

Encounter: What's in a Name? (Witches and Demons 2.5)
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What's in a Name?

Seated on the couch in the library of his husband's ancestral home, Maxim tucked his feet under him against the nighttime chill. He had just added wood to the dying fire and the room would soon be warm again.

Maxim had always thought the house rather cold. Aside from Ian's entertainment room and their bedroom, he still didn't consider it cozy, but he had grown accustomed to it in a way he'd never imagined possible. It was Ian's and Maxim didn't care very much where they lived, as long as they were together. Not to mention, he'd be lying if he said he didn't enjoy some of the benefits of living in a historic mansion.

Maxim found the house and its inhabitants, both present and former, to be an endless source of inspiration for his fiction. Of course he would never tell the real story of what happened to the Northhill family. Their plight was private and he had long ago promised Ian he would never speak of it publicly. Truly, they both preferred to forget it, but tonight Maxim had to find the answer to a question he had put off asking. Rather than disturb Ian, who had been deeply asleep when Maxim had left their bed, he sought the answer in a book about the Northhill family's history.

He picked up the old, leather bound volume resting beside him and opened to the page he'd been reading.

"Hello, darling. Couldn't sleep?"

Maxim glanced toward the doorway where Ian stood, smiling at him. Barefoot and shirtless, with his dark, curly hair in disarray, Ian looked disarmingly adorable. It was that combination of sweet and sexy that had charmed Maxim from the first -- even back in the days when he'd wanted to hate Ian simply because of his profession. Now Maxim realized how unfair he had

been, thinking all actors were as cold and egotistical as the boyfriend who had dumped him in his youth.

"Just thought I'd read in here so I wouldn't bother you."

"I reached over for a cuddle and found an empty bed." Ian approached and joined Max on the couch, sliding an arm around him and kissing his cheek.
"What are you reading?"

"Nothing."

Ian narrowed his big blue eyes and tugged the book from Maxim's hand. He glanced at the cover. "Ah. The book of my family history. I didn't think either of us would ever want to look at this again."

Maxim and Ian hadn't met under the best circumstances. Ian had nearly died by the hand of the same demon that had killed many of his ancestors. Now the Northhill family curse was broken, but memories of the demon were still fresh to the husbands.

"I've been curious about something and thought I might find the answer in the book."

"Curious about what?"

"Your last name. Your grandmother was a Northhill."

"Quite right." An amused smile tugged at Ian's lips. He gently brushed back a wisp of hair that had fallen across Maxim's forehead.

Maxim took his hand and threaded his fingers through Ian's. He loved the warm smoothness of his husband's hands.

"She married a man named White, so therefore your father's name and of course yours should be White, not Northhill."

"Carrying on the Northhill name has always been important to my family. My grandfather agreed to take the name Norhhhill and allow his children to take the name as well. Only after he died did my grandmother start using the name White as a tribute to him. You could have just asked me about it."

Maxim nodded and glanced down at their entwined fingers.

Carrying on the Northhill name had always been important to Ian's family. Ian was the last in his line and he had married Maxim.

"What's wrong?" Ian asked.

"Now that you've married me, you obviously won't be carrying on the family name." Maxim lifted his gaze to Ian's rather confused one.

"What do you mean? You don't want children?" Ian asked. "We probably should have talked about it ages ago, but I never--"

"I'd love children, but--"

"I thought we could adopt. This is my fault. I should have brought it up long before now."

Smiling, Maxim cupped Ian's smooth-shaven cheek. "Love, don't be upset. I'd hoped for the same, so it looks like now is perfect timing for this discussion."

"I love you," Ian said against Maxim's lips, then covered his mouth in a possessive kiss.

Closing his eyes, Maxim surrendered to Ian completely. He moved closer, wrapping his arms around him and caressing his back, enjoying the play of hard muscles beneath Ian's smooth skin.

Ian broke the kiss only to tug Maxim's T-shirt up his body and toss it aside. They reached for each other again. Bare skin rubbed against bare skin. Ian covered Maxim's neck with kisses, making him tingle all over. His cock stirred and Ian reached down, cupping him through his thin night pants.

Groaning, Maxim thrust into Ian's teasing hand. Maxim kissed Ian hard, thrusting his tongue into his husband's warm, wet mouth. Ian's tongue met his and they thrust and stroked. Ian moaned softly. This time he slid his hand into the front of Maxim's pants and curled his fist around his cock.

"Oh fuck," Maxim breathed. Ian stroked him to full mast and for several blissful moments, Maxim could do nothing except feel. Then he realized that he was having all the fun. He wanted to make sure Ian enjoyed himself too.

Moistening his lips, he slid off the couch to kneel between Ian's legs. He tugged down Ian's night pants and Ian lifted his hips off the couch so that Maxim could pull off his pants and drape them over the couch arm. He reached for Maxim who shoved his chest, pushing him back against the couch.

"Just sit back, close your eyes and feel."

An eager smile on his lips, Ian settled back against the couch, his legs spread and his cock stiff. "How about if I just sit back and feel? I like to watch."

Maxim grinned, clasped Ian's cock and took the head into his mouth. With hands, lips, teeth and tongue, he stroked and teased, licked and fondled.

Ian's chest heaved. His muscular belly clenched and every inch of his lean body tensed in the most wonderful kind of frustration.

"If you don't stop in a second, I'm going to --"

Maxim didn't allow him to finish, but sucked him to completion. While Ian lay limp, his eyes closed and the flush fading from his face and chest, Maxim sat back on his heels and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. He stared at Ian with a faint smile. He was so adorable.

Ian opened first one eye, then his other and offered Maxim a playful smile. "I owe you something."

"Then pay at your convenience." Maxim leaned closer, braced a hand on either side of Ian's hips and kissed him.

"Get up here." Ian grasped Maxim's shoulders and tugged him onto the couch.

He pushed him onto his back, pulled off Maxim's pants, then straddled him. His long fingers teased and tweaked Maxim's nipples. It felt so good Maxim couldn't help groaning. His stomach tightened along with his cock.

"I hope no one walks in on us," Maxim said, glancing toward the door and thinking about Ian's housekeeper and Maxim's aunt Judith, who cared for Mrs. White.

"You weren't worried about that a moment ago." Ian climbed off the couch to kneel beside it. He gently tugged Maxim's nipple with his teeth, then licked and kissed his way down his stomach. All the while he stroked Maxim's hard cock.

"And in another moment I won't be worried again," Maxim breathed, closing his eyes as Ian dipped a finger beneath his foreskin. "Oh fuck, Ian."

Ian chuckled and replaced his finger with his tongue. Like Maxim, he used his mouth and hands to tease and please. Soon Maxim's heart was pounding and he felt ready to explode. This was too fucking good. There was nothing Ian didn't know about him or his body.

When he came, Ian's mouth never left him. He pleasured him until the last exquisite drop.

Maxim wasn't sure how long he lay with his eyes closed, every inch of him relaxed and completely satisfied. He felt the weight of Ian's head on his stomach and the tickle of his curly hair. Opening his eyes, he saw his husband still kneeling on the floor, his cheek resting against Maxim's belly, his eyes closed. Affection overwhelmed Maxim, just as lust had overwhelmed him moments ago.

Caressing his husband's hair, Maxim said softly, "Ian?"

"Yes, darling?" Ian opened his eyes and lifted his head.

Maxim sat up as well and Ian joined him on the couch, holding him close.

"Do you want our child to take the name Thomas or Northhill?" Maxim asked.

"Thomas. Northhill. What's in a name? It's love that matters. Besides, nothing good ever came from the Northhill name, that's for certain."

"You're wrong. You're here and you're the best thing that's ever happened to me."

Maxim covered Ian's mouth in a tender kiss as they cuddled close, bathed in firelight and love.

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