

*016a - the herbalist greets you*

Duration: 39.301063 seconds

You **rush** through the market square, **blood trailing** behind you. Her stall is closed. **Damn.**

But you remember her house by the woods. Your steps stagger, but you make it to a small house, tucked away like a secret. You bang on the door, breath ragged.

HUNTER

Nika! OPEN UP!

The door *creaks* open. She looks at you. Just sharp eyes, calmly reading the state you're in.

NIKA

(almost amused)

I didn't think you'd need me this soon.

She waits. Maybe she wants a reason. Maybe she wants you to ask for it. What do you do, ask for help, or tell her what happened?

**Options:** *ask for help / tell her what happened*

*016a01 - asked for help*

Duration: 69.936979 seconds

*[Empathy: Increase by 1] [Wound: Set to 0]*

It's not the time for pride when you're this close to bleeding out.

HUNTER

(pleads, pride wounded)

Please--

You say, leaning against the doorframe.

HUNTER

I need your help.

Without a word, she opens the door wider and guides you inside. Her hand slips under your shoulder, *steady, gentle.*

Her home is small, quiet. It smells like herbs and sunlight. Like safety. She eases you into a chair by the fire.

NIKA  
(concerned)  
Sit. Let me see.

You do, surprised by how careful her touch is. It makes your heart **race**.

INNER VOICE  
(hisses, mocking)  
Would she care if she knew what you  
are? A *killer*. **A monster**.

You silence it.

You like Nika. And part of you wants her to like you back.

She brushes her fingers over the wound. The pain flares, sharp and blinding. Then...**it's gone**.

HUNTER  
(surprised whisper)  
You have magic.

NIKA  
(smiles)  
So do you.

She says, eyes locked on yours. No judgment. Just certainty.

You're alike. That much is clear. But is it *enough* to let her in? Do you tell her more about yourself or stay silent?

**Options:** *tell her more / stay silent*