

A Human's Guide to Surviving Magical Mishaps by Kit Bryan Chapter 4

Rule 4- Trying to keep everyone happy is like juggling marshmallows. It's pointless, challenging and inevitably makes a mess.

"Ideally, we would find a guide whom you could stay with for a while or who could stay with me, as they will need to be available to me twenty-four-seven," the Mayor adds. I frown. I consider the statement and what could be confusing him. After a moment, I decide it has to be a phrase that wasn't familiar to him. As he hadn't frowned until the Mayor stopped speaking, I figure it was the final statement 'twenty-four-seven'. Not wanting to be too obvious in case I'm wrong, I decide to try and subtly explain the meaning. Hopefully I'm not making a total fool of myself.

"So he needs a guide who can be around twenty-four hours a day seven days a week," I sum up, inserting myself into the conversation. Ashton smiles at me again, and I figure I must have guessed correctly. Go me! Mayor Simmons continues on, oblivious to the subtle interactions between Ashton and I.

"Yes, exactly. It may take a few hours to find someone appropriate. Most people will have gone home for the day already, and it will have to be someone with a level head who will be able to predict your needs somewhat as you get your bearings." Ashton nods his agreement, and his eyes brighten as an idea hits him.

"I understand. Actually, I would like to request Miss Fall as my guide," he states firmly. I freeze in shock. He wants MY help? The Mayor stares and we're all struck dumb for a moment. My father is the first to speak.

"Absolutely not," he declares, almost aggressively. Ashton frowns.

"Why not?" he asks, his tone a challenge. My father won't appreciate that.

"She's practically a child. It wouldn't be right," Dad grumbles out. Ashton pushes his hair back from his face and looks me up and down in a way that makes me want to hide my face.

“Truly? How old are you, Miss Fall? You certainly don’t look like a child to me,” he adds. I blush scarlet. What does he think I look like?

“I’m twenty-one,” I respond, trying to avoid his gaze. Ashton smiles at me.

“Mayor Simmons. What age must a human be in order to be considered an adult in this realm?” Ashton questions. The Mayor stutters his answer, his composure shaken. There is something very commanding in the fae’s demeanour. It is hard to argue with him when he speaks in such an authoritative manner.

“E- eighteen, Mr. Rallowend,” the mayor replies shakily.

“Eighteen? That’s odd; fae are considered adults as soon as they reach the age of sixteen. Regardless, Miss Fall is certainly not a child. So again I ask, why can’t she be my guide?” he repeats. My father tries again.

“She’s hardly qualified...” my father begins, but Ashton interrupts, not letting him finish his argument.

“We did not deem any specific qualification necessary for my guide. Just a level head and the ability to predict my needs and assist me. Miss Fall has already displayed these qualities to me. In fact, she has assisted me multiple times since my arrival, not just with the light but also by clarifying your words.” Ashton shoots me another smile. My father speaks again.

“But I-” he is interrupted by Mayor Simmons.

“I see no reason why Miss Fall can’t be your guide. That is as long as she agrees to the job,” he adds. Ashton turns to me and holds out a hand. I stare at him for a moment confused, until he reaches down and picks up my hand. He bends over it in a sort of half-bow before returning to an upright position, although he does not release my hand.

“Miss Fall, I would like to formally request your assistance as my guide until I can capture the fae criminals. I will ensure that you are compensated well for your time, and I give my word that should you accept, I will ensure your safety for the duration of my stay. If you will accept, you will have my gratitude, and the fae realm will owe you a favour in the future.” He concludes. I stare at the fae. I can see the Mayor eagerly nodding his encouragement on my left. On my right, my father frowns at me. He isn’t pleased with the situation, but he

can't continue to openly argue with the mayor, so he keeps his mouth shut. I decide to stall while I make my decision.

"I'm not sure. I mean, I already have a job. I can't just skip work..." I trail off. The mayor intervenes.

"I will ensure that you are given leave from work and that you do not experience any negative consequences because of your absence," he promises. I chew my bottom lip. I don't miss the way Ashton's eyes drop to my mouth, taking in the sign of my anxiety, although they immediately dart back up to my eyes.

"I suppose I could be your guide. Although I absolutely have to go to work tomorrow. I agreed to work the shift as a favour to a coworker whose daughter is sick and needs to be taken to a doctor's appointment tomorrow. It would be very rude of me to cancel, and I know there is no one else to do it. Besides, I promised to cover the shift, and I don't want to break my word," I explain. Ashton nods at me.

"That is acceptable. If you have no objections, I will accompany you to your work. I will need to learn about this realm somewhat before I am able to properly search for the escaped criminals. Accompanying you as you go about your day should offer some insight," he explains. I hesitate.

"I'm not sure that it's appropriate for you to hang around at my work. I mean, it's a store, so it's not like there's a rule against it or anything. But you are definitely going to attract attention. I guess I am only doing a quick five-hour shift so it wouldn't be too bad. It might be boring for you though," I add. Ashton shrugs.

"This entire realm is a mystery to me. I am sure that there will be plenty for me to observe," he comments.

"Does this mean you will agree to be my guide?" he asks for clarification. He is still holding my hand, and I am feeling more than a little uncomfortable. I hesitate for a moment, and you could probably cut the tension in the air with a knife. It is so thick. I can practically feel my dad willing me to refuse, and the mayor willing me to accept. No matter what I choose, someone will be disappointed. So I decide to just do what I want to do.

"Yes," I answer, my voice quiet. Ashton grins at me, pleased. He bows over my hand once more and presses his lips lightly to the back of my knuckles

before releasing it back to me. I blush and avoid his eyes, allowing my blue hair to fall across my face. Ashton seems to be doing his best to catch my gaze. I wonder how old the fae is. He doesn't seem like he is much older than I am. I would definitely place him in his early twenties. While I am turning my head to avoid the stare of the handsome fae, hoping my thoughts aren't showing on my face, my father takes the chance to catch my attention and frowns his disapproval.