

Originally followed on from Chapter 57

When Par woke after the Immortus, Enio had another plan

Par told Enio of his adventures, and Enio described his own. They laughed at, rather than questioned, each obvious exaggeration.

The room turned out to be the Father Abbot's upstairs bedroom. Brother Gaius peeked in from time to time, and on one visit brought supper. Par had no trouble eating. In fact, he was famished. By dessert he was eager to wander the wonderful old abbey again.

The monk insisted he stay in bed.

At sunset, Enio said he had something to check on and left.

Brother Gaius glared at Par through the door before it closed. Par waited a few moments, slid out of the bed and went to the window. Down the hill in town, the yellow glow of lanterns greeted the evening. His home was out there, waiting in the dark. So were his parents. He'd soon have to face them. What would he say to his father, the man who had turned him over to the abbey for a Reckoning?

At last, Enio returned—with a sack.

"What's this" Par asked.

"Shh." He dumped the bag. A pile of charity clothes spilled onto the bed.

Par eyed the mess. He'd awoken wearing only a Lustering gown. "Thanks, but why now?"

"We're going to a party. Hurry, before Brother Gaius gets back."

That was all Par needed to hear. He found a plain brown tunic and trousers. None of the ragged apparel quite fit, but wearing real clothes helped him feel normal again. Brother Gaius had stepped away, leaving the sitting room outside empty. The

boys scurried through it and down the stairs. Before they reached the front door of the Abbot's residence, a throat cleared.

They turned and froze. In an armchair by the fireplace sat the Father Abbot.

"Um," Par began.

The Abbot closed a book. "Where do you think you're going?"

"Um," Enio chimed in. "Well, John and Buckets—"

"Without me, I mean." The Abbot smiled.

Par raised his eyebrows.

"Quiet now." The Abbot ushered them to the kitchen. "Brother Gaius will have fits if he sees you've escaped. He'll make a fine Prior, but he's a bit of a mother hen. Quick—to the cellars."

They crept through the lower passages to John and Buckets' room. Par spent the evening as he had after their Lustering ceremony, dancing and celebrating. The Abbot performed an invocation to double the carbonation in the ale. Once, he even doubled the alcohol.

Enio begged to buy the sigil off of him, but the Abbot declined.

During a fiddle-fueled jig, Par pulled the Abbot aside. "I was wondering—can you elevate Buckets' mind again, like you did to help him break us out of the tower?"

The Abbot took a long sip from his tankard and wiped the foam from his lips. "Someday, perhaps. But it is too soon—and always risky."

"Oh." Par sighed. "I just wanted to thank him—"

"He knows, Par. Regardless of his mental state, Tommy's heart is just fine. I feel as long as a person *feels* right, they don't always need to *think* right." The Abbot paused. "I think."

Par squinted. "What?"

The Father Abbot frowned into his tankard. “Perhaps I’ve had enough for the evening.”

The old man gathered his robes and bid them a cheerful goodnight.

Par remained with his friends until the fireplace burned low, and even Enio couldn’t stay awake.