

The Visit

By C. Jade Wyton

Qotal, god of beauty and fertility, is visited by the lich father of their demigod daughter. Something is off about his visit, though Qotal cannot place what, exactly, it is....

A collaboration with my wife, Charlotte.

Contains emotional manipulation, questionable consent, and drugs/drugging.

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Qotal sat in the glorious stone temple garden she called her home, playing with her daughter, Xochitli. As far as her duties went today, she had completed them all and answered the prayers she was capable of. Which meant she had all the time she needed to spend with her beautiful daughter. Xochitli was nearing a thousand years old, now. Young for a god, though her mortal half was showing through with age, and she was nearing what a mortal may have compared to teenage-hood.

Or, perhaps, she was already several years into it? Qotal wasn't completely sure. She dealt with new life and fertility; mortal ageing wasn't something she was extremely familiar with. The slow creep towards the end was more of Zalte's knowledge.

She watched her daughter collect crystal beetles from under the sparkling star-shaped flowers that grew from between the paved path cracks, and then flicked her feathery crest as she saw Xochitli's gaze move behind her; the child lit up in that familiar way, and Qotal's lips turned up in a grin.

"You're not as subtle as you imagine, Kordulf," she commented, turning her head just in time to feel a light puff of air against her ear. It was a common way for him to get her attention, and she wasn't surprised that he was close enough to peck a kiss on her cheek. "I always know when you're around. All I have to do is watch Xo. Her reaction to seeing her father is always uncontainable excitement. When she lights up, I know you're close."

Kordulf chuckled at her words, and moved his kiss from her cheek to her lips. "Her reaction is as my own when I see the both of you."

A contented sigh found its way from Qotal as she leant into his kiss. "It is delightful to see you again, my darling. Your visits always brighten my day."

"As you brighten mine," he commented, before pulling away and turning to Xochitli with arms outstretched. "Come here, little one!"

Xochitli ran and leapt into her father's arms, squealing in excitement. "Papa! Where did you go this time?!"

Kordulf swung the girl in a playful arc; when she was smaller, he may have held her longer against his chest and let her play with his long, greasy hair. Though now that she was older, Qotal saw the effort it took him to heft the young

demigod into the air, and he had no choice but to place her gently back to her feet before addressing her.

"I visited a god in a far, far away land. His name is Osiris," he explained. "I think him and your mother would have gotten along well."

He cast a glance to Qotal as he spoke, and though it was warm there was something serious at its edges that Qotal could see clearly but not fully interoperate. It was a familiar seriousness; the same sort he got when he spoke of his beloved Genevieve, and Qotal had to hold back a sigh. She never considered herself the jealous sort. Her entire existence was for love and beauty and freedom, and jealousy was not something that meshed well in her world..... But she wished, just sometimes, that Kordulf's affections for her could have been even half as strong as his affections for his lost love.

That serious look made it clear he wished to speak with Qotal alone; though it could clearly wait, as he turned back to Xochitli and buried his face into her neck to blow a loud raspberry that made her squeal and run behind her mother.

"Oh, you're hiding from me!" Kordulf teased, pursuing the girl around the goddess. They ran in circles, Xochitli giggling as her father mock-grabbed for her, brushing his fingers over her but not taking hold of her even when he clearly could. "There's no point in running, love! Nobody *ever* escapes from me! I always track them down, eventually!"

Qotal couldn't help but laugh as Xochitli broke from her side and ran across the garden, her father in close pursuit. He let her lead until she stumbled, in which he lunged forward to wrap his arms around her middle and heft her off the ground as the butterflies scattered and the beetles buzzed sideways.

As Qotal made to stand by their side, Kordulf dropped to his knees, burying Xochitli gently into the flowers as she squealed and laughed.

"Papa! Papa!" Xochitli kicked out playfully. "That tickles! Stop!"

"Oh, don't you know, my dear?" he chuckled as he blew a raspberry into her cheek. "I *never* stop! Not until I get what I want! And I want to see my daughter laugh until she's pink instead of yellow!"

"Papa!" another raspberry caused another squeal, and Xochitli gasped with the effort of breathing as she gave an involuntary giggle. "Papa! Stop!"

"Kordulf," Qotal's voice was humoured, but firm. "She said that's enough."

Kordulf blew one more raspberry into Xochitli's scales, before letting her go to hide behind her mother. He looked up to Qotal with a smile that made her blush, before rising to his feet and taking her hands.

Again, he had that serious look buried under the warmth. And this time, when Qotal noticed it, she turned to place a wing around her still-giggling daughter. "My little one, why don't you go and see your grandfather? Tell him that Kordulf is visiting us, and ask him to prepare a meal?"

"Yes, Mama!" Xochitli chirped, giving each of her parents a hug in turn before rushing away towards the gate into her grandfather's realm.

Qotal watched her go, flicking her serpentine tongue as she did. She waited until the girl was gone, before turning back to Kordulf. "Dear one, is something the matter?"

A hesitation overtook the man. A familiar, mournful expression finding its way to his face as he looked away and hung his head. "I've had some word of

Genevieve. Just a rumour. But I... I don't like the things I've heard.... What was done to her, after I was banished— I hope they're false words. I couldn't bare the guilt of knowing she's been in such pain."

Qotal gave him a sympathetic look, a low hum escaping her as she placed a hand on his shoulder to comfort him. "What happened to her...?"

Though he looked miserable, he did not tremble. There was a sturdiness to his form; a steadfast calm that held him firm. Especially when he took a deep breath and shook his head.

It was clear to Qotal that he was trying to be strong, and so she shifted closer, pressing against Kordulf affectionately. She hated to see him in such a state. He may not have felt as strongly for her as he felt for his Genevieve... but, by all the realms, did Qotal care for *him*. His wonderful silver tongue and its loving compliments were not wasted on her, and somehow this once-mortal man had earned her affections with his words....

"Kordulf?" she asked, resting her head on his shoulder. "Are you alright?"

He didn't answer, only looking to Qotal when she pecked a kiss on his cheek. And though he avoided the question, she didn't press him for an answer as he took her hands in his and squeezed them softly; she knew it was a sensitive topic, and the last thing she wanted was to upset or anger him. So she let him change the subject.

"I swear you get more beautiful every time I visit," he commented.

"You're always more handsome yourself, dear one," she offered him a smile. "I am always glad to have your company."

"And I, yours," he said. "Your presence always helps ease the pain in my heart."

Feathers rising in pride and joy, Qotal couldn't help but lean forward to hug Kordulf tight. She felt his fingers gently run along her shoulders before a kiss pressed into the top of her head, and she glanced up to him to ask: "What brings you back this time?"

"When I saw Osiris, we talked of plants," Kordulf said, softly. "He helped me with my work— Not my art project, but my gift for Genevieve. Though, I suppose, it is more of an apology to her, now that I know my promise has been broken...."

Qotal's shoulders dropped, and she gave a solemn nod. It was a promise he had told her about many times before; that when Genevieve had fled her husband, Kordulf had promised to protect her. That she would never be hurt again. But now it was clear that, with his banishment from the mortal plane keeping him from her, he had failed to uphold his word.

"I'm familiar with your promise," she sighed out her nose. "I'm sorry. If there was any way I could assist you...?"

Kordulf smiled, then; clearly having received the response he was hoping for. He cast a glance to the direction their daughter had run off in, and —confirming she really was gone— let his hands slip to Qotal's hips. "Perhaps you would like to test it?"

"Test it how?" she asked, returning his smile as he touched her hip.

"It's the key to ultimate pleasure," he told her, lifting a hand. From his fingers sprouted a small, squat fungus that bloomed outwards with tendrils like a flower's petals; each tendril was a different colour, a gradient blooming outwards

from its black core into a vibrant show of beauty. And as the fungus bloomed, the hand still on Qotal's hip tightened. "If you would indulge me, I think I could make your night."

Qotal hesitated, then.

As much as she loved Kordulf, she wasn't so sure about his proposal. She knew his work well. And she had seen the mind-numbing effects that it had on those who would partake with him— Her own experiences, even, with his most mild drugs, though good, always left her feeling lightheaded for days afterwards. An impressive feat, for a mortal's magic to have such an effect on a god.... And for this? This project of his? She knew it would not be mild. He had told her about it enough that she knew what she would be in for; it was his most powerful creation, fine-tuned specifically to thrill the body to its limits....

"Kordulf," she said, seriously. "I can't. I have to look after Xochitli. If I am enchanted with your magic, which you *know* sits in my body for days, what will be of our daughter?"

"You deserve a break," he said to her, dropping the fungus into his palm to free his fingers so he could stroke her cheek. "I can look after her until the effects wear off.... She is my daughter, too, and as much my responsibility as yours."

The fungus in his hand now clearly had a pungent, sickly-sweet smell to it. Which, on its own would not have given Qotal pause, but... there was something more bitter underneath. Something Qotal couldn't place, as she flicked out her tongue to taste the smell that clung to Kordulf's fingers as they trailed down her snout. A bitter flavour which, though mild, made her feel... sick. Deep in her stomach. Something about it didn't feel right. But she kept her comments to herself, as Kordulf pecked another kiss on her nose.

"You know that I would never let anything happen to my little Xochitli," he reassured. "No harm would *ever* befall her, under my watch."

Qotal didn't doubt *that*. She had seen the man stand up to gods, before. His magic so powerful he could push them aside when they tried to block his path to their realms... tried to hinder his search for his family. Nothing could stand in his way, when he had set his mind to something. And to combine that with his protective nature... nobody would dare lay a hand on their daughter, lest he hunt them down and take out his temper on them. Though Kordulf was not a god and so could not kill a one, he could still cause them great pain. Even *Zalte*c knew that.

*No*, Xochitli would never be harmed. Not with the threat of Kordulf's rage hanging over her like a protective storm cloud.

Still, as Kordulf quietly presented the fungus to her again, Qotal found herself hesitating.

"You're certain this is safe?" she asked, slowly.

"Very," he said, assuredly. "I've had multiple gods give their input. And while with Osiris, we even gave one of his disciples the honour to try a very small dose— If it didn't harm a mortal, there is nothing it could possibly do to hurt a god. Don't you agree?"

Qotal gave an apprehensive hum, and Kordulf withdrew his hands from her. He held them up in a submissive way; curling his fingers over to hide the fungus from view.

“But! It is *your* decision, not my own,” he commented. “I simply want to give you a wonderful night, while I am here to help keep watch on my little girl.”

“It’s not that I don’t trust you to watch her,” Qotal reassured, swallowing down her nerves. “I do trust you. And I think your work is beautiful.... I just simply do not feel like it, tonight. I’m sorry, Kordulf.”

“There is nothing to be sorry for, my love. I would never pressure you,” he moved to the temple’s steps, now, and placed the fungus atop a decorative post that held the railing before sitting at the top step. He then tapped the step one down from himself, offering Qotal to sit with him.

She obliged him, and felt his hands find the shoulders of her wings. The massage that followed made her entire body relax; especially so when Kordulf’s hands began to wander. She felt him pull her close, until her head rested against his chest, and he looked down at her with a pleasant smile.

“If not through my magic, perhaps I can still make your night in another way?” he offered.

Qotal couldn’t help but chuckle and, with a blush, she reached up to the top of the railing post and plucked the fungus from its top. “Perhaps we could do both,” she suggested.

She placed the fungus in her mouth, chewing it slowly and savouring the flavour—which was more of a tang, than sweet or bitter like the smell— before swallowing.

Kordulf lit up in joy, his eyes sparkling with energy as his grip around Qotal tightened and his hand slipped into her robe. “Tell me exactly what you want from me tonight, my dear, and I will provide it.”

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Kordulf rose from the temple floor, brushing the beautiful flower petals from his pelt as he glanced to Qotal’s sleeping form. She was such a beautiful woman; so regal, so smart, and so kindhearted. It almost made him feel guilty, for what he had just done.

But he didn’t let himself linger on guilt. It was a necessity, after all. And there was no point in feeling bad about things that *had* to happen.

He clicked his fingers, spores falling from them like sparks from a flint and steel, and trailed a circle around her. Brown fungus sprouted from where each speck fell, and rose before curling inward to cover Qotal in a protective pulsating shell. Each growth met at the centre and, like a twine being spun, swirled into a decorative knot that clearly marked Kordulf’s property. Nobody would touch her while she slept. Nobody would dare.... His protection was the least he could do to make up for the trick he had needed to play on her.

He was sure she had smelt the bitter secondary spell he had put on his work.

True, the fungus he had given her had filled her with pleasure beyond her own comprehension. But that second spell, that had triggered when her senses had become so numb she had no way to fight it... it would keep her asleep for at least five years. Perhaps longer, if he were lucky. Perhaps even long enough, that he could finish what needed to be done, and return to Maztika to wake her himself.

When he was sure that Qotal would be held safe and comfortable within his

work, he exited her temple and, with grace and confidence, walked through her garden to the edge of her realm.

"It is done," he said aloud. "Now tell me, Zaltec. Where is Genevieve?"

A lithe, dark form stepped from the shadowy nothing that lapped at the edge of Qotal's realm, and a low chuckle came from Zaltec's throat as he circled Kordulf.

"Not even a hello, how are you, or how long has it been?" he asked— Though, the humour in his voice was cut short as Kordulf's hand found his neck to hold him still. "Ah! Alright, alright! I get it. You're not in the mood."

Kordulf released Zaltec, who rubbed at his throat with an annoyed frown on his panther-like face before he gave a low growl of displeasure.

"Where is Genevieve?" Kordulf repeated. "I held up my end of our deal. Now you hold up yours. Before I lose my patience with you."

Zaltec gave a huff, and moved to begin circling Kordulf again... though he clearly thought twice of it, as he saw the satyr's eyes tighten in impatience. "She wasn't easy to track," Zaltec commented. "She resides in a realm that is specifically designed to hide stolen souls from us death-gods— I didn't even know that it existed, until I traced your dear beloved to it. Actually, I'm rather furious about it; this *Scavenger* has no business harvesting souls that belong to other gods! Genevieve should have been mine, on her death! That was a part of our contract...."

Kordulf's eyes tightened further, and Zaltec waved a dismissive hand.

"We could have traded for her, you and I," he reassured. "I would have been more than happy to have returned her to you, for some of those *delightful* little necrotic treats you grow."

Slowly, Kordulf crossed his arms, and leant back in an almost authoritative way. "Enough 'would haves,' Zaltec. Where is she?"

"A hidden little realm that resides to the left of limbo," Zaltec answered. "It's hanging from the lower-side of the fey wilds, like some sort of pocket-dimension grown into a tumour. I wasn't able to gain entry, so I can't tell you of its state.... But I could sense Genevieve within it. She's as restless and desperate as you are; so you may want to find her quickly. Before she makes another deal.... She makes so many of those. And with the excess of fey magic I could feel *seeping* from that realm, she may find herself taken advantage of... *again*."

The grin that followed Zaltec's words made Kordulf give an angry snort, and he cast a glance back to Qotal's temple. "And I can trust that, when I leave to find my Genevieve, you will not break your promise?"

"A deal is a deal, Kordulf," Zaltec muttered, frustration edging his tone. "I will not harm my sister while she sleeps. Even if I was to try, a god cannot go back their word, and my own magic would stop me from laying a hand on her.... At least until she awakens. Just remember: Once your little curse wears off, and she takes that first step from her temple, she will no longer be under your protection and I can do as I please with her."

"Hm," Kordulf grunted. "You just *had* to write that into the contract, didn't you?"

"I *never* promise perpetual protections," Zaltec chuckled. "Just the same as all I control, there must *always* be an end. A *final* clause. To *everything*. And once

she awakens, I will have enough control of Maztika that I will be able to make her a part of that everything.”

“Then, I suppose, once she awakens, we will become enemies,” Kordulf stated simply.

“Are we not, already?” Zaltec asked, clearly humoured. Though he raised his hands submissively as Kordulf’s lip curled in a sneer. “Ah, I wouldn’t cause a scene, Kordulf. Not when another soul has just entered the realm....”

Kordulf’s expression fell to neutrality, as he cast another glance back towards the temple. Zaltec was correct, of course; there was a sense of company having just joined them. A familiar, excited young soul.

“Papa! Papa!”

“I’m over here, Xochitli!” Kordulf called back, before cutting his eyes to Zaltec and speaking with a voice that dripped with venom. “Make your peaceful leave from this realm now. Before I kick you out, myself.”

Zaltec heeded the warning, stepping back over the edge of Qotal’s realm into the nothingness beyond and vanishing just in time to avoid Xochitli’s seeing him.

“Papa! What are you doing all the way over here?” Xochitli giggled as she reached her father’s side. “Where’s Mama? Grandfather sent me to find you; the feast is ready!”

“Your mother’s having a little nap,” Kordulf’s soft tone returned as he addressed his daughter, and he turned to her with a warm look. “And she has trusted me with your care until she wakes up.... As for your grandfather, I do not wish to be rude, but there is no time to join one of his feasts. I would like to leave the realm before the end of the week, and you know that the celebrations will last at least a month if we indulge him.”

“Oh,” Xochitli’s mood dropped, when Kordulf mentioned leaving. “You’re... you’re leaving *that* soon?”

A grin, just playful enough to be wicked, found its way to Kordulf’s lips. “Perhaps I should rephrase,” he chuckled. “There is no time for *us* to join one of his feasts, as I would like *us* to leave the realm before the end of the week.”

Xochitli lit up; her entire body stiffening in excitement as she rose to her toes and gasped. “*Us?! As in— You and me?!?*”

“Yes. As I said, you mother entrusted you to me,” he told her. “And there is somewhere I must be. So, you will be coming with me.”

A squeal of joy escaped Kordulf’s daughter, and she bounced in place and clapped her hands together. “Really?! Really, really?!”

“Yes,” Kordulf answered, simply. Then, he took his daughter’s hands to calm her, and pecked a kiss on the top of her head. “I would not leave you behind on your own.... Why don’t you go and gather your things, my little one? And we can leave in haste; the sooner, the better.”

“Yes! Yes, of course, Papa!” Xochitli could barely stand still, she was so excited by the prospect of a journey. “I don’t have much to take! I can be ready in an hour!”

“That’s my girl,” Kordulf praised, releasing his daughter so she could run off to gather her things. “Oh! And Xochitli?”

The girl paused, glancing back to her father.

“How would you like to help me with my art?”

—END—

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