

# Alpha's Rejected Mate Returns as Queen

Chapter 301 Our Wedding

Selma Payne's POV:

I looked at the setup in front of me in disbelief and then at my lover beside me.

"In fact, I've been worrying about what to give you. After thinking about it, all material things don't matter to us. I've asked for the opinions of many people around you, and in the end, I want to give you a wedding – no flashes and microphones, no guests you don't know, no political symbols, and cumbersome etiquette. This is a wedding that only belongs to the two of us.

"Do you like this dress? You've always liked simple and plain clothes, so I secretly learned a few tricks from the tailor and made this wedding dress for you."

Aldrich smiled and extended his hand to me.

"Are you willing to walk this blooming flower path with me?"

Looking at his eyes filled with love, tears unconsciously flowed into my eyes.

How could I not be?

I nodded and gently placed my hand on his palm.

We walked hand in hand, slowly through the thorny arch, through the fragrant path of flowers, and step by step to the stage.

Dorothy, acting as the 'priest', made a face at me, then cleared her throat and said, "We're gathered here today to witness the marriage ceremony of two young people.

"Aldrich Leopold, with your sincerity, are you willing to be the husband to the lady beside you, cherish her, love her, and faithfully stick to today's oath no matter what situation you encounter?"

Aldrich looked at me with a tender expression like water and said softly, "Yes, I do."

"Selma Payne, with your sincerity, are you willing to be the wife to the gentleman beside you, cherish him, love him, and faithfully stick to today's oath no matter what situation you face?"

Looking at Aldrich's handsome face, I nodded. "Yes, I do."

Dorothy scattered flower petals at us and announced loudly, "In the name of true love, I hereby declare you as husband and wife!"

The moment the flower petals fell, Aldrich and I hugged each other and gave each other a passionate kiss.

There was no thunderous applause or high-pitched blessings. The wedding that only belonged to the two of us was quiet, but it moved my heart more than any other grand occasion.

With tears in my eyes, I thought, 'I didn't choose wrongly. He is the one who truly understands me.'

Dorothy had left at some point in time. Aldrich and I lazily lay on the ground covered in flower petals, silently enjoying this blissful moment.

"I hope that everything will stop at this moment." I whispered, "There won't be a happier time than now."

After plucking the flower petals from my head, Aldrich leaned on my side and laughed in a low voice. "Don't say it too early, Madam. You'll be happier in the future than you are now."

"Is that so?" I pretended to glare back at him. "You're the one who's a married man fresh out of the oven. Don't be so sure of your words."

Aldrich put on a sad look and said aggrievedly, "You don't believe me? My wife, this breaks my heart."

I laughed and pushed him. We ran around the lawn and joked around.

Time would not stop for anyone. No matter how much I couldn't bear to part with him, it was time to return to the resting room.

We were reluctant to part as we hugged each other. Aldrich kissed my forehead and said in a low voice, "See you tonight, my love."

I reluctantly bade him farewell and followed Dorothy back to the lounge.

My wedding didn't have a pre-wedding party, but the guests still gathered early to talk about everything. I 'trembled in fear' as I avoided the people in the corridor. When I returned to the lounge, I heaved a sigh of relief and felt at ease.

When I returned to the safe zone, I immediately caught Dorothy and 'interrogated' her.

“You hid such an important thing from me!” I felt a little sad. “This was a wedding! What if I was not prepared and something went wrong?”

Dorothy saw through my one-man play with one look and said, “Come on, I know you like it. Besides, it’s a surprise. How can I not surprise you? It wouldn’t have had this effect if I had told you earlier. It’s like a token hidden in a lunchbox. If you already know what the other party wants to give you, what’s the point? It’s better to ask the other party to give you some dishes you like.”

“I won’t forgive you even if you say that!”

“So what do you want, Your Highness?”

“I’m cutting ties with you ... For ten minutes. Don’t talk to me for ten minutes.”

Jordin and Emma were already laughing at the side.

“Alright, quickly change your clothes.” Jordin held back her laughter and said, “It’s going to be dark in an hour. We still have to leave some time to touch up our makeup.”

I refused Dorothy’s help the entire time. I was a man of my word. I’d cut off ties with her for ten minutes, hmph!

I stood in the preparation area again. My mood was completely different from this morning.

If the coronation ceremony brought me more of a heavy sense of responsibility, then the wedding ceremony was filled with honey and the sweet fragrance of flowers.

According to tradition, the Lycan King, my father couldn’t personally hold my arm and enter the venue like other fathers.

302 Husband And Wife

Selma Payne’s POV:

My mother had no relatives left, and my father didn’t have any relatives of high status, so I decided: I’d broken more than one or two traditions anyway, so why should I care about these minor details?

In addition to the girls, I had a new group of concierges in the afternoon. More children were standing in the line as flower boys and girls, holding hands with the big brothers and sisters to prevent them from running away. Their little flower baskets were filled with soft flower petals. Some were curious and secretly took out a few to play with.

I couldn’t help but laugh when I heard the girls retelling these scenes to me.

No matter which family they came from, no matter what position their family had, it didn't matter to children of this age. It was their nature to pursue freedom and happiness. How beautiful this was!

I liked children, and when I was a girl, I had imagined how many children I would have in the future – it would be best if I had a lovely daughter and a naughty son. I would educate them into intelligent and healthy adults and watch them form families and live happily. Every time I fantasize about it, I feel extremely happy and satisfied.

There were many fantasies in a young girl's life. Ordinary ones, such as finding true love, while fantasy stories, such as her legendary life, could be heard. Now, many of my childish fantasies have come true. Will my children go along with my wishes?

With the experience from this morning, I easily completed the entire process. As I held hands with Aldrich and stood on the stage, I secretly made a face at him.

The oath for this wedding was much longer. The priest probably wished he could write all the well-wishes in the classics into the wedding oath. After listening to it for a long time, I felt like I was listening to an appreciation class on classical literature.

Our wedding rings were part of the royal family's collection. Two huge rubies, each twenty-five carats on average, glistened under the diamonds as if they were declaring our bright future.

Wearing the ring, under the priest's declaration, we kissed politely in front of the guests

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Thunderous applause and cheers swept through the temple. The people waiting outside the temple also cheered when they heard the official's announcement. For a moment, the sound of celebration resounded through the sky, and the whole Lycan Pack was in a festive mood.

Aldrich and I sat on the carriage and paraded to the people. The people didn't have any negative emotions toward this sudden marriage. I even saw many banners and posters that wished Aldrich and my happiness. I was touched and happy, holding back my tears as I waved to the cheering people.

Celebrating a wedding was more open than celebrating a coronation. Even the guards were not as rigid and serious as they were during the day. The groomsmen, bridesmaids, and guests of honor sat in convoy behind Aldrich and me, following the tradition of throwing flowers and ribbons blessed by the temple to the people. Young men and women pinned fresh flowers in their hair or chests and tied ribbons around their wrists, hoping to find true love as soon as possible.

The ball was to be held in the palace, which was not open to the public.

After the opening dance with Aldrich, we enjoyed ourselves until the middle of the night, and then we were surrounded by the guests and led into the bedroom.

The elders threw flowers and seeds at us, and our friends carried us and put us on our beds. After the process, they left considerately, even though their smiles were so meaningful.

The sudden silence made me feel a little uncomfortable. This silence also amplified the shyness and anxiety in my heart.

I did not dare to look at Aldrich, and he did not say a word. In the endless silence, I finally mustered up the courage to sneak a glance at him. I noticed that his ears were as red as a tomato.

I didn't know why, but I burst out laughing. Then, I couldn't help but laugh so much that I almost fell off the bed. Aldrich's pretense of calmness also fell through. He helplessly pulled me back from the edge of the bed and mumbled, "You're making me lose face by laughing at me like this..."

It was fine if he didn't speak, but I wanted to laugh even more when he did. Aldrich pretended to be fierce as he pounced over to cover my mouth.

We joked around without restraint and didn't know which action started the fire, but everything changed without us knowing.

The night was long under the deep curtains.

The next day, I woke up to the crisp chirping of birds. The warm sunlight shone through the gap in the curtains, creating a dazzling golden light. I thought it was noon.

Aldrich squinted as he lay beside me. Seeing that I had woken up, he lazily greeted me. "Good morning, my dear wife."

I kissed his cheek and said, "Good Morning, my beloved husband."

We lazily hugged each other in bed, neither willing to get out of bed, as if this soft and wide bed was the only thing left in the world.

I was about to fall asleep when Aldrich suddenly asked, "Do you like it?"

"What?"

"Did you like it last night?"

Realizing what he was saying, my face turned red. I grabbed the pillow next to me and pressed it against his face. "Don't talk about this! From now on, you're not allowed to speak!"

Aldrich easily dodged the pillow, held my waist, and pinned me under his body. He laughed deeply. "It seems that Your Highness is not satisfied with my service. Do you need my after-sales service?"

He swallowed my cry of surprise with a kiss.

The sun was high up in the sky.

303 Request For An Audience

Selma Payne's POV:

It was almost sunset when we left the bedroom.

My belated hunger clamored that I needed a lot of food to fill my rumbling stomach, but my room was quiet. There was no one other than Aldrich and me, so I had to find food myself.

When I turned the corridor corner, Kara was chatting with a few servants in the hall. When she saw me, she put down the accounts she was half-checking and motioned for the servants to go to the kitchen to get me some food.

"Happy marriage, Your Highness." Kara bowed to me. "The first three days of the wedding is a holiday for the new couple. You and Sir Aldrich don't have to do anything during this period. We will handle everything for you."

I thought Kara, who had always been strict, would blame me for my daily routine. I didn't expect her to smile, which made me mentally prepare for a long time in vain.

Although I could take three days off, I still worriedly asked, "Is there really nothing I have to do personally?"

Kara shook her head and said no. But a few seconds later, she stopped me as I was about to leave and said after some deliberation, "Actually... I do have something I need your opinion on."

"What?"

"It's about an audience request."

Looking at Kara's hesitant expression, I felt that something was wrong. "Whose? Tell me, Kara. You don't have to worry about anything."

Kara took out an application form from the documents on the table and handed it to me. I took it and saw that Benson's name was written in the application column.

An invisible hammer suddenly hit my chest. I quickly read through the text. It turned out to be my parents – my adoptive parents. They wanted to see their younger daughter, who had been missing for many years.

Dad... Mom...

The memories of the past washed over me like a tidal wave. It was as if I had returned to the ordinary but warm double-story house in the Shadow Pack. Mom was cooking dinner before the stove, and Dad came home after work. Rhode followed behind his father with a blueberry jam cake in his hand.

That was my last birthday before I returned to the Lycan Pack and spent it with my parents. After that, I chose to commit suicide.

The unfinished cake was still in the refrigerator, but they could no longer wait for the person to come to eat the cake. Instead, it was replaced by cold news of death.

After I returned to my Lycan Pack, I thought of returning home in glory more than once to repay my parents for raising me. But first, I was surrounded by danger and didn't want to bring danger to my parents, who lived a peaceful life. Secondly, I still had to consider my parents' mood, and I hadn't thought about how to tell them.

After I chose to disclose my identity, I thought the news that I was still alive could not be hidden from my adoptive parents, but I did not expect them to come so quickly. It was so fast that I could only stare at the application form in a daze, not knowing how to react.

Kara gently called out to me, "Your Highness? Your Highness? Are you okay?"

I came back to my senses and smiled at her. "I'm fine."

"You seem to be in a difficult position. If you don't want to see them for the time being, I will reject them for you."

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"No, no, no! Of course, I want to see them!" I immediately rejected Kara's proposal. "I'm... I didn't know what to say. By the way, do my parents know about this?"

"They already know. They were the ones who instructed me to hand this application to Your Highness."

"What did... my parents say?"

“They said that everything is up to you. Mr. and Mrs. Payne are your adoptive parents, and the royal family will never be able to repay their kindness. You should know what to do. Don’t let your heart down.”

It was as if a huge stone had been lifted from my chest. When I heard that my parents didn’t object to me seeing my parents, to be honest, I heaved a sigh of relief.

I didn’t know how the other children caught in the middle of being born and raised would feel, but I was really afraid there would be a conflict between my biological parents and my adoptive parents. They were all my family, and losing either one would make me suffer so much that I would rather die.

After calming down, I said to Kara, “Let’s approve this application. I’ll meet my... adoptive parents and brother tonight – no, tomorrow at eight in the morning.”

Kara nodded and asked, “Only the Payne Family? What about the Shadow Pack’s Alpha and former Alpha and Luna?”

Benson, the man who once led me to despair and death. I was pretending to be magnanimous when I said I didn’t hate him, but it wasn’t a big deal if I didn’t have a strong feeling of hatred. After all, after I had experienced so much, the carefree feeling I had when I was a young girl now seemed empty and childish. I regretted even more that I had chosen to die for him.

But that didn’t mean I’d let him go. This arrogant, arrogant, hypocritical coward. How much gratitude and trust had he deceived my family by using the leader title and friends as disguises?

“Invite them,” I sneered. “Are my parents free tomorrow?”

I was no longer the weak little girl I was before. I wouldn’t stay mum about my past anymore.

The person who used to use his power and status to push me into the quagmire was now also overpowered by someone stronger and higher in status. What kind of expression would he show?

304 The Confession

Selma Payne’s POV:

As soon as I got back to the bedroom, I was carried to the bed by Aldrich, and to stop his mischievous behavior, I said sternly, “Will you accompany me to meet some people tomorrow morning?”

After changing his position, he pulled me to his chest and asked, “Who?”



“My adoptive parents and brother, and the person whom I once sought death for.”

Aldrich stopped combing my hair.

To prevent him from misunderstanding, I immediately explained, “He’s already a thing of the past. I don’t have any feelings for him now. I’m going to see him purely to take revenge for the sins he’s committed against me.”

Aldrich’s expression turned darker, and he asked in a deep voice, “Sins? What did he do to you?”

“It’s like what I told you before. He was rude to me and offended me, something like that...”

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“Do you know that you always look at your right hand when you lie?” Aldrich interrupted me, “Tell me the truth, my dear. What did that b\*stard do to you?”

Looking at his eyes that were filled with anger, I muttered to myself for a long time before finally coming up with a gentler explanation. “You know, I always thought he was willing to accept me as his fated mate, so I impulsively confessed. After being rejected, I felt embarrassed and jumped into the river in anger.”

“So, not only did that b\*stard keep hanging on to you, but he also rejected you after you confessed to him. He even humiliated you and said that you better disappear forever.”

I didn’t expect that he would be able to guess most of the truth. I was so shocked that I couldn’t say anything. This further proved that Aldrich’s guess was correct.

He looked like he was about to rush out of the palace to kill someone. To prevent us from occupying the headlines of social news tomorrow, I immediately said, “He’s a complete b\*stard. I’ve already thought of how to punish him. Tomorrow, you just have to follow me and hold the line. Don’t be impulsive.”

After staring at me for a long time, his shoulders suddenly drooped, and he buried himself in my arms, sighing.

“How good would it be if we knew each other since we were young?” He said sadly, “I’m so many years older than you. I can easily strip off all the rascals who bullied you and throw them into the river. Whoever dares to laugh at you, I’ll make sure they don’t come back, whether they’re Alphas’ son or some other pointless identity.”

I hugged him gently and combed his messy hair. “And be childhood sweethearts? Of course, that’s the best-case scenario. But I’m happy enough now. You’re by my side and will be my shelter for the next few decades.”

We kissed gently, without any desire, only lingering love.

We finished our first meal of the day on the bed, then we packed up and prepared to greet my parents.

Seeing Kara and the servants clean up the messy bed in an orderly manner, my face couldn't help but heat up. I went to the living room to change my clothes. Bertha was waiting there. As the acting head servant, she had to help Kara inspect every part of the palace. Coincidentally, she had come to my suite.

"Happy marriage, Your Highness." She bowed to me and said, "I can't give you anything precious as a wedding gift. I weaved this pair of wreaths with the flowers I cultivated. I asked the werewolf grandmaster to make it eternal. I hope you don't mind."

I received the beautiful floral wreath in surprise. "Thank you! How do you know that I like fresh flowers?"

"I am a servant, Your Highness. It is my duty to keep your preferences in mind."

"That's so considerate..." looking at the flower wreath, I recalled the new message I had received. "Regarding your brother, the werewolf grandmasters think he went northwest where he disappeared. The people I've sent out are urgently searching that area, and I believe they'll receive the news soon."

After Bertha left, Aldrich and I went to see my parents together. I didn't expect a few other guests in the study – Duke Frank, Arkadius, Morton, and Master Mary.

The elders all got up to wish me a happy marriage, and I returned their greetings shyly.

After I arrived, they were observant and left one after another. Duke Frank stayed for a while and spoke to his son before he also left.

My parents were the only ones left in the study. I gathered my courage and said, "Father, Mother, regarding that application... I've already approved it. I'll be meeting my adoptive parents tomorrow morning."

"You should do this, child," my father said kindly. "There's no way to repay them for raising you. Your mother and I must thank them for everything they've done for you."

"There's another person," I said carefully. "Benson Walton, the current Alpha of the Shadow Pack. I have some scores to settle with him."

My parents could vaguely guess what was going on and asked, "Is that related to you throwing yourself into the water?"

I explained the grudges between Benson and me. By the end of it, my mother was already furious, and even my father, who had always been calm, had a dark expression.

“I should probably properly evaluate the character of these young Alphas,” my father said in a deep voice. “Arrogant second-generation kids can’t give their people a good life.”

305 The Meeting

Selma Payne’s POV:

The next morning.

I would be lying if I said I wasn’t nervous as I was about to see my adoptive parents and Rhode. The glance at the ceremony was so blurry that I didn’t see if my adoptive parents had gained weight or slimmed down, if they were haggard, or if they were in good health.

Seeing that I was absent-minded, Aldrich held my hand tightly and silently supported me.

At eight o’clock, the Officer of Rites announced on time.

The door to the living room opened. The moment I saw my adoptive parents, I couldn’t hold back anymore. I strode forward and hugged them. “Dad! Mom! I missed you guys so much!”

My adoptive parents were at a loss and quickly sobbed in my arms.

“My daughter, my baby... ” My adoptive mother pulled me into her arms. “Selma, how could you be so cruel? You left us behind without a word! The cliff is so high, and the river is so cold. What if something happened to you?”

“I’m sorry, Mom. I was too impulsive.” I cried so hard that my snot and tears were flowing. I didn’t care about etiquette at all. I held my adoptive parents’ hands and let the tears wash down my line of defense.

Rhode stood beside my adoptive parents and patted me heavily. Even the strong warrior couldn’t help but sob. “Selma, we thought it was good as long as you were fine! It’s good that you’re fine!”

We hugged, telling each other our worries and thoughts until my parents came to comfort us. “Alright, child, don’t just stand at the door. Invite your adoptive parents to sit.”

My adoptive parents finally reacted and hurriedly bowed to my parents, but my parents stopped them.

“We can’t accept your bows,” my father said. “You raised Selma safely. We can’t repay this kindness, so how can we accept a bow from our benefactors?”

My adoptive father was a little frightened, “What are you saying, Your Majesty?”

My mother was much more direct. She held my adoptive mother’s arm and pressed her down on the sofa. She said bluntly, “Even if it’s for our daughter, we don’t want her to be in a difficult position because of us, right?”

My adoptive mother nodded in confusion.

While we were being intimate here, the Walton Family, who had been left out on the side, seemed a little awkward. They didn’t know whether to stay or leave. It wasn’t until my father glanced at them that they reacted and bent their backs or knees.

“Greetings, Your Majesty,” Benson greeted with great difficulty. “Your Majesty the Queen and Your Highness the Princess...”

He lowered his head and didn’t even dare to look at me.

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My father didn’t let him get up, nor did he say anything to taunt him. He just left him hanging coldly. Such an atmosphere made my adoptive parents extremely terrified. They subconsciously wanted to say something, but I shook my head gently, indicating they would remain silent.

Benson’s parents were even more confused. They did not understand what their son had done to upset the King.

After a long while, my father finally ended the silent dismemberment. “Hello, young man. You’re the Alpha of the Shadow Pack, right?”

Benson bowed even lower and replied respectfully, “Yes, Your Majesty.”

My father asked the Walton Family to take their seats, but he left Benson hanging.

The atmosphere suddenly became filled with tension.

We affectionately chatted with my adoptive parents about our daily lives. They were a little restless at first, but they quickly accepted the enthusiasm of the King and Queen. They glanced at the bewildered Benson from time to time, not hiding their worry for him.

Look, my adoptive parents were so concerned about Benson, but what did they get in return for their sincerity?

I coldly looked at Benson's stiff body while chatting and ignored Rhode's hint.

Finally, my father changed the topic and talked about my marriage with Aldrich.

"By right, you are also Aldrich's in-laws," my father said as he gestured to Aldrich. "He should pay his respects to you."

My adoptive parents waved their hands uneasily. They had never seen many nobles in their ordinary lives, let alone received a noble's bow.

I stopped my adoptive parents, trying to get up. I stood up and bowed to them respectfully with Aldrich, just like how we did to my parents at the wedding.

Looking at my adoptive parents' helpless expressions, Aldrich softly comforted, "Please don't decline my respect, Mr. And Mrs. Payne. It was you who raised Selma. That's why I had the chance to meet my true love and marry her. Without you, Selma and I would not be who we are today. I am grateful to you from the bottom of my heart."

"Please don't... you don't have to..." my honest adoptive father was about to faint. Seeing my adoptive parents could not accept it, I skipped the topic and started talking about Rhode.

After so many years, Rhode was still alone without a fated mate or a chosen mate, but he wasn't in a hurry. He was optimistic and would be happy to get married at fifty.

Rhode was worried about his good buddy, so he took the opportunity to bring up Benson.

This time, my father's attention finally returned to Benson, as if he had not intentionally ignored this person.

"As for you, young man," he said in a deep voice. "Do you have anything you want to confess to us?"

As soon as he finished speaking, Benson started trembling. He looked up and revealed an expression of defeat.

306 Exposed

Selma Payne's POV:

"Forgive me for being slow-witted, Your Majesty. I don't understand what you're referring to," Benson said dryly.

My father ignored him and said to me, “Oh, really? My dear Benson, why don’t you take a good look at me and your former playmate? Do you really have nothing to say to me?”

Benson’s face turned even paler. He gulped and stubbornly said, “I don’t know...”

“You don’t know? Okay, okay, it seems that the life of an Alpha has degenerated you. Even the memory you were so proud of has degenerated.”

My sharp and unkind comment caused my adoptive parents and the Walton Family to be terrified – this wasn’t a heartwarming scene of an old friend reuniting.

“Come on now, Selma,” my adoptive mother said softly. “Benson was very concerned about you. He helped a lot after you went missing.”

I chuckled and stared at Benson’s evasive eyes. “Is that so? You’ve been helping Mom and Dad to find me?”

Benson didn’t answer. I disdained his silence.

“This is really interesting. A good show. The Midnight Opera House needs a talent like you.”

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The Walton couple finally couldn’t help but hurriedly say, “Your Highness, perhaps Benson has offended you in some way in the past, but I promise you that he’s a good boy.”

I interrupted them and asked, “Promise what?” Guarantee that he will do his best to find me? Guarantee that he didn’t expect me to disappear forever? To make sure that he wouldn’t cry out like a thief or hypocritically analyze the reason for my suicide?”

Rhode, my adoptive parents, and my biological parents were all confused.

“Don’t say that, Selma,” Rhode said with a frown. “Benson was indeed concerned about you.”

“Of course, he should be concerned about me.” Looking at Benson’s trembling figure, I smirked and admired the embarrassing scene. “Of course, he should pay attention to every piece of news about me. Whether I’m dead or alive, whether I’ve returned or disappeared, whether I’m still unconscious or awake, whether I’ll reveal the secret he’s been trying so hard to hide from the public...”

“Stop!” Benson broke down. He fell to the ground and held his head in pain. “Please stop! Just stop!”

I suddenly stood up and walked up to him. I lifted this coward's collar and shouted angrily, "Are you scared? The mask of a good person you've painstakingly maintained is about to be taken off, and you're so scared that you're about to pee your pants, right? If you knew this would happen, why did you do it?"

"Selma, what happened? What are you doing?"

My adoptive parents stood up in fear. They reached out but retracted their hands. They were shocked by this change.

I threw Benson to the ground. "Since he doesn't dare to admit it," I said. "I'll do the talking. It's about my suicide by jumping into the river."

Benson grabbed my skirt's corner and squeezed a sharp wail from his throat. "Please, I beg you, I beg you, I beg you!"

I kicked him away and let the truth see the light of day again. "The truth is that Benson was the fuse that led to my suicide. While I was in the Shadow Pack, Benson kept using the 'fated mate' tag to bait me, neither agreeing nor rejecting. After I expressed my feelings to him, he ruthlessly humiliated me. Back then, he thought I was a human, so he denounced me for being a lowly human and told me to disappear from his sight forever. I was heartbroken, and in my agitation, I jumped into the river to commit suicide."

A sudden clap of metaphorical thunder rang out from the ground, stunning the ignorant crowd.

Benson was still hoping to quibble. "How can you blame me for this? Love is a matter of mutual consent. Don't I have the right to reject a mate?"

"Of course you do, son of an Alpha, a future leader with a bright future. Not only do you have the right to reject, but you also have the right to waste a little girl's feelings and youth, to abuse her coldly, to bully her with your bad friends, to insult your friend's sister, and to pretend to be a good person with a hypocritical mask!

"Your power is so sacred. After all, in your heart, strength and status are everything. A noble Alpha's son can naturally bully a human girl.

"Even if she died because of you, she's only worth worrying over for two or three days. How to maintain your reputation is the most important. For this, you hid the truth, deceived your friends, and deceived your parents. As long as you are still a leader worthy of trust in everyone's hearts, then my life and death are not important.

"But what are you afraid of now? Power and status are your beliefs, aren't they? So now that you're beneath me, who has a higher status and more power, you should be happy with it!

“Benson Walton, in the five years I was gone, have you been watching Rhode and my parents with such a heart-wrenching pain? You’ve been hiding the truth with a clear conscience and watching them walk from hope to despair, haven’t you? Have you been sitting in the office and enjoying the pride and satisfaction of an Alpha’s power?”

“When you look down at your pack from the floor-to-ceiling window, have you ever thought that my family is grieving because you hid this from them? Have you ever thought that more vicious bullies will unscrupulously bully the weak in their eyes because of your twisted backbone?”

Benson trembled as he curled up into a ball. I couldn’t see his expression, but I knew it would make me lose my appetite.

307 Self-deprecation

Selma Payne’s POV:

After wiping the hand that had touched him, I threw the handkerchief at him and said expressionlessly, “A disgusting thing like you, you think you’re worthy of being a leader of a pack’s Alpha? The heaven is truly blind.”

No matter how devastated Benson was, I felt great.

This man, who was once insufferably arrogant and weighed down on my destiny like a tall mountain, now seemed like an insignificant fallen leaf. Although annoying, he was crushed into powder with a gentle touch.

The anger that had accumulated in my chest was swept away. I no longer paid attention to the pile of mud-like coward by my feet. I returned to my adoptive parents’ side and gently held their hands to comfort them and stop them from talking.

It was not the time to interrupt.

The Walton couple were so anxious that they were about to go crazy. They looked at their son, who had collapsed, in shock and disappointment. They were filled with guilt and pleading when they faced me. They didn’t even dare to look at my adoptive parents, much less my biological parents, who exuded an aura of authority without being angry.

The living room suddenly fell silent, leaving only Benson’s weak sobs and trembling.

My father slowly walked up to him, coldly looking at the young Alpha, saying, “Benson Walton, do you confess to your crimes?”

Benson raised his head shakily, revealing his wet face and red and swollen eyes. He mumbled, “I admit it...”



Mrs. Walton let out a sigh of despair. Mr. Walton stood up helplessly and tried to defend his son. "There must be some misunderstanding here..."

Benson interrupted his father and said dejectedly, "No, Father, everything is real. I was the one who forced Selma to commit suicide. I was the one who bullied her. I was the one who turned a blind eye to my friends bullying her. I used to be a b\*stard. Irascible, arrogant, stupid, and ignorant. I was the one who caused all the tragedies."

Hearing his self-narration, my adoptive father sighed, my adoptive mother burst into tears, and Rhode looked at his 'good buddy' in shock. His eyes darted between Benson and me, clearly unable to accept this.

"Why did you do this?" He angrily grabbed Benson's collar and lifted him, roaring at him, "Selma is my younger sister! You keep saying that I'm your best friend, that I'm destined to serve as your Beta, that my family is your family, that you'll treat Selma as your sister, and this is how you treat your sister?"

Benson wanted to defend himself, but he was punched to the ground by Rhode.

"Go to hell, you hypocritical villain!" Rhode beat up Benson as if he had gone mad to vent his anger. "How dare you do this to Selma! How can you let me down? How can you let Selma down? How can you be worthy of the people in the pack who sincerely regard you as a leader worthy of following? You've deceived everyone!"

My father watched all of this coldly and had no intention of stopping it. Mr. Walton and my adoptive father quickly stepped forward to pull the two apart. Rhode, who had lost his mind in anger, even punched Mr. Walton in the chaos.

Looking at this farce of fighting and kicking, I suddenly felt extremely fed up – the outcome was already decided, so what was the point of wasting more time?

"Enough!" I shouted, and the people in the chaos stopped and looked at me, bewildered.

"Come back, Rhode. Violence can't solve anything."

Rhode glared at Benson unwillingly and spat on the ground. He shook off Mr. Walton's hand and turned to leave.

"As for you, Benson, what kind of punishment do you think you should receive?"

With a bloody nose and a swollen face, Benson silently got up. With Mr. Walton's help, he said with a hunched body, "I'm willing to accept anything."

I waved my hand impatiently. “Don’t play dumb with me. This kind of ambiguity is boring. As an Alpha, you should know that the royal family generally doesn’t easily intervene in local affairs. You understand what I mean, right?”

Benson bowed even lower. “Yes, Your Highness. After I return to pack, I will immediately resign from my position as an Alpha and join the mobile patrol team, punishing myself with hard work until my death. I’m doing this of my own free will. I only ask for your forgiveness.”

I subconsciously opened my mouth to say something sarcastic, but I changed my mind. To an egoistic maniac like Benson, who regarded power as his life, falling from the pedestal was probably worse than death. Moreover... A mobile patrol team? This is a good place. I needed a sentinel to help me investigate the various packs, and the candidate had already arrived.

It might sound a little dark to say this, but the rules of politics were like this: A frightened dog might not be obedient, but it was easier to control than a loyal person.

I nodded in satisfaction. “I accept your apology. This is considered done.”

After being beaten up by Rhode, Benson’s father sent his men to treat his wounds. My adoptive parents knew they couldn’t do anything about it, so they remained silent. Rhode was immersed in the pain of being betrayed by his friend and the guilt he felt for me.

The Walton couple was terrified. They could not accept that their son had done such a despicable thing, but reality had hit them in the head.

After dealing with Benson, only one question was left unanswered: Who should be the Shadow Pack’s Alpha?

308 You’re Worth It

Selma Payne’s POV:

Benson didn’t have any siblings, and the Walton Family was even more ashamed to return to their Alpha position. In the end, Mr. Warton suggested with a bitter smile, “Your Majesty, please give the order for a public election. Benson is a good-for-nothing, and as his father, I don’t have the face to take over, so we should choose a new Alpha.”

My father agreed.

The Walton couple hurriedly took their leave. This family reunion also seemed out of place because of my grudge against Benson. Facing my terrified adoptive parents, I consoled them, “Can you and Rhode stay in the palace for a while? I’ve been planning

to go back to the Shadow Pack to visit my family. After I finish my work here, I think we can go back together.”

Of course, my adoptive parents were happy, but they couldn't show it because of my biological parents' presence.

My biological mother said considerately, “There's no need to have any qualms. In fact, His Majesty and I also support Selma in returning to the Shadow Pack for a visit. After all, that's where she grew up for eighteen years. Her feelings for that place are extraordinary.”

Surprisingly, the two mothers got along very well. My adoptive mother was easy to get close to, and my biological mother also had the style of a middle-aged woman who was very familiar with others. Soon, the two of them were happy and harmonious. In contrast, my adoptive and biological father's relationship was much more formal. Although there was no estrangement between the two, they could not be intimate.

I didn't dwell much on this. As long as there were no conflicts between the two sides, they could get along however they wanted. There was no need for them to force a smile for me.

As if there was no conflict, we happily spent the entire morning together. My adoptive parents insisted on going back to the hotel after lunch.

“We still have luggage to pack. Besides, although Benson is a wimp, The Walton couple are my friends who have gone through life and death with me. There are some things I have to tell them.” My adoptive father had aged ten years at the mention of this.

“Selma, I'm very sorry. As your parents, we should have discovered all that you've suffered a long time ago, but the truth is that we didn't do anything. We let you fight against malice and bullying alone. I'm such a... oh Moon Goddess, what have I been doing before?”

Facing my tearful adoptive parents, I felt like a knife was cutting my heart. I immediately comforted them that this was not their fault.

“You're also victims of deception. Don't blame yourself for this.” I sobbed as I wiped their tears. “The past is the past. There's no point dwelling on it. I've returned to your side, and we'll have a happy future, won't we?”

Before I left, the unusually silent Rhode suddenly told me, “I'm sorry, Selma. It was my negligence that indulged Benson's every move.

I knew he had gone to a dead end, so I smiled and nudged him, just like how we played around at the Shadow Pack when we were young.

“You know that I’ve never blamed you, Rhode. On the contrary, if you didn’t act as my haven, I don’t know if I could’ve persisted in the bullying for so long. So, don’t look like you’re about to cry. Smile and take good care of your parents, okay?”

Rhode stared blankly for a moment before smiling back at me. With red-rimmed eyes, he said, “Alright.”

After the chaotic morning ended, I returned to my idle state in the afternoon.

As usual, Jordin and Emma went on leave three days after I got married. Dorothy hid in the Sorcery Research Institute to avoid disturbing Aldrich and me. I felt quite empty without the girls chattering around me.

However, this emptiness lasted only a few minutes before it dissipated with Aldrich’s clingy dog-like attacks.

We fooled around the entire afternoon and had dinner on the bed.

As I munched on the caramelized baguette, I couldn’t help but laugh when I thought of the expressions on my face when I was with my adoptive parents this morning.

Pouring me a cup of tea, Aldrich said, “Today is indeed a day worth being happy about, but if you must be distracted when you’re with me, then I’ll be angry even if it’s the couple that I respect.”

“Be serious.” I gave him a push. “What was that? They’re my parents!”

We started pushing each other around like primary school students. After ending this childish game, I suddenly felt myriad emotions as I lay in Aldrich’s arms.

“At this moment, I feel my life is already complete.”

“What do you mean?”

“My true love is by my side, my two sets of parents are healthy and safe, my close friends are each other’s confidants, and my respected seniors and teachers have led me to this place. I don’t know what I had done in my previous life to be able to obtain so many precious friendships in this life.”

“It has nothing to do with your previous life. The answer to everything is that you are worth it.”

“Really?”

“It’s true.”

“You’re lying to me.”

“I swear that everything comes from my heart. Because my lover is so kind, intelligent, beautiful, and powerful. So isn’t it natural for the world to favor her?”

Was I loved by the world?

I’d always been a person without a sense of security. I never asked anyone if they liked me because I was afraid of getting an answer I didn’t want.

However, if I were to ask myself, was I loved by the world?

I didn’t think I cared about the answer.

I’d already received so much love from my lover, family, and friends. What more could I want?

309 The Change

Selma Payne’s POV:

In the middle of September, I set off for the Shadow Pack. To protect my former friends and family, the royal family announced that Aldrich and I were going on a honeymoon at the Shadow Pack. The specific itinerary was kept secret, and no media interviews were accepted.

Accompanying us were Dorothy, Jordin, Emma, Master Kevin, and others. I thought the Sorcery Research Institute would send Master Hayley, but Master Kevin’s arrival surprised me. He was famous for his academic brain. He was not interested in anything other than the library and the laboratory, let alone traveling.

On my wedding day, I saw him on the viewing platform. He was holding a delicate wooden box with the Y&Y on it. Before leaving, I visited Master Mary and asked her about it.

“It’s been so many years, but Kevin still hasn’t gotten used to this.” She said emotionally, “Ever since Layla passed away, Kevin would bring the dress he had customized for Layla to important events. This way, he can feel that Layla is still by his side.”

I sighed and didn’t pursue the matter.

Many of them, like Dorothy, had never left the Lycan Pack since they were young. She was extremely excited along the way, occasionally picking rare plants, seeds, spores, and other small things to store in her sample bottle. Compared to accompanying me on

a journey, she was more like a student on a study trip. She was more relaxed than anyone else.

We stopped at the Silver Moon Pack for a day to rest. As one of the top-ranked packs, the Silver Moon Pack was as prosperous as the Lycan Pack. In particular, this place was close to the plains that bordered the elf forest and human society. Trade was developed here, and it had a luxurious feel.

Francis welcomed us warmly. Coincidentally, his youngest daughter also came back to visit her family. I finally got to meet the girl that Francis always talked about.

It was not accurate to call her a girl. She was a few years older than me. Although she had been married for many years, and she led a very happy life. With the nourishment of love, she was as young as a seventeen or eighteen-year-old girl.

“Greetings, Your Highness.” She went forward and kneeled before me, seemingly a little excited. “Thank you for coming to the Silver Moon Pack. Your presence is an honor for all of us.”

Teresa was a talkative woman, and with her witty language, the unfamiliarity between us was quickly swept away. As I chatted with her, I was surprised to find out that her husband was an old acquaintance of mine – Benson’s friend, the head of the guards, Daniel.

“So you’ve known about me for a long time?”

“You could say that,” Teresa smiled shyly. “Daniel has been helping Mr. And Mrs. Payne to find you. I’ve gradually come to know about you.”

Daniel had always been one of the indifferent people in the Shadow Pack. He didn’t bully me, nor did he help me. He treated me like an invisible person. We didn’t have much interaction, but I didn’t expect him to be willing to help my adoptive parents find me.

I had to thank Daniel for taking care of my adoptive parents. Since Teresa already knew about my background, there was no need to hide my relationship with my biological parents. I didn’t know him much in the past. I didn’t expect him to be such a warm-hearted person who was cold on the outside.

“You know, conflicts and contradictions are inevitable in human relationships,” Teresa said with a troubled expression. “As Benson’s friend, Daniel had no choice but to avoid suspicion with you. He didn’t mean to be disrespectful, so please don’t misunderstand.”

“Why do I feel like you’re a little afraid of me?”

Having been seen through by me, Teresa smiled awkwardly and didn’t reply.

Recalling how she was so secretive about Benson that she didn't even dare to mention his name, I understood everything. The news of Benson's resignation had long been sent back to the Shadow Pack. Coupled with some rumors that were intentionally leaked, smart people could easily link it to me.

They were all adults, so they were expected to be realistic. No matter how good their relationship with Benson was, they had no choice but to admit defeat in front of me. They were unlucky to be Benson's trusted aides. To prevent me from settling the score, it was normal for them to show goodwill in front of me. I was sure Teresa had rushed back to her hometown alone to meet me because of her husband.

After figuring out the crux of the matter, I lost all interest in chatting and sent Teresa away with a few perfunctory words.

She was still a little worried before she left, but I had no interest in comforting her. Since she liked to guess at other people's thoughts, she should guess as much as he wanted.

Aldrich and I took our leave early and returned to the hotel.

Seeing my low spirits, Aldrich asked, "Why are you unhappy? Did someone offend you?"

I shook my head. "No. I feel like something has changed."

"What has changed?"

"I can't say for sure. This feeling is like a flower growing from a seed to a flower. Although the surrounding environment hasn't changed and it's still the same, the outside world's attitude towards it has suddenly changed."

310 Emotions And Interests

Selma Payne's POV:

Aldrich laughed out loud because of my strange metaphor. "You're saying that because you've become a Princess, everyone's attitude towards you has changed drastically?"

I nodded gloomily.

"I knew this would happen sooner or later, and I was prepared for it, but I still can't help but feel disappointed. Could it be that I can't have a pure friendship without any schemes and benefits again? I don't want every word I say to be weighed on a scale before I express it. It's so exhausting, and I can't bear it. "

Aldrich rolled me into a ball and stuffed me in his arms, patting my back like he was coaxing a baby to sleep.



‘Don’t be so pessimistic. You already have friendships that are pure and without any conditions, haven’t you?’ His voice was extremely gentle. “You have me, your adoptive parents, brother, and a group of like-minded friends. Isn’t what you have now more precious?”

“I understand that you’re all the most important people to me, but the thought of having to talk to people like Teresa every day in the future makes me feel mentally tired. People are complicated. When they pursue benefits, they hope to obtain them without putting in any effort with their emotions, but when they pursue feelings, they put benefits on the table and weigh them. In the end, your feelings are all gone, and you don’t get any benefits. Isn’t that exhausting?”

Aldrich didn’t answer me, instead, he said, “I don’t know what other people think, but do you want to hear my story?”

“What?”

“It’s about my mother’s family and my childhood.”

Aldrich’s mother had passed away when he was very young, and Duke Frank had raised him alone. It wasn’t that there weren’t any other relatives who popped up during this period, but it wasn’t a heartwarming story.

Duke Frank was born a commoner and did not have many relatives. On the other hand, the Duchess was born into a noble family, and her family was a long-established noble family that lived in seclusion in a certain pack. Due to the huge difference in status, the Duchess’ parents did not agree to her marriage to Duke Frank. They even said, “You can either continue to be a noble lady, or you can go to the horizon with that beggar and never come back again.”

The young Duchess was so angry that she secretly eloped with Duke Frank, and her parents ignored her as they had promised.

Later, Duke Frank made a fortune step by step and worked hard to get to his current position. The Duchess finally led a good life. However, the good times did not last long. After a few years of enjoyment, the Duchess passed away, leaving behind the heartbroken Duke Frank and little Aldrich, who was still in his cot.

The Duchess’s family, which had disappeared for a long time, suddenly reappeared. They tried to please little Aldrich so that the young and ignorant Aldrich would quickly regard them as family.

However, they could not wait to show their greedy fangs, urging Aldrich to ask Duke Frank to provide them with benefits, and even tried to murder the father and son. As the maiden family of the Duchess, they were only qualified to inherit her inheritance when her husband and children died.



Of course, the clumsy plot was easily seen through by Duke Frank. From then on, the family disappeared, and the heartbroken little Aldrich also closed himself off for a long time, unwilling to make friends again.

“That was until I entered the military camp. I met many of my comrades and my first instructor, Frank.” At the mention of Frank, Aldrich was a little dejected. “I was just a cocky kid back then. I didn’t like anyone and always felt that others were plotting against me.”

Of course, nobody liked this Aldrich, so after a month of training, his peers in the same class could tell each other everything they had, and he was still a lone wolf.

It wasn’t that others didn’t want to get close to him, but he refused to let anyone get close to him. He even used sarcasm to dig out the purpose of others trying to build a good relationship with him. This made him a condescending noble young master in other people’s hearts. No one dared to provoke him, but no one was willing to get close to him.

As an instructor, Frank saw everything. One day, he called Aldrich over and beat him up in the name of private guidance. Aldrich, who had an inflated ego during puberty, couldn’t take it. After many failed counterattacks, he couldn’t stand his ground and exploded.

He accused Frank of abusing his authority for personal gain and was using the opportunity of guidance to vent his grudges against him. When Frank asked why he thought he was targeting him, Aldrich answered without hesitation, “Just because I’m a noble, you’re biased against me, so you’re trying to torture me?”

After he shouted this, the furious Frank suddenly calmed down and asked, “You think I’m biased against you?”

“Yes!”

“Don’t talk nonsense, kid! You’ve always been the biased one!”

Frank’s punch landed on Aldrich’s face, interrupting his anger and knocking him out of his senses.

How could it be his fault?

311 Pride and Prejudice

Selma Payne’s POV:

Frank grabbed Aldrich's collar and carried him to the edge of the training ground. Outside the wire fence were the trainees from the same batch participating in the weekend movie night.

"Look at this group of young people of your age. They are innocent, pure, and passionate and can become friends with just one look. And you? At the age of fifteen or sixteen, you're living like a dying old man, arrogantly digging out the dark side of other people's hearts, but you don't know that you're the one who's stuck in a dead end!

"What do you have that others want? A powerful duke for a father? Noble status? Wealth? Let me tell you, kid, don't think you're so likable. When people greet you, it's not because they want to ask you for something. It's just a form of courtesy. They might not even remember your name! The things you value are not even worth a fart. No one cares about them at all!

"This is the military camp, not your home. Don't throw your young master temper here! The people living with you are your comrades. Now you're giving them a dirty face, but when you're on the battlefield in the future, are you going to tell your comrades, 'Don't come and save me. I won't give you anything'? If you're still so laughably naive, then let me tell you, you're not worthy of being a warrior!

"Now, answer me: do you want to continue staying in the military camp, put away your young master temper, and obediently go roll in the mud with your comrades, or do you want to pack up and leave immediately? "

Aldrich was already completely stunned. For many years he had been lingering in the shadow of his mother's family, unable to extricate himself, using his violent appearance as a cover that he did not dare to get along with others. Having his disguise suddenly exposed, he felt embarrassed and angry, but at the same time, he felt a huge emptiness.

"From then on, I began to try to integrate into the group. At that time, we were all young, and there was no overnight enmity between us, so we accepted me very quickly." Aldrich said, "Thanks to that beating from Frank. He made me understand one thing: you can't know a person's heart. Never speculate about other people's thoughts. 'Relatives' who smile at me may want me to die, and strangers who say bad things to me may want to get close to me. Preemptively predicting the outcome won't change anything. Instead, it'll block my eyes and interfere with my judgment, making things worse.

"So, you don't have to worry about your future. Whether it's true or false, it's inevitable in social life. This has nothing to do with our identity. Whether we are kings or beggars, we can't escape the shackles of social rules – we are the creators and users of these rules. We should have expected everything, so there is no need to be discouraged."

I looked at him for a long time before suddenly bursting out laughing. “Do you know what you look like right now?”

“What?”

“The male host of the Midnight Love radio station!”  
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After saying that, I tried to escape from Aldrich’s arms, but he grabbed me back to the bed and pressed me down.

“It seems that you’re not sad at all,” he said with ill intentions. “In that case, let’s do something happy.”

The room was dimly lit.

After I stopped wasting my time, I swept away my dejection and appeared full of energy in front of everyone the next day.

Before I left the Silver Moon Pack, I especially looked at Teresa to comfort this panicking lady I had angered.

She was wary when she spoke to me, not as friendly as she was at the beginning. She probably didn’t know how she had offended me, so she didn’t dare to ‘be presumptuous’ anymore.

“I must apologize for my attitude last night,” I got straight to the point. “I was too tired yesterday and rude to you because of some things. I’m very sorry for the trouble I’ve caused you. You’re a very good person, and I like to get along with you.”

Teresa was surprised and a little flattered. “You’re being too serious, Your Highness. I don’t feel anything.”

I didn’t expose her little pretense. I smiled and asked, “When are you returning to the Shadow Pack? I think we can be friends.”

“I- I still have to keep Father company for a few more days.” My friend’s request caught Teresa off guard, but she quickly reacted naturally as an extrovert and smiled sweetly. “I’ll go to the Shadow Pack before your honeymoon with Sir Aldrich ends. It’s my honor to be your friend.”

“Then, I wish you a happy life. We’ll meet again at the Shadow Pack!”

After resolving this knot in my heart, I felt unusually comfortable. Just as Aldrich said, ‘Don’t assume anything.’ If I wanted everything to develop in a good direction, then I had to work hard in a good direction, right?

“You guys had a good time chatting?” Aldrich asked.

I nodded. “Of course. Selma and Teresa will become friends. Definitely!”

After so many years, the Shadow Pack didn’t change much. I could even find the tree I used to hide in when I was young.

Back then, I was always the one who was ignored. Often, no one could find me even when it was dark because everyone had forgotten about me.

312 Feelings

Selma Payne’s POV:

Most of the time, it was Rhode who carried me down from the tree and bought me a blueberry ice cream sprinkled with powdered sugar. Then, he would bring me home while talking about the dinner menu.

Although I wanted to stay in my former home, I had to stay in the hotel to prevent the security guards from going crazy. Ultimately, I arranged for my adoptive parents and Rhode to come in. We spent a happy week together, and then we had to get down to business.

In addition to our honeymoon, there was another purpose for the Shadow Pack – to select a new Alpha.

This work required the residents in the pack and the representatives of the royal family to witness it. Without a doubt, I was the guest representing the royal family.

The day of the selection was set to be the night of the nearest full moon, the 23rd of September. Before that, we selected a few candidates through public opinion. Among them are some of my acquaintances, such as the captain of the guards, Daniel, a few young people from political families, and even my brother, Rhode.

Besides being Benson’s Beta, Rhode didn’t have any political capital. Benson’s resignation had ruined his reputation.

Even under such circumstances, so many people still supported him. Although we unanimously attributed this to the people’s recognition of Rhode’s achievements, everyone knew I couldn’t do without it. As the adopted brother of the princess, Rhode had the possibility of rising to the top. This made countless people fight to invest in him.

Rhode couldn’t help but feel depressed. But he never showed it before me, and I knew it was because of Emma.

One night, Emma came to me and said, “The most influential Mr. Payne doesn’t seem to be in a good mood.”

At that time, I didn’t realize my influence on Rhode. I was happy he could get so many people’s support, so I was puzzled. “Why? Is he troubled?”

“I think it’s because of the votes,” Emma shrugged and said, “Mr. Payne is happy that the people voted for him, but he thinks that if he gets support because of you, you will probably be viewed as practicing nepotism. So, he is considering whether to withdraw from the election.”

“What?” I was shocked. “Why? Rhode had given so much for the Shadow Pack. He deserves it all. He shouldn’t have to give it up for me!”

I immediately decided to look for him, but Emma stopped me.

“Would you like to hear my opinion?”

“Of course, please go ahead.”

“I don’t think Mr. Payne is calm right now. He’s at the peak of his impulsiveness. If you go over and persuade him now, he might be even more determined to withdraw from the election.”

Emma was right. My appearance would push Rhode to make an impulsive decision.

“So what do you think is the best?”

“You can give Mr. Payne the cold shoulder for one night and pretend that you don’t know about this. Since the temporary Election Committee is not open at night, Mr. Payne would have to wait until the next morning to apply to abstain. There’s only a bit of time left until tomorrow. If we can distract Mr. Payne until the night, it’ll be too late for him to back out.”

It was a good idea, but...

“But this is only a temporary solution. Perhaps he will withdraw from the ceremony if we can’t resolve the knot in Rhode’s heart.”

Emma was stunned. She didn’t seem to have thought of this.

This girl couldn’t be blamed for not thinking carefully. In fact, from her life experience, she always played the role of the instigator, so she valued the results over the process, not to mention the psychological disturbance.

“I’m sorry, Your Highness. I was too naive,” she mumbled. “I shouldn’t have taken it for granted.”

I told her not to feel guilty. “You don’t have to apologize. On the contrary, I should thank you. Thank you for thinking about my family.”

I didn’t expect Emma to fall silent after I said that suddenly. The redness gradually spread to her cheeks and ears, and soon she was as red as an apple.

I was initially confused, but an idea immediately came to my mind.

“!”

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I took a deep breath and swallowed my shock. I asked softly, “Are you two...? Oh my god, really?”

“Yes, I think so.” Emma nodded shyly.

This was the first time I’d been so close to a friend’s love life, and I was so excited that I couldn’t speak. Once again, I suppressed my shrieking and excitedly asked, “I remember you haven’t met your mate yet. You and Rhode?”

“No, Your Highness. The Moon Goddess did not give us any guidance.” Emma shook her head. “I’m not a traditional person. I don’t care if fate has arranged the best choice for me.”

“How far have you guys progressed? Holding hands? Unsure? Confessing? Oh my god, I didn’t notice anything.”

“Actually... we have yet to make any progress. I have a one-sided favorable impression of Rhode. I don’t know what he’s thinking.”

I realized it was time for me to make a move and immediately said, “Don’t worry, I’ll help you test him!”

“But the election is going to be a success.”

“Don’t worry. I understand Rhode. He’s not that weak. If he gave up on the election because of me, I’d be suspicious of what he’d gone through in the past three years that I don’t know to become such a timid and irresponsible man!”

313 Cowering

Selma Payne’s POV:

Rhode was surprised by my visit. He didn't look too good, but he still greeted me with spirit.

"It's so late. What's up?"

"Because the election ceremony is tomorrow night. I wanted to see how you've prepared."

Rhode fell silent at the mention of the election ceremony.

"What's the matter? Are you worried?" I asked despite knowing the answer. "If I can help with anything, just let me know."

As expected, Rhode's reaction was intense. He refused without thinking, "There is no need! I can handle everything on my own."

After speaking, he realized his tone was harsh and wanted to find a remedy. He opened his mouth a few times, but nothing came out. Ultimately, he could only let his shoulders fall and sigh gloomily.

I didn't hide anything and got straight to the point. "I heard you're considering giving up on the election."

Rhode didn't expect me to know about this. He asked in a panic, "No, that's not what I wait, how did you know?"

I didn't disclose that Emma had leaked the secret to me. Instead, I asked, "Why though? Is it because of me? Are you afraid that it'll affect me negatively?"

"Perhaps it's a little presumptuous to say this, but... I've heard a lot of rumors recently. Because of my relationship with you, many people think that I was able to get on the running list because of your manipulation. I don't want you to be accused of nepotism. Moreover, I know that my words carry little weight, and my experience is still shallow. I don't have the qualifications to compete with the seniors."

Rhode was dispirited. No matter how I looked at him, his sighing hurt my ears.

The Rhode I used to know wasn't like this. He was kind, upright, and fearless. In the past, many people talked about my 'human' identity behind my back and laughed at my adoptive parents who adopted me. Rhode's attitude had always been neither servile nor overbearing, and he retaliated directly. He never let himself be wronged, let alone us.

What was wrong with him now? Why did he suddenly become so timid?

Facing his lack of fighting spirit, I said, "If that's what you're thinking, then fine, you can submit your withdrawal application tomorrow. But don't get me wrong, you didn't give up because of me but because you don't have the qualifications to be a leader.

"You've given up after a little setback. If you become an Alpha in the future, in the face of greater challenges, will you still use the public as an excuse to give them greater benefits? The people won't support a weak leader like you. Instead of collapsing because of more rumors in the future, you might as well give up on everything now."

Facing my unkind words, Rhode was shocked. He didn't expect me to criticize him so sharply. For a moment, he didn't know how to respond.

I pretended to leave. "Since you're not going to participate in the election, I have nothing to say to you. Rest well. Good night."

"No, wait!" Rhode pulled me back and said incoherently, "I didn't mean it that way. I mean..."

"Then what do you mean by that?" I knew that now was the time to help him loosen the knot in his heart, so I had to be tough. "Today, you gave up your future because you were worried about me. What will you give up tomorrow? An Alpha must have a strong heart. A person who can't bear a little gossip cannot bear the responsibility of the whole pack. If you're willing to be a coward to avoid responsibility, then it's fine. I can protect you, Mom, and Dad for the rest of your lives. You don't have to do anything else."

"I'm not a coward!" Rhode roared.

I shouted back without fear, "Then, prove it to me!" If you're not a coward, then do what you should do! Don't find any excuses for yourself!"

Rhode was stunned. After a while, he covered his face and fell onto the sofa.

"You're right. I'm a coward. I said something nice like I don't want to trouble you, but I don't want to be a burden to you.

"It's not that I don't know who's behind all these rumors. After assisting Benson for so many years, I've gotten used to these schemes. But Benson and I are different. He's the one who's bearing all the burden between him and me. I only have to follow his instructions. But when it comes to you, I've suddenly realized that I've become a weapon for those with ill intentions to use as an excuse. Not only can I not help you, but I've also become an obstacle for you.

"I love the Shadow Pack. I've been dreaming of it becoming better. But I love you more, my sister, my closest kin. I don't want you to be hurt in any way, and I don't want to be one of those who hurt you..."



Rhode choked with sobs. This tall and strong man seemed to be lost.

“I’ve seen a lot of such things. A stalemate will only lead to more intense fights. People without a bottom line will do anything for power. You’ve just been crowned the princess, and your foundation is still unstable. If the first election you’re in charge of causes trouble, people will inevitably be prejudiced against your ability and image.

“So, I was thinking, why don’t I take a step back? Even an assistant can contribute to the pack, right?”

A person’s heart did not always grow with age. Experience did bring not only maturity but also more and more fear, cowardice, and concern.

314 Don’t Compromise

Selma Payne’s POV:

Sociologists often compared the differences in behavior between children and adults; they all believed that young people were always braver than older people.

In fact, this was not necessarily courage. The aggressiveness of young people might come from the fearlessness born from ignorance, and the cowardice of older people might be the caution condensed from experience. Being overly fearless made one stupid, and being overly cautious would make one appear timid.

I believed I’d misunderstood Rhode. He was not running away. On the contrary, because of his experience as Beta, he was more careful about the impact of the election on all parties. A compromise was always the most impressive lesson in politics. It was hard to say whether his subconscious decision to quit was because unspoken rules bound him.

In response, my anger dissipated, leaving only deep helplessness and heartache.

Must time be so ruthless in taking away the last trace of a person’s youthful spirit? Rhode was still a young man. Was it really good for him to encourage him to fight for it?

I suddenly wasn’t sure. Facing Rhode’s dilemma, I suddenly realized I was no different from those who secretly pressured him. I only saw the good and bad of utility and ignored Rhode’s wishes. I only saw him as a coward and didn’t see how much he struggled and suffered.

At the end of the day, I hoped that Rhode could become an Alpha, not without selfish motives. I wanted the Shadow Pack to become my force, so I ordered Rhode around arrogantly.

“I’m sorry, Rhode.” I lowered my head guiltily and leaned on his shoulder like I did when I was young. “I took everything for granted. It’s your freedom to run or not. I shouldn’t have made such a conclusion. If you want to withdraw, we’ll apply tomorrow morning, okay?”

“Selma…”

“I shouldn’t have accused you like that. I’m the one in the wrong. My identity as a Princess has made me too frivolous. I’m delusional to think I can control everything, and I’m trying to guess other people’s minds from a narrow perspective. I said you can’t take responsibility, but I’m the one who can’t be a leader with my arrogance.”

“Don’t say that. You wanted to cheer me up.”

“That’s right. I wanted to cheer you up, but I forgot what you need. Don’t worry, Rhode. I will support all your decisions. As you said, even if you can’t become an Alpha, being a Beta can still help the pack shine. We’re still young, and there are plenty of opportunities to make a name for ourselves.”

Rhode rubbed my hair like he did when I was a kid. He laughed and said, “I was the one who gave up initially. What has changed now? I don’t intend to withdraw, Selma. I’ve decided to try to participate in the election.”

“But weren’t you?”

“Yes, I have many concerns about you, me, and the pack. But just like you said, these are all responsibilities that I should bear. A person who only knows how to retreat can’t even be a good assistant. As for those rumors, if you don’t mind, why would I overstep my boundaries?”

“I’ve thought it through. I’m not the only one by your side. You also have Sir Aldrich, your attendants, and that Miss Sorcery Apprentice. If you have to avoid suspicion with everyone close to you, you’ll be too isolated and helpless in the political field. Since there will be voices of opposition no matter what you do, it’s better to do what you want to do and say what whoever wants to say!”

Rhode’s change was so sudden that I couldn’t react in time.

Looking at my stunned expression, Rhode suddenly ruffled my hair like he did when I was young. He smiled and said, “No matter if you’re a little girl or a Princess, you’ll always be my little sister. An older brother should protect his younger sister. How could a younger sister worry for her older brother? Don’t worry, and do what you want to do, Selma. I can’t be of much help, but I will always support you, just like how you always support me.”

After settling the election, I thought of Emma before I left. I asked Rhode, "I heard you've been getting along well with my attendants these days. They are born into noble families and rarely see the outside world. It would be great if you could be their guide."

Hearing me mention my attendants, Rhode's face turned slightly red. "It's just a little help. It's nothing. It's my honor to show the young ladies around."

Looking at his bashful expression, I roughly understood that Emma's love wasn't unrequited!

"Alright, I hope you two get along well. Good night, Rhode."

Emma had already left when he returned to his room with light steps, leaving only Aldrich in the bedroom.

"What are you doing? Why are you so happy?"

I told him about my conversation with Rhode and asked him if he heard anything about Emma and him. Emma was my attendant, and I was Rhode's younger sister. It was not appropriate for Rhode to tell me about this. However, he had a good relationship with Aldrich, so he might reveal a thing or two.

It was a pity that Aldrich didn't know anything about this, but I was still very happy because this showed that Rhode truly respected Emma and didn't discuss a girl with just about anybody.

### 315 The Election

Selma Payne's POV:

The next day.

The Alpha candidates gathered at the temporary Campaign Committee in advance. Most of them were ambitious or smug middle-aged men, Daniel and Rhode were relatively young, and there was even a white-haired old man. Due to Benson's reputation falling like a cliff, Daniel and Rhode also suffered many negative effects, and they were weaker than the other candidates in terms of competition.

However, in the end, the winner would depend on the public's votes and the Moon Goddess' will. Only the person she approved of could succeed in the Alpha position, which was why Alpha's status in the pack was superior.

After some small talk with the candidates to prevent cheating, the chosen representative and I were isolated from the candidates. We were to stay in a specific small room until the moon rose. There was no one to accompany me during this time, so I decided to write my memoir out of boredom.

It was about what had happened three years ago: Leviathan, Azazel, Mullwika, the Archpriest, Frank, and Linda, as well as New Flow, god's blood, Dorothy's past and present life, and other minor points.

The most important thing was the black cocoon that was still lifeless.

Regarding this strange cocoon, the research team was cautious. They feared hurting Linda and Frank, who were still in danger, and also afraid that it would explode if they left it alone. However, they were also helpless. No precedent could guide the current situation. Even if they wanted to do something, they had no way to start.

The medical room where the black cocoon was sealed had become a forbidden area in the entire palace. The werewolf grandmasters had set up layers of restrictions and seals on it. Even I had only visited it once.

I was quite familiar with this black cocoon. It looked like the black version of the light cocoon, but its power was millions of times eviler than the light cocoon. Furthermore, it had the same effect as the cocoon formed from the sap of the giant pine tree. The two were both creations of demons, so it was hard to say if they had any similarities.

Did Linda, who was 'sleeping' in it, also experience the changes I had experienced?

Linda had black moth-shaped kins, which made her true identity a mystery. After I reformed my body, the golden moth pattern appeared on my skin. I once guessed that it had something to do with me absorbing Azazel's power.

Linda's black moth was so similar to my black-gold moth. Did this mean that she had a secret relationship with Azazel? Was the black cocoon a symbol of 'ascendance'? What would it hatch? Was the thing that it hatched still Linda?

I drew up conjectures about the relationship between Linda and Azazel, but I overturned all of them in the end. Unless Linda woke up, all my conjectures would have no results.

I wrote and drew, and the day passed. I could finally come out of the small house when the moon was high in the sky.

After the voting during the day, the final five candidates emerged: Daniel was eliminated, but Rhode was still around. The other four were people I was not familiar with, and they used to hold important positions in the government.

At this point, it had nothing to do with the person. The Moon Goddess would choose the final candidate. Since the last public Alpha election was almost a decade ago, the committee was unfamiliar with the process. We could do less and make fewer mistakes to prevent anyone from taking advantage of the loophole. We asked the candidates to stand on the altar and wait for the goddess' will.

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After a while, dark clouds gathered in the sky and blocked the moon.

“It’s coming! It’s coming!”

The surrounding crowd cried out in surprise. We looked up into the sky, and sure enough, a tiny gap had opened in the clouds. The bright moonlight poured through the cracks and enveloped the people on the altar. The moonlight had some unknown power, causing the candidates to transform into their wolves.

Whoever was the last to transform would be the goddess’ choice.

At this moment, I couldn’t help but feel nervous. Could it be Rhode?

His changes didn’t seem as drastic as the others, making my hope grow. I watched everything change without blinking.

Finally-

“They’ve changed! It is Rhode! The goddess has chosen Rhode!”

It wasn’t just someone who cried out in surprise. Immediately after, everyone’s eyes were focused on the majestic wolf on the altar.

It was Rhode!

I heaved a long sigh of relief and took the lead in clapping. The others followed my lead and gave Rhode a warm round of applause.

The wolf transformation only lasted for a little more than ten seconds. Rhode, who had transformed back into his human form, waved to the crowd in high spirits. His competitors, sincere or not, congratulated and hugged him. Countless flashes recorded this historic moment.

The voters’ representative and I went to the stage to announce the results. When we hugged, I whispered, “Congratulations, Rhode.”

Rhode winked at me.

As the new Alpha, Rhode gave an inauguration speech to the public. He must have attended many such occasions with Benson before, so he seemed to be at ease. His mature behavior won the support of many hesitant people. An experienced and sophisticated young leader soon won the cheers of the people.

Becoming an Alpha was a very glorious thing. The hereditary system allowed the Alpha family to rise to the sky with them. But the greater the interest, the greater the

responsibility. History had seen many Alphas who were overthrown due to stupidity or cruelty.

### 316 The Kidnapping Of The Orphans

Selma Payne's POV:

The newly appointed Rhode obviously couldn't be as idle as before. He had to transfer government affairs from the temporary ruling council quickly. At the same time, he faced doubts from the outside world and internal obstacles, which made him so busy that he even slept in the office for a few days, let alone spend time with my adoptive parents.

I wanted to help him, but the Lycan pack had always not interfered with the internal affairs of other packs. A decision without consideration would send a wrong signal to the outside world, so I had no choice but to stand by and even reduce my contact with Rhode.

However, even if I couldn't interfere on the surface, it was still very easy to give some help in the dark. Under my instructions, Emma became the middleman between Rhode and me. Their personal relationship also developed smoothly under my tacit approval. More than once, Jordin complained to me that Emma was missing, Dorothy was addicted to collecting specimens, and she couldn't find anyone to hang out with.

After the election, I had nothing to do. Every day, I would travel with my parents, be intimate with Aldrich, or go shopping with the girls. My days were very leisurely.

Unknowingly, the honeymoon trip was about to end, and the day of departure was about to arrive. Teresa came back before I left and brought me some special products from the Silver Moon Pack and a rumor circulating there.

The wanderers seemed to have become rampant again. They attacked a few smaller packs. Although they didn't suffer any major losses, many children were taken away, especially from the orphanages in the disaster area.

I was shocked. "They just took the child away in broad daylight? No one stopped them?"

"Of course," Teresa said helplessly. "But the wanderers only choose the poor and weak. Those places don't have enough security, and charity organizations like orphanages don't have much defense. In addition, they also attacked banks, shopping malls, and other places to hide. The local government was busy protecting the money bag, so who would remember the orphanage?"

"This is too much! What do those Alphas usually do? Isn't the children more important than anything else?"

“That’s true, but in the face of real gold and silver and ‘burdens’ who have no parents, how can human nature stand the test?”

I naturally understood this logic. I was angry but also helpless. The smaller packs were poor, and without banks, shopping malls, and other such places, the financial situation would only worsen. The disappearance of the orphans was much easier to deal with. If the news were suppressed, no one would remember this after two to three months.

This was the cold reality of politics. I hated it, I hated it, and I wanted to change it.

“Didn’t those packs report the situation? I didn’t hear anything before.”

I’d been in contact with my parents every day. If the royal family knew about this, they’d tell me.

“Or I’ll say it’s a ‘rumor’. You know that my family’s business is doing well. I heard this from the pack’s merchant, who was attacked.” Teresa said mysteriously, “No one wants to take responsibility for this. We’ll hide it as long as we can.”

This group of damn politicians! They could not rescue the missing orphans but hid this matter from us. If the rescue time were delayed, the children would be in danger!

After she left, I immediately contacted my parents and told them about the wanderers’ attack on the pack and the kidnapping of the children.

To my surprise, they had also received the news, although not much earlier than me. Those few Alphas didn’t have much ability, but they were very skilled in deceiving and lying. Even the royal spies were deceived and blocked from the truth.

“So far, ninety-four children have been confirmed to be missing. They are from the Yellow Leaf, Flood, and Saber Tooth Packs. These packs are all close to the border and are poor and weak. After the wanderers kidnapped the orphans, they fled into the elf forest and disappeared without a trace.”

My father said in a deep voice, “The elf race has always been isolated from the world. There will be great obstacles in our negotiations with them. They will most likely refuse to let us enter the elf forest to search.

“Can’t we ask the elves to help us with the pursuit? A group of extremely vicious criminals has escaped into their territory. With the proud nature of elves, they can’t tolerate this, right?”

“That’s true, but I can’t guarantee anything. There have been cases of criminals escaping into the elf forest before. Sometimes, the elves would capture the criminals, but sometimes, they would let them do whatever they wanted. As long as they don’t harm the interests of the elves, the elves would pretend that they didn’t see anything.”



Personally, I had a little prejudice against the elves. For thousands of years, the race that had always claimed to be kind, reclusive, and peace-loving was the proudest.

When their people were hurt, no matter who did it, they would make a statement to condemn all races indiscriminately, as if the whole world had wronged them. When others needed their help, they would pretend to be invisible.

I didn't want to put it too harshly, but how much of their isolation was because they were 'reclusive', and how much was it because the other races were unwilling to pay attention to them?

### 317 The Decadence

Selma Payne's POV:

The elves' ambiguous attitude caused a lot of trouble in the pursuit. Three days later, after receiving no response from the Elf King, my father sent a small elite team into the elf forest to scout the situation.

Without a doubt, I became the leader of this search team, so I didn't have to return to the Lycan pack. I had to wait for the team members to arrive in the Shadow Pack. Since this was a top-secret operation, we would disguise ourselves as a civilian scientific research team. The elves' attitude toward non-threatening civilians was still very peaceful, so we couldn't reveal our identities, or it might cause a diplomatic incident.

I couldn't help but get angry: I really didn't understand what those pointy-eared people were thinking. They had to be careful when werewolves entered the country, but they could ignore the vicious wandering criminal gang. They could send someone to catch us if they didn't trust us. Were there people who were naive enough to think that the stray werewolves only targeted the werewolf race and were harmonious and friendly to other races?

I didn't know what the Elf King was thinking, but I realized that the size of the brains of some werewolves was eye-opening.

In the three days after the scandal of the missing orphans was exposed, many criticisms drifted like snowflakes to the three packs at the border, which tried to cover up the reality. In this regard, the first thing the Alphas in these three places thought about wasn't how to calm the public's anger, how to organize a search and rescue, but instead began to throw the pot down, 'Are you accusing me of dereliction of duty? Alright then, I might not do anything. Whoever has the ability will take care of this mess.'

This ignited the public's anger. The arrogant Alphas might have wanted to force the public to see the 'fact' that 'they can't live without them', but he didn't expect to push himself into the pit of fire.



The people with the Yellow Leaf and Floodwater Packs held a referendum to overthrow the legitimacy of the current Alpha. The Saber Tooth Pack members were even more furious. They attacked the government, deprived the Alpha of all power, and sued him for 'serious dereliction of duty' until the Federal Court.

In other words, the final decision was now in the hands of the Lycan pack. The Yellow Leaf and Floodwater Packs needed to elect a new Alpha, and the Saber Tooth Pack's situation was even more critical. In addition to selecting a leader, they also needed to quell the rising trend of riots.

My father made a prompt decision and immediately sent Duke Frank to deal with the most critical pack – the Saber Tooth Pack. My itinerary changed again. I immediately set off for the Yellow Leaf Pack and Floodwater Pack to host the Alpha election and wait for the search team to meet me here.

On the day I left the Shadow Pack, my relatives and friends were all very reluctant to part, and my adoptive mother was so worried that she almost cried.

"I heard that there's a Riot Brewing at the border. You must be careful wherever you go. If there's any danger, protect yourself first and think about other things, understand? I know you have to bear the responsibility of a Princess, but that doesn't mean you have to take the lead in everything. Promise me. You must ensure your safety!" she said worriedly.

I hugged my adoptive parents tightly and said, "I understand. Mom and dad, you have to take care of your health too. I'll come back to see you when I'm done with the things over there."

Rhode had gradually shown the qualities of an Alpha. He wasn't acting like a kid anymore when he calmly told me, "Take care of yourself. If there's anything you need me for, let me know immediately."

Before leaving under everyone's watchful eyes, I nodded and bid farewell to Teresa and the others.

The werewolves did not have any strict regional discrimination. However, the difference in Regional Development was an objective fact. Only some of the packs with superior geographical location could be as prosperous as the trunk pack, and not all the packs with convenient transportation could be as prosperous as the Silver Moon Pack.

The closer we got to the border, the more obvious the gap between the rich and the poor became. The size of the pack gradually shrank, and in the end, it was just like a small village. The level of prosperity within the packs also decreased in order. Some particularly small packs were like small districts with slightly larger areas.

This also made me understand why the packs attacked by the wanderers were so negligent in taking care of the orphanage. They really didn't have the resources to do so, even if they wanted to.

It took us a day and a half to reach the nearest Yellow Leaf Pack. What I saw along the way made me question one thing, 'Could those especially weak packs that would not have the resources to support themselves in a few years form a city?'

The strict geographical division and isolation had severely miscalculated the distribution of resources and population between packs. The rich became richer while the poor became poorer. In recent years, with the infiltration of human society into the werewolf race, some young people even became popular with cross-pack immigration, which they didn't even dare to think about in the past.

However, reality forced people to make this choice. Young people had to work if they wanted to survive. If their own 'pack' didn't provide the opportunity, they could only go to other, more prosperous, powerful 'packs' to survive. Their departure made their 'pack', already weak, even shakier, eventually forming a vicious cycle.

The Yellow Leaf and Floodwater Pack were undoubtedly the places the immigration tide had ravaged.

Legend had it that the Yellow Leaf and Floodwater Packs' ancestors were inspired by the Moon Goddess' handmaidens, thus creating these two packs.

### 318 The Idea Of A Merger

Selma Payne's POV:

However, with the passage of thousands of years, the ancestors' glory could no longer solve the problems of future generations. Without a way out, this place inevitably declined.

The area of the two packs was not large, slightly smaller than the smallest district in the territory of the Lycan pack. This was also why I could complete the inspection of both packs in a day.

As the leaders had stepped down, the packs were without a leader. The people did not know what to do after the referendum, but fortunately, most were still content with the status quo.

Therefore, even though the efficiency of all industries was declining, it had not reached the terrible point of shutting down for the time being. On the surface, the lives of the people were not even affected.

Without further ado, I immediately sent out a poll to the people of the two packs: Would you like to combine the Yellow Leaf and Floodwater Packs?

That was right. I didn't select an Alpha immediately but let my think tank group temporarily lead all government work. Considering giving up the two packs was not a spur-of-the-moment decision.

The Yellow Leaf and Floodwater Pack were very close to each other, so close that it took less than an hour to get there by car. The development of infrastructure in the two places was also very biased. The Yellow Leaf Pack was generally better in public services such as medical care and education, while the Floodwater Pack was better in commerce and public entertainment.

This 'slight difference' was only a slight advantage compared to the other party.

As for the population, it was hard to say if there were 30,000 people in total in these two places and if they were to look at it separately.

There were almost no natural resources. Although there were natural forests, they were the territory of the elves. The external transportation was more convenient, but the only neighbor, the elf race, was a fat otaku who had not left even once in a hundred years, directly cutting off the road of foreign trade.

In general, the Yellow Leaf and Floodwater Pack had nothing. The old, the weak, the sick, and the disabled guarded the poor and remote villages. No wonder they were bullied by the wandering forces like soft persimmons.

If he wanted to change all of this, he had first to strengthen his abilities, so combining two packs was the best solution. The customs of the two places were similar, and they had a good relationship. Moreover, they were in a special period of no government, so there was no need to worry about any interest groups coming out to give orders. From a certain perspective, it could be considered a blessing in disguise. They had an opportunity to change the poor and weak situation.

However, these were all my considerations. As for what there was to do depended on the local's decision.

The next morning, I received a call from my father.

"I heard you made a big one at the border?" My father seemed a little helpless. "Perhaps you can guess that the Council of Elders is quarreling like crazy now. Even our people don't agree with what you're doing this time. Unless a pack is going extinct during the war, there had never been a merger."

I didn't even have to think with my toes to know what those stubborn old men were arguing about. "So what if there's no precedent? There will be one now. If this is

successfully implemented, other packs can imitate it, especially those that can't support themselves anymore.”

“This isn't that simple. Combining two packs isn't as simple as moving the boundary stone.”

“I understand. This involves a lot, culture, economy, history, population, etc. That's why I chose the Yellow Leaf and Floodwater Packs as the road opener for the change, instead of those small places on the mainland with a wide range of implications. The industries here have withered, the population is sparse, and a hundred ruins mean that it is still in development. The power network is also very easy. After the Alpha stepped down, not one family could step up.

“Can you imagine? During the few days when the government was shut down, the people acted as if nothing had happened. They went to work and went to school as usual. It could be seen how weak the actual influence of the government on the people had become. If I had come a few days later, the local people would have solved the crisis themselves. After all, they have lived with an incompetent Alpha for many years.”

“What happens after the merger? Have you thought about what you're going to do?”

“I want to start with the basic construction. The passage between the two packs will be the foundation to enrich the traffic network, plan new living areas, and call on people to move to the new district to break the problem of regional isolation and unity. After that, focus on the buildings at the original site of the two packs, re-plan the fragmented functional areas, build roads and bridges, and make them green.

“Public facilities such as hospitals and schools are also in urgent need of refurbishment. We can take this opportunity to merge some public facilities to add new ones and improve efficiency. Of course, all of this is built on the foundation of money. The local gold vault is so idle that it's like a spider's web.

“I've thought of a few solutions for the time being. The first is that the central bank will provide low-interest or interest-free loans to this place to solve urgent needs. Then, they would use work as relief, recruiting workers from the people and using the housing area as welfare. This would save human capital and reduce the economic pressure on the people. The last thing is to attract investment.”

“That's a good idea. To be honest, I'm a little surprised. But do you think this will solve the root of the problem? If no industry can support the pack's positive development, no matter how new and good the infrastructure is, it is just a shell and useless.”

319 The Fastest One First

Selma Payne's POV:

“I’ve thought about this too, but the positioning of the Yellow Leaf pack and the Floodwater Packs is too awkward. The population is scarce, the land is barren, the technology is backward, and the existing industries are almost all half-dead, and there’s no way to pick one that can make a living. However, this place also has its advantages because it’s close to a natural forest and the industry is undeveloped, the natural environment here is very good. I think we can develop high-end medical and healthcare industries here. It just so happens that we can open bids to pull in capital and technical investment, killing two birds with one stone.

“And then there’s tourism. Perhaps you know that there are three ancient castle ruins left behind in the Floodwater pack? They are not well-preserved, but they would be beautiful if professional archaeologists and engineering teams were to repair them. It’s a natural tourist resource. If we can find out what historical events are related to these castle ruins, it’ll be better to make a name for ourselves.

“Also, this place is close to the elf forest and far from the known elf fortress. It’s the ideal landing spot for explorers. If we can get the support of the academic community and accept the task of receiving research groups, then we’ll undoubtedly have another source of revenue.

“This is what I think is more feasible at the moment. In fact, I think education can also be considered, but it doesn’t have that much of an advantage compared to medical care and tourism. It might not obviously affect the economy, so it’s not considered for the time being.”

I said many things like a machine gun, and then I became nervous. My ideas probably sounded like child’s play in my father’s eyes. Were there any obvious flaws? Was everything too simple and childish?

On the other end of the phone, my father was silent for a long time. Just as my heart was beating like a drum and I was getting increasingly nervous, he suddenly sighed and said, “Selma, you really are a natural-born Queen.”

“What?”

“What I mean is that you’ve done a good job. Although there are some flaws, at your age, with your experience, you’re already ten thousand times ahead of most politicians in considering all aspects. Most importantly, I feel your sincerity to the people in your words. You really do it for their benefits and want to give them a prosperous life, not for your political achievements and face to do some flashy but useless work.”

I couldn’t help but feel embarrassed at such a compliment. “I’m not as good as you think. It’s just my shallow personal opinion...”

“‘Shallow opinion’? But even with such a shallow view, it’s something many people can’t even think of in their lives.” My father was very pleased and immediately agreed, “Do it,

child. Don't hold back. I will help you share the pressure from the Council of Elders. As long as you succeed in the merger, you can easily shut the mouth of the stubborn old people, and in the future, they will be a little inferior in front of you!"

I was overjoyed to get my father's approval, but I immediately thought of another thing. "But what about the search team? I'm going to set off immediately after they arrive. I can't do anything in such a short time."

"That will depend on your position. Child, do you want to be a commander or a vanguard?"

"Can't I do both?"

"Unfortunately, we have to give and take sometimes because we cannot split ourselves."

I understood what my father meant.

Being the commander meant that I should be the brain that planned everything, and after researching the regulations, I would send them to the nerves and limbs to complete them. This meant I only needed to plan the development plan after the merger, then form a team I trusted and let them execute it.

Being a vanguard meant that I should be a person who put it into practice and led my team to modify and merge the pack step by step. I had to give up on the search team's mission and pass this responsibility to someone else.

To be honest, I really wish I could clone myself. That way, all my problems would be solved. However, the current situation was that I had to give up one of the two options; the pack or the search team.

In the end, I chose the search team.

The modification and combination pack would be a long-term, large-scale project that might not be completed in three to five years. The timeline would be very long. However, it was different for the search team. This mission would take anywhere from ten days to half a month. They had to end the mission regardless of whether they found anything. Otherwise, the elves might see through them and provoke a diplomatic incident.

It was obvious that I didn't need to choose anything. I just had to finish the one that took a short time, then the one that took longer. Even if the merger were confirmed, the people would still need time to adapt to it, and my search team mission would serve as a buffer.

It was decided that the original plan would not change, and the modified pack would be discussed after the search mission.

As this was an emergency investigation, the voting time for the public went up to six in the evening.

As soon as six o'clock passed, Jordin, who acted as my secretary, immediately showed me the results of the investigation-surprisingly, more than 70% of the people agreed to the merger.

It was already very good to exceed 50% of my expectations. This result could be considered a surprise.

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Selma Payne's POV:

Very quickly, the travel-worn Dorothy answered our questions.

She still hadn't given up on collecting specimens. After arriving at the border, I signaled for her to collect specimens and learn more about the local people's lives.

Rather than asking for the people's will, it was better to say that the merger proposal touched their hearts. Dorothy said, "The Yellow Leaf, Floodwater, and Saber Tooth Packs have a long history. Their geographical locations are also close. The residents have had the habit of intermarriage since ancient times. Many families might have children in the Yellow Leaf Pack, but their parents were Floodwater Pack members, and their uncles and aunts would move to the Saber Tooth Pack with their spouses. There is no difference between the inside and outside of these three packs for the locals."

No wonder so many residents from another pack followed me when I was on patrol. I thought it was some celebrity effect, but it seemed like I imagined things. They were here to visit their relatives, and I was just here to watch the fun.

After taking a sip of water to moisten her throat, Dorothy continued, "About a hundred years ago, there was a debate about whether to merge the three packs. It was so loud that it almost succeeded. However, the Alphas of the three packs didn't agree. After all, no one wanted to be under someone else's rule, so who would be the boss after the packs merged? That era still had a strong dictatorship, the Alphas didn't agree, so the matter was left unsettled.

"I've also heard some rumors, saying that some people from the Saber Tooth Pack heard that the Yellow Leaf and Floodwater Packs are going to merge, and even stopped voting for the Alpha election and rushed here to ask if the news is true. This will spread quickly, and the Saber Tooth Pack may also be involved in the merger.



The news that Dorothy brought back made me fall into deep thought again. If the Saber Tooth pack were to participate in the merger, then the infrastructure and industrial planning would have to change accordingly. Of course, it was best to investigate this personally, but I couldn't leave now. Should I send someone to the Saber Tooth Pack?

Soon I thought of a candidate – Duke Frank. He was hosting the Alpha election with the Saber Tooth Pack. As an experienced politician, was there anyone more experienced than him?

So I immediately called Duke Frank and asked him to help me collect the basic information about the Saber Tooth Pack. Duke Frank agreed immediately and asked, "I heard you're hosting the merger of the Yellow Leaf and the Floodwater Packs. Do you want the Saber Tooth Pack to participate?"

"It would be best if it was possible. I heard the people also look forward to the Saber Tooth Pack. I'll be more prepared. It's better to be safe than sorry."

Duke Frank was more 'law-abiding'. He was only here to preside over the election and suppress the riots. He didn't interfere with internal affairs at all, so it would take a day to prepare. Give me the detailed information before six o'clock tomorrow night."

Since the merger was chosen, the election of Alpha would be delayed. I selected officials with excellent achievements and good reviews from the local government to form an interim government. Several representatives recommended by the people formed the highest supervisory group with Jordin, and Emma was appointed as the secretary.

Since the royal family could not interfere with local affairs, I could not openly lead all operations. The highest supervision group and I formed an image of leaders, one in the open and one in the dark. When I was not around, they would exercise decision-making power on my behalf. Jordin was the supervisor to prevent the representatives from being greedy for benefits.

On the one hand, she was born into a noble family and had been trained by her family since she was young. She was well-versed in politics and could knock down the people in the interim government who had bad intentions. On the other hand, it was because of her grandfather, Earl of Marlowe. She was the closest person to the royal family when I was not around. If there were any unexpected factors in the merger pack, she could immediately inform her grandfather and report it to my parents. She didn't have to worry about any official communication channels being blocked.

As expected, the Saber Tooth Pack, who heard the news, immediately requested to join the merger, so the second public opinion poll was carried out among the three packs. The election for the Saber Tooth Pack had also stopped, so I had to select people from the remaining government members of the Saber Tooth Pack to join the interim government.



I had to emphasize that I deliberately avoided the families of the three original Alphas. From the actions of these Alphas, it could be seen that their cultivation was mediocre, and their families were sucking blood from the public. Perhaps there were talents in their families, but I wasn't some soft-hearted saint. It was best to keep a respectful distance from people who were political and could cause trouble for me at any time.

In short, after I was done with all of this, the search team had also finished gathering, and the day to head toward the elf forest had arrived.

A development plan could only be made after some time. The plan I'd written in a hurry in a day or two had many loopholes, and it was harmful to implement rashly. Before I left, I didn't give any transformation tasks to the interim government. The only goal at this stage was to appease the public, win the public's trust, and lay a foundation for future actions.

After making all the necessary arrangements, I closed the door on the surface under the excuse of an occasional illness or to recuperate. In reality, I changed into a disguise and led the search team into the elf forest.