



**BONUS STORY**

**ENCHANTING  
EXPOSITION**

**ALICE WINTERS**

\*Read after finishing Enchanting Exposition

Alice Winters

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Sam's POV

The blast of fire hits me so hard that I'm thrown back, shielding my face even though I know the protective charm I'm wearing should negate most of the attack. The two officers who had joined my attempt at arresting this man are thrown back by the blast, sent careening off the sidewalk and into the grass as the man bolts.

The area is too densely populated to use any type of force to bring the man down, and I have to be careful that he doesn't get someone else caught up in things.

He shoves a woman who'd been scrambling to get out of the way at me, leaving me to steady her so she doesn't stumble into the oncoming traffic flowing down the road the criminal has decided to bolt down. He dodges across two lanes and leaps the barrier separating the lanes before coming out on the sidewalk on the other side as I'm left as the only one keeping up with him.

"This is who they pick to protect the city?" the man calls as he looks back at me running along as fast as my human body can. Maybe I can't shift into a werewolf or toss fireballs or fly, but I'm persistent. And as soon as I get within a good distance of him—and somewhere he couldn't potentially fall *into* traffic—I'm going to tase his ass.

He's fucked over a few different units in the surrounding districts, quite well known for his knack for robbery before making his grand escape, but not this time.

Wanda, a woman with the power to control gravity, slides onto the scene. Her magic catches him a moment before he throws something so hard and fast it knocks her down onto her ass and he jumps over her with a laugh.

“This is fucking sad. Is this really all you can do?” he asks, clearly taking pity on the police force sent out to contain him.

There are cars coming toward me, but there’s enough of a distance that I dodge across the multiple lanes before rushing after him as he takes a sharp right onto a bridge. He seems to be eyeing cars he can snatch up and take off with, and I’m left questioning why the fuck I don’t have any magical powers to stop his ass.

The man dives right into traffic, clearly planning on commandeering a vehicle if I don’t stop him fast enough. I push my limbs as hard as they’ll go until my legs burn and my lungs feel like they’re being constricted. I force myself forward a moment before I watch Iya step onto the scene.

He holds his arm out right as the man is running past. The man slams into it, his neck colliding with Iya’s arm with so much force that the man is flipped backward and onto the ground. He’s so startled that he lies on the road for a few seconds before Iya snatches up his leg and lifts him up into the air.

“Sam! Sam! Iya got the wee little asshole,” he says, quite proud of himself.

I’m out of breath, having chased him longer than I feel comfortable admitting, and give Iya a thumbs-up. He’s thrilled by my approval since... *technically* he shouldn’t be helping.

“Let me down, you motherfucking monster. What’d your momma do, fuck a bull?”

“Ha! You’re a funny little human. But you also made my Sam work quite hard, and now he looks all sweaty and haggard. So I think Iya can just make this situation go away.”

And that’s when Iya hoists him over the railing, hanging him upside down as the man’s cocky attitude goes right out the window.

“No, no, no, please! I’m sorry! I’ll return all the money! I mean... what I haven’t already spent, but I’ll return the rest.”

“Iya, don’t drop him!” I say, forcing one last burst of energy into my body as I rush toward him.

The man is terrified. “R-Right? Listen to the kind officer. Please. Listen.”

“Iya will hold you here while Sam decides your fate,” Iya states. “Tell Sam everything bad you’ve ever done.”

“I-I robbed the bank. All the banks. Even the one in Westgate. I robbed them all. Yes, now please... I’d rather not die. Ha... ha... please?”

“Iya, set him down on the bridge,” I instruct, so Iya huffs and hauls him back over. The moment he does, the man lifts his hand, clearly planning on blasting Iya with some magic before thinking better and turning the magic on *me*.

Iya’s pissed. So pissed, in fact, that he grabs the man and just chucks him right off the bridge before dusting his hands off. “Where would you like to eat? I’m quite hungry,” he says as I hear the man scream “YOU MOTHERFUCKER” before I hear a splash.

Johnson, of course, chooses that moment to come trotting up. “Do *not* tell me Iya just threw him off the bridge.”

“Johnson is hilarious,” Iya says as I just stand there, honestly struggling to come up with an excuse for what just happened.

“Iya, can you go collect him for me?” I ask.

“Of course!” And with that, he rushes off, pleased as can be to retrieve the man he’d just thrown off.

Johnson stares at me as I settle on a simple shrug. “Miles is boss of the district and he... uh... placed Iya in this uh... position, so there’s nothing we can do about it.”

Johnson doesn’t seem so sure about that, but I guess when the boss of the district is a chaotic man who rides around on a dragon destroying shit like he has no idea how much of the city’s taxes go to fixing it up, then there’s little we can do.

Once Iya “finds” the man who “somehow” fell off the bridge, the man seems much more compliant. He tells Johnson anything he needs to know (especially when Iya is breathing down his neck). And I’m shipped back to the office to write up my sketchy—at best—report.

When I’m finally done at the station for the day, I find Iya waiting outside my car, sprawled in the grass. I walk over to him and look down.

“You do realize that you can do things other than follow me around, right? Like I know at first it was to keep me safe, but now you can do other things that interest you,” I say as he looks up at me standing over him. It’s not often I have to look down at him.

His eyes are locked right onto mine. “You interest me the most.”

I watch him for a moment while trying not to look like a fool over his comment. “Hmm... yeah, but I want you to have your own life to enjoy too. It doesn’t mean you love me any less. We still come home to the same place each night.”

“Iya has lived hundreds of years without you. From different countries and cultures, to different masters. Iya’s done it all, but right here is best. Iya helped Miles the other day. Miles needed me to punch a student in

the face.” He seems quite proud of this fact, and I can’t help but wonder if that’s not actually what happened.

“Uh... I see. Did he ask... you know what? Never mind.”

“Iya also made a pyramid of humans.”

“Were they still alive?” I ask.

“Very.”

“That’s good... confusing but good. Want to grab something to eat? We can cut through the park and go to that grill you like so much.”

“Very much!” he says as he hops up and we start walking together as my mind wanders.

“You’ve been Miles’s demon for a very long time, haven’t you?”

Iya nods as he walks by my side. “Hundreds of years.”

“Did you always like him?” I ask curiously.

“Very much! Before Miles, Iya hated all humans. Iya was never allowed to do anything but what Iya was told. So I spent most of my days thinking of ways I’d slaughter them all. But not now. Iya likes humans now.”

While... I feel like I should be concerned by that, I really feel nothing but sorrow for him. He’s such a kind man who really wants to love people and be involved. He adores it when Miles includes him and even more so when I do. So I can’t fathom what had to have happened to force him to hate people to such an extreme.

“Iya is very lucky that Miles kept me for so long. I knew it wouldn’t last, and he’d get bored of me and find someone else, but he never did. And he used me for fun things. Sometimes Iya had to kill, but it was to protect, and it was always people who deserved it. And when Miles asked me to watch you, I wasn’t sure what kind of person you’d be, but I knew Miles

would never put me with someone he didn't trust... and you were very handsome."

"I... remember," I say, a little embarrassed by our first few encounters. "You... uh... came on a bit strong."

"Ha! You are hilarious. You are very handsome. And now Iya realizes you're not just a pretty face! You're pretty all over! You're very smart and funny and nice and you like my jokes. And you like me. So that is very nice."

"Good," I say. "I... really want to find a way that you could be free... like Havoc is if something happened to Miles. I wish I was a mage."

"Nah, you're perfect the way you are."

I fiddle with my shirt at the idea. It's not like Miles is just some... café owner who is just living his best and safest life. He's constantly being tossed off into risky situations. And people seem to have an odd desire to end his life.

"I'm going to find the material I need to make sure you'd be free if something ever happened to him," I promise Iya.

"You are far too kind, Sam. But even if we never find it, every moment I spend with you makes Iya the happiest man alive," he says as he reaches over and squeezes my hand. "And we even get to have fun hanging people off bridges!"

He announces this loud enough that the woman walking her dog in front of us slowly turns to look at us. When she sees Iya, she looks even more alarmed.

"Please don't tell others about that."

"About which part? Hanging him over the rail or chucking him off the bridge? That was hilarious. You should have seen him hollering when I

dragged him out of the river by his foot. He sure changed his tune when I asked if he wanted to go for round two!”

“You can’t throw people off the bridge,” I say. “I feel like we had this conversation before.”

“Hmmm... Iya remembers you saying that we weren’t allowed to throw them at a moving car.”

“It’s not ‘we,’ it’s *you*,” I correct him.

That just makes him laugh harder. “Some people need to be thrown at a moving car, Sam. It’s their destiny.”

“It’s not...”

“I fear it is. Isn’t your goal to keep crime down? The time I threatened to smack that man with his cactus he gave you all the information you needed. Speaking of cacti, did you know Evan fucked a cactus?”

I raise an eyebrow. “Uh... huh. Sure.” Honestly... what the fuck goes on over there when I’m not around?

“Iya thought we were going out to eat,” Iya says as he points at the place we just walked by.

“We are. I have to make a quick stop in here first,” I say as I point to the place a few doors down.

“Ah, okay,” he says as I wave him in first. Instead, he holds the door open for me.

“No, I’ve got it, you go on in,” I insist, trying to hold the door open for *him* so he goes first.

“Nah, nah. *Iya’s* got it,” he decides.

“Really,” I say as I give him a smile. “I super got it.”

“Nah. Iya’s super got it.”

I try to pry his hand off the door but he’s holding on for all he’s worth. I’m a bit worried he’s going to crush the door, he’s holding it so



hard. “Iya, please. I’d prefer you go in first.”

Iya’s suspicious now. “Why? Is there someone after you, Sam? Do you think there might be someone inside this building that will cause you harm?”

Clearly, the only way I’m getting him inside the building first is with a simple word. “Yes.”

Iya presses a hand against my face, shoving me back from the place. “Sam, stay back. Iya will make them regret their lives,” he declares before rushing right into the building.

I have to practically run to keep up as everyone leaps out and shouts “Surprise!”

Iya suavely wraps me up in one arm to protect me while punching the closest person right in the face before grabbing the balloon the man had held and wrapping the string around the neck of the next person.

“Fucking hell, Iya!” Havoc shouts as he reels back while holding a bloody nose. He takes one glance at the blood and then at his fiancé being semi choked before punching Iya right back.

“Are you trying to *murder* me?” Miles asks Iya in surprise.

“He’s too pretty to be murdered,” Marco says as he pops a confetti shooter right in his own face in a fucking *weirdly* sexy way.

“Huh,” Iya says as he realizes the balloon’s string is currently in the process of being used to choke the very man he just raved about for saving him. “Sam, which one wants to cause you harm? They are all very suspicious and I am prepared to fight... even if I’d be really sad to fight any one of the Penetrators.”

“You’re obviously the most suspicious one here!” Miles yells as he smacks the balloon out of his face with enough force that it comes back and smacks him in the head.

“None of them, Iya. I just wanted to get you inside. It’s a surprise party!” I try to explain.

Etienne chuckles a bit. “I kind of didn’t want to come because everything Miles invites me to nearly ends in my death, but I’m so happy that I didn’t miss this,” he says as he sips some drink he’s holding.

“Ahhh! Iya sees! It was a surprise party! Are we trying to surprise the person who has it out for you, Sam? Surprise him into an early grave!”

“No, it’s for your birthday... kind of. Miles said today was the day he’d deemed your birthday, but that you’d never done much for it, so... I wanted to throw you a party... or something.”

“Is absolutely fucking no one going to care that I’m *bleeding all over*?” Havoc asks as he waves at his bloody nose.

Miles points at the string still around his neck in an “I get you” kind of way. I hurry over to help free him as Iya seems to realize what’s happening.

“So... there’s no enemy?” Iya asks.

“No, it’s a birthday party... *for you*,” I say.

He seems confused. “Are you sure? Iya’s not sure what was done to deserve this.”

“You didn’t... have to do something. This is for you and for no reason other than the fact that I wanted you to have a special day,” I say as Miles rubs his neck and Leo tends to Havoc who looks ready to brawl Iya. Lachlan hurries over, unsure if he needs to help in some way.

“If it wasn’t your birthday, I’d fuck you up so hard,” Havoc growls.

“Ha! You are funny, Havoc,” Iya says. “Ooh, Iya wants Sam to jump out of the cake naked.”

“Definitely not happening,” I say as I grab a party hat instead and force it on his head. It looks ridiculous, but I enjoy it and it seems like he

does too.

“Iya is so happy to see all of the Penetrators here,” he announces, which makes everyone appear a bit uncomfortable, but they’re all used to this level of uncomfortableness and hell, it’s his birthday.

“I’m going to punch you so hard tomorrow,” Havoc says. “Only because Miles whispered in my ear, ‘You can’t punch someone on their birthday.’”

“Iya can’t wait!” he declares.

“I’m taking your fucking birthday present back too,” Havoc decides as he plucks it off the table.

“Here! Iya! I got you the best present ever. It’ll make Havoc’s present look like dog shit,” Marco says as he stuffs a rather large and thin present into Iya’s hands.

Iya takes it and without hesitation tears it open before holding up an oversized painted portrait of Marco. Marco is thrilled by this.

“Isn’t it just beautiful?” he asks.

The look on Iya’s face tells me that he doesn’t quite think it is.

“Sam! Iya wants to hang it in the bathroom so we can stare at it while on the toilet!” Iya decides. “Might scare the shit right out of ya!”

“Ha! Good one, cow,” Havoc says. “I am... shockingly pleased by that joke. And even more pleased by the scowl on Marco’s face. Almost enough to give you your present back but not quite.”

“Iya, you can open the rest of the presents—including the one we got you—after we eat,” Miles says as he pries it out of Havoc’s hands and returns it to the table.

“They’re finally going to feed us, Leo,” Etienne whines. “I’ve been here at least ten minutes and thought we were never going to eat.”

“It’s probably just grass and hay,” Havoc grumbles.

“Who invited you two?” Miles asks.

“How could I not invite you all?” I ask. “You’ve all played such a huge part in Iya’s life... Miles, you saved him from a horrible existence, and the rest of you have welcomed him into your lives.”

“Gosh, he almost makes us sound like good people,” Etienne whispers to Miles.

“Iya thinks you’re not good people, you’re the best people. All such best people. Sometimes even Havoc,” Iya decides.

“I’m still punching you the next time I see you. And feeding you to our dragon,” he says as he waves at Menace who is uncomfortably close to the cake. Like paw up, single toe bean outstretched to take a swipe at the frosting until Miles gives him a look. He hisses and flings himself off the table.

“Now let’s eat! I’m going to expire if I don’t eat soon!” Etienne says as he rushes off.

I start toward them but Iya pulls me back.

“Thank you, Sam.”

“Of course. It was no big deal,” I say. “I’m just glad you’re enjoying it.”

“Very much,” he enthuses as he grabs me in a hug, dragging me in and squeezing me tightly. “Very, *very* much... now about you jumping out of that cake naked...”

“Maybe we’ll do something else privately at home instead of... in front of all of them,” I say.

Iya laughs, clearly pleased by the idea as he picks me up and heads toward the door.

“Wait! No! Not now!”

“Ah, fine, fine. Iya can wait,” he says. “This does look like a lot of fun first.” And with that, he carries me off and puts me on Lachlan’s back, which is even more awkward than I imagined it could be.