

## A Human's Guide to Surviving Magical Mishaps by Kit Bryan Chapter 13

**Rule 13- Don't invite debt into your life unless you want it to crash on your couch for months and eat all your good snacks.**

Ashton and I make the generic polite conversation that you make when you have guests. 'Did

you sleep well?' 'Is the bed of 'Did you find everything you needed in the bathroom?' and

so on. Dad just gives a surly nod when Ashton asks how he's doing and I have to elbow him to get at least that much. I try to maintain a steady stream of conversation, but inevitably, every time I take a sip of my tea or a bite of toast, the room falls silent again and I have to find some new way to restart the conversation. Ashton is cooperating with my attempts but I don't think he's enjoying how my dad is watching him and it's making it hard for him to come up with anything to say. It's funny how he was so confident speaking to my dad and the mayor in a professional capacity, but now over breakfast he has no idea what to say. Not that I blame him. This is incredibly awkward. But I doubt it will happen too often. My dad and I

rarely have breakfast at the same time.

A loud knocking at the front door has me jumping out of my seat, eager to end this awkward

breakfast.

"I'll get it!" I call out, already rushing for the front door. I hear the scraping of Ashton's chair as he comes after me. I'm about to open the door but he beats me to it.

"Please, as we discussed last night. Allow me to answer the door and ensure it is safe first." He insists. I step back and shrug. Sure, whatever. It's a little weird for him to answer the front door at my house, but if it makes him more comfortable and is safer then it's not something worth arguing about. He opens the door cautiously while I peer around from behind his shoulder. It's like seven in the morning. Who would be knocking at our front door? Maybe a neighbour who needs something? Or someone delivering a package? I'm surprised to see

a woman wearing a business suit and heels. She's at that weird age where she could be twenty five or thirty five and I couldn't tell. Makeup makes that difficult sometimes. She has her dark hair pulled back into a practical, but reasonably pretty bun and her expression is stern. Who in the world is this? Someone dad knows maybe? I expect to see some reaction from her at seeing Ashton. His glamour might make him technically look human at a glance, but he is ridiculously attractive so surely she would suspect something. Plus what woman doesn't at least glance at an attractive man?

1/4

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"I'm looking for Katerina Fall." She states blandly. Ashton still looks at her suspiciously but I step around him, or maybe more just slip my way into the gap beside him since he hasn't moved out of the doorway.

"That's me." I answer politely. Ashton glances at me and I smile.

"Relax, she knows my name. None of your... targets would have any idea who I am." I reassure him. He still seems doubtful, but he does take a half step backwards so that he isn't

in my way.

"Mayor Simmons requested that I deliver this to you." She pulls an envelope out of a navy blue handbag that I actually kind of want and holds it out for me to take. I automatically

reach out and take it **as** I ask.

"What is it?"

"The Mayor has sent some funds to cover the fae's expenses while he is here as well as to pay for your services. If the fae is here longer than a week he will discuss further

compensation." She answers. She says 'fae' like it's a dirty word. I don't think she's happy about this whole arrangement. I frown, I'm not sure I want to take money from the mayor, particularly since **he** wants me to spy for him. I'm about to say something but Ashton beats me to it.

"I believe I am the one who has acquired Miss Katerina's services and I will be the one to pay her for her time." Ashton insists. I think he caught the woman's tone as well because he doesn't sound particularly friendly. Actually he sounds insulted, but whether it's due to her tone or the envelope of cash she just handed me, I'm really not sure.

"The mayor is aware of that, however he assumed that you would not have human currency available to you right now and some expenses might come up in the meantime that need to be handled." She says this in a condescending tone. Now I'm offended. Not only is she assuming that my dad and I can't afford to host a single guest, but she's talking to Ashton like he's stupid. I hold the envelope back out to the woman.

"I'm not comfortable taking this money. I can cover any immediate expenses and Ash- Mr. Rallowend and I can discuss the terms of my employment ourselves. I apologise for the inconvenience of coming out here." I wait with the envelope outstretched. The woman makes

no move to take it from me.

2/4

Rule

"If you have an issue with this, please contact Mayor Simmons directly and discuss it with him. I've done my part so I will be going." Without another word, she turns on the spot and walks down the driveway, her heels clicking against the cement. She gets into a fancy looking silver car and leaves.

"You know, she didn't even tell us her name. How rude." I complain. Ashton also looks annoyed.

"I agree. I did think that she was being... abrasive. But I was unsure if I was reading the situation correctly." He admits.

"No, **you were** totally right. She wasn't very nice at all." I sigh and fiddle with the envelope.

"And what am I supposed to do with this?" I grumble. I carefully peel the envelope open to check the contents. My eyes widen.

“Woah, he sent three thousand dollars! I am definitely not comfortable taking this. The mayor definitely expects something from me and I’m not really planning to deliver.” I complain. Ashton’s brow furrows as he thinks. I suspect he’s thinking back to our discussion about money from last night and trying to figure out just how much money I’ve been given. He gives up after a moment and shrugs.

“Do not worry about it too much. I will make sure the funds are returned to your mayor. You might as well keep the money as a bonus. Besides, you did say I will need to purchase some clothes.” He points out. I’m still not sure about this.

“I don’t know. I’m not keen to be in debt to the mayor. That could end badly for me...” I trail off. Ashton reaches out and gently takes my hand. He bows over it the same way he did last

night.

“I assure you there is no need for concern, I will take care of it.” He promises. He makes eye contact and waits for me to nod my agreement before releasing my hand. That bow of his has to mean something, but I’m not completely sure what. I’ll ask him sometime, but maybe not now. I have to leave for **work** soon. I’m hoping no one will care if I sneak Ashton in with me before we open to do his shopping before I have to actually start work. I can put his

purchases through as soon as the store opens.

3/4

Emergency calls only

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“Okay, fine.” I go to move the money to my purse since the giant envelope is a little obvious, and realise there’s a note in there with the money. I pull it out. It’s handwritten in a neat, capital letters.

MISS FALL

GOOD MORNING. I HAVE ARRANGED THIS MONEY FOR YOU TO ENSURE YOU CAN COMFORTABLY PROVIDE FOR THE NEEDS OF MR RALLO

WEND AND TO COMPENSATE YOU FOR YOUR TIME. IF FOR ANY REASON YOU FIND THIS IS NOT ENOUGH OR IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING YOU FEEL YOU NEED TO DISCUSS WITH ME, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT

ME DIRECTLY.

-K. SIMMONS

Well, that isn't particularly subtle. He has also written his number on the note. He gave it to me yesterday but I guess he's just making sure I kept it. Whatever. I drop the note randomly into my handbag.

"What does it say?" Ashton asks curiously.

"Nothing much. More of the same, telling me to call if I have anything to report. But it doesn't matter. We need to get ready to leave in a few minutes."

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