

The Annoyed Eminence

By K. M. Shea

Killian Drake sat on the bench seat of one of the many Drake SUVs he owned. His cellphone loosely hung from his grasp. He was bent slightly forward, looking through the front windshield at the deadly figure Considine Maledictus struck even when he was simply prowling down the hospital sidewalk.

Considine was why Killian was here—sitting in an SUV parked in the hospital parking lot—when he wanted nothing more than to head to House Medeis and crawl into bed with his wife.

Not that he needed to sleep—the night was his element—but the past few hours had been...stressful.

Considine had flipped Magiford on its side when he blasted out his powers—or at least he'd shaken the vampire population within it. And who did the mewling vampire Families call when frightened, bothered, upset, or in hysterics?

Killian.

Killian's phone rang—again. Killian glanced at it, then silenced it before he went back to watching Considine.

“Another elder, Your Eminence?” Josh—Killian's second knight—asked as he draped his hand over the top of the SUV's steering wheel.

“Yes,” Killian said. “No doubt calling to complain about a bruised forehead or broken nose.”

Considine had sent out a command over a significant portion of the city, calling to every vampire within range.

The command had been so strong he'd reached a number of very old—and very fussy—vampire elders who'd been sleeping in their coffins, only to smash their faces into the lids of their coffins when they woke up due to the suddenness of the command.

Normally Killian would have found this hilarious—particularly as he'd been outside of Considine's range and hadn't experienced the command himself.

The humor in the situation faded, however, when the phone calls started coming in from frightened and confused vampire elders.

“Team four just checked in,” Rupert—the other occupant of the car—reported as he checked a text message on his phone. “They've established positions at all hospital exits and entrances. The area is secured.”

“Good.” Killian's phone rang again—it was just another unimportant elder, so he silenced it.

At least now he knew what Considine had been up to the past few weeks.

The crafty vampire had extended all that power to save a slayer—a Curia Cloister employee who was being treated in the hospital—and now, here he was casually strutting down the sidewalk.

There was something so very *irritating* about that—possibly because Killian could see himself doing the same thing if Hazel were hurt. But this was a trait he didn't want to share with the eccentric and powerful Considine.

“Do you think I should take a picture?” Josh asked.

Rupert shifted in the front passenger seat. “What for?”

“To add to the scrapbook,” Josh said.

“You make scrapbooks?” Rupert asked.

“Yes. I send them to Elder Maledictus, so he is kept apprised of His Eminence’s personal growth and overall outstanding achievements.” Josh paused, then added. “Also, they are a consolation prize. He tries so hard to get an inside spy in Drake Hall and keeps failing, so the scrapbooks are a peace offering to keep the drabness of the world from sapping away at his inner strength.”

Rupert turned in his seat to peer back at Killian. “Did you know about this, Your Eminence?”

“Of course,” Killian said, still watching the dangerous elder—who was slowing his pace and coming to a stop under a flickering sidewalk lamp. “It’s another chance to tweak Considine’s proverbial tail. Take the picture, Josh—it can be the first entry in a scrapbook to commemorate Considine’s personal growth.

“Understood, Your Eminence.” Josh dutifully tapped away on his phone, bringing up the camera app.

Rupert pinched the bridge of his nose and looked generally pained.

“Make sure to capture how stupidly *moody* he looks,” Killian said. “He’s acting ridiculous over a human.”

Josh turned to stare at Killian, whose One was a wizard, while Rupert—much weaker than Josh and a “newer” member of the Drake Family—stared at his hands with too much care.

“Your Eminence,” was all Josh said.

Killian rolled his eyes. “I heard it as soon as I said it. Just take the picture.”

“Yes, Your Eminence. The gray sky is very complimentary right now, and yet still manages to convey the inevitable darkness that will swallow this world.” Josh tapped his phone, which produced the little shutter noise, testifying he’d taken the photo.

Killian narrowed his eyes as he studied Considine, noticing his moving mouth as the older vampire apparently talked to himself.

“What is that loon doing?” Killian muttered.

“He seems to be processing emotions,” Josh said.

Rupert again turned to stare at Josh. “*What?*”

“It’s a very healthy thing to do,” Josh said. “And given how protective he was of the hurt slayer; I imagine he has some feelings that need to be recognized for his mental wellbeing.”

“You are unbelievable,” Rupert grumbled.

“Thank you,” Josh said, oblivious as always.

Killian’s Second Knight never failed to be himself—then again, he was so strong it likely never occurred to him to worry about what others thought of him.

Killian’s phone rang again, and Killian was so distracted by Considine’s general weirdness that he answered it without glancing at the caller ID.

“What?” Killian snapped.

“*Your Eminence!*” a woman’s voice—shrill enough to make Killian stiffen—crackled over the line. “*I finally got through to you! Your Eminence, what is happening? I was woken up so rudely from sleep by a command, and I know it wasn’t your command, but it was a very strong command that reached my entire Family and upset us so greatly I don’t even want blood tea, except I must know who is so strong that they dared to wake me, Madame Josette, from my much*”

desired slumbers and to do so in such a rude and roughshod manner that I should hit my face upon the lid of my coffin!"

Not willing to listen to more of the vampire's vapors, Killian spoke. "Madame."

It was one word, but it was all he needed.

The vampire elder gulped and fell silent for a few long moments before she dared to speak again. "*My apologies, Your Eminence.*"

Killian remained silent.

"*I must beg for your forgiveness. It is merely that I am...shaken.*" Madame Josette's voice trembled, revealing the truth of the statement.

"Of course," Killian said with a patience he didn't usually have for the more dramatic elders.

Normally he'd never stand for it. But tonight, Considine had revealed himself and shot off more power than he'd used in a long time—perhaps even centuries.

There was a reason all the vampires who had experienced it were shaken, and Killian didn't blame them.

"The command was issued by an Elder vampire," Killian said. "He had great need of help at the time, but I've personally handled the situation."

"*I see,*" Madame Josette said. "*But what Elder is so powerful they are able to issue such a command?*"

"One you don't want to cross," Killian said. "Good evening, Madame Josette."

"*Good evening, Your Eminence.*"

Killian hung up before the nosey vampire had a chance to ask more questions.

Josh fussed with his phone, zooming in on Considine—who was still dramatically standing underneath the lamp like an idiot—for a portrait shot. "You don't intend to reveal Elder Maledictus is behind the order?"

"Not yet." Killian leaned back on the bench seat. "I'll wait to find out what Considine wants to do."

Josh calmly nodded, but Rupert looked back at Killian, confusion wrinkling his forehead. "You intend to give him a choice, when this could be a strategic advantage against him?"

Killian sighed and considered his words. "Considine is an irritation, but he's not my enemy. He carries burdens I don't want, so it's in our best interests to work with him." Killian paused, then continued. "If the slayer is important to him in the way it seems she is, he's going to be in a rough spot. There's nothing to gain in further pushing him, besides his enmity—which would be a bigger annoyance than he is already."

Rupert looked from Killian to Josh.

"His Eminence will deny it, but he has a certain amount of admiration and fondness for Elder Maledictus, which means as long as he isn't messing with Drake business he is to be helped," Josh said.

Killian narrowed his eyes. "That is *not* what I said."

"I listen carefully to every word you speak, Your Eminence," Josh said. "Including the words of your heart."

Killian scowled. "The Medeis wizards and their gooey, happy-go-lucky, need for emotional connection have corrupted you."

"Not in this case, no," Josh said. "You've merely progressed in your personal growth arc to a spot where it is now appropriate to begin discussing feelings and affection."

Killian raised his eyebrows. “I think I like it better when you rant about the inevitable end of this forsaken mortal coil we call earth.”

“I am always game to discuss the weary burdens of life and how they build to make us long for the dreamless sleep that is death,” Josh said.

“Of course.” Killian looked around the back bench seat of the SUV. “You took proper precautions with the SUV you drove Considine and his slayer to the hospital in, correct?”

“I dropped it off at a fae detailer’s,” Rupert said. “He said to give him a week and he’d get all the blood stains out.”

“Excellent,” Killian said. “Give it to one of the wizards once it’s cleaned.”

“You think it’s still dangerous for vampires to use?” Josh asked.

“Not likely,” Killian said. “But it’s an excuse Hazel and the House Medeis wizards will actually accept.”

“Permission to give the SUV to Momoko?” Josh asked.

“If you want.” Killian kept his expression blank. He was well aware his Second Knight and Momoko—one of Hazel’s wizards and close friends—had a thing going on. He intended to stay out of his Second Knight’s love life, but he’d pass the information on to Hazel—who did not share his intentions.

“I think Elder Maledictus is done...processing.” Rupert pointed to Considine, who was again strolling towards the parking lot.

Killian opened a side door and climbed out, slamming the door shut behind him. “You’ve certainly had an eventful night.”

Considine shrugged as he prowled closer. “I’m surprised to see you here.”

Killian scoffed. “After the ruckus you raised? Coming here was unavoidable.” He glanced at the hospital. “I take it she’s stabilized?”

“And awake.” Considine said.

“Good. But it seems like we have a lot to talk about. I’d say let’s go to my Hall, except it’s still overtaken by my annoying siblings, so it seems like your place is the better choice at this moment.”

“Fine,” Considine agreed, surprising Killian with how easily he gave in. “I’m sure you’ve already uncovered my apartment number since your little minions picked me up outside the building, and you’ve had plenty of time to figure out where Jade lives.”

Killian kept silent precisely because he *hadn’t*.

Between being stuck answering pesky phone calls and making sure the hospital was secured, the only thing he’d been able to order his Family to investigate was Jade O’Neil—Considine’s slayer.

But if Considine was going to make such assumptions and spill out useful information, Killian certainly wasn’t going to correct him!

Killian opened a side door of the SUV and glanced back at the older vampire who—Killian privately agreed with Margarida—was more of a sire to him than Ambrose Dracos had a chance to be. “So. You’ve gotten fond of a human, then?”

“Yes,” Considine boldly said.

Killian smirked. “My getting a wizard One doesn’t seem so crazy now, does it?”

Considine didn’t rise to the bait, he merely shrugged. “Be as smug as you like.”

Killian narrowed his eyes. “Why?”

“Because it won’t last long.” Considine motioned for Killian to get into the SUV. “Not after the news I have to share.”

Killian climbed in, scooting across the bench so Considine could climb in after him. “And that news is?”

“I’m moving to Magiford. Permanently.” Considine gave Killian a smile that was too charming to be nice. “Surprise!”

Killian stared at Considine as the older vampire climbed in and closed the door. “You’re joking.”

“No joke.”

“Because of the slayer?”

“Because of the slayer.”

Killian was silent for several long moments, then groaned. “There is something inherently unfair in this mess. I’m your favorite because I don’t cause trouble, so why do you have to move to *my* city?”

Considine glanced at the driver’s seat, and upon seeing Josh immediately buckled his seatbelt—Josh must have treated him to quite the ride on the way to the hospital.

“You could fire Jade,” Considine suggested. “If she leaves Magiford I’ll leave with her.”

“I can’t fire her—that’s not my jurisdiction,” Killian sourly said. “Also, she’s the strongest member of the Magiford task force. You’re not going to get her kicked out of the department *that* easily.”

Considine shrugged. “It was worth an attempt. I’ll just have to explore alternatives.”

Killian had a feeling he wasn’t going to like anything Considine considered an alternative but was smart enough not to let the elder vampire know that, so he fell silent as Josh turned the car on, pulled out of the parking spot, and cruised around the edge of the parking lot.

Killian checked his text messages, silenced several more calls from annoying elders, and didn’t look at Considine again until they reached downtown.

Considine looked thoughtful—not deviantly thoughtful as was his usual mode, but rather something that almost looked like...worry.

“You won’t regret it, Considine,” Killian said.

Considine glanced at him. “Regret what?”

“Falling for your slayer.”

Considine shrugged. “I suppose only time will tell.”

“You won’t,” Killian repeated, his eyebrow twitching when his phone rang again.

He knew he was right—Considine wouldn’t regret loving his slayer.

Killian, however, would likely regret the elder vampire’s attachment for all the new *fun* it would bring to Magiford.

One thing was for certain, he’d have to tell Josh to buy the biggest scrapbook he could find for Considine’s *personal growth*.

The End