

enemy of my enemy

by iztopher

Months after begrudgingly saving the world, Boyle thought he would never have to deal with heroics or Hercules again... Until a darkling arrives at his door with a proposition for the most fun he's had in ages.

For Ishti, for the ficlet prompt "Boyelmite, scheeeeeming! >:)"

...

Boyle was no good at demon summoning. He had tried, but demons were a wily bunch, and when he worked with them, he usually fell under their influence before capturing them in his. It was a shame, because he was quite skilled with working with minions, and he would have loved to add a daeva to the mix. Or even just an imp, really. Instead, skeletons would have to do.

Which is why he was surprised when he opened the door to his house and saw a darkling standing out in front.

Wormwood had, of course, seen its fair share of demons, but nobody had seen a darkling outside the Demon Realm since Hercules defeated their master, Mordred Darkthrop, a little over a century ago. Now one stood in Boyle's yard, between his gargoyles, rocking back and forth on her purple heels, waving her green tail behind her.

"Can I help you?" Boyle asked.

Her smile showed off tiny, adorable fangs. "Oh boy, can you ever!"

It turns out that Hercules did not, in fact, defeat Mordred Darkthrop. His accounts of the matter, his crowning achievement as a hero, were plagiarized from the journal of a certain Mel Darkthrop, Mordred's descendant and the ultimate chosen of the Darkthrop Prophecy. The darkling, Yemite, explained this to Boyle over a cup of poisoned coffee with a nearly equally toxic amount of whipped cream on top.

Somewhere in the midst of this, Yemite had apparently shifted her allegiance from Mordred to Mel, and as a result, saw Hercules stealing her

credit as a grave injustice it was her duty to right. Hercules had taken credit for Mel's accomplishments for *years*, Yemite explained, and she had always hated it. Besides, his account erased the fact that Mel had ever raised the Darkthrop Empire to begin with, which Yemite saw as a vital part of Darkling history.

Boyle briefly regretted not leaving Hercules to the elements at the top of Skull Mountain. "I'm game," he said. How could he not be? Hercules was a prick. He'd attempted to destroy the world, and more importantly, he'd successfully destroyed one of Boyle's gargoyles. "But how did you know to seek me out?"

"Te'ijal said the last time she saw Hercules, you were helping carry his unconscious body down a mountain." Before Boyle could ask about the details of her knowing Te'ijal, Yemite tilted her green-horned head a little and grinned with a mischievous gleam in her eye. "Besides," she said, "anyone who calls himself *Boyle the Horrible* sounds like my kind of person."

He was. Yemite was Boyle's kind of person, too. She was energetic, an enabler, with a wicked sense of humor and a refreshing willingness to listen to his ideas. She would make an excellent minion. If only he wasn't retired, he would ask her if she needed a job.

They sat on a richly embroidered rug in Boyle's home - her flopped on her stomach, kicking her legs absentmindedly, him cross-legged with Fang laid napping beside him. A book lay on the floor between them, with a scribbled, brainstormed sheet of paper on top.

"Okay. We could sneak into his house and leave a curse there?"

She pouted. "That seems like a waste of a perfectly good curse to me."

"...How about a fish? Somewhere he won't find it at first, until it starts to rot."

"Now you may be onto something..." Yemite's tail swished thoughtfully back and forth like a grandfather clock. She pursed her lips and furrowed her brow, deep in concentration, before springing to life. "Oh! I've got it! So, we take three chickens..."

As they continued talking, they had to cross out less and less from their brainstorming session. They were formulating a real plan.

“Oh! We need to replace all of his mirrors with Truth Mirrors,” Boyle suggested. “He’ll *hate* that.”

Yemite hummed in interest, then asked, somewhat sheepishly, “aren’t those just... regular mirrors?”

“...Depends where you buy them from.” Boyle was glad Ingrid wasn’t there to talk about the time he saw a ‘regular mirror’ and claimed it was broken, because his build and beard had both lost an inch and a half compared to the reflection he saw at home. “We’ll table that idea for now.”

“You’re definitely onto something, though,” Yemite said cheerily. “As much as I would like to reign some terror upon him, I would *also* like to force him to confront the truth.”

“That’s not a bad idea.” Boyle stroked his beard. “I could have Ingrid brew up a Blabbermouth potion...”

By the time they finished their plotting, Boyle was leaning his cheek against his fist as a makeshift pillow and suppressing a yawn every few minutes. “Yemite, although I am one of the world’s most powerful mages, I am ultimately mortal. I think I need to sleep.”

“Oh, of course! You must replenish your magic for our journey ahead.” She stood up. “What direction is the inn?”

Boyle, who was having the most fun he’d had in months, was less surprised than he’d like to be by how reticent he was to send her off. “It’s down the hill and to the right,” he said, “but I have a guest cot, if you’d prefer the fine accommodations of the Wolfbane household.” It was a new development. For years, he’d long avoided making his home hospitable to guests, until Myst and Robin had to go ahead and make themselves so damn easy to *miss*.

Yemite giggled. “Oh, Boyle. Darklings sleep standing up.”

Unlike most immortals, Hercules had no sense of when he had overstayed his welcome in a mortal settlement. When he woke up at the base of Skull Mountain, they had sent him home to Acropolis with his tail between his legs. Boyle and Yemite were relieved to learn that he was still there months later. They came into his house as quiet as could be, armed with a grinder full of Almirk peppercorns, a vial of truth serum, and a carrying cage full of chickens. They left for the inn in high spirits.

The next day, Hercules woke to a rooster crowing in his ear. *That's strange*, he thought blearily; *I could have sworn I fell asleep in my own bed-*

He had. There was just a rooster on his bed.

A rooster with a small paper sign dangling from its neck. He reached out to snatch it, and it did *not* like that, immediately crowing aggressively and attempting to peck at his fingers. Hercules frantically scooted backwards away from it, toppling off his bed in the process. *Ouch*. At least as he scrambled up and away from his bed, the bird seemed content to leave him be. It could tell he was no measly foe.

He unfolded the paper and frowned at the writing, which read: #1.

That was strange. As far as Hercules was aware, there was no house #1 in Acropolis to return the rooster to. At least it gave him an opportunity to rope someone into helping him handle it. *Of course I, the great Hercules, could capture a simple rooster, but I need your assistance to bring it to its rightful owner...*

He was distracted by the sound of clanging metal and shattering ceramics from his kitchen. And, he realized with confusion, more cawing. From the opposite direction.

Hercules thrust aside the curtain which separated his bedroom from the living area. A second chicken, this one a hen with a sign proclaiming it #2, clucked in irritation as it walked back and forth across his kitchen counter. Sugar crystals covered the floor, alongside white and blue fragments of the container that held them up until a moment ago. *That was fine*, he told himself, *the powerful Hercules can handle a broom*. He walked nervously across the kitchen to the tall cabinet where it was stored, keeping an eye on the chicken to avoid provoking it further.

Nervously, he grasped the metal handle of the wooden cabinet door and swung it open, revealing the contents of his storage and -

His stomach plummeted.

This chicken's sign said #4.

From their place in the bushes outside of Hercules's house, Boyle and Yemite attempted to stop themselves from devolving into hysterics with

little luck. Yemite just barely kept her wings restrained from flapping in laughter and causing a scene as they heard Hercules bellow. It sounded more in mild pain than severe frustration, so he must have rubbed his eyes after touching the pepper-laced handle to his cabinet.

"Now he just needs to try to rinse them out with the truth-laced water jug we left him..." Boyle narrated ominously, slipping back into old habits. "And since we bribed the foremost expert on Darkthrop this side of the Arishta Isles to claim their chickens escaped, it's a near-guarantee they'll take the opportunity to ask for an interview with the hero Hercules. This batch of Blabbermouth was particularly potent; Ingrid said it should last all day. I believe your friend's legacy will be restored by nightfall."

Yemite beamed. It was softer than her usual devious grin, but Boyle liked it just as much. "In the meanwhile," Yemite said, "wanna take bets on how long it takes him to realize there's only three chickens?"

He nudged her shoulder with his elbow and returned her smile. "Oh, you know it."