

Rosario woke up late that day. She had ridden the train with Bren to faer place and she'd been kind of hoping Bren would invite her in so they could talk about what happened. But as soon as they got to Bren's apartment fae got real taciturn and told Rosario to go home and text faer in the morning. When she finally got home it was almost 3am; she thought about calling Plaz right then and there but she was exhausted so she just went to sleep.

She opened her eyes slowly. It was after noon. She still felt exhausted, she started replaying last night in her mind and then she remembered Kevin and she decided to call Plaz immediately. She drew his sigil in the filter and started rolling the joint but no sooner had she put flower to paper Plaz was already there.

"Finally!" He said "would it kill you to write? I was worried sick about you?"

"Chill dude, I got home late last night."

"I know I know, sorry," Plaz turned concerned "I was just nervous. So it went ok?" he asked.

"Let me finish rolling this joint and I'll tell you all about it."

They smoked and she told him about the conclave, about being in Faerie, about the fascist centaur. She stopped right before telling him about Kevin.

"Wow" he said

"So shit. Well at least nothing happened to you last night, what do you think they're gonna do to you."

"I... hmmm. I'm not even that worried about that, I'm more worried about the thing they were discussing. About changelings."

"Yeah, for sure."

"I need Bren to fill me in on that history if fae knows. I know very little about the phenomena. I guess they used to take children but now they just kind of... pair up children?"

"Still creepy if you ask me."

"Sure, but, I guess they gotta do what they gotta do. I wonder what that disease is they were talking about. The thing that requires changelings in the first place. A disease that makes you need a physical human body to recover from."

"hmm. hmm."

"what?"

"I'm not sure. I don't want to say anything until I've checked, but I have some ideas."

"Well that's fucking cryptic."

"I'm just, there's something I've heard about with demons. Something that has the same taste of that but I never connected the dots. I'd have to think about it."

"wow ok. I guess that shouldn't surprise me, demons and faeries are probably more closely related than we think."

"argh, bite your tongue. I'm not sure I would go that far."

Rosario smiled a devilish smile.

"Something else interesting happened last night." she said

"Why do you have that look on your face?"

"What look?"

"You know! Your like little mischievous look."

"I wasn't aware I had one of those."

"Rosario"

"All right all right. We met someone last night, someone you know."

"Someone I know? who? where? did you go somewhere else last night?"

"No, he was at the conclave. He said his name was Kevin but you probably knew him as some other name. Little faerie trans boy. Sound familiar?"

Plaz got very quiet and had a very serious look on his face.

"I know who he is." he said flatly.

"Rosario, listen to me very carefully. Stay away from him."

"Oh." she just said. Her demeanour changed.

"I guess you two didn't split in good terms."

"What did he tell you about me?" Plaz had an intent stare.

"Not much, just that you used to date."

"Used to date" he scoffed. "that's one word for it."

"You don't have to tell me what he did. If you really think he's dangerous I'll stay away from him. He did seem nice last night, but... that doesn't mean anything."

"it's not anything he did to me, he just. Can I tell you something. Something I've been thinking about telling you?"

"sure, Plaz."

"I'm really really trying to stop being all skittish around fae folk, I didn't use to be like this. Demons and faeries, we've never really gotten along. Demons and angels, people think we're at odds but like, we're like cousins, siblings even. And even when our "parents", for lack of a better term, are fighting, it's just them fighting not necessarily us. But faeries... we don't get faeries, they're something else entirely. Demons will tell you to keep their distance, that they're crueller than the cruellest of us. Angels say they unnerve them, and if you've ever met an angel, well, that's quite the statement.

"When I was a young queer demon living in New York city, mixing with humans, which we're also told not to do. I thought to question that wisdom. I figure, I'm queer, people are always saying we suck, but I think we're pretty cool, maybe faeries are pretty cool too. I hung around with them in mixed wyrd queer spaces. Raving in the 80s you saw some weird shit and I met... Kevin then. And I liked him and we started dating.

"Demons aren't evil. I mean, you know that. A lot of demons are harmful to human in like a passive way. For a human to be around Astaroth will hurt them, not because she wants to hurt them, but being in her presence is harmful to a human, that's just how it is. Some demons are cruel but it's the same way that some people are cruel. I imagine it's the same for faeries but Kevin... Kevin didn't seem to get that. He was always fucking with people, and he thought I'd be into it. I'm not, not that way. At first it was simple things. Stealing someone's name seems pretty fucked up, but it's kind of whatever, they can just get another name. Making people get lost in the middle of the city. Again, scary but you can get back on track pretty quickly. Then he started ruining lives. I couldn't stand it. He said it was ok cause it was only straight people, I wish I could believe that. I can kind of understand where he was coming from, but he was pretty indiscriminate. I just. Left. And I stopped hanging out with faeries and I guess.

I mean I know I'm fucked up and racist but I just thought. Oh that's why they told me to stay away, so I did. It wasn't till you introduced me to Bren that I started reconsidering that. I want to apologise to faer but"

He started crying.

"Oh my god, Plaz."

"please just stay away from him, I'd hate to think what he would do to you."

"Ok ok. I will stay away from him."

She hugged him.

"It's ok hon, It's ok."

"I'm sorry. Fuck I'm a mess."

"It's ok, do you want a tissue?"

"sure."

"Do you want me to roll another joint?"

"sure"

She rolled another joint.

Bren was sitting on the fire escape, thinking about Rosario. Thinking about Rosario's face, her hair, her beautiful brown eyes. The way she was always ready to go. *How much of that will change?* fae wondered.

Fae heard someone climbing up the stairs.

"Oh, it's you" fae said.

"Hiya!" said Kevin. "Mind having a little chat?"

"As it pleases you" she replied. He sat down on the railing, his back to the street 3 stories below and said.

"I haven't been able to stop thinking about you." he said

"Sounds like a personal problem" Bren replied grumbly

"Come on, put the nice one on"

"Fae doesn't want to talk to you."

"Ok fine, then I'll talk with you. Why are you so mad at me though? Aren't we all fair folk around here?"

"No, it's different. I'm a changeling, you're a faerie. Plus, in case you've forgotten, I have little reason to be happy at the good people today given the trashing they gave me and my... friend"

"I already told you, I don't approve of the way you were treated last night. But those are faerie boomers, like what did you expect? Busting in like that. I was elated. These conclaves can be ever so boring, and dear queenie always wants me to come to them."

"Which queen?"

"She doesn't want me to say"

Bren narrowed faer eyes at him. Fae sighed.

"Fine, what do you want?"

"I'm just really curious about you, bandying about with a witch and a demon. Not something you see every day."

"That witch happens to be a changeling too."

"Yes, though she doesn't seem to be too used to it."

"She just found out recently."

"How can that be? She's an adult."

"I don't know. She's from the DR, I don't know how they do things down there. Not like we're always good at telling people."

"But either we tell them young as I assume your folks did, or we don't at all."

"I was the one who told her. It just kind of slipped out."

"Hmm"

"Well she's not like a normie, she's a witch, or a magician. I actually have no idea what kind of stuff she does. She hangs out with that demon."

"Yes, dear Plazzy. New York City is so small. I haven't seen him in decades though, I thought he stopped hanging around here. How is he?"

"I don't know. I don't like him very much. He's so anti-faerie."

"Plazzy? that can't be right. Plazzy was the biggest faerie fucker in the city back in the day."

"You're kidding right?"

"No no, he was always hanging around. And he racked up quite a body count. I guess I must've been his last one."

"Well he's been nothing but odious to me."

"Don't hold that against him. He's probably still sore about how things ended with us."

"Why?" fae asked "What's your history with him anyways."

"We met in the 80s. You're young but I assume that I don't need to tell you that it was a very difficult time to be a queer person in New York City. Well, if you were human at least, or even part human" he looked at faer as he said this "Plaz and I didn't have to worry about the virus coming for us, but we both lost people. It wasn't easy for me, but it specially wasn't easy for him.

"Oh you should have seen him back then Bren, he was a machine, every day he was crusing. He fucked humans, he fucked faeries, he fucked demons, and vampires, and werewolves. I remember he told me about the time he had a threesome with a satyr and a human witch." he noticed Bren was glaring at him "And that's maybe a story for another time. Point is it would be one thing if he was only fucking them, but he got attached. Over and over again. He always said the relationships that blew up were the easy ones, the ones with tearful goodbyes not so much. He had more than a handful of those. I only had one.

We both did some things we would later regret. In those years there was a lot of anger and a lot of grief. The difference between the two of us, at the end of it, was that he took that anger and grief out on himself and I took it out on others, mostly unsuspecting humans. Did they deserve it? maybe not, but neither did we.

He left New York and I never saw him again. I stayed. Eventually the gays got the marriages and the rights, and fuck the wyrdos, right? But at least my boyfriend's on PrEP now and I'm nice to everyone and I never hurt anyone ever.

Ok, hardly ever. But I like to think at least now they deserve it."

Bren was pensive.

"That all makes sense" fae said.

"So there's still a bunch of queer faeries in the city."

"hehe, yeah lots. But hardly any... shit what's the current acceptable term for that. There's more than a couple changelings, and more than a couple humans that are fae touched. Not too many like me. Not any like me. All the faeries like me who are only fae, well they're like the kinds you met last night. All about politics and the going back to the forest and abhorring the city. Nevermind that this city is as alive as the forest, maybe more. This city..." he trailed off

"Sure" Bren said hastily "I was surprised, I hadn't really met any other changelings until I met Rosario. I thought they'd be more... abundant."

"Something's going wrong" Kevin said

"I think I understand a little more what that conclave was about." He continued "I'm gonna skeedaddle. Tell Plazzy I say hi if you see him, and tell your little friend too."

As he said that he stepped off the fire escape and landed gently on the sidewalk. There were people around but they seemed not to notice. He waved and smiled at Bren and dashed.

When he was out of sight Bren scoffed. "Weirdo" fae said.