

((Note: This section takes place during [chapter 20](#).)

Kai asked, "Does someone like you even enjoy these? Candy and games that is, or are you here to just wreck the place?"

Tyler explained as they walked into the fair, "Well I enjoy these kinds of things much like anyone else...except perhaps the candy. I can't stand sweets. Besides I feel like keeping it low key. You know grabbing a corn dog or two, trying the popgun game, tease the psychic, and maybe see if there's anything else interesting. If I go about wrecking and burning every building it'll get old." Then he asked, "What about you? Do you actually enjoy this kind of thing or are you just looking for something neat to add to your collection? I hear the freak shows can sometimes turn up really crazy things. Although it's almost always a hoax."

"Well..." Kai hummed, looking around. "Actually, I've never been to one now that I think about it," they trailed off. They paused, looking down at Tyler again. They chuckled, "Oh I wouldn't take something so openly like you. I isolate my targets. It's why my face isn't the one on the wanted posters."

"Really? You should consider it, they've got a good artist," said the conjurer as he pulled out from his pocket the poster he had torn from the shop window earlier.

Kai paused briefly and shifted awkwardly, "Yeah well."

"See? Even got my good side, you'd think I was there to pose for him," he said showing Kai a wanted poster that seemed to depict a somewhat more sinister looking version of Tyler than the one standing in front of them. "Oh well. To each their own I suppose," he said, stuffing the poster back into his pocket.

Kai made a snort of laughter, "Heh, bucket of sunshine aren't ya? Though, that bucket is made of something rotten."

The conjurer chuckled at the comment. "Yep, bucket of sunshine and thumbtacks. That's me," he said quite proudly as he jabbed a thumb against his chest for a moment. "Anyway, we should try a bit of everything, since you've never been to one of these before. We'll start with corn dogs, I'm sure you've heard of those. Hotdogs on sticks coated in batter. Honestly, I think it was one of humanity's better ideas," he stated, now taking the lead and heading to a corn dog stand.

"Fine then, corn dogs it is," the necromancer said, following after him. Tyler watched other people paying and saw that the money he had conjured earlier was no longer in circulation. Well that was to be expected, he quietly conjured up some coinage so he could pay for the food. Kai reached into their pouch as they got up to the stand, pulling out a couple coins for their corn dog. They sniffed it and said, "I've had these before. But it has been a while." They chuckled and a bite off the top. Before they took another bite, they asked, "Say, where does a runt like you live if not with your parents? Conjure up

money for a house too?"

Tyler smirked this time. "Pfft, not even. If I really feel up to it I can just conjure up some shelter. Mostly I just hide out in public places. Like a bum I guess but better looking...and smelling. If I had a place to call home I'd have been caught long ago." He paused to pay for a pair of corn dogs, both of which were apparently for him. "Although, can't honestly say I don't miss having a place of my own," he added before taking a bite out of one corn dog and chewing thoughtfully.

"A place to call your own..." Kai echoed quietly, taking another bite of their corn dog.

Tyler continued to eat his corn dogs in silence, watching the necromancer space out. They seemed to be thinking hard on something. Although what it was Tyler had no way of telling. So instead of figuring it out, the conjurer just watched the people and Kai as he ate his corn dogs until they seemed to notice their own stupor. He teased, "Welcome back."

The necromancer looked around again and asked, "So what's there to do here aside from corn dogs?" They took the last bite and threw the stick in a nearby trash can.

Kai brushed the crumbs off their hands as the conjurer said, "Well there are of course all manner of rides. The renowned Ferris wheel known as the ride-to-ride on a date."

"Date ride?" they frowned.

The conjurer continued listing, "The infamous Tilt-A-Whirl guaranteed to make you hurl or your money back."

Kai sniggered, "People ride these? People ENJOY these? And I thought I was the sick one."

"I know right!? I mean they poison themselves with alcohol and cigarettes, make themselves sick on rides that spin toss and flip, but the moment you light a house on fire it's suddenly not cool," Tyler exclaimed sarcastically before going into a fit of giggles.

"Hey now," Kai grinned, one hand going to their hip. "Alcohol isn't all that bad if you know your limits. You can get a good buzz without killing brain cells." They wagged their finger.

Tyler shrugged, "Wouldn't know about alcohol myself. Never drunk the stuff." Then he went back to telling her about the rides, "Anyway, there's also that crazy spinning cage I can never remember the name of...the one that uses centrifugal force to defy gravity. It's just over there." He pointed in the direction of a spinning cage. "Course there are countless games too. My personal favorite is the pop gun game, but there are others. Dart throwing, knocking down pins with baseballs, trying to get ping pong balls into bottles, and fishing. There are also things like the funhouses, but honestly, they're only really fun if you're like ten," Tyler said, finishing his rundown of what fairs typically had. They didn't exactly

differ but much, just the themes. Country fairs also had foods and what not but most were baked sweets for contests. "So take your pick, what's it gonna be?"

The necromancer asked, "So uh... What's the pop gun game or whatever?"

Tyler explained, "The popgun game has these toy guns that shoot corks. You try to knock objects down with the corks they shoot. Here it's this way." Tyler took the lead and guided Kai through the fair to the game.

They chirped, "Huh. Never used guns when they worked. So why not?" Like promised several toy guns were lined up on a counter, behind the counter was a man and five shelves each of the shelves had a number of items on them. Kai flipped a coin onto the counter of the stand so they could play. Tyler leaned on it to watch. "So what, do we have to knock down a certain number of thingies to get a prize? Or is it just for effort? I wouldn't expect the ladder here," they rambled to the stand owner.

The carny seemed to come to life and answered, "You peg one object down you get one of these little guys here. Get two, you get a medium stuffy, and three gets you one of those." On the last one he pointed a veritably gigantic stuffed toys hanging from the ceiling. "You can use any gun ye-like sir, any gun ye-like. Though if I was to recommend one, I'd take this one 'ear," he said handing Kai one of the toy firearms.

The necromancer picked up the gun and looked at it thoughtfully. "Mmm," they hummed quietly, raising it level and aiming. They shot the gun and the cork flew, knocking a bottle over. A smug grin crossed their face and they re-aimed. The second grazed the side, bouncing off feebly and flopping to the ground. "I don't suppose real bullets bounce so easily?" they laughed quietly. The third shot knocked another bottle down. "Ha-HA!" they proclaimed, throwing their hands into the air and then setting the gun down. They looked at the toys and pointed to a stuffed shallow dragon, "I'll take that one."

Tyler was impressed by Kai's shooting, especially considering they had never played before. He said, "Heh, not a bad shot, Kai. Could kill someone with an aim like that."

Kai smiled smugly at the compliment. "As a spell slinger, I certainly hope so. I suppose it's not much different from aiming a spell," they mused aloud this time, staring at their plushie.

The conjurer stated plainly, "Little easier to aim a spell I think."

"True that," Kai muttered as they laced their fingers behind their head.

The carnie said to him, "How bout it, son? You want a go at it?"

Tyler paused as though considering whether or not he should play without causing the man any trouble. "Sure, I'll take a couple shots," he said smiling, having decided he wouldn't. He placed some

money on the counter and the clerk left some corks for him to use in exchange. Kai watched with interest as Tyler loaded the popgun and took aim. He fired, but his cork bounced weakly off the first bottle despite hitting it squarely. The second shot did the same so Tyler changed guns and shot hitting the top of the bottle. Which at first didn't seem like it would topple but it did, the conjurer's grin was more defiant than satisfied. "Hmm...I'll take the pygmy." The man handed the tiny stuffy over to him.

"Cuuuuuuuute," the necromancer made a snort of laughter. The guy chortled in response.

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((**Note:** This section takes place during [chapter 21](#).)

Tyler conjured a bit of string and tied the pygmy to his lamp chain making it look like the pygmy was holding on. "There. So, Kai how about we ride that tilt-a-whirl, or perhaps more games?" he asked, putting one hand on his hip as both lamp and pygmy swayed from his staff.

Kai thought again for a bit before deciding, "Well...those rides do look interesting. Can't be worse than a dragon ride." They walked towards the carnival coaster.

As the guy followed them, Tyler warned, "Don't let them fool you. Some of those rides make people with the toughest stomachs kweezy."

Kai made a small snort at the guy's warning. "Kid, I work around rotting and mutilated corpses. I think my stomach capacity can handle swinging around," they chuckled. The two came to a stop in front of the ride. The necromancer stared up at it in silent contemplation.

Tyler argued absently, "You never know. Motion sickness is an entirely different field than being around corpses." She made a small chortle of laughter at his explanation. Some of the people around them were starting to give the pair stares, seeing this he jutted his thumb at Kai. "Undertaker," he explained and the people lost interest, although some seemed more like they were embarrassed to have been caught eavesdropping. In the line, Tyler conjured up more money with a flick of his wrist. "So what was it that interested in your uh...field of expertise?" he asked Kai casually, curious to find out more about the necromancer. "I certainly hope you have a more interesting answer than immortality or long lost loved ones. Not that those are bad answers. Just...unoriginal." He added with a shrug, in his mind these were the two most likely reasons for anyone to choose necromancy.

The necromancer's hands floated down to their pockets and they turned at the waist to look at the guy and his cheeriness. Their rose eyes almost threateningly bore into him for a moment, which he made no response to, before smirking and looking forward again. "Not at all," they cocked their head to the right. "I learned the five finger discount when I was your age and dark magic was very useful for it. The best for the business I believe." A few clicks of agreement came from their shadow on the ground, which

caught the conjurer's attention. The clicks sounded almost insect or bird-like in tone. Not something a human could vocalize at any rate. "My master was...is a necromancer, so that naturally followed. He's rather...forceful." Kai stepped forward, paying for a ticket onto the ride and glancing back at Tyler again.

He turned back to the ride in front of them. "Well not exactly fascinating but at least it's different. Musta been rough when you started out. Woo we're up!" he exclaimed the last bit as the ride finished and the people that went on before them started unloading. A gold Aquarian's voice echoed over the sound of the nearby crowd explaining about magical defense. Tyler didn't take much notice of it since he already had a healthy supply of magic at his disposal.

After they stepped into the ride, a man came around and secured people into the ride. Kai looked at the floor thoughtfully and muttered, "Not really, the thieving was easy. The magic was fun. Nothing mattered at that point anyway, I had nothing to lose." They continued darkly, "Thieving goes beyond just taking items at night. You can play people to get the most out of the deal. Many people are so easy to manipulate. Seducing men or women. Weasel into their heart and you can take everything." They made a quirky smile. "And if you can rip a soul from its body, who's left to tell?" she continued. Kai looked over at Tyler, "See, I don't like squealers. So people who know too much tend to come up missing. And there's no fuss when their body just disappears into my collection."

"Oh, scary," the conjurer said with a fake shiver. "No wonder you seemed a bit surprised by the fact that I was looking to be seen. You don't like being seen yourself, guess I shoulda seen that coming a mile away," he said as they got buckled into the ride.

Kai raised an eyebrow at him and explained, "Well yes, thieves typically don't want to be seen. That's the point. So you can show your face around town and enjoy your spoils in peaceful comfort."

"And speaking of seduction. I've been wondering, are you a boy or girl? Don't really seem like you're completely one or the other." The ride started moving as he was talking. He didn't say much else while the ride was in motion apparently enjoying himself too much to care for the conversation. Kai seemed to enjoy it as well.

The necromancer laughed heartily, "My oh my~" They bent down to his level, placing a finger under his chin, teasing, "I do look like an effeminate boy. And yet, maybe I'm just a tomboyish girl. The possibilities." Tyler chuckled at the answer. They grinned, "Sorry kid, but I don't let people check the undercarriage. Kinda ruins my ability to con both genders."

As things settled down, he started talking again. "Fine by me. I'll just refer to you as 'it' from now on," he said giving a light laugh at his own humor before stepping back and sliding his chin off her finger. Though he couldn't hide the light blush that had come to his cheeks. Kai smiled faintly in response. "Well, you're good at least," he added knowing full well she had probably seen it. "Stealing to live, kinda sad when you think about it," he carried on as though he had never stopped talking, and feigning sympathy as he did so. The ride was over quickly however and it came to a stop. The conjurer said, "Though, now I want to

see this in action. Come on. Let's see how big a discount you can get from the snack vendors using your charms."

Kai's arms folded across their chest and they accused, "Oh is someone trying to use me for free snacks?"

"Maybe," Tyler replied playfully.

A snort escaped the necromancer as they scanned the vendors. There were different types of people in each gender. Each had their own delicate M.O. to deal with. Tyler looked ahead to see what had caught the necromancer's eye. It was a lone petite woman running a candy stand. She was dressed up in a flowery summer dress, long blonde hair, with bright green eyes, adorned with a floppy sun hat. She looked almost too happy. At the sight Tyler mentally wretched. "Alright then," Kai muttered, pondering a minute. The stand was a light brown wood and filled with brightly colored sweets in animal and dragon forms. "This calls for a cuteness overdose technique," they said quietly. A dark cloud rumbled in the palm of their hand as they looked through it as if searching for something in it. "Perfect," they smirked, snapping their fingers. The dark cloud fizzled away and a form bubbled up from the ground; a rosebud dragon hatchling. It stared blankly up at the necromancer. Kai knelt down and gently blew on the hatchling's face. A small amount of a green vapor came out of the necromancer's mouth and went into its nostrils. The hatchling popped to life; its eyes glowing brighter.

Tyler gave an impressed whistle. *'Necromancy always was a creepy magic,'* he thought to himself.

Kai asked it, "Can you act cute and candy-loving for me?" The hatchling nodded and chirped. Kai handed their stuffed animal to Tyler and picked up the hatchling, holding it to their chest. They wandered over to the stand and did a double take, stopping in. Tyler stayed back to watch the thief at work. He couldn't hear most of the conversation between them and the candy lady over the general noise of the fair, but bits and pieces came through. As the lady at the stand pointed, he looked down the street was a store bearing the same name as the stand. *'I should have burnt down that place instead,'* he thought grudgingly to himself. Well, he could always go back tonight. Just as he was imagining how he could wreck the place he spotted Kai motioning to him and the vendor looked in his direction. The conjurer gave a little wave feigning nervousness.

The thief handed him off the large wrapped dragon gummy on a stick. "There, little rat," they smirked.

Tyler felt his gut wretch again. "You picked a candy store on purpose, didn't you?" he muttered to them as he glowered at the vile candy in his hand. Clearly this wasn't what he had hoped for, but still he caught the part where they got two for one and that was a pretty good deal.

Kai grinned and said, "Perhaps I did...then again, I like sweets myself. If the kiddie wants to choose his snacks, then kiddie has to do the work." They gave him a teasing pat on the head. "Eat up," they chortled as they straightened and took the wrapper off their own gummy.

Tyler simply stuck his tongue out at their retort. He glanced back at the store owner, who was watching him with enthusiasm. She made a motion as if telling him to try it. Groaning, Tyler bit into the candy and was immediately repulsed by the taste. He spat the food back out. Still eyeing the candy with more disdain than an anti-dragon extremist, the guy asked, "So what was that black cloud earlier? Some kind of corpse catalogue?"

Kai took a bite and answered, "Ah yeah." They snapped their fingers and the hatchling faded away. "A way to look through my stuff without summoning anything. Quite useful for casual glancing. Most people don't want to know you're a necromancer. They'll think it, but they'll ignore it as long as they don't see the bodies. Pitiful really," they paused, breathing out a thoughtful sigh as a smirk crept onto their face. "I can steal souls when I collect a fresh body. And eat those souls to rejuvenate my vital energy. Or...even make my toys seem more lifelike as you saw. I suppose I could even give it back and watch the toy as it realizes it's now my slave. Since I still can control their body with my magic, they can never truly have their life back. It's a cruel joke I could put on someone really. Maybe send a conscious loved one after them. Force them to cut that person down..." They stared at Tyler for a moment, "But that's something my fellow necromancers may enjoy if they even have the ability to mess with souls. It's a select ability only few learn. Most don't seem to care as long as they have a mindless horde of bodies. I don't...typically enjoy torture. As long as I don't have a reason for it."

Now the idea of making a tool realize that it's their tool brought a sadistic smile to Tyler's face. "I can see the appeal in it," he stated. He was now imagining himself forcing countless loved ones to kill each other thus increasing his "collection". "Maybe I should have gotten into necromancy. Eternal youth and I'd get to torment people. Sounds awesome," he added as he casually tossed the remainder of that vile candy into a garbage can now that they were out of sight of the candy vendor.

Kai raised an eyebrow as if she thought him to be messed up. A smile crept across their face, "Why yes, necromancy does have some nice perks to it. You can change form and summon beasts, however..." They bent down, grabbing his chin lightly in one hand, "Should you falter or prove unable to control these abilities, they'll backfire. Your own soul could be consumed by the dark form you took. The hulking beast you summoned may not be so inclined to listen to someone weak. Maybe he decides a kiddie makes a good toothpick." They released him and continued, "Dark magic is not so forgiving as other magic." They straightened up, their hands finding their way to their pockets.

The conjurer retorted, "Only if the kiddie is actually weak of course."

Kai put a finger to their cheek as they stared at Tyler thoughtfully. They took a bite out of their gummy as they continued, "Meddling with souls is a...touchy subject of this world. Most things having to do with souls are taboo and...certain individuals will hunt you down for it." They glared briefly at the ground.

Tyler had to think on that one, he knew a great deal about magic, but because his affinity was for conjuration, he didn't look too closely at some of the other schools. "So what...like bounty hunters? Pretty sure they'll hunt you down just for being a necromancer," he stated not entirely sure he

understood what Kai meant.

The necromancer paused briefly before saying, "Bounty hunters?... No I've never encountered a bounty hunter. I think we may be more trouble than we're worth." They snickered at the thought. "No, I..." They chewed on their tongue for a moment, "Well I told you dark magic is not so forgiving. It attracts some uh...other attention. Necromancy is borderline taboo in itself seeing as how we mess with the dead, but they really don't like the souls. I think they get angry when they can't collect souls. So using the souls for twisted purposes after may just cross the line." Kai fidgeted in their spot from discomfort. "They're Death. Reapers. Whatever you wanna call them. Gods know I got one riding my ass. No pun intended. But they know. They just fucking know every little thing you do. Goes in their little shitty books like a narration of your life. And have no doubt they pop up when they don't like something," they continued on, annoyance dripping from their voice.

"I guess running afoul of a collector of souls would put a damper on your day, wouldn't it?" Tyler said sarcastically as he digested what Kai had revealed. "You have a reaper hovering over you? Is that why your shadow seems to act on its own?" he asked, glancing down at Kai's shadow for a moment. He had to admit, the idea of death hanging over your shoulder 24 and 7 was a bit creepy, although he figured one gets used to it after a while.

Kai burst out laughing and doubled over briefly, holding their gut. "Oh no no. He has no need to physically be here. He doesn't need to. As I said, they just know everything you do. My shadow is something far different." They made a beckoning motion as they straightened up. Their shadow twisted and contorted as something seemed to pull away from it in a gooey fashion, much like pulling apart melted cheese. It pulled up away, climbing up Kai's form until it snapped away from their shadow, returning it to normal. On their shoulder sat a pitch black dragon with red eyes. Its form was very smokey as its edges were not well defined. It few clicks came from its mouth. "This is Tix. He's a shadow walker dragon that got dabbled up in dark magic and was tainted by it. As this breed is normally white. I found him as a hatchling and we just became friends. He's quite the protector really and has quite a few surprises packed in," they explained.

"Nice you meet you, Tix," Tyler said with a slight bow to the tainted shadow walker. Tix clicked a few notes in response before crawling back down into Kai's shadow. "You necromancers aren't the only ones who have to watch themselves. If I heard a tale of conjurers getting devoured by their creations today, it wouldn't be for the first time. When you boil it down every school of magic has its dangers," he mused thoughtfully. "But we're not here to argue magic theory. I did lots of that with my parents. What do you feel like doing next?"

The necromancer chuckled, "Yes, all magic can kill you. But...frankly I'm more concerned about losing my own soul than simply dying to being devoured. I'm sure the souls I have stolen are not happy about being in a state of limbo for eternity." They shrugged at the prospect. "But I digress. I suppose either way dying doesn't tickle my fancy. Buuuuuuuut we've already done everything I particularly care about. Games, snacks, rides. I was hoping to polish some of my collection items, but that requires a



more remote area for more obvious reasons," they smirked.

While the conjurer silently admitted that being trapped in limbo for all eternity didn't sound so great, his point did get across to Kai as they conceded that dying period wasn't exactly on their to-do list. "Well if we're done here, we can either part ways or head to the warehouses. One of them should be locked up right about now," he said, leading the way out of the fair.

Kai looked blankly at him before clearing their throat, "Oh you go right ahead. I'm not sure you'll come out of city hall so unscathed. Not even at night either. I hear dragons have hawk eye vision and that it's even better at night." They shook their head and explained, "I prefer to do my work in the shadows. Makes Tix's work easier, too. Considering he can be intangible as long as he's in a shadow." They looked down at him and said, "Listen short stack. As I said, I gotta clean up my collection."

"I'll take that as a no then," Tyler said cheerily as Kai patted his head.

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((**Note:** This section takes place during [chapter 23](#).)

On their way out, he spotted the city hall and a mischievous smile came to his face. "Could also crash some of those magic lessons that the Aquarians were hollering about not too long ago. Imagine the shit they would get into for letting a known criminal bust into the city hall and make a mess of the place, and then get away with it to boot." Anyone with eyes and two cents in the brain could tell he was itching for the opportunity to create some havoc.

Kai purred, "Careful~ Wouldn't want an accident in causing all that trouble. You might just find your way into my collection." They lightly tapped his nose once.

"I'll be fine," Tyler said as the necromancer turned and walked off with a wave. "Can't promise the same for anyone else though," he added in a low mutter. He did a large twirl and started making his way to the city hall. He could see guards standing outside of the doors as people filed in. He stalked into a back alley and discarded his jacket and hat, since they would give him away. He smoothed out his messy hair and conjured a nice golfer's hat. Plopping that on his head, Tyler mixed himself in with the others entering the city hall to register for magic lessons. He wanted this to be perfect, so he would have to study his target first. He could see the guards looming over the people as they entered the building. Tyler was confident in his disguise. Without the jacket, he wore just a plain white shirt and black pants along with that golf cap instead of his normal pointed hat. He did still have his clanking lantern staff though. It was perhaps the one thing he wasn't comfortable parting with, even if he could just make a new one.

Tyler felt someone brush past him. Looking at the black-haired, silver-winged halfling in a silver dress

hurtling through the crowd, he wondered what she was up to. He hoped she didn't get the same idea as him, because that would just make him look like a copycat. Tyler was about to start moving through the gap made through the crowd when there was a dull thud of two people colliding right by him. Turning he saw a silver-haired man yelling at black-haired teenager, who had his sword drawn. The silverette said, "What the he-"

The conjurer shoved one hand in his pocket to watch the scene unfold with uncontained glee when he felt something metal in that pocket. He pulled out several gold coins and was momentarily confused. *'I didn't conjure these...ooooooooohhhh.'* He came to a realization as the man who was yelling took off in the direction of the halfling that had brushed past him. Whoever had brushed past him had left gold in Tyler's pocket, a kind yet wasted effort. He would have to hold on to this for later.

As the conjurer turned to leave a sword was pointed at him by the teen, who got bumped into by the silverette. The brunette said, "On full legal terms, I'm here to collect your bounty. I don't forget a face. And there's a pretty pile of gold on your head. That means guards can't interfere. Get what I'm saying?" he smiled smugly. "How about we make this easy?" he said, lowering his voice as he drew his second sword. Tyler knew full well about the bounty on his head, although he wasn't really sure if it entailed barring the guards from acting while the man was on a hunt.