

Ocean's Perspective of the Dominance Conversation with Ali

from The Doorway of Possibilities Episode 2 Chapter 9

By Nicole Eatough

Ocean walked along the seemingly unending sand silently with his master. Escape from the Archives was impossible, but he would stay by her side until the end. He wished he had not gotten so little time with her. He was barely able to teach her anything—clearly. If she'd heeded his words better, they would not be stuck in the Archives right now. This was Tavor's plan, not hers.

Suddenly the world around them flashed. Ocean froze, his gaze jumping to his master, only for his gaze to catch on Light instead. Somehow, he and his master had been transported back to the fake city, right next to Light, who still sat on the fountain where they'd left him.

"What?!" Ali exclaimed, spinning around to look back in the direction they'd come from. She spun back around to stare up at Ocean. "You didn't appear us, did you?"

He shook his head. "I only have the ability to appear us to your home, Master."

She brightened. "Hey! Can you do that here? I mean, are we sure it's been tried?"

If Ocean believed he could, he would have suggested it from the beginning. But she asked, so, reluctantly, he took her shoulders in his hands and moved closer to her. Closing his eyes, he released a slow breath, focusing on his master's home. Nothing happened. He opened them a moment later, shaking his head with a regretful expression. "I'm sorry, Master. I had no trouble fulfilling your earlier wish, but this I cannot do." He truly was sorry.

"What?!" Light exclaimed, causing their master to jump. He widened his eyes, as though stunned. "The Archives won't let us leave? Who. Would. Have. Guessed?" He tilted his head a

little more with each word he spoke, his eyes set on their master's.

Ocean narrowed his eyes at the other genie. Just because there was no chance of them escaping was no reason to criticize their master's actions. Personally, Ocean admired her dedicated personality. It was why he had high hopes for her as a master, despite her silly ideas of genies leading their own lives. Well, it was why he'd *had* high hopes for her.

Ali glared at the light genie—as he deserved—before marching off in the opposite direction from where they'd come. Ocean followed her, not bothering to give Light another glance.

Soon, they once again found themselves surrounded by sand. They walked in silence again until she said, “Ocean? Can I . . . ask you a question about genies?”

His eyebrows shot up as he looked down at her. She sounded tentative, though he couldn't imagine why. “Of course. That is part of the reason you obtained me, yes? To learn more of genies, since Tavor has been derelict in your education.”

He wished there'd been more opportunities for just the two of them to talk, both for the sake of her genie education and for him to educate her on how to be a proper master. But they were always surrounded by the others. Even when she went to school, she always had at least two genies with her.

“Thank you!” She sounded so grateful, it made him smile. Why couldn't all masters be as pleasant as Ali? “So . . .” She trailed off quickly, as though unsure how to formulate her question. He stayed quiet, allowing her time to organize what she wished to discuss.

“Well . . . I mean . . . so, genies have dominance behaviors?” Was that a statement or a question? “I mean, there are times when some of the others get angry at Tavor, or he gets angry at them, and they seem to challenge each other.”

“Yes,” he admitted slowly, then sighed. It was something she never should have been subjected to. “How embarrassing that you’ve seen such a sight. Most masters do not, since they do not indulge their genies. One of the consequences of overindulgence is the dominance behavior.”

He eyed her critically, telling her without words that she’d caused this by giving the others free rein. She wouldn’t have witnessed this deplorable behavior without that. “Genies require a firm hand—which is part of the natural order of our kind.” He raised his eyebrows at her, hoping she would finally understand what he kept trying to tell her. Though why was he so intent on still teaching her? Did some part of him believe she might find a way to escape? Or was this simply his desire to humor his master until the very end?

This time, she asked a real question. “Do genies ever do that same dominance behavior with humans? And if they do, does it look the same?”

Ocean stopped immediately, wild scenarios of the genies bullying Ali into giving them free rein, into switching to online school, into leaving Horton, and her being too gentle, too ignorant to stop them jumped through his mind. He forced his thoughts to still as she stumbled to a stop next to him, but he had to know if she asking out of curiosity or because of something she’d experienced.

He stared down at her intently, willing her to give him an honest answer. Thank goodness she’d come to him with this and not one of the others. Who knew what they would have told her? “Master. Why are you asking this?”

Her face turned pink. “Just trying to learn.” Her voice was too high for her words to be true. “You know I like learning things.”

He narrowed his eyes, rising to his full height and crossing his arms over his black

buttoned vest. She needed to tell him the truth, or he couldn't fully ascertain the situation and give her advice. "You are lying, Master. What happened? Did Tavor threaten you into coming to the Archives? Or into obtaining all the McMichael genies? Is this why you're following his plan? You are—"

"No, no," she denied, holding her hands up as she shook her head, the motion causing her dark hair to fly around. "That's not it at all. Nothing like that happened. Tavor has manipulated me into following his plans before, but he's never threatened me into it."

Ocean found that difficult to believe. Well, perhaps not. Tavor preferred manipulation to bullying. But Ali got this question from somewhere. Perhaps it was one of the others?

"I was . . . um . . . kind of held against the counter?" Again, the words sounded like they should be a statement, but her tone made them a question. She groaned. "Look, it wasn't anything big, Ocean. I'm just wondering if I upset the genie involved and if that triggered a dominance behavior. That's all I want to know."

He frowned down at her, staying rooted to the spot. He wouldn't let her out of this conversation now. Something happened that she didn't understand, and Ocean didn't have enough information to know what. But he intended to learn. "Master, please explain to me what happened. In its entirety this time."

"Something happened that may or may not have upset a genie and he got really close. I was standing against the counter and he placed his arms on either side of me to box me in and . . . got really close?"

Her voice squeaked at the end, but he barely registered it, wild scenarios flashing through his mind again. But these were far worse than the previous scenes he'd imagined. She wasn't talking about dominance in the sense of a genie wanting her to follow his will. This was

something else entirely.

A flush rose to his cheeks as he tried to express his dismay and condemnation over the situation. “That’s not— That’s entirely—” He started several more sentences, but that was all he could manage. His mind was too filled with scenes of the others getting far too close to their master. Finally, he managed, “Utterly inappropriate!” His eyes blazed with offense. “Who did that, Master? Which one? Rajan? Maybe Illan?”

Both genies were greatly fond of Ali. Had either gone too far? If genies became possessive, which would be easier to do with free rein that allowed them to act as they pleased, then they could come to desire— He cut that thought off, his blush worsening. Ali was their *master*, not a being for them to want to— He still couldn’t finish the thought.

“Um, maybe you can just answer my question?” she asked “Do genies do dominance behaviors with humans like they do with other genies, and does it look different?”

His jaw flexed, but he was the one who’d pressed that they finish this conversation. He had to respond. His voice came out tense. “Yes, genies may seek to assert dominance over a human if given the leeway to do so . . . No, it does not look terribly different than with other genies . . .” His mouth snapped shut. Many genies would gladly bully masters if given the opportunity. But that was *not* what Ali was talking about. And he should at least make sure she understood that.

Forcing his mouth open again, he said, “What you saw . . . is different. At least, different from the *way* you’re thinking. It’s arguably a type of dominance behavior, but it’s not . . .” It was dominance as in a male wanting a female to submit to him romantically. But he was *not* repeating that to his master. She was too innocent to understand. And since she was asking for an explanation of the behavior, that meant things hadn’t gone too far. The genie in question must

have realized the inappropriateness of their actions and backed off. Thank goodness.

But he was done with this conversation. Without another word, he strode off. His master rushed to catch up with him, having to take several steps to match his long stride.

“Different from the way I’m thinking *how*?” she demanded. “And is that bad?”

“It’s *not* appropriate,” he declared, eyes still blazing. And she didn’t need to know any more than that. Hopefully, with that knowledge, she would walk away the next time something like that started. Or, better yet, put her foot down and force the genie to stop. Though he would far prefer there not be a next time.

“I don’t know *what* he was thinking,” he muttered, his gaze flicking to his master before returning to straight ahead. If he knew who’d done it, he would give that genie a *stern* talking to, but he didn’t think his master would reveal the culprit. As they continued, she sought to get more answers, but he merely shook his head at her. He’d told her all she needed to know.