# sometimes you just wanna eat a cupcake without breaking a rule or getting accosted Posted originally on the <u>Archive of Our Own</u> at <a href="http://archiveofourown.org/works/58483462">http://archiveofourown.org/works/58483462</a>.

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Archive Warning: <u>No Archive Warnings Apply</u>

Category: <u>Gen</u>

Fandom: <u>Twisted-Wonderland (Video Game)</u>

Characters: Yuu | Player (Twisted-Wonderland), Ace Trappola, Deuce Spade, Riddle

Rosehearts, Trey Clover, Leona Kingscholar, Ruggie Bucchi, Jack Howl, Azul Ashengrotto, Jade Leech, Floyd Leech, Jamil Viper, Kalim Al-Asim, Epel Felmier, Vil Schoenheit, Idia Shroud, Ortho Shroud, Malleus Draconia, Lilia Vanrouge, Sebek Zigvolt, Silver (Twisted-Wonderland)

Additional Tags: The Whole Gang's Here - Freeform, stressed housewardens encounter

secret first year plot, poor firsties just wanna eat shitty food and throw some pillows, riddle genuinely thinks ace and deuce are gonna commit arson, vil knows its actually epel who commits the arson, Feral Yuu

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5/6

# sometimes you just wanna eat a cupcake without breaking a rule or getting accosted

by minstrellite

#### Summary

riddle: i think the firsties are up to something

leona: prob tryna avoid ur puny ass

vil: leona do u want to decorate my floor

idia: wtf why are u normies online

kalim: hi!!!!

user malleus is offline. user azul is offline.

---

Sometimes, you just have to create a full blown counter-intelligence scheme to make sure your wayward young ones don't blow up the world by accident because they wanted popcorn.

#### Notes

This is such an old fic that I decided to post because I recently redownloaded this godforsaken game and Yana has my frontal lobe in a headlock.

Please enjoy copious shenanigans from both ends ft. Leona and Kalim rolling nat 1s on stealth, Azul and Idia competing for Worst Fitness, another octatrio! and an actually insane Yuu who's so tired of being responsible they bent backwards into being the chaotic neutral they were meant to be.

Also! OCs galore in this fic bc there's definitely a giant first-year compendium that forms after Book 3 where these kiddos worship Yuu from afar and then find out they're just stupid and very lucky.

### local lion terrorizes community with propriety

#### **Chapter Summary**

Leona fails stealth and the Firsties gather their goods. Riddle malfunctions and Professor Crewel threatens death by embarrassment (via collar). Also, please welcome to the stage Yuu! with no self preservation at all.

#### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for <u>notes</u>

Ruggie, in all his two years of self-appointed and approved Leona-tending, could count on exactly three fingers how many times he had seen the overgrown housecat leave the dorm of his own volition and attend classes, of which all three were mainly to avoid "annoying little runts" (read: adorably loving nephews). So, forgive him for standing halfway down the sprawling staircase in the center of the Savanaclaw common room and *gaping* at the lion not only carrying schoolbooks but wearing his full uniform? It was enough to send Ruggie into cardiac arrest, or worse, altruistic concern.

Thankfully, Jack seemed to notice his distress like a superhero in wolf's clothing and snapped him back to attention.

"Uh, Ruggie-senpai? Not that it's any bother to me, but Shardul has been trying his best to get down the stairs for about... five minutes now, and we're both already running late for a quick prep session with the Prefect before today's rumored alchemy pop quiz."

If Ruggie were of sounder mind at that moment, it would've occurred to him that Jack Howl from class B and Shardul Khan from class C shouldn't have had alchemy together at all, but unfortunately his poor frontal lobe was juggling three well-dressed Leona-shaped pins and couldn't dedicate any brainpower to squinting in scrutiny at oddly level-headed freshies. He instead opted to wordlessly slide aside, allowing the slender tiger Therianthrope to slip past him, and pad down the stairs with all the agility of a brick doing parkour (he absolutely did not stumble into the railing and have to right himself by gripping the banister and sliding down onto a cushion formed by his traitorously quivering tail).

With one more cursory glance thrown towards his vice housewarden (who looked one step closer to bedlam with every breath), Jack scruffily grabbed Shardul by the back of his uniform jacket and practically dragged the two of them out of the dorm, lest they catch whatever illness had befallen their beloved dorm heads.

Leona, blissfully unaware of the war he had started in poor Ruggie's deflated balloon of a cerebrum, sauntered out behind the two freshmen, armed with a paltry selection of entirely mismatched textbooks and what looked like eight slices of salami rolled into one big cold cut burrito dangling out of his mouth. Putting on his best "Rook Hunt" face, he tailed his targets out of the Mirror to the main atrium of the school, ducking inconspicuously behind a pillar and being as camouflaged as a fully uniformed Leona could be.

The simpering starry-eyed freshie cubs that were Jack Howl and Shardul Khan weren't lying about meeting the Prefect, but whatever was being handed off in a backpack that absolutely dwarfed the herbivore could not have been about alchemy. His nose twitched with the familiarity of ink and clean potion bottles, and yet under all of that was the smell of... root beer? And was that... powdered cheese flavoring? Suddenly he was unsure of his convictions; maybe Crewel became a good Samaritan overnight and decided to make seasonings instead of potions.

Across the hall, Yuu hauled the backpack onto their back with little ease, giving into Jack's ministrations with a weary huff. The aid gave their eyes time to wander, where they locked onto a suspiciously scattered trail of salami on the ground that ended near the only pillar in the atrium that had magically grown a tail. For a predatory animal, he is so incredibly obvious.

"We better disperse, I think we're being tailed. We'll meet at Ramshackle tonight as planned. You know that we absolutely cannot let anyone find out about this, or else there will be dire consequences, and I'm talking truly fatal."

For all their fresh-faced naiveté, Leona had to give the cubs some credit as they nodded, graven and serious. From what his impeccable ears had absolutely not strained to hear, it seemed he might need to do some impromptu patrolling at Ramshackle, purely for his own amusement of course. He reached up to his mouth to take another bite only to find a pathetic empty fist where there should've been another salami burrito. *Shit, time to go find Ruggie, and some breakfast*.

#### **Housewarden Group Chat**

smths up w the freshies

ive never seen jack this eager to do group studying even when hes been offered money for it

... not that i care ofc

just fgiured i wld say smth b4 one of u selfrighteous fucks decided to snoop and getme involved

Vil Schoenheit:

Leona-san, would it kill you to use spellcheck every now and then?

Your texts are barely comprehensible, and reproachfully so.

It's quite unbecoming of you as the housewarden of Savanaclaw.

stfu musical theater enjoyer

did i ask 4 an opinion frm the peanut gallery

go talk to a miror or wtv

Vil Schoenheit:

That travesty aside, I do believe something is happening among the first years.

Epel has been perfectly courteous these past few days, almost without fail.

It sounds wholly choreographed, almost as though he wants me to pay as little attention to him as possible.

Unfortunately for him, I am nothing if not attentive.

I shall attempt to extract further information once classes have ended for the day.

aight

A whip crack sounded loud and sharp across his desk as Riddle flinched violently, drawn abruptly from his concerned musings by an equally concerned looking Professor Crewel.

"Must I send you to the infirmary, Mr. Rosehearts? Don't make me repeat myself a third time, now." The professor's brows were furrowed in irritation and his grip on the whip tightened as Riddle swallowed nervously and shook his head slightly.

"Well, now that I *finally* have your attention, I wanted to commend you for your work on this week's lab exercise, but don't let that get to your head. The next time I catch your attention wandering in front of a cauldron it'll be your neck that gets collared, naughty boy."

"Y-yes, Professor."

"That's *Master* to you, boy. Now out with you, I'd like to enjoy my lunch without the incessant yapping of all you pups."

With whatever little strength was left in his arms, Riddle scrambled to gather his books and stumbled out the door with a lack of grace unlike the composed Heartslabyul housewarden. Trey stood waiting outside the doorway, facial features marred with equal concern and intrigue.

With a dry mouth, Riddle turned to the taller boy, eyes fixated on the small clover painted on his cheek. "Have you seen Ace or Deuce at all today?"

Trey's brows furrowed in concentration. "Not after breakfast, no. I did a routine tooth check with as much precision as I could, given all their squirming. Although, come to think of it, neither of them could stand still at all, even through breakfast. Ace does get his coffee jitters often, but I've never seen Deuce look so uneasy, like he was constantly watching over his shoulder for something."

Having heard enough, Riddle turned sharply on his raised heel, powerwalking towards the mirror hall with a speed even Trey had trouble keeping up with. He had already begun reaching for his cell phone with one hand, juggling his books into his other arm skillfully.

"Hey, Riddle, wait, what's the rush? Riddle? Riddle!"

At the far end of the corridor, a worried Deuce nudged his elbow into his companion's side like a javelin on autopilot until Ace firmly grabbed him and twisted him around.

"Dude, I'm standing right here, I can also see him, don't worry. All we gotta do is hand these off to Yuu-kun and then we can run back to lunch like nothing happened. Chill out." The false bravado in Ace's voice counteracted the audible sigh of relief he let out when his housewarden's eyes skipped entirely over their corner of the hall.

With no warning, a breathless Yuu barreled into his side, and all three of them tumbled like bowling pins and crashed into a pile of limbs against the wall.

"Shit, sorry dude, I—"

"SHHHH!!" Ace clamped a hand over the Prefect's mouth and dragged them behind him before furiously pointing and whispering, "Dorm Head Riddle is *right. there*. Do you want to get caught this close?" Yuu shook their head as violently as they could under Ace's iron grip.

Without another word, Deuce pulled three paper-wrapped packages from inside his backpack, unzipping the backpack on Yuu's back and stuffing them inside with as much discretion as possible (with how quiet that hall was it was like trying to open a bag of chips in a bathroom). Safely settled back in place and free from Ace's sweaty hand, Yuu wiped their mouth once before saluting the card duo and sprinting down the hall as surreptitiously as they could with a metric ton of contraband on their back.

Trey's watchful eyes took in the entire exchange, and yet he did nothing but smile and shake his head. There was an Unbirthday party to prep for in only three days; this was going to have to be Riddle's problem to solve.

#### **Housewarden Group Chat**

It is as you suspected, Leona-senpai.

Ace and Deuce have been on edge all day.

I shall inquire with Azul-san promptly, and if this pattern continues, I believe it is our responsibility as dorm heads to assure the safety and well-being of our juniors.

kingscholar:
ok so basically im done then right
i dnt have to bother w this anymore
bc its naptime and im tired

Vil Schoenheit:

Leona-san, for once in your life please take things seriously.

No dorm leader is exempt from their duties, and it is our responsibility to keep everyone safe.

I suppose we should meet after classes and brainstorm a solution?

I agree, Vil-senpai.

We cannot sit idly by if there is some threat.

Even if not, when Ace and Deuce are involved, chances are that something will go wrong.

kingscholar:

alr fine, wtv

if we dont decide in 15 min im

ditching to take a nap tho

Chapter End Notes

#### Featured OC: Shardul Khan

- i based him on Shere Khan from the Jungle Book bc i wanted a little pal for Jack and he definitely would need some coercion to scheme
- as mentioned, hes a tiger therianthrope! i like to imagine hes quite meek compared to the actual Shere Khan as of rn, but he grows into a bit of arrogance later
- this boy would absolutely swoop in to take housewarden provided leona fucking graduates someday what a loser (affectionate)

## octatrio 2, electric boogaloo

#### **Chapter Summary**

Azul faces his worst nightmare (mini Azul) whilst Riddle rages. Meanwhile, Jamil's third headache threatens to put him in the ER and the Scarabia treasury gets a few pounds lighter.

#### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for <u>notes</u>

Jamil had never received a text from Vil Schoenheit in all his time at NRC, so to see the name pop up on his screen flabbergasted him so much a knife fell from his grasp and clattered to the ground noisily. Of course, where there is noise, a curious and even noisier Kalim will soon be summoned, and like clockwork, his personal liability bounded into the Scarabia kitchens like a hyper-active puppy, complete with the confused head tilt.

"Jamil, I heard a loud noise! Are you okay?"

His second headache of the day was already blooming in his head, and it was only 1 PM. Phenomenal.

"Yes, Kalim, everything is fine. No, nothing broke. Yes, those are kebobs on the stove. No, we no longer have any of that jasmine tea you like so much. Yes, I have requested the Al-Asim attendants to send more via parcel. Don't you have some kind of housewarden meeting today?"

Kalim, who'd been steadily drooping lower and lower like a half-snapped flower stem, bloomed back to life at that question.

"Yeah! Riddle and Vil-senpai were talking about the freshmen, and they said the freshies might be doing something dangerous? But honestly, I think it sounds kind of fun! What if they're just planning a really big study group, those take a lot of work!"

With that obliviously flippant statement, he bounded back out of the room like a coked-up Energizer bunny, smiling wildly at some secret joke. His grin would've been somewhat tolerable if it didn't cause stabbing pain to spike behind Jamil's eye. *Yes, a lot of work which I must do because you never tell me about your ideas until the moment before you need them, you blubbering fool.* 

His dangerously rising blood pressure almost distracted him from the actively cooking kebobs, which in turn almost distracted him from a shadow slithering around behind the doorway.

"Um, Vice Housewarden Viper?"

Sishaa Shahmaran was a wiry and slippery first year who Jamil could seldom shake, given that the freshie seemed to worship the ground he walked on. Slim and tall enough to look almost long, Sha (Kalim nicknamed him one day and despite their combined efforts, the name stuck) almost rivaled Floyd in being intimidating, if not for Floyd's general disregard for taking up space directly contradicting Sha's palpable desire to be physically always wrapped around a pillar. Except for the moments in which he was tailing Jamil like a neglected toddler, of course. He'd almost be proud of the freshman's slyness if it wasn't such an inconvenience to him personally.

Jamil turned to address the disembodied voice floating in from the hall.

"Yes?"

"Uh, well, I just wanted to, um, ask what Housewarden Kalim was talking about? No details, of course!" At this, the voice revealed itself and a distinctly nervous Sha waved his hands frantically in front of his face. "Just that, uh, I wanted to make sure my friends weren't involved."

Jamil's steady knifework stalled to a halt. Uh? *Um*? He'd never heard anything so unsure from the boy before, but then his eyes narrowed. Sha wasn't named "king of the snakes" for nothing, so he'd have to determine if this was real concern or faked.

"I'm sure it's nothing to worry about, it sounds like he thinks it's just a big study group. Am I to understand you think something more is happening?" He debated using his Unique Magic to force some answer out of the boy, but the kid was trembling now, and it wouldn't do to cause an actual injury.

The boy blushed and stammered.

"Uh, wait, yeah, I think they said something about a study group? Maybe that's it, hehe." He scratched his head unconvincingly, and Jamil could feel a third headache forming in the middle of his skull.

"Look, if anything happens, I shall be well informed. And I *hope* I don't have to remind you to stay out of trouble, yes?" The Heartslabyul brats and the Prefect were one thing, but the younger Octavinelle trio AND the usually strait-laced Savanaclaw freshies? It was asking for some catastrophe, at best mild property damage and at worst another Overblot.

Sha nodded so furiously that Jamil worried his eyeballs would rattle back into his skull like pinballs. Then, in a display of physical affection baffling enough to cause worry, he threw himself at Jamil and pulled the older boy into a tight hug. Jamil bluescreened violently, dropping another knife, which then prompted Sha to release him and... sniffle?

"Thanks, Vice Housewarden."

"I've told you before, just Jamil-senpai is fi—" Before he could finish, the first year had already disappeared.

Jamil didn't believe in gods, but if any higher power was listening at that moment, he desperately hoped they were tuned in to his mind like a celestial radio.

Please please PLEASE let it be just a study group.

In all the commotion, Jamil did end up getting distracted enough to not notice the kebobs he'd been cooking had simply disappeared, and he just resigned himself to starting over. He really should be getting paid.

Unbeknownst to both Jamil and Sha, Kalim had decided an espionage effort was necessary, and while they were talking, he was busy tying his headscarf around his neck like those bandits he'd seen in stories. Makeshift mask fully secured and supplies in his bag (binoculars for seeing and some extra food in case he got hungry or ran into someone else!), Kalim did his best Sha impression and slunk off behind a pillar, waiting for the moment the boy walked off to begin tailing him.

Soon after, the boy went through the Mirror back to the main hall, where he was greeted by a concerned Sebek Zigvolt (strange) and an intensely giddy Yuu (even stranger). Kalim leaned in as close as he could from the pillar behind which he was currently crouched.

Unfortunately for Kalim, Sha had good ears, and Kalim was well-adorned. The boy immediately gestured his friends closer and dropped his voice to a whisper.

"Guys, my Housewarden is deffo right behind us right now, cuz I 100% heard his jewelry, but I think we're in the clear. My vice dorm head seemed kinda sus abt us for a second, but he bought my whole 'oh no I'm worried about my idiotic friends' shtick. Either that or he's too tired and just gave up." At this, he unwrapped the steaming paper towel in his hands to reveal mouthwateringly delicious kebobs. Yuu devoured one immediately whilst Sebek frowned.

"Viper-senpai is quite intelligent, but if you are sure, human, then I will defer to your judgement." Sebek had somehow managed to whisper-yell at an alarming decibel level, an inhuman feat of pure willpower.

Yuu turned to Sebek with literal tears in their eyes.

"You're getting so much better at this whole socializing thing, I'm so proud of you." The whispering cut a lot of the emotion, but Kalim watched fondly as Sebek flustered, but preened at the praise altogether. Yuu then turned their laser-focused and kebob-less attention back to Sha.

"You got the goods though, right?" This time, Sha smirked.

"Place had some hella lax security, so it wasn't too hard to slip in and out. Not sure how my dorm heads will react when they see that something so expensive went missing, but I'm also not sure they'll notice? I did have to hug my vice to get the key back on to him, though, and I think I broke him."

Kalim paled at this. The Al-Asim attendants had recently delivered some of his favorite jasmine tea, which was sadly already empty, but they'd also delivered some highly volatile and unstable potions ingredients to be handed over to one Vil Schoenheit for some Pomefiore related endeavor. *Shit, did the freshies get those herbs for an experiment of their own?* 

The trio of freshmen slowly began to walk while Sha spoke, getting further from a distracted Kalim who was busy digging into his pack for his phone. When he looked up, the boys were gone, the only evidence of them being the lingering aroma of Jamil's kebobs. Damn, now he was hungry.

As Kalim ventured back to the dorm, he figured he should inform his fellow housewardens about his successful spying. They'd know what to do with the information more than him, anyway. And besides, he was hungry.

#### **Housewarden Group Chat**

hello!!!!! i tailed the freshies today cuz they were being sneaky hehe and uh they might've taken some herbs from the treasury???

i dont think theyre doing anything dangerous tho maybe its a study group!! at ramshackle!!!

Riddle Rosehearts:

Kalim, this is very insightful.

But maybe you should consider better security?

I must return to Heartslabyul, lest I be caught loitering too long after my meal. We shall discuss this afternoon.

okay!!!!!

If there was one talent that Jade and Floyd shared in equal capacities, it was the ability to read Azul like the open book he is. The cephalopod merman had a routine he followed like clockwork. In fact, the only person who rivaled Azul in discipline was Floyd's favorite little goldfish, who as it goes was dutifully marching towards the entrance to the Mostro Lounge with a vengeance entirely too becoming of him.

"Jade, Floyd, I need to meet with Azul immediately." Riddle was just as much an open book as Azul, and his face betrayed the turmoil not detectable in his controlled voice.

"Ehe ~ Goldfishie I've never seen you here for lunch! Didya wanna try the new special? I've been workin' hard to make something extra special with those veggies that Sea Turtle sent us." Floyd's mouth stretched wide into an eager grin.

Before Riddle's blood pressure could shoot dangerously higher than it already was, Jade stepped forward and removed his hat with a smooth flourish.

"Please extend our deepest gratitude to Trey-san for the vegetables on behalf of myself and Azul-san. We would be delighted to have you both here to try out the menu, at a discounted price, of course." He may be conveying gratitude, but Jade was still responsible for the sales at the Lounge, and he was nothing if not an effective salesman.

"That's quite alright, Jade-san. I would much rather see Azul as soon as possible."

"No can do, Goldfishie, Azul's been holed up in his office all day, and he didn't even come out for fried chicken. Lil' Shrimpy was here to see our freshies and Azul took one look at them and went back inside his office." Floyd pouted something fierce at the thought of not being able to bother Azul.

Riddle tipped his head forward with a frown.

"Yuu-kun was here? Did they want something specific?" The tension lines under his eyebrows had gotten more pronounced.

Just as Jade was about to reply, the office door slammed open and an enraged Azul whirled out like an ink-filled hurricane, face turning purple from rage. Not even bothering to conceal his emotions, he nodded brusquely at the tweels and Riddle before bellowing, "Dillon Ashengrotto, I can see your slimy little fingers over the top of that chair, and if you don't come out here this instant, I swear to the Sea Witch I will volunteer you for Jade's mushroom recipe testing this week!"

Jade could barely contain the affronted look that crossed his face as the younger Ashengrotto pushed the chair out of the way with a resounding screech, unfolding to his fully menacing height before sauntering over.

"Yes?" The boy batted his eyelashes in a crude pantomime of innocence.

Azul scoffed. "Don't even try to butter me up, I *know* you've been sneaking SOMETHING in and out of my office for days, and I will find out, even if I have to make Floyd squeeze you for it." A lazy whine floated out from a vague pile of limbs on the counter. Evidently, Floyd had gotten bored.

Two heads peeked out from behind Dillon, each bearing a pair of beady crimson eyes and cheeky grins.

"Sorry, big brother, but I simply have no idea to what you may be referring. I've spent the last few days studying ever so diligently with Saber and Fletcher and couldn't possibly have had the time to be in your office as much as you claim. Doesn't it please you so to have such a studious and well-respected sibling? I would never do something to sully your good name or inconvenience your business." Dillon had spent years hanging on to Azul's every word and knew how to twist his brother around his finger exactly as he wanted. The heads behind him nodded vigorously as their names were mentioned, grins growing wider.

"Yeah, Mr. Azul, we ain't got the time to be in yer space, cuz if we're not ready then Crewel's gonna use us to decorate his coat rack." Saber was a pointy little thing, with sharp eyes and a sharper tongue. His brother Fletcher was more of a silent intimidator, an excellent counterpart to Saber's silver-tipped speech.

Dillon smiled daringly at Azul, almost taunting him to try and poke holes into their story, to which Azul had no choice but to concede. It would be a huge waste of time (and thus huge loss of profits) to sit here and debate what he couldn't prove, so with a resigned sigh he dismissed his brother and the entourage with a passive gesture before turning to Riddle, more composed than his initial entrance.

"What can I do for you, Riddle-san?"

"I've noticed some unfamiliar movement within the first years at Heartslabyul, specifically Ace and Deuce, and was wondering if your first years may be acting... off as well. I assume my hypothesis was correct, then?"

Azul's smile froze as his eyes grew sharp, and he hesitated before motioning Riddle to follow him into his office. Jade trailed after and planted himself outside the door like the vigilant right-hand man that he was.

The voices were muffled for a while before loud curses echoed, cutting through the silence of the Lounge. Jade stepped aside as the door was wrenched open by a constipated-looking Riddle and a deceptively neutral Azul followed. Riddle continued stomping his way out of the Lounge in the fashion that small children tend to do when they don't get what they want; Jade correctly assumed the redhead wasn't pleased.

"I take it there was some disagreement, Azul-san?"

"I told him to 'fuck off' as cordially, and I think somehow the politeness made him even angrier, if that were possible. I fear one day poor Riddle's head will expand and explode with all that hot air."

Jade smiled conspiratorially behind his hand, the picture of innocence.

"I suppose this means you will be handling your unruly brother by yourself then?"

It was a wonder Azul's teeth didn't shatter from how hard he clenched his jaw just then.

"If that brother of mine thinks he's one-upped me then he has another thing coming."

#### **Housewarden Group Chat**

Greetings, my fellow dorm leaders.

First, I must apologize to Riddle-san for my decidedly less-than-stellar demeanor earlier today.

It pains me to have to ask for assistance handling a family matter, but I've given it some thought and it seems that what initially seemed to be just brotherly pranking might be a larger issue.

Of course, being the benevolent Housewarden that I am, no minor outburst would prevent me from providing my assistance in keeping our unruly first-years safe and sound.

Should I discover any further information, I shall take extensive notes and be sure to come prepared to our meeting.

Good luck to the rest of you, and as always, should you have need for anything, I am here.

#### Riddle Rosehearts:

Your apology is well received, Azul. I was on a shorter fuse than normal as well.

Do you have reason to believe your brother's actions are stranger than normal?

He has been going in and out of my office regularly, which is normal, except he hasn't taken anything?

Rather, he keeps placing things INTO my office, and try as I might, I can't find anything besides rubber ducks, and it has plagued me to a disturbing level.

This is valuable information, Azul. Thank you.
We shall have to consider how rubber ducks fit with the other bits and bobs those potatoes have managed to squirrel away.
kinggahalar
kingscholar:
oi ocotopunk cant u type less
no 1 wnts to read tht much
Leona-san, your feigned ineptitude is truly laughable
kingscholar:
piss off u tentacled freak
ill fill ur creepy little pot with sand
user kingscholar has been temporarily timed out by admin.
Vil Schoenheit:
One day, I will strangle him with his own tail.
And then turn his peat into a lovely coat.
Enough about that. Shall we reorganize later?
Why, of course

Vil Schoenheit:

ashengyatto: ALERT ALERT CODE RED card 1: bro wtF YOU SCARED ME WHAT WHAT ashengyatto: riddle-senpai and my brother are in his office rn and theyre somehow audible through the soundproofing????? card 1: thats our teapot tyrant for ya card 2: shitfuckshitballs card 1: DEUCEY WATCH UR FUCKING LANGUAGE **BALLS** card 1: great u summoned yuu bro bro its fine riddle and azul stay mad at each other lit rally all the time we Gucci user yuur mom has been temporarily timed out by Crow-bot ashengyatto: yuu yk theres an auto timeout every time u say g\*cci and yet u do it anyway like?????? at least censor the damn word

sword dog: no bossman's right, mr. azul's neva been this pissed bro

dw tho cuz fletch is doin recon rn

shield	dog:	T

#### user yuur mom has been removed from timeout by Crow-bot

#### I BATE THAT MF COOLDOWN

#### EPEL WHEN I CATCH U EPEL????? WHEN I CATCH U?????

apple bottom jeans: bitch pls just try it

you have the fitness of a limp noodle and im a spelldrive player

GASP i resent that,,,,, jack get him

woof woof: wtf im not ur guard dog

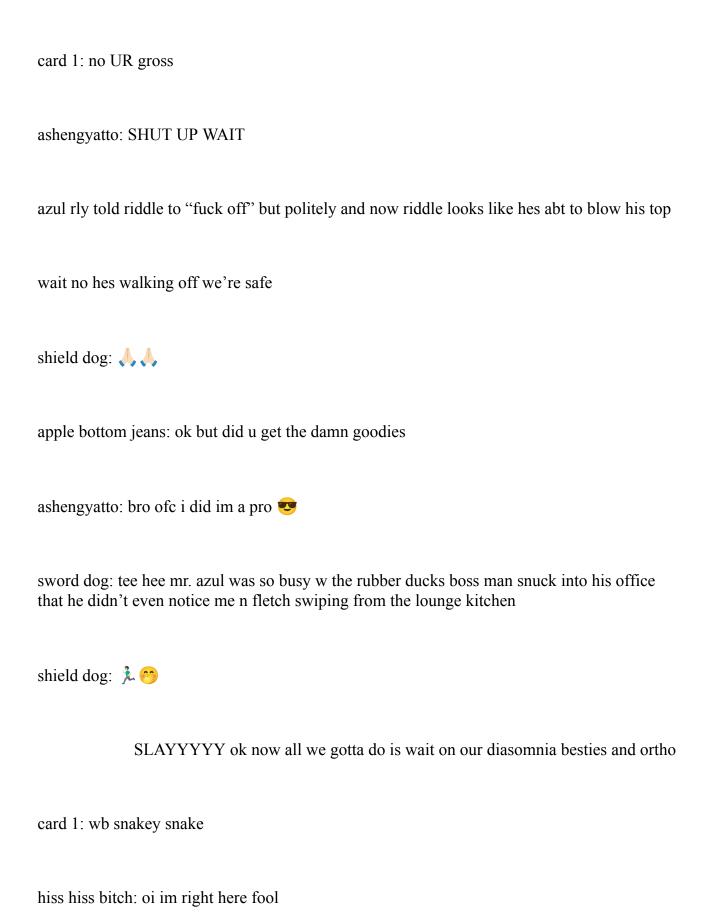
my babies are abandoning me,,,, this is betrayal

ashengyatto: OK WAIT FORGET THAT THE DOOR JUST OPENED

shield dog: 👂

card 1: im literally biting my phone rn

card 2: ew gross



card 1: heyyyyyyyyy 😋
hiss hiss bitch: loser (affectionate)
n e way i handed off my bit to yuu earlier so im Gucci
user <b>hiss hiss bitch</b> is offline.
WHY DOES HE GET TO SAY IT BUT NOT ME
card 1: cuz ur weak to deuce's puppy eyes but sha could prob use his weird snake thing on us and then wed die
card 2: 👀
d-deuce,,, stop-stop it,,
woof woof: y'all, i think we better put our phones away. idk abt u but crewel looks like hes abt to collar me and i cant have that
apple bottom jeans: SHIT
user <b>woof woof</b> is offline.
user <b>apple bottom jeans</b> is offline.

card 1: ok tru me n juice gtg2

user card 1 is offline.
user card 2 is offline.

ashengyatto: aight crew we out

sword dog: roger

user **ashengyatto** is offline.

user **sword dog** is offline.

user **shield dog** is offline.

peace out

user yuur mom is offline.

#### Chapter End Notes

Featured OCs: Dillon Ashengrotto, Saber and Fletcher Skeete, Sishaa Shahmaran - i like the idea of azul not being an only child, which is so incredibly hilarious. also, ursula actually has a younger sister named morgana whos the main villain of the subsequent little mermaid films, so it only felt right to give azul a conniving younger brother and his own twins

- the twins are based on morgana's henchmen, cloak and dagger, the two manta rays. i named them saber (as in a long sharp blade) and fletcher (as in one who makes arrows) be it fit that weaponry and armor naming scheme the ogs had going on
- hc that saber and fletcher worship floyd but FUCKING HATE jade, like he doesnt even know why but they actively trip him in the halls and steal his mushrooms
- sha's based on kaa, and he clocks jamil's snake vibes IMMEDIATELY and decides "i wanna be like that one"
- he's also taller than the tweels but no one notices be he's always slouched over

# how to keep your kids from drinking motor oil no borax no glue

Chapter Summary

Epel gives Vil a conniption and Idia gives himself a panic attack. Also, TW! for copious amounts of French from Rook.

#### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for <u>notes</u>

Something was wrong with Epel. And not the usual kind of wrong, either. Nope, this was entirely too peculiar, and it was driving Vil to near hysterics.

Epel's uniform was pressed, his collar neatly folded and pinned in place. His tie was snug around his neck, and the bow was perfectly straight. His vest buttons were fully done up, and his armband was surprisingly still on his upper arm instead of something diabolical like his forehead. His pants were startlingly devoid of creases or smudges, and his shoes were shining so brightly Vil could see the whiteness of his teeth glinting off the reflective surface of the leather. To top it all off, Epel's makeup was virtually flawless, as it seemed he'd finally followed all the steps instead of taking shortcuts. Put simply, he looked *too* put together, and that was suspicious enough.

But then, he approached Vil. Not strange on its own, but the notepad in his hands? Very strange.

"Vil-senpai, you know a lot about cauldrons, right?"

Vil fought the painful urge to crease his brows as he frowned.

"Epel, it's insulting that you should ask. As the Housewarden of Pomefiore I am a certifiable expert in all things related to potions, cauldrons included."

Epel grinned.

"Great! D'ya know if cauldrons are safe to drink outta? Oh, an' what bout eatin' out of 'em? Like, if I put a can ah' soup in a cauldron and gave a bunch ah' people spoons, issat okay?"

The barrage of questions was so baffling that Vil needed to sit. Entirely uncharacteristic of him to lose his composure, but when one's beautiful poison apple decides to ask questions about drinking something like hazardous waste, one desperately seeks respite, and perhaps divine intervention.

"In theory, perhaps? It technically depends on the ingredients in the 'soup'," He shuddered at the thought of canned foods. "And the material of the cauldron." Vil prayed that it was cooked food, and not some microwaved monstrosity or worse, one of Lilia's creations. "But wh—"

The lavender-haired boy continued grinning, blissfully unaware of Vil's mental gymnastics.

"Kay, thanks Vil-senpai!" With that, he turned on one foot and scampered off.

"What—EPEL DON'T DRINK CANNED SOUP!" Vil would later admit he stood in confused shock and rage for embarrassingly long, but all his mental faculties were so scrambled it was like putting a cell phone through a blender and then turning it on.

Dear Seven, this year's band of freshmen would kill them all.

An effusive Rook Hunt picked that moment to glide in and begin waxing his poetic praise towards Vil's general beauty and grace and all that loveliness.

"Roi du Poison, il est un jour de bonheur! Why does such a strained expression mar your beautiful face? Oh, it pains me to see the unfortunate crevices in your angelic visage. I can already feel des larmes d'empathie pooling in my eyes and yet, the sight of your—"

"Rook. What did Epel eat for breakfast?" Rook stopped in his tracks, his trance dispelled by the uncharacteristic confusion which undercut the stern quality of Vil's "Housewarden" voice. "Monsieur Pommette? Why, the same as always! Pancakes with *une compote de* ruby berries, some *yaourt*, and of course, *jus de pomme* courtesy of *les Felmiers*!" Rook watched on, dismayed, as Vil's consternation etched deeper lines into the gap between his brows "Roi du Pois—" "Rook. What did I eat for breakfast, then?" Another bewildering question. "Eh, what you always eat? A healthy, balanced meal with *les oeufs* and turkey bacon for

"Eh, what you always eat? A healthy, balanced meal with *les oeufs* and turkey bacon for protein, whole-grain wheat *sandwiches sans beurre* with cucumber and cottage cheese, and your usual collagen water for skin hydration and celery juice for nutrition!"

"Good, just making sure no one in Pomefiore accidentally inhaled potion fumes or consumed hallucinogens today. Or worse, had cheese out of an aerosol can or something. Rook, go through the dorm kitchen and rid us of any can, tin, bottle, or spray you can find. I'm putting us on a detox diet, effective immediately." With that, Vil swiveled on his heel and stalked off. Gracefully, of course. Like a swan with a kill list, perhaps.

"Murder swans," Rook mused. "Now that is a hunt fit for un chasseur."

# **Housewarden Group Chat**

And poison
Great Seven help us
kingscholar:
wot
those damn brats
fucking herbivore has to be at the center of it all
Azul Ashengrotto:
Why, Leona-san, I'm pleasantly surprised to see a heightened legibility in your messages! I see someone decided to take a certain threat to heart?
kingscholar:
watch it tako-nerd
nah ruggie mustve put autocorrect or smth on here
damn it i told him to stop meddling
Riddle Rosehearts:
Has anyone been able to reach Idia Shroud or Malleus Draconia at all?
Azul Ashengrotto:
Regrettably, not everyone is as diligent as you or I, Riddle-san. Perhaps some creative coercion is in order? And a visit to Diasomnia for a tech-free dialogue.

I think the spudlings may be playing with fire.

Excuse me, for now I must go inspect the Pomefiore potions lab to ensure that my unruliest poison apple hasn't made a secret Molotov cocktail in our cauldrons.

Riddle Rosehearts:

Cauldrons?

Oh, Queen of Hearts lend me your patience, I'm going to find Ace and Deuce and collar them until they graduate.

Azul Ashengrotto:

Check for rubber ducks, I wouldn't put it past my smarmy little brother to infiltrate across dorms.

#### 18 naked cowboys at the ram-shackle ranch

apple bottom jeans: y'all vil-senpai said we cool to eat out of cauldrons

summon away deucey

card 2: o? bet

card 1: nooo don't get him started he might drop one on me again

card 2: and u prob deserve it asshole

ACTUALLY YOU DO DESERVE IT BC U LEFT ME TO DEAL W DORM HEAD RIDDLE ALONE

ladies ladies stop fighting take a chill pill

btw has anyone heard from ortho
at all

hes suspisiocusly silent and that usually means a techno beam is charging somewhere

mr. worldwide: yuu-san why must u make me sound so trigger happy

the technomantic beams are a last resort!

o like last week when u "resorted" to threatening the birdbrain

be he withheld some of my stipend

mr. worldwide: that was a calculated and justified decision, and i stand by it.

card 1: me 2

card 2: me 3

apple bottom jeans: me 4

woof woof: me 5

OK I GOT IT SHEESH

but guys we cant rly fire a laser at the headmage thats poor taste

apple bottom jeans: u kno what else has poor taste? Poison. woof woof: epel no apple bottom jeans: epel yes simpbek: HUMANS .... and ortho and jack ashengyatto: cough cough sword dog: uh excuse me we are mermen simpbek: ... assorted species collective? ashengyatto: good enough simpbek: wait why is my name **EPEL** apple bottom jeans: i dont make the rules sebek your last waka-sama rant was 45 MINUTES LONG

# BRO THAT WAS SO FUCKING FUNNY TSUNOTARO WAS RIGHT THERE AND THEN SEBEK FLAILED AND HIT HIMSELF IN THE NOSE

all hail simpbek

Sebek Zigvolt: HSHUT UP
-------------------------

user simpbek has changed their name to Sebek Zigvolt.

much better.

now, i come bearing important news. i have acquired lilia-sama's spice rack.

it was very difficult, i asked cersei for help, he was absolutely useless.

cerizzy: uh what???? slander??? jail for a thousand years

besides, if i didnt remind lils-senpai about his gaming sesh u woulda been COOKED

Sebek Zigvolt: SHOW SOME RESPECT FOR THE ILLUSTRIOUS LILIA-SAMA

card 1: sebek man how do u manage to yell through a screen

card 2: my eardrums just flinched in antissipashun

woof woof: deuce,,, do you want my flash cards

card 2: LISTEN SPELLING IS HARD

Sebek Zigvolt: shut up ass and juice

ASS AND JUICE OH MY GOD

user apple bottom jeans has changed user card 1's name to ass.

user apple bottom jeans has changed user card 2's name to juice.

apple bottom jeans: the council has spoken

i now name u ass and juice by the power of the fairest queen

ass: WTF SEBBY

juice: im never escaping

also cersei how goes the enchantment effort

cerizzy: .... it goes

ashengyatto: WDYM IT GOES YOU HAD ONE JOB WHORE

cerizzy: LISTEN FIRST OF ALL IK IM ONLY HALF-FAE BUT I STILL CANT TOUCH IRON LIKE THAT

also aggie is getting so sus w my q&a seshes like bros got one eye on me all the fucking time

i mean,,, hes ur brother thats normal

cerizzy: no i mean he enchanted an actual eyeball to follow me around

hes on sorta okay terms w an ignihyde soph so he got some gadget thing and then enchanted it to be an ACTUAL EYEBALL

Sebek Zigvolt: okay I would also agree that is going a bit far.

apple bottom jeans: yikes when SEBEK says its far you've practically lost the line altogether

mr. worldwide: GUYS RIDDLE-SAN IS HERE TO ASK NII-SAN ABOUT SMTH THIS IS BAD

ashengyatto: ORTHO BUDDY I THOUGHT U WERE RUNNING INTERFERENCE

ass: NO AMOUNT OF INTERFERING WORKS ON ONE-TRACK MIND RIDDLE ROSEHEARTS FUCK

mr. worldwide: aaaa what do i do i blocked all the texts as low-sus as i could,,,,

ykw once he gets to the door i could just use a technomantic beam and say it was a misfire....

ORTHO DON'T KILL RIDDLE

ass: ORTHO GDI

he is trigger happy

user apple bottom jeans has changed user mr. worldwide's name to trigger happy havoc.

cerizzy: WHERED HE GO

user trigger happy havoc is offline.

fuck.

#### "IDIA SHROUD!"

He knew that voice. Everyone knew that voice. Of all the piss-poor unlucky RNG, did it have to be an honest-to-Hades conversation with "make eye contact with me" Riddle Rosehearts? The boy came preloaded with ungodly charisma buffs from birth, he probably spawned into Twisted Wonderland with a buff list so long you can't even read it.

Perhaps if he just pulled his hoodie tighter and laid under his covers, headset on, the comforting glitchpop vocals of Hatsune Miku healing off those negative social stat debuffs.....

Ah, much better. See, there was no reason to be stressed, soon he could reload his last save of the newly released Tsukihime and grind off that super-secret ending he found the tags for in his last data dump. Everything was just...fine...

"IDIA SHROUD!" Ugh! What an infuriatingly persistent boy. And this one wasn't just a silly low-level mob either. Sigh.

Alarms flashed in the back of Idia's mind as he dragged his torso off his desk and rolled his chair over to the door of his room.

".....what do you want....." He flinched in anticipation of the ear-assaulting lecture he was about to face as the door swung open.

"Good, you are actually awake for once. My apologies for the volume, but I thought a nocturnal creature such as yourself may need some prompting."
" i'm not nocturnal"
Riddle didn't seem to hear him, of course.
"Now listen, I can maybe excuse your lack of discipline towards your own schoolwork as being either lazy or careless, but to ignore your fellow housewardens' concerns about other students in your care is inexcusable."
What? What the hell was he even talking about? Nobody in this dorm ever did anything, and even if they did, they wouldn't expect Idia of all people to be their backup. Yikes, that would just be a -200 IQ play right there. The only person (?) he cared about enough to warrant attention was Orth-
Huh.
Where was Ortho? The humanoid had been steadily absent from the dorm by virtue of vaguely described "study sessions" and "group activities" with "friends". Okay, that last one isn't so suspicious, and Idia supposes he's quite happy that at least Ortho has managed to gain those elusive IRL friends he could never get. But what the hell does a robot need with studying? A robot equipped with enough data and access to crash the entire internet at a moment's notice?
"Idia! Are you even listening still?" Oh Seven, the redhead was still here, and still talking somehow.
" listen if this is about other dorm members I assure you they don't want me involved" He struggled to speak through Riddle's piercing gaze trained onto his face like a laser.

"What? Don't mumble at me, speak up!" Oh, why couldn't they just leave him alone? Couldn't the others see he barely wanted this position as is?
"But if it's about Ortho"
Riddle nodded gravely at this and Idia immediately sat up, back ram-rod straight and headset instantly abandoned.
"What happened is he ok? Did his battery die? Did he get injured? Oh Seven, do I need to order parts? Ok maybe I can scavenge some older replaced into a pseudo-upgrade so I don't upset the delicate balance of his current software, not to mention" Idia's concerned spiel devolved into the mutterings of a hysterical man.
"Not necessarily injured yet, is what we think." It was Idia's turn to stare intensely at Riddle, the full force of his rarely-open amber eyes stalling the redhead in his tracks.
"Explain."
"W-Well, Ortho has recently become closer with Yuu, correct? So, that comes with the added territory of multiple other first years, and it's in our experience that they tend to, how do I put this, 'fuck around and find out'." Understanding dawned in Idia's mind and he nodded furiously.
"I can install higher intensity trackers into Ortho's OS remotely and he won't feel the intrusion at all, and if he asks, I can just tell him that it was a remote upgrade of his sensor drivers since his speech module did get damaged enough recently that I had to replace it." He began typing furiously on one of three keyboards as a monitor glowed from the activity and the wall of screens came to life.
"Um, you do what you'd like, but the reason I came is to remind you of a Housewarden meeting regarding this. We think the first-years might seriously injure themselves, a technomantic beam firing included."

Idia stilled. His posture, which had thus far exuded the confidence of a genius engineer such as himself, began to droop yet again.

".... so now you're telling me i gotta attend an IRL meeting with real life super bosses like Malleus fucking Draconia and that literal beam of sunshine Al-Asim....." Fuck his life. Did he get a second curse?

"Do NOT shirk your responsibilities, Idia Shroud. You are a Housewarden of Ignihyde, a dorm at the prestigious Night Raven College. It is an honor to hold such a position, and in matters of campus safety, no, you may not send a floating tablet in lieu of yourself."

With that death sentence delivered, Riddle twirled off self-importantly and left poor unsuspecting Idia there to wallow in his misfortunes and mentally prepare for the gallows of social interaction.

Behind the door, a poorly disguised Ortho winced at his brother's crisis and muttered a soft apology under his breath. In his hand lay the crushed and battered remains of his last speech module, which Idia would have used to create an add-on for his improved trackers if Ortho hadn't just mangled it.

Sorry Nii-san, but this is important to me, too important for you to swoop in and stop it. He floated off cheerily towards his room to prepare for his meeting with the others later. Besides, this means you can make friends with the other housewardens! Real friends like mine!

## **Housewarden Group Chat**

Riddle Rosehearts:

I have confirmed Idia's attendance later today, as I am sure he understands the consequences of negligence.

u dont have to be so rude abt it bruh
if ortho's involved ill be there
even tho i rly dont fucking wanna be

like why cant i just send a tablet huh no one needs my face just my participation besides, i have access to every camera in this school no need to be rollin on stealth like the catboy since im a certified genius n all

kingscholar:

call me a catboy again, i dare you.

ill put out those sad limp flames faster than you can say 'sorry'

yikes!

hostility detected!

chill dude its a joke

dead crowd today this is why i hate normies

just take the furry joke and move on

also wb uh

malleus

shudder

kingscholar:

lizardo prob thinks hes too important

Malleus Draconia:

Greetings! This is Lilia, on behalf of Malleus, who has misplaced his handheld device into my care.

I will ensure he is in attendance today, regardless of any grumblings about human time-keeping.

#### Chapter End Notes

i struggled with writing in-character pov narration for idia even more than his dialogue how do ppl write this loser

also! ive teased my diasomnia ocs, agathon and cersei here, they're brothers agathon is a 2nd year, very very strait laced and proper by the books about magic use

cersei is a force of fucking nature 1st year, a very "if i mash things together something will happen" type, him and ace hit it off IMMEDIATELY

theyre both personifications of the enchantress from beauty and the beast, where one represents her value of "justice" and the other represents the actual effects of her magic via chaos:)

# the mortifying ordeal of being known (by your liege)

Chapter Summary

Sebek embarrasses himself for the cause and Cersei gets it on tape. Also, we finally see the housewardens have their round table. Spoiler alert: it gets messy.

#### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There were few days in Diasomnia that weren't punctuated by noise these days. Before the arrival of one Lilia Vanrouge, Diasomnia was a stoic and somewhat unapproachable dorm by virtue of being mostly fae. Most humans and other human-adjacent races were quite varied and diverse in their development of magic and their personalities regarding magic. But for fae, magic was reverent and ever-present. Magic defined their livelihoods and most, if not all, fae had an affinity for magic ranging from easy household spells to probably summoning a dead God for fun (It's on Cersei's bucket list to get that strong, even if he has to do it when he's 95).

But in the age of Housewarden Draconia, who swept into Night Raven College with a walking narcoleptic liability, an ancient personification of chaos, and a human loudspeaker, Diasomnia is anything but quiet. Lilia's gaming sessions, Sebek's passionate and effusive admirations of Malleus, the dorm kitchen when Lilia cooks, or accidental sword training turning violent in the lounge; really, the only thing louder is probably a bomb.

Cersei has contributed to that noise plenty himself. His brother Agathon was the silent type, the type to walk the walk without talking any talk. Cersei was a yapper though, and he was damn good at it. Even though he was only in his first year, he'd been unanimously named the dorm's "negotiator", given that the other loudmouth was an incredibly oblivious Sebek.

Which is how he found himself standing in the lounge during the tensest standoff between Sebek and Lilia he'd ever seen. The smaller fae wasn't even floating anymore, standing firmly on two feet to cast the full force of his signature General Lilia look on a distraught Sebek, who looked one soft touch or questioning look away from bursting into astronomically loud sobs. The rest of the dorm had ventured out of their rooms, having sensed the change in the delicate magic of the dorm and subsequently being alerted that Shit was Going Down.

"Sebek, what is that you have in your hand?"

Now, Sebek was a good knight. Strong, resourceful, diligent, and loyal to a fault, he could be trusted to be one of Malleus Draconia's closest retainers and, dare he even say it, companions (Should Sebek hear his thoughts, Cersei would probably be beheaded on the spot from the

sheer might of Sebek's volume). But he was a comically bad liar. Sweaty palms, red ears, restless eyes, fidgeting fingers; any visible symptom of a bad liar, he had it.

"L-Lilia-sama! H-hehe w-what are you doing here in the lounge? Do you have need for me, DID SOMETHING HAPPEN TO MY LIEGE?"

Cersei had to admit, the immediate refocus to Malleus' well-being would've been a good intentional diversion, if it was intentional. Knowing Sebek, he panicked and his mind reverted to the most comforting thing he could think of. Malleus.

"No, Malleus is fine. Now, what is that in your hand?" Sebek's face was wet at this point and Cersei could almost taste his fear in the air around them.

"It's just your, uh, spice rack." *Oh Seven, you fool, you absolute imbecile*. Why did he have to go and reveal his hand? If only Sebek's single-track meat-headed brain would have realized that a simple hand-off to Cersei's half-outstretched and awaiting hand would've been so simple, but no, one look from Lilia and Sebek folds like their last cast iron pan (it was a messy night in Diasomnia, so messy that the news traveled its way to the ears of one Ramshackle Prefect and they never let him or Sebek hear the end of it).

"I see, and why ARE you holding my precious spice rack, the one I have cultivated with a variety of seasonings and exotic taste enhancers from over centuries of travel, the one which I purchased on a trip upon first beginning my culinary adventures?"

Maybe if he concentrated hard enough, his experiments would pay off and he could enchant the Diasomnia floors to eat Sebek, killing two birds with one stone. And then it hit him. Literally, because Cersei was standing quite unfortunately close to an old grandfather clock that had existed in Diasomnia since time immemorial (read: the founding of the dorm). Unfortunately, that same grandfather clock had recently been the in the path of some poor first-year's failed practical magic, cursing it to instead clone and spew its little cuckoo birds at whoever was in the vicinity upon the clock striking the hour. That poor sod was him (and so was the first-year who cursed the clock, but nobody else knows that so it's not real, peer-reviewed source: Cersei Athanasiou).

Cursed cuckoos aside, the clock had just struck 11 PM. That meant two things in Diasomnia, unique only to this dorm. One, its curfew time. That's universal, except for Heartslabyul, but they were always special. The second and more relevant thing? Lilia Vanrouge had very recently become an epic gamer, and every night at 11 PM he played a lengthy session on some MMORPG (Lilia doesn't know the name himself, only that he can customize his character beyond physical perception).

"Lils!" At least eighteen pairs of eyes swiveled to look directly at him. Big mistake, though, Cersei Athanasiou loves attention. "Senpai, uh, its 11 o'clock. Isn't it time for, uh..." He trailed off and waited for Sebek to catch on and move, which he obviously didn't. Lilia, however, immediately caught his drift, leaping off the ground with gravity-defying speed.

"Ah, of course!" The room breathed a collective sigh of relief, Cersei and Sebek doing it twice, and then Lilia turned around. "Sebek, dear?"

The room held its collective breath again in fear, and Sebek froze up.

"Put that back where you found it? I need my spice rack for dinner on Friday, I've discovered something wonderful called Taco Night!" Someone in the back of the room fainted.

"O-okay, yes, Lilia-sama, I WILL NOT LET YOU DOWN!" Sebek's voice steadily grew louder, whether with confidence or panic, nobody knew.

Cersei waited until Lilia's pink-tinged hair disappeared around the bend of the hallway before melting straight into the floor, head cradled gently in his hands. Nobody could ever blame him for accidental magic ever again, because he just saved this entire island's collective ass. In fact, they should've all be thanking him, falling at his feet, why weren't they falling at his feet in gratitude?

Sebek clapped him on the back once and sent him reeling instead. *That's it, I'm killing him, he's dying, next research topic: how to instantly vaporize annoying half-fae.* 

--

Lilia smiled knowingly to himself as he floated into his room, hands reaching for the red and black headset which sat perched on a bat-shaped holder, a lovely present from Sebek for his birthday. What silly, rowdy boys they were.

He had known exactly what those two were up to from the moment he knew his spice rack had been moved. One doesn't grow to be 700 years old without spending the first 200 years testing the precarious boundaries of mortality to combat the unbearable shackle of boredom, then spending the next 500 magically tagging everything they own because the first 200 resulted in losing all of their belongings virtually every other week. He knew exactly where that spice rack was going, and truth be told, he didn't care that much about it, he could always use it as the chance to finally use the spice holder Silver got him for Father's Day two years ago, but he found himself too attached to that gift to let it face the elements. Letting Sebek have inconsequential trinkets to protect in the well-intended but misguided belief that Lilia cared deeply about them enabled him to instead keep his real treasures out of harm's way. He loved Sebek but the boy could be a walking hazard when he became laser-focused, as he oft did.

Life had become too boring and mundane lately. The novelty and countless learning experiences of his first years at NRC had dwindled into the same monotony, and no matter how out of left field they were, Overblots weren't fun, just a chore. These children, this band of ragtag first-years who'd somehow come together to defy the unspoken line between Diasomnia and the rest of the school that had formed upon Malleus' enrollment? They were the key, Lilia knew that much. These kids would bring life back to learning, they would heal the rot filling the halls of this school and poisoning the centuries-long feuds at the heart of the individuality of an NRC student. Most importantly, they weren't afraid to push those boundaries that enabled his strength and growth so many years ago.

He'd just have to make sure to step in before they crossed that threshold of mortality. He knew the line well, after all.

The energy in the room was tense, so tense you could bite it like a block of thick cheese. Riddle sat perched on a tall chair at one end of an elliptical table, looking one hair away from flipping it, his face turning a brilliant shade of cerise. At the other end was an empty tall chair with a floating rectangle, the messenger of one Idia Shroud. The tablet's levitation abilities seemed to falter further with each steaming glare from Riddle.

Vil and Kalim sat on opposite sides of the wider middle of the table, one blissfully ignorant and the other willfully ignorant. Vil was dutifully examining his coiffure in the back of a reflective silver serving tray, whilst Kalim whistled a cheery tune and swung his legs back and forth.

As the standoff between Riddle and Tablet almost came to a head, the door swung open, and a half-asleep Leona swaggered in. Vil scoffed.

"Must you insist on being tardy, Leona?" Was anyone surprised, really?

Leona bared his teeth at the blond before collapsing into an empty chair next to the quivering tablet like a tired noblewoman in a classical painting. Truly, he was the epitome of indulgence.

Riddle opened his mouth to speak, evidently slightly calmer, when the door swung open yet again, and in walked Azul, looking suspiciously like the octopus who punched the fish. He looked as normal as a merman mafioso on the down low could look, except upon scrutiny, the edges of his uniform were crumpled, and his face bore lines of exhaustion. He shot Leona a sly smirk and nodded at a stoic Riddle before delicately seating himself next to the redhead.

Only one seat remained empty, and as each dorm head realized who would be soon entering that room, the tension heightened into a thick cloud, crawling down the back of their throats and settling there like a particularly stubborn cough.

Malleus picked that exact moment to open the door, and after a moment of hesitation, stepped through the threshold, bending his head slightly as to not catch his horns on the jamb.

"Hello, Malleus-senpai," Kalim's voice had lost most of its signature cheeriness, being replaced by an uncharacteristic wariness, but still not losing any of its charm. Outside the window, a lone cricket chirped loudly to fill the ensuing silence.

"Hello," The Draconia heir's low drawl sent shivers down their spines, and the previously tempered tablet began to shake violently, before promptly powering down.

"Wh- IDIA!" Riddle's anger meter exploded as he leapt across the table, all notions of propriety and magic use abandoned as he began shake the ever loving hells out of the unresponsive device.

Leona let out a disapproving click.

"Give it here." Tablet securely in hand, he fiddled with the buttons on the side until the screen came alive again, before deftly navigating the UI to a video-calling app.

"Herbivore let it slip the other day that this tablet can do video calls, so let's see how that flame-brain likes it when we can all see him gloating behind all those screens." He growled at the end.

Azul chuckled and let out the most sarcastic round of applause, going so far as to move his hands in a circle. Leona studiously ignored him.

A few silent moments of anticipation passed, before the tablet crackled to life yet again, slowly rising to float at eye level with the group.

"Oh, uh, s-sorry, um, I guess when M-Malleus walked in," The tablet shook as it spoke the 'forbidden' name, "It probably affected my remote connection for a s-second."

Malleus frowned, the mild offense visible on his aristocratic features.

"I might be a particularly powerful fae, but I assure you I understand how to control my magic enough to coexist with modern technology." The room shivered, furniture included.

Before anyone could attempt to placate the prince, the other prince piped up.

"It ain't got anything to do with the lizard. Little Shroud over here thought that was the perfect chance to escape, wasn't it?" With that, Leona reached over the table to yank the tablet towards him while it struggled against his grip and projected the voice of an audibly panicking Idia.

"W-Wait wait don't manhandle me you fool! This is expensive and highly sensitive technology and it won't respond well to you clawing at it!" Leona continued tapping furiously at the screen, showcasing a level of technological prowess that stunned the room into silence, although his ears folded back into his skull and betrayed his displeasure.

"A-Azul-shi, Riddle-san, please, cmon!"

Azul and Riddle stayed resolutely seated, clearly echoing Leona in startling solidarity.

At that moment, a sound pinged and Leona sat back in satisfaction as Tablet began to sputter and gurgle noises from its speaker, before shutting off all audio. A moment passed before the video call function began to ring.

Across the school, a baffled and panicking Idia stared at the words "CALL INCOMING" reflected back at him from his monitor.

Ohmy Seven OHmy SEVEN he fuck in ghijacked mehow did Imiss someone at this school having that much ability even the rest of Ignihy decant-

His stream of panic slowed as the ringing of the call disrupted his thoughts.

### RRRRING!

Idia floundered for a second, hands flapping in front of his face as he calculated the possibilities at lightning speed in his mind. Then, with a resigned sigh, he moved his mouse

to hover over the green button, and clicked.

Instantly, the faces of his fellow dorm heads flickered into view with varying levels of emotion reflected on them, from a downright furious Riddle and a disappointed Vil to a smug Leona and an offended Malleus. Was he dying today? Maybe he should have Ortho arrange funerary rites. Wait, no, Ortho was yet again suspiciously missing, but that's a later problem. He shakily raised his head to face the music.

"H-hello..." He didn't think he could muster more than a weak murmur, which was clearly the wrong thing to do.

"Idia-san, I rec-" As Riddle began to speak, something muffled him and moved him out of view, something that looked suspiciously like the hand of one Leona Kingscholar.

"Listen, squirt." Squirt? Oh, how dare he, they were almost the same height! And they were both slouchers most of the time!

"You can't be here in person? Fine, you're a weakling anyway. I don't care how you have to be here, but if I got woken up from a nap during prime sunny hours in the botanical garden for this farce, then you'd better believe that I will chase you down and drag you by the neck into this room if that tablet ever powers down again, you understand?"

*Eek!* This was a special form of Leona known as Intimidating Leona, and Nervous Idias were statistically weak to those. He didn't trust himself to speak, so instead, Idia just nodded as emphatically as he could.

"Good, now back to business." The camera view jostled as though the tablet had been thrown or slapped, and Idia winced.

Back in the conference room, Riddle fought the urge to bite Leona's gloved hand as he regained his composure. The lion beastman was clearly proud of his win, tail flicking behind him in lazy satisfaction. Riddle cleared his throat and the room settled.

"I now call into order the Official Housewarden Meeting to Stop Unruly First Years from Leveling the Island," he paused, unimpressed. "Azul-san, was this name necessary?"

Azul shrugged with a shit-eating grin.

"My filing system is very complex, it requires a precise naming convention."

"In any case, we must discuss the potential outcomes of whatever is about to happen at Ramshackle Dorm tonight, whether it be a study group as Kalim suggested or a literal bomb involving liquid fuel sources, which would explain the questions about cauldrons to Vil. Perhaps the canned soup comment was a distraction, intended to incite a reaction from Vil's sensibilities?" He paused, and Vil coughed delicately.

"I suppose in my momentary fit of violence, it did not occur to me that the spudlings may have been duping me, but yes, it's a possibility."

Leona barked out a laugh.

"While that entire idea is fucking hilarious, why the hell are we here then. Kids probably won't get far with anything, maybe a small fire. They know basic water summoning spells, don't they?" Riddle's only response was a tired shake of his head. Ace and Deuce were never, how does one put it, academically inclined. Curricula did not imply their knowledge in the slightest.

"I propose we watch from a distance tonight, for security purposes. And in order to maintain proximity, should the need arise for our assistance." Malleus did not like that, given how the furniture began to vibrate again.

"I have full faith in Sebek as my retainer to be able to perform any task necessary of him, especially of a magical caliber like brewing."

Six pairs of incredulous eyes blinked at him.

"It's not about Sebek alone, it's just, well, Ace and Deuce are involved, and so is Yuu..." Riddle needed to say no more as understanding dawned in Malleus' eyes.

"Then we are in agreement? We shall all meet after dinner in the Hall of Mirrors, and then proceed to Ramshackle."

Every head nodded in various levels of enthusiasm. Kalim's head bobbled dangerously from its own recoil, and it made for a comical image as he righted himself and almost fell off the chair.

"Then this meeting is now adjourned." Riddle slammed his binder shut, and almost instantly, Leona just about leapt out of his seat and sauntered out of the room, tail grabbing the door handle and swinging it shut just before Malleus could reach it behind him. The others filed out in a similarly eager fashion, and once the room was empty and it was just Riddle left, he sank back into a plush loveseat in the corner and placed his head into his hands.

The guilt from the injuries he inflicted on the other dorm members while in Overblot, especially the ones Ace and Deuce sustained, always continued to weigh on him even now. Riddle knew in his heart that the other dorm heads felt the same of their first-years, Kalim and Malleus aside. *I can take rule-breaking, I can even handle property damage, just please, please let them be safe*.

### 18 naked cowboys at the ram-shackle ranch

cerizzy: yo we good for tonight

ashengyatto: yuh

sword dog: we on

shield dog: ass: me n deucey r with yuu rn can confirm, deuce is currently snoozing on my shoulder ass: yeah and he looks dumb as shit lmaoooooo hes drooling and everything apple bottom jeans: send pics or it didnt happen ass: <view attachment> whatd i say huh, never doubt me again shield dog: 😤 ass: thanks fletch

ok listen

i pulled a favor w trein-sensei to leave grim w him for the night he wants to see if grim and lucius will get along, and itll help grim w animal linguistics

woof woof: how tf did u even

nvmd im not asking

im p sure yuu practices wixcraft
i mean
i will neither confirm nor deny
ashengyatto: guys i'm sorry
you need to continue without me
im dying
woof woof: what the fuck
sword dog: bossman stubbed his toe
ass: rip in pieces dillon
apple bottom jeans: you and your dump truck ass will be remembered :
ashengyatto: true friends 🙏
okay Operation Slumber Party is a go
okay Operation Stantoct Fairty is a go
apple bottom jeans: yeah,,,,,
that's all it is,,,,
that 5 an it 15,,,,

cerizzy: smart

apple bottom jeans: dangnabbit i've been foiled fine 😔 see yall later at mine epel im conducting a security check for you at the door apple bottom jeans: this is discrimination against poor country bumpkins like me i am a refugee from another universe with nothing to my name don't even start with me ok i gtg show up or ill hunt you down :) cerizzy: terrifying, understood

#### Chapter End Notes

shield dog:

featured OCs!: agathon and cersei athanasiou

- like i mentioned, theyre the personifications of the enchantress' magic from beauty and the beast
- cersei is like chaos incarnate and im p sure he gets along very very well with lilia, it pisses sebek tf OFF
- cersei and sebek are Mortal Enemies (they are friends, they just cant admit it be Teenage Boy Syndrome)
- theyre also both half fae and sebek cannot for the life of him understand how cersei is

so okay with his non-fae side, except cersei's father is a very accomplished mage (and a beastman,,, are u catching my drift here)					

## surveillance shenanigans and the mortal peril of slumber parties

Chapter Summary

The Night dawns, and it all comes to a head. Words are exchanged, and at the end of it all, Epel successfully makes Dire Crowley shit his pants.

#### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for <u>notes</u>

The woods around Ramshackle Dorm were silent, save for the sounds of their shuffling feet.

They moved as one unit, stealthily creeping through the underbrush like shadows. Every step was calculated and precise, and even the trees took a moment to react to the quick sounds of their heels crunching a stray root or a strewn autumn leaf.

That's what Idia thought, at least. His tablet was clutched firmly under the arm of an irate Leona, who'd had it unceremoniously shoved into his hands by a tired Riddle. Idia's view of Leona's armpit gave him no contextual information visually, so he'd settled for crossing his fingers and blindly believing that Azul's borderline anal retentive planning worked.

Meanwhile, Riddle cursed as they pushed their way through burnt bramble and broken bush to reach the wide clearing just behind the rundown house. Near-sentient ivy vines slithered around the rag-tag group, and he shivered at the thought of the ghosts of angry past vying for their early demise.

Behind him, Azul was becoming increasingly unsteadier as his knobbly knees knocked him into Vil's side. The blond hissed in warning and he simpered silently, hands raised in apology.

The sounds of wild laughter and joyous screeches filled the woods as they neared the house. Lights flickered in the windows, and the shadows of enjoyment blurred past the glass panes.

They shuffled closer, now entirely exposed from a lack of woodland cover. The grass was tall, but not enough to hide the tops of their heads nor the ridiculously gargantuan horns of their draconian member.

"Leona-shi, could you—"

Leona whacked the back of the tablet with his free hand.

"No. You've lost seeing privilege after your last shenanigan."

The tablet sputtered to no avail under its sweaty armpit prison.

Someone gasped in horror.

"Ow, ow, ow, my HAIR—"

Vil let out something akin to a whispered and whistle-y wail at the sight of his blond locks entangled with not one but two dead branches and a burr.

Before he could screech further, Riddle clamped a hand around his upperclassman's mouth firmly.

An impatient Malleus hissed, no doubt finding this a colossal waste of time. He hadn't hesitated to make it clear how "capable" and "dignified" Sebek had become.

A loud bang and violent yells echoed from the dorm, and they froze. Leona motioned with one hand, and they snuck closer. Riddle muttered an apology as he accidentally-on-purpose trodded on the lion's tail.

The lights were flickering between numerous bright colors now, and something that looked suspiciously like a pillow smacked against one of the windows with a rattling thud. The shadow of Grim flew into the window next, and it slowly slid down the pane like a sad wet heap of cat.

"Is he dead?" Kalim, who'd been oddly silent until then, perked up at the somehow enticing possibility of murder.

"Nah, that cat's resilient," said Leona.

"My, a big word, 'resilient'," teased Azul.

Leona cuffed him across the skull, jostling the tablet under his arm enough for Idia to renew his protesting.

"Ack, someone get me out of his arm, plea—"

Another thump, and the tablet fell silent. Leona picked it out of his armpit and deposited it onto Malleus' horns like they were a tripod.

"There, now shut up."

Malleus tilted his head quizzically, and the tablet tilted precariously with him.

"Whoa, whoa, WHOA MALLEUS-SHI LOOK OUT—"

A clawed hand tipped the tablet back into place. It let out a crackly sigh.

The yells from inside the house increased.

Riddle and Vil exchanged concerned looks, before motioning for a huddle.

They shifted into a circle, Malleus' horns knocking the tablet into Azul's head.

"OW—"

"Apologies, Ashengrotto."

Azul responded with a murderous look.

"I think they're doing fine, but let's just walk over there and knock, maybe ask about studying, and then leave. I think the sight of Riddle and me should dispel any wayward thoughts."

Leona scoffed.

"Who the hell put you in charge, Pome-freak? Those pups ain't scared of you after seeing you crying over your wrinkly mug."

Vil snarled at him, all pretense of civility now lost as they began to physically tussle. Azul gaped, and Riddle sank his head into his hands.

Malleus grabbed Leona and Vil by the backs of their uniforms.

"Kingscholar. Schoenheit. Quit it." Magic charged the air around him in disapproval.

They grumbled their obvious dissent, but released each other's collars.

"Okay," Riddle said in an attempt to regain control. "We just need to show our faces to discourage any roughhousing. I propose me and Azul, given that Vil may need to compose himself again."

Vil frowned, but nodded all the same.

Azul smiled his signature shark-like grin, entirely unbecoming of an octopus like him.

The huddle dispersed and morphed into two lines, with Riddle and Azul spearheading the front lines. They quietly marched their way to the front stairs of the house, the wood rotting and broken.

Riddle's nerves were on high alert, and he took one calming breath. Then another. And another. Finally, he raised his hand to knock, and all hell broke loose.

For in that moment, Malleus felt a tickle in his nose. A stray leaf had floated by his face and agitated his delicate senses, causing him to need to sneeze. Sensing danger, Leona quickly plugged his fingers around the fae's nostrils, and in the act of doing so, knocked the tablet clean off of Malleus' horns. Idia, uncaring of his volume in lieu of worrying about his expensive technology, yelled loudly and waved his digital arms violently. Leona's tail lashed out and wrapped around the tablet, in turn dislodging his precariously balanced feet on the already rotting steps and sending him and Malleus tumbling into the grass. His tail then whacked the tablet straight into Vil's back, who was too preoccupied with cleaning his coiffure to dodge, thus sending his elbow into Kalim's head. Kalim then pitched forward, and his earring became caught in Vil's uniform, yanking the falling Vil back forward towards an oblivious Riddle and a panicking Azul. They crashed into a heap on the top step, Azul's hair

in Kalim's mouth, Vil yanking his uniform free from Kalim's earring, and Kalim's undone headdress falling squarely over Riddle's eyes and obscuring his vision.

Naturally, this debacle had dispelled all of their stealth. Within seconds, the curious freshmen appeared at the front stoop of Ramshackle, armed and ready to fend off intruders or bandits, only to see their dorm leaders tangled in a heap at their feet.

Riddle, through his paralyzing shame, faintly registered the voices of his worst nightmares: a smug Ace, a horrified Deuce, and a gleeful Yuu.

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"What—" (This was Deuce in shock.)
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"The—" (Yuu was stifling cackles.)

"FUCK!" (That was Ace through the widest smirk imaginable.)

Fuck indeed.

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The last golden and rosy hues of the lingering sunset filtered through the newly fixed windows of Ramshackle Dorm as the seven wayward Dorm Heads sat squished in one file on the couch. Their respective charges stared down at them with varying degrees of emotion.

Dillon was leering at Azul with the kind of manic glee and vengeance that only a younger sibling could possess, the twin rays poking out behind him like amused bodyguards.

Ace and Deuce were whispering furiously to each other, Ace's shit-eating grin painting a pretty picture next to Deuce's horrified dead stare. Riddle didn't notice any of this from his position with his head firmly buried in both hands. Only the tips of his bright cerise ears were visible.

Yuu was wincing at the state of their couch, the cushions springing out and the baseboard collapsing from the wriggling weight of the equally disgruntled Leona, Malleus, and Vil.

Epel was hiding behind Deuce, the evidence of his throwing Grim into the wall hidden by his carefully tucking his hands behind his back.

Kalim was waving brightly at Sha, who was resolutely avoiding the blinding eye contact of his Dorm Head, lest he somehow be coerced by the innocent doe eyes to spill everything.

Jack looked shamefully conflicted between apologizing and reprimanding Leona, who was too busy swatting his tail around Malleus' right horn in a successful attempt to irritate the fae to notice Jack's woe. Shardul stood behind him, glaring violently at the kitchen counters, where the popcorn bowl which should've been rightfully his had been abandoned in favor of this.... sham of an interrogation.

Cersei was struggling to hide his wheezing laughter behind one shaking hand, tears streaming silently down his face. The other hand was busy gripping the back of Sebek's uniform, who

was already on his way to lying face-first on the ground in some self-deprecating form of supplication.

In all of this, Grim had found his way back into one of the cauldrons they had filled with popcorn, and was busy munching away without being supervised.

And so, they all sat and stood, marinating in the baffling sequence of events with no explanation, until Azul cleared his throat.

"I suppose we will get out of your hair then? You all seem busy with your...."

He trailed off, lifting one eyebrow in question in an attempt to retain his reputation of control and command, although his flaming cheeks and slight stammer belied his embarrassment.

"No, no, do go on, tell us, what were we so busy doing?" Dillon asked, not missing a single beat to tease his older brother.

"Yeah, Mr. Azul, he-he..." Saber crowed as Fletcher nodded.

"Uh..." Azul floundered uncharacteristically before turning to Riddle for help.

"Ahem," Riddle coughed once into his trembling fist. "We... we were simply... a bit concerned that some... trouble... may have been afoot... and as Housewardens, naturally each of us was worried."

The freshmen stared blankly.

"For your health, your health, in case something went wrong, you know." He hurried to amend his statement, and a minute amount of the tension in Jack's shoulders seemed to bleed away at the thought of Leona's apparent concern for his well-being. The lion in question was staring blankly at the wall behind the misfit firing squad and pretending to Not Care. His ears and tail dispelled the illusion of nonchalance immediately.

"Hm, and what is so dangerous about us meeting to study and spend the night at Ramshackle, which has been well renovated by Vil Schoenheit himself?" Ace punctuated his question with a shark-like grin and a teasing pointed finger tapping under his chin.

Vil flushed.

"W-well," he stammered. Epel gaped at him, jaw fully unhinging.

Vil tried again.

"I noticed one of my potatoes had a lot of questions for me about cauldrons? At a time with no significant potions exams in the first year curriculum?"

"That was for personal stuff!" Epel yelled.

Vil Looked at him, undeterred.

"W-We wanted to, uh, uhhh..." It was Epel's turn to stammer unconvincingly.

"We wanted to have a themed slumber party, Dorm Heads!" Sebek yelled from his half-declined position on the floor, his voice vibrating the floorboards enough that Cersei stumbled and released his uniform, sending Sebek smashing nose-first into the wood.

The collective winced in unison.

"Okay, but, what about the packages that Deuce gave to Yuu?" asked Riddle pointedly. "Yes, Ace, I did notice you all whispering very loudly that day."

Ace paled, his grin fading.

"T-That was a bundle of snacks we took from the Heartslabyul fridge! Sorry, Dorm Head!" Deuce fell into a 90° bow, then slapped Ace in the back once to force him into a half-bow.

"Wh—No need to apologize, that is food for communal eating," Riddle said.

"Yeah dumbass, and you didn't have to hit me for it either," whined Ace, rubbing his back.

Deuce smacked him once again.

The two got into equally heated stances, ready to square off, when Jack forcibly separated the two.

"Then explain all the secrecy," Leona said, trying very hard to remain uninterested by inspecting his fingernails.

"We wanted to have some fun with it, and it's easier to meet when we don't have to explain it to anyone," Cersei piped up from crouching on the ground where he was helping Sebek with his nosebleed.

"I-I abologize, b-bhy liegzh, sniffle, I hab defabed yo'—" Sebek coughed. "You—"

"Shhhhhh, relax, clean up your nose and stop crying," Cersei soothed his fellow half-fae.

The liege in question was currently sporting a wrinkled face and a serious look of consternation at feeling so useless.

"I don't like sleeping alone," said Yuu quietly.

The room became slightly somber.

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"Wait, Yuu—"
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"Yuu, cmon—"

"Yuu—"

"Dude—"

"Uh—"

The frantic voices of the other first years began to overlap in their hurry.

"It's okay, guys, they're just worried," Yuu continued on. "I've been having awful headaches and nightmares and, I just—didn't want to tell anyone, at first. But then Ace started turning up to lunch and dozing off on my shoulder, and Epel's been looking kinda thin recently, and Jack's been so tense he pulled a muscle at track practice, and I thought maybe it wasn't a problem that was unique to me."

The boys in question reacted in various ways: Ace covered his face, Jack's ears drooped in shame, and Epel hid further from the questioning stare of Vil.

"And then Ortho suggested a slumber party one day, because I guess he noticed too."

The humanoid perked up from his spot near the counter where he'd been gently petting Grim. He floated over to the group, just as Idia's tablet wriggled its way out of Kalim's lap and into the air.

"Ortho?"

"Hi, Big Brother, I'm so sorry if I worried you, but the other day, after my recent sensor and software update, I noticed all of their vitals were out of normal range. I like my friends, I wanted to help."

The tablet hovered unsurely, before zooming closer to Ortho.

"Ortho, I-I'm happy that you have friends, and I'm happy that you care about them. You deserve that."

"Big Brother...."

Ortho did the robot equivalent of tearing up, and he floated back near Dillon, who graciously allowed him to hide near the old TV stand. The octopus then turned his attention at his own older brother.

"Zu, you've been perfect for most of my life. The pinnacle of achievement, really. But this past year, I had to watch your crumble under your own weight, and I couldn't do a damn thing to help. It haunts me. I—"

He choked up.

Azul's eyes grew misty.

"Mr. Azul, we've been foolin' around so much 'cuz we made 'im promise to never do anythin' alone, even the dumb shit—no, especially the dumb shit."

The mermen went silent, processing the weight of their admissions, and Cersei took it as his chance to speak before Sebek combusted from guilt.

"Malleus, we love the opportunity we've been given to study and learn at your side, I know that Sebek especially appreciates your presence."

Sebek sniffled in agreement through a bloody wad of tissue.

"But," Cersei continued. "It's not healthy for him to be around fae his whole life. And it's not healthy for me neither. We're fae, but we're also human, and these dumb gigs where we throw shit at each other and ingest minimal amounts of microplastics and commit minor arson is just part of the human life we don't get in Briar Valley. We don't live as long, and we've had too many close brushes with death in one semester for my liking."

Malleus' face darkened at the thought of Sebek passing on before him, and storm clouds rolled in outside the windows.

Then, he smiled, and the clouds dissipated.

"Sebek, I am proud of all you've accomplished in my presence," the dragon fae began.

Sebek stiffened his top lip, lest he start sobbing again.

"But I am prouder still of all you've accomplished in my absence. You've become more than just Baur's grandson, more than just another Zigvolt, and if these human gatherings are all it takes, then you have my blessing."

Sebek began to sob uncontrollably, and Cersei smushed him into the crook of his shoulder, gesturing for the crowd to ignore them.

"We're young, not just us freshmen, but ALL of us," Yuu said. "It's not normal to be stressed enough as a collective that multiple students self-combust."

"My friends and I, back home," They took a deep, shuddering breath. Talking about home was always difficult.

"My friends and I would do these stress-busting sleepovers sometimes, where we would just be dumb and silly. This house, this giant, newly renovated house, it's too empty for just me and my hybrid monster-cat-mage combo and the ghosts under my bed, not to mention the mouse in the mirror."

Grim lazily wagged his tail from his new perch atop their head.

The ghosties popped their heads out behind a pillar and waved genially.

"So," They shrugged. "I thought if I could help this new group of students be dumb and silly together, they wouldn't be stressed and alone enough to join the Overblot bandwagon."

The buzzing nervous energy of the room stilled as the freshies dog piled onto their Ramshackle Prefect in one big messy group hug. Their Housewardens watched on, feeling slightly out of place.

"Okay!" Riddle clapped his hands together once. "I think we've crashed your slumber party long enough, we'll invite ourselves back out."

On his cue, they'd already began rise from their places on the now-deformed couch and inch towards the door. The Pile let out a sharp cough, and the Housewarden Conga Line froze.

"Uh, excuse me, no WAY I'm letting this go so fast," said Ace, one arm still stuck inside the Pile.

"Uh-huh, me neither," added Dillon, smirking. "C'mon Zu, stalking? That's a bit low."

"Not to mention, I think this little debacle broke a ton of Night Raven College rules and Queen of Hearts rules, hm?" Deuce goaded, catching on remarkably quick.

Jack, Shardul, Sha, and the Twin Rays broke out into matching grins.

"Say, Yuu, shouldn't we do something about the unlawful trespassing onto Ramshackle Property?" Epel remarked innocently.

Ortho, ever the prankster, nodded emphatically.

"Yes, Yuu, according to my copy of the updated Night Raven College Rules and Regulations, Housewardens can issue reprimand to any student within the physical realm of their own dorms, and it doesn't seem to exclude other Housewardens."

"I shouldn't have given him access to those," Idia muttered through the Tablet. Leona shoved the thing back under his armpit in irritation.

Yuu chuckled evilly.

"Perhaps punishment is in order."

In the coming weeks, the confused populace of Night Raven College watched their Housewardens do extremely out of character things as their punishment from the Prefect of Ramshackle.

Riddle was made to watch as Ace and Deuce very carefully shifted every single uneven stack of teacups in the Heartslabyul decor to be completely aligned, painted the checkerboard tiles an eye-assaulting shade of teal, and cut misshapen chunks out of the centers of every tart, pie, and scone in the kitchen. He wasn't allowed to voice any complaints about any rules lest he wished his own shameful delinquency be placed on full blast.

Ruggie had the time of his life forcing Leona to eat not one but multiple entirely leafy greens, including a hilarious incident where Leona painstakingly attempted to eat a singular leaf of spinach, regurgitating it twice, before rolling the leaf in a piece of smoked ham like a joint and downing the whole thing in one piece. Ruggie counted it as a win on the newly-initiated Leona Vegetable Counter hanging on the Savanaclaw Dorm fridge. Jack and Shardul participated with respective trepidation and glee by holding Leona down in his chair so he couldn't escape.

Dillon and the Twin Rays were given full access to the Mostro Lounge menu for 24 hours. They managed to change every single mocktail to be an alcoholic nightmare for about 15 minutes before the Head Mage swooped in and shut the operation down. He did, however, cart off the liquor under one wing in the name of "confiscation", not knowing that the whole thing was a successful ploy by the freshmen to feed him laxatives.

Epel spent a whole day shadowing Vil as his "translator". This just involved Vil being completely rendered mute by force, having to rely on Epel in full Country Bumpkin Mode to communicate his written thoughts and gestures. Vil immediately initiated a hunt the next day for all existing footage and photographs so that he could burn them in a bonfire.

An Idia-shaped hoodie lump made its way to classes for one day and one day only, an exuberant Ortho trailing behind as a faithful assistant. The Hoodie Lump was even forced to volunteer with the cafeteria ghosts during lunch. The robot boy spent the entire time recording his older brother from 17 different angles to make a home movie and save it to his password protected hard drive.

Malleus and Kalim were the only ones who thoroughly enjoyed their "punishments", the former too terrifying to punish by any means, and the latter too out of touch to see anything short of an assassination as a punishment.

Cersei and a reluctant Sebek tasked Malleus with undoing the enchantments on multiple cursed objects around Diasomnia, which were just regular objects being repeatedly manipulated behind the scenes by an eager Lilia as soon as the curse was "broken". It was the most fun Malleus had had in decades, though he'd never tell the boys that.

Kalim was made to clean the entirety of Scarabia after a party in Yuu's honor, one he simply couldn't help but plan following the Prefect's tear-jerking admission. The boy made the most of it, singing nonsensical songs and making dances for every task. An extremely irate and anxious Jamil needed to be physically restrained by none other than Sha, who very happily tied his Vice Housewarden to a column and left him there for the whole day.

The freshmen came to be known as the Pile from that day forward any time they were present in a full group. The ordeals of the Surveillance Shenanigan only brought them even closer together, and the newly-gained respect and support from their Housewardens enabled all kinds of new nightmares to be unleashed on the poor students and staff of Night Raven College.

Seven help the Head Mage, because the minor diarrhea was just the beginning.

#### Chapter End Notes

aaaaaaa i sincerely apologize for taking over a month to update this fic

life kinda whooped me in the ass a bit ngl, but i'm back and ready to finish this up!

#### footnote:

leona eating spinach = ron swanson eating a banana (please look it up it's peak comedy) epel being a vil translator = loosely inspired by obama's anger translator bit the diasomnia cursed objects = inspired by that one lovecraft story where a wizard curses people and then fulfills the curses by breaking into their homes and killing them

yes i am acknowledging the existence of M\*ckey M\*use, only because someone living in your mirror when you live in a technically haunted house is a hilarious concept. i have not been coerced by the Disney Overlords

There may be a +1 chapter to this fic which involves the Freshie gang vs Dire Crowley stand-off we've all been waiting for! Please give me your ideas in the comments, right now i'm between a school spirit festival wherein the gang repeatedly dunks Crowley in a dunk tank and a special culinary crucible with guest judge crowley where the freshies try their absolute best to give him mild food poisoning.

Please <u>drop by the Archive and comment</u> to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work	:!