

The Eternals

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Adult language and content.
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Prologue

KELLY

I filled up my tank, and could not believe the price of fuel. *How was it possible that it had doubled since yesterday? Two vials?*

Two vials had once been enough for me to pay the electricity in my apartment for a month, or a nice pair of shoes. Now, my hard-earned income seemed to go straight to gas or rent, and there was not much leftover for fun.

I shook my head in disgust and closed the gas cap tightly. As I ran into the station to pay for the fuel, it started to rain.

Behind the counter, a sullen, bored-looking teenager sat paying no attention to me as her fingers quickly worked her cell phone.

I cleared my throat to get her attention.

She looked up at me. "Pump number?" she asked, annoyed.

"Pump sixteen," I said, mimicking her tone.

"That'll be two vials puh-lease," she said, holding out her hand.

I reached into the cooling pouch inside of my bag and reluctantly handed over the two vials.

She smiled insincerely. "Thank you for shopping at Gas-N-Go. Have a nice day."

Ignoring her, I grabbed the receipt from her hand, walked out the door, and then drove the short

distance to my apartment building.

When I arrived, I unlocked the front door, walked in, and set my keys and purse on the counter. It was a decent enough place, but as I looked around, I had to admit that there were days when I really missed my expansive childhood home.

No need to start feeling sorry for yourself, I thought. You're the one who made the choice to move away from home.

I'd wanted to prove to myself and to my parents that I could do it on my own. So far, I was doing okay, but if things continued and blood became anymore scarce, I wasn't sure where exactly that would take me.

I sat down on the worn hand-me-down couch, kicked off my heels, and clicked on the television. As usual, the first five minutes of the news was about the latest Eternal death. There had been a recent string of them in the past few weeks, and in each case, the M.O. was the same. Obviously, someone or something didn't appreciate us being here, and it was starting to worry me.

From what I'd been told, The Eternals had once been a dying breed, even just a few years ago. They'd been in hiding, and were only able to hunt for food at night. Then, a new leader had risen to power amongst them with a plan. A plan that would once and for all ensure the existence of their kind. Little had his race known what kind of cataclysmic chain of events he'd trigger by setting it into place.

Chapter One

RANI

“Rani!” my Mom called. “Come on, you’re going to miss the bus!”

I took the stairs, two at a time, kissed my mother quickly on the cheek, and ran to the bus stop just as the bus was pulling up. When I sat down, I could barely catch my breath.

“Jesus, Rani,” snorted my best friend, Tyler. “If you would wake up five minutes earlier, you wouldn’t have to run at such a breakneck speed just to make the bus, you know.”

I coughed. “Shut up, Tyler,” I said between gasps. Not everyone is as fit or as perfect as you.”

He smiled at me and then looked out the window.

I reached into my backpack and grabbed a spare brush that I always kept handy. My blonde hair was so thick with knots, that it took almost all my strength to brush the tangles out. I just couldn’t figure out how I could go to bed every night with smooth hair, and in the morning look like a family of rats had taken up residence in it.

“Looking good,” sneered Katie, who was sitting across me. Katie, the bitch, looked as though she got up every morning at three a.m. just to get ready for school. Her hair was always in place, make-up just right, and she never had chipped nails.

“Screw you,” I mumbled in her general direction. I was definitely not in the mood to deal with her bullshit this morning.

Her eyes narrowed. “What did you just say to me?”

I knew she was looking for a fight, and I was *so* not going to let it happen. “Nothing,” I replied as innocently as possible.

“Yeah, that’s what I thought,” she replied, still glaring at me. Then, thankfully, she turned to her neighbor to finish whatever conversation they’d been having, which I’m *sure* was regarding foreign policies, welfare, or world hunger.

I smirked.

Yeah, just the thought of that made me want to laugh out loud. Katie, who was pretty and popular, was also as vapid as they came. Conversations with her included - who wore it best at an award show, or which color of eye-shadow would make her eyes “pop,”

Pathetic.

I stuffed the brush back into my backpack, and zoned out the rest of the way to school, thinking about the future. I was in my senior year and could not *wait* to start college in the fall. I had already been accepted to the University of Minnesota, and am not a brainiac or anything, but I have to say that I do “okay.”

Fortunately, schoolwork had always come pretty easy, and I’d never had to really worry about it. Tyler, on the other hand, was a totally different story. He’d *excelled* in sports, but had always struggled in school since the first grade. Many times in the mornings, I’d be quizzing

him on the bus, and no matter how hard we'd studied together, he'd still only average a "C." Anyway, as far as I knew, Tyler had not made any plans for the fall yet, and he hated talking about it, which drove me nuts. I'd even tried pushing him on a few occasions, telling him the importance of college, but he'd get so pissed off.

"Rani," he'd once said. "I already have a mom; I don't need you nagging me, too."

I'd agreed and zipped my lips, hoping he'd eventually figure it out on his own. I just hated to see my best friend flounder.

Tyler:

He actually was a very good-looking guy - tall, with brown hair and *the* bluest eyes I'd ever seen on anyone. His body wasn't so bad either; all those years of football and hockey had given him muscles in all of the right places.

My other friends had always ribbed me about not going out with him, but even as good-looking as Tyler was, however, we just never really had a "spark." I had certainly seen my share of "Rom-coms", and according to those movies, I should have seen rainbows and butterflies when I kissed a guy. Hell, I'd settle for fluffy clouds and a horse. In fact, last year we'd both gone to a party at Mindy McGann's house. Mindy's parents had been out of town, and her older brother, Luke, had purchased a keg of beer for the party. I normally never drank, but that night I'd felt a little daring. So, I'd played Beer Pong with some classmates, and lo-and-behold, I sucked. Apparently, Beer Pong is a lot harder than it looks. In fact, twenty-five minutes

into the game, I had already chugged five beers from my red Solo cup. It was then that I'd started to feel warm and a little dizzy. So, I'd gone in search of Tyler, who'd been sitting around the television playing video games with a bunch of other jocks.

"Tytytylerrrr," I'd slurred and then giggled at the sound of my voice. When he didn't answer, I'd repeated it louder. "Tytytylerrr! Come on, let's go."

Tyler had looked at me with a furrowed brow. "Hang on a minute, Rani. I'm about to blast this zombie."

"Tytytyy..." I'd whined, but then had been unable to finish because the damn Beer Pong beer decided, in that very bad moment, to return to the party. I felt my mouth begin to water and I knew exactly what was going to happen. I tried to hold it in, but it was pointless, the beer was coming back and there wasn't a damn thing I could do to stop it. I turned my head and the beer and cheese doodles that I'd been munching on earlier ended up all over Mindy's couch and Jake Callun's head.

"My bad," I mumbled to nobody in particular.

"Oh, Christ, Rani," Tyler had muttered. Then he'd, grabbed me around the waist and hoisted me up over his shoulder.

I then hiccupped-slash-burped and said, "sorry" to a horrified Jake, who was looking down at his coveted letterman's jacket, which was now decorated with bits of bright orange doodles.

Thank God Tyler was a good athlete, because he had us out of that home in under ten seconds.

When we'd gotten to Tyler's car, he put me in the front seat and buckled me in like a child. "You'd better not hurl in my car," he'd warned, getting in next to me.

Still slightly dizzy, I didn't say anything, only closed my eyes as we drove.

"What the hell were you thinking?" he'd asked sternly after a few minutes of silence. "I mean, seriously, Rani?"

I still hadn't wanted to talk, so I'd just shrugged my shoulders.

"Well, I certainly can't take you home in this condition," he'd said with a sigh. "So, let's just go to a park and chill out for a while."

I'd agreed.

When we'd reached the park and got out of the car for some fresh air, it had made me feel much better.

"Here," he'd ordered handing me a stick of gum.

I'd popped the gum into my mouth and the minty flavor had never tasted so good.

"Better?"

"Yes," I'd answered and then began to shiver from the chill in the air.

He'd noticed and removed his jacket. "Here, put this on".

I'd thanked him quietly and then had slipped it on. The jacket had still been warm from his body heat and had felt awesome. Feeling better, I'd nudged in a little closer to him and then rested my head on his

shoulder. “Tyler,” I’d whispered after we’d sat there for some time. “I don’t really know what I’d do without you.”

He’d chuckled. “Right back at ya.”

Smiling, I’d sat up and then we’d both stared at each other in silence. When no words were spoken by either of us, I’d reached for him, gently pulling his face closer to mine. We kissed, and then kissed some more, and I was waiting for the fireworks, or some type of spark, but there was... nothing.

Eventually, we’d pulled away from each other and then both of us had started laughing at the same time. “Well I guess it is true,” I’d said, as our laughter died down.

“What?”

I’d smiled. “Men and women *can* just be just friends.”

Shaking his head and smiling, he’d unlocked the door and drove me home.

Chapter Two

RANI

The school year was coming to an end, and as I walked the halls, I noticed that they were still pretty empty.

Damn, that flu virus must be really spreading, I thought in dismay, hoping that I wouldn't catch it.

Recently, we'd been informed about a rampant flu that was going around, and had been told to make sure that we washed our hands frequently, and stayed home if we were not feeling well. Both Tyler and I had been fortunate enough not to catch the bug yet, so our lives went on as usual. But, as time went on, I'd begun to notice that the students and faculty that had been out sick, returned to the school a little bit different than they had been before.

On Wednesday, I noticed a *huge* change in my Social Science teacher. Mrs. Conolly, was usually a shy, quiet, mousy-haired teacher. Normally, she wore the same kind of outfit every day, which consisted of slacks and turtlenecks. She also usually spoke quietly, her voice barely above a whisper.

When she returned to school that morning after being out sick for a few days with the flu, she looked like a new woman. She'd dyed her hair a platinum-blonde, was wearing form-fitting clothes, and held a new demeanor that demanded attention.

"Hey, Mrs. Conolly," smirked Jake McNally,

eyeing the teacher up and down on her first day back. “Looking good.”

I’d expected her to blast him for talking to her like that. Instead, she just smiled and said, “I know, Mr. McNally, and I am feeling good, too.” Then, they’d shared a smile as Jake took his seat.

I stared with my mouth open. *Was she serious, did I just hear that?*

The class bell rang and the rest of the students took their seats. Many of the boys in the class were whispering to each other, and one kid in the class starting humming “Hot for Teacher”, a song by Van Halen. This made the rest of the class burst out laughing.

I sat quietly, waiting for Mrs. Conolly to bring the class to order, but she didn't. Instead, she turned around and went to the chalkboard. Then, she started writing down the next day’s assignment, and I swear - it looked as if she was purposely bending over seductively, trying to give the guys in the front row a show.

I glanced at the girl sitting next to me and she looked just as disturbed as I felt.

Stunned, I looked again at my teacher, and almost threw up in my mouth.

Mrs. Conolly was twerking!

I didn’t think anything else could rattle me as much as that did.

Boy, was I ever wrong.

Chapter Three

TYLER

“Tyler!” my mom called. “It’s time for dinner. Wash up and come downstairs!”

I shut off the television, dragged myself out of bed, and went into my bathroom to wash up. When I stepped into the dining room, both of my parents looked at me with odd expressions.

“What’s up?” I asked.

Mom forced a smile. “Um, not much. Hope you’re hungry.”

Even though my mom had made my favorite, chicken enchiladas, I had to admit, I wasn’t feeling very hungry. There was a dance coming up the following week and I’d been trying to think of a way to invite Rani without scaring her off. Although she’d always insisted that we were just friends, I still couldn’t help the intense feelings that I kept hidden from her. Every time we were together, and she smiled up at me or laughed, I wanted to grab her and try that kiss one more time. Make her want me the way that I wanted her. But, I was afraid it would destroy our friendship, and at least that was something.

“Dig in,” my father said as he scooped a generous helping of enchiladas onto his plate. “Looks good, Diane,” he continued, adding a large dollop of sour cream to the top.

“Thanks, sweetheart,” she replied, beaming at him. “Just try to save enough for the rest of us.” She turned to me. “Tyler, honey, you better grab some before your Dad takes it all.”

I nodded and put a small piece on my plate. As I picked at my food, an image of Rani popped into my head again. *How in the hell was I going to get her to go with me to the dance?* I knew she wanted to go, and there was no way I’d be able to handle it if she went without me. No way.

“You okay,” asked mom.

I looked up from my food. “Yeah. Fine.”

“Okay,” she replied, staring at me curiously.

I glanced over at my dad, who normally had half of his plate devoured before I even started, and noticed that he’d barely touched his enchiladas. In fact, as he stared down at his pile of food, he actually looked a little sad.

“Hey, Dad,” I teased. “What’s the problem? Is it too spicy for ya?” We and had the same inside joke. A year ago, we’d gone to the Minnesota State fair and had entered a jalapeno eating contest together. Before we’d even arrived in the parking lot, he’d bragged that since he’d married mom, he’d grown a cast-iron stomach.

“Son, the secret to eating spicy food is to just swallow it whole, and plug your nose,” he’d informed me after we’d sat down at the picnic table, waiting for the contest to begin.

“Okay,” I’d replied, trying to sound braver than I actually felt. I’d had jalapenos before, but not a lot, and definitely not in one sitting.

“On your mark... get set... go!” yelled the announcer, after they’d given all ten of us a quart-sized bowl of the whole peppers.

I still remember looking down at them, and just the smell had made my eyes water. I’d glanced over at my dad, who’d already swallowed at least ten and was stuffing in another, when I’d noticed his eyes - they were watering and he also had sweat running down his face.

“You okay?” I’d whispered.

Instead of answering me, he’d turned the most curious color of green I’d ever seen. Next thing I knew, he opened his mouth and projected a gush of vomit so intense, that it would have given that kid, Regan, from *The Exorcist* movie a run for her money.

“Oh, my God!” a woman had cried, sitting in the front row, and who was now covered in chunks of jalapenos, corn dogs, and cotton candy. “You’ve got to be kidding me?!”

I’d tried to stifle a giggle as everything began to unravel around us. First, the obese farmer sitting next to my dad must have caught a whiff of the puke, because he also lost it. Then, to everyone’s horror, down the line, each contestant began sputtering, gagging, and emptying out their stomachs.

“Come on,” groaned dad, grabbing me by the neck of my T-shirt. His face was pale and his lips were swollen from the peppers and stomach acid. “Let’s get out of here.” We ran to the nearest bathroom where I watched as he tried his best to clean up.

“Let me guess, the swallowing thing back fired,”

I'd teased as he blotted his face with wet paper towels. "And it was too much for your wimpy stomach."

"Smartass," he'd replied, trying his best not to smile. "Uh, let's go home before the locals catch up with us. They might just hang us up by our toenails if they find us."

Picturing my dad hanging by his yellow toenails had made *me* gag. "Yeah, let's cruise."

Obviously, thinking back to the contest, my dad looked up from his plate of enchiladas and winked. "Don't remind me. That had to be the most embarrassing day of my life."

"Oh, you've had worse," said mom, and they shared a smile.

I stuffed a forkful of food in my mouth. As I began to chew, I watched my parents curiously. For some reason, neither of them were eating. They both just stared down at their plates somberly.

"You guys sick?" I asked.

"No," they both said in unison.

"Okay," I said, watching them curiously. I ate a few more bites and then put my fork down. I just couldn't do it. Thoughts of Rani were still interfering with my own appetite. "May I be excused?"

"Yes," she answered, smiling almost nervously. "Why don't you go the living room; we're going to have a family meeting."

I pushed myself away from the table, and then wandered into the living room. Plopping down into the oversized couch, I wondered what this was about. "Family meetings" weren't something our family did

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