David said. "Like you having coffee, or me going to Italy."

Morgan grinned at the mention of their plans. "I suppose so. Alright, I'll get the same as you."

David smacked a hand lightly on the table. "Alright! I'll go order." He stood before Morgan could protest being left alone, heading to the counter. Morgan watched him, falling back into his thoughts. A few more customers came in and out, and Morgan watched each carefully for a sign of Life or Sleep or Pain in their faces. There was a quiet old man waiting behind David, gnarled shaky hands clutching his cane, and Morgan

watched him warily. Pain never used a cane, on the rare occasions he took a human form, but he may have changed his practices since. But the old man didn't spare him a glance and David was back with their food and drinks in a moment more. Morgan blinked out of his trance, putting the old man out of mind to take his coffee and Danish.

David was already taking part in his order, a bite gone from his Danish and sipping his coffee. Morgan eyed his coffee, deciding to let it cool before trying, instead picking up the Danish and taking a bite. His first bite was entirely pastry, and he made a face. David laughed aloud, shaking his head as Morgan pulled another face, annoyed at him for thinking that offering him a dry, rather tasteless food was funny.

"You have to get more, the center is the best part. If you just eat the edges it's not good."

Morgan raised an eyebrow, but he took a bigger bite, getting the jam. "Oh," he said without meaning too, making David laugh again.

"What'd I tell you? Let's not be so quick to judge my taste, hmm?" David took another sip of his coffee, grinning around his cup.

Morgan rolled his eyes, failing to mask that he was enjoying his Danish quite a lot. They ate and drank in a comfortable quiet for a few moments, Morgan quickly finishing off his Danish. The old man was still in the shop, sitting alone at a table across the room from them. His face was less scarred than Pains, but he was too far away to be sure. He cast nervous glances at him, and around the room, unaware of David watching him.

When he began worrying the edges of the table, David spoke.

"Hey."

Morgan's gaze flicked back to David. "Sorry?"

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing," he said quickly. David raised his eyebrows, his mouth a thin line.

"Really? Because you look like a caged animal." His eyes softened. "You're doing the thing."

Morgan almost asked what 'the thing' was, but as he opened his mouth he became aware of his shoulders sitting forward, his back bending so he was smaller in his seat. His posture had improved as he'd gained more confidence and energy with the humans, but now he was sitting like he had when he was sad and tired on a bar stool.

He mouthed an 'o', frowning softly. He sat up straighter. "I'm sorry. I don't want to worry you with it."

David quirked a little grin. "We're only here because you used to worry me with things. Try me."

Morgan huffed a little through his nose. "I suppose." He sighed, his mouth curling down at the edges, eyes again darting to the sides. "My, um- co workers are starting to ask for me back. They've been running into me, and I expect they won't leave me alone until I come back."

"Your family?" David asked. "How bad has it been?"

"Not terrible," he said. "But it will get worse, I know it. I'm surprised they've waited this long to try and reach me."

"How long has it been?"

"A little over a year," he murmured. "They said I was being selfish."

David scoffed. "Selfish? You quit a job, it's not like you were holding up the sky."

Morgan sighed. "A few of the others have been trying to supplement my work, but they say they need me back. I'm the youngest, they got on without me before."

"You're not being selfish," David told him firmly. "They're being dramatic. They'll live without you."

"Exactly." Morgan smiled thinly. "Thank you, David. I think I feel a bit better now."

"Of course." He watched his face, and smoothly changed the subject. "So my sister's a photographer, right? She went on a trip to these lime caves, they look *unreal*." He pulled out his phone. "Do you want to see?"

"Oh yes, please." Morgan leaned across the table to get a good look. They launched into talks about David's family and his own artistic talents while the world went on around them and Morgan's coffee ran cold.