

Karsyn's Short

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Karsyn

The moment I see Finn's beaming face I quickly try to turn around.

"Don't run!" he yells after me.

Work used to be so boring. So normal. I just came, did my work, snipped at anyone who needed to be snipped at and went home.

But then a human arrived and ruined everything. *Why* they thought adding a human to the mix would be the answer, I'll never know. *Why* he became the answer to getting everyone to work together, I also don't know. I will never tell him that, though.

"Alexei!" Finn says as he hurries after me.

Suddenly, I get nailed in the back of the head with something hard and snatch it from the air as it falls before seeing that it's an eraser. It looks a lot like the eraser I chucked at Marcus when my brain decided to stop working.

"When Finn asks for something, you do it," Marcus growls, clearly the thrower of the eraser.

Slowly, I turn to Finn. "Ah, I didn't notice you there," I lie to the human's beaming face.

"Of course not. Anyway, Claude will *not* stop annoying me, so I think you need to do your part and just go out with him *once*."

I stare at him. "I thought you were my friend."

His smile falls. "I am!"

"Then you wouldn't do this to me," I say, completely deadpan.

He watches me for a moment before that smile returns. "You're my best friend, right? And I'm yours?"

I stare at him, not willing to admit to having relations of *any* kind with him. I also don't want to admit that he *is* my closest friend, but that's just because he wormed his way into my life while I was perfectly fine being alone for the rest of my life.

"Claude saved my life and really, it's just one little date. If you're not having fun, leave after ten minutes." He makes it sound so simple, but nothing is ever simple when Claude is around.

“You are no friend of mine,” I growl before rushing away, or at least trying to.

“I love you, Karsyn!” Finn yells after me.

I hurry out to my car where my phone beeps and I look down at the message from Claude, Marcus’s brother and the most annoying man in existence. I *wanted* to block his number but with all of this going on with Finn, I didn’t want to chance Claude needing to reach me for something important and I’d have him blocked because I can’t stand him.

Asshat: My evening is free if you would like to join me for an hour or four.

This is never ending. Why doesn’t he realize that I would never in my life be interested in someone like him? I can’t stand it when people are flashy and annoying. He goes against everything I believe in. And even if he didn’t... I’ve had enough shit to fill me for a lifetime. I’m done with all of that.

Asshat: One date. If it goes badly, I won’t bug you for another.

I look up at the department as I see Finn walking out while hanging on Marcus, the man that nearly no one could get along with. He usually only talked to me and that’s because I was the only one who would snip at him. I think we got our daily socialization by snapping at each other.

Me: Fine. I am doing this for Finn. Not you.

Asshat: Wait... are you serious? For real? Where do I pick you up? Do I pick you up now? Where are you? Is this a joke? Is it April first? Is this Finn? Is there a gun against your head? Is this a cry for help?

Me: The only one I need saving from is you. I’m driving myself so I can leave after two minutes.

Asshat: I’m extremely excited that you’re excited. I can’t wait. Where you want to go? I’ll take you anywhere you want to go.

Me: Send me the address and please don’t show up.

I arrive at the restaurant on time. Which is horrible, so I decide to wait in my car in the hopes he’ll get annoyed and leave.

After ten minutes, I realize that I’m just putting off the inevitable, so I walk inside dressed like I’m going to a funeral. I wanted my clothes to

reflect my mood, so I went with black pants and a black button-up. I'm also decked out in police gear so it's clear that I could put him down if I need to.

The hostess smiles at me. "Just one?"

I glance beyond her to see if I can find Claude but that was absolutely foolish to even do. There's no way I could miss the man *beaming* at me in a lime-green vest over a yellow button-up. He looks gaudy as hell and my attitude immediately sours when I see him.

"Sir?"

"I already have a table from the depths of hell," I grumble as I slowly walk toward Claude. I feel like I'm walking to the guillotine and the way he's just *smiling* irritates me. No one's that happy dealing with me.

The moment I near the table, he hops up and pulls my chair out like I can't figure out how to do that alone.

"I'm so glad you could finally make it. You're a very busy man!" he says, like I hadn't just been going straight home every night and staring at the TV or reading a book.

I sit down and he decides he also has to push my chair in. Instead of letting him, I plant my feet and push against him. He's too determined to keep pushing, so he shoves a little harder, but I'm determined not to let him win.

"Let me just push in your chair for you," Claude says through gritted teeth.

"I'm pretty sure I can do it myself."

"Yes, but I want to be nice and you won't let me be nice."

And that's when I remember Finn telling me about how Claude nearly sacrificed his life for him, so I lift up my feet. The issue is I wasn't thinking about how hard I'd been pushing *against* Claude so when I lift my feet, he practically *throws* me into the table. My body slams into it and the legs fling up and teeter. Everything on the table slides off as I flail and Claude barely manages to catch me before I crush the table.

I slowly stand up and look back at Claude who stares at me for a split second, then beams at me before quickly righting the table and tableware. The he sits back down like nothing happened. There's wax from the candle melted across the surface that Claude nonchalantly drops a napkin on top of.

"So, Alexei—"

“Only friends are allowed to call me Alexei.”

His eyes get huge as his smile widens. “I’m your friend?”

Dammit. Of course that’s how he would take it. “No, I’m saying you should call me Karsyn.”

It’s clear he’s no longer comprehending what I’m saying. He’s in some euphoric fantasy where I’d call him friend. I’d be better off speaking Russian to him for the level of comprehension he’s currently possessing.

“What would you like to drink?” he asks as he slides a menu over to me.

“Blood.”

“Yes, but what kind?”

“Blood kind.” I have to hand it to the man, he *never* gets deterred.

“Yes, but there are different types. That’s what makes this place so special,” he says as he shows me.

I flip it open, slightly confused on why I can’t just order blood and even more confused when I see the strange names listed for each thing. “Are these the names of the humans they killed to get it?” Clearly, I’m joking since it’s not exactly legal to kill off humans for blood.

He looks horrified. “No... they’re like... fancy names!”

“Uh-huh. I’ll take blood.”

He slowly pulls the menu from my fingers before flipping it around to face him. “How about I pick? I’d love to pick for you.”

“Will it be your blood? That could be good.”

He grins at me. “No, no it won’t. I’ll pick for you.”

“I want it to be expensive.”

“I’ll pick the perfect one.”

The waiter comes up and Claude orders something for himself and then says, “And my strikingly handsome date will have the same. Isn’t he just gorgeous?”

The waiter just gives a polite smile and hurries off as I contemplate murder. I’ve worked in law enforcement for many years and I’ve hunted down every type of criminal, so I can’t help but wonder if I could get away with murder. I think I’d be good at setting up the crime scene, honestly. And really, what better specimen than Claude? He has no close family. If he disappeared, Marcus would just assume he went off on his own again... ah shit... but Finn. Finn likes him for some reason.

“Oh no,” Claude says before glancing down at his lap. “I mean. You are... an... adequate person. Yes!”

I narrow my eyes as I question if Claude is malfunctioning. He *has* to be malfunctioning. “How are you related to Marcus?” I ask.

“Twin, of course. I was born first, as I’m sure you’ve already noticed.”

I’m not sure how that would be clear, but maybe it’s because he’s said it more than once. “Hmm...”

“What about you? Tell me about yourself! Maybe your childhood?”

“Uh... yeah, no.”

He just keeps smiling before glancing down again. “Okay. What would you like to talk about, then?”

Why does he keep looking down? What’s so exciting about his crotch that he has to reference it before talking? Why am I getting so irritated by it? I grab onto the knife that’s laid out for the humans who dine here and fiddle with it as I say, “Why me? Why did you spin around in your weird clothes and go ‘I want to harass *that* one’? I don’t like people or dates or any of this nonsense. But you’re so persistent.”

He seems thoughtful for a moment. “Honestly, I don’t date either, but there was something about you. And then the way your accent went right—Your...” He glances down again. “I lick... like... it!”

What the hell is he doing?

I reach across the table and grab his arm before yanking it toward me and looking down at it. It looks like he wrote a fucking book on it. “What is this?”

He has literal bullet points inked into his skin from what looks like a Sharpie.

Things to not say or do:

- Don’t constantly call him sexy or other things. You can tell him he looks nice but you’re not going for a hookup.
- Leave his accent alone. It’s clear he hates compliments from you.
- Dress normal.
- Try to be someone other than yourself.
- Keep him away from sharp objects.

- Don't forget he hates how annoying you are, so don't be annoying.
- Just pretend to be like me.

“Are these... notes? Is this like a quiz you're trying to cheat on?” I ask.

He shrugs. “I don't know! I told Finn you finally agreed and he gave me a list of things not to do. It was confusing, so I asked him to write it down on my arm so I could refer to it.”

“Do you really want to be with someone you have to take notes to go on a date with?” I ask. “Why don't you just find someone who fits you?”

“You intrigue me.”

“You're intrigued because I won't immediately sleep with you. Besides me, when's the last time someone turned you down?” I ask.

“Finn!”

“Besides Finn.”

He seems to think about it for a ridiculously long time. “About ten years ago there was this guy who was extremely straight and... wait... no... I slept with him too. Never mind. I don't really recall.”

Of course he can't. “See? You're fixated on me because you want to sleep with me.”

“No! Not really!”

I sigh, not getting any of this. But it's just one hour of my life ruined. That's all it'll ever be.

“Why do you have to keep me away from sharp objects? Do I look like I'll just fall on them?” I ask.

He waves at the knife in my hand. “You look like you're ready to murder me.”

“That's because I am,” I say with a grin. “How would you like to die, Claude?”

His eyebrows knit. “Not at all, if I get a choice.”

“That's no fun. But you said I could do anything I wanted on my date with you.”

“I'm starting to think our ideas of fun are vastly different, but that's okay! Opposites attract!”

“Hmm...” I growl, not convinced. “Hold on, what’s on your other arm?”

On the other arm is a different list.

Things to say or do:

- Tell him you like him but don’t confess your undying love or try to sleep with him.
- Find things in common.
- Harass him just a little. He likes minor harassment.
- Ask him fun questions like: What are your hobbies? Is Finn the best person ever? What kinds of movies or TV shows do you like to watch? Do you really have a house full of mannequin legs?

“I might murder Finn,” I growl.

“Why? He was really helpful! He’s like Cupid and it’s so cute. I’m not very sure about the mannequin legs but to each their own. This one time I dated this guy with an obsession with wigs. Not like he was wearing them to look nice or anything. He just liked collecting them and hanging them everywhere.”

I stare at him before shaking my head. “Wow, okay. But no, I don’t have any mannequin legs in my house at all.”

“Oh, that’s good. I was prepared to embrace it but wouldn’t mind if I didn’t have to.”

“Hmm...”

The waiter returns and sets our glasses down before asking if we need anything else. Why it took five years to pour blood into a glass I’ll never know, but I thank him and shoo him off with my hand, the one with the blade in it.

I take a sip and stare at Claude who is back to reading his arm. “This tastes no different than regular blood.”

“It’s infused.”

“With?”

Claude shrugs. “I don’t know. Infusion.”

“Did you read what it was?”

“It was the most expensive one, so I thought you’d like it the most.”

“It’s probably like the blood of hooker nuns or some shit that they’re jacking up for people like you to toss money at.”

He takes a sip. “I love hooker nuns.”

I snort as I swirl the blood around. “So what’s next on your arm list? I see you eyeing it.”

“Talk about hobbies. What are your hobbies, Alexei?”

“Good question,” I say like I’m not being sarcastic as hell. “I love beheadings. They just brighten up my day. When I don’t have the opportunity to behead, a good round of torture is like a midday snack to me.”

“You can torture me, if you want.”

“Would you let me tie you up?” I ask while trying my hardest not to be amused.

“Of course!”

“Alright, let’s do that after we’re finished here, then!” I say.

“I look forward to it. What about, in exchange, you talk dirty to me in Russian!”

“Which arm is that on?” I growl.

He looks at them. “The Things Not to Do arm. But a little Russian dirty talk has never hurt anyone.”

“It hurts me.”

“Just say, ‘I’m a sexy beast’ in Russian.”

I stare at him.

“What about, ‘You’re a sexy beast,’ but in Russian?”

“Let’s go back to hobbies. My current hobby is not speaking Russian.”

He nods like he approves.

“Are you enjoying this? Was this worth the weeks of torturing me?”

He smiles at me and it looks so genuine on him. “It is! Look at all the people jealous of us.”

I look around but I only see wary looks from people side-eying my knife. “Uh-huh.” I down the rest of the blood and see that he does the same.

“Ready to go?”

“We’ve been here ten minutes.”

“Ten minutes longer than you probably were ever going to get with me.”

He grins. "Sure."

He pays, of course, and then we head outside to where I'm planning on escaping to my car, but he points behind us. "There's a park back there where we could go for a walk."

I glance back at the park as a teeny tiny stupid voice in the back of my head reminds me that I really have nothing better to do. "Why? Are you planning on killing me and wearing my skin?"

"I hadn't considered it, but it's not a shabby idea," he says.

"Fine," I say for some reason. Maybe it's because I feel bad that I'm planning on running after ten minutes. Or maybe it's because I honestly have nothing better to do.

So I follow him as we take the path behind the building and into the park. This end of the park is much more of a nature walk, which means we mostly pass people walking dogs or going for a jog.

"Do you live here?" I ask.

He shrugs. "I don't know. I just wander, mostly. I came here since it's where Marcus is. I always felt like there was something beyond what I was doing. I get wrapped up too much in books and history, but honestly, where has that gotten me? What about you? Been here long?"

"Not long enough." But I'm not unraveling any of that.

He turns and heads out toward a pond. "This is why I brought you here. I thought that maybe a baby goose would just wash away that scowl." He points at a fluffy gosling swimming around with its family.

"Like to eat?"

He looks absolutely horrified by my joke and I can't help but love it. "No... just... to look at."

I fold my arms over my chest. "What if you caught me one? I might actually enjoy this date if you caught it for me."

He's wary and I'm unsure why until he says, "Are you going to eat it?"

I raise an eyebrow. "No, I'm not going to eat it!"

"Alright—"

"Wait, I want that one," I say as I point to one. They all look the same but if I'm going to send Claude off on a goose hunt, I want to make him work for it.

"Which one?"

“The one right there that looks different from the rest.” They all look the same.

He stares at them, then must feel confident in his choice because he takes his shoes off and heads for the pond. He returns in a split second, gosling in his hand. It’s livid, screaming as loud as it can as he holds the tiny ball of fluff. “Is this the right one?”

“If it isn’t, are you going to catch me another?” I ask.

“I would.”

“You’re so strange,” I say as I reach out and touch the tiny thing’s fluffy head.

He’s beaming at me, like he’s proud of his accomplishment, and honestly, I’m weirdly pulled in by the look. It’s not the cocky look he generally wears when he spouts stupid shit. Why the hell does it matter? What a stupid thought.

That’s when I notice that mama goose is *pissed* and headed right this way. Either Claude’s ears don’t work or they’ve been shattered by the noise the baby is making because he doesn’t notice until she flies into the air and bites him right in the ass.

I cackle, way too pleased as he leaps through the air. He tries putting the gosling down but she goes for his head, so he snatches her out of the air. Now he’s holding a gosling in one hand and a goose in the other and I’m laughing far too hard as it snaps at his face and hisses. He puts the baby back in the water.

“There! Now fuck off!” he says, but the moment he lets go, the goose decides that the only way to make this better is for him to die. “Alexei! Alexei, help!” he says as he rushes ten feet away. The goose doesn’t care what speed he goes, she will bathe in his blood.

Eventually he puts enough distance between him and the goose that she waddles back to the pond and the highlight of my evening is over with.

My phone rings and I see that it’s Claude.

“Hello?”

“Come away from the pond,” he urges. “And bring my shoes.”

I glance down at his shoes that I would prefer not to touch. They look brand-new and stupidly expensive. “Why?”

“So that thing doesn’t murder me!”

“But I like it here. It’s nice and quiet.”

He sighs. “Well, every time I try to go back to you, she comes after me.”

“You shouldn’t mess with animals.”

“You suggested it!”

I’m grinning as I say, “Maybe.”

“Did you watch her come after me?” he asks, sounding slightly pitiful.

“I did.”

“I was violated by a goose. Her beak bit my asshole.”

I grin wider at the thought. “Only action you’re going to get on this date.”

“Come to me!”

“You’re not cute when you whine.”

“Am I cute when I don’t whine?”

A little. “No,” I say as I walk away from the pond to find Claude hiding behind a tree. “Wow, hiding from a little goose.”

His eyes get huge as his hands start flailing about. “Little? That thing had to have weighed a hundred pounds.”

“Geese don’t weigh a hundred pounds!”

“That one did!”

“Well, that was no doubt the best part of the date. Thank you for the laugh. I haven’t laughed like that in a while.”

He smiles at me, all signs of distress gone. “As long as you had fun.”

“Good. Now I need to go home.”

“Do you want to go on a second date?”

“No.”

Claude sighs. “But this one went well, didn’t it?”

“No.”

He sighs again while looking disappointed. “Why are you so stubborn?”

“I don’t want to date anyone, Claude! No one. Not you, not someone else, not a vampire, not a human. I just don’t want to date.”

He kicks a stone as we walk back toward the cars. “Okay. I get that. How about we do things as friends, then? I have like one friend besides Finn.”

I sigh because I don't know if it's worth fighting over. "Will you text me?"

"At least ten times a day."

"What about calling me?" I ask.

"At least once a day."

"Sounds dreadful. So no."

"Fine, I'll limit it to one text a day."

"I'll think about it," I say as I head back to my car. Before I can get in, Claude pulls me into a hug that I refuse to reciprocate. So I just awkwardly stand there with my arms hanging by my side.

"Thanks for going out with me! I hope you enjoyed some of it!"

"I enjoyed you being bitten immensely," I assure him as I get into the car. "I suppose thanks for paying."

"Of course. Any time!"

I start the car and begin to drive. Claude needs to just move on. He's only interested in me because I'm someone that doesn't automatically want him. Once he gets an understanding of my personality, he'll want nothing to do with me again.

I like living alone. I like being alone. Yeah, sometimes it sucks when I feel like there's nothing more out there, like everything is against me. But it beats living through shit like I did when I was younger. I'd rather be alone for the rest of my life than deal with any of that again. Claude just doesn't understand.

And I have others now who interact with me, like Finn. I don't need anything else.

I'm perfectly fine all alone and no matter what it's like to be surrounded by people, I know it's not worth it.

I glance back at his car to find him manically waving at me.

No. It's not worth it. It can't be worth it.