Sick Day - Sara

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Sara

A low thud against the door pulls me out of a vaguely nauseous doze. My phone lights up offensively bright against the dimness of my apartment, but holds no recent messages. The thud comes again, and I kick away blankets and stumble over. I don't think it's been long enough that the neighbors decided to call in a life check.

I crack the door open, ready to warn off whoever's bent on needing to see a face, and it takes a second to register Remy standing there. His arms are tucked around paper bags, leaving his boot to tap my door.

"What are you doing here?" My voice would squeak if it wasn't so rough from coughing and sneezing half my brains out.

Remy arches an eyebrow. "Saving your life apparently. How long has it been this bad?"

"I'm fine." I try to say but get ambushed by another round of coughing that not even smothering my face in my hoodie sleeve can hide.

He's judging even harder, and I slowly open the door to let him in. I try to hide behind it, like the door can save him from the germ dungeon my apartment has turned into. Things like colds and low level viruses are sicknesses that medical experts long ago agreed needed to run their natural course to help all species keep some sort of immunity levels. Only took a late centuries plague devastating the world to realize that we

shouldn't actually be using magic to cure everything. It's a fine theory until you have one.

Remy sets everything down on the counter that divides the kitchen from the small living area and surveys the apartment. This is the first time he's been over and I'm barely upright with the flu. *Mortifying* is an understatement.

"Remy," I try to protest from the door.

"Sara," he returns, starting to unpack grocery bags. He sets a carton of orange juice on the counter and a small plastic bottle. "Here. Herbal remedy."

I inch closer. "I have drugs."

"That's probably why you look so miserable. Those don't do anything." He beckons me over to my barstool.

"I'm diseased," I protest. "I don't want to get you sick! And then Bear will get sick, and it'll be my fault!"

"I don't get sick." He shakes his head dismissively. I don't believe him for a second. He sighs slightly, flashing a smile my way. "I really don't. Come sit down, get some *real* meds. I'm making soup."

"You don't have to." My feet drag on the way over.

He braces hands against the counter, and pins me with a look. "Let someone take care of you for a second."

"You don't have to." Even though we've been dating for five months, I suddenly feel a little defensive. "I'll be fine in a few days."

He unpacks vegetables and broth cartons. A pack of raw chicken thuds to the counter before he looks at me again. "I want to."

It's the flu and regular hormones that make me almost burst into tears. Instead I reach for the tissue box balanced on the back of the couch and blow my nose, discharging a horrifying amount of mucus.

"Sorry, that was disgusting," I wail, and stumble to toss it in the trashcan that's taken up residence by my deathcouch.

"No, what's disgusting is catching your two-year-old's throwup in your bare hands." He locates a pot and cutting board.

I pull my hood up over my head and come to sit at the bar. "Okay, you win."

Remy finds a glass and pours me some orange juice. I pick open the remedy container, checking the dosage amounts. A box of ginger chews appears by my glass.

"Dejan hit those with boost charm and dropped them off." He says it off-handedly, expecting nothing else from his friend. But everything blurs for a second. Sometimes it still feels like the elf doesn't like me, even after everything we've been through together. Then he goes and does something small like this.

Once I get everything sort of packed back into place emotionally, I register that there's four bags on the counter. Way more than is needed for soup.

"Remy," I start, suspicious.

Two more tissue boxes are unpacked, along with a container with a paper taped to the top.

"Bear made you a card, and we made peanut butter cookies." He taps the container.

I unfold the paper and find a scene from the last time I met them at the park, tall slides and all. It's Remy's sloping handwriting telling me to "get better super fast", but Blair's lopsided B waving stick figure arms with bear claws signing off.

I take a cookie, pretty sure that it alone might cure me. "What did you bring?" I ask, reaching for one of the still-unpacked bags.

He gently swats my hand away. “Keep your diseased paws out.” He lifts out three more containers of easy to reheat meals. It’s only after he lifts them out, that I realize fully that he’s at my apartment in short sleeves. Taking care of me.

I slip around the counter and almost smash my nose into his chest. I rest my cheek against his shoulder with an extra little sniff as his arms circle me. I nestle even closer, tucking my arms between us with a new discovery.

“You’re hot,” I hum.

He laughs, kissing my hoodie-protected head. “I don’t want to know how high your fever is then.”

Remy tries to nudge me away, but I push closer with a noise of complaint that fades almost instantly. “Thank you,” I say.

He rubs my shoulder. “You’re welcome. Now go sit back down,” he says after a moment.

I’m on my way when he opens the refrigerator door. I leap back with a defensive “Nooo!”

He stoops to look in, then sends judgement my way as he keeps one arm propped on the door. “I love you, but this is atrocious.”

“I know,” I admit, shoulders slumping. “I’ve been so busy at work that takeout is all I could muster and then I caught a plague.”

“Okay.” He straightens and the door gently *slaps* shut. “I’m saying this with love as well, but go shower and put on clean clothes. I’ll take care of *that*.” He points at the fridge.

“I–”

He points me away. I stay long enough to tell him where trash bags and the exterior bins are, and then I shuffle off, leaving him to his mission.

I definitely cry in the shower. It's been five months of actual dating, but I still haven't brought him to meet my family. He hasn't really pushed, especially after we've talked about it. But things like this make me not want to even more, since it feels like potentially risking him walking away. I know he won't, but still. He's even joked that being friends with Dejan for over five years has given him thick skin, but I'm more worried that he might go to war for me.

They're not bad people, but I can already hear the "he has a kid?" whispered judgementally from my mom like she didn't live the same single parent life with me, and the somewhat obliviously implied "what *do* you see in, Sara??" given to him.

When I make it back out in clean joggers and the ARMY sweatshirt I stole from him two months ago, he's cleared out the stagnant leftovers and the small trashcan by the couch has a fresh liner. Soup is simmering, and there's a faint undertone of lemon-scented antiseptic cleaner in the air. Blinds are open and the sliding patio door is cracked to let in the fresh spring air.

"What if I wanted to keep wallowing?" I point to the windows as I reclaim the barstool.

He grins where he's scrubbing dishes. "Too bad."

I chew on a ginger stick, feeling the charm hit in tandem with the gingery sharpness. The sinus pressure lets up immediately and some of the chest tightness eases.

"Your blankets are washing, but I'll dry them before I leave," he says.

"You already won boyfriend of the century, you don't have to keep trying." I pour myself another glass of orange juice, immediately regretting how it clashes just enough with the ginger to be unpleasant.

His eyes sparkle a little with his broader smile. It's only because I'm sure he will get sick that I don't kiss him.

"How'd you know I was dying?" I ask instead.

"I haven't heard from you in thirty-two hours and your last text had two spelling errors," he says.

"Okay, Sherlock," I scoff, making a mental note to go check later. That must have been when the fever really hit along with a headache.

"I'm a highly trained military professional," he says mock-seriously, toweling off his hands. "And Maya officially confirmed my suspicions," he admits.

"All I said was that I wasn't feeling well," I protest.

"Elves don't normally get sick, and when they do, they're a pain in the butt 'cause they're convinced they don't need anything," he says pointedly.

"I'm only half," I protest, softly laughing with his arched look at me. "Do I want to know how bad Dejan is?"

"No." Remy gives a long-suffering sigh. "He caught something on a mission once, and even Besim was ready to just bury him and leave him behind." He shakes his head, and my laugh devolves into another cough. "And that can definitely just be Tara's problem now."

"You'd let him starve to death?" I laugh. Tara's admitted to being nowhere close to being able to cook. I don't as often as I should, but I'm over at the Kalama's for dinner at least once a week and Remy's started letting me into his cooking process. He definitely hovered at first, used to putting things together himself. I guess we're both getting used to having someone around.

"I might," he says easily, like he didn't show up at my door after thirty-six hours with at least four meals in hand.

"Thank you." I tuck my hands into my lap. "I know you wanted to, but you didn't have to, and I really don't get sick very often, so I just sort of wait it out, and..."

He leans on the counter and tilts one hand up. I slowly put my hand in his. "Thanks," I finally just say.

"Any time," he returns, gently squeezing.

I hurriedly take my hand back and blow my nose again. Remy lets me pretend, even as he smiles again. He stays long enough to have a bowl of soup with me, then tidies back up. My blankets are dried in a blink and are still warm as he tucks me back onto the couch with more water and meds and another kiss to the forehead. They're still warm hours later when I briefly wake up.

I grab my phone and send a quick "I love you," before burrowing back down into the blankets and falling asleep again.

Bear's right. His magic is cozy. And he's cozy. Despite being a highly trained military professional, he's definitely cozy.