



# House Arrest

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**T**HE HOUSE FAERIE HAD BEEN SITTING IN THE SMALL, DRAB room in the eastern wing of the castle for over half an hour before somebody finally walked in. The home of the Lord and Lady who ruled the city-state of Cliff's End, the castle was also the workplace of many of the nobility and others who served the demesne. This wing housed the headquarters of the Cliff's End Castle Guard, who were tasked with maintaining law and order in the port city. This was the first time the faerie had entered the Lord and Lady's Seat.

But then, as a house faerie, he had reason to stay inside his own home.

Being confined to this room, however, was frustrating for the faerie, as there wasn't enough room to fly about, and there wasn't anything in the room to hold his interest. The décor was rather pedestrian: a table surrounded by three chairs, two on one side, one on the other; a lantern that cast odd shadows; and nothing else. The house faerie had been brought here by two large members of the Guard "for questioning," along with the humans who lived in the house for which he was responsible.

Well, all but one of the humans. The one they didn't bring was also the reason why they had been brought to the castle: Alvin, the middle son, had died.

The house faerie regarded his new visitor, a tall man with long red hair and a thick red beard that obscured virtually all of his face, save an aquiline nose and probing green eyes. He wore an earth-colored cloak, indicating his rank of lieutenant, which also meant that he was tasked with the solving of the more

## 60 • House Arrest

elaborate crimes—such as murder. The cloak covered leather armor decorated with the gryphon crest of the Lord and Lady.

“Good afternoon,” he said, closing the door to the small, drab room behind him as he entered. “My name is Lieutenant Torin ban Wyvald.”

The faerie had been pacing. “It’s about time somebody showed up. I was going barking mad in here.”

“My apologies. I’m afraid that this case is rather complex.”

“I can’t even sit, thanks to those blessed backed chairs, and the place is too small for flying. These wings ain’t for show, I’ll have you know, Lieutenant.”

“Again, my apologies. I’m afraid we don’t have any stools. Feel free to sit on the table.”

With a loud groan of annoyance, the faerie did so, crossing his green legs and folding his green arms. Indeed, the faerie was entirely green, save for his wings, which were more of a teal color.

Torin would normally have sat in one of the two chairs with their backs to the door, facing the person being questioned, who was in the chair on the other side of the table. But the faerie’s position on the table’s edge made that awkward, so Torin remained standing. “Now then, you are the house faerie of the Grabodlik residence, yes?”

“Right.”

“I’m afraid I was never able to get a name for you—what are you called?”

Smiling sardonically, the faerie said, “The house faerie of the Grabodlik esidence’ll do the trick, thanks. ’Fraid you couldn’t pronounce my name.”

“You’d be surprised what I could pronounce, good, ah—good sir.”

“Not properly.” The faerie sighed. He went through this every time a non-fae tried to call him by his name. “See, us fae, our language don’t just use the throat—the vibration of our wings’re a part of it, too. Like I said, they ain’t just for show. So you’re not physically capable of pronouncing my name, and if you try it, it’ll sound wrong.”

“Very well, good sir faerie.” Torin nodded and leaned up against the wall. “I assume you know why we’ve brought you here?”

“I’m guessing it’s got to do with poor Alvin’s death?”

“Correct.”

“Well, at least it got me out of the house. Honestly, I almost never leave. Don’t have much call to, really—I mean, as a house faerie, I got a job to do, and it ties me to the place most of the time, y’know?”

“Understandable.”

“The castle’s nice—not so sure about this room, though. Rather drab. I thought you lot had a whole troupe of fae working here.”

Torin half-smiled. “The Lord and Lady do employ a swarm of house faeries, yes.”

“Obviously, they forgot this room the last time they swept through.” The faerie