

Chapter 18 Rule 18- Embrace the majestic power of a mug that says, "I'm ready to conquer the day"

Despite the fact that I'm working a short shift, it somehow feels much longer than usual. When I head back to the floor to work, the crowd of fans has mostly dispersed, but not entirely. The few people who are remaining try to play it cool but are clearly fishing for information about Ashton. They pretty much follow me around for the rest of the morning and they are clearly hoping that I'll give them some clue as to when Ashton might return or where they can find him next. Clearly this is going to be more of a problem than I originally anticipated. I suspect we will need to invest in a good pair of sunglasses and a hat or something. The typical celebrity disguise. It probably won't be so bad as long as he doesn't hang out in the same space for too long. By the time the fae obsessed fans figure out where he is, we will likely have moved on. Still, it's something I'm going to have to be aware of. I should also probably try to avoid letting anyone know that he's staying with me. He might not have any social media or records of his existence in this realm, but my dad and I definitely do and while I'm a reasonably private person, all it takes is one person to spill the beans and we will end up with his entire fan club on our front lawn. Probably some protesters too, I'm just glad it was the fans who turned up this morning, not the people who hate fae. That could have been much, much worse.

I head back to the break room to find Ashton and find that he's not alone. Lucy is perched on the couch beside him, probably a little closer than is normal. She is fiddling with a curl from her shoulder length, chocolate brown hair as I walk in and she looks up guiltily. I raise an eyebrow and

she holds her hands up defensively.

"Hey, I'm working a long shift, this is my break. I'm allowed to be up here. Besides, Ashton doesn't mind, do you Ashton?" She prompts, gently elbowing him to get his attention.

"Not at all, Miss Lucy has been most helpful." He answers politely. I notice that he has a mug of tea in MY novelty mug. It's awesome, it has a gorgeous picture of a unicorn on it and the words 'I wish I was a unicorn so I could stab idiots with my head'. I brought it in as my 'assigned mug' for when I drink tea at work. We used to have a collection of communal mugs that anyone could use, but there were constant arguments about who was leaving dishes in the sink. It was actually Marcus' idea for everyone to just bring in a mug of their own and keep it here. That way if there are dirty cups we know exactly who they belong to, but also as a general rule people tend to take better care of something they know belongs to them. The kitchen has been way tidier since we started bringing our own mugs.

"You made him a cup of tea?" I confirm. Lucy nods eagerly, dropping the curl of her hair and turning herself to face me.

"Yep, and I've been helping him figure out youtube. Everyone should know how to search up funny cat videos, just in case they're having a bad day." She says cheerfully. She has clearly had her morning coffee and managed to contain her excitement since we last spoke. Aside from a slight tendency to stare at Ashton, she's acting almost normal. I can't help but wonder how she would react if she was seeing him the way I am right now. White tattoos, green eyes, small horns and pointy ears. Personally I

don't think he looks that odd, I've seen alternative style people with much crazier looks than Ashton, but it's an interesting thought.

"Well that's alright then. I'm just going to sign out and then I'm totally free, we can go do whatever you like, although I might suggest we start with lunch." I direct my last statement to Ashton and shoot him a smile. I might have some nice coworkers, but I'm definitely looking forward to not having to work here for a little while.

"HOLD UP!" Lucy yells the words as I turn to go fetch my things. I turn back to face her with a raised eyebrow.

"You forgot, didn't you? We're meant to be meeting Marcus for birthday drinks and dancing tonight!" She gives me a tone that is a combination of excitement and sternness which really doesn't seem appropriate for the situation. What is she planning?

"I didn't forget. I promised Ashton that I would work this morning and then be available to help him. I was going to tell Marcus I can't make it and take him out some other time to make up for it." I answer, a little defensively. How rude, I would never forget someone's birthday plans. Besides, Marcus has plenty of friends, he won't mind if I bow out this one time. Lucy shakes her head stubbornly.

"No, no, absolutely not. You are not leaving me to be his only coworker there. I'll be stuck following him around because I don't know anyone else. Clearly, there is only one solution." She pauses for dramatic effect.

"You'll have to bring Ashton along! It'll be great, he'll love it." She turns to Ashton eagerly.

"You want to come don't you? We're going to a club in town. There will be music, dancing, and drinking. Don't you want to see what the night life is like here?" She works to convince him. Ashton looks up at me from where he's sitting on the couch and he looks... hopeful? Does he WANT to go? I study him closely, trying to be sure I'm reading him right.

"Ashton...You don't have to be polite and say yes. But do you WANT to go out with us tonight?" I ask, trying to keep my tone neutral and not show preference one way or the other. I want to go, and taking Ashton sounds fun, but I don't want to pressure him into attending a club with a bunch of strangers just because I want to go. He is paying for my time after all.

"I believe I should like to attend and see what kinds of music and dancing you have here. That is assuming that no other information presents itself to us regarding my task in coming here." He answers carefully with a sideways glance at Lucy. Translation; 'Yes I want to go but work takes priority' which is totally fair. Lucy doesn't hesitate or give either of us a chance to change our minds.

"Perfect, I'll come by after work and we can get ready together. It's going to be great!" She dashes off to get back to work. I suspect a few minutes late based on how fast she's power walking back to her register.

"Are you sure you're okay with this? I really can cancel if needed." I want to confirm with him now that Lucy isn't here to pressure Ashton. He nods easily.

"Yes, I am sure. These assassins might be important, but this is a new place and all new experiences and I do not intend to stop living just



because of them. I would very much like to see a party." He answers honestly. My answering smile is a huge grin.

"Great! So tell me, do you like to dance?"



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