



Size Doesn't Matter (Monster Matchmaking #4)

Author: *Olivia Day*

Category: Dark Erotica

Description: How long does it take to find true love? Cyrus P. Cartwright, an orc with a big heart and no one to share it with, has asked himself that question countless times.

When cocky, confident Nico Ross shows up in ripped jeans, an old T-shirt, and plenty of lofty ideas swirling around in his head, Cyrus might have finally found his answer. But Nico isn't interested in love. He has eyes for just one thing, and it's something only an orc can give him.

As they get to know each other better, the rift between reality and their desires grows all too clear. Cyrus knows he's more than a short and sweet human like Nico can handle, and Nico is adamant that his infatuation with Cyrus will never, ever turn into love.

But people and monsters can change, and when Nico has to make a decision about his relationship, it's one that both he and Cyrus will have to live with for the rest of their lives.

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THE LIbrARIAN

He walked in with all too much confidence for a man of his stature – and a human, no less. I'd helped dozens of different monsters before, all with their unique quirks and characteristics, but the humans I met numbered in the hundreds. Humans always exceeded the proportion of monster clients. This one was nothing special, but that didn't matter as long as his soulmate was already in the pages of my book of matchmaking.

He stepped up to the counter and extended a hand. "Hi, I'm Nico," he said. "Nico Ross."

His nails were short but neatly manicured and painted with a light brown polish that shined brilliantly in the warm library lights. His hair, dark and straight, was slicked back with too much product and his eyes were a soft, warm brown.

I took his hand, which was soft and gentle, and gave it a shake. "Hello, Mr. Ross. What brings you into the library on this fine spring day?"

"I want to use your matchmaking service."

"Ah, yes. Let me guess, you would like to be paired with a monster?"

Nico smiled. "Of course. Who doesn't want to?"

“Oh, they exist, as do monsters who are uninterested in humans. But, fear not, I have many monsters waiting for their mates and many more certain to join them in the future. If you will simply follow me, I shall take you to the matchmaking room where we can fill in your application in complete privacy.”

“That would be amazing, thank you!”

I led Nico to the back of the library, past towering bookshelves and corners with plush velvet chairs and stacks of books beside them, stopping at one particular shelf in the back that was a darker brown shade than all the others. I fiddled with some of the books on the shelf till it shifted, revealing the short, narrow passage to the matchmaking room. Nico looked in awe at every little thing I did, which I tried not to pay much mind to. Many of the people I helped were aware of the process, but even more people had no idea what they were getting themselves into.

“Tell me, Mr. Ross, what do you do for a living?” I asked.

“I’m a chef – well an assistant chef, but I’m on my way to running my own kitchen.”

“How delightful. Do you enjoy your work?”

“Yeah, but it can be stressful. That’s why I’m looking for an outlet to release some tension in my life, if you know what I mean.” He winked at me and nudged my arm.

I smiled politely. I was used to comments like this by now, though they never got any funnier or cuter. “Yes, I’m sure I do. Well, let’s get started on that application, shall we?” I entered the passage first, gesturing for him to follow me.

He stepped inside, looking around curiously while I gathered some empty papers to write his information down on. The only pieces of furniture in the room were a small table, and equally small chair, and an old bookshelf that had been removed from the

main floor of the library long ago.

“This is a nice little spot,” he said.

“Yes, it is,” I offered up absentmindedly. “A bit stuffy, though, which is why I use it solely for matchmaking profiles.”

Nico rubbed his hands together and glanced over my shoulder at the papers I held.

“That makes sense. Now, just tell me what I need to do and I’ll do it.”

“All I need is for you to answer a few simple questions. First: do you prefer men, women, something else?”

“Men. I’m only interested in men.”

“All right. And does any particular age interest you?”

He shrugged. “Not really. I like older guys, but I like younger guys too. Truth be told, I haven’t really dated since college, so I’m not sure what I want anymore.”

“I understand. What about the physical appearance of your preferred match? Do you like tall monsters, short monsters, athletic, chubby, dark hair, blue eyes? All those sorts of characteristics fit into this category.”

“I actually do want something specific.” His gaze trailed down to the shiny wooden floor, his cheeks suddenly flushed.

“Go on, tell me. I won’t judge.”

“Well, the monster I’m looking for has green skin, a couple of extra large teeth, and is taller than you and me combined.”

I furrowed my brow. “You want an orc?”

“Yes, that’s exactly it.”

“Well, I must tell you, matching with a specific monster is incredibly difficult. It’s possible, but it may take years.”

“I don’t mind waiting. What I have in mind is worth waiting for.”

I took a deep breath, hoping he didn’t mean what I thought he meant. “Most monsters using this service do not appreciate being fetishized, Mr. Ross. Casual hookups abound, yes, but they are always respectful and understanding. What you’re searching for might be better found on certain dating applications outside of my realm.”

Nico glanced up at me again and smiled. “I know,” he said sheepishly. “But I’ve always wanted to be with an orc. It’s not a fetish thing, I promise. It’s just that I’ve heard they have big...hands...and I’m curious to know what that’s like. And I’ve tried those apps, but I’ve never found an orc on them – not once.”

“Very well. Please understand that your eventual match might not see it the same way, though, and there may well be some tension regarding your desires.”

“Don’t worry, I understand fully. It may not work out, and I’m okay with that. I’m still willing to give it a shot, though. I’ve heard about the work that you do and your success rate is wild. If anyone can help me out, it’s you.”

I scribbled a few notes on the paper before sliding out the big book of matchmaking and thumping it down on the table.

“Very well. I’ve ascertained all the information I need from you, so we’re done here for the time being. I’ll be in touch with you should you receive a match, and until

then, I hope you don't mind exercising a little patience."

Nico winked again. "I don't mind at all, and thanks for your help today. I hope I hear from you soon."

I sighed. Had he listened to a single word I said? If he hadn't there was nothing I could do now, so I began flipping through a few pages of the book searching for a potential match and pausing only to say goodbye to Nico as he left. When I looked back down, I realized it had been directly in front of me all this time.

"Mr Ross, wait!" I waved him down before he exited the library, pushing a small sheet of paper into his hand. "This is your match."

His eyes widened. "What? Already?"

"Yes. Trust me, this is the one."

"And is he..."

"He is. His name is Cyrus P. Cartwright and all the information you need to contact him is written on that slip of paper. Good luck, my friend. You're going to need it."

CYRUS

“Good morning, Irving,” I called to my coworker as I walked into my office at the university I worked in.

“Morning, Cyrus.” Irving popped out from behind the door of the office opposite mine. “You’re awfully chipper today.”

“Am I?” I grinned. “The truth is, I have a feeling something great is going to happen.”

Irving smiled back. “Maybe so. Sylvan always senses when something is about to happen, and he told me this morning that I should be careful at work today because big changes are afoot.” He waved his hand dismissively. “Usually that means someone brings in doughnuts to share or something equally trivial, but I wouldn’t put it past him to sense changes for you as well.”

“Thank you, I’ll remember that.” I was about to say something else, but Irving had already disappeared into his office again, shutting the frosted glass door behind him.

I quite liked what Sylvan, Irving’s fae fiancé, had done to him. Since they’d gotten engaged, Irving opened up more and seemed to enjoy the smaller things in life, something I appreciated greatly as his coworker. One should never take a single thing for granted, I always said.

My phone buzzed in my trousers pocket and I shut my office door behind me so I could check it. A text from an unfamiliar number popped up, and I was about to delete it before I read it more carefully:

Hi! I'm Nico, your new match from the Monster's Sanctuary Library matchmaking service. I got your number from the Librarian and I was hoping we could meet soon, maybe even tonight? Text me back what time will work for you and I'll see you there.

This was the moment I'd been waiting for, and I could hardly believe my eyes. I rubbed them and read the text again, hoping it wasn't a particularly cruel prank. Each time I read it, though, the more it sank in that I actually had a date – someone who wanted me and only me.

“Quite forward, isn't he?” I read the text for a third time. “Well, I do like a man who knows what he wants.”

I texted back a suitable time to meet up, hoping I wouldn't live to regret planning a first date so quickly. I enjoyed getting to know my dates virtually first, so I knew what I was in for when we finally met in person, but the last time I had a date was too long ago for me to remember it clearly, and beggars couldn't be choosers.

I signed up for the library's matchmaking service after a long dry spell in my dating life, and I'd now been waiting for a match for over a year, applying at the same time my coworker Irving did after he lost a bet. When Irving got a match after a few short months of waiting, I assumed my turn would be next. So, I waited. And waited. And waited. Eventually, I gave up hope and settled into a life of loneliness, which wasn't so bad after all – most of the time.

But now he was finally here, and I was about to meet him for the first time. Despite my best attempts to remain patient, I could hardly wait.

I got to the library half an hour early just to be sure I didn't miss him. I was greeted by the Librarian, cheerful and welcoming as ever.

"He is coming, isn't he?" I asked them nervously.

"Yes, of course," they said, giving me a reassuring smile. "You can sit and wait at the table in the back and I'll direct him over there as soon as he arrives."

"Thank you, I shall do that."

Both the table and the chairs were far too small for me, so I pulled up one of the larger chairs meant for reading in and tucked my legs off to one side so that my knees didn't pop up over the table's surface.

I didn't have time to change into something more date-appropriate after work, so I hoped my sweater and slacks were appropriate. I needn't have worried, however, because the moment my date walked in, I realized I would have painfully overdressed no matter what I chose.

Nico, as he called himself in the text I received, wore a black T-shirt and light-wash denim jeans. The jeans had holes in the knees and frayed threads hanging down around the torn edges, and the T-shirt bore a logo from the local ice skating rink.

Our eyes locked from across the room and he waved at me eagerly, ignoring the Librarian as he passed by them. They started to follow behind him but stopped themselves when they were certain he already knew exactly what he was doing.

"Hi, I'm Nico Ross."

"Hello, Nico. As you're already aware, my name is Cyrus P. Cartwright, and I am an orc."

Nico smiled. “Yeah, I know. I’m so curious about orc culture. Do you mind answering a few questions?”

“Not at all. Please, sit.”

Nico sat down, fitting much better in the small wooden chair than I did. I may have looked silly sitting in a lounge chair at a café table, but I didn’t regret switching seats. A beast of my stature needed to do everything he could to stay comfortable in a human’s world.

“If you don’t mind my asking,” Nico began, “isn’t your name a little...humanoid for an orc? It’s just that all the other orc names I’ve seen are different from yours.”

“Yes, that is true.” I smoothed my hair down nervously, wishing now that I’d made time for a haircut. “My parents chose this name for me, as both orc and human parents usually do for their offspring.”

“Why? I mean, why not something more traditional?”

“Well, the surname has been in the family for generations, ever since my great-grandmother married a human man. My father, a Cartwright by birth, and my mother who married into the family name, preferred how ‘Cyrus’ sounds and they chose it. It’s as simple as that, though I am sorry if it’s a disappointing answer.”

“No, it’s not disappointing at all. I was just curious. So, what does the P. stand for?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing?”

“That’s correct. Some people have middle names while others don’t. My parents split

the difference with a middle initial that suited the rest of my name.”

The expression on Nico’s face told me that he was a little confused, but he didn’t seem put off by anything I said, nor was he put off by my more orcish features, which was a pleasant surprise. I’d worried for over a year what my match would think of thick, green skin with that sickly gray cast I worked so hard to change with numerous skincare products, mud-brown hair that curled in thick, tight waves on top of my head no matter how hard I tried to straighten it, and those long, jutting teeth that gave my mouth an obvious underbite. I was not exactly a handsome creature and I knew as much, but Nico didn’t seem to mind. Perhaps he was more familiar with dating orcs than I previously thought.

He leaned forward, looking me up and down. “Do you always wear such scholarly clothing?”

“Well, I am a professor,” I replied. “I must dress for the job. But I do enjoy wearing jeans on the odd occasion –or is that not what you meant?”

Nico shook his head, his smile broadening. “No, that’s fine. It must be hard to find clothes that fit. You’re way taller than any human I’ve ever met.”

I squared my shoulders and puffed out my chest. Height was what humans cared a great deal about, and height was something I had plenty of – height and muscles.

“There are dedicated orc clothing retailers, and some human brands make orc-accommodating clothes as well. It’s not as difficult as you might think. I’ve heard much worse tales from other monsters – goblins, gargoyles, and the like.”

“Of course, that would be tough. As a shorter man, if something doesn’t fit, all I have to do is bring it to someone who can hem it and the problem is taken care of.”

“And your shirt –“ I pointed at his chest. “Do you skate?”

He laughed brightly. “No, no, I’m no good on the ice. My friend is a figure skater, though, and I went to a fundraiser for the rink a few years back.”

I nodded. “So, it’s nothing but an old T-shirt?”

“Yeah, you could say that.” He shrugged and glanced around the empty library, his gaze settling back on me after a few seconds. “Hey, it’s getting late. Wanna...go back to my place? Or yours, I’m not picky.”

My smile faded. “On the first date?”

Nico raised his eyebrows. “Yeah, why not? I’m attracted to you, you’re attracted to me, and when two people are attracted to each other...” he made a gross gesture with his fingers, which I took as my cue to get up and leave.

“I’m sorry, I’m not interested in hooking up right away. I thought this first date was to get to know each other, and we could see where things took us from there. But if sex is all you’re looking for, I’m afraid you’ve been matched with the wrong monster. Goodbye, Nico. It was lovely to meet you.”

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NICO

“N o, Cyrus, wait! Please don’t go just yet.” I grabbed his arm, or at least tried to, but my fingers barely fit around half of his tricep.

Cyrus paused, looking back at me with a disappointed dullness in his eyes. One date in and I’d already screwed things up, possibly beyond repair.

“Are you truly only looking for a casual relationship, or are you interested in something more?”

“Something more,” I said a little too quickly. “I want to get to know you better, and I thought, what better way than to get as intimate as two people can be?”

He raised an eyebrow, thick and heavy, before scoffing. “I don’t believe you for a second, but I like your confidence – unfounded as it may be. Tell me, Nico, have you ever been with an orc before?”

I shook my head. “But I’m willing to learn. Please, give me a chance.”

Cyrus sighed. “Quite a lesson it will be, then. I doubt you’re ready for sex with me, and I don’t think that having a go at it on the first date is a good idea at all.”

“But –“

“I wasn’t finished speaking. I was going to say that, against my better judgment, I will allow you to come home with me. I cannot promise that anything will happen, but I would like to get to know you a little better before making a decision that both of us might live to regret. I try not to regret anything in my life, and I’ve been rather successful thus far. I will not let you be the one to break my streak.”

I stared at him for a minute while I tried to figure out if we were going to fuck tonight or not. I didn’t dare to ask after nearly losing my date entirely, so I followed Cyrus out of the library like a lost lamb looking for its mother. I waved awkwardly at the Librarian, who gave me a pointed look before turning away to write something down.

I had no idea how they thought Cyrus and I would be a good match unless the only reason we got paired together was because he was an orc. If that was it, then I wasn’t satisfied with the matchmaking service at all, and I planned on telling them as much when I came back to find a new date.

“You wanna go back to your place or mine?” I asked as we stepped out into the warm spring evening.

A breeze rustled the leaves of the trees in front of the library and I realized I was a little underdressed for the season still, even with summer fast approaching.

“Where do you live?” Cyrus asked.

“Oh, a couple of blocks from here in an apartment. It’s nothing special, just a one-bedroom, but I keep it pretty clean.”

He eyed me skeptically. “We’ll go to my house. It’s quite small as well, but it’s a nice drive from here and I suspect it’s much tidier than you say yours is.”

I shrugged. “You’re probably right. Hey, are all orcs neat freaks? Because I read –“

“Forget what you read. All orcs are different, much like humans. Some are slobs who clean once a year at best, and some keep their spaces immaculate. I fall somewhere in between, although I do prefer a well-organized life than one in which I pray I can find what I’m looking for in a timely manner.”

“You talk a lot, don’t you?” I said as we walked through the parking lot.

“Does that bother you?” Cyrus asked.

I shrugged again. “Not really, it was just an observation. I talk quite a bit too – that’s what I’ve been told, anyway.”

We stopped in front of Cyrus’ vehicle, a short truck that had a comically tall cab. I would have laughed if I didn’t think it would be rude.

“Did you drive here?” he asked.

“No, I walked.”

“Hop in the truck, then. It’s not a long journey to my house so you won’t have to wait terribly long to find out if the night is going to progress as you plan.” He sneered at me, those long teeth suddenly looking a lot more dangerous.

“Thanks for the ride,” I told him as I climbed into the truck, fastening the seatbelt with shaky hands. “I hope you’re looking forward to this as much as I am.”

Cyrus nodded silently, his eyes trained on the road ahead. I couldn’t tell whether he was acknowledging what I said or agreeing with me. I hoped it was the latter, but the blankness in his gaze told me it was more likely the former.

I had to play my cards right with him if I wanted to see him naked anytime soon. It

was a lot of work for someone I just wanted to sleep with, but I'd made it this far, and I could put up with his quirks for a little while longer if the reward at the end of this was as sweet as I hoped.

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CYRUS

Nico was quiet as we drove to my house. I lived in a little cottage downtown surrounded by other small, quiet houses. It might have been wiser for me to live in a larger home that was made for orcs rather than humans, but I liked my neighborhood and had no intention of leaving any time soon.

Nico finally spoke once we'd pulled into the garage and I parked the truck.

"Is this it?" he asked, unbuckling his seatbelt.

"Yes, this is my home."

"It's nice."

"You haven't seen inside yet."

A smirk flashed across his face and it must have taken every ounce of strength he possessed to not crack an inappropriate joke. "I can't wait," he said, his voice wavering as he held back a laugh.

I led him to the front door, unlocked it, and ducked so I could fit inside without bumping my head on the door frame.

"Why don't you get a new door?" Nico asked, glancing around the living room

curiously as he walked in. “The inside is nice and roomy.” He pointed toward the ceiling, which was high enough to allow me to stand to my full height.

“It doesn’t bother me much,” I admitted. “I’ve grown used to it over the years, so it would be strange to change it now, and I’m not terribly fond of changes. Truth be told, I did consider replacing it when I first moved in, but after training myself not to bump my head after a few painful mishaps, I decided it was easier to leave as it was and not make a fuss.”

“But think of how nice it would be to not have to duck.” He flopped down on the couch on the other side of the room, the stark whiteness of it contrasting shockingly against his shirt. He spread his legs wide and stretched his arms over the backrest.

I sat down in the chair opposite him. “A new door would be nice, but I’m certainly not going to change it simply because a stranger told me I should.”

Nico scoffed. “I’m hardly a stranger.”

The furniture dwarfed his body, making him look like a doll positioned on human objects. He was more suited to the size of a goblin or an incubus, but he wanted an orc, and an orc was what he got.

“We met mere hours ago – you are practically a stranger,” I insisted.

Nico’s eyes darted around the room, taking every little bit of it in. “Yeah, I guess you’re right.” He shifted uncomfortably, closing his legs and folding his hands into his lap. “So, are we going to discuss our future together?” he asked.

“My, you are forward, aren’t you?”

“I guess I am. Do you like that?”

“Sometimes.” I leaned forward, meeting his reluctant gaze. “Listen to me, Nico. You seem like a nice enough man, but I need you to understand something about sex with orcs.”

“Ooh, tell me.” His eyes lit up as he eagerly awaited my next words.

“We’re big.” I gestured awkwardly to my lap.

“I know. I’ve watched orc porn before.”

“Well, that’s not a good representation of what it looks like in real life.”

“Really?” he looked disappointed.

“The human actors they get for those scenes are big, usually taller than average. They’re not small like you. That’s also their job, so they’re much better prepared for intercourse with all sorts of monsters. You’ve got to understand that jumping into a sexual relationship with me is only going to hurt you. It takes time, practice, and patience to be with an orc my size, and I get the feeling that all you want is a little quick fun.”

Nico’s eyes widened the more I talked about myself. His eyes weren’t the only things growing, and I found it more and more difficult to keep my eyes off his bulge.

“I get that, but I don’t mind waiting a little while. There are other things two people can do together besides fucking. I wouldn’t mind taking an orc cock in my mouth before my ass if that’s what it takes.”

I’d all but lost the words I planned on saying. Forwardness was one thing, but this kind of talk was something else entirely, and I wasn’t quite sure how to feel about it. Part of me enjoyed someone who knew exactly what he wanted and wasn’t afraid to

say it out loud, but the other part was offended by those same things.

All I wanted was someone to love me and cherish me for who I was, and Nico was absolutely not the right man for the job. But he was all I had, and maybe it wasn't so bad to let loose and have a little fun once in a while. Maybe it was all right for me to want to sleep with someone I'd just met.

"You know what, Nico?" I rubbed my hands along my thighs. "Tonight is your lucky night after all. Tonight I'm yours to have some fun with. But be warned, I'm a lot to take in – and not just my, well, you know. If you really want to be together, we're going to have to take things slowly."

"I don't mind at all," Nico replied quickly. "I'll do whatever it takes. And I'll listen to what you tell me. But are you sure you really want to go through with this? Back at the library, you didn't sound like you wanted to have sex with me at all."

"Oh, we're not going to have sex just yet."

"We're not?"

"No. Tonight is our night to explore each other's bodies, see how we work together, and then maybe – maybe – I'll let you have a little more of me."

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NICO

A night of passion without fucking was not exactly what I had in mind, but it was a start. And I was actually going to get to touch an orc cock – maybe – for the first time. I would at least get to see him naked, something I'd fantasized about for ages.

I followed him into the bedroom at the back of the house, tapping my foot impatiently as he slowly drew the blinds and fluffed up the pillows.

Once he was satisfied with the room's appearance, he took his time getting undressed, taking care to fold his scratchy wool sweater over the quaint little rocking chair in the corner and hang his slacks – properly creased down the middle – on a wooden hanger in the closet.

His bed was bigger than any bed I'd ever seen before. Calling it king-size was doing it a disservice, and I had to wonder if he'd had it custom-made or if there was a furniture store that catered to orcs. Either way, it took up the bulk of the bedroom, which was not a small room. I couldn't wait to hop on it and get busy.

"Do you have any condoms?" I asked, scanning over all the surfaces for some sign of sexual activity.

Cyrus chuckled. "Yes, but we won't need those today. We won't need them at all, actually, unless you think that orc diseases are transmittable to humans and vice versa?"

I shrugged. “I was just asking. What about lube?”

“In the nightstand drawer. I already told you, though, we won’t be doing that tonight.”

“I want to be prepared, is all. Who knows what a little touching might lead to?”

“I know, and it’s nothing. Not yet.”

I poked around in the stuff in Cyrus’ nightstand for a minute. The lube was exactly where he said it would be, but I left it since he told me we wouldn’t need it yet, and unfortunately, I believed him. There were also a few paperback books that were so worn, he must have read them dozens of times already, along with a travel-size packet of tissues, and a worryingly large tin of breath mints.

I took the tin out, popped it open, and grabbed one of the enormous white mints, crunching it between my teeth. It broke in half and a shock of minty pain washed over me. These were no ordinary mints, and once I could breathe through my nose again, I tossed them back in the drawer and closed it before turning around to see if Cyrus had succeeded in removing his clothes yet. What stood before me was a massive, grayish-green beast of a man.

My mouth fell open, hanging limply like it had broken hinges. His body was better looking than all the pictures or videos I’d seen, or even the wildest fantasies that I granted myself sometimes. I didn’t think it was even possible for real life to exceed my fantasies.

“You look...incredible. I’m sorry, I’m kind of at a loss for words.” I couldn’t stop staring. I was transfixed on him. “Do you work out?”

Cyrus shook his head. “Most Orcs have bodies like this naturally. Even the laziest

oafs out there have some solid muscles.”

“And your dick...will it grow when it’s, well, hard?”

Cyrus nodded. He seemed unbothered by my reaction, although he was probably only putting up with me to make me happy.

My eyes were nearly popping out of their sockets. My cock ached, straining against the zipper of my fly. I had to have him. I didn’t care how it happened, but I needed him right now .

“You may look,” Cyrus told me, “but no touching yet.”

“Please,” I whimpered. “You can’t show me all this and force me to keep my hands off of you.”

“Why don’t you get undressed and make yourself comfortable on the bed? I’ll look away if you’d prefer.”

“Oh, I don’t care about that.” I yanked my shirt over my head and fumbled with my jeans for so long, I was beginning to get embarrassed. “I’m usually better at this kind of thing,” I explained quickly.

Cyrus ignored me hopping around the room trying to pull my pants off, instead making his way to the nightstand. For a moment, I thought he was going to take out the lube so he could use it on me, but he pushed that aside and pulled out the tin of breath mints instead.

“Would you like one?” he asked, holding the open tin out.

“Uh, no thanks. I...already took one.”

“Have another if you’d like.”

I shook my head. “One was plenty.”

Each mint was about the size of half a dozen quarters stacked together, but in his fingers, they looked almost normal. I could still taste the burning pain of the one I ate on my tongue, and I wasn’t about to be fooled into eating another one.

“Why do you have those anyway?” I asked.

Cyrus closed the tin and put it back in the drawer. “Haven’t you never seen breath mints in someone’s house before?”

“Of course I have, but the kind you buy at the grocery store checkout, not those massive things. Do orcs really need special mints, too? Is your oral hygiene that bad?”

Cyrus took a moment to bite down on the mint, his expression unchanging as the flavor permeated his mouth. “Much like humans, I’m sure,” he said after swallowing most of the mint, “some orcs take poor care of their mouths. My parents instilled proper oral hygiene in me as a young lad, but even with care, it’s difficult having these spears always being exposed to the air.” He tugged on one of his lower teeth jutting out over his upper lip. “We tend to suffer from bad breath because of it.

“Then why not get them removed? There has to be surgery for that.”

“Would you elect to have two to four of your teeth removed even if they were perfectly healthy?”

“No, I guess not. But my teeth are different – they all fit in my mouth.”

Cyrus snorted. “Never mind. I can see that I have much more to teach you about orcs than I realized, my dear fellow.”

I bit down hard enough on my lower lip to make it sting, avoiding Cyrus’ gaze. “Yeah, I guess so.”

He took a step forward, closing the gap between us a little more. “Congratulations, you have passed my first test.”

“And what test is that?”

“To show even an ounce of empathy. I will not let a man touch me who can’t even be bothered to listen to what I have to say.”

My face brightened again and I looked up. “Are you saying what I think you’re saying?”

Cyrus took another long stride forward, his head towering over me as he looked down, his gaze softer than I expected. “That depends. You have some lofty dreams in that pretty little head of yours, but I think we can make one or two of them come true tonight.”

I was practically trembling with excitement. “I’ll do anything you tell me to – anything at all – if it means we get to have a little fun tonight.”

Cyrus let his finger trail down my chest, stopping a little higher than I would have liked, before backing away.

“Very well, come join me on the bed and we shall see where the night leads us.”

Was it all going to be worth the wait? I was about to find out, whether I was prepared

or not.

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6

CYRUS

I watched Nico struggle to climb the side of the bed a few times, only to slip down again, before taking matters into my own hands. Walking over to the other side where he stood, I hoisted him up and set him down on top of the bed as gently as I could.

“You’re strong,” he said admiringly, watching as I circled back around to my side, climbing effortlessly into bed as I did every night.

“Stronger than you, I suppose. Now, Nico, let me lay down some ground rules for the night.”

“Please do.”

“There will be neither anal sex nor oral sex.” I paused for effect and Nico let out a disappointed sigh. “You may use your hands on me, and if things go well, I shall consider some other activities.”

“That’s a lot of rules.”

“Did you not tell me you would do whatever is necessary to be with me?”

He nodded reluctantly. “I guess I did, yeah. And I meant it, but don’t you think we could do a little more since I’m already here and we’re both naked and...well, couldn’t we?”

I shook my head. "Patience, my dear fellow, is a virtue, and if you can exercise a little more of it, I promise that you'll be rewarded."

Nico sighed again, this time in frustration, and turned over onto his side so that he was facing me. "Do you have any toys, at least?"

"None that would fit you. So, are you ready for your first orc kiss? It's a sensation you'll never forget, so make sure you're prepared."

"Oh, I'm prepared. May I...may I touch your skin first?"

I furrowed my brow, which must have scared him a little because he backed away till he was in danger of falling off the side of the bed. His reaction made me chuckle, and he relaxed again.

"That's such a strange request," I told him. "Why would you ask that?"

"Because it looks so leathery and thick from where I'm lying. I always thought orcs looked a lot like humans, only bigger. I'm realizing now that you guys are a little more unique than I thought."

"Very well. I suppose you can touch my skin, although I think you should rephrase some of your questions. They tend to come off, how shall I say, creepy."

"Oh, I don't mean to sound like that," he said quickly. "I'll work on that, I promise."

I shook my head. "Don't worry about it for now. It's not that important, just something to keep in mind."

I held out my arm for him to touch, but Nico went for my abdomen. I flinched when his fingers brushed against my skin, startled by his choice of body part to feel up. His

hands were clammy and his fingers trembled slightly even as they pressed against my muscles. He couldn't have been too scared, as his cock was still stiff as a metal rod, but he was no longer the confident, might I even say arrogant, man I met at the library earlier in the evening.

"I want to learn everything I can about you," he told me. "I want to find out what makes you tick and then do it for you. If you ask me to, I'll worship the very ground you walk on."

"Calm down, Nico. I'm not asking to be worshipped, I only want to be appreciated and respected."

"And I can do that. Now, come here and let me get a taste of that perfect mouth of yours."

I hesitated. Was this really what I wanted? I already knew the answer, but I was afraid to admit it to myself. I didn't dislike Nico – really, I didn't. He was a strange little character, but he genuinely wanted to connect with me, just not in the way I wanted to connect with him.

"Don't make me regret this," I said, removing his hand from my abdomen and letting it rest on the bed. "We might never have a relationship as strong as the Librarian intends with their service, but I still wish to enjoy myself."

Nico nodded, pulling himself closer to me. He wasn't looking at my eyes, I could tell. His gaze fixated on my mouth, and more specifically, my fangs.

"Now," I continued, "close your eyes, relax, and let me take the lead tonight."

NICO

I squeezed my eyes shut tight, waiting to feel Cyrus against me. He could have crushed me like a bug if he wanted to, using his sheer size to his advantage. I had no fear that he would, though. A gentler orc couldn't possibly exist, and of course I had to be the one stuck with the angel when what I really wanted was a devil.

His breath wafted into my nostrils as his face drew closer. It was minty and fresh, with a hint of heat and salt. My mouth watered at the thought of getting my tongue in there to explore. Those fangs would be a treat to play with, although they were sharper than I thought they would be. I suspected the guys in the photos I'd seen either wore caps or filed their teeth down to make them less dangerous. It was a shame, really. The full teeth were a sight to behold, and even now when I could no longer see them, they pressed into my chin, smooth and hard.

His lips touched mine and puckered into a kiss; short, sweet, and all too lifeless. There was no passion in it. My heart sank as it occurred to me that he might not be good in bed at all, or at the very least not into me enough to want to be good. I hadn't thought to ask about his experience or how his previous lovers felt about him, and now it was too late.

He planted another kiss on my lips, coaxing my mouth apart with his tongue. It was thick and meaty but surprisingly dexterous. I dared to open my eyes for a second. His own eyes were closed and a few stray curls of hair brushed against his temples.

“You’re really handsome,” I told him when he drew back from his kiss.

“So are you,” he replied, cupping my chin in one of his massive hands. His fingers were doubly thick compared to mine and his skin wasn’t as soft as mine, but his grip was as gentle as I could have imagined, if not more. “I like you, Nico. I think we could be exceptional together if you would only give a real relationship a chance.”

“If we stay together, does that mean you’ll fuck me someday?” I asked.

Cyrus’ gaze hardened, his grasp on my chin slipping. “Perhaps,” he said shortly.

“And what about tonight? Do I get to have at least a little taste of that massive cock of yours?”

“Taste? No, but I will allow you a touch.” He directed my hand down the V-shape between his hips, letting it rest on the base of his cock. It was still semi-soft, but it stiffened even as my fingers brushed against it.

“So you do like this.” I smiled.

“Yes, of course I do. I’m not averse to sex, just slow to warm up to people, especially when they behave the way you do about my body.”

He dragged my palm across the length of his dick, letting my fingers curl around the shaft before removing his hand entirely. It was all mine now, every single inch – of which there were several.

I squeezed it, unable to stretch my fingers fully around the thickest part, and slid my hand up and down, brushing my thumb over the head. I practically drooled at the mere thought of getting that thing stuffed between my asscheeks, but Cyrus was probably right about it being too much without adequate preparation. The biggest

cock I'd ever taken was actually a human guy who just happened to have a larger-than-average member. This was a whole other world.

I didn't dare tell Cyrus about how enthralled I was by his cock. He was already self-conscious enough about all the worship stuff, and the last thing I wanted to do was end our night prematurely. His hands wrapped around my waist, fingers digging into my skin, and all those worries melted away. This was everything I wanted – almost.

“Can I make you cum?” I asked, my voice barely above a whisper.

“I don't see why not.” Cyrus' tone had softened again too, his cheek pressing against mine as he rubbed my back. He lifted me away from the bed as if I were as light as one of the pillows. His thumbs circled over my shoulder blades, fingers traveling down my spine till he reached my hips. I wanted him to touch me more, to wrap one of those massive hands around my cock, completely engulfing it in his grasp, but he never did.

I took my other hand and placed it around his shaft, using both to encompass it, stroking it with an effort I would have never used on a mere human. The skin on his dick, tough yet still softer than I imagined, stretched tightly around the thick organ, which was the same color as the rest of his skin, if a little darker. It filled my hands and made me shiver with anticipation, the chill mingling with my sweat.

I'd watched plenty of adult-oriented orc videos in my time; I knew they shot big loads, something the straight orc men were pretty proud of. They claimed to be able to get any female orc pregnant at any time, although I didn't quite believe them. Orc pregnancies, as far as I was aware, worked similarly to human pregnancies, and the amount of cum didn't matter as long as everything else lined up.

Fortunately, Cyrus and I didn't have to think about the complexities of pregnancy with each other, and I turned my attention back to the huge cock in between my

hands. I didn't have to wait long to witness Cyrus cum, a loud groan emitting from his mouth as ropes of thick, white substance shot from his tip.

It spilled over my hands, covering my fingers in the sticky stuff, I was so tempted to reach down and lick it off, but I expected a slap or something from Cyrus if I got my mouth close to his dick just yet.

His climax was enough to send me over the edge without a single touch and I pressed my cock against his thigh as it pulsed, our cum mixing on our skin. I held onto Cyrus as long as he would allow me, squeezing him through each wave of pleasure.

And then it was over and he pulled my hands away, still dripping cum, and got up from the bed.

"Wow, that was amazing," I gasped, collapsing back into the fluffy white pillows.

"Yes, it was nice," Cyrus agreed, walking toward what I could only assume was the bathroom.

"Nice?" I sat back up. "It was more than nice."

He came back from the bathroom with a stack of towels. "I suppose so. Here, you'll need this to clean up. If you want to use the toilet or shower or anything, they're right through that door." He pointed back toward the room he'd just come out of.

"I wouldn't mind a quick shower before I go – if that's all right with you."

Cyrus stopped wiping the towel over himself. His shoulders tightened and he looked me straight in the eye, completely unwavering. "You're leaving?"

"Yeah, of course. We're done here, aren't we? I mean, unless you wanna try for

round two.”

“Orcs have a long refractory period,” he said curtly. “There will be no round two until tomorrow, at least. I thought you might want to spend the night since it’s so late, though.”

My heartbeat, which had finally slowed down, quickened again. “Oh, Cyrus, I’m not really the sleepover type. I thought we would have some fun and then...and then...” I trailed off.

Cyrus nodded, turning away so I couldn’t see his face. “Shall I drive you home?” he asked, his voice much less sure than a few seconds earlier. “I have to get dressed, but I don’t mind.”

“No,” I said quickly, “I don’t want to trouble you with that. I could use the walk anyway.”

“Goodbye, then, Nico. Have a nice night.”

“I will,” I croaked, my voice betraying me. “Um, thanks for the good time. I’ll see you again soon, maybe?”

“I don’t think so. We tried, but we’re simply not compatible. Tomorrow I’ll go back to the library and reactivate my matchmaking profile.”

So this was how it ended. I’d really screwed things up with a genuinely nice man, and I didn’t even get to have my way with an orc cock.

CYRUS

It was difficult for me to admit, but I enjoyed my time with Nico on our first date. I was disappointed when he left so quickly, but he understood how my body worked better than many others I'd been with, even some other orcs. And what he didn't know, he was willing to learn about. I almost hated to let him go so quickly, but he would never be the man I was looking for. For me, sex wasn't everything and for Nico, it was all he cared about when it came to dating an orc.

It was with this sentiment in mind that I walked into the library as soon as it opened the morning after my dalliance with Nico and approached the front desk.

"Hello?" I said gruffly, tapping the bell on the counter.

It rang out louder than I had hoped and I cleared my throat while I waited, trying in vain to rid myself of the low, ugly tone I was cursed with every morning.

"One moment!" the Librarian called from the back room. They emerged with a cup of tea in one hand and a biscuit in the other. "My apologies, I haven't had time to eat breakfast yet and I'm running a bit behind. Oh, Professor Cartwright, it's you. What brings you to the library on this fine morning?"

"Failed love, I'm afraid." I offered a sad smile and the Librarian nodded in understanding.

“I did tell that silly boy that he might not find what he was looking for through my services. He insisted upon trying them anyway, though now I wonder if I only did both of you a disservice.”

“Don’t worry about it. I don’t mind searching again, even if it takes another year or,” I sighed, “two or three more years.”

“Chin up, Professor. We’ll find you the right man yet. Would you like to keep everything the same on your application?”

“Yes. Actually, maybe widen the acceptable ages a bit. I still have no interest in men much younger than myself, but I don’t think a 60-year-old would be so bad.” I gave as convincing of a smile as I could muster, but the Librarian saw right through it.

“Are you sure? I tend to discourage my clients from compromising their desires as long as they’re safe and they fit well enough into what the matchmaking service offers.”

“Yes, I’m certain.”

“All right, I shall do that for you. Anything else?”

“That’s it. Thank you for all the work you do here.”

They smiled. “It’s my pleasure. I’ll have my breakfast and then get straight to work on changing and resubmitting your application.”

I walked away from the front desk with a slightly lighter step, or as light as an orc’s step could be, to head into work with a level of optimism I hadn’t possessed since I got that first text from Nico.

Ah, Nico. I missed him a little – the doe eyes, the hair with too much product in it, the cocky smile he always seemed to have when I caught him staring at me – he wasn't perfect, but I was unlikely to ever find perfection. And maybe I could get him to love me as much as I wished I could love him. Maybe we could make it work after all.

I stopped midway across the parking lot, glancing around for any cars that might hit me if I were in their way. The lot was still empty save for my truck, so I allowed myself to stand out there all alone and ponder my decisions up until this point.

Was Nico worth all this trouble? Quite possibly not, but he was the only speck of hope I had to find someone who enjoyed being around me, and I could make myself enjoy being around him in turn. I could do whatever it took to get some of the human warmth I so desperately craved.

A brief thought that I might regret this choice flashed through my mind, but I turned on my heel anyway and marched straight back into the library, causing the Librarian to nearly spill their tea when they saw me.

“You're back,” they said.

“Yes, I am back, and I want to retract my application.”

They cocked their head to the side, taking another sip of tea. “Are you sure?”

“I am. I don't know if it's the right decision, but I'm willing to take that risk.”

“Very well. I'll set your application aside in case you change your mind again later but, for what it's worth, I don't think you will regret this at all.”

“What do you – oh, never mind.” I wanted to ask more questions, but I held my

tongue. I had somewhere to be and if I didn't leave right now, I wouldn't have time to stop by there before work.

The Librarian was right; falling in love was not something I would regret.

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9

NICO

I was awoken from a deep sleep by a knock at my apartment door. It jolted me awake and I rubbed my eyes, checking the time on my phone.

“Oh, shit, I need to get up and get ready for work.”

I rubbed my eyes, forgetting what it was that woke me up, and got out of bed to go make some coffee. Standing in the kitchen buck naked, I heard it again:

Thump, thump, thump.

It sounded like someone was trying to break down the door, but I doubted that was the case. If they wanted to break in, they would have done it already.

“Leave it at the door,” I called out, assuming it was a delivery or something.

It was a little early to have a package dropped off, but I didn’t tell people how to do their jobs. I also wasn’t expecting anything, but it could have been a gift. I didn’t care as long as they left me alone to drink my coffee and get dressed.

“Nico, open up! It’s me, Cyrus.”

I dropped my bag of coffee beans on the floor and they spilled out, causing me to trip and nearly fall as I scurried to the door. I flung it open, half-expecting this to be a

cruel prank, but Cyrus stood in front of me as tall and orcish as ever.

“Good God, put some clothes on.” He shielded his eyes, but I laughed and stayed where I was.

“Why? We already saw each other naked once. Does it matter anymore?”

“It matters when it’s 8 in the morning, my dear fellow. I didn’t expect to see a nude man before I began work for the day.

“And I didn’t expect to see an orc waiting for me at the door. I thought you ended things pretty officially last night when you told me we wouldn’t see each other again.”

“I did.”

“Then what changed?”

“I know you want me to say that I changed, but I didn’t really. I just thought about it more and realized that I would like to spend more time with you after all. So, what do you say to a second date tonight?”

“This sounds too good to be true,” I said slowly, narrowing my eyes. “Are you sure you didn’t get replaced by a different, more adventurous orc?”

Cyrus rolled his eyes. “Do you want to date me or not?”

“Yes, of course,” I said quickly. “So, second date tonight – where at?”

“My house again. I have something to show you.”

“I hope it’s what I think it is, but even if it’s not, I’ll be there with open arms – and some other open parts, if you know what I mean.”

Cyrus shook his head. “Ugh, Nico, really . There’s a way to be tactful and that is not it.”

“I’ve never tried to be tactful so I guess it’s working, huh?” I moved out away from the door so he could come inside if he wanted. “You have time for a cup of coffee?”

He checked his watch, sighed, and said, “I suppose so. It will have to be quick.”

I finished making coffee, swept up the beans I spilled onto the floor, and put on some clothes that I found draped over the back of the old dining table chair I kept in my bedroom to put folded laundry on. There was no folded laundry on it today, only a crumpled pile of most likely clean pants and shirts. Cyrus watched as I worked, sitting awkwardly on the couch that was much too small for him.

“Here’s your coffee.” I handed him a cup and joined him on the couch, although there wasn’t really enough room for both of us when one of us was a good foot and a half taller and twice as thick.

“Thank you.” He took a sip. “Mmm, it’s good.”

“I am a chef.”

“A chef’s assistant .”

I cleared my throat. “Yeah, whatever. So, tonight at your place?”

Cyrus nodded, looking around for a place to set his cup. “Unless you need more time between dates.”

“No,” I said quickly, “not at all. Should I bring anything? Food, beverages, toys?”

“Just yourself. That will be enough, I’m sure.”

He finally handed me his cup and I set it on the windowsill behind us. “Sorry about the lack of tables. I don’t spend much time at home, and when I do, I don’t really find the need to have much surface space.”

“No need to apologize. I won’t be spending much time here either, I can assure you that.”

He got up to leave, but I stopped him in his tracks by grabbing the sleeve of his coat. He could have pushed right past me if he wanted to, so I didn’t hold on too hard. The last thing I wanted to do was to dislocate my shoulder because of a stupid little accident.

He turned to look at me, slightly annoyed. “What is it, Nico?”

“Can I have one kiss before you go?” I gave my best puppy dog eyes, hoping it was enough to charm him.

“But the coffee,” he protested. “The taste will be awful.”

“I don’t care.”

Reluctantly, Cyrus leaned down, tilting my head up to meet his. His kiss was soft and tender and once again all too short. I could have stayed there for hours, but he pulled away almost as soon as our mouths touched.

“Another one?” I asked, staring up into those dark eyes. I still couldn’t tell if they were brown or black, but I loved the color anyway.

“Not yet. Tonight I’ll give you more, I promise.”

“Really?”

“Yes. Be patient and you will be rewarded, remember?”

I smirked. “I don’t think I’ll ever forget.”

Cyrus closed the door softly behind him, his massive shoes thumping down the corridor as he left. I would have followed him all the way to the university if I didn’t have my own job to go to, just so I could spend a few extra hours with him.

If only Cyrus knew what he had done to me, maybe he would feel differently about our relationship, and maybe I could convince him to go all the way with me. There was still time to change his mind, and as I zipped up my coat and grabbed my keys, I couldn’t help but wonder if there was anything else I could do to get deeper into his head.

10

CYRUS

I had little time to prepare for Nico's arrival once I got home from work. I'd wanted to shower and wash my hair, change into something more comfortable, tidy up the house a bit, and maybe even fix something simple for dinner, but all I had time for was a quick rinse and a pot of tea. I hoped Nico liked tea.

I had only just put the tea tray in the living room when a persistent knock sounded at the door, drumming away until I called:

"Come in, the door's unlocked."

Nico burst through the door carrying a plastic grocery bag with the handles tied together. "I come bearing gifts." He thrust the bag into my hands. "I brought some stuff from the restaurant I work at. You didn't mention having any allergies or dietary preferences, so I hope you can eat everything." He paused. "Orcs don't do the vampire thing, do they?"

"What, drink blood?" I laughed. "No, certainly not."

"Then you do eat regular food?"

"Yes, what else would you expect?"

Nico shrugged. "I don't know. Some monsters have some pretty strict dietary needs.

The restaurant I work at has a lot of specific dishes on the menu and we make accommodations for different monsters all the time. I also dated a guy once who only ate root vegetables, but he was human and I think that was a choice that he made.” He furrowed his brow. “It’s kind of strange now that I think about it. I didn’t question it back then, but the sex was so good, I think I was blinded by that.”

I took a deep breath, waiting for Nico to stop rambling. “Well,” I said after a few blessed seconds of silence, “we orcs eat the same food humans do, only a little more due to our size.” I held up the bag. “Thank you for this; it’s very kind. I take it you’ve already eaten, then?”

“I had a quick bite in my car before I left work. Oh, by the way, I’m parked on the side of the street a couple of spots down. I hope that’s okay.”

“It should be fine. Please, sit down and make yourself comfortable. I’m just going to put this in the refrigerator and I’ll be right out.”

I left Nico alone in the living room. There wasn’t much he could do in there to get into trouble, yet somehow when I back out of the kitchen, he was sifting through the drawers of a little cabinet sitting by the window.

“You are a curious one, aren’t you?” I asked.

Nico started. “Oh, sorry. I thought I would hear you walk in. I guess I got caught up in my snooping.”

“I would say so. Did you find anything interesting?”

“Not really. Why do you keep your batteries in the same drawer as your first aid kit?” He walked over to the couch and sat down, pouring two cups of tea for us.

“Because I had an empty drawer and both those things fit in there together. I’m a practical man, Nico. If I have a space I can utilize, I will.”

Nico shrugged. “That makes sense, I guess. Now, you told me you had a plan for us tonight. I’ve been thinking about it the whole day, so you’d better not hold out on me now.”

A smile crept across my face. “I do indeed. Let’s finish our tea, and then you can come with me to the bedroom.”

Nico gulped down his cup, still piping hot, and set it back on the tray with a worrying clink . I had no interest in guzzling down the drink like a pig, so I took my time much to the impatience of the silly little man next to me.

“I hope you didn’t chip that cup,” I said, taking a little sip of my tea.

“It’s fine.” Nico checked it and set it back down, a little more carefully this time. “Yeah, it’s fine.”

I had to admit, it was fun dragging things out for Nico. He could hardly stay sitting on the couch, he was so eager to head to the bedroom, and I would be lying if I said I didn’t find it hot for a man to want my body this much. There was something off about his attitude that I still couldn’t shake, however, and it made me hesitant to allow him fully into my heart. We didn’t love each other, that was clear enough. But where I was capable of loving him, I couldn’t envision a world where he loved me back nearly as much.

“All right, shall we take a trip back to the bedroom?”

Nico jumped up and started off toward the bedroom, but I made a detour into the kitchen to put the tea tray away. When I entered the bedroom, I found Nico standing

in the middle of it with his shirt already off, and working on his jeans next.

“Slow down,” I told him. “It’s not a race and my plans for tonight are going to take some time.”

“I just want to be ready,” he insisted.

I ignored him, instead making my way to the closet door. I opened it, ducked inside for a moment, and emerged with a long, plain cardboard box. I lifted the lid and set it atop the dresser, bringing the open box over to where Nico sat on the bed.

“This is new, never used,” I told him. “It was a gift from someone...special, but I’m not really into toys so I put it in the closet and forgot about it. I only remembered it after you mentioned toys last night.”

Nico straightened his back, peering over my forearm into the box. “That’s huge,” he said, his eyes widening. He pulled the unnaturally bright green dildo out and turned it over in his hands, squeezing it in his grasp and sliding his hand along the shaft. “It doesn’t feel like yours.”

“Nor should it. It’s about half the size of my cock when fully erect, so it will be a perfect starting point for someone with little experience like you.”

Nico bristled. “I have plenty of experience.”

“Experience with an orc,” I corrected myself. “Now, lie back, relax, and let me do most of the work.”

He didn’t have to be told twice and, with a long sigh, he sank into the bed, spread his legs, and waited for me to begin.

11

NICO

Cyrus slathered a generous amount of lube onto the dildo, coating the tip of it especially well. It looked like too much for a single toy, and maybe I should have feared for my life – or my hole, at least – but all I could feel at the moment was excitement. I was finally getting one step closer to the cock of my dreams.

He inserted his finger first, which I had to admit made me tense a little. A single finger on Cyrus' hand was like having two regular fingers on a human inside me, and I wasn't used to being stretched that much quite so early. He worked slowly and carefully, though, and over the next few minutes, the burning dissipated, leaving only a pleasantly full sensation in its wake.

He slid in another finger, bringing the tightness and stinging back with a vengeance, he must have noticed how uncomfortable I was despite my best attempts to relax and take deep breaths because he placed a hand on my knee and gave it a gentle rub.

“You're doing so well,” he told me. “I think you're almost ready for the dildo now.”

He pressed the tip of the toy against me, nestling it in between my cheeks. The lube was cold and the dildo slipped down once from the sheer amount Cyrus had rubbed on, but he positioned it back into place and pushed gently.

I closed my eyes and imagined it was his cock filling me instead, although his cock would somehow be even bigger.

“You’re good at this,” I murmured.

“It’s not difficult,” he answered. “It’s just a toy.”

“No, I mean sex in general. I kind of expected orcs to be rough and only care about getting themselves off.”

Cyrus sighed. “That’s what you get for believing what you read on the internet. I’m sure that on those same websites, you would find them writing that vampires don’t leave their houses and demons only have sex with humans to feed on their souls, yet in this very town, we have proof of that simply not being true.”

“You’re probably right. But I –“ I cut my words off with a groan as Cyrus pushed the dildo in farther, hitting parts of me I didn’t know could be reached.

I didn’t regret insisting on an orc, even though I had yet to experience much with him. It was well worth every minute, every hour, every day I had to wait and listen and learn if it was building up to all my greatest fantasies.

He worked gently and carefully in spite of my repeated assurances that I could handle more.

“I know what’s best for you,” he insisted, and maybe he was right.

Every time I convinced him to loosen up a little, he would push the dildo in deeper until tears formed in my eyes. Then I would beg him to back up a little and try going slower.

“I told you,” he would say, undoubtedly rolling his eyes.

But he was enjoying himself as much as I was, if not more. One of these days I would

have to thank him properly, but not tonight. Tonight was reserved for me to learn how to take orc cock like a man.

I would have liked Cyrus to get me off with the dildo, but after a while, he stopped fucking me with it and climbed into bed with me.

“What are you doing?” I asked, rolling over onto my side. “I wasn’t finished yet.”

“That’s enough for one day,” he told me, stroking my shoulder with the back of his hand. “I don’t want to hurt you.”

“You won’t, I promise.”

Cyrus turned down my pleas. “Let’s take the rest of the night easy, all right?”

Before I could beg him to reconsider, his hand moved down to my cock and he slid his palm over the shaft, sending a shiver straight down my spine. So, this was what taking it easy meant.

His other hand wrapped around his cock, and, moving closer to me, rubbed his cock against mine. It was never more obvious to me now how obscenely large Cyrus’ dick was. It would make any man blush with either humiliation or lust – or both – and I was no exception.

But Cyrus didn’t say a word about my size. He didn’t speak at all, only allowing a few quiet moans to escape. I wanted to tell him how hot I found that, but I was worried that even a peep from me would ruin the moment. The last thing I wanted to do was make him shy away from me for good.

I didn’t need to worry about that right now, though. All I needed to worry about was getting my needs taken care of, and Cyrus even did that for me. When I couldn’t wait

another second, he made me cum and then he came all over me, tempting me to ask if we could go for round two sometime tonight. I already knew the answer to that, though.

“You’re amazing,” I sighed, snuggling under the covers after Cyrus cleaned us up.

“Am I?” he smiled.

“The best.”

“Well, I’m not so sure about that, but I’ll take the compliment anyway.” He tucked the blankets around me before slipping into bed again himself, the mattress sinking as he settled in. “You’re staying for the rest of the night, aren’t you?”

“Of course.” I wasn’t about to make that mistake twice.

“Good. Tomorrow you can make us breakfast.”

“Breakfast?” I raised an eyebrow. “Does that mean what I think it means?”

Cyrus had closed his eyes and I could have sworn he was already snoring, but one eyelid popped back open and he stared directly at me. “It means whatever you want it to, my dear fellow,” he said wearily. “Now, get some rest. We both need it.”

CYRUS

I turned over in bed, laying my arm over the lump of sheets next to me. Whatever time it was, my internal clock told me it was too early to be awake yet, so I allowed myself to drift back into sleep before a muffled groan made my eyes flicker open. The sheets moved and I quickly pulled my arm off of him and scooted away, now wide awake.

“Oh, Nico, I’m sorry,” I whispered gruffly.

Nico didn’t respond, and I realized that I hadn’t actually woken him up by nearly crushing him to death. With that disaster averted, I allowed myself to rest my arm gently over him again, pulling him in closer.

He was actually rather cute when he was sleeping, his hair falling in front of his gently closed eyes, his chest rising and falling softly with each breath, and his mouth closed so he couldn’t say anything obtuse. I never thought I would be with a human like him, always assuming I would be matched with someone a little closer to my size – a bigger gargoyle, maybe, or even a tall human, but not Nico, who looked like he would blow away in a heavy gust of wind.

After a few minutes of watching him, he began to stir again. He rubbed his eyes and looked back at me, smiling before turning around again to look at the clock hanging on the opposite wall.

“Oh, shit,” he mumbled, the smile disappearing, “I have to get ready for work.”

“No, Nico, wait.”

“What? It’s almost 9, Cyrus. I’m gonna be late if you don’t let me get up.”

His body was weak in this dozy state, so it was easy to keep him pinned to the bed. “It’s Saturday, my dear fellow. We have all morning to stay inside and enjoy each other’s company –unless you picked up a weekend shift as an excuse to get away from me.”

He relaxed, leaning back against my chest, laughing softly. “I would never do that, but I did forget it was Saturday.” With a sigh of relief, he put his hand on top of mine, rubbing in little circles around my knuckles. “Well, Cyrus, what do you propose we do with our morning?” His voice was still a little gravelly, but even now as he spoke, it smoothed into that honey-sweet tone I was growing to love so much.

“I can think of a few ideas.” I shifted, pressing my erection against him.

Nico immediately tensed again, though no longer with worry. “I think I’m ready for the next step,” he told me.

“Are you?” I ran my fingers through his hair. “I shall be the one to determine that.”

A few strands were clumped together with product left over from yesterday and I smoothed them out as I combed my fingers through them. It was difficult to manage when my hand covered the top of his head fully, each finger looking like a sausage compared to his more delicate features.

Nico didn’t move as long as I caressed his head. He didn’t speak either, which was a pleasant change of matters. I didn’t dislike listening to Nico talk, but between the two

of us, there was rarely a moment of silence. Two chatty people did not mesh well together, even if that was one of the only things we had in common.

“You stay in bed and relax while I freshen up,” I said, slipping out from underneath his body weight.

“What are you going to do?” Nico asked, whipping his head around to watch me. “I don’t want you to leave for too long.”

“I’m simply going to brush my teeth,” I replied. “You know how it is with that pesky orc breath.”

“I think you make too big of a deal about that. Did someone complain about it once or something?”

I paused halfway to the bathroom. “Not exactly. It’s just that...oh, never mind. I’ll be gone for two minutes; do you think you can handle yourself?”

Nico nodded, recognizing that now wasn’t the time to ask more questions. I could feel his eyes on me as I closed the door behind me, taking in every little bit of me before I disappeared. He loved my body, that much I was certain of.

I came out a few minutes later as promised and rejoined Nico in bed. He cozied up next to me, his body fitting in beautifully against mine. Despite our size, we seemed to almost be made for each other, like two improperly cut puzzle pieces from a box of regular pieces. At least, I wasn’t cut quite right – Nico was as normal a human as they came.

“You told me you’re ready for more, so let’s see how true that is.”

Nico’s eyes were bright with desire. “Yes, I am. Tell me what to do and I’ll do it –

anything, anything at all.”

I lounged back and spread my legs out, rubbing a hand along my cock. “Very well. If you would like to, you can suck me off this morning.”

Nico’s eyes widened. “It would be my honor.”

I wasn’t used to taking control and making my partners do what I wanted them to. I wasn’t even sure if I did want Nico to give me head, though he was certainly eager enough to make it worth it.

He scrambled to the end of the bed and crawled up between my legs, positioning his head above my cock and his hands on my upper thighs. He settled into place, wrapped one hand around the base of my cock as far as his fingers could fit around, and dipped his head down. Eagerly, he licked around the tip, swirling the precum around to make insertion into his mouth a little smoother.

I watched him keenly, curious to know how well he would take my length. It didn’t matter if he failed today, as I would continue to teach him the ways of the orc as long as he needed help, but his over-confidence in his abilities intrigued me nonetheless, and I had a sneaking suspicion that he would try to go all the way this morning, whether he could handle it or not.

He lowered his mouth around the head, taking it in a little deeper, before glancing up at me. I gave him a nod of approval, rested the back of my head on the headboard, and closed my eyes. He could take it from here.

13

NICO

I realized as I stretched my mouth around Cyrus' dick that I was way out of my depth here. My lips barely fit around his girth and the length was another matter entirely. I was good at deepthroating, but this couldn't possibly fit all the way. I didn't know of a creature that existed that could take a full orc cock, except maybe another orc. And even then, I doubted it. Their mouths were big, but not that big.

I stroked the shaft a few times, fingering the veins that ran along the length. If I could manage to fit even half of it in my mouth, I had no doubt it would feel amazing. That was a big if, but I was determined to try.

Cyrus was enjoying his pleasuring to the fullest extent. I let him revel in the gratification for as long as I possibly could. His mouth hung open slightly and I could see both sets of fangs, the inner ones jutting out just over his lower lip. They were hidden from me most of the time, and it seemed like Cyrus preferred it that way.

I took an ambitious thrust downward, my mouth engulfing another inch or two of his cock. I'd reached the shaft and already I could feel the tip tickling the back of my throat, warning me to back off unless I wanted to choke.

I ignored the warnings and slipped down farther, allowing my tongue to slide across the tight green skin. His cock pulsed, each throb reminding me how big of a load I would have to take if I let him cum in my mouth – if I even had a choice.

Sweat trickled down my brow as spit gathered at the corners of my mouth. I had it wide open, stretched tight to fit around Cyrus. He let out a few deep, low moans that made my heart skip a beat as I reached closer to the base of his cock.

I couldn't go any farther down. I was already gagging and sputtering, something I wasn't used to doing in situations like this. But his cock filled my mouth to the brim, blocking my throat with its sheer width. I could feel it all the way down and I backed off a little to allow myself to breathe easier before pumping my head up and down a few more times.

I wasn't going to be able to handle much more of this, and as much as I wished I could keep going for as long as I wanted to, I began to hope and pray that he would cum soon. Tears stung my eyes and I choked back a cough, taking care not to bite down on his shaft. I honestly wasn't sure if he would be able to feel it much, but I didn't want to find out the hard way.

Cyrus' breath came out in a strong, heavy puff. His nostrils flared each time, his eyes still softly closed. He was in another world, one I wished I could join him in.

I closed my eyes, a couple of tears squeezing out, which trickled down my cheek and hung from my chin before dropping onto the sheets below. Before I could hold him in place, Cyrus reached down and pulled his cock out of my mouth, freeing me from the gag that had blocked me for several minutes.

"What are you doing?" I panted, flexing and rubbing at my jaw. It was going to be sore for days, at least.

Cyrus didn't answer, instead giving himself a few strong strokes before cumming on his stomach and chest, emitting a single strangled groan. I watched, a little disappointed he hadn't done it in my mouth.

“I could’ve taken that,” I whined.

Cyrus opened his eyes and looked at me witheringly. “No, you couldn’t have – not yet. Now, come here and let me take care of you. You look ready to explode.”

He wasn’t wrong. My balls ached for some release, and Cyrus barely had to touch my cock for me to lose control.

I crawled back to Cyrus’ side and fell back into the warm embrace of the bedsheets. “Fuck, that was hot.”

He handed me a damp hand towel. I took it and let it hang limply between two fingers, only for him to snatch it away again and dab it at my mouth and cheeks for me.

“Yes, it was fun,” he agreed. “I think I misjudged your readiness, however.”

“What? No, it went well, didn’t it?”

“Don’t worry, Nico. We shall keep trying, but you’re not ready for me to fuck you yet, as much as you so greatly desire to. I think we should return to simpler, easier activities after today anyway – you need to give your body a break. I don’t want to hurt you.”

“You won’t,” I began, but my jaw spasmed and I was forced to stop talking and let it rest.

Cyrus was right: I did need to slow down a bit.

14

CYRUS

Nico and I lay in bed for the rest of the morning, lazing about and enjoying each other's embrace. It was the ideal way to spend the weekend, just the two of us with no one else to bother us and nothing to worry about.

I stroked his hair and massaged his shoulders, kissed the back of his neck, everything two lovers did when they were, well, in love. I was falling for him, as much as I knew it would only hurt me in the long run. Nico didn't share my feelings and he'd been clear about that from the beginning. Nothing outside of my feelings had changed, but the worst part was that I didn't even care. I was too consumed by love right now to care one bit about the future.

Nico, of course, only had eyes for my cock. He liked me well enough, I was convinced of that much, but his love didn't extend beyond the flesh. He practically begged me to let him try blowing me again that evening, but I declined.

"We can have sex again tomorrow," I told him. "You need to pace yourself, my dear fellow. Even two humans can't possibly have sex all the time."

"They can try," Nico insisted.

"And unless they wish to fail, it's best not to tempt fate."

That seemed to quell his desires for a little while. We spent the day talking about

every little thing we could think of, and each hour that flew by, I found myself admiring my lover more and more. The sun set lower and lower yet we continued to talk well into the evening, even after the birds had all gone to bed, the frogs tired of croaking, and a warm spring rain started up.

“My first-ever boyfriend cheated on me,” Nico told me as I rubbed up and down along his thigh absentmindedly while we lounged on the couch.

We’d managed to move from the bedroom to the living room at some point during the afternoon, but somehow we’d still landed back in each other’s arms. It was difficult to pry Nico away from me, and even more difficult still considering I didn’t want to.

“I’m terribly sorry,” I murmured. “That must have been difficult for you.”

“It was. I had a hard time trusting my partners for a long time after that, and it led to some pretty messy breakups.”

“When did you start trusting people again?”

“When I met my last boyfriend, Cade. He was a wonderful man and he reminded me how much good there still was in life.”

“What happened to him? I mean, why are you not still together?”

Nico sighed. “Cade determined that he wasn’t interested in men after all. It broke my heart, but I couldn’t force him not to be true to himself. He’s married to a beautiful woman now and they have a kid. We still keep in touch sometimes, but we’re both busy and we’ve kind of moved on from that period in our lives.”

“That’s not too tragic of an ending, is it?” I traced a finger along his hip bone.

“No, I guess not. It could have been worse, although I don’t think I could love anyone else again like I loved him – not that I want to. Love is overrated anyway.”

My fingers lingered on the meaty part of his thigh. “Is it?” I asked, hoping the shakiness in my voice didn’t betray my disagreement.

“Eh, it’s all right for some people – not me, though. I think it’s more fun to move from guy to guy and experience a whole range of personalities and –“ his hand cupped my knee, fingers tightening with surprising strength –“bodies. But I’ve said enough. Now it’s your turn. What happened to all your men of the past?”

I stopped caressing his leg entirely. “I...haven’t dated much, to tell you the truth. I used the library’s matchmaking services because I have such trouble finding dates on my own.”

Nico furrowed his brow, looking back at me with a level of concern I couldn’t help but find endearing. “Why? You’re such a catch.”

“Thank you.” I chuckled. “Not everyone feels that way, though.”

“Well, they’re plain wrong. I can’t imagine someone turning down the chance to date an orc. It’s heaven on earth.”

“You flatter me, really. I did date one man for a year or so – a human, like you, although he was a little closer to my size.”

“A year is a long time. What happened?”

“He didn’t like some of my quirks. That happens in long-term relationships, as I’m sure you’re aware. Things you don’t believe will bother you at first chip away at you over time and eventually become too annoying to ignore.”

Nico sat up, turning till he was sitting in a way that he could see my face. “Let me get this straight: he didn’t like some things about you, so you broke up?”

“That’s right.”

“And what annoyed you about him?”

I shook my head and shrugged. “Nothing. I liked him a great deal. We had fun together, and for a time, it felt like we were the perfect match.”

“Well, He missed out then because you’re a real catch.”

“Maybe to you, but not to him. After he left, I thought I would never find someone who loved me again, and I’m sorry to admit that I think that’s true.”

Nio grabbed the side of my face, wrapping his fingers behind my neck. “Don’t you ever say that again, Cyrus P. Cartwright. You’re a wonderful man and completely deserving of love. Anyone who tells you differently has no right.”

I smiled sadly. “But how can it be wrong when the fact is, I’ve yet to find anyone who loves me – and I mean truly loves me?”

Nico fell silent. He couldn’t say those words, especially not after his loveless rant. I didn’t want him to either, not if he didn’t mean them.

“Well,” I said after a long and painful bout of silence, “I think it’s time for us to go to bed if we want to have any energy reserved for tomorrow.” I moved his hand away from my face and got up, stretching for a moment before leaving him on the couch to mull over our conversation.

“Are we doing anything tonight?” he called back hopefully, just as I was about to

close the bedroom door behind me to get changed into pajamas.

“No, my dear fellow. Tonight we shall enjoy our sleep.”

15

NICO

Cyrus was withdrawing from me. I could feel it in his touch and hear it in his voice. I couldn't let him slip away, not now. If I wanted to keep him, I needed to do something to keep him interested, but what? All my attempts to win him over with sex ended with either a reasonable rejection or a restrained session of lovemaking that ended well, but not at the level I was looking for.

I climbed into bed, already better at scaling the thick mattress than I was last week, and curled up next to him. He held me close, but there was a coldness in the room, and it wasn't coming from the partially open window. As I drifted off to sleep, I tried to picture us together years down the line when I was a head chef and he was, well, whatever he wanted to be in five or ten years. Still teaching at the university, maybe? He seemed happy doing that.

The vision was dark and blurry, showing me only glimpses of us holding hands watching the sunset, kissing at our wedding, or getting into bed night after night as our hair turned gray and our wrinkles deepened.

I couldn't do it. I couldn't give him what he really wanted, as much as I wanted to make him happy. He was a good guy, sure, and he made my heart leap with excitement most of the time. I looked forward to seeing him in the morning, hearing him whisper in my ear to see if I was awake. But that wasn't enough to make me want to spend the rest of my days by his side. The infatuation would wear off and we would both be left with an empty relationship and no one else to turn to.

I was restless throughout the night, and I woke up several times with a faint headache and blurry vision. Each time I squinted at the clock on the wall, praying it was 5 or 6 and I could get up, only to see that it was barely past midnight, or 2, or 3. When I inevitably kicked the sheets around to make them more comfortable, Cyrus shifted next to me, his weight making the entire bed creak.

When morning finally came and released me from the prison that was this bed, I got up and tiptoed to the bathroom. Taking a quick glance back before I shut the door, I determined that Cyrus was still asleep, which was exactly what I wanted.

In the bathroom, I took a few minutes to finger-comb my hair, brush my teeth, wash my face, and put on some lip balm. I wanted Cyrus to be impressed by me when he woke up – smitten and ready for some action. He had promised me we would get back to what was important in the morning, and I was more and more confident that I was ready for the next step.

When I was satisfied with my appearance, I slipped back into bed, pulled the blanket over both of us, and snuggled against his back. He moved a little, reaching his hand back to find mine and hold it.

Perfect timing, I thought.

“Good morning, sunshine,” I said softly. “Did you have a good night’s sleep?”

“Good enough.” He exhaled loudly and turned to lie flat on his back, tucking one hand behind his head. “Someone kept waking me with all his tossing and turning, though.”

My cheeks flushed. “Oops, sorry about that.”

“I don’t mind. Are you all right? Is there something wrong with the bed?”

“No, nothing wrong with the bed. I guess I just wasn’t that tired,” I lied.

I couldn’t tell him that thoughts of us, and not dirty thoughts, were what kept me from up last night.

“I’m quite surprised after yesterday morning’s escapades.” He smiled slyly. “I would have expected you to be worn out solely from that.”

Yesterday morning, when Cyrus let me get his cock in my mouth – how I wished we could do that again today, although it might take some convincing on my part.

“Yeah, but I’m stronger than that.” I tried to flex my muscles, but my strength paled in comparison to Cyrus’ naturally thick body and I shrank back, embarrassed that I’d even tried. “It’s Sunday,” I said, changing the subject. “You know what that means?”

“Church is in service?”

“What? God, no. I mean, yeah, it is, but we’re not going there. No, silly, you told me yesterday that we could have some more fun today.”

Cyrus nodded his head slowly. “And so we shall. But first, what about some breakfast?”

I waved my hand dismissively. “Aw, who needs breakfast? Although, if you’re taking orders, I’ll have one massive orc cock – raw.”

Cyrus rolled his eyes and let his head fall back onto the pillow. “How do I manage to put up with you?” he asked, staring up at the ceiling.”

“Because you love me.” I started to smile, but as the words I had just said sank in, I realized how badly I’d fumbled my hand and the smile faded, leaving me tight-lipped

and nervous that I was about to be kicked out onto my ass. I hadn't meant it. It just came out. I couldn't tell him that, though.

He blinked a few times, having nothing to say in response. What was there to say? I was a complete and utter idiot and we both knew it.

I leaned in closer, resting my hands on either side of his broad shoulders. "That was uncalled for, but let me make it up to you." I lowered my voice to a whisper. "Let me worship your cock."

Cyrus' expression changed. I couldn't tell for sure if it was a good change or a bad change, but his forehead wrinkles had smoothed slightly and his clenched jaw had relaxed, leading me to believe that he was genuinely considering my proposal.

"I'm just not sure if that's a good idea," he said after an obnoxiously long pause. "No one has asked me that before, and I don't know if I'm comfortable with it."

I sighed. "Look, I'm not going to make you do anything you absolutely don't want to, and I wouldn't blame you if you said no just because you're tired of putting up with me, but you have a beautiful body and someone – me – desperately wants to admire it. What could be wrong with that?"

He looked across the room at nothing in particular, a bright light sparking in his eyes for a second. He was intrigued. He wouldn't decline me now.

"All right," he said, snapping his gaze back to me, still lying in bed next to him waiting as patiently as I could. "Don't make me regret it."

"I won't, I promise."

CYRUS

I had to give it to Nico, he was good at convincing me to try things I'd never so much as thought of before. As his lips enclosed around the tip of my semi-erect cock, I allowed myself to fall back into his lurid fantasies for the second time in a day. His hands caressed me, his eyes trained downwards. I didn't know exactly what this morning would bring, but I did know one thing – he was committed to making it pleasurable at the very least.

He pulled his lips away and began to stroke me harder. His thumb ran over the tip, already leaking precum. I wouldn't last as long as I normally did, I could already feel it. Nico was determined to make the most of our precious time together, though, and he did his best to drag out every single touch.

"It's perfect," he told me, "the way it curves, the thick, bulbous head, the veins traveling along the length – I don't know how you've gone your entire sex life without something telling you that before."

"Most people don't care as much about genitalia as you do," I said gruffly.

"Oh, I don't know about that." He paused to lick the precum off his fingers, licking his lips when he was done. "People just don't appreciate orc cock enough, and it's a real shame."

Nico's lavishing praise might have been a touch overdone, but I didn't mind. In fact, I

rather liked it. He made me feel important, and like I was worthy of as much love as any other species of monster. I was every bit as special as he kept saying, I didn't mind admitting it.

"Oh, Nico, keep doing that," I groaned. "That feels nice."

His grip loosened and he broke eye contact with my cock to look up at me. "Nice? Just nice ? Come on, Cyrus, you can do better than that."

"Incredible – it feels incredible."

He turned his attention back to my cock, heeding my pleas for him to keep going. I was hard as a rock now, and there was no turning back. If we were to be interrupted now, heaven forbid, I would have the most terrible case of blue balls of my life – or green balls, as it were.

He dipped his head again, taking as much of me into his mouth as he could fit. I dug my fingers into the sheets, nails gripping into them like claws. A bit of drool trickled down past one of my fangs. This was not the same Cyrus from a few weeks ago. No, this beast was wholly unfamiliar to me. Nico was changing me, whether I wanted him to or not.

He got up from his hands and knees, sitting back on the bed. He still cradled my cock in his hands, but he kept moving his jaw back and forth as he sat there.

"I don't think I can go quite that far again for a while," he admitted with a laugh. "Sorry."

"Please, don't apologize. You're doing well enough without using your entire mouth and throat."

He got back into position on his knees and watched the way I twitched in his grip for a few long minutes. My cock ached, begging for more, begging to be sent over the edge, but I was in Nico's capable hands now, and while my words might have held some sway over him, I trusted him to deal with me however he deemed best.

"It's beautiful," he murmured between sucking and licking and kissing. "It's so beautiful. How were you blessed with the most incredible cock, when most of us get this?"

He pointed to his erection, which looked perfectly enticing to me. "It came with all the other wonderful quirks of being an orc," I replied, hoping the sarcasm wasn't too dripping to ruin the mood.

My breaths between talking or moaning or whimpering were growing heavier. There was a point when I felt as though I could've torn an entire building down with my strength, but now, as he wore me thinner, I was practically melting into the bed. I didn't know it was possible for a man to singlehandedly break me in the way that Nico had. All my life, I thought it took more than what most humans could do to get me going and keep me interested long enough to please their increasing demands.

But Nico, well, he was different. He massaged and caressed me, first gently, then a little harder, stroking my shaft with hands that must have been cramping by now, until I came harder than ever before. I saw stars as I squeezed my eyes shut, the swirls of color and light dancing around behind my eyelids.

When I opened my eyes again, he was lying back on the end of the bed, exhausted so early in the morning. I sat up and crawled toward him, flopping down next to him hard enough to make the bedsprings squeak.

"Nico?" I murmured.

“Yes?” he asked, staring up at the ceiling.

“Nico, may I tell you something?”

“Of course – anything.”

“I...think I’m falling in love with you.”

17

NICO

“What?” I rubbed at my ears, hoping they were just clogged and I’d heard Cyrus wrong. “Sorry, could you say that again?”

“I’m falling in love with you,” he repeated, more finality in his voice this time.

For me to say that he loved me was one thing, but for Cyrus to profess his love was a whole other thing and it was not something that I wanted to hear.

“Oh, well, Cyrus, I’m, um...I’m flattered. Really, that’s such a sweet thing to say. Don’t you think it’s a little early to declare something like that, though? I mean, we’ve only known each other for a week. We can joke about being soulmates all we want, but it’s probably best not to take it seriously.”

“Even if it’s the truth? I can’t hide my feelings, Nico.”

“No, I guess not. Well, uh, thank you.” I stammered through a painful struggle to come up with words – any words – to tell him. “I – I don’t know what to say.”

Cyrus didn’t respond. He was waiting for me to profess my love back, but I couldn’t do that, not even after the level of intimacy we’d reached minutes before. Maybe there was something wrong with me, but it didn’t matter: Cyrus expected an answer right and I couldn’t give him the one he wanted.

“Hey, is that the time?” I craned my neck to look over at my phone on the nightstand. “I should get going. I need to be up early tomorrow for work and I didn’t sleep super well so I might take a nap when I get home, plus I need to clean the house a little and I’m sure I’ve got some texts to respond to by now, since I haven’t checked my phone in over a day –“

“Nico!” Cyrus held a hand up before pressing the fingers of that same hand against my lips. “Stop rambling. I understand what you’re trying to say, and there’s no need to be afraid to say it. You don’t feel the same way, but that’s all right.”

“It is? You’re okay with that?”

Cyrus smiled a little too cheerfully. “I have to be, don’t I? And you’re right, I think it would be best if you leave now. I’ll be spending the afternoon washing bedding and tidying up the clutter we left around, and there’s nothing particularly fun or sexy about that.”

“No, there’s not.” I chuckled nervously. “I’ll see you again soon. Tomorrow after work, maybe?”

Cyrus was silent for so long, I thought he might have fallen asleep. When I looked over at him, though, his eyes were wide open and he glanced back at me. His answer was disappointing:

“Let’s wait until next weekend. I need some time to think things through, I suspect you’re going to need a chance to let your muscles recuperate.”

He had a point. My jaw ached, my fingers were stiff, and my head felt full of stuffing and twice its usual size from a lack of sleep.

“Okay, I’ll see you in a week, then.” I got up, scooping my pile of clothes off the

floor.

I really wished I had something a little fresher to put on, but these would do until I got home. I made a mental note to pack a small bag of things next week, as Cyrus' deodorant and toothbrushes worked fine, but were a little overpowering for a mere human like me.

I said one last goodbye at the front door and headed out, the late morning sun nearly blinding me as I walked to my car. Someone had left a note on the windshield asking me to please move it and I made another mental note to find somewhere better to part next time.

It was lonely not having Cyrus around, and even lonelier when I imagined getting to the weekend only for him to call me and tell me he'd changed his mind. He wasn't the kind of man to renege on promises just like that, but after that painful conversation in bed, I wouldn't exactly blame him. A week was both an eternity and a split-second of time for us to think things through – for Cyrus to think things through, anyway. I already knew what I wanted, and I knew that I wasn't going to get it.

I still didn't want to stop seeing him, not when we were finally starting to understand each other. But it felt wrong to stick around and get what I wanted when I refused to give him the only thing that he desired. I could lie and tell him I loved him after all, but he would sniff a lie like that out immediately and there would be no walking back a false declaration of love. Not with Cyrus, anyway.

I just wasn't a true-love kind of guy and I couldn't pretend that I was. I learned that after the only man I ever really loved broke up with me, and I'd made peace with it. Not everyone was capable of spending the rest of their days with one person or one monster and if Cyrus expected me to change, that was on him, because I was honest about what I was looking for from the very beginning.

I got back to my apartment and fell into bed, forgetting about everything else except sleep. Sweet, precious, necessary sleep. My troubles with Cyrus could wait another day or two or three, and even if I never saw him again, I couldn't muster up the strength to care about that anymore right now.

CYRUS

I headed into work early Monday morning so I could get a jump on some tedious paperwork, but when I arrived at the college, I realized that I wasn't the only one who had that idea.

I tapped my finger on the glass part of my colleague's office door and he smiled, gesturing for me to come inside.

"Irving, what a pleasant surprise to see you here," I said as I walked in, ducking my head. "I thought I would be all alone for the next hour."

"I'm absolutely swamped with midterms to grade," he explained. "No doubt you're here for the same reason."

"Of course." I sat down, the arms on the narrow leather chair squeezing my thighs. "Tell me, how is the life of domestic bliss?"

Irving chuckled. "Sylvan has forgone commissions on paintings entirely as he plans our wedding. I let him take the lead on it, as he had a much clearer vision of what he wanted than I did. Coffee?" He held up the small pot he kept in his office. "It's fresh."

"Yes, please. I suppose it's for the best that you let him take over if his mind is set."

“It’s true. I did make him include me in picking out the wedding bands, although we went with his choice in the end.” He handed me a cup filled to the brim with steaming hot black coffee. “They’re...made of wood.”

“Well, that’s a fun twist on the traditional ring, isn’t it?”

“I suppose so. I don’t care so long as we actually get through the wedding and things slow down a bit.”

“But you’re happy with him, aren’t you?” I took a sip of the coffee, the hot liquid burning my throat as it went down.

“Happy beyond belief.” Irving smiled, a faraway haze clouding his eyes. “Sylvan is the most wonderful person to ever enter my life. I can’t believe I almost let him go.”

“You’re a lucky man,” I said, giving him a somber smile.

“Don’t fret, Cyrus. You’ll find the one someday too. You’re still using the matchmaking service, aren’t you?”

“I actually got a match about a week ago,” I admitted. “I didn’t tell anyone because I wasn’t sure if it would stick. I’ve waited so long, you know, and it felt too good to be true.”

“That’s wonderful. Tell me about him – is he human?”

“Yes,” I said slowly, “but he’s not what you might picture as being a good human match for me.”

“Oh. You mean, he’s short?”

“Well, that, and he’s not really the romantic type. Honestly, I’m not sure how much longer we’ll last as a couple.”

Irving’s smile faded. “I’m sorry to hear that.”

“It’s all right. I’m trying to enjoy it while it lasts. It’s been so long since I’ve dated someone, I nearly forgot how wonderful it can be.”

Irving leaned forward, lowering his voice despite no one else being in the building. “And what about the sex? Is it good?”

“Irving, where are your manners?” I laughed. “Yes, the sex is rather good – great, actually. In a way, that’s the problem.”

“How could good sex possibly be the problem?”

“It’s all he cares about. He likes me well enough, I think, but the poor little fellow specifically asked for an orc because he’s been watching orc porn or something like that, and his dream is to have sex with one in real life.”

Irving sat back in his chair, taking a big swig of coffee before responding. “That’s unfortunate. What do you think of him, though? Do you like him?”

“I like him a great deal. Irving, may I tell you something confidential?”

“Of course. You know I won’t tell another soul, not even Sylvan.”

“I think I would be perfectly content spending the rest of my life with him. He would never go for it though, so I’m trying not to think too far ahead.”

“Have you told him as much?”

“Yes, I told him yesterday when we were together.”

“Then that’s all you can do. Don’t worry, Cyrus. Even if he’s not your soulmate, the right man will come along eventually and sweep you off your feet.” He frowned as he thought over the logistics of that fantasy. “Well, you might be the one sweeping him off his feet, but my point still stands. The Librarian is masterful at finding the ideal match, even if you don’t believe in it at first.”

“I know,” I sighed, “but I’m just so tired of being patient. Anyway, I should leave you to your work so that I can start on mine. Thank you for letting me unburden my woes on you.”

“Anytime, Cyrus. You’re always welcome to sit and have a chat when something is troubling you, especially relationship woes. I went through a fair share of them myself even after I met Sylvan, if you’ll recall.”

“I do indeed. I’m looking forward to the wedding and, fingers crossed, I’ll be able to bring a plus-one to it.”

Irving smiled reassuringly. “I know you will. Good luck with your little friend.”

I left Irving’s office with a weight lifted off my shoulders. My steps were light and springy for an orc and the entire world around me was a little brighter and more vibrant. What I needed to do was give Nico more time, and even if he didn’t change, I would still be here and my soulmate would still be out there somewhere waiting for me. It was all I could do to keep hoping and waiting.

19

NICO

I got what I'd been waiting for on Friday night. My heart nearly exploded out of my chest when I saw the text from Cyrus and, hands shaking, I opened it to read it in full:

I'm looking forward to seeing you tomorrow morning, bright and early. Get a good night's rest, because you're going to need it.

"Thank God," I breathed. "Cyrus, man, you know how to keep someone on edge."

With my weekend plans cemented, it was hard to fall asleep despite Cyrus' request for me to come well-rested. I would need it, he'd told me. What did that mean? Were we finally moving on to the next step? Was he going to...no, I couldn't allow myself to get my hopes up. It was probably more of what we'd already been doing: playing around with toys or something else fun but safe. Whatever it was, I would eagerly lap up the attention as long as he was willing to give it to me.

I threw some things into a bag as soon as I had confirmation that I would be seeing Cyrus. I packed enough to stay the whole weekend if he asked me to. I wanted to be as prepared as possible.

I got up way too early Saturday morning, took a hot shower to wake up, and hopped in my car, hoping Cyrus would be awake when I arrived. If he wasn't I would just have to sit out on his doorstep in the cold for a while. It was nothing I couldn't handle.

He'd left me a space to park out in front of his house and I pulled up a little too quickly, scraping my tires on the curb. The lights in the living room were on, which meant he was awake. Cyrus was much too conscientious to forget to turn the lights off before going to bed. I knocked on the door before pressing my ear to it to listen for his footsteps.

"Cyrus, it's me, Nico. Sorry, I'm a little early," I called to him.

The door swung open and I pitched forward, tumbling into Cyrus' arms.

"Careful, my dear fellow," he laughed, "or you'll break one of those thin little bones you humans need so much."

"I got a little too excited, I guess." I blushed, trying to hide my face from him, but he tucked a finger under my chin and tilted my head back.

"Are you hungry for breakfast? Or tea, or coffee? I have everything."

"I am hungry," I said slowly, "but not for breakfast. I think I'm ready to go straight to dessert."

Cyrus nodded and took my hand in his. "Let's go to the bedroom, then."

"No." I pulled my hand away. "No, let's stay out here – do it on the couch or something."

He glanced out of one of the street-facing windows nervously. "Out here?" he hissed. "The neighbors might see."

"Who cares? Most people fuck in their own homes."

“ I care.”

“Then close the curtains.” I tugged on the fabric, smoothing each panel over the window until it was fully covered. “You can do the other one.”

“We’ll still cast shadows.”

“Let it go, Cyrus. Everything will be fine.”

Carefully, he drew the curtains on the other window, shielding us from the outside world. I flicked the switch to turn the overhead light off, washing the room in darkness.

“Now they won’t even be able to see our shadows.”

Cyrus nodded. “That’s better. I’m still not sure that no one will be able to see us at all, but I think it’s good enough.”

I rolled my eyes. “Well, yeah, if they peek in through the window they’ll see everything. But if they’re being a peeping tom, that’s their problem. Now, come here and let me touch that gorgeous leathery skin of yours before I get cranky.”

He narrowed his eyes, looking at me incredulously. “Do you really love everything about me as much as you profess you do?”

Love . There was that word again. He wasn’t using it in that pesky forever and ever context, but it still burned my ears when I heard it.

“You know I do.”

“Then come over here and prove it to me.”

I smiled. “Well, look who’s in a bossy mood today. The orc’s got some attitude, hm?”

“Oh, I can stop if you don’t want me to boss you around,” he said apologetically.

“No, no, I like it.” I moved toward him, turning and letting him wrap his arms around me, his hands pressing into my chest till it was almost difficult to breathe. Almost .

“Now, tell me, what do you have in store for us today?”

“You’ve been putting in so much of the work these last few dates, I thought I might offer you a little something in return. How does that sound?”

I could tell by how serious his tone was that he’d been thinking about this all week, and it would have been funny if it weren’t genuinely thoughtful – and a little painful, knowing he had feelings not shared by me.

“I’d love that,” I said, lowering my voice to a near-whisper. “And what do you plan to do to me?”

He led me over to the couch, pushing the coffee table out of the way. It slid so easily, I would have believed him if he said the floor was made of ice. Then he directed me to get onto my knees, arms resting on the seat of the couch, and relax.

The couch was almost too tall for me to do what he asked, but I lifted my arms high in the air and rested my head next to them, letting my chin sink into the cushion. I would kill to own a couch this plush and cloudlike, but I was pretty sure Cyrus paid dearly to have one that fit him, I didn’t have that kind of money to blow on a fancy couch.

“I hope you don’t mind if this takes a long time,” Cyrus told me, his voice coming

from directly behind my back. “I want to repay you for all the time and dedication you put into pleasuring me last week, and this is the best way I know how.”

“I don’t mind one bit,” I assured him. “I’ll take anything you’re willing to give me.”

That was confirmation enough and he rested both his hands on my shoulders, his fingers digging into the knots in my back from work and stress. I closed my eyes, took a breath, and waited for him to begin.

CYRUS

I let my fingers work their way down Nico's back, sinking their tips into every inch of yielding flesh. He sighed once, a moan escaping his lips at the tail-end of the breath. He was ready for me to go lower.

I spread his asscheeks, pert and perfect, and slid a finger across his hole. I would have given anything to fuck him right here, right now, but there was no reality in which that would have worked out well.

Instead, I pressed my tongue against his hole and licked upward, tasting the saltiness of his skin and the faintest floral aura of soap. My tongue was large enough to fill his entire crack, so I took care to only use the tip at first. I could go further later if Nico enjoyed it, but now was not the time to make bold moves on him.

Nico let out a long, satisfied sigh and shifted a little before sinking into the couch again. He was enjoying it, at least, which was all I cared about. I prodded a little harder before pulling my tongue away, only to lay it flat against his hole.

"Is that your tongue?" he asked, his voice muffled. I responded with a grunt, which was affirmation enough for him. "It feels amazing ," he moaned. "Keep going."

I had no intention of stopping now anyway but with Nico's encouragement, I gave him a little more tongue, a little more stimulation. His body shuddered with a shiver as the tip of my tongue trailed up, reaching almost to the small of his back.

Goosebumps appeared on his skin and I reached around with one of my hands, finding his cock and stroking it.

It didn't take long for his muscles to tense, telling me he was close to climax. If I'd wanted to, I could have pulled back and drawn things out a little longer, but I worried that Nico was getting tired. The last thing I wanted to do was overstimulate him, so with the last bit of stamina I had left of his to use, I pushed the tip of my tongue into his hole, my nose bumping up against his crack.

Nico groaned gripping his hand around mine and squeezing his cock. spurts of cum dribbled down my fingers and I pulled my face away from his ass, taking a deep breath now that my nostrils were unobstructed. I wrapped my free arm around him and pulled him up, lending him my strength now that I'd spent his.

"I could do that all day," I told him, sitting next to him on the floor, still supporting most of his weight with my arm.

"And I would let you," Nico said, still struggling to catch his breath. "But not tonight. I'm pretty tired."

I brushed strands of hair out of his face. "I know," I told him. "You deserve to rest. Would you like something to eat, or maybe drink?"

He shook his head and smiled. "Not right now. What I'd really like is to give you head again, but you know how I get after I cum –" he stifled a yawn – "sleepy."

"Don't worry about me; I'm used to taking care of myself. Let me just get a blanket and then we can lie out here for a little bit. Some cuddling sounds nice, doesn't it?"

Nico yawned again, this time unable to suppress it. "Yeah, sure," he said absentmindedly. It does sound nice."

My heart sank, but I forced myself to keep smiling. He was tired and probably not thinking about what he was saying. He tended to do that even when he was at peak mental alertness, so justifying his tone now was easy. Yes, he was tired, that was all, and it was nothing a little rest on the couch couldn't fix.

Someday, surely, he would catch feelings, and I would be there with open arms to love him back. Until then, we still had something marvelous; a passion that was hard to come by even in strong, committed relationships, and I would keep holding onto that as long as I possibly could.

"I'll get a blanket from the bedroom," I said, snapping back to reality when Nico cleared his throat. "I'll be right back."

He smiled at me again, those laugh lines deepening as the smile spread. "I'll be waiting. And, Cyrus?"

"Yes?"

"Thanks again for everything. You're the best."

The best. I was the best. That compliment was enough to warm my heart, even if it was only for a fleeting moment before a gnawing sense of dread returned, replacing any warmth I'd just had.

21

NICO

I couldn't do this anymore. I was lying to myself if I thought we could make this last much longer, and it was never clearer to me than when Cyrus picked me up and set me gently on the couch before draping a blanket over me and tucking it between the cushions and the backrest. If he weren't as caring, it might have been easier. But this – this was too much.

“You're too good to me,” I mumbled.

Cyrus scoffed. “Nonsense. There is no such thing as being too good to someone you care about.”

“Or love ?” I prodded.

Cyrus' lips trembled. “Yes,” he said after a moment. “Yes, I believe that applies to love as well.”

I pulled my arms out from underneath the blanket. I reached out to grab Cyrus' arm and pull him back down to me level. “It's not fair,” I said.

Cyrus knelt on the floor next to the couch, scooting a little closer to me. He still towered over me, but at least he wasn't so far away from my face that I could barely see his expression. The problem was, even closer to my face, I still couldn't tell what he was thinking.

“What do you mean?” he asked, smiling and cocking his head curiously.

“What I mean is that we can’t keep pretending we’ve got something substantial here,” I told him. “It’s not fair to either of us. I’m keeping you from living the life you deserve and you, well, you love me too much to make this decision yourself.”

“But I thought we’ve been having fun.”

“We have been – at least, we were. It’s gone past fun now, though. You’ve caught feelings for me and when my infatuation dies out, there won’t be anything left for us to hold onto.”

Cyrus nodded slowly. I knew I didn’t love him. I’d always been honest about that. But at this point, he was blinded by his feelings and wouldn’t see things any other way unless I made him. I hated doing that to him and as his dark eyes turned dull and sad, I couldn’t help but wonder if there had been some better way to let him down.

“I understand.” He stood up, looming over me like the monster that he was – the monster I’d been so intrigued by a few weeks ago.

I still held a fascination with him, but the longer I spent with him, the more I realized that he was just like anyone else. His body looked different than mine, or, say, an incubus’, but he had the same desires as any human would.

He wanted to love and to be loved, to have someone to come home to after a long day of work, to wake up next to that person in the morning and plant a kiss on his cheek. It was so little to ask for, but I was never going to be that person for him. I’d spent too long building my life around a different set of ideals and it was too late to change them now.

“I guess I should go,” I said quietly, lifting the blanket off of myself so I could get up.

“No, it’s too late for you to leave tonight,” Cyrus insisted. “You should sleep here. I’ll bring you another blanket for the couch if you’d like, or you can sleep in my bed and I’ll stay out here.”

“Oh, Cyrus, I can’t do that.” I blinked a few times, fighting back the tears I hadn’t prepared for. “But thank you for your generosity. You’ve always been so generous with me.”

He smiled sadly. “Not always. In the very beginning, you asked for something that I didn’t give you. It’s too late now, and I apologize for making you wait. I simply wasn’t ready, and neither were you.”

“It’s okay,” I replied. “It doesn’t really matter. I had a lot of fun with you, and you’ve opened up a whole new world to me. Someday maybe I’ll have my fantasies fulfilled, but I kind of asked to be put in my place after matching with someone who was looking for something else entirely. I never should have tried to force it.”

I sat up and Cyrus handed me my clothing folded neatly into a pile that looked more like doll clothes in his hands. I hurried to put everything back on, the awkwardness seeping into the room with each second that dragged by.

“I shall see you again someday, I’m sure,” Cyrus said as he walked me to the door. “At the library, perhaps?”

I turned around to take one last look at him and smiled. He was unbearably handsome in this lighting, even with a deep sadness dulling his eyes. “Perhaps.”

CYRUS

I should have been devastated to see Nico go, but all I could manage was a sigh of relief. He never would have been happy with me, and I couldn't be with a man who was stifling his own desires to keep me satisfied.

The longer I sat in silence at an empty dining room table, however, the more the realization crept in that I would have to return to the library and begin looking for a new match.

"Another year or two of waiting," I said wearily, letting my chin rest in my hands. "At least I can say I tried my best with Nico."

Dear, sweet Nico. I would never forget that man, not even if I met my soulmate and married someday. He was a part of my life story permanently, and I didn't have the heart to try to erase the marks he'd left on me.

I went to the library after work the next day, sidling in with full awareness that all heads turned when I walked through the door. How could they not? I had to duck to walk inside, although the library's door had better clearance than most.

"Professor Cartwright, how lovely to see you," the Librarian greeted me as I straightened up.

"Likewise." I smiled.

“I do apologize for the door,” they said hastily when I rubbed the back of my neck, sore from hunching over to fit into buildings so often. “I’ve been asking to put a new one in that’s more accommodating, but you know how long these things take even if people are receptive to the idea.”

“Oh, I don’t mind. I’m rather used to it by now.” I glanced around the room, ensuring that everyone had returned to reading or working. “I was wondering if we might speak in private?” I asked in a hushed tone, leaning in closer to the counter.

The Librarian looked up at me and blinked. “Is this not private enough?”

“I’m afraid not. My voice tends to carry even when I whisper.”

“Very well. Will the matchmaking room suffice?”

“Yes, I believe it will. Actually, that is what I wish to speak with you about.”

Their expression softened. “Ah, I see. Follow me, then, and we can discuss your match.”

I’d made this walk through the library once before when I first submitted an application over a year ago. I thought I wouldn’t have to make it ever again, yet here I was, very much single and very much wishing for a mate.

They moved a few books around on the polished darkened wood shelf before pushing back the entire shelf to reveal a small passage to a secret room. It wasn’t so secret anymore, not since all the humans and monsters in town seemed to desire a perfect match from the matchmaker themselves, but the sentiment was still there: this was a room meant for a specific purpose, one that the Librarian and all who entered behind them held sacred.

I lumbered inside and sat down in a chair that was far too small for me. I was afraid I might break the delicate wooden frame, but even as it creaked underneath my weight, the Librarian said nothing about it.

“I take it you’re in need of a new match?” they asked, flipping through the pages of a large, partially filled book. The cover was made of ornately stamped brown leather. The stampings were of monsters of all shapes and sizes, including an orc tucked away in one corner.

“I – yes, that is exactly what I’m here for,” I said, a little surprised by their perceptiveness. “How did you know?”

“I suspected Mr. Ross had ulterior motives from the start.” They clicked their tongue. “Well, he told me as much when he sighed up. But the book doesn’t lie,” they held the massive book up for a moment, allowing me to get a glimpse inside the empty pages, “and I thought perhaps I had misjudged the man. I see now that my first impressions were correct.”

“But if the book doesn’t lie, how could he be the wrong match for me?” I asked.

“Not all matches are perfect. Some are matched up based on specific characteristics,” they explained.

“Such as being an orc.”

“Exactly. Mr. Ross’ fate may well lie in a relationship with an orc, but that does not mean that the match will be perfect from the beginning. Of course, people change over time, sometimes matching up better than they initially did, but sometimes it’s their match who changes them into the partner they were meant to be. Now, I cannot tell you much more without revealing my secrets, but there is some burden on the matches to make their relationship work.”

“Then Nico and I, we were supposed to persist in our relationship even though you yourself have admitted you didn’t think it would work?”

“Ah, now you’re putting words in my mouth.” They shook their head, bronze curls swinging back and forth. “No, what I told you was that Nico had something else in mind when looking for a mate. My worry was that neither of you was ready to be matched up, but I cannot choose when a match occurs. That, my friend, is yet another thing left up to fate to decide.” They snapped the book closed and set it back on the shelf. “Now, everything appears to be in order. I shall contact you when you receive another match, although –“

“I know, I know.” I nodded wearily. “It could take weeks, months, or even years.”

The Librarian smiled again and offered me a small pat on the shoulder. “I’m sorry, Professor. Sometimes life works out differently than we hope. Your match is out there somewhere.”

“Yes,” I said, “and at the moment, he’s in a hot, stuffy kitchen taking orders from a chef who barks at him like a drill sergeant.”

“Hm?”

I shook my head. “Never mind. Thank you for taking time out of your busy day, Librarian. I hope to from you again soon, although I very much doubt it.”

They followed me out of the matchmaking room, sliding the bookshelf shut behind them. “Don’t lose hope quite yet. I know it can be difficult, but these things take time.”

I nodded and thanked them again, although I didn’t really believe what they were saying. If any of it were true, then Nico and I would have been able to work things

out. In fact, the longer I thought about what they had told me in the matchmaking room, the more I regretted letting Nico go. Was it really the right decision if we were the best match for each other? Should we have tried harder to make things work?

It didn't matter if Nico's heart wasn't in it, and unless he heard what the Librarian had to say for himself and truly believed it, I could never change his mind. Love was simply not something he was interested in, as hard as it was for me to wrap my head around that, and I had to respect his decision.

I still missed him, though, and when I returned home all alone with no one to curl up on the couch with or climb into bed with me, the reality of my life going forward finally sank in. And the worst part by far was the ache in my heart that had grown twice as painful to make up for the man who wasn't there anymore.

23

NICO

I waited a couple of days before going back to the library to look for someone new. I wanted to give Cyrus some time to go there himself without the worry of running into me since he cared so much about finding his soulmate as quickly as possible.

I honestly wasn't sure why I went back there at all, but once I found myself in front of the inviting doors with a big open sign tacked on in the middle, it wasn't hard to step inside. The Librarian greeted me with a smile and I smiled back, but it wasn't the least bit genuine on my part.

"Hi, I'm here to look for a new match," I told them as I approached the counter. "I'm sure you've already talked to Cyrus – I mean, Professor Cartwright."

"Yes," the Librarian nodded, "he was in here a few days ago. I expected him to return, but I must admit that I'm surprised to see you back. I thought perhaps you would have sworn off matchmaking entirely."

"Oh, no, I'm not that easy to get rid of." I laughed. "I guess I can't be alone for very long after all."

"Of course, and we're happy to have you back. I welcome all match-seekers to use my service as much as they wish. Now, is there anything you would like to change in your application before I put it back into the dating pool?"

I hesitated. If I left it the way it was, I would only get a match with another orc, and I wasn't sure if I was ready to move on from Cyrus so quickly. "Do you have any goblins?"

The Librarian raised their eyebrows in surprise. "Did I not tell you before that searching for specific monsters in this way leads to more waiting and potentially less integrity in the match?"

"Yeah, but the orc search worked out well until it didn't."

"Exactly. And to answer your question, no, I do not have any goblins currently looking for a mate. This town doesn't have many goblins in it based on some of their past experiences, as you might recall."

"The Goblin-Orc Conflict of 1504? Wasn't that, what, like 500 years ago?"

"521, to be precise."

"Surely they've moved on from that. Besides, if what I learned in my history lessons is true, our town didn't even participate in that conflict."

"Yes, and because of that, the orcs used our town as a sort of refuge for those few years. The goblins never really came back once we had established a fairly large population of orcs."

"Oh, I see. Well, if there are plenty of orcs around here, you can keep my application exactly how it is. I doubt any other orc can compare to Cyrus, but I guess I'll give them a try."

"Of course, Mr. Ross. Is there anything I might help you with today?"

“Please, call me Nico. No one else calls me Mr. Ross, and you know me better than most people do at this point. And, no, that’s it.”

“Very well, then, Nico. Have a lovely day, and I shall contact you when I find you a match.” The Librarian looked down at their book and sighed. “Oh, dear.”

I was about to turn and leave, but I stopped and leaned over the counter to get a better view of the pages. “What? What is it?”

“It seems that your match is already in this book. I should have thought that through a little more clearly before you came in.” They shook their head.

“Who is it?” I grinned. “Don’t keep me in suspense.”

“It’s Professor Cartwright.” They glanced up at me, their mouth pulled into a tight line, and my smile faded.

“Oh. I forgot that his application was open again. Is there another match I could maybe go with? You know, the second- or third-best?”

The Librarian flipped furiously through the pages. “Yes, here is your second-best match. What a relief that they are already looking for a mate.”

“And he’s an orc?”

“Yes, an orc male named Throkhan. He’s 42 and has been looking for a match for 2 years.”

I nodded. “He’s not related to Cyrus, is he?”

The Librarian shrugged. “Truth be told, I have no idea. It’s quite unlikely, though.

Professor Cartwright moved here from a different city when he got a job at the university, and I've known of Throkhan's family for many years. They've lived in the area for decades. It says here that he prefers conversation via phone, so here is his number." They handed me a slip of paper folded neatly in half. "Good luck, Nico."

"Thanks, I'll need it."

I left with a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. When I matched with Cyrus the first time, I was excited, if a little nervous. Now I couldn't conjure up any excitement as hard as I tried. My hands shook with anxiety as I opened and refolded and reopened the paper with Thokhan's number scrawled across it. This was a good thing, wasn't it? This was exactly what I wanted. And yet, all I could think about was Cyrus sitting alone on that big white couch in his house and it made me want to cry.

CYRUS

I had trouble sleeping every single night after my visit to the library. My dreams were filled with visions of Nico and in those dreams, he smiled and laughed, his nose crinkling and dimples appearing at the corners of his mouth. And when he wasn't smiling, he was looking at me with eyes so adoring, I would have given anything to wake up and find him in bed next to me.

I'd never stopped loving him, not even when he told me he didn't love me back, nor when he broke up with me and should have broken my heart. My heart was intact and as full as ever, just with no Nico to shower my love upon.

I couldn't get what the Librarian had said out of my mind, and I wondered if Nico had gone back to the library yet as well. Had the Librarian explained things to him the way they had with me? Would it change anything if they did?

So many times, I picked up my phone to call Nico, but every time I backed out at the last minute and set it back down with the number already entered and ready to call. The fifth time I allowed myself to get that far, I grew frustrated with my inability to follow through with something so simple and tossed my phone onto the couch, where it wedged itself between the cushions.

"Dammit," I cried, throwing my hands up in annoyance. "You're not usually this way, Cyrus. What's gotten into you?"

I fished the phone out of the couch and was about to put it in my pocket when I noticed that the call had gone through and Nico had already picked up on the other end. Cautiously, I put the phone to my ear.

“Hello?” Nico said, sounding a little annoyed. It must not have been the first time he’d said it.

“Hello, Nico,” I answered quickly.

“Oh, there you are. I thought maybe you butt-dialed me or something. Can orcs do that? I suppose anyone with an ass can.”

“Yes, I suppose so. I was actually just calling to see how you’re doing and I dropped my phone before you picked up. I’ve been awfully clumsy lately.”

“Yeah, I get that.” Nico laughed awkwardly. “I’ve been clumsier lately too and my boss is none too pleased. He can’t fire me, though, because no one else would ever put up with his antics.”

“Oh, I’m sorry to hear that. If you don’t want to talk right now, I would understand. I can call back later – or you could call me if you’d like. I’m always available for a quick chat.”

“No,” Nico said quickly, cutting me off from rambling on any longer. “I’ve been meaning to call you, I just haven’t found the right time, you know?”

“Better than you can ever imagine.”

He laughed again, this time clearer and more brightly. I missed that laugh. “I’ve been thinking about you a lot lately. It’s hard to forget the time we spent together over those weeks together, huh?”

“Indeed it is.” I paused as another voice on Nico’s end, distant and faint, said something. It was too muffled for me to make out the words, but the voice sounded masculine and rather deep for a human. “Are you busy?” I asked.

“Um, a little bit. Maybe it would be better if I call you back later. Is that okay?”

“Of course, of course. I’m terribly sorry for bothering you.”

“It’s not a bother, really, I’m just, well, I’m on a date.”

I nearly dropped the phone, letting it slide all the way down my cheek before fixing my slackened grip and pushing it back up.

“Cyrus? Are you still there?”

I cleared my throat. “Yes, I am. A date, you said? How wonderful.” The wavering in my voice betrayed my true feelings.

“Yeah, with another orc named Throkhan. Do you know him?”

“I’m afraid not. He sounds delightful, though.”

“Well, we’ll see. I’m waiting for him to get back from the bathroom right now. I’ll call you tomorrow and let you know how it went.”

“Tomorrow morning?”

He was silent for a few seconds. “Yeah, in the morning. And if not then, in the evening when I’m off work. Speaking of which, you have a nice day off tomorrow – it’s a holiday for schools, right?”

I smiled. "That's right. I'm surprised you remember."

"I'm better at remembering things than you think. Oh, he's back. I'll talk to you later. Bye!"

He smooched at the phone and hung up before I could get a word in edgewise. Slowly, I sank down onto the couch and let my phone drop into my lap. I had to be happy for Nico however this new relationship turned out. I couldn't give him what he wanted in the end, but perhaps this orc could. Perhaps he would even fall in love with Throkhan, whoever he was, and I would one day find myself attending a wedding between the two.

Or, more likely, it would be another fling he grew tired of after a month or two before moving on to a newer, more interesting monster. I tried my best not to let my thoughts about Nico grow bitter, but it was difficult when he could move on so easily and I was left to pick up the pieces of our shattered relationship alone.

My heart hadn't been broken before but it was now, and it was Nico who'd stomped directly on it and shattered it into pieces without even realizing where he was stepping.

25

NICO

My first date with Throkhan was going well so far, even though I couldn't stop thinking about my conversation with Cyrus at the beginning of it. I worried that I was too distracted throughout the date, but apparently I was good enough to get invited back to Throkhan's place.

"Are you sure?" I asked him. "That's a lot to commit to on the first date."

Throkhan shrugged his massive shoulders. "Why not? Don't you like having fun?"

I smiled. "Yeah, I do."

It was tough to decline something as tempting as this, I took him up on his offer and got into his car with him, hoping his home was at least half as nice as Cryus'.

"You mentioned that you're a logger, right?" I asked, settling into the passenger seat that was almost too big for me.

"That's right." Throkhan nodded.

"Cool. So, how long have you worked in the logging industry?"

"My whole adult life," he answered as he pulled onto the dark highway, driving past rows of trees along the sides of the road. "My daddy worked in the industry when I

was a wee lad, so I grew up learning the business.”

“How interesting.”

“I’m thinking about getting out of logging, though,” he continued, “but I’m not sure what else I would do.”

“Why, is it not profitable enough?”

“No, the trees still pay well, but I’ve been having to deal with some real nightmares over the last few years. Y’know the Librarian?”

“Yeah, of course. I signed up for the matchmaking service like you, remember?”

Throkhan grunted. “Their cousin, Sylvan Lockwood, is some sort of tree-lover, I think. He’s been protesting at all of my major sites for at least five years now. There’s something wrong with him, I’m telling you.”

“Sylvan? Isn’t he engaged to Irving Scott?”

“Who?”

“Oh, never mind. He’s just a professor who teaches at the local university. I know him through Cyrus P. Cartwright, another professor.”

Throkhan shook his head. “I’m not familiar with either of them.”

“I dated Cyrus for a little bit,” I explained. “He’s an orc, too. Nice guy, but a little too soft-hearted for me.” I chuckled and Throkhan followed it with a hearty laugh that shook the whole car.

His laugh faded and he grew worryingly serious. “I can’t stand people like that, especially my own kind. A professor, though – you’ve gotta expect that from one of them.”

I shifted uncomfortably in my seat. “Yeah, I guess so. Hey, how far are we from your place?”

“Close, very close.” He turned onto a quiet, empty road and pointed. “See that house just over the hill?” I nodded. “That’s mine.”

“Ooh, it’s nice. Did you have it custom-built?”

He puffed out his chest. “I built it myself.

I raised my eyebrows. “Impressive. Well, I’m excited to see inside it – especially the bedroom.”

We pulled up to the house and got out. I waited on the porch while Throkhan unlocked the door and let me in, flicking on a light switch so we could see. Finally alone with my new orc, I realized how different he was to Cyrus, not just in personality, but also in looks.

His skin was closer to grayish brown than green, and his eyes were a dull shade of yellow. His face wasn’t too bad to look at, but he kept his hair pulled back into a loose ponytail that looked like it took him all of two seconds to style as opposed to Cryus’ neat waves. His teeth shined in the warm overhead lighting, much like Cyrus’, but his smile was more of a grimace, and his eyes held no twinkle the way Cyrus’ did whenever he looked at me. Granted, Cyrus had always seemed like the exception out of all my previous partners, but that was never clearer than now.

“What are we waiting for?” Throkhan asked. “Let’s get straight down to business.”

I nodded and smiled nervously. “Sounds good. Hey, do mind if I use your bathroom quickly?”

“Go ahead – first door on the left in the hall. I’ll be in the bedroom on the opposite side of the hall; you can meet me in there.”

“Thanks.” I followed Throkhan’s directions all the way into the bathroom and shut the door behind me, locking it.

I stepped up to the sink, turned the faucet on, and splashed cool water on my face. When I looked up at the reflection in the mirror, I hardly recognized myself. I had an orc waiting for me in his bedroom right now, and all I could think about was Cyrus, the very man I’d rejected.

Oh, Cyrus. I might not have loved him, but I liked him – a lot – and I was a fool for kicking him out of my life as unceremoniously as I did. He deserved better. We both deserved better. And it was all my fault.

I emerged from the bathroom dreading what I was about to tell Throkhan. The orc had been kind enough to invite me into his house with the expectation that we were going to have sex, and now I was leaving him high and dry with no good explanation.

“Uh, Throkhan?” I knocked gently on the bedroom door before pushing it open. “I – oh, God!”

Throkhan was spread out on his massive bed, legs open, cock resting against his lower belly. There was not a single piece of clothing on his gargantuan frame, and I almost felt like I should shield my eyes for his own privacy, if not my embarrassment.

“I – I’m really sorry,” I stammered, “but I think I’m going to have to leave.”

Throkhan didn't move a muscle. "Why?" he asked.

"I'm not – well, I'm not, uh, feeling well," I lied. "I think I need to go home and get some sleep."

He patted the empty space on the bed next to him. "You can sleep here if you want."

"Oh, no, I'll be able to make it home just fine. Thank you, though. I'll call you tomorrow once I'm feeling a little better and we can..." I didn't want to tell him we could plan another date when I had no intention of seeing him again. "We can talk."

Throkhan nodded, totally unbothered, cock and balls still out for the whole world to see. "Sounds good. I hope you feel better, Nico."

My heart lurched. I was a horrible person for putting not one, but two orcs through the ringer because of my stupid little whims. "I'm sure I will. Thanks for the nice date, Throkhan."

"Do you need a ride back home?"

I glanced at his nudity and back at the bedroom door. "No, I'll walk. I don't want to get you out of bed when you look so...comfortable."

"It's no trouble, really." He made to get up, but I shook my head aggressively.

"Nah, it's fine. I think the fresh air will do me some good anyway, and if I get too tired, I'll just call a cab. Goodnight."

Throkhan flopped back down onto the bed and waved. "'Night."

I left him to do whatever it was that he was planning on doing that he was alone and

began the long, lonely walk back to my apartment. I'd hoped for some light from the moon and stars to guide me, but the sky was covered in clouds and the trees surrounding the road blocked out what little illumination the moon could have given me.

I walked for the better part of an hour before finally admitting to myself that I was lost, and not kind of lost, but lost-lost. I had no idea where I was, but the thick line of trees on either side of me and the rapidly deteriorating asphalt underneath my feet told me it was nowhere I'd ever been before.

I walked on against my better judgment, only for the paved road to end and a rough gravel road to begin. The gravel merged into a dirt path surrounded by tall, overbearing trees on either side of me. This was not good.

The only light in the darkness came from the woods. A faint glow emanated from some windows and what looked like fireflies dotted the edge of the roof. The fireflies didn't move even after I stared at them for a few seconds, and I realized it was just a string of lights.

"It could be a serial killer," I told myself. "They might be waiting for their next victim at this very moment."

I knew that was just the exhaustion and anxiety talking, so I pushed forward, finding myself on the porch of a small log cabin in a matter of minutes. I lifted my hand to knock on the door, hoping whoever answered wasn't too annoyed by a stranger on their doorstep.

"Well, here goes nothing."

I took a deep breath and knocked. A moment later, the door opened and a tall man with glasses opened the door.

“Nico Ross? Cyrus’ boyfriend?” The tall man cocked his head. “What are you doing out here?”

“You must be Irving.” I sighed. “It...It’s a long story.”

“Well, come inside, and then you can tell Sylvan and me. It’s absolutely frigid tonight.”

I hugged my arms around me, shivering. “Are you sure? I don’t want to intrude.”

Irving shook his head. “It’s not an intrusion. Any friend of Cyrus is a friend of mine, and Sylvan is all too happy to host guests. In fact, your surprise visit will probably make his entire night. Now, come with me and Sylvan will make us all some tea.”

I smiled and nodded. Irving was too kind to someone who’d broken up with his friend, but I wasn’t about to go back into the woods and struggle to find my way home. It had been a long night, and I still needed to apologize to Cyrus for treating him the way I had.

26

CYRUS

B zz, bzz.

My eyes fluttered open and I turned to look outside through the window. It was pitch black and far too early for my alarm to be going off. I must have been dreaming. I turned over in bed and closed my eyes again, letting out a tired exhale.

Bzz, bzz .

I opened my eyes again, this time staring up at the ceiling. The noise wasn't in my head. My phone was ringing, and at this time in the night, it could only be bad news.

In the dark, I pawed around for the device before my hands closed over it and I grabbed it, answering the call a second before I got the phone up to my ear.

“Hello?” I mumbled.

“Hello, Cyrus. Were you asleep?” If I wasn't conscious enough before answering the phone, Irving's serious, sobering voice was enough to jolt me awake.

“I was, but no matter. Has something happened?” I sat up in bed, heart pounding as I waited to hear what tragedy had befallen my coworker. “Is Sylvan all right?”

“Yes, Sylvan is perfectly well, as am I. But we do have a surprise visitor tonight and

he needs a ride home. I would take him myself, but my car is parked out by the road proper and you know how long a trek that is from the cabin. Only a truck like yours could make it all the way down the dirt road safely.”

I blinked a few times, my eyes adjusting to the darkness. The time on the clock read just past midnight.

“A visitor? Who might the visitor be?”

Before Irving could answer, a voice in the background broke through: “I told you it’s no trouble at all; just give me some directions and I’ll walk back home. I was already planning to do that when I got lost.”

Nico .

“It’s your boyfriend,” Irving said dryly.

“He’s not my boyfriend anymore.”

“He told me as much. Listen, if you don’t want to come, Nico can sleep on the couch for the night and Sylvan will take him back to his apartment in the morning.”

“I don’t mind,” Nico called out.

Irving sighed and paused, waiting for Nico to pipe up a third time. When he spoke again, his tone was hushed. “You don’t have to come get him, but you’re a fool if you think he’s not still into you. That man has not shut up about you once since he arrived on our doorstep.”

“Really?” My heart skipped a beat.

“Yes. I would never lie to you, Cyrus. This poor fellow is smitten.”

“Tell him I’ll be there in an hour.” I was already getting out of bed and unbuttoning my pajama top so I could put some proper clothes on. “Don’t let him go back out into the cold.”

“I won’t.”

“You promise you won’t let him leave?”

“Of course.”

“All right, I’ll see you soon.”

“Bye, Cyr–“

I hung up, dressed into day clothes, and tried to run a comb through my tangles before giving up and dropping the comb back onto the bathroom counter. I brushed my teeth with the toothbrush that was twice the size of the one Nico had left before returning to the bedroom to throw the sheets back over my bed. It wasn’t made well, but at least it would be more inviting to pull back the covers and get into when I got back home – if I got home before morning at all.

The road to Sylvan’s cabin was empty, allowing me to drive faster than I usually would, but as the paved road turned to gravel and eventually dirt, I was forced to slow to a crawl. My truck could handle the bumpy path well enough, but overgrown tree branches scraped at the sides like fingernails on a chalkboard.

I made it to the log cabin in record time and parked my truck outside, hoping Sylvan wouldn’t be too upset about the fumes poisoning his perfect garden and overgrown field.

I was about to knock on the door when it opened before me and the freckle-faced fae on the other side grinned, waving me inside.

“Come in, come in. There’s tea in the kitchen and some leftover cake in the fridge from a few days ago.”

“Oh, thank you, but I’m not hungry.” I smiled politely and ducked through the door, taking in how small the cabin was inside.

It was not made for an orc, that was certain, but Sylvan and Irving looked happy and cozy in their little home, and that was all that mattered. A pang of loneliness shot through my chest. If I were a fae – or a human – I might have been able to have something like this too.

“Where’s Nico?” I asked.

“He went with Irving to get some ice from the freezer chest out in the back,” Sylvan explained. “They should return in just a moment–“

The door opened and Irving stepped inside with Nico in tow. One look from Irving told me everything I needed to know. He hurried over to the kitchen after a quick nod for a greeting, dragging Sylvan with him.

Nico walked up to me sheepishly, hands clasped behind his back. “Hello, Cyrus,” he said quietly.

“Hello, Nico. I heard that you’re in need of a ride home.”

He nodded. “I hope it wasn’t too much trouble getting here.”

“Not at all. Shall we get you home before it gets too late? I’m sure you want to get to

bed as much as I do.”

“Yeah, that would be great. Um, thanks.” He glanced up toward the kitchen. “And thank you both for your hospitality.”

Irving nodded. “Any time.”

Sylvan scurried over, grabbing Nico’s wrists so he could hold his hands. “Remember what we talked about,” he whispered.

Nico smiled awkwardly. “How could I forget?”

“Good.” Sylvan patted the top of Nico’s hand like one might pat a puppy’s head. “That’s what I hoped to hear.”

He let Nico go and we left the cabin together, getting back into the truck in utter silence. I revved the engine and the sound washed away the eeriness for a bit. The bumps in the road kept me focused ahead, but by the time we reached the main road, I knew one of us would have to talk eventually.

“What did you and Sylvan talk about?” I asked as casually as I could muster.

“Oh, dating and stuff,” Nico replied dismissively. “I went on that date with another orc, remember?”

“Ah, yes, I do remember now.” I’d never forgotten, but it was the last thing I wished to bring up. “How did it go?”

Nico shrugged. “Fine.”

“And did you go home with him?” My tone was even, but my hands trembled on the

steering wheel as I waited for the answer. I gripped it tighter, my knuckles turning ashen.

“Yes,” he said hesitantly. “But, Cyrus, we didn’t do anything together. I couldn’t, so I left. That was how I ended up lost.”

I relaxed my grip on the steering wheel. It wasn’t up to me to tell Nico whom he could and couldn’t have sex with, but the thought of another orc holding him at night filled me with a level of jealousy I’d never experienced before and, quite frankly, didn’t think I was capable of experiencing until Nico left me. It had nearly consumed me before I finally fell asleep a few blessed hours earlier, and it came back with a vengeance now as Nico spoke about my replacement.

“He wasn’t like you at all,” Nico continued. “He was nice enough, and I think he was going to fuck me like I wanted an orc to, but he was a logger and he made fun of Sylvan and – and...” his voice trailed off.

“He wasn’t the right match for you,” I finished for him.

“No.” He shook his head. “Once I got to his house, I realized that I didn’t even want to hook up with him before getting out of there. There’s only one person in the world I want to be with these days, and, I’m beginning to think there’s only one right match for me in the whole entire world.” He glanced in my direction and inhaled shakily. “Except that I’m an idiot and I already let that match go.”

I could have sworn my heartbeat stopped for a second before returning harder and faster than ever before. “Oh?”

“Yeah, and I’m not sure how to get him back.”

“Maybe you don’t have to try to find a way to get him back. Maybe if you just tell

him what you told me, he'll be happy to take you back." I turned onto the road that led to my neighborhood, driving straight past Nico's apartment.

"You think so?" he asked.

"I know so." I pulled into my driveway and parked the truck. "Look at that, we're home already and it's not even morning yet."

"Yes," Nico smiled, "we're home."

27

NICO

Cyrus unlocked the front door to let us both inside his house. I realized now that I didn't need to apologize to him after all. He didn't want an apology, and he probably wouldn't accept one no matter how much I insisted. All he wanted was to be loved and cherished, and I could finally give him that.

I couldn't imagine life without him anymore. I'd already lived it for a few days and I hated it. This was where I was meant to be, in the house with the couch that my legs dangled over, the bed I had to climb up, and the stove that I practically needed a stool to cook at. None of that mattered as long as Cyrus was by my side.

"Shall we go straight to bed so we don't miss too many more hours of sleep?" Cyrus asked, turning to face me after locking the front door behind us.

"Oh, uh, yeah, that would be fine," I said, a little disappointed that the night was ending here.

"Or," Cyrus continued, "would you rather we sacrifice our sleep for what we really want?"

I couldn't help but smile. "Yes, I think I would prefer the second option."

Cyrus smiled back. "I thought you might."

Without waiting for another word from me, he scooped me into his arms and carried me back to the bedroom, setting me on top of the bed with an effortless flair only someone as strong as an orc could manage.

“I believe you’re ready for the final step,” he told me.

My chest fluttered. “Are you serious? Tonight?”

“Don’t you want me?”

“Of course I do. But you were so adamant before about –“

Cyrus put a finger to my lips. “Never mind what I said before. It’s time now, especially if we’re going to spend the rest of our lives together. You, my dear fellow, are going to have to get used to me.”

I stopped protesting. It was obvious that Cyrus was fully on board, and as long as he wasn’t doing this just to keep me interested in him, I was happy to finally get what I wanted. Except, the difference now was that it wasn’t the only thing I wanted out of Cyrus. I wanted so much more now, and to be fucked by an orc was only one thing far down on the list compared to everything else I wanted to experience with Cyrus.

His lips met mine for just a few seconds, and in those seconds he conveyed to me all the passion that we held between us. We were meant to be together, even though our bodies didn’t look like they were made to fit and our desires seemed to clash half the time. All that, which had seemed so monumental a week ago, was trivial now. There was so much more between us than the physicality or the surface-level ideas we had of each other, and I couldn’t believe I hadn’t seen past those before.

Cyrus pulled my shirt off and turned me over, instructing me to get on my hands and knees. My jeans came off next, followed by my underwear, which I kicked onto the

floor. At some point, Cyrus had removed his clothing too, removing every last barrier preventing us from being together.

He took the bottle of lube from the nightstand drawer and squirted some on his hand. I'd already had his fingers inside me before, and it was a familiar experience when he inserted them, stretching me just a little.

"Relax," he told me, "because this might hurt for a moment."

"A moment?" I laughed. "I expect it to hurt much longer than that, but I'm ready."

The tip of his cock made me gasp and tighten up. Maybe I wasn't as ready as I previously thought, but I wasn't about to stop him now. Cyrus took his time, taking care to move as carefully as he could. If I was going to get fucked by any orc, he was far and away the best one to do it.

"I'm going to go a little deeper now," he told me, rubbing his hand down my back.

His touch relaxed me again, and I took a deep breath, letting it out as he pushed himself in an inch or two farther. If he were a human, it would have been nothing for me to take. With the size of his cock, though, I could feel it pressing against every little nerve inside of me, filling me up more than I ever thought was possible.

I buried my head in the pillow as he took his first thrust, still only about halfway inside my ass. It burned, but the pain was everything I wanted, everything I could have hoped for. My spine tingled and my toes went numb with how hard I curled them. Each breath took more and more effort as the pressure built to an almost unbearable level.

"How are you doing?" I asked between gasps. "Is everything okay?"

Cyrus nodded curtly. “This is no trouble at all for me, Nico dear. You focus on your own pleasure, all right?”

I smiled. “All right.”

It wasn't hard to do and as Cyrus worked behind me, I allowed myself to close my eyes and get lost in the moment. My fingers clutched the pillow in front of me so hard, I was afraid I might tear the pillowcase. Cyrus wouldn't have cared if I did, so I gripped it all the tighter and let my mind wander back to the cock buried deep inside me.

This evening, which had started off so poorly, couldn't have gone any better if I'd planned it myself.

28

CYRUS

Nico's ass was so tight, so perfect, I could hardly believe this was all happening mere hours after I'd been rudely awoken by a phone call in the middle of the night. This was straight out of my wildest dreams, and the best part was that I had the man I loved so dearly back because he wanted to be here. It was everything I ever could have asked for.

There was no way I could possibly fit the entirety of my cock in Nico, but I thrust it in as deep as I could go and worked up a good, slow rhythm that I knew wouldn't hurt him. This was what he used to beg me for, and I needed it to be a pleasurable experience now that he was finally getting it.

His little whimpers and moans and the way that they mixed with my grunts made my nerves light on fire. We didn't need to talk anymore, only focus on each other with our touch. I pressed my fingers into his asscheeks as I pumped, knowing full well I would leave marks with the amount of pressure I was using. Nico would have far more pain than a few small bruises from my fingertips, however, so I didn't worry too much.

He'd relaxed into my rhythm, but his muscles now tensed again, and I realized he wasn't going to last much longer. If I was going to give him everything he dreamed of, I needed to cum inside of him.

I pumped a little harder, each breath leaving my body with a meaningful forcefulness.

Nico's moans grew louder and more frequent as he buried his face into the pillow, nearly smothering himself with it.

I rocked his hips back and forth, doing most of the work for him, as his hands and knees trembled, threatening to give out. A wave of pleasure overtook me and I ceased everything I was doing, frozen as I came, my climax crashing over me and making my ears ring and the sweat trickle down my forehead.

Cum dripped out of Nico's hole, my cock still buried inside him. Being with an orc meant extra mess to clean up because of the sheer volume of semen we produced, but I didn't think Nico much cared about that. If anything, he was turned on by it.

As I came down from my orgasm, I slid my cock out of Nico and he collapsed onto the bed, his muscles finally giving out on him.

"That," he said breathlessly, hand pressing weakly against his chest, "was the best thing I've ever experienced."

He didn't bother to open his eyes, and though we both needed to clean ourselves and the bed up, I allowed myself to rest beside him for a few minutes. I propped my head up on my hand, elbow digging into the mattress, and watching his chest heave as he struggled to catch his breath.

"Was it everything you wanted?" I asked.

"More," he replied, opening his eyes to gaze back at me. They shined bright while his cheeks and lips flushed a beautiful rosy pink. "So much more."

I leaned down and planted a kiss on those perfect pink lips. "I'm glad to hear it. Now, you rest and I'll tidy up. You've earned your sleep."

“So have you.” He laughed and shifted over onto his back. “Sorry about the mess.”

“Don’t apologize.” I waved my hand at him. “And I’m serious about you getting your rest. You’re going to need it for tomorrow.”

A smile spread across his face and he raised an eyebrow, tucking his hands underneath his head, elbows out. “Is that a promise?”

I shook my head. “You little fool. Yes, it’s a promise.”

With that, he closed his eyes and settled into the bed, the smile still etched across his face even as he drifted off to sleep.

As I expected, Nico was sore the next morning and I offered to carry him out to the couch and bring him breakfast there.

“No, I can manage.” He winced as he swung his legs over the side of the bed. “I’ll have to get used to this eventually, won’t I?”

I smiled. “I suppose so. You are staying, aren’t you?”

Nico stood up gingerly and turned to look at me. “I’ll stay here with you forever, Cyrus. You’re going to have to throw me out into the cold if you want to get rid of me again.”

I laughed. “Trust me, I’ll never do that.” I hesitated, hoping that what I said next wouldn’t make Nico uncomfortable. “I love you, Nico.”

Nico’s laugh lines softened and his eyes sparkled with adoration. “You know something, Cyrus?”

“Yes?”

“I love you too.”

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 3:20 am

I leaned back in my chair and took a sip of lemonade before surveying what little work I needed to do for the day. Spring, which up until a few days ago had been a holdover of the cold days of winter, had warmed up, and everyone who usually huddled in the library and read books was outside enjoying the sunny weather.

I didn't mind, as I was in need of a bit of a break from the swaths of people and monsters coming in at all hours of the day. Soon, children would be out of school for the summer and parents would bring them in to pick out some books to read in their copious free time, but until then, I was blessed with a little more peace and quiet.

I'd just picked up my most recent matchmaking applications to place them in the book of matchmaking when the bell on the door jingled and a large, green monster ambled inside. Behind him, a man at least half his height and width sidled in, stepping up next to him as they approached the counter.

"Well, well, if it isn't my most recent matchmaking success." I beamed. "I must say, it's a delight to see the two of you back together."

"We're happy about it too." Nico grinned and squeezed Cyrus' hand.

"And we have you to thank," Cyrus said. "We didn't believe you in the beginning, but as it turned out, you were correct all along."

"Yes, well, that seems to be a running theme with my matches." I shook my head. "But that is neither here nor there. I'm absolutely thrilled that you found each other again after a bit of a rough patch. Things are going well, yes?"

“Oh, yes.” Cyrus nodded vigorously. “We couldn’t be happier.”

“And,” Nico said, his soft brown eyes sparkling with enthusiasm, “we have some exciting news to share with you.”

“Oh?” I cocked my head. “Do tell.”

Nico and Cyrus exchanged glances. “I got a promotion!” Nico blurted out.

I clasped my hands together. “Oh, that’s wonderful news.”

“Yes,” Cyrus explained, “the head chef at his restaurant obtained a new job and has moved on from that location. Nico was next in line, and he was more than ready to accept his dream job.”

“The extra money doesn’t hurt either,” Nico added. “Everything has just worked out so well these last few months, I can hardly believe it. Sometimes I feel like pinching myself to make sure I’m not in a dream.”

“Well, I can assure you that you’re not dreaming,” I replied. “Fate has a curious way of playing out sometimes.”

“It helps to have a mysterious fae for a friend,” Cyrus said, his eyes narrowing slightly as he studied me. “Anyway, we’re planning a small party at my house to celebrate, and we were wondering if you might like to stop by. We’re only having a few of our closest friends, so you don’t have to worry about being out of place. Irving and your cousin will be there too, of course.”

“I would love to go,” I said. “At what time does this party begin?”

“Tonight at 6,” Nico told me. “I’m making all the food and I can promise there will be plenty for everyone.”

“Oh, I don’t doubt that. Well, I would be delighted to come and celebrate both the promotion and your proper debut as a couple.”

Cyrus pulled Nico into a gentle embrace, his arm encompassing most of Nico’s body. “We would love that. Thank you, Librarian.”

Nico nodded. “Yes, thank you. We couldn’t have done any of this without the library and its wonderful services.”

“You would be surprised what you could accomplish even without the matchmaking service, but I will take your praise as the utmost compliment, and I shall see both of you later this evening.” I chuckled. “Now shoo and let me get back to my work.”

They left the library arm-in-arm, only breaking apart for a moment so they could fit through the door. Cyrus’ truck started up in the parking lot and I turned my attention back toward the big book of matchmaking. I had another successful story to write down, and I needed to get on that if I wanted it done in time for my next match, whoever they might be.