

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Cole decides to figure out what the fuck is going on WHILE getting some delicious home cooking in his belly.

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Cole stares at the blonde woman, who basically looks like a stereotypical Stepford Wife, and tries to decide what to do. On the one hand, he sort of needs to know why there's a strange lady in his new house calling him 'Master'. On the other hand, he *is* really hungry... neither he nor Raven have eaten since this morning, after all.

In the end... he decides to go with a middle of the road approach.

"Okay. Here's what we're going to do. You're going to finish that amazing dinner and we're going to sit down to eat... but while we eat, you're going to answer my questions."

Beaming at him, the beautiful blonde simply nods.

"Sounds like a plan!"

Well... she was certainly chipper. Letting out a sigh, Cole makes his way over to the table where Raven is sitting and sits down as well. The half-demon looks at him with a big pout, causing him to blink owlishly.

"Raven? Is everything alright?"

Then, it dawns on him what might have made her upset... he'd been so caught off guard by the blonde woman's mere presence that he hadn't really registered what she'd said. He gives Raven an apologetic look.

"Sorry Raven, I should have spoke up in your defense."

Looking over at the woman still cooking at the oven, Cole calls out to her.

“I would thank you not to refer to Raven as my ‘pet’, alright? We’re partners. She’s not just some... animal I’ve tamed or something.”

There, now he’s set the record straight. Only, instead of being grateful... Raven whines in the back of her throat, causing Cole to look back over at her in confusion.

“I don’t care about *that*, Cole...”

What? Cole furrows his brow once more in consternation.

“What is it then? What’s wrong?”

“... You let her get away with calling you Master, but you won’t let me do the same...”

Wait, was that it? Ugh, she’s right, the blonde did address him as Master, didn’t she? When Cole looks over this time, its to see that the blonde is walking over to the table with two plates of hot, delicious smelling food.

“Hey... don’t call me Master either, okay?”

He’s also ready to get on her if she’s ignoring Raven by not making her a plate of food as well, but the mysterious woman puts both plates down on the table in front of the two of them, smiling and tilting her head to the side as she considers his words.

“Hm... owner then, perhaps?”

Cole blinks rapidly.

“What? No! Not that either! I don’t want to own anybody!”

The blonde smiles again, those perfectly red lips of hers once more curling upwards.

“Ah, but you do own me... and her too, based on what I’m feeling between the two of you.”

Raven doesn’t help matters by nodding in agreement. Groaning, Cole runs a hand over his face.

“That’s not... I don’t even know who you are, lady!”

The blonde giggles at that.

“Truly? You’re a clever one... I’m sure you can figure it out, all things considered.”

His eyes narrow at the implicit challenge in her words.

“... I already know you must be connected to the house in some way. Are you some sort of spirit or something bound to the property?”

Grinning freely, she just giggles some more.

“You could say that, Master.”

Growling now, Cole points a finger at her.

“Stop that. Not your Master.”

Humming, she taps her chin with her own finger in contemplation.

“Well... if not Master or Owner... how about ‘Lord’? You could be my lord... my very own lovely lord~”

Cole opens and closes his mouth wordlessly. He was nobody’s lord! As far as he was concerned, he didn’t have a drop of noble blood in his body! But then he

sees Raven giving him this imploring look with big watery eyes, like she's really hoping he'll agree... and also extend the privilege to her.

Ugh, the food is getting cold while he argues this. And frankly, Cole doesn't think being called 'Lord' is as bad as Master or Owner, at least. With a sigh, he slowly nods his head.

"Alright, fine. You can call me your 'Lord'. You too, Raven."

The mysterious blonde smiles happily, but Raven positively *beams*. The half-demon looks like Christmas has come early... or whatever equivalent holiday she might celebrate.

Cole just shakes his head and finally digs into the food in front of him, prompting Raven to do the same. He doesn't bother asking why the blonde isn't eating with them... if she is some sort of housebound spirit, then she might not need food in the same way they do.

Fuck it's good too. The food that is. It's absolutely delicious, probably in the top five meals Cole has ever had... top three even. Honestly, he can barely spare the time between bites to ask what he needs to ask, though eventually he manages to stab his fork in the blonde's direction.

"Alright. Don't just stand there staring at me like a weirdo. Explain who exactly you are while we eat. And feel free to tell us what this place is too while you're at it."

He feels a little strange giving orders and making demands even now, but if she wants him to be her 'Lord' so badly, she'd better be willing to act like it. Fortunately... she doesn't leave him in the dark any longer.

"The answer to both questions is one in the same, my lord. I am 'this place' as you refer to it. And 'this place' is known far and wide... as the House of Mystery."

Cole takes that in, still feasting on the meal she's made as he contemplates her words. On the one hand, he should have probably been able to guess that she

'was the house'. After all, he'd already known that the property had an intelligence to it. Still...

"What is the House of Mystery, exactly?"

The blonde's smile drops for the first time since this whole interaction started, replaced by a cute little pout.

"Truly? You don't recognize me in the slightest?"

Cole slowly shakes his head before glancing to Raven to make sure he's not the only one. But she also shakes her head, prompting a scoff from the blonde personification of the House.

"Well of course *she* wouldn't know, sheltered as she's always been. But you... well, I suppose I shouldn't have expected too much. You are still quite young and ignorant, aren't you?"

Ouch. But also... yeah, probably fair.

"If you're talking about magic, I can't deny it. I barely know how my own cleaning magic works, let alone anything beyond that."

Wrinkling her nose, the blonde scoffs. In that moment before she speaks, Cole decides he's just going to refer to her as 'Mystery' from now on. Even if it does sound a bit like a stripper's name, it's better than using 'the blonde' forever.

"Cleaning magic? You really think what you do is simple 'cleaning'?"

The question takes him aback a bit. Cole furrows his brow and slowly shakes his head.

"I mean... I guess it is something more than that, especially if I was able to block Raven's father from contacting her. But by and large... yeah, I mostly just clean things, right?"

“Wrong! You do far more than clean things! You *cleans*e things, my lord! And with some more time and practice to grow into your own, you’ll be able to properly *purify* them as well!”

Cole opens his mouth... and then closes it as he processes that revelation. It sort of made sense in a way. Cleaning magic by itself had always seemed to be a bit of a whiff to him. Like he’d rolled the dice on the magical lottery and wound up with something that was almost borderline useless.

Of course, in more recent times he knew that was no longer the case. First he’d helped Raven stop her father from using her as a portal to enter their dimension and destroy Earth. Then, he’d stopped Chemo’s rampage, wiping him out and cleaning up the mess he’d left behind in mere moments.

So yeah, his magic wasn’t ‘borderline useless’ by any means. By that logic, discovering that it was some form of cleansing, possibly purifying magic... did make some sense.

“So... I’m holy or something?”

But Mystery just shakes her head.

“No my lord. You are not ‘holy’ or ‘divine’. Rather, your type of purifying, cleansing magic is much older than those things. It is cosmic in nature, tied to the very concept of Order itself.”

Order... Cole tilts his head to the side, turning the word over in his head. It does feel... right, in a way. It sounds appropriate to him, like it resonates with him on a deep level.

On the other hand, it’s also a teensy bit ridiculous, isn’t it? He’s just some guy... and yet... here he finds himself anyways, eating dinner with his half-demon familiar while being waited on hand and foot by a sentient house.

The food is really, really good though... so Cole could definitely get used to this. That doesn’t mean he’s done asking questions though.

“Why us, exactly? Obviously you weren’t the place that that scammer was planning to show us. You took over the location and captured his friends so they couldn’t ambush us. And then you gave me the key and made it clear you wanted me to... take ownership of you.”

He hates having to say that last bit, he doesn’t want to own anyone... but the house isn’t exactly a person, even if she does make for a very hot, very sexy blonde. And they do need a better place to stay... will they be safer in the House of Mystery rather than his apartment? Almost certainly, right?

Her ruby red lips curling once more, Mystery nods.

“Yes, I did all of that to ensure you would come into possession of me, my lord. Why? Simply put... I decided I deserved better.”

Cole blinks, caught off guard by that.

“... Better.”

Nodding, Mystery chuckles ruefully.

“I have had many owners over the course of my existence my lord. Some better than others, obviously. Some suppressed me almost entirely, preferring to subjugate and dominate me until I was nothing but their property. Others learned to live with me and coexist with me... a partnership like the one you have with your half-demon, of sorts.”

Tilting her head to the side, Mystery sighs.

“My latest owner was... not smart enough to subjugate or suppress me. But he was also a terrible partner, by and large. And he brought all manner of nasty things onto my premises, relying on my inherent security measures to keep them locked down. To say nothing of the several times that his very ownership of my property resulted in individuals using this place as their battlegrounds.”

Cole winces at that, especially the last bit. Given they were being hunted by Trigon's agents, maybe Mystery had jumped the gun by deciding to give him ownership...

"In the end, I got fed up with him... and when I felt your magic, I knew that I had to have you. That decision is already paying dividends, my lord! The very first thing you did upon acquiring me was spend hours cleaning me up. Do you have any idea how many messes my previous owner made within me?! I could clean them up myself of course... but it's nothing compared to what you can do."

Ah... okay, that made more sense. He was effectively a housekeeper for the House of Mystery. A cleaning service that would never go away. To be fair, she'd made the right call if that was the sort of 'owner' she wanted. Cole really didn't like living in a dirty place, so it wasn't like he was going to let her stay filthy or anything like that.

That said...

"Those 'nasty things' you said your previous owner brought onto the premises... are they still around?"

Giggling lightly at his worried tone, Mystery shakes her head.

"Many of them still are my lord, but you don't need to fret. I will know when you are ready to help me with them, and it's not quite yet. For now, I've stored them all out of the way so that neither you nor your partner stray across them by accident. When the time comes for you to cleanse them, I will let you know."

Well... alright then, that didn't sound too bad. He just didn't want to accidentally stumble into a cursed artifact or something. Or worse, have Raven stumble into one. She had it bad enough with Trigon knocking at the door, even if Cole had upgraded said 'door' to a bank vault at this point.

Leaning back in his chair, Cole considers what else to ask... before realizing he doesn't really have any other questions. Well, except for one.

“Why... uh, why do you look like that exactly?”

The House of Mystery could have chosen any form, from what he understands now. And yet, it had chosen a female form, and one that was so stereotypically Fifties Housewife coded that he had to ask. Was it a fetish thing? Was it the previous owner’s fetish thing specifically? Because if so...

“Ah, you don’t have to worry my lord. I never once showed myself to my previous owner in this way. No, this... this is entirely for you.”

Cole blinks, even as Mystery’s smile turns somewhat... lecherous.

“I merely wanted to make you feel at home, my lord. But more than that... I wanted to be able to offer you myself... if you so chose to partake. Your ‘partner’ can join us as well if it pleases you.”

... He was being propositioned by a house. Could his day get anymore surreal?

“Of course, if you’d rather not, I’d understand. I could stay back and just... watch, if that’s your desire. I certainly won’t forbid intimacy on my premises.”

Right. Because even if he didn’t want to fuck Mystery, she would still be aware any time he fucked Raven within her confines. That was... well... Cole looks over to see how Raven feels about all of this, but she just shrugs at him, clearly unbothered by *either* idea.

Which meant the ball was in his court now...

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!