

Chapter 258: Lyre: Reaching Out

LYRE

Owen ignores Aaron to sit on the edge of my bed, reaching over to touch my shin. I smack his hand away before he makes contact with a quick shake of my head. "Don't bother. I'm under restriction again." Even if I replenish my arcana, I won't be able to use it.

"Ah."

The relief in that single syllable is mildly offensive, but considering the circumstances, I let it pass.

More importantly, I hold out my hand for my phone without saying a word, and Owen deposits it into my palm without being prompted. It's good to work with people who understand you.

"Explain exactly what's happening with Grace."

The angel-descendant's eyes get a little shifty, while Aaron keeps looking between us. He looks more like a confused golden retriever than a wolf.

I wave a hand toward the door with mild irritation. "Aaron, could you get me some water? With ice, please."

"But Grace—"

"Please." That stupid potion has my heart hemming and hawing at even the sound of his voice, so the word comes out between gritted teeth rather than with the pleasant tone I intended.

He sighs, broad shoulders drooping a bit. "Fine. I know, I know, you two have some weird secrets you don't want to share with me..."

The self-deprecation dripping from every syllable and the sidelong glances my way have my metaphysical, potion-addled heart breaking, but I manage to hold onto centuries of practiced poise. "The water, please, Aaron."

"Got it. Fine. I'll just call Caine and get the story from him," he mutters, bumping aggressively into Owen's shoulder on the way out.

Alpha-level testosterone fills the air, but thankfully Owen isn't bothered by the Lycan's antics as he calmly walks around the bed to grab the erstwhile, still-sleeping Sam by his ankles and drags him out of the room as well.

Moments later, the door is locked and the angel-descendant motions to my phone wearily. "She's gotten herself stuck in a parallel rift. I haven't been given clearance to investigate from here, but from what I gather, there are two time-altering relics in the area, with both activated."

"By her, or...?"

"That's uncertain," he reports calmly. "But our assignment is still incomplete."

A gentle reminder we can't leave until it is.

Damn Isabeau and her stupid little cronies. If I'd blasted through all this shit early and taken a restriction on day one, it might be over by now and I could be at Grace's side...

Then again, it could be even worse than the current situation, so there's no use agonizing over long-passed opportunities.

But my back molars grind together in frustration. At myself, at these stupid restrictions binding us, at the App for giving her a mission so far away... at myself, again, for trusting that creep of a Reaper to keep her safe.

My fingers tap against the display of my phone. It's out of battery, because of course it is. Neither Aaron nor Owen gave a single thought to charging it, I'm sure. But the Divinity App couldn't possibly be constrained by something so mundane.

As expected, a few seconds later the App populates the screen, with several alerts, restriction warnings, and other notifications.

I ignore almost all of them, scrolling to the most active group chat in my messages.

[LYRIELLE: I need help.]

Almost immediately, there's a response.

[TIME: Our ability to do so is limited in scope.]

Of course it is. The last time I dragged him into something even remotely resembling "help" was three hundred years ago—and he's been cautious ever since.

[CHAOS: Get the stick out of your ass already. What @Lyrielle wants, she gets.]

[WRATH: I'm here, point me in a direction.]

[TIME: This is more than a simple request, and you know it.]

[CHAOS: Order's really got you by the balls, huh?]

Ugh. There is such a thing as too many responses.

Ignoring their infighting, I keep it simple.

[LYRIELLE: Grace is in trouble. Time, two of your relics are active in her region. I've never heard of two being active in the same timeline before, so there should be grounds for your intervention.]

[CHAOS: Oh... that.]

My eye twitches.

[WRATH: Uh-oh. I'm out.]

[TIME: ... Fine. I can file an official complaint.]

[CHAOS: Oh no, you really don't want to do that...]

[LYRIELLE: What the hell did you do to Grace?]

[CHAOS: Well, teeeeechnically, I was trying to help.]

[TIME: Interfering in timelines is subject to Balance.]

[CHAOS: GTFO.]

[TIME: @Lyrielle requests my assistance, so I cannot.]

[LYRIELLE: Will you just explain?]

[CHAOS: Better yet, I'll go fix it. Brb.]

[LYRIELLE: Get back here.]

[LYRIELLE: Chaos!]

[LYRIELLE: @Chaos]

[TIME: I'll handle this. If he's interfered, it falls under Balance's purview.]

I blow out a frustrated breath, turning the screen around to show Owen. "Help is on the way. I think."

It takes only a glance for him to catch up on the conversation, and his brow furrows. "So we still have no details."

"No. But if it's because of Chaos..." My head pounds just thinking about it. By the way Owen's eyes have hazed over, he's having a similar reaction.

But then he says, "Lyrielle's Fan Club?"

I twitch. "Something like that."

His gaze slides from my phone to my face, both brows slowly rising. "You're saying Chaos and Time are your fans?"

Perhaps this is a great time to keep the rest of the member list a secret.

Clearing my throat, I turn off my display and affect an unconcerned shrug. "Is that such a surprise?"

"Knowing you, no. But Echo Witches aren't exactly the most favored existences—"

Biting back an instinctive snarl at his words, I shrug again. "An Echo Witch who follows the rules of the Divine." Mostly. "As long as I stay between the lines, both Order and Chaos have no issue with my existence."

Owen tilts his head as he continues staring. "Does Grace understand what an Echo Witch is?"

Of course not. I've artfully danced around the subject of my existence at every possible chance. "Her knowledge is sufficient for the moment."

He nods a couple times before asking, "Is the trouble she's in related to you, though?"

Damn it. When exactly did Owen lose his fearful reverence and become so damn chatty? Perhaps I need to toad another person, remind people how bad of an idea irritating me is.

I bare my teeth at him. "No. She's unlucky enough to be her own special existence."