

PARTY FOR TWO
ARETHE - STORY 017

ARETHE

I



Celebration

Thump. Thump. Thump...

A sharpened rock wrapped around the end of a stick formed a tiny axe that Mathew swung at the base of the plant he was trying to gather. It didn't take long for it to topple over. By its size, he expected to hear the sound of a massive tree

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falling – but there was nothing. He was small, it too was small by comparison to the rest of the world. It snapped, fell, and he hefted it over his shoulder. Everything was dark outside, insects chirped and buzzed around as he worked.

Tomorrow was a special day~

While the Fae knew where they were, they were preoccupied with other tasks over the last few months. Fluttering around town, messing with the locals, helping or hindering wherever they saw fit. As long as they had a good supply of Aetherial Nectar, they were happy. The novelty of their new toys had worn thin, so both Em and Mathew had more autonomy over what they did and where they went. All the other denizens of the household had their own lives as well. Painting, tending to their gardens, enjoying books, cooking, cleaning, studying, hunting humans that didn't belong, whatever else came to mind. The longer the pair lived

with them, the more Em and Mathew seemed to fade into the environment.

It didn't take long for Mathew to carry the last bit of his project through the tall grass and into what remained of a worn-down brick shed. It was on the outskirts of their property. Gripping the stem with his teeth, he climbed a ladder-rope he put together and made his way up to a table near the back of the crumbling structure. He was far too small to cause any distress to the environment. Sweat draining down his brow, the tiny blue-haired being gently set the blue floral arrangement in place...

Perfection...

The Next Morning

“I could think of worse ways to spend today,” Em said with a smile, glancing over her shoulder at Mathew who was a little out of breath on the pathway, “Fear not, immortal. I’ll fend off any creature, be they large or small.”

“I mean, if anything did happen, it’d be smart for me to distract them. We know I come back, you haven’t died yet and I don’t really wanna’ take that-”

Whap!

The tiny, sharpened twig came down atop Mat’s head in a flourish as Em turned to face him. She put a hand on his shoulder, lifted his chin, and looked into his eyes directly. With a smirk, she shook her head.

“No. Immortal or not, I don’t want to see you hurting. Got it, gov’na? You’re under my protection, my VIP. I’m a professional.”

Blushing, Mat gave a simple nod. She pat him on the cheek, gave him a wink, and turned in place to continue along the path. They were just out and about, walking for the sake of walking. A hike together without rhyme or reason, so she thought. As the outline of a partially ruined shed came into view, Mathew jogged out ahead of her. He smiled, gesturing towards a small entrance.

“Have you been in there yet?” He asked.

“Negative. Haven’t been out this way much. Katri’s been having me patrolling and fending off little skirmishes of human raiders near the house. I think she likes me since I told her more about what I used to do for a living.”

“I’m glad. Heard them talking about you a bit too.”

“Say anything interesting?”

“You’re useful. I’d agree, I feel really safe with you around. Even when the odds aren’t in our favor.”

“That’s the goal, my good sir,” Em said as she approached the hole.

Her demeanor shifted entirely. The smile on her face disappeared, replaced with a stoic, hardened expression. Her right hand came up, stopping Mathew in his tracks as he too became deathly silent. Crouching, she looked to the dirt.

“Footprints,” She said, “Have you been in here before?”

“No. Think they could be the Fae?”

“Not likely...” She replied as she looked around.

Em picked up an acorn from the floor, pulling the couple off with ease. She stepped up to Mathew, pulled his hair up into a tight bun, and pressed the cap atop his head. The motions were quick, and as she brought her hands back, she

patted him on the shoulder. He nodded, his bright blue hair now hidden entirely as Em turned to walk inside. She carefully peered around the corner, keeping out of sight the best she could as she visibly cleared the area with spear held tight. In a quick motion she stepped out, aiming her spear left towards the longest open space. Her head was on a swivel, her adrenaline sharp. She was cool, calm, and collected – like a switch flipped in her brain from casual banter to trained soldier. With silent ease, she looked around, following the footsteps slowly. As Mathew cautiously followed, keeping down the best he could, she shook her head.

“I’m coming,” Mat replied sternly, his voice low.

There was a long, cold stare before she nodded. Then, the two ventured forth, following the footsteps through the dust. They led around rusted, metal machinery. Cloth that had seen better days. A pile of scraps from a mouse long since gone. Cobwebs the two kept far away from, all the way to a makeshift

ladder. Her expression didn't change as she gripped the edge, and Mathew put his hand on her shoulder. She shook her head, but he insisted. With a long, suffering sigh, she stood down and allowed him up first. The climb was long, up to a table near the back of the room. As he reached the top first, he disappeared. Before Em could follow with spear in hand, the sound of a cloth moving could be heard. She rushed to the top, only to see something that took her breath away. As she pulled herself up, she watched as Mathew carefully pulled a cloth cover away from a perfectly fresh lemon cupcake!

"Boy! You liar," She said, a smirk across her face as she casually walked over to his side and punched him in the shoulder, "I will bonk you again."

"Abuse, abuse!" He laughed, nearly falling back from the hit, "Careful, or-"

"Or what?" Em replied with a brighter laugh.

An old tape player was open with a tape pressed inside. The headset itself was positioned with each speaker facing inward, and a string held aloft by two twigs had various leaves dangling down from it. A beautiful assortment of blue flowers rested near the ladder they came up on. The smell of lemon-flavored confectionery lofted through the air mixing with the flowers on the breeze. Mathew climbed up on the tape player, and with his weight, it clicked shut.

“What’s all this about?” Em asked.

“Do you know what day it is?” Mathew replied, extending his hand to her from atop the tape player.

She shook her head, taking his hand and allowing him to pull her up onto the platform. Leaning down, Mat kicked the play button. Music filled the air, an upbeat tempo from a time far before either of them. Neither knew the artist, the music was filled with brass and guitar strumming along with fervor. It hearkened to a speakeasy, the cheap headset’s crackling

voices only added to the ambiance. Pulling Em towards the center, Mathew laughed again.

“I’ll give you a hint. It’s June~”

“Oh, no shit!” Em said, an embarrassed blush crossing her face, “Fuck dude, I haven’t looked at a calendar in like a year. Your birthday or mine?”

“Yours,” Mat replied, “Fair warning, I’m awful at dancing.”

Em scoffed, pushing him slightly as he shuffled back and forth.

“You think I care about that, my dude?” Em said, grabbing him by the hand, “Come here.”

The sun had risen, bathing the pair in golden hues as they both danced together. At first, Mathew was stiff in his movements. Rigid, nervous. But after a while of dancing together atop the tape player, he loosened up a little bit. Music

rolled over the two, time passed by quicker and quicker until Mathew danced his way over towards the cupcake.

“Lemon, right?” He said.

She took a scoop of the frosting in her hand, holding it up to her mouth for a taste. As her tongue came close, she shifted and pushed her hand directly into Mathew’s face. He laughed, the sweet confectionery topping dripped down his front as he grabbed a fistful and tossed it in her direction. She squeaked, taking cover masterfully to dodge out of the way of his attack. As he reached up to grab another, she balled her own bit of confectionery into a tight snowball. Just as he cocked his hand back to throw, she popped up and clocked him directly in the face with another strike.

“Gawhgnn!” He choked, grabbing onto the cupcake for support, “I give up! I surrender!”

As he wiped his face clean, he felt Em’s hand grab his wrist and pull him to his back. He landed, just in time to see a fistful

of the lemon cake falling down to his mouth. She stuffed it into his maw, before wiping away the frosting from his eyes so he could see properly. Em was completely clean, while he was a frosting mess.

“I win,” She laughed, nodding, “Yes. Lemon is good, you remembered. Good boy.”

She ran her fingers through his hair, before helping him back up to his feet. Unspoiled, the two enjoyed the entire day together. Just the two of them, dancing to music, relaxing, and being at true peace...

Art By: Meawt

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