

# Chapter 29: Or Maybe a Decent Partner 3

Bucking Fyester to the side, I scrambled away from him until a headboard and wall stopped me, setting my array to work. I observed him at the foot of the bed with an empty hypo on the quilt between us, and everything—room, heart and mind—went dead quiet.

“What did you do, Fy?” I spoke into this hush.

But with the room taking on a sway as it blurred in and out of focus, I already knew.

As Fyester crawled toward me, his face was pinched with such worry and pain that it might have twisted my heart if I hadn't been trapped in a numbing freeze. If I hadn't been impatiently awaiting a report on what type of sedative he'd given me and how long my array would need to flush it out of my system.

“Please,” Fyester said. “Please, just go to sleep. When I'm allowed to wake you up, everything will be ok again, and maybe *they'll* stop hurting me-ngh!”

He flopped onto the bed, and I tried creeping toward its side, but when I moved, the world spun so quickly that I nearly blacked out while my stomach revolted. When I could focus again, Fyester had crawled through my vomit to reach me with another hypo in his hand.

Seizing his wrist, I twisted it, but no matter how much pressure I applied, he wouldn't drop the hypo, even as he screamed, slapping at me. I relented, mostly because the last ten seconds had almost sent me under, but still, Fyester wept, thanking me over and over again.

Something about this wasn't right, more than the fact that he'd drugged me. I might not trust myself to claw the hypo away from Fyester yet, but maybe I could figure out what the *fuck* was going on.

“Why?” I asked, hearing the question from far away. “Did someone set you up to do this? Are you trying to sabotage the *Lokke Vitras* by debilitating his replacement? How did you know that I'd stop outside of Cerullis' headquarters tonight when even I didn't?”

“I can't, Zae. I can't,” Fyester gasped. “Please, let me- let me- Oh, Mother Time, I'm so sorry. If I say something, *they'll* hurt-ngh!”

He went slack on me, jerking my hold on his arm so that I was on top of him. I used this momentum to roll over the foot of the bed, but with dizziness altering my field of view, I messed up my jump to my feet.

Teetering, I stumbled a few steps, driving my hip into a hard edge, before toppling. Glass shattered with shards of it digging into me as I slid down something solid, but when the fuzz around me cleared away, nothing visible was stopping me from a quarter-kilometer-long drop.

My saving grace was a barrier around the tower, like what I'd used on our last date, but instead of him, I'd driven myself into the window this time. Where had I gained the force needed to break it?

Yes, focus on that, not the pain that was ripping my heart to shreds beneath my numbing blanket, tearing into me like the glass in my skin.

Something pricked my neck again, but I was prepared for it this time, ripping the hypo out of my body before Fyester could depress its plunger. Flinging it across the room, I drunkenly climbed to my feet, only to have a fist swung into my face. The sharp crunch of my nose pulled a string of words from outside of the sedative's ringing haze—

“-don't want... don't make... Please, I don't want to-”

—and something slammed into my temple and gut. Mother Time, not where I'd just-

The world stuttered into focus once more while my array politely informed me that it had filtered sixty percent of the toxin in my blood out of it. I sat up, noting the bits of shattered window around me, before getting to my feet, soundlessly this time.

The room was swaying and swirling still, but I had enough focus to see Fyester on the other side of the bed, where I'd thrown the hypo. He was rocking in place, muttering to himself, and that noise covered any sound that my stumble toward him might have made. His distraction got me close enough to pull him into a chokehold.

I let my mind dive into emptiness while Fyester fought me, clawing at my arm and driving his elbows into my sides. When he eventually slumped into unconsciousness, I got him on the bed before administering the second hypo that he'd meant for me. It should last much longer without his array already working to negate its effects, but I pulled restraints out of my abandoned clothing, just in case, letting their blue glow add to the city light from outside.

Once I'd secured him, I rested Fyester's clothes on top of his limp body before getting dressed as quickly as I could.

Because the shielding numbness that I'd raised at the first jab of a needle? It was failing. Sitting on the bed's edge, I leaned my elbows on my knees with my head in my hands.

For a while, I spun what had happened through my mind, trying to decide how I should proceed, but I came up with nothing. So, I sent a message that I hadn't needed to use in years.

*Evushk, I need advice. I don't know what to do.*

And in final defiance of what was waiting behind my shield, I pulled *evushk's* stored message, the one I'd received earlier, to the forefront.

*They always leave us in the end, it read. Every Lokke Vitras. Every time. We are eventually left alone.*

My vision trembled, and I thought it was because of the sedative until something wet spilled over my eyelid, splashing to the floor.

And another.

And another.

And my numbness was ripped away from me.

In the aftermath of recent violence, my growling scream seemed deafening, and it didn't stop until I'd run out of air. I wanted to stand, to punch something, to release this agonizing tingle around my heart, but it kept me pinned in place. It slunk its way up my throat, snagging on the base of my brain, and from there, it spread slashing tendrils through my mind, turning the world into a far away, fairy tale place—

*"Kuvesk, what-?"*

—shouldn't I be better at emotional control than this? So many horrible things had happened to me over the last six years. Shouldn't I have broken like this before now? Damn, even the person I'd been as a child had kept emotions at bay better than the version of me sitting here today—

Laughter interrupted the howl that was tearing the air apart, crazed and loud and fractured.

—then again, when I'd been a child, I'd never had to deal with anything like this. I didn't think—

*"Kuvesk."*

—Fyester had attacked me. Attacked me! I'd thought... we could have tonight. I'd thought... maybe we could have more. I'd *trusted*—

*"Kuvesk!"*

—was this what would happen with my family? My parents, Pheniks, and Feena betraying me like...

Fuck! Why wouldn't this pain, searing its way through my body, finish its consumption of me already?

*"ZAEDEN!"*

My name, spoken by someone who hadn't said it in years, cut through the snarl engulfing me, obliterating it in a second. With a gasp, I calmed my frantic sway, stopped my soft moan, and just... listened.

*"Remember, my *kuvesk*. Unless you will it, emotion cannot touch you."*

That was... right. Of course it couldn't. I didn't know why I'd let it.

Like a yowling lion cub, I took my pain and set it outside the home of my mind. It might cry to come inside once more, but I'd locked every door tight. I wouldn't let it near me again, not now at least.

Straightening from my knees, I let out a long breath, checking my array. It had burned the sedative out of me, and my bruises had begun to heal as my body did its work. While some of my cuts had closed, I'd have to pick glass out of the rest before they'd do the same.

In my array, I had a reply to my earlier message sitting in the top left, and a direct connection had been opened without my permission, something that was only allowed from one person.

"*Evushk*," I said.

Nothing else. Never acknowledge or apologize for a slip-up as bad as mine had been.

"Good," *evushk* said. "Now, where are you? I can't find you through the recorders near your array's reported location."

"I'm in an old partner's apartment," I said.

A weighty silence fell, one that made me wonder what he was thinking. Was he displeased that I'd so thoroughly compromised myself, or was it something else?

"Tell me what happened," *evushk* eventually said.

I gave him the details he'd need to tell me how I should proceed.

At the end, I tacked on, "I don't think Fyester was in control of himself. He kept mentioning a 'they'. *They'll hurt me*. Might be worth looking into."

"I'll mention it to whoever hears the boy's case," *evushk* said. "Ensure he's properly secured and leave. I'll take care of this."

What a... strange solution. Usually, he made me clean up my messes.

"As you say, *evushk*. It's only..."

Breaking off, I clicked my tongue.

"As you never fail to remind me, you are the *Lokke Vitras*, and your time is valuable. I would never forgive myself if you wasted it by fixing something that I should handle on my own."

"Do you think I'd go out of my way for you if I didn't think it was warranted?" *evushk* said.

"No," I sighed. "You never do anything if it doesn't also benefit Lutov."

A beat of quiet bounced down the connection, followed by-

“We both know that’s not true.”

Was he trying to cheer me up? If so, I was a little... shocked beyond words, actually.

“Go, *kuvesk*,” he said. “I need you out of that apartment.”

“Yes, *evushk*,” I said, “and thank you.”

He cut the connection without replying, never had liked me expressing gratitude to him.

I made the mistake of glancing at Fyester before I left. It was cliché as hell, but he looked so peaceful in sleep. I could almost forget the anguished desperation that had carved through those soft features not twenty minutes ago.

As I forced myself to turn away from this, I knew I’d likely never see him again. I’d likely never know what would happen to him—*evushk* certainly wouldn’t tell me—and this bothered me to a degree.

Fyester had hurt me tonight, but I nonetheless wished him happiness. Whether he achieved it, however, would remain a mystery to me.

When his apartment door closed behind me, I slammed the door shut on him as well. Thinking about him wouldn’t do me any good, and I had something important to attend in the morning.

So, fully aware that I was using it as a distraction, I threw myself into final preparations for Pheniks’ House naming ceremony.

## **TTS Chapter Twenty-Nine**

---

Revision #2

Created 20 November 2024 08:21:45 by FatalisticFable

Updated 24 May 2026 01:52:31 by FatalisticFable