

Originalficfest prompt: 25. *"What will you do when you've taken everything, and there's nothing left of me?"*

Title: a cup of tea

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Rating: PG

Warnings/Notes: slave!fic. Part of the new slave-assassin verse. 565 words.

The tea they share is weak, just a hint of color seeping into the boiling water from the herbs tossed in. It's the same tea they've shared since coming into the employ of the Noi, both barely ten years old and thrown face first into this world. It's made from what looks like weeds and grasses, painstakingly gathered by her companion from his memories of a life before. The tea soothes and calms them, the heat and scent of it filling them with a sense of refreshment.

They don't speak for a long stretch of time, knowing all too well the burdens of the day. They know too well the fear and the thrill of being able to move freely, of possibly never coming back to the compound—either through running away, or their death. They breathe in that scent of calm Dannaii fixes, relaxing in the time they have between training and utilization.

She watches Dannaii's painted hands pour separate cups before they settle on the floor across the brazier from each other. His hands are so much a part of who he is here, the ink imprinting itself on the throats of those who would speak against the Noi. Even with the brutality of what the Noi have made him, she can see how those hands were gentle, a healer's hands. She smiles softly, hiding it behind her cup, knowing just how soft those hands are.

"That is a look I have not seen on you in many days. It warms my heart to see you so." He taps out a beat on his thigh, her eyes following the slaves' shorthand rhythm for understanding. She nods slowly, her tongue thick with scar tissue that restrains her from speaking and telling him why she's smiling. He smiles back at her, a sharp slash across his face. It should scare her, but after this many years, she can only remember the boy he had been.

Her fingers rest against his foot, the crossing strips of gold a burnished mirror of her own in the dying sunlight. She drums out responses to him on the sensitive skin of his ankle, chuckling in her throat when he squirms away from her light touch.

"Annaii." She garbles out his name, softly growling it as the cups in their hands are emptied and almost forgotten. The nights are short here, and she has to rest before the first sun begins to rise. Dannaii flicks a look at her from hooded eyes, almost angry, before he stands. She reaches out a hand to rest on his wrist, a flutter of fingertips asking what is wrong as the heat from her palm warms the abjad there.

He takes a painful breath and freezes. "What will you do when you've taken everything, and there's nothing left of me?" She stares at him a long time, confused. Another flutter of fingers, and another inscrutable look. Dannaii shakes his head, and puts his things away. "Go. Rest. I will see you on the next day."

She pauses, uncertain. She folds herself to the floor, the knot behind her ear falling forward to brush the floor a moment, before she stands and walks away. These matters are nearly too much to handle, and she needs to let her mind empty before she will be able to rest enough to be pleasing on the next day.