Inara (numerous-and-abundant)

Threads

stare into darkness, admit defeat

Omakes

bloody hearts (ivy)

Inara has crept upstairs from the basement in the night -- Kestrel went upstairs 30 minutes ago, telling her that he recommended she stay there. Despite the fact that he is her Purpose now, her motivation, everything that is important to her, she can still disobey a recommendation, being intensely curious about what she might see upstairs. She stands at the top of the basement stairs (she's already mentally catalogued which of them creak, and the exact path she must take to be utterly silent) and peers out the sliver left between the door and the doorframe. She dares not even breathe anything but the slowest of breaths, lest it push the door open further.

The living room is dimly lit, yet she can see well in the dark. Kestrel kneels, face towards her, looking up at the altar she knows is on the other side of the wall. It's *his* altar, she knows that now, now that she's in tune with him. His own altar. Candlelight flickers across his face. He looks up, expression almost worshipful. It's discordant, to see the one she turns to for all direction look so vulnerable. She watches as he reaches onto the altar, left hand coming away holding a scalpel. He takes a deep breath, taking a moment to observe the glint of the blade in the light. It throws a little spot of light around the room. He kisses the blade, and then, all at once, presses it into his wrist. He's carving something into it. The cuts look deep. His face is tipped down in concentration, but every so often he pauses the movements of the blade to throw his head back, and his face displays pure euphoria. In 3 minutes, he is done. Blood drips down his forearm and he lets it drip onto the altar. Inara thinks back to the color of the altar. It was porous, cheap wood, but the top was a deep red. She hadn't paid it any mind at the time.

He sets the blade down and turns towards the basement door.

"Come in, my darling angel," he says, smiling.

She tenses and freezes, unmoving.

He pats the floor beside him, and she can detect no malice in his gaze. She pushes open the door and comes to kneel beside him.

"Give me your hand."

She does, and he presses his right wrist, bloodied, into hers. A messy print of the heart carved into his forearm is left. It burns and she gasps as it sizzles. It immediately forms raised welts. The type of wound that will scar. A tear rolls down her cheek as she smiles. He pats her shoulder.

"A mark for you."

He tugs her down until her head is in his lap and strokes her hair.

“Glad you’re mine now.”

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