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Adrik

I've never wanted to kill someone as much as I've wanted to kill Armando and now she's telling me I can't? I usually agree with her on everything, but this is going to be the one time I definitely do not agree. He's going to suffer. More than he already has. Then I'm going to watch the life drain from his face.

"I know you want to kill him. In fact, I love you more because you want to kill him. But let me explain." I heard her voice in my head once again. I glanced around at the guys, who could tell something was happening, but they weren't sure what. They all looked slightly on edge, like they were waiting to jump in. Sephie had turned to face me, her eyes were completely black, but she was smiling at me.

"Let her explain before you completely explode," Ivan said. I looked to him, not completely understanding how he knew I was as angry as I was. "She had to get angry to get you to think. We can feel her response to you. If it went anyone else, I'd suggest we all leave, but my money's on her, not gonna lie."

I glanced around the room. Stephen's eyes were wide. "This is so weird," he said. "How does she not kill everyone?" he asked almost in a half-whisper.

Sephie giggled, her eyes still focused on me. "Let me explain?" she asked. I nodded once. I tried to calm down, but I still felt like I was ready to rip someone apart. She shifted again in my lap, so she was straddling me. I could bear her dirty thoughts as she did, which helped my anger subside, but only slightly. She placed her hands on my chest, saying, "I know you want to call him. I wanted to as well, but there's a better way. If Stephen breaks him, he'll spend the remainder of his life being tortured in the worst way possible. Worse than what you can do to him. Armando was a healthy man. He's not that old. He still has a long life ahead of him. If Stephen breaks him he's going to spend every single day for the rest of that long life in complete and utter torture. He'll be locked inside that body with the demon, either of them having control, and only having each other to torture. If you kill him, his soul comes back and he makes the same mistakes over and over again. Which means innocent people will die at his hands, whether directly or indirectly. Don't think of it like saving his soul. Think of it like saying theirs. If Stephen breaks him, he'll have to endure a very difficult lesson designed to make sure he makes better choices the next time around.

As she was talking, her eyes faded from black to the new purple. I felt my anger subside as I watched the colors change. This might be my favorite color transition.

"Um, Seph, I hate to be a Debbie Downer over here, but how do we know his demon is even still there?" Stephen asked.

"It is, but Ivan will be able to see it. If he can't, then I just have to show it my eyes. That will bring it out. It's scared of me too."

"NO." While my anger was starting to subside, it surged again at the thought of Sephie having to be in the same room as Armando. There's absolutely no way I would let her see him ever again. I would figure out another way to find out that information. She had glanced at Stephen briefly, but looked back at me when she felt my anger rising again. She had an amused look on her face that quickly turned to wonderment. "Blink, love," she thought, grinning at me. I didn't have time to wonder what she meant before her lips crushed into mine, her desire overtaking everything else. She was quick with her kiss, but it was enough that my anger was back to a manageable level "I'll tell you that one later, too."

"Okay, so Ivan will be able to see it. Maybe mention if you have to. Show it a picture, maybe. Whatever. It's still there. It is, however, smarter than the average demon. It knew enough to step back whenever Armando was around me. That's how he got past me. That's also why we all think he's a fucking moron. He's not aware of anything that happens when the demon is in control," Sephie said.

That makes everything make so much more sense.

Sephie pressed her lips to mine once more, her eyes changing to the deep blue that meant she loved me before turning back around to face everyone else. She took both of my arms and wrapped them around her waist as she crossed her legs in between mine. She glanced at Stephen, who still looked skeptical and mostly worried. "Don't worry, Yoden, I'll help you. You can do it You did it three times already. You just don't believe it was you. I was only your battery. Actually, we were all your battery. Same as when Misha uses me and Andrei. You just needed a power boost. The rest was you."

He thought for a moment, then looked at her. "I guess if I have to have a test subject, he's the best one. There's really no way to fuck this one up."

She laughed. "You're not going to fuck it up at all, Yoden. You haven't spent years studying how best to manipulate and fuck someone for nothing."

Once we were alone later, I asked her about everything we didn't discuss in front of the guys. "How can I hear you in my head now?"

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She grinned at me. "Really, it was the next logical step, I think. It's not like we haven't been reading each other's minds already. We just have sound now. Although, I am now painfully aware that I affect you when I'm not with you. I heard you say 'Jesus, she's all over the place earlier when I was in the shower, thinking about everything that's happened lately. Yeah, so, sorry about that," she said.

I chuckled. "Don't be sorry. I like being able to feel you. That's what worried me today. It'd been too long since I felt anything from you. Same for Andrei and Misha. They came to check on you at the same time I was beginning to worry about you."

"We forget that time is different when I talk to my dad. I didn't mean to worry you," she said. "I think it took longer because Ivan was with me this time, too."

You said being able to talk to me was special to me and him. You can do it with him now too?"

She nodded. "Only you two. You were right when you said you and he have a stronger connection than the others. Your connections are going to remain that way. His won't be quite as strong as yours, but it will be more than the other guys. I think the connection between you and Ivan will get stronger as well. We've spent the most time together over lifetimes. The connection gets stronger each time."

"How do you do it?" I asked.

"Do what? Talk to you?" I nodded. "Same way I push my emotions and thoughts to you. Just concentrate on pushing the words to me instead."

"Like so?" I thought. She grinned. "Like so," she said, pressing her lips to mine.

"And you think Ivan and I will be able to do this as well?"

"Among other things," she said, her smile stretching across her face. "I'm not the only one with demon eyes now."

"Shut up."

She laughed. "That's why I told you to blink earlier before I kissed you. I saw yours change. My dad literally just told me about it today and it already happened. You're like in the gifted program. You're clearly an over-achiever," she said.

"How?"

"So, Battista was right in that the black eyes are a warning to other demons that I own them, but he was missing part of it. He's apparently never seen it happen before, but you can do it and Ivan can do it. Remember my dad told me we could all walk between Heaven and Hell?" she asked. I nodded. "The difference between us and everyone else is that we control our demons when they step forward. We're forcing our demons to use their powers for good. It's virtually unheard of, which is why Battista didn't have all the details about it. The black eyes are a warning to other demons that we know all their secrets. My dad did warn me that now that we have Stephen, the fears going to increase tremendously once other demons see us. They apparently get aggressive when they're afraid."

"And this is something Ivan can do too?"

"Well, not yet, I don't think. You figured it out before he did, even though he found out about it before you did. See? Over-achiever," she said, grinning at me. "Although I'm not sure yet how you figured it out."

"I'm not either. I was so angry at the thought of you seeing Armando again, thinking about ways to keep that from happening. If you needed to show him your black eyes, I thought there must be a way to make it happen with me so you would never have to see him again."

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She chewed on her bottom lip as she thought about what to say next. "It's not dissimilar to how it started with me. I was also insanely angry the first few times it happened with me. It took me a while to figure out how to control it, but it still sneaks up on me quite often," she said.

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Adrik

I felt Sephie stir next to me. I knew it was morning. I did not want it to be morning. I knew I didn't have anything important until early afternoon, so I could stay in bed with her for once. I didn't even open my eyes; I just pulled her closer to me, pulling her leg over mine. "I'm not getting up yet. You're not allowed to leave yet, either," I thought. I heard her quietly giggle as she snuggled in closer to me. She pressed her body completely against mine. I heard her sigh as she relaxed once more, falling back asleep.

It was sometime later when I woke up again. She was still asleep next to me, her body completely tangled with mine. I heard Ivan's voice, but I heard it in Sephie's head. This is weird.

"Princess, are you two okay? You never sleep this long, but nobody is brave enough to come check on you."

I couldn't help but laugh. I was thankful they weren't going to come in to check, as I hugged Sephie's naked body a little tighter. I concentrated on Ivan, trying to push my words to him the same way Sephie had shown me with her. "She's fine, Ivan. It's my fault. I didn't want to wake up this morning." I wasn't sure it had worked, but I heard his reply a few moments later.

"You got new level zapped, Boss. Don't think I didn't see your eyes change last night." I could tell he was laughing when he thought that.

"Right. Because being able to talk to you when you're God knows where is completely normal, too," I thought. I could hear him laughing. "We'll be out

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I pulled Sephie closer, running my hands through her hair. She made her cooing noises, snuggling into me even more. "I like it best when you sleep in with me. The guys try their best, but nobody keeps me warm like you do," she said. She finally opened her eyes, revealing my favorite deep blue.

"It's the thoughts you make me think. It warms me up. They don't have the same thoughts. Because they know I would kill them for thinking about you the same way I think about you," I said.

She laughed loudly. "Gross."

I couldn't help but laugh at her response. "Come, we should get up. The guys are worried. Ivan checked on you once already."

"Ivan came in here?" she asked, surprised.

"No. I could hear him in your head. He was asking if you were okay. He said none of them were brave enough to come in here, which I appreciate."

"You heard him in my head?"

I nodded. "I answered him, since you didn't wake up. You were right. Apparently he and I can communicate with each other the same way you and I do. He also caught my eyes changing last night. He said I got new level zapped when I told him it was me that didn't want to wake up this morning."

"He's right. I think you did. I'm not surprised he caught your eyes changing, either. He's very quick to notice the newest weird things now," she said. "Poor Viktor is going to be terrified once he learns you and Ivan can do it too."

I sighed. "I don't know what to do about Viktor. I think you're right. I think he's avoiding spending time with you."

"He is. I'm not sure I'm going to be the one to help him. My dad said it needs to be you and Ivan. My dad keeps assuring me that Viktor isn't scared of me, but he's terrified of finding out what he can do. He knows I'm the one that's helped everyone else unlock their gifts and he doesn't want to know what his is yet."

"How do we help him then? I don't know the first thing about how you've helped everyone else. You just do it, it seems. How are we going to do that for him?" I asked, thinking of how Ivan and I could possibly get Viktor to realize his gift.

"That, my love, is the million-dollar question," she said, climbing over me to get out of bed. "One that I do not have the answer to just yet."

Viktor walked into my office that afternoon. "I heard from the journalist. He said he has the information we need. Do we still keep up the charade that Chen is the one he's been talking to this whole time? Did Battista tell him what he's really been helping?"

I thought for a few moments. "I'll call to confirm with Battista, but my first instinct is to keep up with the charade. Chen seems to enjoy it and I'd still like to keep us as anonymous as possible."

"Chen loves it. Who knows that kid would enjoy pretending to be somebody else so much? I'll make the arrangements."

Once he walked out of the office, Ivan walked in the office, closing the door behind him. "That looks serious," I said, watching him close my office

door.

"Eh, I'd rather not be overheard and I don't know how I feel about it looking like we're in here staring at each other without saying anything yet. We mind to ease into this one," he said, laughing as he sat down.

"What's on your mind?"

"Sephie talked to you about Viktor?" he asked.

"Briefly, yes. When we woke up this morning, I had noticed that he's been avoiding spending any time with her after she brought it up. He always sends somebody else. I think she might be starting to take it personally," I said.

"She's definitely taking it personally, but she's also trying to not let it bother her. Her dad said it's being avoided. She's not letting me see her. She was not the least bit surprised, but her dad also said it might be up to the two of us to help him figure it out, Ivan said.

"That's what Sephie told me this morning. The bigger question is how the fuck do we do that? She's the one that's done it for everyone else. Even she doesn't know how she's done it. She just does."

Ivan was thoughtful for a few moments. "I think we should have a conversation with her. She's inadvertently nailed everyone's gifts before they've gotten them. I think she was the first one to say that Stephen could manipulate and fuck someone. She nailed me being able to see demons. She also hypnotized Andrei up enough that he finally started to trust himself and trust what he was seeing. The only one she didn't do much for was Misha, but his was already starting. She did, however, make damn sure we'd always listen to it."

"I don't think I've heard her say anything like that about Viktor, though. Bechise he's the one that spends the least amount of time with her, he has the fewest inside jokes with her."

"That's why we need to talk to her, I think. I know she's seen something that one of us have or she knows something that the rest of us don't, she just hasn't paid attention to it. She just has to give us a hint on what she thinks his gift is and then we can figure out a way to help him realize it."

"Agreed. She gave you extra points when she found out you caught my eyes changing yesterday. She said you're getting quite good at seeing the weird shit when it first happens. I agree."

"I wouldn't have felt it if her dad wouldn't have told me it was going to happen. I figured that's when hers started when she would get insane level angry. When I felt her anger go off the charts to contain yours, I hijacked it's when it would happen. I knew you were also trying to figure out a way to keep her from seeing Armando again. The best way to keep him from seeing her eyes is to make your eyes do the same thing. For the record, I do agree with her on what to do about him, but it doesn't mean I'm happy about not watching him die."

"I'm still trying to wrap my brain around that one. I still don't like it. I'll argue with her. I'm not sure I should argue with the universe though," I said. Ivan laughed as he saw my anger start to rise over not being able to kill Armando myself.

"You should never to get contacts too, Boss. At least for your business meetings, he said, smirking at me.

"No shit? Right now? I'm barely angry."

"No shit. They're not as dark as hers, but they're darker than what they were last night. It took her a long time to get all the way black.

"Shit. I didn't even think about my meetings. That's gonna be awkward until we get a handle on this," I said, somewhat amused at the thought of scaring my business associates.

"Maybe avoid eye contact for a while until we can figure this out," he said, laughing at my predicament.

"Get out of my office, a asshole," I said, laughing with him.