

A Guide on how to Lie, Cheat and just generally Fuck with Everybody

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A Guide on how to Lie, Cheat and just generally Fuck with Everybody

by [MelsCalamity](#)

Summary

It was a truly messy and unfortunate concatenation of ridiculous circumstances really that brought Mari into Selina's apartment that night and bound them together over a half-devoured wedding cake and a half of bottle of wine.

What followed after that memorable night was a guide. A Guide on how to Learn to Lie, Cheat to get what you Want and just generally Fuck with Everybody ignorant of the Rules of a Living in Gotham.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Introduction at it's finest

Chapter Summary

„Okay then, please listen madam, I don't want any trouble and I promise, I swear on whatever is holy to me, that I won't bother you again. This was a huge mistake, that I made because I was desperate and dumb, but I *swear* that you'll never meet me again, not tomorrow, not on Wednesday, not ever, so please, *please*, can we end this peacefully without any calling of cops?“

Selina stared through the speech blankly, unblinkingly, before she cocked her head and frowned. „You know, begging is really not your forte,“ she declared. „I think I liked you better when you urged to stab me, darling,“

Chapter Notes

Yeah, so in case you didn't got it by my truly marvelous Summary,

This is an AU, where Mari grew up in Gotham and is every cell the American, that I can make her.

Both Mari and Selina are heavily out of character and *slightly* freaky?, because apparently, I'm a fucking strange being and can't write from the perspectives of any sane people and just have to make them weird anytime I try to feel into them (it's a curse, I tell you).

And also I don't really have a strict plot line for this (like at all), so I have no idea how this'll evolve in the future. It was more of a „Oh yeah, another idea that's pestering my poor cerebral capacity, let's pick this and write it down' than anything else really.

(I was just like, what if I take a character with a heart of gold, strip her off everything akin to her actual kindness and add a little of childhood trauma so that she can exchange vague insults with a master thief (also nothing like herself, bc who do you take me for? An imposter?), who apparently took an obsession to her.)

Furthermore, I apologize for any tears that this might bring, if they were caused from happiness (I doubt it) or from pain (My writing is like a pile of fuming cow's shit and I warned you, fellas).

Cheers everyone and enjoy the read!!

This is fairly easier than last week's fiasco, Selina thought absently, while making sure to will her face to remain in a polite, but mainly insecure simper, which could probably melt the coldest and cruelest of people to sympathetic wet spots on this unbelievably rich marble floor. Once she had heard a man tell her that humbleness was basically a magnet for affection and likes and even though the bloke that had so interestingly informed her of the fact, had been a real imbecile, she must admit that he had been quite right in his assumptions.

The ancient couple passing her smiled back pleasantly as did the guy, that had been staring at her exposed legs for a total of three minutes. Internally, she rolled her eyes at his non-existent sense for subtleness; outwardly, she ducked her head and blushed heavily, willing herself not to not grin. Fun was what always encompassed those acts and it was silly really how much she liked it to pretend. If she wouldn't have become the greatest thief in Gotham to exist, then she would have probably tried her luck as an actress, as it was almost suspiciously easy to slip into those personages like coats to try and take off.

And also again this was going almost too easy for her expectations, she thought and wanted to shake her head at the gratifying lack of security preparation. She had studied this hotel day and night, and knew it in and out like all of the names of all high-society's celebrities on a list and now this. Not one security man had halted her to check her over, not one second glance that wasn't bound to either admiration or polite acknowledgement, she wanted to laugh actually at everything, that was happening so much more smoothly than had been planned, because of course, things went on perfectly when she had been poised for some trouble. If it'll continue in the same fashion then she will most probably be able to get to the main event in only a few quarter minutes now and it was a notion, she found pleased her, even while she mourned the lack of entertainment from slight inconveniences from unexpected turns in the routines, that she had learnt by heart. She had been honestly just waiting for them to arise and will later on bemoan their absence.

Now though strolling through in the foyer, she shook out her left leg, adding it into her next step and pretending to stumble a little clumsily, and ignored her toes, that were squished together in a heapfull mess inside those deadly gorgeous Louboutin heels, that she wanted to set on fire with how they were pressing her skin to a throbbing pile of blazing pain. She had been expecting nothing less from this footgear of course, but still it was slightly annoying how everything went so smooth and perfectly by plan and then she couldn't enjoy it as her feet were screaming in pure anguish. It tempted her to just complete this proceeding while being barefoot and the mental image was enough of an amusement, that she let her smile widen for just a second, before correcting it into just the right amount of teeth.

She dutifully went on wheeling the cleaning cart to the elevator, ignoring the high sound of a cat being murdered when the cart rolled over a particular unexpected fold in the carpet, that covered almost the whole passage way and smelled of wealth and roses and affluent perfume.

Stepping inside the metal cabin and smiling at the tall man, who stood next to her, she turned to push the button to the twelfth floor, only to find it already glowing. Stepping away when the doors obediently closed and movement picked up steadily, she relaxed a little and took a brief moment to brush over her short, short black dress, adjust the apron. Her fingers skimmed

over her bangs, brushing them aside from her forehead and she rightened the little head band on her scalp, that mocked her with it's ranking existence.

A chambermaid, she didn't roll her eyes, but was tempted to, certainly of all roles to play, she probably liked this one as one of the least. Submission and obedience weren't really her favorite, too easy; she played the wild ones, that were all about teasing, fighting and sexual energy with more of her unfeigned passion. Those were exciting; enticing and allowed her to instinctively improvise and mix her own personality into it, as she liked those things best herself.

Talking off sensual though..

She leaned her head, just in time to catch the sultry look that swept down her body and ended on her painstaking heels, lingering on these noticeably and long enough, that she wondered if his brain had momentarily shortcuted. However the man still lifted his head after a second, proving her assumptions wrong, and gave her a charming smile when he noticed her watching. He tapped his shaved chin.

Ah, a self-loving hitman. Just what she needed, she thought somewhat annoyed, but delighted still at the minor inconvenience, that at least might bring her some more entertainment.

Allowing a little of her inner calm to show, she cocked her hip provocatively and pretended to return his appraising look with one of her own. He certainly wasn't unattractive, well-built like a dancer and neatly handsome, but sadly, he wasn't her type. She liked those who were dark and mysterious; hard to fickle with and even harder to love. A sinful affair like a catfight; scratching and biting, a give and take of passions. What can she say, she had always been a sucker for trouble. Loving the action and excitement from it.

But she supposed he'll work out for what she had devised in her head.

„Sir?“ she looked around in the remarkably spacious cabin, that was unsurprisingly also, very beautiful. There was a low, mahogany table in the corner and a vase, that looked like it belonged into a museum rather than an elevator rested atop it. Wealth and money hidden in every tiny detail, the golden ornaments on the walls, the lights just bright enough to not be unsettling; everything thoroughly and thoughtfully planned out. As a woman of style, she had to admire such handiwork. The accessoires were balanced out evenly and didn't clash, and she would first congratulate and then hire whoever designed this if given the occasion.

„Would you like me to check on your rooms? Just a quick..inspection of course,“ she added secretively, whispering, trying not to snort when his eyes widened and at how easy it was to charm him.

He smiled even more openly after these words, all perfect teeth, and nodded. „Of course, I would certainly like that,“

She lowered her eyelashes at him and waited for the elevator to burst open, so she could go on with her scheme, rather than exchanging heated glances with a stranger. She wasn't by any means disturbed by the situation, not really, she was too openly humored and entertained with the play for that, it was more the like that she was..impatient in a way that made her fuzzy

from the inside. She wanted to drag this man away, break into the hotel rooms and steal the price, she had been dreaming off for a long week now. It was maddening, the thought of her conquest being so close, yet still stages in her calculations away. It was eating her inside out, in a manner that was both delicious with her nervous hypersensitivity and antagonizingly painful, an ache that was turning in her stomach and squeezing her nerves.

Ah, but the anticipation. She licked her lips, which tasted warm and of matte lipstick, a favorite of her, all spicy and sweet, and the thought of the safe, her precious will be certainly locked away in occupied her thoughts. She couldn't help but fantasize it all out in colours and scenarios, curious and keen she was. She thought that perhaps it would be a TL-15? Steel walls and concrete blocks of four centimeters? Some love to go overboard so perhaps, five centimeters? Also who was she if not realistic, a high burglary classification lock system, level 3 could be waiting for her as well and she fought down the urge to drool like a schoolgirl in front of her worshipped love interest, as she *loved* those locks. They were just so very devious and loved to block if approached too harshly. Once when she had been younger and less experienced, one had almost snapped off her hand and she had been treating them with caution and a detached sort of respect from then on.

Oh, yes. She was dying to find out, what was awaiting her.

The ding of the elevator sounded like release and Selina all but dragged the man by his collar into the corridor, and leaned against her victim to reach to a biteable neck, that would look better covered in bruises if she would be in the mood for that. She breathed against the slightly sweaty skin and was again astonished at the gooseflesh that erupted from her barely there administrations, whispering. „Your room please, lovely,“

He nodded hastily, eyes glassy, and she grinned in satisfaction, every ounce the cat, she was naming herself after.

„One dealt with, two remain,“

She pulled the bed sheet tighter and looked over her master piece. Tied to a chair, all but conscious, the man was truly a treat to all fans of bondage. This way he looked most attractive to her, so helpless and unprotected, forced into a stool; Selina was nicely proud of her achievement and showed her self-regarding appreciation by swiping her fingers over his hairless jaw delicately, and unclasping the watch from his wrist, that had been calling out to her so luringly, before she turned and left the room with the grace of a woman that knew what she did.

Her heels clicked silently in the quiet, as did the modern clock on the wall across the chamber. She spared a mindless look at it and breathed through her nose, surpressing the noiseless giddiness that keened to envelop her senses. It was twenty minutes before showtime, she had plenty of time and yet she felt a surge of nervousity rush over her, curling her hurting toes. Twenty minutes to climb the slippery facade and break the lock. Twenty minutes to locate the safe and take out her utensils. Twenty minutes to crack it and leave. It felt like nothing, but she knew from experience that she was fast enough to fit inside the

rigorous schedule. Under pressure, she worked only slightly better and she loved the nerves best anyway.

She kicked off her heels somewhere near the vicinity of the spacious and king-sized bed, walked over towards the cleaning cart, she left there, to withdraw her suit from inside a box. She switched her clothing to her usual, black attire of burglary, her Cat Costume, and then stretched her back until it popped pleasantly. Her limbs followed next and she repeated the process with her whole body, till she felt thoroughly bendable. Liquid really. She closed her eyes and breathed silently for a second, focusing and gathering her attention, before she pushed open the balcony doors and climbed onto the stone railing, gripping it only loosely and unafraid of falling.

It was high enough to overlook most of the city, Selina noted with some sort of detached inquisitiveness that came from being a casual spectator, and grinned when a breeze picked up speed to smack freezing rain in her helmeted face.

Ah, Gotham, still as atrocious as always. Smudged shades of black and grey with no ray of sunshine, no happiness or real smiles, madness and pain, it was truly a place to develop depression and commit suicide, via jumping from somewhere relatively high, as she had read in a journal was the most common way to die nowadays.

Briefly, she wondered how many people had been in the same position as she was now. Had been in this same hotel room and looked down, thinking of the option that death provided. Crouched on the railing, on the edge of falling, only one daring jump away from neverending peace. Silent, mute, tempted.

Luckily for her however, she had nothing more in common with them, as she saw no point in suicide. In the death of self-pity, she saw nothing more than mere cowardice. Stupidity. Unwillingness to fight, but to give up instead.

Gotham truly brought out the weakest in common people.

She stood, flexed her claws and bounced on her heels testingly, before she jumped and gripped the window sill, that she had been aiming for. It was slippery from the rain, but she had been expecting nothing less and only clawed into it stronger, biting her lip in excitement while she angled her feet against the wall in a steadfast push.

Agitation pooled low in her stomach and she felt her breath speed up to a shallow kind. Wind and rain, a symphony of feel and coldness splashed on her face, making her blink slowly, mesmerized by the usual treatment from Gotham's very own clouds and as while it happened newly, it was quite an unique sensation in itself again.

She adored it. She loved every little single moment of this with a passion and damn everybody, but she would never get enough. It was like an interdicted drug, addictive in its very impact and delicious through being forbidden, and she thought that she could this forever if ever given the chance to.

She would love to remain as she was, on the verge of achieving her goal, but not quite there as well, but instead she exhaled and jumped again, this time gripping the balcony's railing,

the presidential suite's, and clinging to it, whilst she swung and pulled herself up.

Only when she had climbed over the railing and sat on the floor beside it, she allowed herself to laugh giddily in the way, she had wanted to the moment she had entered the hotel. She was almost there now and it made breathing more gratifying. She rubbed her arms against the cold and grinned as she saw the doors, so very heavily wardedly closed and just calling out to her to be cracked.

„What a treat really,” she marveled and pushed up to stand, so she could have the sweet appetizer, before she would get to taste the main course, her conquest.

„Good Evening, isn't it, Miss Kyle?,”

Selina tried not to stiffen when she heard her name being called from behind of her, gripping her bag tighter to her leg. She knew this voice. She feared this voice. But she dearly hoped that she had been mistaken.

A turn later proved that she had been indeed right in her first assumptions. Mollie Hobbs, in a floral dress and matching, colorful hat, was wobbling towards her with her arms outstretched like she would like to hug the world and everybody on it, human and animal. And sadly in Mollie's world view, that included Selina.

Dear Lord.

She bit down a grimace and with an ease that came from experience, put on a pleasant simper instead. „Miss Hobbs,” she greeted politely and stepped back for good measure. Mollie was like a little kid, everything that was within her reach will be touched and grabbed and as she hated being unnecessarily touched in general, she always held a good safety distance.

Mollie Hobbs' smile faltered only a fleeting second, before it was replaced by an even brighter one, as is her sublime common facial expression. Selina knew of few people that were happy in Gotham and showed it so outwardly, but Hobbs definitely exceeded any of her general expectations. She was a walking advertisement for toothpaste, always grinning, always felicitous; it would be dearly amusing the show, if it wasn't this scary to be at the receiving end.

Theoretically, Mollie treated everybody the same, with smiles, small conversations and cost less pies, but somehow Selina seemed to have been put as her number one of importance to mother, the very same day she moved here, as not a day had passed that she had exited the building without meeting the pudgy woman in either the hall way, the staircase or the main entrance. She was speculating if the woman is actually just waiting for her to leave her apartment to attack in an ambush of blinding grins and baked presents to invite her inside her home to stuff her up with even more cakes and keep her there for an eternity, handcuffed to a heater.

And she was meeting her often enough, that she had grown rather paranoid too. No one knew of her real professions (in the space of beyond laws, real names were a strict taboo), and

Mollie was insistent enough in her stalking, that all alarm bells had instinctively went off simultaneously and rather quickly.

Probably she was overcompensating in her reaction, but Selina was no one to underestimate the state of privacy, so therefore she got to start sneaking out in the most ridiculous ways to devoid this ever watching woman of contact to take proof from. She climbed over the fire escape, went over the rooftops or escaped through the window as her cat persona.

And it had worked for about a month, before she had forgotten in a heap of exhaustion and complacency and went her normal route over the stairs, thus meeting dear Mollie in the hall way.

She really wasn't prepared for this at all.

„Miss Kyle,“ Mollie looked up at her in a mock scolding grin, that looked feral and stupid at the same. „You keep disappearing on me, little lady, I invited everybody over last Monday, do you remember?“

She tried not to wince. Ah, last Monday, she had been in the Museum all day, pretending to be a tourist while checking out the security. Rather late then, a rude group of beaters tried to rob her, keyword:tried as she taught them a good lesson for daring to attempt to steal from her by kicking their asses. Fortunately, a man saw her beating them up and wouldn't budge on his offer to pay her a dinner, until she accepted and used him to eat herself satisfied. Unfortunately however, later on, he also wouldn't accept a no, and matters got dirty quickly.

All in all an eventful day that she didn't need a reminder of.

„Ah, yes. Monday I was busy working, I had dinner and got home only late at night,“ she explained and embraced her bag, pretending to be awkward about it.

„Oh, well,“ Mollie said and smiled less wide. „Everybody was asking after you, just so you know. We were missing you greatly, Miss Kyle, I dare hope that next time, the date will work out for everybody,“

Selina nodded compassionately, a gesture she had copied from the psychologists in several Movies. It worked surprisingly well she had learned over time and now, she felt that it would do it's influence here as well.

„I hope so as well, Miss Hobbs,“ she started walking slowly and kept on looking Mollie with a thoughtful frown, that the woman returned in a sort of pinched smile. „Neighbors should keep together, right? ..We're friends,“ she knew that she had said the right thing, when Mollie Hobbs's smile renewed itself completely and turned brighter.

„Of course, Miss Kyle. We're all friends here. We stick together and help each other out,“

„Certainly,“ Selina smiled back with an understanding nod, before she turned and left. She had bottle of wine to finish and a catch to celebrate.

Selina wouldn't exactly count herself as a lucky person.

Sure thing, she had come from a poor background and is exceedingly fortunate for having a talent for burglary, as she would have probably already either died, been murdered or would be living a poor life right now, if not so, but objectively said, *well*, the talent is a part of her. She was counting all of her skills as extensions of herself, so really, that any outer forces had helped her would be foolish as an explanation for her rather efficient cocktail of genes.

But the chances of this happening. Well in this case,- only this time-, she must be surely a lucky cat.

„I'm not really sure what you're searching for over there, but I'll have you know that I don't keep my valuables in a book shelf,“ she said, leaning against the door frame whilst observing the situation in silent humor and sipping on her wine.

The thief- well rather soon-to-be-thief -snapped around with a knife in hand and scowled, though it could also be a grimace. It was evening, the light was not on and the switch too far away to bother, it was hard to tell.

She took another sip of her wine, humming pleasantly when the taste covered the bland taste of nothingness in her mouth. Ah, deliciously, the rich taste rolled in her mouth and played with her senses. She licked her lips and indicated with the glass towards to across the room, where her cupboard stood in the shade.

„You should try your luck there, kiddo, that's where normally people hide their stuff,“ she suggested and swirled the red liquid inside the glass to watch it move. A dream of bordeaux-red; on first glance could be blood rather than wine.

„What?,“ the thief- a she, definitely a she- whispered quietly. Suddenly she sounded rather meek and submissive, though the knife remained in the air.

Selina got to admit the sudden change in personality went over smoothly, her voice was everything of a scared six-year-old, even if she doubted that she's that young. Still the suddenness made it rather suspicious. No one would want to stab you, only to be scared then. Or at least, no one sane would. Let's not forget about the masses of Gotham's very own crazy maniacs, that one second were crying over some great-cousin they lost in a car crash, and in the very next second, attack you, screeching you're at fault.

Been there, done that, won't repeat it.

She pursed her lips in thought. „You're not coincidentally a case of madness, are you? Because if so, I'll have to kick you into oblivion and quickly,“

„I'm not,“ the girl said rapidly, a hint of her earlier fierceness sounding through. „Not crazy that is,“

Well, Selina guessed that cleared that up rather nicely. Any mad person she had asked until now, had answered to the question concerning their sanity by lunging at her with a knife or

screaming; the girl did neither, so maybe she do is sane. „Sooo,“ she swirled the wine again. „What’s up then?,“

The girl first stared, then finally sighed and lowered the knife. „Oh fuck,“ she muttered. „Okay then, please listen madam, I don’t want any trouble and I promise, I swear on whatever is holy to me, that I won’t bother you again. This was a huge mistake, that I made because I was desperate and dumb, but I *swear* that you’ll never meet me again, not tomorrow, not on Wednesday, not ever, so please, *please*, can we end this peacefully without any calling of cops?“

Selina stared through the speech blankly, unblinkingly, before she leaned her head and frowned. „You know, begging is really not your forte,“ she declared. „I think I liked you better when you urged to stab me, darling,“

„What- I didn’t- I wouldn’t- stab you?,“ the girl laughed nervously and, her hand, that held the knife disappearing behind her leg. „I didn’t want to stab you, I was merely surprised that’s all,“ her voice grew more steely to the end. Firm.

A firmness, that Selina was inclined to believe, proved the exact opposite of her words. Well, but stab her, stab her not; She found she didn’t care either way.

„You know, you’re actually really bad at acting,“ she said and raised a brow at the way, the youngster flinched. „I mean, your voice is sometimes fine, but your body,“ she made a disgusted sound. „Un-na-tu-ral, not convincing,“ she swept out with her glass. „You’ve got to put some real work into it, darling. Real emotions, *passions*,“

She shook her head gravely and drank wine. She needed the alcohol to vanish the physical pain, she felt from this ungenueine acting. Her ears were practically bleeding at this point. „This, right now,“ her hand vaguely gestured to her. „wouldn’t fool an infant, and you, dear one, are trying to fool an high-class actress,“

The girl just gaped at her, silent, mouth open, unattractive. Still it looked kind of funny though. Like she was trying to imitiate the The Scream and was failing. „You’re an actress?,“ she blurted ultimatively and shifted on her feet, like she was cold and the floor was even colder. Well, she wouldn’t know in her furry slippers, maybe it was and she was being a bad host.

Selina had never been a bad host before. Maybe it was because of the special circumstances, but normally she always held up the facade of her guests being genuinely welcome. It was refreshing to be able to reveal the truth, even if the back stabbing girl probably would have been the most welcome of all guests she had. At least, she didn’t come with pie or tried to grab her ass. Both very welcome changes, so she guessed that hostly behaviour is in order for gratefullness.

She finished the last sip of her wine and hummed in disappointment. The bottle’s wine had been delightful as long as it had lasted. „Dear, do you care for wedding cake? I’ve got enough to feed a rabid raccoon family, and it’s nougat flavored, so we can split,“

„What?“, the girl uttered again, one of her favorite words or so it seemed. She certainly wasn't the most eloquent person, Selina thought and decided to gift her one of her encyclopedias, so she can take pity on her fellow humans and learn a few new words.

„Wedding cake“, she repeated dutifully, sucked on her lip to taste the remains of wine on them, that made her smile pleasedly. „Do you want some?“

„Uh, no? Do I get to say, no?“, the girl asked suspiciously and put her hands on her hips in a show of her real character. Selina didn't hold back the small whoop of delight at her finally dropping the shallow act. It didn't do her any favors anyway.

„You do, but it would certainly be a shame. The white chocolate is divine or so I'm told,“

She didn't miss the small twitch, the girl made at the word ‚chocolate‘, and decided that she will feed her some cake anyway. She wasn't sure why though she would force her to, but she choose so anyway. Her subconsciousness must have it's reasons.

„Follow me then, darling. The kitchen is this way,“ she turned and left the door frame, her fingers delicately gripping the wine glass as to not drop it. It was her favorite and she would probably cry if it broke.

Entering the illuminated kitchen, she stalked over to the counter put down the glass, turned to the fridge and withdrew the huge plate plus cake on top. It was white, almost fully covered in white goodness and she poked the surface, testingly. It was quite hard and broke only when she stabbed her finger forcefully into it. To clean her finger of cake remains, she put it inside her mouth and sucked it off. Ah, yes, perfect consistency and taste; guest-presentable and incapable to disappoint.

She took out two forks next and put all down beside the grand plate. Just then, she left the kitchen to enter back into the living room, slapped the knife out of the girl's hand, when it was raised, and yanked the girl away from the shelf by her arm towards the kitchen, again. While she was walking, she muttered. „Honestly, I've got to do it all myself, don't I? I said cake, so that means cake, you can try to stab me all you like, but we're eating cake,“

The girl of course squirmed in her grip, but when she was pushed into a chair and was given a fork, she only stared angrily.

Selina raised both her eyebrows. „Eat, or I will force it down your throat, madame,“

The girl shook her head stubbornly and crossed her arms with a huff of angry air. „Eat it yourself, bitch,“

„Oh, I will, darling, and you will join me,“ she promised and leaned forward to stare her down. Unsurprisingly, she wasn't expecting any less, the girl glared back hotly and bared her teeth almost ferally.

She decided to double the trouble and urge her a little gently towards the right direction. Just a *tiny* hint. Just to nudge her. Kindly.

„Eat, or I'll call the police,“ she demanded and stabbed her finger down onto the table.

An offended gasp and the girl growled with her eyes narrowed. „You can't blackmail me into eating your darn cake!“, she snarled and gripped the table tight in frustration.

„I can and I will,“ Selina spoke smugly and leaned back to enjoy the show. Well, the girl seemed to be related to at least one murderer if not two by the way she was holding the fork, like she was prepared to stab her in her face with it. Hmm. Selina was daring her to, she had known she'll win in this argument, if without an eye or with.

„Ohmeygod, FINE!“, the girl finally yelled after a minute or two of silence and went to aggressively attack the cake instead of her face. However Selina didn't refrain from smirking obviously and basking in her victory. What did she say. She had known she'll win.

„You're mad, utterly mad,“ came growled from the girl, who shoved and shoveled the treat forkwise inside her mouth, only to stop to chew and groan in bliss. Selina smirked only wider and crossed her legs.

The girl looked up, her face fully smudged in cake, and seemingly, caught her look. „Don't look so smug, you! I will sue you for-for-for..forcing me to eat against my will! That's not legal!“,

„Do tell,“

„Yes, that's right. You're mad and belong in prison. You manhandled me. You forced me against my will. And- Oh *hell*, and why does this taste so damn **good**!“, she groaned furiously and all but melted into the table in a puddle of murderous, cake-adoring girl.

A minute passed that was spent in the girl stuffing herself, her watching her victoriously and the clock ticking in the background. It was probably one of the most peaceful moments, she can recall and, she will remember it for a while. Things like these, eventful and silly, do happen to stay in her mind.

„Did you calm?“ Selina asked and pointently looked down at the plate that did not adorn a half of cake, like they had agreed on. Instead there laid random chunks all over the table and about a third of the wedding treat was still present atop the plate in full shape. She found she didn't overly mind.

„Yes,“ the girl was currently attempting to wipe her face with her sleeves; a maneuver that was both disgusting and unsuccesful. Selina scrunched up her face in disgust and handed her a napkin, that was surprisingly unbickeringly accepted. She counted it as another small victory for her side.

„Do you want a glass of water?“ she asked rather amicably. Considering that they only five minutes prior had been yelling at each other, this was probably the most friendly, they will get. Well, there will be at least always space for improvement this way, so she won't start complaining.

„Yes,“ the girl mumbled again and weakly wiped at her chin, her head downcast. Selina went to get her water and put it down in front of her.

It was silent again, save the ticking of the clock.

She will probably have to replace that damn thing, didn't she? It was way too loud. Offending. It shouldn't make the quiet stand out quite this obviously; that wasn't its damn job. It should be showing the day of time and otherwise shut up.

Anyhow she refrained from cursing the ticking object any further and instead focused on the girl, that had, while she had been internally cussing, raised her head and was staring now again with an unreadable expression.

Selina cocked her head suddenly when she realized one major thing, that somehow had slipped her focus until now. She can see her guest's face now. When they had been shouting and arguing, she hadn't paid it any mind, but now when nothing's left to do anymore but unashamedly stare at the back-stabbing girl, she did nothing but that. Stare. And Observe.

She started at the top. The girl owned dark, curly hair, that seemed to be blue if looked at in a squint and spilled over her bony shoulders, long and messy. She wore a red, wooly beanie and a shady blue in colour jacket, that she was pretty sure, would rather fit for sunny weather rather than the one in Gotham, and was also slightly dirty with mud at the elbows. Her face was pretty, all nice rounds and curves, with dry from no use of beauty products, skin and she had a scar under her lower lip, that was shaped like a half-moon. Also, she had those bright blue eyes, that observed her own just as intently, and dark rings around those eyes, that spoke of nights of restless sleep and nightmares. She knew and recognized those eye rings, as they belonged to her as well. Such a silly thing to revel in, eyecircles, but it was something important that connected them, didn't it? They both slept horrible and were both suffering from insomnia. The sole difference was here that Selina hid hers under make-up and the girl didn't.

Suddenly she wished she didn't hid them, just so that the girl could connect the dots as well and recognize their similarity. The girl should know after all, that she had been thinking of stabbing her fellow insomniac. She should be aware of how widely they differed and how close they were via the same nightly troubles. It was important after all that she knew it.

Selina had been just contemplating to politely inform her, that she wasn't allowed to stab her as she was an insomniac as well, when the girl spoke up first in a tone that was far from neutral. It shook slightly and was quiet, in a way that didn't fit to her brash persona at all. „When did you marry?“ she said and barely even glanced up.

Selina frowned in answer. Marry? She didn't marry and certainly wasn't planning to. Quite the thought, she laughed openly. She hated weddings, too many mothers talking your ear off and nothing to steal. Well, if you were attending a non-famous' person's marriage that is; at fancy weddings, they were quite a lot of little things to lay an eye on.

„I didn't marry and probably never will,“ she told her honestly and avoided accidentally putting her ellbow down on a chunk of cake. Ew. What a mess. She will have quite a handful tomorrow morning in cleaning this.

„Whose cake is that then?“ the girl asked and stared down onto the mess, like it was the greastest mistery of all time.

„Oh, no one’s,“ she laughed. „I ordered it as an experiment and as you can see it was succesful,“

„What was it about? Finding out how much mess one cake can make?“

Selina looked up and found her glaring down at the chunks, like they were offending her personally. Her blue eyes were firing down, aiming and shooting mercilessly. So much anger, she thought and leaned her head. The girl was certainly a temperamental one. She wasn’t sure though how she felt of that.

„Not quite,“ she said. „I had wanted to know how much cake it takes to calm an anger fit, and well,“ she pointed down. „Here is the unlucky amount that couldn’t make it.“

They sat in silence again. The clock was again ticking annoyingly clear.

„You’re very strange, you know that?“ the girl threw in suddenly and frowned thoughtfully. „People normally are angry at me for breaking inside their houses. They throw things at me, or scream. You may also have dragged me here- thanks for that by the way- and yelled, but then you offer me cake and converse with me normally,“ she stared directly into Selina’s soul, an intensity that was full of confusion and curiosity. Questions there, but unanswered. The recklessness of youth, isn’t it?

Selina only smiled amusedly but with a seriousness that even startled herself. „Oh, dear, for once, if you haven’t noticed, I suspect that I’m quite drunk,“

The girl cracked a small grin at that. „Do tell,“

„Yes,“ she glared playfully, but continued. „And as for the second, I guess that I’m just plain strange, am I not? I mean, what am I even doing? I’m conversing in my kitchen with a backstabbing youngster, while my table is dirty as hell. You don’t know me well, practically not at all, but would I be non-drunk and less tired, I would be screaming right now before lunging to clean this,“ she flicked the nearest piece of cake from off of table, where it splattered against the floor. „I’m a madwoman when it comes to cleanness,“

„I see,“ the girl rolled her eyes, but smiled briefly.

Selina suddenly stilled when she realized quite a problem. Not that it’ll remain as one for long, buzzed and ill-mannered she is right now, but still quite the predicament. „And also, I just realized that I kept calling you ‚the girl’ inside my head for the last twenty minutes now already. Do you care to introduce yourself, so I can finally stop that? ,“ she asked.

The girl laughed oddly and nodded slowly and Selina had a moment of clearness, where she was surprised to notice how easy and unbothered they were suddenly able to talk to each other. When had this even happened? Just ten minutes ago maybe they had been both

screaming murder (one significantly more than the other) and now they were having a kinda friendly way of communication. Whatever the hell. She should be drinking more if that's what happens. It was way more interesting than what she had planned originally.

„Mari, just Mari,“ the girl said in a way, that said she had to stress the ‚just‘ in her name quite oftenly.

But still she found that she could associate her with the sound of ‚Mari‘. Mari sounded interesting, foreign, like a misspelled word or the mumble of someone incoherent. She could imagine this particular girl belonging to this unusual name quite well. Mari felt slightly difficult on her tongue, when she mouthed it experimentally, oily, and slippery, refusing to cooperate same as a tongue twister, and that was the girl too, wasn't she?

Unnecessarily difficult, stubborn and odd.

In her opinion it fit perfectly.

„Mari,“ she spoke carefully and, of course, it came out wrong again. She tried it with more emphasis. „Mari, Mari, Ma-,“

Mari sighed and leaned into her hand tiredly, looking like she was about to either sleep in from boredom or annoyance. „Are you quite done?“

„Not yet, actually,“ she replied and poked another chunk of cake with her index finger, that was laying alarmingly close to her left elbow. „Mah-ri, Maa-,“

„What's your name then?,“ Mari cut in, looking extremely relieved to have found a question to interrupt her. Of course, she didn't expect her to be anything other than rude. Little shit, she is, she thought somewhat fondly.

„My name's Selina,“

„Nice to meet you, Selina,“

„Likewise,“

„I have a question, I want to ask, but it may come across a little too personal,“

„Let's hear it. I'll be the judge,“

„I-alright, you said that you don't expect to ever be married. Uhm, Why not? I mean, you seem nice enough, maybe a little, okay, *a lot* nuts, but you're really not the worst and you're beautiful, so why do you think that?,“

„Well, you were right. That's just rude and personal,“

„See? I told you,“

„Well, I despise weddings, too much white everywhere and you’re forced to actually talk to people, and probably I would be an abysmal wife, that wouldn’t stop eyeing other men, and getting into trouble, you know?“,

„Selina, I’m like sixteen if you recall, despite your expectations, I do *not* know at all,“

„Yeah, right. I apologize. You’re sixteen though? You look not a day older than twelve,“

„Wow, damn you got me here. I actually *am* twelve, I just like to pretend I’m older to have people treating me more seriously,“

„Mmm. Quite manipulative and devious, darling, I like it,“

Mari had been leaning onto the table more and more as time passed by, her eyes falling closed occasionally and her face going slack, before she suddenly startled back into her seat and yelped, having been close enough to the wooden surface to hit her chin when she retreated. „Oh, fuck that hurt,“ she groaned and cupped her lower part of her face to rub it soothingly.

Selina laughed and laughed even harder at the sudden betrayed expression. She looked dearly amusing; too stubborn to rest properly, having decided to fight her body instead. Stupid, yet amusing and she thought that she must have a strange sense of humor to laugh at someone’s pain, but laughed anyway. „You should just lay down, if you’re tired, Mari,“

„Oh, really?“, Mari spoke sweetly and high on sarcasm, still smoothing over the skin on her chin. „I didn’t know, Selina. Thank you, you just opened another world to me, that my poor, sixteen-year-old-self couldn’t reach herself. You have my endless gratitude,“ she mock-bowed and grinned sugarly.

„You’re welcome,“ she said quite seriously. „And I’ll have you know that I will drag you into a bed if you won’t go willingly,“

Mari grimaced and folded her hands. „Oh man, I would be laughing at the joke if I didn’t know you bad enough now after the cake thing to know you’re really not joking at all,“

She decided to ignore the ridiculous way the sentence was phrased and just raised a brow. „Will you go willingly? I can force you,“

„No well, uhm, the thing is, my.. home’s a quite endless walk away and I normally tend to avoid Gotham at after midnight since that’s when the real shit happens,“ she bit her lips, hard enough to make Selina wait for blood, that surprisingly didn’t leak. „There’s like a really strange type of guys, I really wouldn’t wanna cross and I think that I should wait out somewhere close to an active lantern at least until the early morning,“

She didn’t roll her eyes no matter how she wanted to, but she do sighed rather openly. Well apparantly she had to spell it out for her letter after letter, who could have thought? „Mari, I

have a guestbedroom that you, yes you dear, are welcome to use as long as you won't trash it,"

And of course, Mari, stubborn and unattentive being she is, startled rather extremely and rambled on, „Oh, really that's generous but, I'm not sure-“

„Do you really want to fight me on this?“ she cut in, fully prepared to accomplish the task by dragging the back-stabbing girl into the bed. She found she didn't care of how it was done, if Mari will at least sleep. She had to be the good host here after all and help Mari to do what she apparently was unable to: sleep. She would at the very least drag the bed here as well, into the kitchen too, if needed to get Mari to rest, that determined of a host was she.

„No?“, Mari answered, rather asked, tiredly and blinked.

Selina rolled her eyes at her youthful face, that was almost close enough again to touch the table and demanded, „Then don't“,

And really surprisingly, Mari actually for once listened to her and didn't roll in her arms too much, when she carried her to the bed, that had been bought with situations like these in mind.

Chapter End Notes

In my defense, I had a fat lot of time, coming up with this because I broke my arm and it wouldn't heal for three bloody months.

My feeble bones are to blame for this, so yeah, bye bye, twinkle toes.

(Word count 7.446)

About to throw up really, but that's fine

Chapter Summary

Selina only leaned her head with those intensely looking eyes and outstretched her hand in an offer. Her nails were pretty, as was basically everything on her, painted in black and with little green cats, that she stared at ridiculed for about a minute, before she snapped out of it and shook her head.

Whatever, why was she even surprised at this point.

„What...Are you doing,“ she asked when it felt a little too silly to be just standing there, staring at the hand like it was an alien, that had dropped down in front of her out of nowhere.

Selina smiled widely and flipped over her hand, to hold it palm downwards. She flexed her fingers and looked over her nails for a brief second, before she spoke up. „Offering you a mutual attachment actually,“

Chapter Notes

I'm baaaaack. And I wrote the Mari POV, so here have it, my darlings.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When Mari woke up in a bed, that was definitely not hers, (mostly she noticed because it smelled nice, on contrary to hers) she promptly decided that she was the dumbest human being on earth to exist.

Cursing quietly under her breath, she untangled herself from the sheets that were unfairly soft and comfortable, and tip-toed over to where her ankle boots were laying on the ground. In a speed that would have most whistle in appreciation, she tied her shoes and put on her jacket, trying not to think too much about how the cloth seemed more clean. It was probably imagination. Just her wild imagination, she was still a little sleepy after all.

Yep, that's it.

Carefully, she opened the door, silently praying it's not one of those loudly squeaking ones, and peeked behind it. The hall way was empty, no black-haired women with cake in sight,

and after a few seconds of checking, she also couldn't make out a sound, other than her own breathing. She only allowed herself to feel mildly reassured. She was still not out of danger.

As quietly as she could, she hurried down the corridor, her eyes scanning every suspicious feature on sight, and stopped at the door of the kitchen, that she recognized easily as it had thankfully a rather noticable colour. It was bright red and impossible to miss. She exhaled only fleetingly, prepared to rush inside and leave over the same way, she had come yesterday, when she recalled what she had been doing here first to deal with.

It had been an easy decision; risk getting caught or possibly miss another two weeks of daily dishes. She had been desperate and hungry enough to risk it, as she had been due to her regular payment for one week now. It really hadn't been her fault, she just really hadn't had any luck this month when it came to stealing.

One of the purses, she had picked up at the market, had been empty save for a few useless coupons and the cellphone, she stole, had a tracker, that forced her to abandon it in order to remain out of reach from the cops. And the last time had been by far the worst of all: She had broken into a garage and barely got out alive as the family's dog decided to hunt her down to rip apart, so she had fled and came back to the Orphanage without any cash and thus got no rewarding food, but a punishment instead.

And as the punishment was, it meant that she had been put on starvation for a total of two weeks, before she would have gotten to prove herself once again, which basically meant bringing something valuable that can be sold pricey. And one week had passed now slowly, that had been spent with Georgie and Berna, trying to coax her into trying her luck with stealing again and changing Miss Oliver's mind with a great catch, while Jules, Colie and Odea had argued vehemently against it, when they had met in their group's dorms in the late evening, saying she should have waited and saved her powers.

The girls didn't try sharing their conquests with her though, none of them was brave enough to risk the wrath of Miss Oliver on them, and she really couldn't even blame them. If she could have prevented this misery, she would have thrown them all under the bus without any second thought as well.

And as kind and caring, they all were in the dorm at night, she knew they would gladly abandon her in a blink of an eye, if it meant saving their own asses. She had learnt that pretty early and couldn't bring herself to care anymore. It was the harsh, but honest reality. This was where friendship ended after all: every loyalty died in the eye of survival.

Mari shivered at the memory of the hunger, that would have been paining her right now as well, if it wouldn't have been for being forced to eat the cake. Her stomach had been aching the very last days so strongly, as she had been too scared to try to steal food since she felt too fucking weak and couldn't risk getting caught, and she had thought she would die as she was unable to really breathe with how painstaking it was everytime, and frowned conflictedly, as she tried to figure out how to go on now.

On the one hand, she ate only yesterday, the sweet, unhealthy wedding cake had been a relief, if against her consent or not, and should have had enough calories to keep her alive for another two weeks or so, if she's lucky.

But on the other hand, she will need some success in stealing pretty soon again, if she's not keen on returning to starvation (what she's not), so she'll most definitely will have to repeat this same thing another day, breaking inside and risking her life, if she won't just steal *something right now*.

And well, it wasn't that Selina- she pushed the aside the feeling of wrongness at the familiar use of first name- needed the money more than she did. She told her herself, didn't she? She flat-out revealed that she's an actress, so she must be swimming in gold and diamonds and cash.

But still, there is the risk of getting caught, the danger for her life. Yet also, there is the pain in her stomach, that had been her daily accompanist for a long and painful week.

She nibbled on her lip. And surely, Selina won't miss one necklace or two. She didn't need so many anyway. It would be a waste to not use the circumstances, wouldn't it?

Mari locked her jaw, as she realized that she didn't have to try to pretend like it would have went any other way. The very first second, she had stopped at the door, it had been decided that she would risk it no matter what. She just wouldn't go back to the hunger again, if she could prevent it. There just wasn't any fucking chance that would happen.

Turning on her heels, she walked back the corridor a few meters, until she reached the same door, she had come through yesterday in hope of release as well. It was open, she noticed relievedly and yet clenched her fists tightly, tense, when she craned her head to glance into the room. Only to breathe a sigh of relaxation, when she saw it was empty. Luck is on her side for once in a while; it was suspicious, yes, but also so very damn easing. She only hoped that this rare occasion of fortune on her side, will last at least until she left this building and won't leave her half-way.

„Okay, Mari, here we go,“ she mumbled to herself and entered the room, defensively in her stance. Maybe it was actually obvious, considering the situation, but she didn't feel overly safe. More like ready to bolt really.

This time, she didn't try her luck on the shelf, but spun to stare at the cupboard instead. She didn't really want to believe herself for thinking that, but Selina's words might make a little more sense now, when she thought of it. Perhaps, people do like to hide their valuables in a cupboard rather than a shelf; she wouldn't know, as she had never had something of importance to hide herself.

The lid opened easily when she lifted it and her eyes widened in response to the greeting sight. Oh god, Selina didn't lie. She kept some really pretty silver ware here, that glistered in the morning light like stars. „Oh, jackpot,“ she hissed happily and stuffed her pockets with as much silver spoons as she could. This should hopefully convince Miss Oliver to ease the punishment, or if she'll catch her on a good day, stop it all together.

She didn't allow herself to overly hope however. Not once had Miss Oliver ever shown the needed mercy or compassion, that would be needed to stop her streak of starvation.

She bit her lips to keep from laughing giddily with her pocket's full, bouncing on her heels rather in glee. She couldn't wait to see the girls' faces when she'll return. They will be happy for her surely, but one part of her will always know that they will silently bask in their envy as well. Miss Oliver will serve her the biggest dishes of all for her big success, even if only to give her a taste of what she could have if she would keep up with the same pace forever.

Breathing once deeply to calm herself, but still with a tiny smile of victory on her face, she left the living room to stand in front of the red, kitchen door instead. She leaned her head against it hesitantly and listened intently, yet she couldn't hear a noise.

So she entered just as quietly as before, and felt a part of her caution drop just at the sight of the same window, that had served as her entrance yesterday. Her exit, beautiful and available; she could leave for once again *with* her stolen goods. She felt a wave of accomplishment surge over her, making her feel immensely proud and pressed her palms over her mouth to smother the smug smile, that grew on her lips.

So this was like success in risky situations felt like, she thought appraisingly and walked slowly, soundlessly deeper inside the kitchen and towards the window. She definitely liked the feeling. It was nice and curled in her chest. She felt great; perhaps the greatest even she had ever felt her whole sixteen-year-old life. A feeling of invincibility enveloped her; strong and powerful, and throughout fizzling and exciting.

Only for it to die a painful death, when she noticed the quiet clink, that could only possibly come from damn table ware hitting against each other. She froze and closed her eyes, desperately wanting follow this feeling and die as well please. Because of course, she had got reckless enough in her high-on-success-state that she forgot to check the whole kitchen with her eyes. She was the worst thief to exist on earth, she was sure.

„Stupid,“ she muttered angrily to herself and promptly bit her tongue to keep from screaming in frustration.

„Ah, Mari,“ a familiar voice spoke up from behind of her, detachedly curious and pleasant in its smoothness. She hated herself for flinching at the tone and tensing at the words. „I had been already wondering when you would wake, dear,“

Slowly, hesitantly, Mari turned around, even if only to see her opponent in case, it decided to attack her. She had always hated not knowing her enemies enough to guess how they would react, and this right now, was even by far worse than the normal stuff in the streets. This enemy wasn't only unpredictable, but here she didn't even have a weapon to defend herself as well, not even mentioned that her opponent had also home advantage and was physically more powerful.

She was, simply and kindly said, absolutely *fucked*.

„Join me?,“ Selina, who was sitting gracefully in an armchair, her legs crossed, and stirring in a white, shining cup, calmly like she had all the time of the world, smiled. She looked unfairly put together in her long, feminine, green suit after that stressful night, that had gifted *Mari* a fuzzy head ache and heavy limbs.

Mari still had in mind the picture the woman had posed just yesterday, she had been pretty and stunning of course in a black and silky bathrobe, that showed off her long, toned legs, but had looked slightly more flushed and manic as well. More human; now however, she looked just posed, no hint of discomfort, and perfect, while she gazed composedly at her with her calm green eyes and had her lips slightly tilted into a faint smile. Simply perfect, perfect and polite and never more in her life had Mari wanted to punch someone squarely in the face.

However she didn't, and focused on realizing that she had been ordered to sit instead. Still it really didn't help her indignation. „Why?“, she asked instead of doing what she had been ordered to. It felt good, better to rebel, more familiar than whatever stupid softness had come over her last night.

Selina only inclined her head and took an oddly graceful (how can sipping even *be* graceful?!) sip on her cup, before she spoke. „To have breakfast of course,“

She stopped glaring, to notice that Selina was of course again, not lying. There in front of her on the table laid spread out several things, like table ware, bread, boiled eggs, she was even sure she saw jam, that stood in a rich-looking glass container.

Unwillingly, her stomach twitched and she felt sick all of sudden. The wedding cake still had her feeling full, and even if she would want to feast - she really didn't- she couldn't even eat for dear life, without then immediately wanting to puke. She refrained from sighing; those were the pains of starvation after all: a tiny hunger, but huge appetite. It was maddening, having access to food, yet being unable to have it. She wanted to break something.

„No, thank you,“ she said back firmly and willed down the vomit that rose when she smelled the eggs. *Please don't puke, please don't puke, please don't puke*, she sang internally and embraced her waist loosely, worriedly. She needed those calories after all. Her life quite literally depended on them.

„Hmm. Water then?“, Selina suggested and rose to her feet in one smooth movement. „You're malnourished, so I can guess what you feel now after the rather fat-laden cake. Do you have sickness? An urge to throw up? Some cool water might help with that,“ the woman stepped steadily closer, but Mari too busy with gaping in surprise, didn't really notice until suddenly Selina was no farther than a meter away. Too close. She swore she got a sniff of something- could have been rich perfume- and stepped back when Selina made her a glass of water and offered it to her.

She glanced from the water to Selina suspiciously, her face blank and unmoving.

Whatever the fuck was going on right now *had to stop*. She wasn't some little girl that needed a big, strong adult to help her, no, she was mature and self-dependent. *Independent*. Point. That's it. No other truth. She didn't need anybody.

Vomit rose again in her food pipe and she pressed a fist to her mouth to push it back as it burned in her gorge. Still she admitted albeit reluctantly, one sip of water would be nice. Really nice. Just one. She grasped the glass rather quickly and drank a few relieving sips. It felt great, cooling in her throat, and brought temporal relief. She nodded curtly in gratitude at Selina, who was of course watching her intently and put it down on the counter beside her.

„Cheers,“ she said with a croaking voice, that would have embarrassed her at some point, if she wouldn't be about to lose her acidic gastric juices via barfing.

Selina only leaned her head with those intensely looking eyes and outstretched her hand in an offer. Her nails were pretty, as was basically everything on her, painted in black and with little green cats, that she stared at ridiculed for about a minute, before she snapped out of it and shook her head.

Whatever, why was she even surprised at this point.

„What...Are you doing,“ she asked when it felt a little too silly to be just standing there, staring at the hand like it was an alien, that had dropped down in front of her out of nowhere.

Selina smiled widely and flipped over her hand, to hold it palm downwards. She flexed her fingers and looked over her nails for a brief second, before she spoke up. „Offering you a mutual attachment actually,“

She was honestly too tired at this point to even sigh properly. Mutual attachment, her ass. Fucking really? What does that even mean? Friendship? No thank you, she'll survive without.

Apparently her estrangement must have shown on her face as Selina raised a pointed brow and said, „You have something to add, darling?“ in a bland voice, that tasted like ash and sounded like honey.

Mari bit her tongue to keep from snapping that *yes, she had plenty to add, thank you very much*, but curled her lip unamusedly. „I don't even know what to say. You're like so mad, that I'm not even sure anymore,“ she uttered instead and crossed her arms.

Selina smiled again. „You're quite entertaining, Mari. Would you at least like to hear what I have to offer?,“

Harrumphing in indignation, Mari rolled her eyes. „No,“ *Like sure, insult me, and then let's be best friends forever*, she thought angrily and huffed. This was honestly getting kinda old already.

„Mm. I'll tell you anyway,“ Mari couldn't hold back the snort at that. Fucking moron. „I'll allow you to stay at mines. You will be fed three times a day and will have your own room,“

She swallowed thickly, feeling something unidentifiable grow on her chest, that she felt the urge to wipe away. It didn't feel nice, more like conflicting really. She frowned and rubbed her throat, where it started to itch all of sudden. She hated it.

„I will buy you clothes, proper ones,“ Selina fleetingly glanced down at that, her eyes zooming over her jacket and shirt disgustedly. She stood up straighter just to spite her and lifted her chin proudly, and somehow that seemed to make Selina grin even broader. She didn't need to pretend to frown, as she was actually really confused.

Like what the fuck? This wasn't even funny anymore, just unsettling.

Selina had her face almost blank again, when she focused back into what was happening, and nodded. „What do you think of dresses? Do you like them?“ the woman asked suddenly, thoughtfully. Her eyes were scanning her body up and down, uncomfortably intense and private. She stopped herself from hunching, trying to appear smaller. This really wasn't the time to be uneasy; it was the time to show how little of a fuck she cared about everything. Selina seemed to like it best, when she was strong, and she needed some of those likes on her side if she was planning to make it out of here unharmed. As stupid as it was, she needed to lick that ass to survive.

„I hate them,“ she said with a glare. She licked her lips, trying not to think of how it would be to actually really wear one. Probably uncomfortable. Tight. If she knew herself right, then she imagined that she would dislike them with a passion. Probably. Yeah, point is, it would be quite possible that she loathed them, but probably. Maybe one day, maybe, she'll get to find out for real.

Selina still only hummed bemusedly and tapped her lip. „We'll see, darling,“

She lifted her chin provocatively and stared, trying not to blink. She felt her eyes water however rather quickly and was forced to blink, not wanting to look like she was crying in front of the enemy. Tears were a sign of weakness, and she was everything but weak. She was anti-weak. Anti-crying. She rubbed her eye to hide the watering, and withdrew a lash, that stuck to her thumb, wetly. After quick contemplation, she blew it away and looked back to Selina who never stopped watching her. Sighing now, she puffed out her cheeks. Well.

„What's next?“ she asked, at loss what to do instead to break the awkward silence after her great staring mishap and avoided those green eyes, that were practically boring a hole inside her with how attentive they were.

„School,“ the eyes didn't ease their staring at all. „I'll sign you up for school. You said you're sixteen, didn't you? I'll sign you up into high school and you'll get a proper education,“ she informed her. „And I'll have you know that I expect nothing but perfect grades, I'll have you get tutors if needed, but you *will* have them,“

„Geez,“ she muttered to herself. „Ease the leash, dictator,“

Selina considered her for a brief moment, and then continued. „And of course, you won't steal from me. I'm not a pleasant person, when it comes down to this, and I *will* hunt you down if needed to return my possessions,“ she stared cold and serious enough, that Mari gulped thickly and shifted, feeling the silver spoons brush her stomach through those pockets.

„Oh and I'll buy you a phone, if you feel the need to possess one, dear,“ Selina added and effectively broke through the sudden tension.

Mari allowed herself to breathe for a few moments, just trying to settle down her thoughts again. This whole.. **thing** was a lot to take in. She had been expecting to be back in the Orphanage at this point, but instead she was still here, trying to guess whatever the shit Selina was hinting at with her offers. Was she playing with her? Pitying her? She didn't really like either possibility, even if she could try to act on the compassion and cry her way out of here (not that she did really think it would work, because apparently actresses were great lying

detectors, but still it would be worth a try). She will need to step up the game and work out a new technique. Maybe scream again. Or attack. Both very great options in her mind.

„This is of course all very generous and all,“ she started saying and cleared her throat when her voice fucking cracked. „But what do you get out of this?“ she asked suspiciously. Nobody would be nice enough to just spend money and a lot of time on her, if they won't get something in return. Kind people, *like*, they basically don't even exist in her world view. Or at least, don't exist as kind as they so supposedly were in stories and books. Maybe kind people existed here, but only with some generous asshole genes mixed into their personalities. That she could imagine, as she was pretty sure to have one kind asshole in front of her.

Selina smiled broadly, almost happily and clicked her tongue. „My, a hard one aren't you?“ Mari glared to show how much appreciated the comment and Selina went on unfazedly. „But you're right I suppose, I do get something for myself out of this as well,“

Silence settled again and Mari raised her brows when there didn't seem to come a continuation or at the very least an *explanation*. „That is?“ she demanded slowly, tapped her finger to her thigh impatiently. She didn't exactly have the time of a day as she had some great lunch to catch up with for her success. Selina could at least be so kind as to speed up if she was at it.

„Look at it, like at another experiment, darling,“ Selina explained not at all. „And hmm, I suppose it's for fun as well,“

Fun. She wanted to snort. Hosting a criminal teenager was her idea of fun.

She shook her head. „Kay, so whatever. You get your fun and I get my day care, nice deal, but I'll be forced to decline. My family's awaiting me for dinner, my sisters, and I have to be back as soon as possible, you know? I kind of didn't show up at home for a night, and I'm sure I'm about to get rekt anyway, so don't really wanna tempt my luck any more,“ she lied through her teeth and shuffled nervously.

Selina, in all her posed grace, laughed prettily. „Aren't you precious? So stubborn, willing to lie at all costs,“ she smiled amusedly and hummed. „Even if she's an orphan and it must be just a little uncomfortable to imagine actually *having* a family,“

„Fuck you,“ she bit out angrily, unwilling to even think that she was right.

The answering smile was somehow even more genuine. „And angry, we can't forget angry, can we now? You're quite an angry girl,“

„Just let me fucking leave so we won't ever meet again,“ she growled lowly, clenching her fists. „Just please,“

„Leave?“ Selina asked and smirked. „No, my darling Mari, you won't be leaving, you will be staying here, didn't you hear? I have everything planned out already, and I may not have any experience in looking after children, but I quite expect that you wouldn't appreciate mother henning anyway. I'm positive we'll work out nicely,“

„You-fucking-serious,“ she muttered, before she opened a random shelf and took a grab for the rolling pin, that was the first thing to fall in her eye. She held it up like a baseball bat and steadied her stance, ready to fight.

Selina stared at her gleefully again, but for once, she ignored it and narrowed her eyes instead, gripping the weapon tighter. „Still keen to keep me here, Selina?,“ she enquired and locked her jaw in tense concentration. She will fight her way out of here, if needed, but she will get back to the Orphanage to deliver. She just will.

The expression on Selina’s face could only be described as quietly suffering delight. Selina brushed over her suit’s jacket absently. „More than before actually now,“ she said and stepped forward to do something with her legs that had Mari toppling over, mostly in surprise. She fell down with an *uff* and laid on her back, staring up at the woman, that had a look on her face that could have been something akin to smugness while she of course readjusted her already perfect hair. „You see, *Mari*,“ she drawled out with great care and leaned over her. „there is one thing, that I obviously didn’t give you knowledge off, but that is quite important apparently to convince you of my advantages.“

She smirked faintly and stretched her palm towards her, sprawled on the ground. „I can teach you the ways of a thief,“ she revealed and unaffectedly pulled her hand away when she didn’t accept it.

Mari pursed her lips silently, bending her legs at the knees and leaning onto her elbows. „What exactly would an actress know of robbing other than playing the part? Much offense here, but you don’t seem to need to be a criminal to have money, so *obviously* sorry, if I’m still not jumping to live with you,“

Selina raised her brows in a way that was probably meant to look superior, but made her look purely curious. „I don’t think that you even have a choice here, dear,“ she said and laughed shortly. „Your burglary skills are *obviously* abysmal and if you care for being alive in about a year, you should either start considering a new way of making profit or learn from someone experienced, even if it’s only from a *sillily generous and inexperienced actress*,“ she informed her with a humored grin and suspiciously twitching shoulders.

Mari frowned when she realized that anyhow Selina was right again. She was horrible at stealing since like forever and actually needed help. She really wanted to bite someone with how frustrating it was. Those past years she had survived on her sheer luck, and even now it had decided to fuck with her and go help someone else instead.

„Sure, right, makes sense, but even if, only imaginatively and by sheer curious way of thinking, hypothetically of course,“ she added when Selina’s face moved into smugness again. „you would teach me, while I stay here, how do you guarantee that you won’t kick me out at some point to leave me to survive alone in the streets again? You could totally just abandon me tomorrow and fuck it all with the promises,“

She didn’t say that she still had the Orphanage to return to, even if she would have to spin some believable lie about her absence and beg on her knees to be accepted back. She didn’t say that she didn’t think, solid truthfulness or not, that it would work anyway. If Selina

would kick her out just an hour or so, after their shaking hands on the deal, she honestly wouldn't be surprised. Angry maybe to have wasted time, but not surprised.

She never was at this point anymore.

Selina rubbed her chin, like she had actually given her something important to think about. „I could swear, but that probably wouldn't calm you as you're not a person of honor and neither really am I,“ she paced a little before she picked up again. „I could sign a contract, an official one with laws binding it and all, that won't have me breaking the deal, or I'd lose a fair amount of money,“ she suggested and turned to stare at her. „Would you be becalmed by us signing a contract?,“

Mari startled, not having expected for Selina to actually try to *find* a solution. She swore internally and outwardly with feeling; Selina was actually determined to do this, wasn't she? Mari didn't know if to pity her for her really persistent affection or pity her for her long-suffering foolishness, the choice certainly wasn't easy.

She grimaced and decided to go with it for now at loss what to do instead. „I, uh, yeah, I guess,“

Selina clapped her hands once and smiled. „Briliant! One divide surpassed, an unhumanly lot still waiting,“ she said and flapped her hand. „I'll have the contracts ready by tomorrow morning. Now, I'll show you to your room, so you can take a proper look at it before we're leaving to buy you some pleasing clothes,“ she turned on her heels and started walking before she stopped and turned again to face her with a suddenly serious face. „And don't think I haven't noticed my silver sticking out of your pockets, madame. Try to steal from me, once more and I'll end you,“ she promised with intense eyes and left the room, silent like a shadow.

Alone now again, Mari let her head knock back against the cool floor and groaned with loud and obvious frustration.

Chapter End Notes

(Wordcount 5.216)

A dress-up designed to end you

Chapter Summary

She coughed obviously and Selina slowly craned her head to stare at her expectantly. Somehow she was reminded of a turtle of all things really and had to cough again to cover her snorting.

„Thank you,” she spoke earnestly, sans the coughing, and she meant it.

Selina smiled flickeringly, like she couldn't decide to go for it fully, and leaned her head. „It was my pleasure,”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The rain was dripping outside, the wind blowing and Selina was watching the girl look around in what was obviously ill concealed awe.

Most likely the youngster wasn't even aware of the face she was making- she would probably screech in embarrassment if she knew- and it was all the more, entertaining because of it. Mari was an highly emotional individual and still, sometimes it was taking her a few tries to get to her close enough to break those mental walls, she built around herself like a prison. Selina didn't mind in the slightest, as she knew to value a slow-going process, the bits of pleasurable success handed over as time passed, over a quick and shallow kind of satisfaction, that came from immediate victory.

Stealing conquests, that were *longed and sweated for* quite longer, tasted particularly sweeter on her palate and she found that the same philosophy could be applied with the orphan as well.

Mari was like a trophy, she was drooling to win over, and she knew that as Mari was difficultly stubborn in her persona and didn't seem to trust her in the slightest for now, she will have the delight of walking the long and delicious path of enjoyment that will have her lick her lips after the goal more than she can probably imagine.

When she had walked off, leaving her to choose, she hadn't been sure if Mari would even follow after her- if she would accept the deal-, and then imagine her adubescence when the girl walked right into the guest bedroom only minutes after, looking tense and closed off in everything but her anger. She had wanted to actually *squeal* in delight, but as she knew Mari wouldn't appreciate her glee, thinking of it more suspicious, she didn't but merely smiled

instead, saying how she was glad that she had agreed, to what the girl had only half-frowned, half-fumed before only saying, *sure*.

Now however when the girl was taking her time to pretend to glare at her new, personal room, (when she was actually silently appreciating, *ravaging* it with her eyes), she allowed herself a little fist pump of satisfaction and bit her lips to keep them from twitching into an even bigger grin than there already was.

Oh, dear, this will be so much fun, she thought giddily and switched her face back into her mask of smooth and formal passiveness, that she had carefully sculpted over years of practice and had therefore brought to perfection, when Mari spun to look at her again after her long and throughout inspection. She had a brow raised pointedly and her hair, dark with a blueish touch, mused up from sleep, cradled her head, making it look significantly more gigantic.

She laughed, but only briefly and airily, producing almost no sound at all. How she was planning to have *this girl* being a perfect thief and passing actress, she had no clue, but she was undoubtedly looking forward to it anyway.

Mari would rather die than admit it, but she was stunned from impression.

The room, *her* room apparently now (mind you, not she ever would call it hers out loud), had been in itself anything six-year-old Mari would have ever dreamed off late at night.

There was a big, spacey bed with lots and lots of blue cushions, that looked like it was practically made for a Queen, rather than a mere girl and the wardrobe, made from some kind of wood that was actually *shining?*, was big enough to probably fit in a whole H&M store.

A desk, wide and broad enough to probably fit six dogs on top, stood in one corner, next to the wall and beside the door to an incredibly spacious bathroom, white and offering in it's existence and she honestly didn't stare at it for *too* long, maybe only two or three minutes before she shook herself out of it.

The sparks of light, sprinkled all over the chamber, she had discovered after looking up, came from a lamp shining at a fancy chandelier, hanging from the ceiling slightly askew, and the carpet atop the floor looked white, fluffy and clean enough that she actually felt lightly ashamed for stepping onto it with her mud crusted shoes. She had breathed a quiet sigh of relief when thank god, there didn't remain any brown imprints of her shoes sizes and afterwards just had tried to avoiding coming close to it in general.

Selina hadn't acknowledged her behavior, even if she probably noticed since she saw for some reason fucking everything that happened, and she was rather relieved for it. At least, Selina, lots of mad irks and quirks she had, had apparently enough pity for a poor orphaned girl to not to mention it. She wondered if this was a rare thing of compassion, or if she could actually try to use that to her advantage and act more and more uneasy, just so that Selina would stop talking to her at every turn and chance and stop mocking her with her posh high-class-iness.

It would certainly be nice.

Last but not least, she rested her gaze atop a row of three paintings on the wall across from the bed and closest to the huge window. They were colorful, mostly smudges of something dark and blue with grey and white splashes, and she frowned at them for a second, wondering if she had actually ever seen a painting from this close before now.

She honestly couldn't recall one time, but she must have. Paintings weren't really all that fancy or infrequent, lots of people have them as decorations in their houses. Images of cats and flowers were the most common, she recalled, they were hanged everywhere. So yeah, probably she had at least once seen a painting of a cute cat or a vase with blossoms in her life, but couldn't remember as it was nothing important to keep in memory. That must be it.

She turned away from the wall to address Selina, who immediately with her facing her, laughed to her face. She smoothed over the frown, as it was really rude, and exhaled hastily instead. No need to blow up over something this silly; she was better than to react to a little mean mockery her way.

She had honestly survived worse and she wasn't even physically assaulted at this point, so that's fine.

„The room seems good enough to me, can we go now?,”

Selina stopped being an ass to nod seriously. „Yes, of course. Follow me, please,”

They went down the corridor, passed several doors that spiked her interest with how luringly closed they all were, and halted at a plain, white door, that was opened to reveal a wardrobe? big coat rack? inside. Selina grabbed a long, black coat and put it on, before she spun to lay a ranking eye on Mari, that felt intense and already too familiar to even startle her anymore. After a few contemplating blinks, she then dug into the variety of clothes, hanging neatly beside each other and took out a thick, red jacket, that looked like it was originally made from melted, bright red rain boots.

Mari couldn't help but blink at it.

Selina rolled her eyes and took out a fitting blood-red scarf as well to put down both into her arms. „Put that on, Mari. It's freezing outside and I won't have you die of a cold, before I even get to start teaching you,”

„I-alright,” she stuttered, still a little unsettled with the whole situation and complied. She felt uncomfortably stiff and was unable to move her arms really in the jacket. She sighed only quietly. Well, fighting she certainly won't be able to in this. She would even be surprised if she will be capable of walking still.

Selina smiled at her, round and bright red like a stop sign, and nodded approvingly. „You look great, Mari,”

„I feel like a canon ball,” she informed her, blandly.

Selina nodded again. „A beautiful canon ball,”

„Can I have something else?” she asked. „Something less.. *heavy*?”

„Mm, no, that’s the only thing small enough to fit you, as you’re rather thin for your age,”

She snorted quietly, unamused still. „I wonder why,”

Selina didn’t answer, but nodded thoughtfully instead.

They were riding in a cab, that Selina had called once they had left the building- over the fire escape astonishingly enough- and they weren’t talking, just staring at the houses and streets passing by. Not a word uttered. Not even a whisper spoken and it was driving her mad.

Normally, she wouldn’t bother over the silence, thinking of it unworthy of her time and she didn’t obviously like Selina enough anyway to just chat with her, but now?

This whole situation could just turn out to be a lot fat waste of time and the thing was, she wouldn’t even know until it was too late.

Truly, Selina had tripped her rather well and knew suspiciously much about where people’s possessions lay, but then she could just be daily visiting a martial arts club or something and therefore was not bad at fighting, and her hiding spot’s knowledge could be easily excused by her own practice in hiding her stuff maybe.

She tapped her fingers to the seat impatiently. She had no idea who this woman actually was, other than a description of her job and a name, and perhaps she was just losing precious time, that could be spent with pickpocketing someone and returning to the orphanage to save her daily rations and roof over her head.

She was no step closer maybe to improving her burglary skills, and that was no pleasing thought.

Not at all.

And Mari was nobody to let herself be fooled. No; If Selina wanted her to stay, she would have to make it worth her time. Prove that she could teach her something valuable, and obviously, this won’t do by itself if they just so happen to just be sitting there in silence, doing nothing productive.

She needed, no *demanded*, proof.

She was a young and aspiring girl, that needed solid proof and she wanted it soon.

...Rather now actually preferably.

„Tell me something about how to steal,”

The words were oddly loud over the quiet drone of the car, cutting through the peaceful atmosphere startlingly and even the cab driver, a man near his forties with pierced ears, looked up to stare at her over the mirror. Selina didn't do as much as hum uninterestedly.

„What do you want to know?,” she asked softly.

Mari bit her lip, thinking. Everything really to stop being the personification of a failure, but she couldn't really say that now can she? It sounded self-conscious and not in the slightest how she wanted to portray herself to her maybe-possibly-to-be-teacher. She wanted to come over as strong and fearless. Confident and experienced. Nobody liked weak people. Those were always eaten by the bullies first and Mari had no intentions on being eaten in anywhere near the future.

So yeah, ask. She could ask how to be a better actress as she was apparently wickedly horrible at lying, but that was not really about stealing at all, was it? Asking an actress of acting had literally nothing to do with the proof, she wanted.

Of course, she could just straight-out ask of how to crack a safe, or, whatever, break a lock- even if she already could do that one-, but that was not really what stealing was about, was it? That was just breaking inside, burgling, and she groaned loud enough to startle the cab driver into staring at her, with wide eyes again, when her mind didn't seem to fill with ideas at all.

„I'm -I actually don't know, okay, I mean how does one learn being a thief anyway?!,” she snapped, once she realized that she really didn't know what to ask anyway. It wasn't like there were just certain stages, you have to accomplish to become one really; it was just a decision and a will, wasn't it? People who were desperate and willing enough to do it, just did it, didn't they? There wasn't any fucking process or history behind it, just plain fear and unwillingness to die and **that's just fucking it.**

And then with those words said, Selina turned- actually *turned to her*- to look at her face and then suddenly burst out laughing, so genuine and loud enough that not only she did a double take, but the driver did as well over the mirror. She was bend over, crying rather than giggling really, and all that Mari could think of in this moment was: *well done, dumbass, you just fucking broke your only possible teacher.*

Selina laughing so freely, looked nothing like the woman, that had been so serious in her threats this morning. She didn't look like the female that had offered her a *Mutual Attachment* either. This right now, was probably the same face that had been telling her of how she thought she had drunk too much and had then proudly proclaimed that she was a maniac in her cleanliness. And she registered only now that she didn't realize how those faces had been so differing to each other, until she had seen the madly honest one again.

It was an extreme of a realization, obvious really, but still huge enough to startle her back into panic mode. She didn't know what to do with it really, because apparently the actress was *acting all the time.*

She wanted to slap herself really, because obviously she did. If she would have the skills to lie- god, please be kind as to gift her-, she would probably only lie as well to everybody really, because well, *why not?* Nobody would be able to tell the difference anyway. She could

just do whatever the fuck really would please her and enjoy herself and then just lie her way out of it.

Mari felt a different kind of appreciation rush over her, thick like honey and just as sweet, because honestly really, who needed to be a great thief, when she could be a great liar instead?

Go out into the street, string a pitiful story or two about having lost her parents in the city and sweet-talk someone into giving her money for a cab ride. Or sweet-talk them into unattentiveness and then pickpocket a few watches or two. Both very sweet options.

Her life could be so much easier.

She could lie to Miss Oliver and maybe fool her into believing that she hadn't been gone to live with an actress, but got beaten up and couldn't move before now to return. So many new possibilities really turn up in front of her. She could lie to children and befriend them to get into their houses, she would lie to old, rich women, talk with them friendly and take a necklace or two with her on her way out.

Everything could be much easier really. So much less filled with the pain of hunger, and the only thing that was apparently left to do, was learn how to lie. Shouldn't be too difficult. She only needed to hang on Selina's every word and- -

Oh.

Oh.

She froze with the realization, her face collapsing into itself.

Oh fuck. She actually *needed* Selina, didn't she? She needed her like a teacher, or a source of knowledge really. She was someone she could learn a lot from, and of course, bless her cursed mouth, she hadn't made a great impression of herself.

She had actually made a really terrible impression of herself. Screaming and insulting her and all when she had been offered cake.

She cursed hella frustratedly. Of god, she had to change that. She needed Selina to like her, to keep her here and teach her everything she knew. She couldn't risk getting taught only a little, only because she made a fool of herself and couldn't hold her damn mouth for dear life, and lose such a rare opportunity.

Selina may still be a petty snot, but she was a valuable snot now to her. A snot, she had to befriend.

She never would have thought she would think that, but she needed to improve their relationship and that quickly. Her life quite literally depended on it. Her future depended on it. The world depended on it.

She was an idiot.

„Uhm, Selina?,” she asked, painfully polite.

Selina who steadily had calmed from her laughing fit and had been adjusting her hair already, looked up at her words.

„Yes?,” A smooth drawl, slow and measured and confident, and oh Jesus, she wanted to learn to talk like that.

„Could you teach me how to lie?,”

Selina’s brows rose and would have probably went on rising if she wouldn’t have went out of forehead. „That’s what I was planning to do, darling, teach you my ways,”

„No, yes, but I mean, can you explain how you do it? How you make it look so untroubled. ..Did you attend an acting academy?,” she blurted, suddenly curious.

She *smiled*. Selina *smiled* at her and she bit down hard, to keep herself from grinning at her success. This was going far better then she could have dreamed to expect. „It’s mostly practice, dear, lots and lots of repetitions make it easier to slip into the roles,” she explained. „Don’t worry, I’ll show you one day,”

One day. Those words echoed in her ears and made the glee die like struck by a lightning. She’ll teach her one day, what basically was meant to say: in a few years or maybe, even never. She won’t get to lie early, no Selina had decided, because of her horrible first impressions to punish her and withhold the lesson.

She felt like screaming really.

She tried not to show. „Oh, yes. ‘Course, thanks,”

Okay, maybe Selina noticed her troubles anyway, because she smiled at her encouragingly and shook her head once, delicately.

Mari didn’t even pretend to have understood the gesture, but smiled back weakly anyway.

One day, huh. She had fucked up truly.

Her wallowing in self-pity was interrupted by the cab driver announcing that they were there, in the main city avenue and Selina paid him exactly thirty dollars and fifty two cent and answered with a *thank you, good day sir*, before she opened the door and told her to follow after her.

Mari followed without asking, and just walked and walked after Selina through the masses of people, trying not to feel too miserable about her life. Her feet were heavy, dragging over the ground, and the jacket, red and suffocating, made it impossible to move any freely really and she just tried not to frown at the colorfulness of everything. It was as if the people had decided to overcompensate for Gotham’s greyness by adding colour themselves and it was just startling how she didn’t notice it, until now, in this moment, really. Everything felt just so surreal and she didn’t want to believe it in the slightest, because if she had fucked up possibly the only chance, she had ever gotten in her hell of life, then she’d probably just cry really.

Her life would be finished.

That would be it.

„Rule number one,” Selina whispered, suddenly right by her side, „Don’t talk about business in public places. Use code words or paraphrase situations, but don’t mention names, it’s a bad habit,”

She was gone, walking briskly, before Mari even fully processed what just had happened.

But then with the realization, she wanted to die.

Mari hurried after her, her face burning. „Wait, wait, wait, and you tell me this only *after* I basically outed us?,” she whisper-shouted, mindful of the people around them.

„People don’t learn by getting said the rules, they have to see first to understand, Mari,” she chided, looking forward still. „You had to learn yourself and now after your ‘outing’ of us, quite obviously, you won’t make the same mistake again, I believe,” she glanced down at her embarrassed and red face and fought a smile.

She wanted to punch her so hard and snapped „You moron,” before her brain started catching up with her words and she slapped her hands over her terribly loose mouth, horrified. Well, so much for being friendly.

„Oh, shit, pretend I didn’t say that,” she begged.

Selina looked down at her again, fleetingly and humored and asked. „Why would I?,”

„Uhm, for the mutual Understanding?” she squeaked and prayed her face wouldn’t betray her by glowing a brighter red.

Selina snorted. „Try something else,”

„Oh, you, little-” she fumed, before catching the slippery control of herself again. „I’m trying to be more amicable here, if you hadn’t noticed, you.... ignorant person,”

Selina laughed at her lame insult as they entered into a building. „You want to exercise on your politeness?” she inquired curiously. „Then, darling, please do it on them,” her hand swept out and vaguely gestured to a woman in black dress, that just had noticed them and hurried over on heels. Mari was actually just waiting for her to twist an ankle or trip, but surprisingly neither happened. She was actually about to get to the bottom of her, being disappointed or relieved about that, but then Selina startled the shit out of her by putting a hand on her shoulder.

She frowned up at her, trying to shrug the palm off, but it won’t budge. „What are you doing,” she hissed lowly, watching the heel-woman nearing.

A deep hum was the only answer, she got from Selina, before the woman on heels reached them. „How can I help you, ladies?” she asked brightly, looking from Selina to Mari and back.

Mari mouthed ,ladies' quietly to herself, amused, and Selina tightened her grip on her shoulder for a second, warningly as she spoke up. „I'm looking for a new Garderobe for my niece here," she glanced down pointedly, at her head and continued. „Something seasonal please, as well as a few dresses and, preferably in a wide color scheme that'll fit to her skin color,"

The woman- she had a high bun of blonde hair, that also oddly enough reminded her of cup noodles- analyzed Mari's face critically and hummed as well. „Oh, yes, pale skin, very tricky. Sit down near the cabins and I'll see what I can find for you, lovelies," she grinned at Mari, who startledly tried to smile back as best as possible, and led them over to a set of green couches.

Mari felt the second that hand unclamped itself from her body and tried not to show how relieved she was, when she slumped back into the couch. Selina sat down next to her, stiffly with her back straight and posed, and she had honestly tried not to roll her eyes, but whatever.

She cleared her throat, and decided to start a conversation to strengthen their 'mutual attachment' more. Could never hurt to try more. „So apparently, I'm your niece then," she said, pursing her lips. The *obviously* went unspoken.

Selina raised a brow at her. „You'd rather have me as your mother?,"

„What-No," she cleared up uncomfortably. „Just well, you could have warned me!"

„I thought that it was obvious as you stay in my home and we're not physically alike enough for a parental relation," she informed, looking at a mannequin, that wore a long, blue dress.

Mari lowered her voice to normal standards. „Well sorry to tell, but it wasn't,"

„I apologize then for my foolish uncooperativeness," Selina said and didn't talk again, until the heel-woman returned with a colorful pile of clothes, on and off hangers both.

Mari tried not to show her surprise and pretended to rub her nose instead. That was a lot fat more than she had honestly expected. A lot, *lot* more than she could ever wear. She had actually no idea, how they were expecting her to wear all of that; really, one set would have been enough for another two years on her standards.

She always looked after her clothes, trying not to get them dirty and washing them occasionally as well. Only when she got into fights, she couldn't keep them from getting full of mud and holes, as in fist fights it was either everything or nothing and as she always gave her everything, her clothes always afterwards looked accordingly wrecked.

„Darling, please take off your jacket," Selina said to her, smiling, and Mari complied, taking it off without protests and laying it down beside them. She felt strangely exposed now without it, and crossed her arms over her chest, pretending not to notice them both looking over her. She was rather used to the disgust already now; it didn't bother her as much anymore.

Selina was the first to speak again. „Well, you certainly got yourself a little dirty from soccer, didn't you?“ There was humor in her voice, and she looked up, trying to assess if it's real or just another of her acts. She found she couldn't really tell, but as she didn't play any soccer and it was a blatant lie, she guessed it was the latter.

She put on a smile as fake as her first one. „Well, Auntie, that's what makes it so great. You should try it for yourself some time as well, it's really exciting, I tell you and I'll show you how to do it right, if you'd like to,“ she exclaimed with hand gestures, rapid and energetic to stress her passionate behavior.

Selina smirked for a millisecond, brief and devious, before spinning to the heel-woman. „What did you find?“

The woman, having looked between them interestedly, snapped into action immediately. „Well,“ she said. „I have a few tops and hoodies, that compliment to her eyes, as well as jeans, high waist jeans, capris, culottes, leggings, short and skirts. A few things really, we should look over each pair uniquely to decide, don't you think?“

Selina nodded her agreement. „That sounds like a plan,“

Mari looked at Selina, who nodded and took that as the signal to stand up and go to the changing cabins. It was slightly more dark inside, a long mirror at one side and a green curtain serving as a divider from eyes. She stood there indecisively for a moment, the thoughts of unclothing now entirely unpleasant, before suddenly a hand reached through the curtain and held a few hangers with clothes and a pair of shoes towards her.

She accepted all of it unwillingly, feeling out of place and angry to be here first.

Uncomfortably, she started taking off her jacket and shirt, stopping when her arms were laid free for a second. Had her forearms always looked this skinny and pale? She couldn't really tell, but somehow they now did. Looked skinny and pale.

She exhaled and went on.

The pants were dealt with quickly as where the boots and she embraced herself, just in underwear, feeling vulnerable, but relieved to be hiding behind a curtain. At least, nobody could see her right now; talk about consolation prizes. She snorted and lifted the new clothes to look at them, more closely. In her hands, they felt heavy and more firm than her clothes, less thin, and with a sigh, she started dressing again, only this time, into the clothes, that weren't hers.

Her hands were a little shaky, and she couldn't use them for dear god to button closed the blouse, so she left the lower part open and pulled on the jeans, that ended somewhere above her navel and fit extremely well. At last, the flats, in a color something between white and cream with pearls strung on top, were stripped onto her bare feet and as she tried to stretch her toes, she found them stiff and unmoving.

She sighed again. Figured.

Quickly, she put the little, blue bag in a similar shape to a common purse around herself and then pushed open the curtains to get this over with.

Selina was sitting at the same green couch, now sipping on a cup of.. something, maybe tea or coffee, and looked up when she waddled outside the cabin and onto the free space in front of it.

There was ...something in her eyes, she thought could be something happy or satisfied maybe, but as it came she didn't got to analyze the look any further as the heel-woman stood up from where she was seated across from Selina, with a bright grin. „Look at you, lovely,” she gasped and came closer to tug carefully on each piece of clothing. „Nothing's too tight? Uncomfortable? Itching? No?,” Mari shook her head every time, because as uneasy she was feeling in these clothes, it had nothing to do with them really, but with her. „Great,” the woman said finally and stepped away to inspect her from afar.

„Beautiful, -of course, somebody's got to tame that *hair-*, but all in all,” the woman spun to look at Selina. „Great, isn't it?,”

Selina nodded and smiled faintly. „It's perfect,”

The woman's grin widened at the praise and she ushered Mari back inside the cabin, giving her a new pile of clothes and shoes and closing the curtain behind of her.

Alone again, Mari changed out of these clothes and into the new ones. A white, short, and she meant really short top with that, which ended above her navel and showed off quite a lot of her collar; striped in blue and red pants and a matching in pattern jacket, that was probably supposed to be left open as it had no zip or buttons. To the end, she stripped on the white sneakers, that looked suspiciously like they would get dirty after only one walk somewhere generally outside, and lifted the sunglasses- also in white- to her face to first stare at them incredulously, and then, just lay them onto her nose and ears.

Why anybody would wear fucking *sunglasses* in Gotham of all places, she had no idea, but well, she wasn't here to complain, was she? She was here to learn lying and this was only to test her.

She will stay through this with pride and then become the greatest liar, mankind had ever known in it's ever long existence.

Amen.

The moment, she stepped through the curtain however, the heel-woman squealed out in delight and she started regretting her decision. Hands touched her arms, her waist, patted her over stomach and she endured them, trying to remain breathing calmly, and calling herself into mind why she was doing this and why exactly it would be a bad idea to run away and hide behind a dumpster.

Selina watched at first passively over her cup, but then cleared her throat and bundled the attention onto herself. Mari had been ready to hug her really- maybe if she would be less of a

snot and they would know each other longer than two days- but as that wasn't reality, she didn't but nodded at her in gratitude instead.

„Evelyn, could you please bring us a glass of water? My niece looks a little pale to me, don't you think?“ Selina said, and frowned worriedly.

Evelyn- was her name apparently- snapped her head around to look at her face and whatever she must have seen (gratitude and a lot of horror maybe), convinced her to apologize hastily and run off to get them their water.

With Evelyn for now gone, Mari turned to Selina, who was looking through a fancy-looking catalogue.

She coughed obviously and Selina slowly craned her head to stare at her expectantly. Somehow she was reminded of a turtle of all things really and had to cough again to cover her snorting.

„Thank you,“ she spoke earnestly, sans the coughing, and she meant it.

Selina smiled flickeringly, like she couldn't decide to go for it fully, and leaned her head. „It was my pleasure,“

They reveled in the silence, short and sweet and filled with promises, before Evelyn returned and brought a tray? with water bottles (plural, what the fuck) and forced her to drink at least one half of bottle, fore they could continue. She stood through the cooing stubbornly and didn't even twitch when Evelyn pat her shoulder, asking if she felt better. She only nodded and said, *yes, thank you Evelyn*, to what the woman smiled brightly and asked if she would be ready to continue or if she would rather sit.

She wanted to continue and said as much, what was how she found herself in the cabin again, staring at a dress horrifiedly and questioning her life choices.

It wasn't really that it was ugly or anything- she didn't think that she had enough experience with fashion to judge rather any decision here-, but it actually didn't look like she could get inside. Like she couldn't figure out how she was supposed to worm herself into this piece of clothing, that looked like it had devoured a sheep or two in it's life without ripping it apart. It was puffy and looked rich and she had no idea where to stick her head inside to fucking wear it.

She needed help, but didn't want to ask for it. It would embarrass her to death to have a foreign woman, helping her into a dress. She would rather die than have that. Like maybe not literally, she was not suicidal, but metaphorically. Metaphorically she wanted to die preferably to accepting the help in dressing from a foreign woman.

Thank god however, and she did actually thank him out loud for that, she found the way to wedge herself into the dress- a painful way really as she twisted her arm once or twice the wrong way, but a way - and brushed over the cloth to smooth it down after the maneuver.

She regarded herself in the mirror critically, her face scrunched up in scrutiny.

Well. A rosy cloud maybe, would be an appropriate description for her. Or candy floss on a stick, with her, playing the part of the stick. An attractive stick really, but a stick.

She walked around a little, watching how the puff shook and shivered with each step and decided that it couldn't be any worse anyway and promptly opened the curtain to reveal herself to the hungry lions.

Evelyn screamed in glee, running to check for uncomfortableness; Selina took one look at the dress, at her unamused face and burst out laughing.

Her mood went from unamused to murder in a finger snap.

Evelyn, unfazed by her murderous glare, tugged on the dress, adjusted puff and asked if she felt any uneasiness with the clothing. She breathed out hotly, burying whatever anger she could find under blocks of determination, and answered with the evenest voice that she could manage, *I don't really like the dress and I feel and look ridiculous.*

Selina had snorted again, but cunningly hid it behind her catalogue this time.

Evelyn had actually looked devastated that someone didn't like this puffy trap and she had felt almost sorry, but then she remembered that if they would buy this then she would have to actually *wear* it and that just wouldn't go.

So in the end, the dress was brought away and replaced with a lot of other ones. Mari didn't feel reassured at the sight of the pile. Evelyn had recovered from the devastation and was happily telling her to try on the other dresses as she had found something that might fit more to her expectations. Selina had just drunk her second coffee meanwhile, watching them silently, like the traitor she was.

Ushered behind the curtain again, she tried on dress after dress. Some were longer than the others, some more colorful, and others were just impossible to understand really with how many loops and bows were placed on them. Sometimes, she liked a dress, as it was actually comfortable and practical to move in, but then Selina had shook her head and told her to get it off. Evelyn had always argued against in the weirdest way possible, agreeing with Selina's opinion, but also saying how pretty it looked on her and promptly, they had gotten those odd sorts of arguments, that surprisingly didn't involve any raising of voice.

It was like a battle really, with two fronts. Evelyn, passionate saleswoman, vs. Selina, merciless actress. Mari was mostly just standing there watching them clash and fight once they were deep enough inside their arguments to forget about her.

It was entertaining actually, she thought somewhat surprised, watching them shot their facts about colors and styles. Not that she understood one word really of what they were talking about, but the passion was still there. Blazing and hot, and she could practically feel their emotions in the air as they sparked and died.

Selina had won in the end, in all fights- not that she was surprised as she seemed like the woman to bully everyone into doing what she wanted -and she got driven out into the cabin again, to try on another outfit, that had suspiciously much accessories coming along with it.

She put on a yellow top, a long one this time, with a neck that was trying to have her suffocating and wormed herself into some shorts, that didn't even cover her knees. She felt stupid really, tired of changing clothes over clothes, but dressed herself with lots and lots of necklaces, black boots like hers, but only significantly more heavy, and a yellow hat, before she stepped out again and did a twirl and posed for her onlookers, that applauded and cheered, one more wild and frantic than the other.

Selina was smiling at her performance in amusement. Evelyn was just generally grinning at everything that was happening and walked closer for her inspection once again, giggling.

„My, Mari, you look stunning,” she took her hand to lift it, to look beneath it, at her waist.
„Does it fit?”

She shook her head. „The boots don't. They're too small,”

Evelyn's smile didn't fade. „I'll bring you a size larger. Anything else?”

„No,” she said. „Everything fits,”

„Are you uncomfortable? Your top maybe?” she tugged pointedly at said clothing and looked it over critically.

Mari shook her head ,no' again.

Evelyn smiled at her sympathetically. „You're almost done, you know. Your Aunt told me, if you like this one, then after this the next will be the last.” she explained. „Just one more and we can move to the checkout, lovely,”

Mari walked back into the cabin, feeling proud and satisfied with herself. „Just one more,” she mumbled to herself encouragingly, before exhaling deeply and unclothing herself again. Again a hand passed her the next outfit through the curtain and she put it on without having to think of it really. It came like breathing already with how many times, she had done it already.

Selina's words echoed through her head, like a mantra.

It's mostly practice, dear, lots and lots of repetitions make it easier to slip into the roles

Was she playing a role right now? The role of a niece, that loved to play soccer and liked her Aunt enough to offer her to teach her it. And she was rather good at it, wasn't she? Evelyn didn't seem suspicious of them and Selina didn't seem to give her any signs too, so maybe she was winging it perfectly. She stood up straighter at the realization, proud, in the leather jacket and the red flowingly light dress. She had potential in acting, she felt so much relief and pride, she thought she might pass out from it.

There was a chance, she might survive in this world after all.

The curtain opened easily when she pulled it. She walked out, straight, proud, looking forward, and promptly, tripped on her feet. She cursed quietly, stumbling and just rescued

herself from smacking into the floor with swinging arms. She giggled a little hysterically, still shocked from having almost made a fool of herself. No wait, she *did* make a fool of herself.

„Idiot,” she muttered to herself and hit her fist to her forehead, without any force behind it. Oh god; She was a self-destructive disaster, that needed serious help.

„Are you alright, Mari?” Selina’s voice called out in the same second, that hands helped her up from her crouch. Evelyn brushed her over, a worried frown on her face. „You okay, lovely?”

She nodded. „Yes, just tripped.”

Evelyn smiled immediately again, like a switch turned. „Oh, okay, do you want to sit?”

She shook her head. „Nope, don’t worry, I’m fine,”

Mari stepped backwards to escape the iron grip of Evelyn and spun to Selina. „What do you think?” she asked and readjusted the dress over her legs. „Top or Flop?”

Selina stared at her, silently without reaction, a mask, and then spoke up, seriously. „Top,”

„Ha,” she grinned. „I thought so too,”

Selina didn’t look to Evelyn, staring at Mari still, but when she spoke it was to the saleswoman. „We’ll take it,”

Evelyn smiled broader and clapped her hands excitedly. A picture of delight. „Follow me then please, ladies,”

Her Garderobe as Selina had called it, in the end, had costed seven hundred dollars and seventy eight cents and Selina had also left a spare of hundred dollars on top, for service, as she had explained later.

Selina as if reading her thoughts, had told her also that sometimes, it costed her much more for one piece only if she bought it from the most expensive boutiques, but still she didn’t know what to feel of it.

Because that much money, seven hundred dollars and seventy eight cents, she had never once even stolen from anybody.

Chapter End Notes

Uff, weighed ending. I shed an incorporeal tear throughout writing this.

(Wordcount 7.017)

End Notes

I'm not a Native Speaker, so if you notice mistakes in spelling, grammar or incorrect uses of words, please point them out so I can liquidate them via editing.

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