

Flinch

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Flinch

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Summary

Day Fourteen: collaring

It hits Caleb suddenly, and he laughs, an unpleasant bark of a sound. “You are surrounded by immortals with ice in their veins, so you come to me looking for a fireball. Is that it?”

Notes

Be warned that this is NOT safe, sane, or (explicitly) consensual kink. Blanket consent is given, but there’s no negotiation, discussion of boundaries, or safeword/signal. Major spoilers up to C2E106, minor spoilers up through the current story arc (~E112). Take a look at the end note for more info if you need it, and enjoy responsibly.

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

It seems like a lifetime ago, the day the war ended. Since then, the Nein have dethroned an aberration pretending to be a fire god, survived TravelerCon, confronted Ikithon, and found the ruins of an ancient floating city. After all of that, Caleb feels like he should be more tired than he is.

The good news is that standing before the Bright Queen is substantially less intimidating than it was in the past. This meeting is largely ceremonial, thanking them for the part they played in the peace negotiations and wrapping up loose ends. Though no one says it, Caleb suspects the Nein's days of skullduggery on behalf of warring nations are, thankfully, over.

Essek sits at the right hand of his queen, looking for all the world like a dutiful servant of the Dynasty. Caleb's eyes keep cutting over to him to see if he's squirming, but there's not so much as a flinch.

Caleb is impressed.

The Xhorhaus is much as they had left it, still under the care of Vedalla. They're discussing surrendering it back to the Dynasty, but there's a lively discussion going on regarding the terms under which they'll do so. Fjord thinks it should be turned into an orphanage, Veth thinks it should be a safe house for humans and halflings stranded in Rosohna, and Jester thinks it should be used to house animals abandoned by their owners during the war. Yasha and Caduceus are listening to the various arguments with a degree of amusement, and Beau keeps loudly proclaiming how little she cares.

Personally, Caleb is unconvinced that the Dynasty will agree to any of that, or that they'll follow through if they do. The house wasn't theirs in the first place; it was a gift from Essek, and they don't really have any leverage on the Dynasty to ensure their wishes are carried out. Caleb finds his mind drifting, so he excuses himself to retire to his room. Cad and Yasha nod before turning their attention back to the discussion, but no one else notices him leaving.

He's no longer used to the perpetual night within the city, but his faultless internal clock tells him it's more or less bedtime. Still, he has a little more reading to do, working his way through some of the books Essek loaned him the last time they were here. Apparently, Essek hadn't thought – or hadn't dared – to try to get them back.

With his mind already turned toward Essek, Caleb isn't surprised to close his door and turn around to find the man himself standing in his room. Standing, not floating, and that part is a little surprising. While his appearance is as immaculate as it was at court, Caleb could only describe his expression as haunted, though naturally, it looks good on him.

"You know you are still welcome here, yet you did not use the front door," Caleb says, knowing Essek will appreciate the lack of pleasantries. "What am I to make of this?"

"I can barely face you," the drow says, his face turned toward Caleb but his eyes downcast. "I could not face the rest of them, as well."

Caleb nods, then silently goes about his business as if he were alone. He removes his boots and strips down to his shirtsleeves, then goes to his desk and begins pulling out paper and ink. It's a ploy to see if Essek will start talking, but he doesn't. At length, Caleb asks, "Can we speak freely? Without unwelcome listeners, that is."

"Just because you discovered me, that doesn't mean I have become any less careful," Essek says with a hint of disdain. It seems to be out of some sort of habit of arrogance, though, because when Caleb shoots him a sharp glance, he has the good sense to look chastened.

"I assume because you are here and speaking to me now, and because your head is still attached to your body, that you have not been exposed."

"No," Essek says, and his expression goes from humbled to miserable. "My deeds have remained undetected."

Caleb sighs and scrubs at his face. "We are not angry with you, Essek. We do not trust you, but we wish you to remain safe."

"'We'?"

"The Mighty Nein."

"And what about Caleb Widogast?"

"He's not angry with you either," Caleb says. "How could I be angry or disappointed or hurt when I have done worse myself?"

Essek's brow furrows, and he finally looks Caleb in the eyes. "Have you ever started a war for the sake of intellectual curiosity?"

"No, but I have done other unforgivable things."

"Have you traded away your nation's most valuable secrets for personal gain?"

That makes Caleb's lip curl in an almost-smile. "Not yet."

The smile seems to irritate Essek further, and his cool demeanor dissolves shockingly quickly. "Then how can you possibly compare us and grant me absolution?"

"I assure you, that isn't mine to grant," Caleb says, then pauses. It takes him a moment to parse what's going on, and he's still not sure he fully grasps the situation. "Essek, it sounds like you *want* me to be angry with you. Me, personally."

"That is patently ridiculous," he spits.

"Is it? You sneak into my room and wait for me to return, and now you seem intent on provoking me into an argument. What do you want, Essek?"

"I want... I want someone to care enough about what I've done to get angry," Essek says, and it comes out as something near a snarl. "I betrayed you. I betrayed your *friends*. I put you all

in danger for no reason. Don't you care about that? Don't you hate me for it?"

"I think," Caleb starts, slowly starting to approach Essek where he stands near the bed. "You want *me* to care enough about *you* to... what? Punish you? Forgive you?"

When Caleb gets close enough, he can see unshed tears in Essek's eyes, though the drow quickly looks away. "I have lived for more than a century, yet I am little more than an adolescent in Den Thelyss. My entire goal is to become like my elders, live lifetime after lifetime, gaining ever more knowledge and caring ever less about the concerns of the flesh and the world. And right now, there is nothing more loathsome to me than that thought."

It hits Caleb suddenly, and he laughs, an unpleasant bark of a sound. "You are surrounded by immortals with ice in their veins, so you come to me looking for a fireball. Is that it?"

"Perhaps," Essek says through gritted teeth, his eyes flaring.

Desire is something Caleb hasn't let himself feel in months. There's been too much in the way, too many layers of politics and intrigue, let alone his own personal demons. But here Essek is, practically begging him to show it. If Caleb's wrong, Essek is still powerful enough to crush him with a wave of his hand. But Caleb's never been afraid to make a wager if the risk seems worth the consequences. He stalks the last few steps across the room to Essek, invading his space in no uncertain terms. With Essek's feet on the ground, Caleb's the taller of the two, and he fists his hand in Essek's shirt and tugs him to his toes to bring their eyes level. It's all bravado on Caleb's part – he hasn't got the physical strength to back it up, and Essek knows it, so the fact that he lets himself be pulled, that he locks eyes with Caleb, tells Caleb what he needs to know.

Caleb takes in a deep breath through his nose. Essek doesn't flinch, but he doesn't move to break Caleb's hold, either. "I may have the means to give you what you seek. It is up to you whether you wish me to use it."

Essek's mouth opens slightly, his stubborn expression breaking. "Anything," he breathes.

For a moment, it's hard for Caleb to believe what he's heard, how quickly this has escalated, but his blood has begun to heat. He lets go, half expecting Essek to run or simply vanish. But he does neither, so Caleb, heart pounding in his ears, turns and rummages through his pack for a recently reactivated artifact.

The collar is beaten metal, a restraining device that could never be mistaken for jewelry, and Essek swallows audibly when Caleb holds it up.

"When I fix this around your neck," Caleb says, attempting to keep his voice even, "it will remove your ability to speak. Any magic that requires a verbal component of any kind, even the merest sound, will be beyond your capabilities until I remove it."

Essek nods slowly. Caleb waits for him to ask questions, but he says nothing, only looks on expectantly, body nearly quivering with tension.

“Since you will not tell me what it is you want,” Caleb continues, “if you allow me to put this on you, I will assume your body is mine to do with whatever I wish. I will not remove you from this room. I will not involve anyone else. I *will* do as I please with you, regardless of how you feel—”

“*Do it.*”

The feeling of disbelief washes over Caleb again, both at what he’s offering and how quickly the drow accepts. His resolve falters – *he* knows he won’t hurt Essek; Essek doesn’t. “Essek...”

“Do. It.” Essek drops to his knees, eyes locked on Caleb’s. “Use me.”

Caleb long ago learned how to control the shaking of his hands when it came time to perform important spells, and he needs all of those skills now to fasten the collar around Essek’s neck. He checks in one more time, giving Essek a questioning look, but the drow just stares back at him obstinately, as if daring him to call it off.

Caleb speaks the word, and the collar fastens seamlessly around the dark, slender throat. It’s not tight – Caleb can easily fit two fingers in between the collar and Essek’s skin – but nor is there any visible latch or weak point with which to remove it.

“Essek,” Caleb says, voice trembling. “Say something.”

His mouth remains shut, his jaw clenching.

“Essek, I have not tested the collar since reactivating it, and I wish to do so now. Attempt to speak.”

Essek’s eyebrows rise, a clear challenge.

Caleb doesn’t quite realize what he’s doing until his palm cracks against Essek’s cheek hard enough to throw the drow off balance. It’s clear that Essek wasn’t expecting it either, and his mouth opens around an indignant gasp with no sound. He recovers quickly, the look on his face half indignation and half gratitude.

When Caleb tries to speak, his voice cracks around the very first word, but he soldiers on. “You... you want me to punish you, and so I will.” He reaches out, and this time Essek does flinch, expecting another slap, but Caleb strokes his face instead. He runs a thumb over the high cheekbone, fingers gliding up and over the pointed tip of Essek’s ear – things he’s been dying to do since Essek began to share his magic.

“You are an extraordinarily handsome man,” Caleb muses. “You know this. I sense that you have used it to get what you want, as you have used everything at your disposal. Including me.”

Essek’s wince is much less obvious this time, but it’s there.

“Did you use your looks, your body to further your goals?” Caleb asks, stroking his fingers gently through Essek’s white curls in contrast to his harsh words. “I assume you did. It is

what I would have done. It is what I *did*, many years ago. Did you drop to your knees, just like you have done for me now?"

Essek's chin juts out, a proud *yes* as sure as if he'd spoken it.

"It is a shame you cannot speak. I would like to know how many cocks you sucked, how many cunts you devoured to get what you wanted. One hundred and twenty years is plenty of time for practice. You must be very, very good at it by now."

Essek smirks.

Caleb realizes the trap that he's set for himself, affording Essek a bit of control over a conversation he can't actually participate in, but quite frankly, Caleb doesn't care. He's been hardening in his trousers since Essek dropped to his knees, and he'll be damned if he lets this opportunity go. Besides, the smuggler Essek feels, the easier it will be to turn it back on him.

So Caleb lets go of Essek's hair to unbuckle his own belt. He doesn't have to concentrate to keep his hands steady now, and he doesn't want to think about what that says about him. When Caleb draws his cock out, Essek looks at it hungrily, and now Caleb has a chance to smirk.

"Now is your chance to prove yourself," he says, stroking himself slowly. "You wish to atone for your sins? This is how. Suck me well enough and I may forgive you."

As horrible a thing as it is to say, the words spill easily from Caleb's mouth, and Essek accepts them willingly. He opens his mouth, tongue extended, and Caleb rubs the tip of his cock against it. Even that much stimulation makes him shiver, the rough-soft texture of it a long-forgotten pleasure.

A hand lands on his hip, and Caleb is so startled he nearly jumps. "*Nein*," he says quickly. "Hands behind your back. If you cannot get me off using only your mouth, you are worthless."

It's more than Essek was expecting, and Caleb sees the impact of the word "worthless" clear across his face. But only sets Essek's resolve that much stronger, and Caleb did agree to punish him. Also, Caleb is honestly unable to imagine a scenario where Essek *doesn't* make him come without needing his hands.

He pushes slowly into Essek's mouth, enjoying the drag of the drow's tongue on the underside of his cock. For the moment, Essek simply opens to him, letting Caleb go as deep as he wants without any theatrics. And, for the moment, Caleb doesn't push too far, slowly withdrawing the second he feels resistance. It's a lovely, unhurried warm-up, Caleb's nerves lighting up like a series of signal fires as he glides back and forth across Essek's tongue.

Essek's eyes are looking up at Caleb from under his lashes, and his insistence on remaining still while Caleb uses his mouth is a clear goad. "I thought I told you to suck it, Essek," Caleb says sternly, and Essek practically smiles as his mouth closes around Caleb.

The first long, hard suck makes Caleb's toes curl against the wooden floor. Essek *is* good at this, and though the thought isn't surprising, Caleb finds himself completely unprepared for the physical reality of it. He bites down on a shout that would probably send his friends running upstairs, but he can't stop his upper body from doubling over. The drow senses it, probably with a finely-honed eye for weakness, and starts bobbing his head quickly. It takes every ounce of willpower Caleb has to grab the back of the collar and pull Essek off.

"At my pace," Caleb grits out. "Do not forget who is in control here." He expects more smugness on Essek's part, but he's surprised to see a stunned expression on the drow's face – perhaps he expected to make Caleb come too quickly and then get punished for it. Perhaps he didn't expect much self-discipline on Caleb's part. If only he knew.

Caleb feeds his cock into Essek's waiting mouth again, but this time he grips the back of Essek's neck, clearly exerting control. Essek settles into it with surprising ease.

"That's it," Caleb croons softly. "How pretty your mouth looks, wrapped tight around my cock. Can you take a little more?" Essek does his best to nod, and Caleb pushes deeper, thrusts in with a little more force. It continues this way for a few long minutes until Caleb realizes he's hardly exerting any pressure at all with his hand, merely keeping Essek's head still while he fucks his mouth, and it makes Caleb groan.

Before long, he's testing Essek's limits without even realizing he's doing so, hitting the back of Essek's throat with every other stroke. He only really appreciates what's happening when Essek gags, his throat spasming around the sensitive head of Caleb's cock, and without thinking, Caleb's hand clenches, holding Essek on him for a split second longer instead of releasing him. When Caleb realizes it, he draws back immediately, pulling free of Essek's mouth and staggering backward.

It's a little disturbing, watching someone gag and cough without a sound. "Fuck," Caleb groans, in regret for what he did... and for how much he liked doing it. Liked the surge of power that came from having such complete control over Essek, an incredibly powerful mage who, for that one moment, had no choice but to choke on Caleb's cock.

Caleb buries his face in his hands, wondering what the hell to do now, but when he looks up, Essek is reaching out for him again. His eyes are watering and he's breathing hard, but he shuffles on his knees until he can get a hand on Caleb's hip and tug.

Wide-eyed, Caleb stares down at him. "Is this," he manages, "Is this what you...?"

A word forms silently on Essek's lips: *please*.

Caleb reaches for Essek again, and Essek puts his hands behind his back without having to be told. Essek takes Caleb in his mouth, pressing forward, and Caleb feels the subtle vibrations of a soundless moan around his cock. He starts again, fucking Essek's mouth and rubbing at the lips stretched wide around him. "You... you like this," he gasps. "You like the feeling of a thick cock pushing down your throat. You like to choke on it."

Another silent moan buzzes into Caleb's body, and all thought of punishment has left his head – if this is what Essek wants, Caleb will give it to him in spades. He thrusts recklessly,

never knowing if this one will set off another mind-shattering spasm in Essek's throat. It feels dangerous, not even trying to control himself, a taste of something forbidden.

Essek gags once, twice in a row, and Caleb doesn't stop. The drow's body shudders, but his hands stay clamped behind his back, and all Caleb can feel is the rapidly approaching point of no return. The next time Essek's throat starts to flutter and contract around his cock, Caleb grips the back of his head and *holds*, pulling him down so that Caleb can shoot down his throat. It feels so good it almost hurts, hips juddering like he could somehow push farther into Essek than he already is, Caleb's whole world narrowing down to the point where Essek's throat grips him, where the pleasure overflows and spills out of him.

And then hands land on Caleb's thighs, shoving hard, and Caleb goes over backwards. He barely even feels the hard landing on his ass; he only thinks to grab his cock to wring the few last, weak spurts of his orgasm out.

When his vision clears, he sees Essek on hands and knees in front of him, coughing violently and without a sound. Caleb feels the bottom drop out of his gut at the sight of what he's done to this man, to his friend. He crawls over to the drow, waving his hand and speaking the word that opens the collar and allows Essek his voice and his magic.

By the time he grabs Essek's shoulders and rights him, the coughing is starting to slow down, replaced by thick gasps of air. Tears are streaming down Essek's face, and Caleb's hand freezes in midair, unsure if he should wipe them away or throw himself backward and never touch Essek again. Before he can make the choice, Essek grabs his outstretched hand and squeezes it so hard the bones creak.

"Thank you," Essek gasps out. "*Thank you.*"

End Notes

A while after the peace treaty, Essek comes to Caleb for punishment. Caleb offers him the Collar of Silencing (blocking his magic), and Essek essentially gives him blanket permission to use his body. With implied consent, Caleb fucks Essek's face and holds him down on his cock as he comes. He immediately feels guilty about it, but it's strongly implied that it's what Essek wanted.

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