

two of a crime

by iztopher

Boyle and Myst have some issues working out whether they're friends or not. The agreement they come to works fine for them both, but may have some nasty implications for the rest of the world.

Title from Two of a Crime by Perma.

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Myst peers at the brush in her hand. She frowns at it, bringing it up to her nose and sniffing it. It smells strong and synthetic, coated in a red, gooey looking liquid like paint. She tentatively darts her tongue out-

"Myst!" Boyle scolds, "Don't eat that."

She pouts and pushes the brush back in the little vial it came from. It's attached to the cap of it, screws back onto the spiral of the glass. "What's the point of a potion you can't drink?"

"It's not a potion."

Myst turns the vial over in her hands. "You got it from Ingrid," she says, trying to reason it out.

"She didn't make it. She bought it."

She looks up at him. "You stole it," she says, and gives a grin Boyle can describe only as mischievous or shit-eating. But she tries to be stern when she says, "Boyle, that's bad."

Boyle huffs, puffing out his chest slightly. He sounds indignant. "I didn't steal it. Ingrid and I are engaged. Everything of hers is mine, and everything of mine is hers."

"You stole it," Myst repeats blandly.

"Oh, absolutely. Doing bad things is my thing, Myst."

Myst decides she doesn't like red, and Boyle says if that's the case, she can steal another color from Ingrid's bag. She does it, comes back with Ingrid's favorite green, a tell-tale sign of thievery; she'll realize it's missing within two days' time. Boyle doesn't really mind the idea of Myst getting into trouble with Ingrid, so he doesn't tell her as much.

They sit in the common area of Delamere inn. It's the beginning of the night, but the rest of the party is in bed, well on their way to sleeping. Myst has an elbow leaned on the round wooden table between her and Boyle. She turns the other to outstretch her hand.

Boyle takes it in his and frowns. Myst's hand is light, unreasonably so. Her skin is thin enough he should be able to feel the bones of her fingers, but he can't. A little unsettled, he inspects it, the quality of her nails. They're in good shape. He sets her hand down on the table and picks up the boggy green vial she'd obtained. Unscrewing the cap, he stares at her knuckles.

"You don't have bones," he says.

Myst cocks her head to the side. "Do I not? I don't have much of anything, really. My amulet is the only solid thing on me."

Boyle furrows his eyebrows, resists the urge to push his thumb against one of Myst's nails. "Is this even going to work, then?"

"You're painting me, right? I assume so. I mean, I can wear a solid necklace, right? I should be able to do this, too." She's smiling, apparently pleased with this, and Boyle figures it's worth a shot.

"*Hand* it over again, then," Boyle says, smirking.

Myst rolls her eyes and gives him her hand.

This time, they get as far as the painting. Boyle moves the little brush against her nail, and Myst watches the glob of paint slowly glide along it. He makes her hold her hand very still, even when he finishes, and he slowly puts it down on the table and grabs the other. Boyle's hand is surprisingly steady and meticulous. He narrows his eyes and grumbles as he paints along the edges of her nail, trying to avoid staining her skin.

He gets a little on her finger, and curses under his breath. He places the brush back inside the little bottle, and returns to her hand with his own, apparently trying to figure out what to do. Myst lets the little bit of skin evaporate, reforms it without the polish.

Boyle blinks, apparently in shock. She giggles.

He makes her wait, then picks up her hand and starts a second coat. Myst decides she's had enough silence.

"So," she says, drawing it out, popping the 'o' when she finishes it. She grins at Boyle and waits for his reply.

"What." Boyle is bored, and apparently nothing else. His expression is irritated, if anything, his mouth a thin little line above his beard. He concentrates intently again on her nails.

"Are we friends, Boyle?"

He stops moving the brush, and scoffs. "Don't be silly. I don't have friends."

"You're holding my hand and putting a pretty color on it."

"So?"

"That feels like friendship. Right?"

"Wrong, Myst. Now stop talking nonsense or else I'll intentionally ruin it."

"But you're helping me," she says. "You got Fang back. You don't need to be on this quest anymore. I know you don't care about the fate of the world." Or, she thinks, if he does, he'd be less willing to admit to that than friendship. "...I mean, as long as it's not in your hands. You care in that sense."

He sighs. "I respect you. But I'm traveling with you out of fear, not out of kindness or, Goddess allow, friendship."

She rolls her eyes and blows out a heavy breath of air. 'Deflating' may be a literal description, and Boyle may need to ask her to stop doing the intangible inconsistent body thing. It's starting to weird him out.

He finishes the second coat on her first hand and admires his *handiwork*.

"Do you think," Myst says, "that's why you always lose?"

Boyle nearly drops her hand. "Excuse me?"

Myst knows she's treading on thin ice here, but she has one and a half of her hands completely painted at this point, so she's not sure what the worst case scenario could be. "I mean, when you didn't let me help you, you got into trouble. You got into trouble multiple times, actually. You stopped falling into it so much when you let me help you. Maybe if you're working

with people, instead of having them work for you, you'll have better results."

Boyle starts painting her hand again. If his expression says anything, it is that this is a lesson in patience for him. "Myst," he says, carefully, "so far I've started to like you pretty well. Don't test it with hero-babble."

Myst glowers.

"Why do you care, anyways?" Boyle asks, moving onto her middle finger. "What does it matter to you if we're friends or not?"

"Friendship is nice," Myst says simply. "I have it with Robin, and with Banana Boy. I'd like to have it with you."

Boyle starts to laugh, but stops suddenly. He jolts up from his position leaning over Myst's hand, drops it. "Who in all of Aia is Banana Boy?"

Myst's eyes are wide. Her finished hand flings to cover up her gasping mouth.

"Myst," Boyle says.

"I can't tell you!" She squeaks. "I shouldn't have said that."

Boyle is grinning now. "Myst," he repeats, "*Friends* don't keep secrets."

Myst stares at him, sets her hand down. "If I say this, we're friends?"

Boyle considers it. "If you say it, and you deliver on the gargoyle, we're friends."

Myst seems to accept this. "Okay. He's a talking raccoon me and Robin hang out with at night. We go on missions for him. He's part of one of those things you didn't want to sign up for so you made Robin do them."

He seems confused for a minute, blinking. "The raccoon is a librarian?"

For a moment, her face contorts into something warped of confusion and disagreement. But in a moment she understands, and her shoulders relax, and she says, "sure. He's a librarian."

"Ridiculous. I knew libraries were ridiculous. Give me your hand, again, let me finish this nonsense."

She follows the instruction.

As Boyle moves from her middle finger to her ring, and then to her pinky,

the room settles into quiet. He frowns as he reaches the end. "I think we're done here."

Myst quickly pulls her hand away to examine it. "It looks pretty! Thank you, Boyle."

"Don't mention it. Or what I'm about to tell you."

"Oooh, a secret."

"Yes. So stay very quiet about it." Boyle narrows his eyes and turns his voice quiet. "The more that I think about it, it's not a bad idea. It could be quite the devious scheme."

"Excuse me?"

He begins to gesture, voice gaining intensity, carefully maintaining its volume. "Using teamwork. You know, incorporating the heroes' strategy into my own plans. It's perfectly evil. Nothing good about it, really. Just the classic trick of stealing ideas from the enemies. You know, Myst, I always thought if I had friends, I would have to share the world with them. But friends support each other's goals and dreams, right?"

"Right." Her voice turns cautious. She has a feeling she knows where he's going with this, and isn't sure she wants part.

"So if you're my friend, you want me to succeed!"

"In taking over the world?" Myst raises an eyebrow.

"Absolutely! Oh, Myst, you're a genius. With friends, I will have the combined power to make all of Aia bow at my feet."

"Sure, Boyle. You could do that."

"And you can help me!"

Myst glances at Boyle, then at her nails. The coat of polish is highlighted by the room's dim lighting. She smiles, just a bit. "Maybe, sure." She stands up, and goes to push her chair in, but Boyle quickly leaps up from his own seat and gets it for her.

"Be careful with your nails," he explains. "They'll take at least a quarter hour to dry."

"Oh! Thank you." She stares at her hands, nearly glaring at her nails. Then she flicks at one with the thumb and forefinger of her other hand. There's

no smearing or damage done to the polish. "I nearly forgot to solidify it."

"Oh," Boyle says, staring at her nail. "That works, too." He slowly pushes in his own chair. "We should both get some rest. Busy day saving your brother and the world and all that. I want it to be in good condition for my takeover." He seems outright giddy with his new realization.

It's a little infectious. Myst grins at him, mouth full of fangs. "Right," she says. "Thanks again, Boyle. I like my nails." She flashes them at herself again, admires the way the room's dim light dances on the paint. It's a curious human thing, she thinks. She likes it.

"Of course," he says, and laughs to himself. "What are friends for, after all?"