

Mage Enough

When your best friend is a wizard, you pick up a few things. A little knowledge, a few memories you could live without, some neat gadgets, some interesting friends...and the occasional pointy toothed asshole who shows up and threatens your family.

"Maybe I heard you wrong," I said as I looked around my grandfather's bookstore. It was frighteningly quiet and deserted. "Did you just-"

"You heard me correctly, Lucas Kale," the cadaverous looking monster on the other side of the counter said. "You and I must settle a matter between us, or I will be forced to kill your grandfather. Please understand that I would take no pleasure in the act, but I can no longer allow your breach of etiquette to go unanswered."

"Breach of etiquette?" I sputtered. "What in the hell are you talking about. I've never met you before today, much less..." I stopped when he pulled a tablet from his jacket and laid it down on the counter. The image on the screen showed a familiar looking black Mercedes McLaren sliding across a dance floor. The top was down, part of the windshield had been sheared off and there I was in the driver's seat, hands knotted on the steering wheel, eyes shut tight as glass and chairs flew past me. "...crashed a car into your club." He swiped his clawed fingertip across the screen, and another image slid into place. In this one, Chance was on my right, his TK wand extended. I was posed like a skinny version of Rambo, but the bright green watergun in my hands sort of killed the macho. In front of me, three vampires were reeling back with their heads on fire.

"Impressive marksmanship," the walking corpse said, almost like he meant it.

"Um, thanks?" I said, wishing I could shrink down behind the counter. I wasn't sure who tall, stark and fangy was, but he was showing me images of me killing vampires like I was late to a Van Helsing family reunion after claiming I'd breached some kind of etiquette. The shit was getting deeper by the pixel here, and I wasn't sure what kind of arrangement he was after.

"You're welcome. Now, that we have established that a breach of etiquette has occurred, we can discuss reparations."

"Okay, so, yeah, that happened. But that was more like property damage and arson than bad manners. And speaking of manners, who the hell are you? If you're gonna come in here and threaten my family, it'd be nice to know your name so I can make a good comeback threat."

That made him back up a little. "I am...unaccustomed to anonymity. I am Lord Thraxus. As to the death and destruction, that was no more than I expected when I gave Fortunato leave to act against Etienne. You, however, were given no such dispensation."

I did a double take at that. "So, you're not pissed at me because I blew up your shit, you're pissed because I did it without permission?"

The dead guy actually smiled at that, which was easily the creepiest thing he'd done. "My emotions do not enter into this equation. As I stated previously, my hand is being forced here. Your presence at Inferno was unwanted, and unlike the Nazarite, you lack the power to defy me openly. Certain factions outside of my court have taken this as a sign of weakness on my part. Thus I find myself faced with two options if I wish to avoid certain conflicts. Kill you or your family, or demand reparation from you. I find Fortunato more convenient as an ally, and your efforts were useful to me. Thus, our present conversation."