



Bonus
CONTENT!



ONCE UPON A TIME
WINTERS

Bonus short for Ghost of Truth- This short story is best to be read after the events of Ghost of Truth (Medium Troubles 2). It's also from Reggie's POV. I hope you enjoy!

Alice Winters

“Gentle” Proof: Courtney Basset

Reggie

“Helloooo, is it me you’re looking for?” I sing.

“Fuck no,” Keaton says as he quickly walks on by.

“I can see it in your eyes, I can see it in your smile!”

“That’s funny because I’m sure as fuck not smiling,” Keaton says, arms folded over his chest.

“Yeah, well maybe if I flipped you on your ass, you’d be upside down and I could pretend it’s a smile. God, you’re so hot it annoys me,” I growl.

“You’re so annoying it annoys me.”

“You like it.”

He scoffs and hurries over to hide behind Hiro like he can hide his massively muscled body behind Hiro the Twig.

I rush over to the other side of Hiro so he’s between us, then stare up at Keaton while Hiro talks to a group of people including Maddox’s boss. It’s something super boring about... I really don’t know, I’m not paying attention.

“Hey, Keaton,” I whisper so I don’t distract Hiro.

“I’m busy,” Keaton says.

“Busy looking hot.”

“Thanks, but no thanks.”

“Tell me your favorite thing about me,” I say.

“When you’re quiet.”

“Ah, Hiro likes that too. Look at the way his face is twitching,” I say as I poke at it.

Hiro smacks my hand away but doesn't miss a beat as he continues on with the meeting. I snatch Hiro's hand before he can set it down and run my tongue up one finger while looking Keaton in the eyes.

When I go to put Hiro's entire finger in my mouth, he slowly, ever so slowly, turns to look at me. There's death in his eyes. If I wasn't already dead, I'd fear for my life, but at the same time, it's kind of sexy but in a weird way. Like is he going to bring down upon me my second death or not?

Keaton lets out a snort like he's amused my death is imminent.

“Excuse me one minor tiny second,” Hiro says to the others as he marches out the door.

“I'm not following him, he wants to yell at *you*,” Keaton says.

“I don't want to follow him either, he wants to yell at *you*. You were the one who started it,” I say.

“Because I was trying to get away from *you*.”

My eyes betray me by looking over at the door with a glass pane in it. Hiro is staring through it, immediately catching my eyes. He wants me to follow. He wants me to go to him where he'll ruin all my fun like the fun ruiner he is.

“He's staring into my soul,” I whisper.

“You should go to him,” Keaton says.

Hiro points to me and then Keaton before doing a “come hither to your death” hand motion.

“He wants you,” I say.

Keaton sighs again before walking over to Hiro, and if Keaton is willing to walk to his death, then I shall stay here and live my life.

As long as I don't ever look at him again.

Hiro's jabbing at the spot before him now.

Shit, I looked.

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

I grudgingly pass through the wall and come to a stop beside Hiro with a huge smile on my face, hoping a burst of friendly Reggie time will be all Hiro needs to forget my minor blunder. "You look really nice today, Hiro," I say, but it doesn't even penetrate his anger bubble.

"What the absolute hell was that? You guys know I have a meeting, and instead, you're trying to squish me between you two like I'm some fucking chastity belt or some shit! No! This is really important to me, so you two are going to take your pestering asses and you're going to go into that room there and wait for my meeting to be over, and if you aren't both sitting *at* that very table when I return, I will refuse to talk to or acknowledge either of you for a *week*."

While I'm sure Keaton would love to say something along the lines of "Sounds good to me," he's probably in the same boat as I am. Without Hiro to pester and poke and annoy... life feels kind of empty. I at least know how to make friends, while I think Keaton really only has us.

So with one more jab of Hiro's finger, Keaton and I slink off into the room together.

"That was clearly an overreaction. We were merely just standing there," I say as I plop down in the seat.

"You *licked* his finger during his presentation," Keaton says.

"By *accident*."

"How do you accidentally lick someone's finger?"

"Do you want me to show you, big boy?" I ask as I hold my hand out to him. Keaton's clearly not planning on giving his hand up with ease as he

stares at me with an expression that's partly "I can't believe I'm in this mess" and partly "I'm so hot and you know it."

Okay... maybe I made that last bit up.

"Let's just sit in silence and wait for Hiro to come back," Keaton says.

I grunt, not quite sure I love the idea of silent sitting, but I suppose I could give it a try. After one minute of a valiant effort later, I'm champing at the bit to do *something*.

"Strip poker," I declare.

"What?"

"We play strip poker."

"With?"

"Me."

"I would rather watch paint dry."

"On my body?" I inquire.

"On a rock."

"I kind of feel like you're being rather dramatic, if I'm being honest," I say. "What do you want to play?"

"Silence."

I try to scoot my chair toward him, but without Hiro around, it's impossible and annoying. Instead, I decide to just put my feet on his lap.

"What are you doing?" he asks as he tries pushing my feet off.

"I thought you wanted my feet. I was under the assumption that you liked feet," I say.

"Well, I don't. Especially not yours."

"So, Keaton, tell me your deepest and darkest and kinkiest secrets," I say as I refuse to move my feet. He's trying to use force now, but I'm not budging. In this state, it's not how strong your muscles are, it's how good

you are at manipulating the ghost world. And I'm more powerful than Keaton.

“Once upon a time I met this creepy guy who harassed me, stared at me, and said weird things to me. Do you know if there are any ghost police I could file a complaint to?” Keaton asks.

“Sounds rough. But you know what would make you feel better? Stripping.”

He grimaces, oddly not loving my idea.

“Fine, we'll try to play your game. The 'silent' game.” I squirm in my seat, feeling absolutely disgusting playing this godawful game. With a gasp, I turn to him. “I can't do it. I even tried holding my breath but it didn't help.”

“You realize you don't need to breathe, right?” he asks.

“I wanted to play your ridiculously stupid game, I did, but I think it goes against my entire being, you know? Do you want to torture my being like that?”

He shrugs. “Yeah, sure.”

I glower at him. “No, Keaton. No.”

He shakes his head a moment before I see his attention pulled to the open doorway. Maddox is walking by talking to another detective. They stop outside the door, chatting about something related to a case they're working on, before continuing on. I watch Keaton's eyes trail after them.

“Do you miss it?” I ask. “Being a detective.”

He just shrugs like he can shrug my only serious question off.

“You know it's okay to miss it. It's okay to be angry. It's okay to hate absolutely everything. I was stuck in the area I died at for so long. And the whole time, all I could think about is that it'll be okay, it'll be okay once I can leave. And I'd get farther and farther from the spot every day and I

knew that once I could leave and go home and see Maddox and my furbabies, it'd be alright. Of course it'll be alright, I'll be home. So I fought and I fought *every day* to get farther from that goddamn spot, and then the day when I was finally strong enough to leave that place, I rushed home. I went home so goddamn fast.

“‘This is it,’ I told myself. ‘Everything will be okay now.’ But as I walked into that goddamn house where I couldn’t interact with anything I once loved, it was so much worse. I remember sitting on Maddox’s bed as he slept, and I screamed and I cried and I kicked and I hit and I questioned everything that I could question why I got stuck on this goddamn world like this. What did I do to deserve it?

“But I guess everything really does happen for a reason because if I wasn’t stuck in that fucking house for five years just watching the ones I love move on without me, I never would have met Hiro. I never would have been able to talk to Maddox again, and I never would have been able to help him. So you know it’s okay to hate it all, right?” I ask as I look over at Keaton.

He’s staring at his hands, and I see a slight tremble there, but the man isn’t letting a sliver of emotion leak out onto his face.

And that’s the moment the door opens and Hiro walks in.

“Oh thank god! Hiro! Keaton just asked me to strip all my clothes off and rub my naked body all over him, and I was a little like I don’t know if that’s appropriate, but I almost did it, so I’m super glad you’re back for me,” I say as I wrap my arms around his neck and hang on him while staring at Keaton.

Keaton raises an eyebrow before scoffing.

“Well, Keaton, you know that’s not a good way to make friends, right?” Hiro asks, like he could possibly believe Keaton was involved in

any of that.

“We were trying to play the silent game, which he doesn’t seem to understand,” Keaton says.

“God no, he’s atrocious at that,” Hiro says before rubbing the top of my head like a dog. And honestly, I can’t even say I care in the slightest because I love the feeling of his touch. The freedom of his words.

I squeeze him until he starts trying to shove me off.

“Dammit, Reggie, don’t murder me,” Hiro cries.

“But if I murder you, you could be my ghost slave. We could haunt each other *naked*,” I tease.

“That sounds like a nightmare,” Hiro says as he manages to push me off him. “Let’s go.”

“Come, Keaton. Come, boy,” I say as I smack my leg like he’s a dog. He sighs but follows after me. “Are we going to a strip club? You know, Keaton’s old stomping grounds?”

“You better be careful,” Hiro says.

“Nah, he likes it.”

I’m lying on the couch with Snugglum when I hear Hiro call Keaton’s name.

“Oh, Keaton. Maddox is wondering if you could look over something for him for a case he’s working on. We set the papers out on the table so you don’t have to flip through them, but if you need something adjusted or whatever, let me know,” Hiro says.

“I wrote up notes and put them there,” Maddox adds.

I peek over the top of the couch and look at Keaton who gives Hiro a soft smile. Damn Hiro stealing my smile.

“Of course, I’d be happy to help,” Keaton says as he hurries over to the table to see what Maddox has laid out for him.

“You know, we could become the best detectives ever,” Hiro says. “Solve three times as many cases if we start sticking ghosts on it. We could just sit back, kick our feet up, and let them do all the work.”

Maddox laughs. “I’ll come into the office with five cases done in a night.”

They laugh but Keaton is too absorbed in whatever he’s reading to notice or care that they’re practically using him as free labor.

Hiro walks through the living room before seeing me and giving me a pat on the face. “You’re a good boy.”

“Nah.”

“I can tell him it was your idea,” he says.

“Absolutely not. I must maintain my mysterious and sexy persona.”

Hiro pats my face again while grimacing. “I’m not sure you need to.”

“I do. That is *one hundred* percent how I woo all the men.”

Hiro looks around and then up and down. “Hmm... maybe you need to change your tactics because right now all you’re wooing is a cat,” he says before picking up Bandit and setting him next to me. He takes my hand and sets it on the live cat, and I absolutely love the feeling of his fur beneath my fingers. The softness. The warmth. I can hear the rumble of his purrs.

“See, when you’re not annoying, you get little treats,” Hiro says.

“You give me treats no matter what I do because you’re a sucka.”

Hiro shakes his head. “I have shit to do. Have fun.”

I must doze off because the next thing I know, something pelts me in the face.

I jerk back and open my eyes to find Keaton standing over me.

“I know you told Hiro,” he says, arms crossed over his chest.

“You know that I asked Hiro if you could join our next man meat sandwich?”

He scowls. “You know what I’m talking about,” he says. It kind of sounds more like a threat, but I don’t mind.

“Hmm... I bet if you take your shirt off, I might remember,” I say.

“Literally *no* one. *No one* could be as annoying as you,” he says.

“Thanks.” I give him a wink, but my cocky look is wiped right off my face as I watch him take his shirt off and drop it on my head.

I gasp as I grab the shirt, yanking it off, only to find Keaton gone.

“Nooooooooooooooooooooo!” I cry.

“What’s wrong?” Hiro asks.

“Keaton took his shirt off, but he ran away before I could peruse his delectable chest with my eyes. Keeeeeatooon, come back.”

“It’s really no wonder he ran,” Hiro says as I sink down on the couch with only Keaton’s shirt to hold.

Honestly, I can’t help but smile as I squeeze it close. This really isn’t half bad at all. No... somehow life has become even more worth living. Which is pretty ironic when I’m dead.