

◆ The Coven Gathering ◆

~ Part 03 ~

Alys and Caspan left the dining room, heading towards the foyer and out the front door.

"I don't like the idea of using demon magic on Tedrick either. But I feel like it might be the only thing that can counter whatever spell he was put under. We don't know enough about what we're dealing with," he said, trying to speak a little more calmly.

Alys glanced up at Caspian. She knew that the man cared deeply for her brother, even though he wasn't family. But he was getting in the way of her plans, and seemed to hardly even consider what her brother felt.

"It's up to Tedrick and him alone. You know how he feels about it. But you also know he will agree to whatever you offer, even if he hates it, because he's such a 'good boy' like that..." Alys replied, her voice going cold at the end.

"I could say the same to you, you know. He *is* a good boy and he *does* go along with whatever he's told, even if he hates it. That's why he's always following through with whatever errand *you* put him on. You want to talk about Tedrick agreeing to anything, even when he hates it? Then let's talk about how *you* sent him off into a bustling city, with *no* guidance, to scope out information on an entity that *you, yourself*, don't know anything about!

Not to mention the way you've been treating him his entire life! You have no right to talk about how I'll force him to do something he hates. Summoning a demon to page through his memories doesn't hold a *candle* to the amount of discomfort that *you've* put him through!" Caspian ranted, pointing at Alys in accusation as they walked back outside. He didn't want to be heated in front of Tedrick, but he had to get it off his chest.

"Tedrick was the one that found out magic was there and he told *me* about it. He asked *me* what to do. So I told him to look into it," Alys said a little haughtily, stepping ahead to avoid eye contact as they made their way to the gardens. "We don't need to bring up how I once treated him. We're talking about today. Where he hates talking to demons."

Caspian took another breath and dug his nails into his pudgy palms. "He's going to be uncomfortable no matter what we try to do. I just want him to know there's a potential option. If he really hates it, I won't make him go through with it."

Alys noticed they were nearing Tedrick, deep in thought beside a rose bush. "Fine," she replied curtly.

"*Fine.*" Caspian really hated playing semantics with Alys. All they ever did was talk in circles...

He caught sight of Tedrick's pink hair through the leaves so he took another deep breath and approached. "Hello, Tedrick." Just the sight of the gangly witch glancing his way calmed him down. He didn't understand how Alys and Tedrick were related. "How's your head?"

Tedrick, looking over from his bush, gave Caspian a surprised look. "Hello, Casp~ My head...?" he trailed slightly, his eyes meeting Alys' and he tensed again.

"Oh... It, um, feels fine. I really can't remember anything past the meeting with the CEO though..." Tedrick said nervously as he carefully pruned the dead leaves.



Alys stared at Caspian expectantly.

"That's alright. I don't want you to strain yourself," Caspian said gently. He wasn't sure if he

should talk about how little the coven collectively knows about Djinn magic. It would probably stress Tedrick out to hear that even Caspian had no idea what to do.

"It seems like a pretty tough spell to cast. Altering those memories of yours. I don't know if I can break it on my own, but I feel like we might make some progress if we... had a demon's help. A more powerful magic would be the most effective against it, but I won't force you." Not without a better reason, at least. Tedrick did *seem* okay, but Caspian didn't like the uncertainty.

Tedrick gulped as he looked at Caspian with quiet shock. *Why is Caspian suggesting demons? Why would he suggest something so drastic- so dangerous?* He looked to Alys who kept quiet, then back to him.

"Caspian, why would I want a demon poking around in my head?" he asked, cautiously. "I'm fine. I just... forgot some things. I can go back to find more information- Meridien is nice. Ferris really liked it there too..."

"Is that so...? Well, as long as it's your choice," Caspian said, gingerly sitting down beside Tedrick. The poor plant was already stressed enough as he was. Caspian didn't want to add to it.

"It does sound like a fine city. Was the food as good as everyone says it is?" He asked, his expression softening to something less serious as he tried to make more casual conversation.

"Yes, it was," he said softly. "I remember enjoying everything a lot. I was practically zoning out as I ate it. I didn't even notice Ferris got drunk and was over eating too, heh." Tedrick blushed at the memory.

Caspian was surprised to hear that Tedrick didn't realize Ferris was drinking. Was he really that taken by the food?

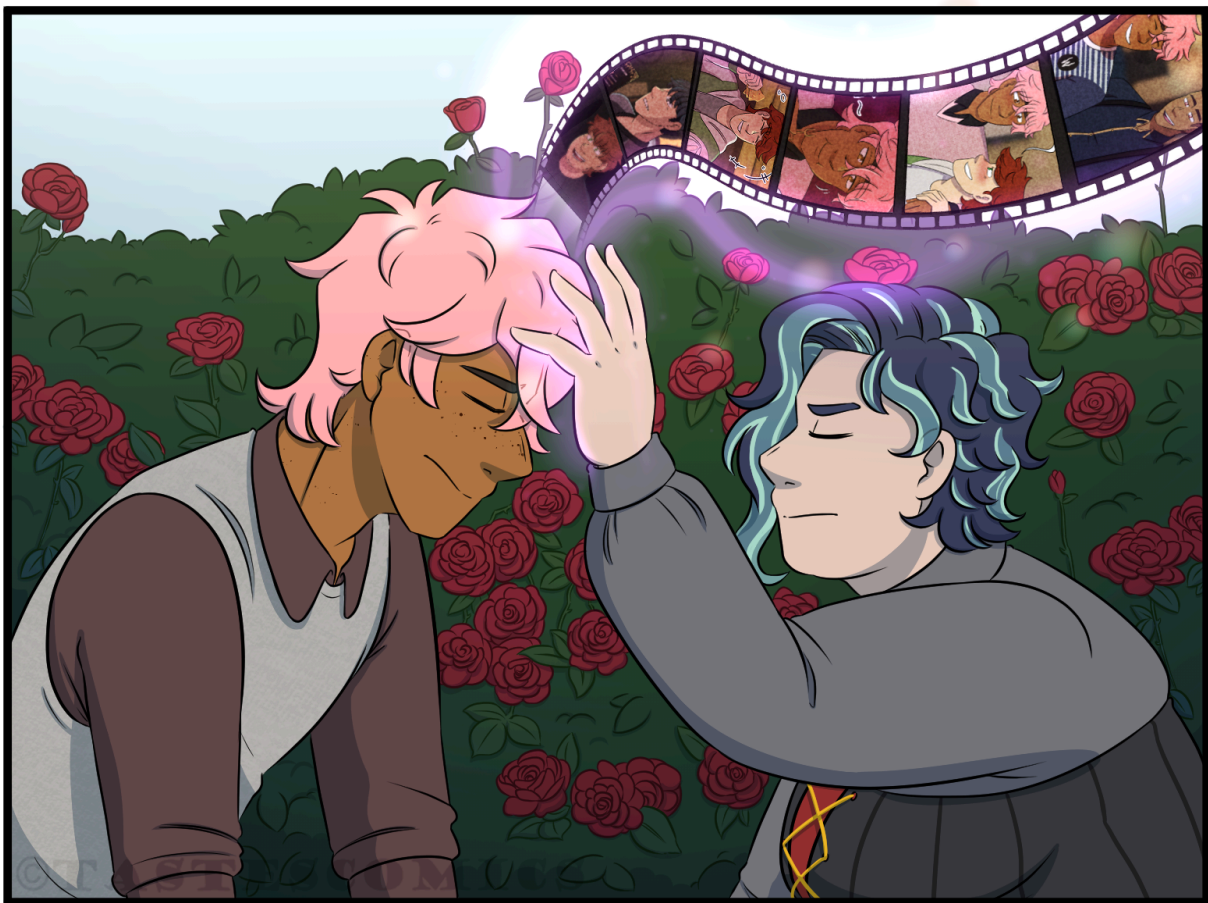
"But why do you two want to unlock my memories so badly?" he asked Caspian.

"I just want to make sure that you're alright," Caspian gently insisted. "Alys said she already had a look, but would you mind if I had one, too? I don't need a demon for this," he said, reaching up and patting Tedrick on the head.

Tedrick looked at Caspian's fat arm as he reached over and sighed a little. Removing Caspian's hand, he sat down properly and nodded.

"Ok, you can look too." He wasn't sure what else Caspian was going to find that Alys hadn't already seen. He was just tired of all this prodding. It was giving him a headache...

Caspian shut his eyes, holding his hand above Tedrick's head a flash of purple magic extended between the two. Instantly, a reel of memories flew through his vision. Caspian tried not to pry too much, he knew what he was looking for. As long as he kept his eyes shut, he could watch Tedrick's memories play out like a movie.



He got a bit embarrassed, watching Tedrick have dinner with Ferris and his friends. *What odd company...* Nothing seemed off here, yet Caspian could feel it. Something was altered. No matter how hard he looked, the details of the evening kept slipping away. One moment they were enjoying dinner, the next Tedrick was walking back through the hotel with Ferris. And then it skipped again and he's speaking with an older man in suspenders. That must've been the CEO. His face was a little blurred, like Tedrick couldn't remember the details about him.

Caspian tried to get another closer look, but Tedrick's memory was cut short after that. He caught a flash of an image before his vision went black. A *spade*...? He shook his head and opened his eyes.

"It seems like quite a few of your memories were altered, but the good news is, all of the adjustments were confined to just a few hours. I was worried it might have affected more than that... I'm sorry for being nosy, but thank you for letting me take a look. I'm not so worried now."

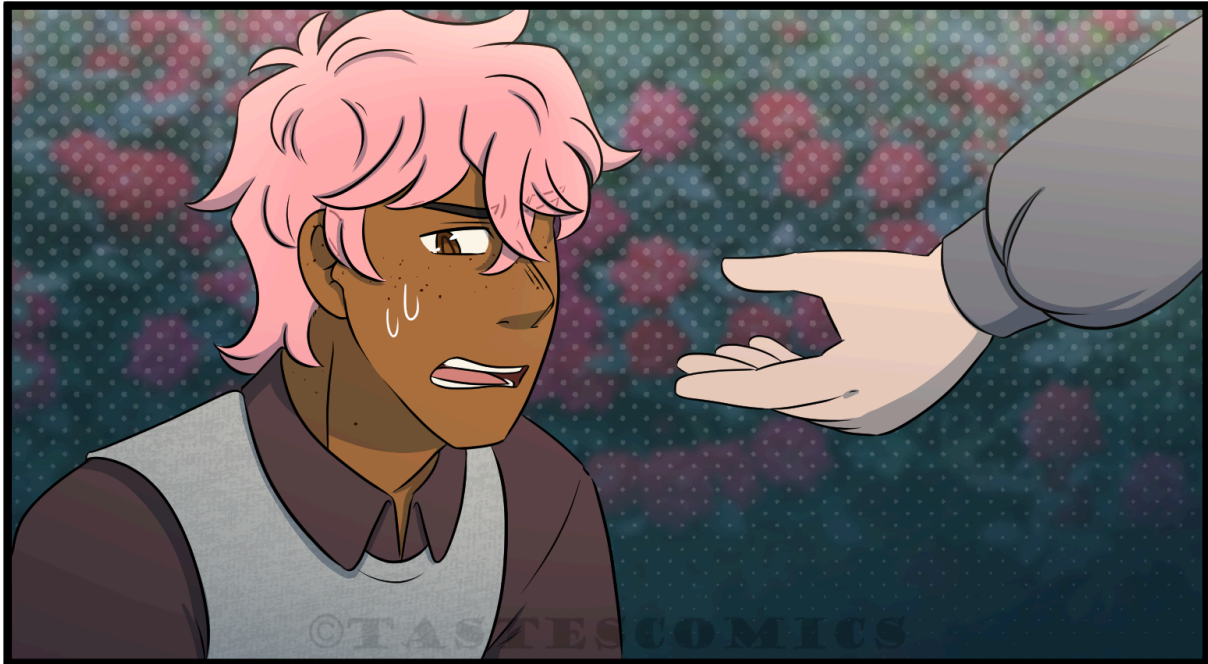
Alys sighed. *I already said that...*

Tedrick looked a little sheepish but nodded. "I'm glad you're less worried... " he sighed softly, but this changed nothing. He fiddled with the garden clippers in his hands, looking down. "Do you really think... a djinn did this?"

Yes, *absolutely*. Caspian didn't want to stress Tedrick out, though. "It's a possibility. I've never seen magic like this..."

He stood up with a little bit of a struggle and dusted the fresh earth off. "Viewing your memories isn't the only thing I came out here to do, though. We had a talk about it and I think that you're ready to join the coven officially. Would you like to?" He asked, holding out his hand to help Tedrick to his feet.

Tedrick looked up, taken aback. "What? But..." He glanced to Alys who still held the same cold expression. "I don't... understand, I thought I wasn't ready. All I can do is plant magic..." He said a little wearily.



"So? For a long time, all Wisteria could do was plant magic. She and I both think you're ready," Caspian encouraged. He also shot a look at Alys for any kind of encouragement, but didn't say anything.

"Yeah but... that was when she was young..." Tedrick continued, his face still covered in disbelief at the sudden proposition. "What about the other members, they're sure too? I just feel like... I haven't earned it. **Epecially** after how terrible I was just trying to get basic information in Meridien..."

"I don't think you should be concerned with ineptitude being a bar for entry when Jack has been one of us for some time now and he's **barely** made any improvement," Caspian said bluntly. He didn't want to say Alys was the only one opposed to Tedrick joining because that wasn't really accurate. Caspian and Alys were both strong forces and the other three tended to side with her because Wist and Candi were her girlfriends and Jack was scared of her.

Tedrick continued to look away, sheepish. "I haven't shown improvement since I was ten..." he mumbled softly.

Tedrick hadn't made much progress, but that was okay. Caspian had a feeling that losing his mother stunted him a bit in the magic department, but that didn't mean he wasn't worth helping.

Alys sighed at her brothers muttering. "Tedrick, a djinn altered your memories. There's not much you can do about that. Especially if... it is my fault for telling you to investigate alone," Alys admitted. "You don't have to go to Meriden again, I can find time to do it myself... But I think we should talk to the rest of the coven about you joining."

He finally looked up at Alys, surprised at her words. "Well... we can talk inside I suppose..." he replied, standing up from the garden floor. He continued to fidget with his tools.

He patted Tedrick on the back as they started the walk back to the mansion. Caspian was honestly a little surprised when Alys took the blame. He expected her to let Tedrick take the fall after collapsing under the pressure she put on him like she always did.

As they approached the front doors once more, Caspian commented, "I really hope that leaving Jack, Wisteria and Candi alone wasn't a mistake..."

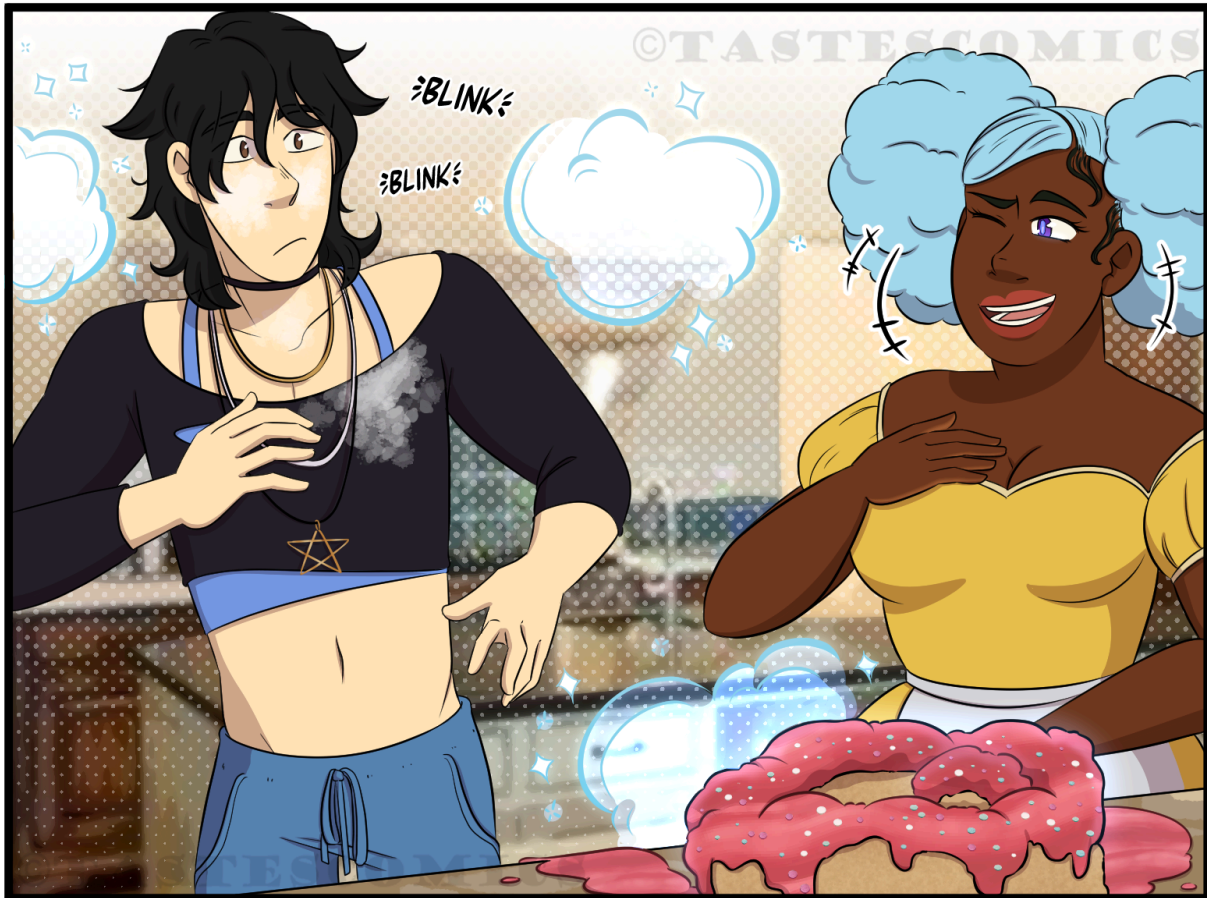
Though as they opened the front doors the smell of smoke was undeniable.

Alys tensed. "Dammit-!" she growled and quickly teleported to get inside.

Tedrick looked panicked and started through the foyer towards the kitchen.

"You have got to be kidding," Caspian sighed, tagging behind them all as they went to figure out the source.

Once in the kitchen, there wasn't actually that much smoke, but Jack's face was covered in flour and Candi was laughing. It looked like they made a cake that... exploded.



Alys was already next to the mess and looked rather annoyed.

"Candi..." She sighed in annoyance and face palmed. "I hope you realize you're cleaning this up."

"Of course- of course~! You should have seen Jack's face though!" Candi mused, then noticed Tedrick and gave him a beaming grin. "Oh, hey Teddy!"

Jack sighed, "Hi Tedrick... Candi just blew up the cake I was making... in my **face**." He pouted.

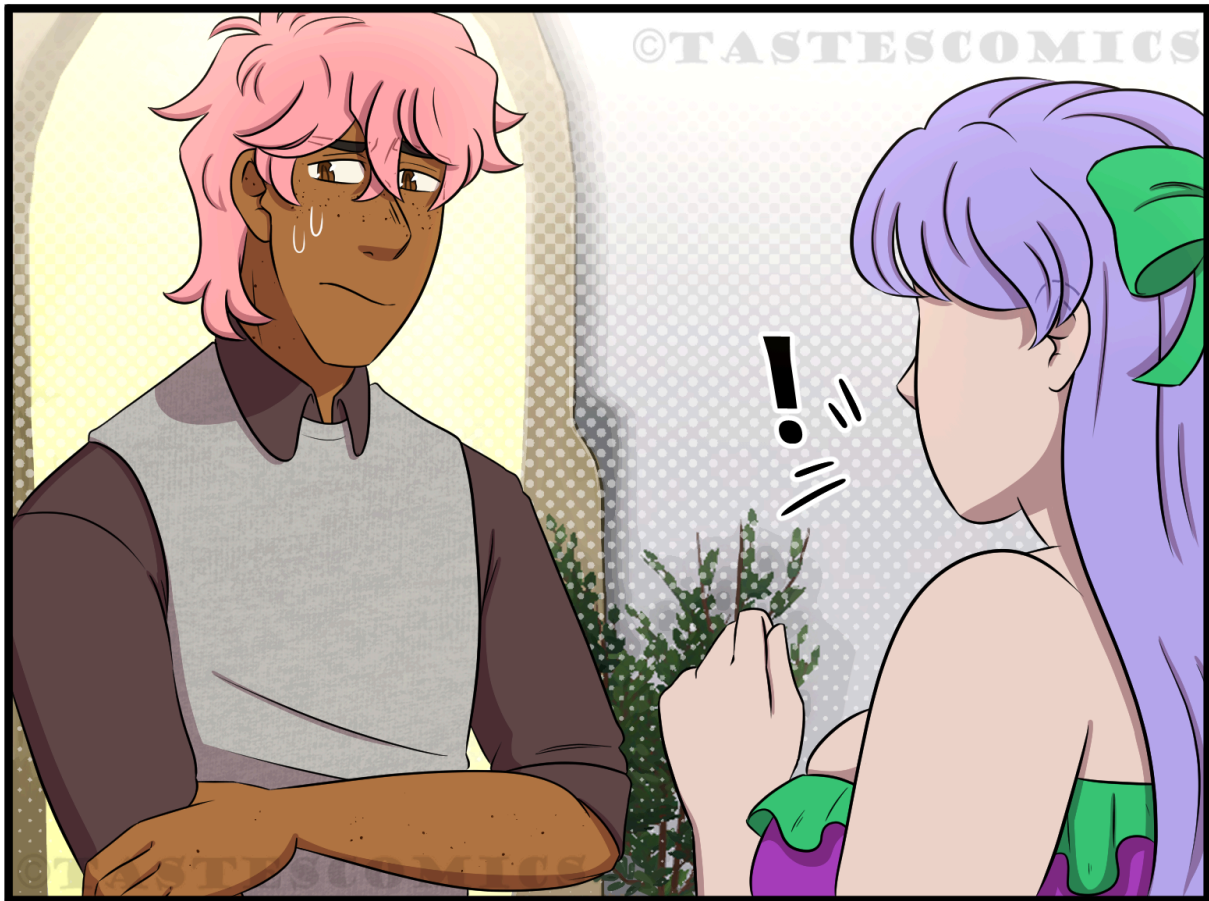
"O... Oh." Tedrick's concern fell back into a sheepish look as he smiled awkwardly. He really didn't know how to respond, baffled they helped themselves into making a cake in the first place.

"**Candi** did it...?" Caspian asked, glancing past the supposed culprit at Wisteria.

"I told her not to!" Wisteria huffed with a pout.

"I can't trust the three of you alone..." Caspian sighed, rubbing his brow. "Anyway, I spoke with Tedrick about what we discussed."

"Oh, good!" Wisteria said, perking up and smiling as she went over to the nervous witch.
"What do you say, then? Are you going to join us?"



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