

A Lesson in Magic

Lesson 3- Always say "please" and "thank you"—your cuteness can only get you so far.

“Damn it.” Laura curses from behind me. Torin pauses halfway through wrapping a bandage around my wrist.

“You saw me.” He states. I give a slow nod. Based on the atmosphere in the room, that’s not a good thing. I should have lied and pretended I didn’t see anything. Said I passed out or something. At my confirmation, Torin carefully releases my wrist, letting the bandage go loose, then sits back, putting as much distance between us as he can without actually moving from where he is kneeling.

I tilt my head watching him closely. Why is he backing up? Did I do something? I attempt to finish fixing the bandage myself, but it’s hard to wrap the wrist of my dominant hand. Giving up I hold it out to Torin.

“A little help please?” I ask. I hear a sharp inhale of breath behind me and once again Torin blinks. Based on his expression you would think the guy would be good at poker but that blink... Nah, it’s a total tell. I’m not sure WHAT it’s telling me just yet, but I’m determined to figure it out.

“You want me to help?” He repeats back, his words a question.

“Well yeah, I thought that was what you were doing.” I wave my hand around until he catches it and finishes bandaging it up.

“Thanks. Uhm, as much as I’m enjoying sitting on the floor with you, and really I am, it’s a total improvement to running for my life and hiding in a damp alley, is there somewhere else we can go while I call an uber to take me home. I’m sort of freezing down here.” I admit. The cook guy coughs a little as if he’s choking and Laura shuffles around nervously. Torin blinks again. Damn it, something is wrong.

“We need to talk.” is all he says.

We DO move off of the floor, the room we move to isn’t much better. It’s a largeish room that appears to be getting used for storage. Still, we manage to pull together three chairs for us to sit down. Torin hovers in a corner of the room, leaning against a shelf. I’m aided to my seat by the cook who introduced himself as Kyle.

Laura has apparently taken over this conversation, far more confident now that Torin has distanced himself a little. I wonder why she's so nervous around him. Maybe because he's her boss or something? He seems like he's in charge here at least. I AM a little intimidated, not by him even though he is scary looking, but by the serious atmosphere that's come over everyone. What are they planning to say to me?

"So, I guess you've figured out that Torin isn't exactly human, neither was your attacker." Laura starts. She sounds sympathetic. I nod.

"Well yeah. I guess there's no point pretending otherwise. Kind of an unexpected way to end my day." I add conversationally. I don't want them to think I'm freaking out. I am, maybe, a little. But I've clearly gotten lucky. I mean what are the chances of me running into someone who can save me from an actual monster? A few minutes ago I thought I was going to be dead, at this point anything is better than that.

"You do seem to be coping fairly well, you might just be in shock though." She adds.

"Thanks, I think..." I trail off and Laura grunts as Kyle elbows her.

"Stop avoiding it and just tell her." He grumbles. Laura sighs.

"Fine. Uhm Carina? The thing is you're human. You're not really supposed to know about these things. You know, monsters and things..." Laura pauses hesitating and I jump in to reassure her.

"I won't say anything to anyone. What would I even say? I saw some guy with horns? People would think I'm crazy!" I laugh awkwardly but the smile falls off my face when no one else joins in.

"Well... You seem nice and all, but we've learned from experience that you can't trust people when they say that. You might mean it now, but eventually you'll want to tell someone what you saw, what Torin is." Laura said seriously.

"I don't even KNOW what Torin is. Does it even matter? I just want to go home, have a hot bath and pretend that this entire evening never happened." I complain.

"I know. We'll figure something out." Laura says with a pitying expression. Kyle just looks grumpy.

“The rules say that when something like this happens we’re supposed to take care of it. Usually that means they end up dead. Obviously we don’t want that, but could we arrange to have her memory wiped?” He suggests. Memory wiping? I’m getting the impression that I’ve stumbled onto something more than just one guy’s secret. Laura and Kyle are taking it kind of personally.

“Memory wipes are super dangerous though. Even a talented magic user could accidentally take too much. Remember what happened to Melody? Her ex cheated and wanted to erase her memory when she found out. Now she barely remembers anything from the last ten years! We could leave poor Carina an amnesiac. That’s hardly fair to her.” Laura objects.

Okay I’m not liking any of these options. I thought I was safe here but maybe I was wrong. They’re talking about magic and stuff. I’m inclined to believe they aren’t just crazy, I’ve seen too much tonight to think that. But that just makes it worse, because that means this talk about death or erasing my mind is an actual serious conversation. I need to get out of here. My eyes dart around the room. Can I make it to an exit?

They fall on Torin where he is hovering on the wall near the door. My heart is racing but as I watch him it begins to slow down. I begin to relax. His expression is a careful poker face, but somehow that’s comforting. The other two are freaking out and discussing crazy options, but he seems calm. Besides, he just saved my life. I don’t think he would let them hurt me.

For some reason his presence is reassuring, he makes me feel safe. That’s hardly surprising, he did save me after all. Maybe I’m reading too much into it, it’s probably no big deal to him, but I appreciate it. I quite like being alive and dying alone in an alley would have sucked. I’m alive, I’m reasonably safe. Whatever the consequences of this evening, I can deal with them.

I tune back into the conversation between Laura and Kyle.

“Well we can’t let her just go home. We need to keep an eye on her!” Kyle objects to something Laura just said.

“Uh, I have to go home eventually. My brother will come looking for me. I’m not planning to tell him anything. I can stay for a little bit but it’s not like you can keep me here forever.” I point out. Laura frowns and Kyle looks pissed off.

“You will stay here until we are sure that it is safe for you to leave.” He states firmly. I shake my head.

“What do you mean?” I ask. He raises an eyebrow.

“I was not the one being chased tonight. How sure are you that it’s safe for you to go home?” he says, his tone is dark and I shudder. I hadn’t thought about that. I assumed it was just some random guy going after a vulnerable woman on the street, a total coincidence. But now that I think about it, I did feel like I was being watched, maybe this wasn’t just bad luck after all.

“I... I don’t know.” I answer, a little stumped. He nods.

“I thought as much. You need to stay here.” At first I’m comforted, he’s still protecting me, but then he blinks slowly again. I think I can see the tiniest hint of a frown. He’s not happy about something. He turns to Laura.

“Cast a binding spell on Miss Akari. She can’t be allowed to take a step outside of this building.”

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