

Chapter 16 Rule 16- Always carry sunglasses.

They're good for hiding from the sun AND for avoiding obsessed fans.

Picking out clothes for Ashton takes a bit longer than I had anticipated. Mostly because each item I pick out triggers a round of questions from Ashton about what they're made of, what their value is, and most of all 'do humans really wear all this in summer?' Still, by the time I'm finished Ashton's arms are loaded up with shoes, socks, a few tops, some jeans, loose pants that he can sleep in and of course all the basic toiletries he might need. I run his stuff through a register and pack most of it into bags except for the footwear and the top. Those I insist he puts on immediately. While he gets himself properly dressed, I stash the rest of his shopping back in the office and stick a big note on them with my name written about five times from every angle to make sure that no one takes them home or thinks they've just been left out and tries to put them away. I head back out to where Ashton should be ready for a few hours of... I don't know exactly. Just watching me work? Maybe he will explore the store or something.

"How do I look? Am I now dressed appropriately?" Ashton asks, holding his arms out to the side for me to inspect him. Hmm, he looks a little more normal now wearing a dark blue shirt. His necklace hanging out over it. He's wearing black sneakers so he finally has shoes on although he wasn't thrilled about that. Still, something looks odd. Maybe I just got used to seeing him without the glamour? A look at his ever changing eyes and I see through his glamour. His fae features make him look far more out of place in the store, but he looks a lot more like himself and I definitely

prefer him this way.

"You look great. I probably need to actually work now. But you're welcome to hang out I guess." I tell him awkwardly. Ashton does wander the store as I work, but he manages to always keep me in sight and he approaches every few minutes when he finds some object that he particularly wants to ask about.

An hour later another group of staff arrive to start work now that the store is expected to actually get busier soon. Among them is my best friend Lucy. She trudges along and practically collapses into my arms.

"Ugh, you're so good, agreeing to cover the opening shift. I don't even like coming in this early." She grumbles. Ashton notices her familiarity and drifts back towards me curiously, hovering just behind Lucy and clearly wanting an introduction. He clears his throat subtly causing her to jump and spin around. Her jaw drops open and her eyes go wide.

"Kat!" She grabs my hand excitedly.

"Kat there's a fae here! Oh my gosh I can't believe it!" She whispers loudly. Seriously, even if Ashton DIDN'T have extra good hearing he would have been able to hear Lucy's 'whisper'.

"Way to play it cool Luce. And I know. This is Ashton. He's... staying at my house for a while. He came here to work and I'm going to be his tour guide for a while." I was about to say he's here hunting a group of dangerous assassins. But I'm pretty sure that isn't meant to be common knowledge and while I love Lucy, she doesn't have much of an inside voice and would announce it to the entire store. She is staring at Ashton,

still dumbstruck, so I continue the introductions.

"Ashton, this is Lucy. She's my best friend and is usually not as weird as this. She's just a little extra... curious... about the fae." Curious is the nice way of putting it. She is obsessed. She has read every article, checked every photo. Read every theory about fae online. I'm fairly sure most of her reading material, fiction and nonfiction, revolves around the fae these days. But I don't want to embarrass her. At least not any more than she's embarrassing herself right now.

"It is good to meet you Lucy." Ashton answers calmly with a slight nod. He doesn't go to take her hand or shake it which is probably a good thing because I suspect Luce might just pass out. Lucy closes her eyes for a second and takes a deep breath, apparently pulling herself together.

"I have SO many questions. What work are you here for? How long are you staying? Have you been here before? Do you have magic? Are you normal for a fae or are you just especially drool worthy? Because seriously I might swoon." She babbles. Okay, she wasn't pulling herself together, she was just preparing herself to interrogate him. Ashton looks a little bewildered and glances at me for help. I tug Lucy back a step to keep her out of his space.

"Calm down Luce, we're meant to be working. There's no need to put him through a full inquisition. Maybe you can talk a little later but I'm pretty sure you need to go sign in or you're going to be late for work." I remind her. Lucy pouts but nods her head.

"Okay fine. I get it." She grumbles.

"It's nice to meet you Ashton. I hope we get a chance to talk more. I'd LOVE to be friends." She gushes before dashing off to sign in before she is marked as late and loses pay.

Ashton watches her leave with a bit of an amused expression.

"Sorry about that. I doubt Lucy is going to be the only person to react that way when she realises that you're fae." I sigh. Ashton furrows his brow and tilts his head.

"Is it really that obvious that I am not human? Also why would people react so... enthusiastically, to my presence?" He asks and I laugh.

"It isn't as obvious now that you're dressed appropriately. Luce is just a bit obsessed with studying the fae so I think she assumes anyone hot is probably fae. It just so happened that she was actually right this time." I explain. Ashton seems to be struggling to keep up.

"Hot is... attractive?" He confirms again. I nod.

"Yep." I agree.

"But why is she... obsessed?" He frowns, still not understanding the situation.

"Okay, well we don't have magic right? So when the fae came a lot of people became really... excited. Because we have so little to do with you all and because all the fae we have seen are really attractive you have basically become famous. Some people are like Lucy, totally obsessed and want to know everything. Other people absolutely hate you and want you to stay away. The point is that you're likely to draw attention." I answer.

Ashton sighs.

"This seems inconvenient. Although, if the assassins also attract attention that may benefit our search." He adds thoughtfully.

"True, I'm definitely going to keep an eye out for news of anyone that people suspect is a fae." I agree. Ashton hesitates before his next statement.

"I... I do not think that I need clarification for the phrase 'drool worthy', but is it normal for someone to speak that way?" he asks, almost nervously. I laugh.

"No, not really. Luce is very honest in how she talks and sometimes gets carried away." I admit. He laughs.

"You seem to have a lot of very... honest friends." he remarks and I just shrug.

"That's probably true. I tend to get along well with people who say what they think. At least I know what they're really thinking." I smile and Ashton grins.

"I will have to strive to be honest for the sake of forming a friendship with you." He states and winks at me.

"Oh, I don't know. Sometimes it can be fun trying to figure out someone's secrets too. But in your case I think being fae makes you mysterious enough." I point out.

"I could say the same thing about you being human." He agrees. I want



him to catch the assassins quickly, but at the same time I can't help but hope that he's here for a while because we both definitely have a lot to learn.



2

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