Chapter 17 Seventeen

"What happened on the first day of Defense: Fundamentals last term?" Reida asked Liam when he came to check up on her and Ianne in the caféteria.

Liam's face scrunched in uneasiness. "From what we've heard, it began with a velox. Lámia, a velox is a..."

"A speed-imbued vampire. I know. Proceed."

Liam nodded. "So he gripped the wand with two hands. Basically, the same way all of us held it the first time. The important thing to note is that he has a relatively smaller physique Think Aunt Lucy, but thinner. He didn't grip his wand too tightly or loosely, but the professors later said his footing was off. When his wand released its first strike, he was pushed back by the force. And because he's a velox, he was speedily pushed back and created a more forceful impact on his classmates behind him. He ended up knocking into three students: one broke a wrist, one fractured a chin, and the last one sustained a few bruises from the fall."

"That was quite a class," said a familiar deep voice, and the figure appeared from behind the women and came up next to Liam. Plum-purple eyes greeted them before he added, "Not Thavma's best first week, but the velox did leave an impression."

"I'm uncertain if it's a kind of impression worth leaving," Lámia mused.

"That's debatable," Theo replied, eyes sliding to Reida next. "Though I'd say some beings are trying their best not to leave any impressions, though they'd soon find out such efforts would be in vain."

Giving him a pointed look, Reida said, "If you want to say something, just say it."

Theo's brows raised as a smile played on his lips. "Here and now? Alright. If you think you can get out of participating in my class just because your superiority-complex housemate is there, I regret to inform you that your efforts will be in vain."

"You should befriend my mother, considering she told me the same thing last night. It's not as if I refrained from participating entirely."

+120 Points at most

"That's true. You participated after I called on you when three quarter of your classmates were givingme a migraine."

"That's gross exaggeration. I answered some other questions as well – without beingcalled on."

"Ah yes, the ones where your housemate didn't attempt." Surprise filtered throughReida, so much so that it made Theo add, "Didn't thinkI'd notice?"

A rush of heat shot up her face, but she persisted arguing "A very astute observation but that's beside the point. The fact is I still participated."

"You willingly stood behind the scenes and assumed the position of an understudy when I don't recall allowing anyone in my class to take on such a position. You were doodling in your textbook while your classmates were testing my patience. And what makes things worse is that you already knew the answer even before your housemate raised her hand. Yet you said nothing. Not very teacher-friendly, are you?"

"Nope," Reida readily admitted. "Ianne and I have had issues with science teachers since kindergarten."

Theo tried extremely hard, but failed disastrously in pressing back his smile, though his baritone dipped slightly when he said, "That disclosure should have been made in your personal statement, Ms. Paw-Claw."

For some reason, addressing her by Ms. Paw-Claw was worse than when he used her title or called her by her first name. There was something in it – something mysterious and enticing something forbidden yet was drawing her in.

Reida willed her mind to count to five, knowingif she opened her mouth any earlier, her speech would come out shaky and brittle. Only at the end of her count did she say, "As you well know, there's a wordcount limit in personal statements. Teacher-friendliness seemed irrelevant in the application process. And should you be seen fraternizing with students, Professor?"

Theo cast a quick glance around, more concern for Reida's reputation than his own. "Only one of you here is my student, and if anyone asks, I'll say I'm here because Chancellor Higgins sent me to get Liam, which is the truth anyway."

"What did I do?" Liam's eyes bulged.

"She didn't say, but I doubt it's cleaning Bunnyagain. Aunt Hexena told me that there may be visiting professors this term, so maybe your subject is

+120 Points at most

involved."

"And yours isn't?"

"I didn't say that. Maybe you're getting one first is what I'm saying."

"Which institutions?"

"Aunt Hexena doesn't know that yet. Maybe if we leave now and you ask the chancellor, we'd both know."

"I have a feeling you started this," Liam murmured, contemplating with furrowed brows.

"How so?" Theo questioned, conspicuouslyconfused.

"Your little plan in involving professors from other institutions when assessing your students is unconventional even in Thavma. I have a feeling Chancellor Higginsis goingto want the same thing for the rest of us."

"Unconventional?" Reida piped, drawing the men's gaze to her while her gaze darted between them. "Having professors from other institutions in assessments has never been done before?"

A ghost of a smile returned to Theo's lips. "We're in Incanta's most progressive institution after all. Might as well take modernism all the way."

Liam butted in, "All the way that you even took in your own rival? I'm telling you, Theo, if it's your fault I'll have to team up with Christos Pappas from my Demystifying Stardust class, I'm going to give your students your scriblet ID."

Theo's didn't flinch but horror descended in his eyes, so much so that it made Ianne snort while Lámia's lips tipped into a slight smirk, liking the savagery between these two. Their entertainment continued when the wizard countered, "Do that, and you'll see your own ID circulating throughout campus."

"Need I remind you that I'm taken?"

Theo was going to say that Liam's relationship status wouldn't make a difference, but when the wizard noticed Ianne shrinkinginto her seat from the corner of his eye, he diverted the point away from the women Liam could potentially attract and brought the issue back to himself. "That'll add to your problem, which would serve my purpose."

+120 Points at most

"Sometimes, I really don't regret destroying your book. I only regret gluing it back when I felt bad."

"You must have felt so bad that you glued it back upside down."

In a whisper, Liam exclaimed, "That was a fucking mistake! I told you! I was already panicking I didn't notice it was upside down until the glue dried."

Checkingthe time on the unnecessarily huge clock that took up a whole wall at the far side of the cafeteria, Theo muttered, "You'll be panicking more if Chancellor Higginsdecides to..."

Liam held up a hand. "Don't finish that sentence. Let's go." He took his best friend by the shoulder and led them away, but not before Theo snuck in a smile to his student, who just seemed to get more appealing every time he looked at her.

At a corner table, Eleni could sense the hostility she and Iridia were garnering from the majority of the student body, which worsened after the discretus she was mentoring in Defense: Fundamentals went invisible halfway through just to get away from her to find another incanta who was far more patient and much less condescending That, and the added fact that two of Thavma's youngest professors spent more time at the trio's table than Eleni liked only intensified the boil of her internal cauldron.

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