

Suggested Tags, Warnings: [A4A] [Magic] [Worldbuilding and Lore] [Rivals to Allies] [Oblivious Dom Speaker] [Oblivious Sub Listener] [Speaker and Listener Are Rival Mages] [Accidental Negotiation] [Unhealthy Relationship Development] [Cliffhanger] [Light Spice]

- **Bold** is for sfx and acting cues.
- ("Parenthesis with dialogue") indicate Speaker 1's Familiar. Their dialogue is there for flavor, or could technically be a second, bit-part speaker.

Backstory/Summary:

In a world where Mages are often solitary and violent, you've recently summoned a Familiar for protection against others of your kind. You like your Familiar – maybe you like them like them, but they can never know.

Meanwhile, you've discovered that your colleague at work is also a Mage. They treat their own Familiar poorly, sometimes even in public, and there's a part of you that feels a strange, twisted yearning when you see that kind of behavior.

You've decided that the only way to reconcile your awful desires is to meet your colleague for a peace talk and try to convince them to be nicer to their Familiar! That way, you won't ever have to see or hear anything that makes you feel awkward ever again, right? And if they won't listen, you'll come up with some way of making them see reason.

—

The sound of a door opening.

Ahem. I couldn't help but notice you standing on my porch for the past ten minutes. This safehouse has security cameras as well as magical wards – you tripped *both* of their silent alarms. Still, I couldn't help but wonder what a rival Mage would be doing here in broad daylight, so I decided to wait and see what you'd do.

At first, I thought you were trying to project your ethereal self inside, but then I realized... No, you were just waiting for something. Waiting for me. So I'm here. To what do I owe this honor?

Mages hunt each other down and kill each other for sport and you want to *talk*. Just *talk*. I don't have any reason to believe you – but I don't have any reason not to, either. And you don't look particularly bloodthirsty...

Fine. Drop the invisibility spell on your Familiar. Tell him to stand where I can see him. You can come in and take a seat, I guess. The couch, the chair, wherever.

They snap their fingers.

Bring some tea for our guest.

("Yes.")

I can and will treat my Familiar like a servant if I wish. I summoned it. It's bound to me. It would do anything I command *anyway*, so why not take advantage of it outside of combat?

They can't help their laughter.

You treat your Familiar like a companion? That's the stupidest shit I've ever heard. Do you also wish your ritual sword a good night and say *bless you* when a sprite sneezes? Oh, I don't buy this innocent act for a *second*. You have to be hiding something.

If this is a ploy to get intel on my hideout, it's... Well, it's working, but I won't let you leave in one piece. You *or* that pesky Familiar. He hasn't moved once. He's really loyal to you, huh. A bit like a dog.

("Excuse me. The tea.")

SFX: Setting a cup down on a table, pouring tea into it.

Drink up. It's a special blend of oolong I got from this little store downtown with a stupid name. "The Flowering Tea Emporium," I think. It's just a glorified hole in the wall. Anyway, that's not the point.

Fine. I'll have a sip first if you're worried about poison.

They take a sip.

Ow, hot, hot! Damn it, you stupid bitch, why didn't you warn me—

Don't look at me like that. I'll call it whatever I want. All of them are more or less just rabid beasts we've bound to this plane, so feral that they'll bite the hand that feeds if you're not careful. It takes rigid training to keep them in line. I'm surprised *yours* is behaving so well.

I'm not going to stop it. They deserve whatever they get, and they'll do well to remember that.

Oh, wow, you look kinda red all of a sudden. You're not angry with me, are you? *You* wanted to talk to *me*. A peace talk. The way you're clenching your hands into fists isn't very peaceful. And after I offered you my *best* oolong.

Have a duel with you? Right here, right now? For *its* honor?

I haven't laughed this hard in *ages*, holy shit. It doesn't have any honor to win back, so it's all pointless. Isn't that right?

("Of course.")

See? You won't get anything even if you do win. "It's not about winning, it's about proving me wrong"? Do you hear yourself? Are you sure you're studying magecraft and not comedy?

They're quiet for a moment as the Listener makes a daring proposal.

You're insane. This goes beyond comedy and into another realm entirely. You'd offer *yourself* in trade for my Familiar's autonomy? So long as it remains summoned, you would answer to me – acting as a Familiar would, fighting in its stead whenever I asked?

Fighting in *her* stead. I see. By forcing me to treat a Mage as a Familiar, and a Familiar as a Mage, you would have me rethink my narrow-minded worldview. It wouldn't work, you know. You couldn't handle life as a Familiar. You wouldn't survive two orders.

But maybe I'm looking a gift horse in the mouth. You're practically throwing yourself at my feet. And what do I get if you can't fulfill your end of the bargain? You can't just expect me to let you go with no consequences.

Hmm. Forfeit your Familiar. Unsummon it, send it back to its plane. You're too close to it, it's not normal. But if you can't handle this, then you accept that Familiars are disposable. If you really believe in your own ideals, you have nothing to worry about.

They sigh.

So, if you want my Familiar to feel like a person so badly, then fine. You can stop this at any time – just say "no." Otherwise, I don't want to hear a single argument out of that mouth.

There are only a few things I *do* want to hear. That's right: familiars only speak when spoken to. They *also* don't challenge their masters to philosophical debates about whether or not they deserve autonomy. Do you understand me?

Not "yes, sir" – "yes, master." I'm not your boss; I'm the only thing keeping you tied to this world. When you pretend like this, you exist because of my whims and *only* because of my whims.

And put that tea down. I'm not going to let you starve, but tea is a luxury that shouldn't be wasted on something that can't appreciate it. Come on, this shouldn't be *hard* for you. All of that self-righteousness should be a pretty strong buffer against any feelings of indignity. Look at all that you're accomplishing from up there on your high horse.

Hmm. Don't hold your head so high. In fact, I need a footrest. Get on the floor, hands and knees. I'm going to rest my feet on your back, so keep it level.

Ah, ah, ah. I'll let you speak to tell your Familiar not to lay a hand on me, but no extra words. He's really upset by this! You'd think it was capable of caring for you, baring its teeth like that and looking at me with such an expression...

Aww, there, there. I'm sure I'll learn my lesson soon.