

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: House shopping!

-x-X-x-

“I think this place is perfect for you. Just a bit of a fixer upper, really.”

Raven narrows her eyes as they follow the sleazy looking man down the street. She knows it's not her place to question anything, but at the same time, she can't help but wonder if they couldn't have found someone better to sell them a proper place of residence.

However, from what Cole had explained to her, it wasn't that simple here on Earth. There were a lot of rules... and the money they found might not be safe to use under the umbrella of those rules. If they were caught with it, they could get in trouble.

... So instead they were doing this, going with this man who was willing to sell property to them under the table. Raven really didn't trust it... but she would leave the decision making to her Master.

A shiver runs down her spine at that thought. She knew Cole didn't want her to call him Master outright, but she can't quite keep herself from thinking of him in that way sometimes. It's almost certainly going to get her in trouble one of these days, because she thinks about him as 'Master' so much that it's inevitable it'll slip out verbally at some point.

She's doing her best to be good enough for him though. That's all she really wants... to make him happy. To impress him. She just-

They turn a corner and Raven blinks, her internal monologue cut off as she feels an... incredible source of magic up ahead. She immediately straightens up, going stiff as her hand reaches out and grabs Cole's arm, stopping him in place. He looks to her curiously.

“Raven? What is it?”

“Something... there’s something powerful nearby. Magically powerful. Do you feel it?”

Cole tilts his head to the side and squints for a moment.

“Hm... maybe?”

Raven is reminded, not for the first time, how lacking in experience her Master is. He’s so powerful... but he simply hasn’t had the time or training he needs to become truly unstoppable. Unfortunately, she’s not sure she’d be the best teacher for him in the end. But she should probably still show him a few things anyways...

“Uh? You guys good? The property is literally right up ahead...”

The man guiding them down the road has stopped now as well and is looking back at them with impatience and frustration on his face. Raven scowls right back at him, glaring him down until he looks away. He has no right to try and rush them... to try and rush Cole.

Cole, meanwhile, hesitates for a moment more before quirking a brow at her.

“Should we retreat?”

Her heart swells as he asks for her opinion, but at the same time... Raven shakes her head.

“It does not feel... malevolent. We should be safe so long as we tread carefully.”

Cole nods and they continue on, with the sleazy man leading them the rest of the way down the street. Finally they arrive at the property... a rundown building that certainly has seen better days. It’s also the source of magic that Raven felt before.

“Well... here it is. Come on, let me give you a tour!”

Raven exchanges a glance with her Master, nodding meaningfully when he arches a brow at her. But in the end... the magic still doesn't feel like it has any ill intent towards them. In fact, if she had to say... she would say that this magic felt more welcoming than anything else.

Indeed, she suspects even Cole can feel that part a little bit, because there's an eagerness to him as they step into the building together. And even as the tour begins... the eagerness doesn't diminish. It probably should though, because the place looks utterly ransacked and half demolished. Even Raven, who doesn't have much experience with Earth Buildings, knows that this place is probably unfit for habitation as it currently stands.

Hell, even the man trying to sell it to them seems to know that.

“And through here we have another bedroom... look, I know it's pretty bad, but you wanted cheap, right?”

There's something else to the man too, however. Something twitchy about him. Raven's eyes narrow as she watches him carefully and notices how he keeps looking around. Almost like he's not feeling that same welcoming feeling that she and her Master are feeling. Almost... like he's expecting something to happen that doesn't.

“Come on right through here, you two! This part of the place would make for a great kitchen, don't you think?”

Cole grunts as they're led into yet another room.

“It would... though I was expecting there to already BE a kitchen here if I'm being honest. And at least one working bathroom. I wanted cheap, not condemned.”

The sleazy man looks more nervous than ever before... while the magic around them thrums with a distinct feeling of amusement. Even Cole feels that bit, Raven notices, his eyes flicking up to the ceiling for a moment before going back down to the man.

“A-Ah well... that is... ahem...”

The man looks around himself like he’s expecting something to happen... or maybe someone else to show up? Raven’s eyes widen and then narrow into slits as she steps forward.

“You... what are you playing at? What are you waiting for?”

“Raven?”

Her Master is too good for this world. In spite of all that he’s experienced, Cole can still be a bit... naïve sometimes. But Raven can feel it... underneath all the magic and the warm, welcoming feeling, she actually does sense a bit of malevolent hostility. However, it’s not coming from the property. It’s coming from the man in front of them.

“You... ah for fuck’s sake!”

With that, the man suddenly pulls out what has to be a weapon and points it at them. Raven admittedly doesn’t have much experience with Earth weapons yet, but she knows better than to hesitate. Just as the man is opening his mouth to try and threaten them more than likely, she whips out her own hand.

Dark shadows coalesce around the weapon he’s pointing in their direction, closing around his hand as he screams in a panic.

She crushes both the weapon and his hand in her magic, her eyes darkly glowing as she does so. The man falls backwards, while Cole curses under his breath.

“Shit, that was a fucking gun... well done, Raven.”

Raven preens under her Master's praise, even as Cole steps forward with narrowed eyes.

"What the fuck man?"

Whimpering on the ground, holding his crushed hand, the vile man looks up at them both with tears in his eyes.

"F-Freaks... damn it, where the fuck are the others?! Leaving me high and dry like this... I'll fucking kill them!"

Raven hums and looks to Cole, standing at his side now as she is.

"What should I do with him?"

Cole hesitates for a moment, even as the man on the ground before them freezes up. Finally though, he shakes his head and gestures to the other man.

"Just... get out of here already. Good luck with the hand."

When their would-be assailant doesn't immediately scramble to his feet and flee, Raven growls and her eyes glow dark again. A moment later and the shadows consume the man... before promptly depositing him in a dumpster five blocks away. When Cole gives her a Look, she bows her head.

"He is alive and unharmed. But I did not want him in your presence for even a moment longer."

Sighing, Cole nods and accepts that before looking around with a grimace.

"I guess this was a bust, huh? We'll have to find someone else to sell a place to us."

Only, the moment those words leave his lips... the room they're in begins to transform as a feeling of distinct disagreement wells up from the magic all

around them. Raven and Cole both go wide eyed as the 'could be a kitchen' transforms into an actual kitchen... and it doesn't stop there.

As they leave the kitchen behind, the rest of the place is transforming as well. Gone are the drab grey walls, floor, and ceiling that dominated the place before. In their place is beautifully ornate architecture.

"What the hell... this looks like it could be right out of the Victorian Era..."

Raven doesn't know what the Victorian Era is, but she certainly recognizes the shock and awe in her Master's voice. She follows Cole through the building until they reach the outside again... however, the outside itself has also been transformed into quite the stately garden. And the building they'd entered... is now a proper house of at least four stories in height, with a gated wall surrounding the property that definitely wasn't there before.

"This is crazy..."

Raven clears her throat, drawing Cole's attention.

"I believe this is a magical abode, Cole. And I think... I think it wants you to take up residence within it."

Her Master blinks. Meanwhile, as if in agreement with Raven's words, the metal slat in the front door they just executed through pops open and deposits a large iron key onto the ground at their feet.

Slowly, Cole reaches down and picks up the key, closing his hand around it as Raven stares.

"Oh damn... I can feel the power in this thing. What the hell?"

No, not hell... Raven is getting a better sense of things now. This house does not belong to any hell dimension... but it also does not belong to this dimension or world. And yet... its here in this city on Earth anyways specifically to gift itself to Cole.

“I believe we’ve found ourselves a new home, Cole.”

Cole glances to her and then back at the house.

“Did it... choose us? Can Magical Houses do that?”

Raven shrugs.

“I believe it chose you more than me. And as for what magical houses can do... your guess is as good as mine. Still, I can feel it... this property possesses its own intelligence and mind.”

Cole’s mouth opens and closes a few times before he finally shakes his head, utterly bewildered.

“Why in the world would it choose *me* though?”

Raven smiles softly at that. One thing she wanted to work on with her Master was his self-confidence. There were plenty of reasons that someone or something would choose her Master, after all. She herself had chosen to give herself over to Cole for the rest of their lives... and she didn’t regret it one bit.

In response to his query, the front door flies open again, inviting them inside. As they both step back into the foyer, there’s a shiver in the walls... of anticipation. Raven furrows her brow in confusion, but luckily Cole seems to come to an understanding.

“Oh.”

Stepping away from her side and over to the nearest piece of furniture, Cole runs his hand across it... cleaning it of the dust that had accumulated on it.

Again, the entire building shivers... but this time in happiness and delight. A low chuckle leaves Cole’s lips at that, even as he shakes his head ruefully.

“I see now. You wanted me here because you wanted a nice, deep cleaning didn’t you? I guess whoever owned you previously didn’t do a very good job of that...”

The House shudders in delight, even as Raven tilts her head to the side, watching Cole continue his cleaning spree. He certainly seems to love using his magic, from what she’s seen so far.

This continues right up until Cole suddenly pulls open a door... and stops, staring at the collection of men bound and gagged and piled up within staring up at him.

“MMMPH!”

“NNNGH!”

“HRRRNN!!!”

Raven immediately moves forward in case any of them break free and prove a threat to her Master... but she needn’t have worried. These were the House’s prisoners after all, and the House had things well in hand.

“... I suppose these are the other guys that fucker was talking about. The plan was to ambush us and take our money, not sell us a property. I guess I should have seen that coming... thanks for having our backs, uh, House.”

A ripple of pleasure and satisfaction runs through the House, even as the tied up men continue to struggle and cry out and scream. After a moment, Cole turns to Raven.

“Can you send them to their friend, Raven?”

Raven nods and wordlessly raises a hand. A moment later and they all disappear from the closet, falling into shadow... and landing atop their friend in the same dumpster she put him in some minutes ago. They’re still bound and

gagged of course, but between them and their friend with the crushed hand, they should be able to get free... eventually.

With that taken care of, Cole just smiles and goes right back to cleaning. Raven can't help but smiling too. Her Master is happy, they have a new place of residence, and everything has worked out perfectly. Truly, this was a good day.

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John Constantine was having a *bad* day. Not the worst day ever by a wide margin, but still a bad day. Things had gone awry like they always did and he'd made it out by the skin of his teeth like he always did. Still, he was looking forward to just... taking a load off. Maybe even a bath was in order?

Fishing around in his pocket as he approaches a random door, Constantine looks for the key to the House of Mystery. Big iron key, it always appears in a pocket when he needs it. Just as it always opens a door to the House of Mystery for him when he needs it, no matter what door he uses.

Only... today he can't seem to get the damn key to materialize. Scowling, Constantine focuses a bit harder, calling on a touch of magic to try and summon the key to his hand. But... nothing. There's a void where his connection to the House of Mystery used to sit.

Mouth agape, John Constantine stares forward for a long moment as he tries to find his damn House... and can't. No key, no door, no entry. He's had the House of Mystery for a while now, ever since he won ownership in a card game. But never in all that time has it simply refused to answer him.

... Had someone *stolen* his house from him?!

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!