

Chapter 257: Lyre: Owen's Medicine

LYRE

I wish I could say it's strange to wake up to two men in my bed, but alas—it happens more often than you'd think.

They aren't usually clothed, though. So I guess I should be grateful for the small things... oh, and I'm still alive. There's that, too.

Even if my body feels heavier than a dead cow.

Damn it.

No arcana. No strength. I'm feeling awfully freaking mortal about now, and I am not appreciating it.

"You okay?" Aaron asks, looking at me with an overabundance of caution I find strange coming from the most carefree shifter I've ever met this side of the century.

"I'm fine." Kind of. Not really. Maybe.

But it isn't like he'd understand the full nuances of what I'm dealing with anyway.

"Yeah?"

If the man had wolf ears, they'd be pricked straight up. And his tail would definitely be wagging. Instead, he sits up and helps me do the same, resting me against the headboard. A quick glance assures me I'm in the same room I've been using, but I'm no closer to knowing who the other guy is sprawled across my legs.

Whoever he is, he's heavy.

A quick jerk of my legs and shoving his inert body with my feet frees me, and Aaron's face gets unbelievably smug once I do so.

"Who's he?"

"Er—that's Sam. You don't remember him?"

I shake my head.

"He's a medic—whatever. It's fine. You don't need to know who he is." Reaching across my body, he shoves the poor, deeply sleeping Sam until he falls off the edge of the bed. "Don't worry about him. Let's talk about you, instead. What the hell did you do down there?"

The smugness fades as he stares at me with a grim, *you're-in-so-much-trouble* kind of stare.

Normally, I'm full of arcana and the idea of taking on a shifter head to head doesn't worry me. Right now, though, I feel a bit like a recalcitrant child, and I don't think I like it very much.

Or maybe I do.

It's complicated, okay?

"Magic," I quip, fighting the urge to swallow under his unblinking gaze. "How's our resident warlock?"

"Probably passed out on the floor outside this room. He's been crying ever since he dragged you back, unconscious." Aaron's lips tighten as he turns fully on the bed to face me. "Why did you push yourself so hard? You might think you're Superwoman—"

"I think her name is actually Supergirl."

"—but you aren't. You looked like you were dying. I was worried about you."

My heart warms, an uncomfortably intimate feeling. "I wasn't dying." Exactly. Maybe. "I was... recuperating."

Not a single muscle in his face twitches as he continues to stare me down.

It's enough to make a girl feel guilty, damn it.

I break eye contact—you know, to make him feel like his intimidation is working and absolutely not in any way, shape, or form because it actually is—and trace a random pattern on the bedspread. It looks new. Pretty sure it's not the one I slept with last time.

Damn it. I've been alive for hundreds of years, and I suddenly have every urge to act like a bashful schoolgirl with her crush. What the hell is wrong with me?

An empty glass tumbler on the nightstand catches my eye, and a faint suspicion runs through my head. "Is that cup yours?"

"What?" Aaron turns reflexively, then shakes his head. "No. Owen gave us some sort of drink he said was medicine."

Of course he fucking did.

"Did it smell like mint?"

It takes him a second to answer. "I think so? I wasn't really paying much attention at the time."

It probably smelled like mint.

My nose wrinkles. "And you fed it to me while I was unconscious?"

He nods.

I groan.

"Why? Is there a problem?"

"No—not exactly." It's temporary, anyway, and the effects are more mortifying than troublesome. "How long has it been since—"

"Six hours, give or take."

Huh.

Reaching out, I snatch the hem of his shirt and yank it up, unsurprised to find several bite marks on his chest. Aaron's fingers almost immediately wrap around my wrist as he says, "I thought you said you were fine. Are we doing this again?"

He sounds exasperated.

"No." Letting go of his shirt, I kick myself for feeling a little wistful when the view is once again covered. "What he gave me is certainly medicine, but it's also—"

"—an aphrodisiac," he finishes for me. "Yeah. We found out."

We? I turn my head toward Sam's side of the bed, even though he's officially out of view after being shoved onto the floor.

Aaron grabs my chin and turns my face back to him. "Nope. Don't worry about him. He's incidental."

"He's human, right? I need to make sure he's okay." Sex with an unconscious me under an aphrodisiac and empty of mana can only mean I was desperately pulling arcana from anyone I could touch. Done wrong, I could kill a mortal without even blinking.

"He's fine. Owen already checked him over. You didn't do much to him; he collapsed after the first kiss."

Ah. That's good, then.

I blink owlshly in Aaron's direction, feeling my skin suspiciously heating under the pads of his fingers. "Did Owen mention how long the side effects last?"

"Forty-eight hours, give or take a few. Yeah." His lopsided, charming smile is back, softening the stern look he's been wearing since I woke up. "Not complaining, but I'd like to get a few answers out of you before we go another round."

An indelicate snort escapes me as I pull my chin gently out of his grasp. "I'm not an animal. Now that I'm conscious again, you don't have to worry about any indiscriminatory advances on my part."

"Oh, no. I love the indiscriminatory advances. I'm just more concerned about the part where you came back half dead."

Like a damn dog with a bone.

But this medication isn't just an aphrodisiac; it can practically moonlight as a love potion. The anguish hidden beneath his light-hearted tone has my heart thumping with its own pain, and my hand's halfway to his face before I jerk it away.

Damn it, Owen.

I'm sure he had no idea I'm under restriction; after seeing me dangerously depleted in arcana, he must have thought this particular potion (I often call it Love Potion No. 8, the precursor to Sandra Bullock's beloved No. 9) would have been the perfect solution to my issue.

After all, it's as natural as breathing for me to pull arcana to replenish what I've lost...

Wait a second.

Frowning, I look Aaron over.

Plenty of pink in his cheeks. Skin still burnished from the sun. Plenty of light in his eyes, and—judging from what's suddenly tenting between his thighs—energy.

"Did we not...?"

"We did," he cuts in. "Five times. Fantastic, by the way, but not what I want to talk about. We can go for number six as soon as you explain things."

Huh.

Touching my tongue to my left fang, I look him over one more time, with a lot more appreciation than before. "Five. And still so enthused..."

My door creaks open and Owen walks in, sounding exhausted as he says, "For whatever reason, you refused to siphon from him."

Aaron immediately reaches over to cover my eyes. "Don't look at him, Lyre. Just focus on me. I thought you said you were going to rest before she bled you dry?"

The jealousy in the room is now palpable, and a lot of puzzle pieces finally slide into place.

Owen fed me the famous angelic aphrodisiac (which, technically, is an arcana-boosting medication used for those who have dangerously depleted their arcana reserves). Aaron, unsurprisingly, offered himself up as sacrifice to the sexual appetite awakened in an unconscious me. Sam was probably an accident.

And, judging by the lack of a certain angel's energy, Owen could be considered the victim of his own medication...

Hmm. Awkward. Tangling with an angel-descendent between the sheets could get a little complicated, especially considering we are technically coworkers and

partners at the moment. Hopefully I don't get another slap on the wrist. I don't need more problems.

"She's not going to jump me this time, Jack-Eye. She's fully conscious. Perfect timing, because Grace needs our help."

Shoving Aaron's hand away, I stare at the somewhat pale Owen, my own lethargy forgotten with the spike of adrenaline shooting through my veins. "What happened?"

At the same time, Aaron says, "What do you mean? Isn't she on a date?"