

Chosen Mate Of The Beastmen Empire

Of The Bea 361

Chapter 361

"Nyx. I'm also called Nyx." She dodged the difficult question and let out a small breath of relief, returning to the main topic. "I have very little memory. I've been in a fog for many years, and I can't remember most things, but I still remember a little about medicine."

She grabbed a handful of herbs and began sorting them into piles by type, pointing to two of them. "These two are antagonistic to each other, and taking them together over time will lead to chronic poisoning,"

After thinking for a moment, she added, "You can take it to a trusted doctor for verification."

She observed Pale Wolf's expression and felt that he probably believed her. Taking advantage of the moment, she continued, "Can I take a look at your leg injury? Maybe I can help alleviate it."

Considering that so many imperial doctors couldn't treat it, she didn't promise that she could fix it completely, not wanting to give him false hope.

Upon hearing Nyx mention his leg injury, Erik immediately became tense.

His expression grew serious, and his muscles tensed as if he instinctively tried to avoid it. He fell silent and didn't speak.

Time ticked by, and Nyx began to feel a little anxious.

It seemed she had been too rash.

Her identity was already suspicious, and the leg injury was a sensitive topic. Even though Pale Wolf had just barely believed her fabricated story, hearing that she wanted to look at his injury might make him wary again.

She understood this logic, but she couldn't wait any longer.

Previously, she hadn't known about the enemy, and was planning things carefully, but this box of medicine had given her an intense sense of danger.

The leg injury was a weakness, and the poison in Pale Wolf's body was also a weakness. If it wasn't treated soon, someone who wanted to harm him could take advantage at any time.

Nyx furrowed her brows in anxiety. "You..."

If he didn't trust her, he could have someone who understood medicine supervise her.

Before she could finish, Erik seemed to have finally made up his mind. He gritted his teeth and nodded. "Okay, you can... look."

"But, I have... one condition," nervous, he stammered, his head lowered, his hands clenched into fists.

Nyx was slightly surprised. "What is it? You say it."

She didn't expect this dumb Pale Wolf to learn to negotiate with her. Truly, he was making progress.

She didn't think he would ask for anything unreasonable, so she relaxed and propped her chin up as she looked at him.

However, Erik still looked tense and uneasy, unable to sit still.

"My... leg... is scary... and ugly," after hesitating for a while, he finally spoke in a stutter. "After you... look at it, you... can't... dislike me."

After saying this, it seemed as though he had exhausted all his courage. The once confident Erik now lowered his head, looking like a little dog waiting for judgment. If he had a tail, it would definitely be between his legs, no longer wagging.

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Nyx was stunned, thinking, "That's your condition?"

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Seeing the dejected Erik, a sense of sorrow and sympathy began to stir in Nyx's heart. She reached out and ruffled his hair in a comforting manner, trying to soothe her self-conscious mate.

"How could I dislike you?" She softened her tone, pulling Pale Wolf into an embrace, gently stroking his hair and back, as though calming a beast. Suddenly, she had an idea.

She leaned close to his ear and whispered softly, "The reason I wanted to marry you is because I borrowed a corpse to come back to life."

It was as if Erik had been injected with adrenaline. His previously gloomy aura suddenly disappeared, and he sat up straight, exclaiming, "Really?"

He thought, 'Since she could already be reborn, why would she need to borrow a corpse to return to life? Could it really be because she wanted to marry me? With this, Nyx's unusually warm attitude toward me from our first meeting suddenly makes sense-

The original Nyx didn't like him, but the current Nyx liked him. Once this realization entered his mind, it became impossible to get rid of.

Erik was so excited that his mind went dizzy, and his face turned bright red.

As Nyx took advantage of the situation to pull down his pants, she half-lied and half-jokingly said, "Of course it's true. You're my fated mate, my destined one. That's why I gave up the chance to be reborn, just to be with forever."

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With each word she spoke, Erik's gaze brightened more and more, completely absorbed in her sweet words.

When all his pants were pulled down, and a cool sensation ran through his legs, he suddenly snapped back to reality, his face turning so red it seemed like it might bleed. "N-No, it's too fast..."

They had just started to understand each other, and it was still daylight. 'Does it really need to go this fast?' he thought.

Nyx, who had been leaning over to examine his injured right leg, looked up in confusion. She noticed the situation in that area just in time and was momentarily speechless.

She hadn't done anything yet. She had merely comforted him by patting his head and back, saying a few soothing words. Pure and innocent love, and yet it had such an effect.

An eighteen-year-old male as Erik was really lacking self-control.

Nyx shook her head, clicking her tongue. She gave Pale Wolf a pitying glance. "You should hang in there for a bit."

She hadn't expected him to admit it in front of her, revealing one of a man's most embarrassing flaws. 'He must have felt really insecure and upset inside, right?' she thought.

Having explained her medical skills, Nyx no longer hesitated. She raised her hand to feel Pale Wolf's pulse, analyzing it quietly for a moment, her brows furrowing in confusion.

She couldn't detect any issues from his pulse, and his leg didn't appear problematic either. She was stumped for a moment, unable to pinpoint the problem, but she did feel he was a bit too agitated and overheated.

"It's okay," Nyx carefully chose her words to comfort her mate. "You're still young, so don't rush."

She still felt that Pale Wolf's body couldn't have a major issue, and she was confident it could be healed.

Erik didn't dare look up, his voice barely audible, "Mm... I'm not in a hurry."

He had only just realized that Nyx was simply checking his leg injury, and it was his own thoughts that were inappropriate,

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thinking too much.

Extreme embarrassment made him no longer care whether his grotesque leg injury would be rejected. He just wanted to cover up the embarrassing situation he couldn't control.

Grabbing a piece of clothing to cover himself, he awkwardly froze for a moment before gradually recovering, lifting his head slightly and focusing on Nyx's hair. Vaguely, he could feel her breath lightly brushing against his leg, causing a tingling sensation along his spine that spread to his entire body.

Erik couldn't help but tilt his head back, lost in thought.

"Are you afraid of monks or priests?" he suddenly asked, trying to distract himself.

"Hm?" Nyx, who had been focused on studying his leg injury, was caught off guard by the question and shook her head. "No, I'm not afraid."

She wasn't really a ghost, after all.

That brief hesitation, however, seemed to Erik like she was pretending to be calm and lying

He opened his mouth to reassure her, but felt that words of comfort wouldn't be enough. The comforting words were on the tip of his tongue but didn't come out.

Nyx didn't notice anything unusual and didn't spare any thought to what Erik might be thinking

Her entire focus was on his leg injury.

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Erik's right leg was exposed, and the injuries were clear to see.

The entire knee area looked as if it had been burned or corroded, with not a single patch of healthy skin. The bone was almost exposed, and it seemed to be worsening, as if it would eventually rot down to the bone.

Nyx's heart twisted in pain, and she couldn't help but show a sorrowful expression.

She thought, 'No wonder ever since his leg was injured and he found out it couldn't be cured, there have been rumors that his temper has worsened.'

Facing constant pain day and night and knowing he would eventually lose the leg, no matter how strong a person was, their mental state would inevitably collapse.

This injury likely wasn't deep at first; it might have just been a small, insignificant scratch.

The key problem lay in the poison infecting the wound.

Nyx racked her brain, going through all the common poisons she could remember, but couldn't find any that matched this set of symptoms.

If it were a common poison, the imperial doctors wouldn't be at a loss. This had to be some rare kind of poison.

"Did the weapon that caused your injury belong to you? Is it still in your possession?" she asked, hoping to study this poison. Maybe she could analyze the components and create an antidote.

To her disappointment, Erik shook his head. "The weapon was destroyed by the enemy."

"Alright," Nyx sighed dejectedly.

Whatever Nyx could think of, the other doctors certainly could as well, and the attackers wouldn't have overlooked such details.

"It's fine." Erik reassured her, pulling her closer and holding her hand tightly. "I think I've found a clue. This poison likely came from Banon, possibly similar to the strange poison he uses to control his subordinates, called 'Moonshade Poison.'"

Since discovering this, the shadow guards had been trying to obtain Moonshade Poison or its antidote from Banon, but they hadn't had much success.

Erik didn't tell Nyx the full truth. He reassured her with half-truths. "I've sent my people to search for the poison or the antidote. As long as we find one, we can solve the problem."

The worst-case scenario was that they'd have to gather enough evidence and eliminate Banon before they could get the medicine.

Given how fast the wound was worsening, waiting until Banon was brought down might be too late to save his leg.

Nyx frowned, unable to relax. She could tell that Pale Wolf was hiding something from her, and the situation might not be as optimistic as he made it sound.

"I'll prepare some medicine for you to try," she said, sitting down at the desk. She grabbed some paper and a pen, but realized she hadn't learned enough characters and that the herb names she wrote might not match the local ones. She put the pen down. "Does the estate have any herbs?"

"Yes," Erik said, seizing the chance to dress, quickly recovering his dignified appearance. "I'll take you there."

The Duke's estate's herb storage was much larger than Nyx had imagined, with an abundant stock.

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It took her quite a bit of effort, but she finally found the herbs she needed from the vast collection and immediately began to prepare the medicine.

Internal and external treatments could reduce inflammation, relieve pain, and prevent infection.

After just over ten days of using the medicine, there was noticeable improvement. Though it couldn't neutralize the poison, the wound's deterioration had visibly slowed down, and Nyx felt less psychological pressure as she checked his condition every day,

The vibe in the Duke's household was harmonious, but the Voss family seemed to be going through some trouble.

The crisp autumn days and clear skies made for pleasant weather.

After lunch, Nyx left the courtyard and went for a walk in the garden farther from the estate, when she overheard some servants gossiping.

"I heard the Voss family is about to collapse. Is that true?"

"The Voss family? Isn't that the mistress's family? Won't the young master help them?"

"Shh-"

"I heard it has something to do with the young master. He's the one who ordered it."

"I've heard that too. It's said the young master is unhappy about the Voss family marrying the mistress off, so he's been targeting them."

"What? How could that be? The young master clearly dotes on the mistress. If the Voss family treated her badly, then even if it was the young master's doing, isn't it just to avenge her?"

"But after all, it's the mistress's family. Blood is thicker than water."

The two sides debated fiercely, each sticking to their opinions, until Nyx accidentally stepped on a dry twig, making a sharp cracking sound, causing the conversation to abruptly stop.

"Who... who's there?" The servants froze, feeling guilty for gossiping about their master.

They looked toward the source of the sound, and upon seeing Nyx, they immediately knelt, begging for mercy. "Mistress, please spare us."

Seeing the terrified group of servants kowtowing in fear, Nyx quickly waved her hand, signaling that she forgave them. "What's going on with the Voss family?" She asked, curious about the gossip. "Tell me everything you know in detail." The servants, relieved for a moment, immediately closed their eyes in despair, almost bursting into tears.

They thought, 'This is it. We're done for.'

Only one bolder servant sneaked a glance at Nyx's expression and, seeing that she didn't seem angry, he hesitated and cautiously spoke up, "I heard that during

a recent court session, Rohan, Lady Nyx's relative, was accused of embezzling bribery, negligence, and illegally seizing private land.

"The emperor was enraged and ordered Lady Nyx to be imprisoned and interrogated, with severe punishment pending. The Voss family's shops have all been sealed, leaving only one house."

The more Nyx listened, the more her expression relaxed, and her cheerful mood was impossible to hide.

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With so many charges combined, if they could be proven true, not only would he face the death penalty, but at the very least, Rohan deserved to be exiled thousands of miles away.

"What's your name?" she asked, handing a silver coin to the clever servant.

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This person had natural talent-not only bold and meticulous but also sharp and articulate, especially when gossiping with remarkable clarity. With proper training, he

could become even more useful. Nyx made a note to recommend him to Pale Wolf later.

The servant, happy to receive the reward, beamed, "I'm Nico Marsh, in charge of the estate's kitchen purchases."

He was delighted to have received the silver, and in his heart, he was overjoyed. He thought, 'With the mistress's favor, could I be on my way to success?'

The others finally regained their senses, some regretting it, others envious, but it was already too late.

Nico seized the opportunity, loyally following Nyx and chatting with her to alleviate her boredom, telling her many amusing stories from the past about the estate.

He guessed what Nyx might like to hear, and kept the conversation focused on the young master.

Nyx listened intently to stories about Pale Wolf, some heroic, some silly, and her smile grew even brighter.

"By the way, there's something new recently..." Nico rummaged through his mind for recent stories and brought the timeline back to the present.

"What is it?" Nyx asked with interest. "Tell me about it."

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"Mistress, have you noticed any changes in the estate recently?" Nico teased, setting up a mystery.

Nyx instinctively looked around, blinking in confusion, and shook her head. "I don't move around much, so I didn't notice any changes."

Most of the time, she stayed in the yard, accompanying Pale Wolf. The two of them would nest together and never got bored no matter how long they stayed.

Only when Pale Wolf had business to attend to would she wander a bit, looking around here and there.

"Oh, right," Nico quickly apologized with a forced smile. "How could I forget?"

He no longer kept things mysterious and directly told Nyx about the strange events, "These past few days, the several idols in the manor were all sent away, and the protective charms were removed as well.

"I heard that the young master even ordered that no monks or priests be allowed to enter the Duke's residence from now

on."

These happenings were quite unusual, and there were even rumors in the manor saying that Erik had been possessed.

However, aside from that, Erik was as normal as could be, even in a better mood. The rumors about possession gradually died down.

Nyx initially didn't understand what was going on until she heard about the monks and priests being banned from entering, and she suddenly realized, nearly choking on her saliva.

She coughed violently a few times, her face turning red as she didn't know whether to laugh or express some other emotion.

She thought, 'Pale Wolf, this fool, really believes I am a ghost, huh? He isn't even worried that I would harm him. He has done so many things for me but never told me. He doesn't even bother to boast or ask for praise.

Hearing her cough, Nico was startled and almost ran to find a doctor.

"I'm fine." Nyx caught her breath and quickly stopped him. "Go on and do your thing. I'm heading back now."

They had been walking for a while after dinner, and now she couldn't wait to return to Pale Wolf and tease him a little.

On the way back, as she thought about the news she just heard, a smile unconsciously appeared on her face, and the corners of her mouth couldn't be suppressed.

Stepping into the yard, her pace quickened, taking three steps at once as she rushed to the door. Just as she was about to push it open, she suddenly heard a woman's voice from inside, and her actions instinctively paused.

She thought, 'Is it a maid?' She looked around in confusion.

Usually, when she wasn't around, Pale Wolf only had Arlong do things, never calling anyone else to serve him.

Looking around, she didn't see Arlong in the yard.

It seemed Arlong must have been busy with something else, and Pale Wolf had called a maid to substitute temporarily.

Nyx quickly thought of an explanation.

Her hand had already reached the door, and she was about to push it when suddenly she heard an angry shout, "Get out!" The voice was deafening, full of unmasked anger. Nyx was startled and reflexively released her grip, stepping back a few

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paces.

It was Pale Wolf's angry voice.

Since she arrived, the violent Erik, as the rumors said, had always been easily controlled by her, behaving in a docile

manner.

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She almost forgot the first day she entered this door, she had also been greeted with an angry shout and a broken cup.

Nyx furrowed her brows and suddenly pushed open the door. "What's going on?"

She wondered if someone had angered Pale Wolf, or if he was once again lashing out at innocent people for no reason.

With a loud bang, the door flew open, and the air instantly became quiet.

As Nyx took in the scene in front of her, her eyes widened in shock. Without hesitation, she quickly stepped forward.

Jinx and Jules were kneeling weakly on the floor, and Jinx was shielding Jules, with Erik holding a sword aimed directly at Jules' vulnerable throat.

It seemed that if Nyx had come in a second later, there would have been one or two corpses on the floor.

As soon as Erik saw Nyx, the murderous aura in his eyes dissipated in an instant. When he saw her approaching, there was a trace of anxiety in his eyes, and his grip on the sword tightened, his knuckles turning pale.

It wasn't until Nyx safely walked up to him that he slightly relaxed, pulling her behind him and protecting her.

"What happened?" Nyx gently linked her arm with his, pulling the dangerous sword a little further away.

She looked down at Jinx and Jules, hoping to get an explanation from them, but both kept their heads down, seeming too scared to meet her eyes, as if they were trembling with fear.

"You two go on ahead." Nyx waved her hand, signaling for them to leave.

Erik remained silent, standing by Nyx's side, his gaze trailing after the two maids as they hurried out of sight.

The room was left with just the two of them.

Erik holding a sword had sharp eyebrows and a cold, tough aura around him. For

a moment, Nyx felt as though she were seeing Erik on the battlefield, as described in the rumors.

But this was clearly not the right time or place for that.

She reached out to take her mate's hand, intending to relieve him of the sword.

"It's heavy." Erik dodged slightly, preventing Nyx from handling the sword she wouldn't be able to lift. Following her intentions, he sheathed the sword and casually tossed it aside.

Erik, who had exuded such murderous intent just moments ago, now appeared harmless in front of his beloved mate, standing obediently.

Nyx sat down first, patting the spot beside her to signal for him to sit. He immediately moved closer and sat down beside

her.

His breathing was slightly hurried, and he cautiously stole glances at Nyx's expression.

He thought, 'Has Nyx heard me swear?'

Whether she heard or not, it was obvious she had seen him attempt to kill someone, and that was a fact beyond dispute.

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The thought that Nyx might dislike him now made Erik's face turn pale, and he found it hard to breathe.

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"Alright, tell me what happened." Nyx gently took his hand and ran her other hand through his hair. "What exactly is going

on?"

She still believed in her mate's character, trusting he wouldn't resort to violence and take someone's life without good

reason.

Feeling the coolness of her small hand, Erik's desperate thoughts suddenly halted, and the brightness returned to his eyes, a glimmer of hope emerging. "They first said they were flower house servants you sent to deliver flowers," his voice contained a hint of barely perceptible grievance, defending himself.

If it weren't for the fact they were using Nyx's name, he would never have let them

in.

Nyx's gaze fell upon the table, where a vase held freshly blooming flowers. It was obvious they had just been replaced. Large, blooming lilies filled the vase, their petals vibrant and full, their symbolism auspicious and pleasant.

"Just these flowers?" She idly flicked at a few, inhaling their strong fragrance.

"Yes." Erik blushed slightly, embarrassed to admit how excited he had felt when he first saw the flowers.

He had thought Nyx was showing him affection, hoping for a lifetime together. But that dream was shattered quickly.

Jinx and Jules had arranged the vase, but instead of leaving, they boldly approached him, one giving him suggestive looks and undressing, while the other gazed at him with a pitiful expression, biting her lip.

Although Erik was somewhat clueless about matters of men and women, he wasn't completely oblivious.

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"I dodged them, told them to get the F..." He inadvertently let slip a curse word, quickly swallowing the rest of it, his expression earnest. "They didn't touch me."

He had never liked being served by lower-status people, and he had never had any maids around him before. After being with Nyx, he was especially protective of his own purity. But those two were like glue, relentlessly pursuing him.

One moment they lied, saying it was Nyx who had sent them to serve him, then they changed their story, claiming they wanted to bear a child for her.

Erik was enraged.

He recognized their faces because of how jealous he'd gotten in the past when Nyx paid too much attention to these two maids.

Nyx had shown them kindness, and now these two ungrateful ones had the audacity to come seduce him. And worse, they were using Nyx's name.

"How about we just throw them out of the house?" He barely suppressed his anger, discussing with Nyx how to deal with them.

On the surface, they would be kicked out, but he would secretly have them killed, making sure everything was handled neatly without Nyx finding out.

The shadow guards had already gathered intelligence, revealing that the two maids were spies from Banon. Since they were enemies planted in his home, he felt no need to show mercy.

If he weren't worried about how to explain things to Nyx if she asked about them, he would've dealt with it already.

Now, they were practically asking for their own demise, giving him a perfect excuse to make them disappear.

Nyx frowned, feeling conflicted, "This might not be right."

"They're still young, without any means of livelihood, and they're so beautiful," she said with concern, uneasy about the situation. "If we throw them out, they might end up in bad circumstances."

Beauty combined with weakness often led to disaster.

Erik was stunned. "You... you still care about their fate?"

"Don't you like me? Don't you care about me?" He plaintively buried his head in Nyx's embrace. "Aren't you mad they tried to take me from you?"

Some of his colleagues had wives who were fierce and jealous, causing chaos in their homes, and Erik had always found those situations laughable. But now, he felt jealousy in a whole new way.

Everyone always said women should be tolerant and virtuous, that jealousy was a sin, but he felt men and women were the

same.

He liked Nyx so much that he wanted to hide her away from everyone. He thought if Nyx liked him, she should act the same way toward him.

Nyx, unable to hold back a smile, pulled her embarrassed Pale Wolf into her arms and kissed him firmly on the cheek. "I like you."

"Of course, I'm mad," she admitted. She wasn't free from possessiveness regarding her mate, and she wasn't so magnanimous that she'd ignore it. "But I think there's another way to handle this. Let's talk to them first, and if they try it again, we'll deal with them then."

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With just a kiss, her grumpy mate was soothed, his face flushed as he nestled against her soft body, shamelessly lying on her lap.

It was Nyx who had taken the initiative to let him lie down.

With every breath, all he could smell was Nyx's sweet and fragrant scent. His mind went blank as he kept inhaling deeply. too overwhelmed to think.

Nyx's voice remained calm and soothing as she gently tried to comfort him. "If they're cast out of the mansion, those two girls, only fifteen or sixteen, will have a hard time surviving

"At their age, if they were born in a good family, they'd be carefree under their parents' care. Even if they weren't rich, they'd at least have some freedom," she said, her voice becoming a little lower.

"Their birth wasn't something they could decide. Being controlled by the Voss family and Joyce, it's not what they wanted."

Nyx didn't think Jinx and Jules seemed like bad girls. Despite their eyes showing signs of hardship, their core was still kind, completely different from the malicious nature of Mila and Kaya from the Voss family.

Perhaps they didn't want to become concubines, but due to their young age and the influence of others, they had no choice but to walk this path.

"The Voss family is like a swamp, and I don't want them to stay stuck in it. That's why I want to give them a hand," Nyx's voice grew softer, a quiet sigh escaping her lips. "I'll talk to them first, then give them a chance to choose."

Erik gazed up at Nyx's beautiful face, his eyes filled with intense admiration.

He wasn't one to show much mercy and never considered if his enemies had any valid reasons. But that didn't stop him from being drawn to Nyx in this moment.

After a long silence, he didn't explain or tell Nyx that the two girls were spies sent by Banon to target him. Instead, he quietly agreed, "Alright."

With many shadow guards in his estate, if they ever attempted anything again, he'd be able to catch them.

Outside, in the courtyard, Jinx and Jules, two fragile figures, huddled together on the ground, tears streaming down their faces and soaking their clothes.

They felt guilty for betraying Nyx and lingered in the courtyard, reluctant to leave, hoping to hear Nyx's curses at them, which would somehow give them a bit of relief.

But what they heard was nothing harsh.

After sobbing for a while, Jules clenched her teeth, made up her mind, and pushed Jinx away. "Go report me if you want. What I did has nothing to do with you."

With that, she quickly walked a few steps forward, ignoring Jinx's attempts to stop her, and suddenly slammed the door

open.

A cold gleam shot out instantly, embedding itself in the ground just a finger's width from Jules's toes.

If she hadn't moved so quickly, her head might have already been pierced by the copper dart.

Erik had one arm around Nyx and the other hand still holding another copper dart, his cold gaze fixed on the uninvited

guest.

If it hadn't been for his reluctance to kill in front of Nyx, he wouldn't have missed.

At the very least, there would have been

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severe injuries caused.

Jules" Nyx exclaimed in surprise. "What are you doing back here?"

"I'm sorry... I'm so sorry... Madam," Jules said, tears in her eyes, not wanting to hide anything anymore. "Actually, I'm working for Banon."

"We're spies sent by Banon to infiltrate the Duke's mansion Jinx stumbled in after her, picking up where Jules left off. "Banon ordered us to get close to Erik, to gather information for him."

Hearing her words, Jules turned her head in disbelief. "Jinx. Why? Don't you want to live anymore?"

Jinx seemed to have given up on life, but Jinx clearly hadn't. If Jinx went back and reported her, she could still have a chance to live.

Jinx sobbed, clutching Jules, looking fragile, but her voice was determined. "You're not leaving me. Whether we live or die, we're together."

They were determined to stay together.

Nyx stared at the dramatic scene in front of her, dazed, unable to process it for a long time.

She thought, 'Banon? Isn't he the enemy of Pale Wolf?'

She suddenly recalled the image of Pale Wolf holding a long sword, ready to kill, and it dawned on her.

"Did you already know about this?" She glanced at Erik, receiving a confirming nod, and couldn't help but rub her forehead.

She had thought it was just a matter of infidelity, not something that would make Pale Wolf kill. It turned out these two were planted by Banon as spies.

Pale Wolf had known the truth all along, but out of respect for her, he didn't act directly against them.

Meanwhile, she had been in the dark, thinking they were simply part of Joyce's plan to annoy her with potential concubines.

Nyx sighed in resignation. If she had known about their spy status, she might not have convinced Pale Wolf to

At critical moments, showing mercy to the enemy was cruelty to oneself. She knew how to prioritize, and she would never let her mate fall into danger for two

strangers.

The thought of what could happen in the future made Nyx quietly regret. She thought, 'So... what's going on now? Did these two girls suddenly turn on Banon?

Why?'

"We, the two sisters, have always had sharp hearing. We've been gathering intelligence for Banon since we were young, and we know a lot," Jinx said, unrepentantly, deciding to completely betray them. She blurted out a lot of information.

Nyx's eyes widened as she struggled to process it all, but she couldn't remember it all. Erik, however, managed to focus on the key points, his brow furrowing.

After revealing a long string of information, Jinx seemed to have drained all her energy, collapsing into Jules's arms, her voice soft as she murmured, "In my next life, I want to be born into a good family... I don't ask for wealth. I just want peace..."

"In the next life, I don't want to be human anymore," Jules cried even harder, "I want to be a blade of grass, a flower."

The two of them clung to each other, crying uncontrollably, a tangled mess of emotion.

The sound of sobbing and sniffles reached Nyx's ears, and she couldn't help but cough, "Can we focus on living this life first?"

"Things still have a chance to turn around, it's not a guaranteed death." She softened her tone.

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The regretful emotions had faded, and she gently advised, "You can send some false information back. As long as we cooperate here, your defection won't be exposed for now. Focus on staying alive, and we'll come up with a long-term plan"

Since they were from Banon's side, the two of them should have the poison called Moonshade Poison in their bodies

If they could successfully trade false information for the antidote, and have it researched by a trusted doctor, not only would Jinx and Jules no longer be controlled, but the poison on Pale Wolf's leg could also be resolved.

With just a few words, Nyx managed to calm the two desperate young maids. With Nyx's presence, they found the courage and support to live. Arlong, who had rushed back after handling other matters, was stunned when he heard this huge piece of news, unable to believe his ears.

The spies that Banon had gone through so much trouble to plant had just turned into their own people.

With his master's order, Arlong, looking serious, led Jinx and Jules away.

For these two who had defected, he needed to first interrogate them for information, and then have the shadow guards verify everything before he could slowly start trusting them.

Jinx and Jules obediently trailed behind him, matching his steps, following him closely.

Suddenly, Jules remembered something. "Oh no."

"What's wrong?" Arlong immediately became tense, as if facing a great threat.

"It's nothing." Jules said nervously, forcing a smile, "It's not a big deal."

It was just that she had forgotten, the lilies they sent had been sprinkled with aphrodisiac powder to help with the... well, enhancing the probability of intimacy. After being kicked out, she had forgotten all about it.

Now, coming clean would probably be too late.

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But Jules thought it should be fine.

The medicine wasn't potent, and it wouldn't harm the body. At worst, it only served as a little boost, an extra push, nothing significant.

Whether it worked or not depended on the person smelling it—if they were inclined, if their desires were strong, and so on.

Jinx also came to her senses, nervously exchanging glances with Jules, both of them lowering their heads in silence.

Erik and Nyx had just married and were at their peak of affection. Now, they were probably already in the heat of passion, so they didn't dare to interrupt them.

Jules couldn't help but recall the scene she had glimpsed earlier when she barged in.

Though it was only a brief and hasty glance, she was certain she had seen them nestled together, Erik lying on Nyx's lap, the vibe warm and peaceful.

Erik seemed to have two faces—before them, he was like a fierce god of death, but in front of Nyx, he could act gentle and harmless. She couldn't tell if it was an act.

Jules pressed her lips together and clenched her fists. Although her life was temporarily spared, she wasn't afraid of losing it. If Erik betrayed Nyx, as long as Jules was alive, she would risk everything to take his life.

A qualified tool, not only with exceptional hearing as a talent, but also skilled in assassination. Jinx's thoughts synchronized with Jules', and she gently stroked her sleeve.

If Nyx had been even a second later in entering, they would've pulled out their weapons.

In the past, they would have never stood a chance against Erik, but now that he had a crippled leg, perhaps they had a slight chance.

The sisters were lost in their thoughts, and before they knew it, they had been led to a corner of the residence.

"Hand over what's in your sleeves, Arlong stopped and extended his hand toward them. "You can keep your hairpins, though."

The two of them froze, startled. They thought, 'How did he know we have hidden weapons in our sleeves?'

Seeing Arlong's calm demeanor and hearing his even tone, they finally realized the truth.

Not only had their spy identities been exposed, but every move, every weapon, and every tactic had been scrutinized in this residence.

"If it weren't for Madam's face, you would already be dead," Arlong smiled.

He wasn't threatening them, as he was just stating a fact.

His master never tolerated traitors. Rather than spending energy verifying their testimonies, it was better to kill them cleanly.

Although Arlong had always disapproved of such a brutal approach, he couldn't persuade his master otherwise.

Nyx was different. She didn't even need to persuade Erik-once Nyx had shown favor, he would hesitate to act against anyone she had taken a liking to.

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Arlong shook his head, feeling a mix of emotions as he confiscated Jinx and Jules' weapons, unsure whether to feel happy or worried.

His master was strong-willed, and once he set his mind on something, not even the lord or the emperor's orders could change his decision. Nyx was the first variable to appear in the past ten years.

It was like the old saying, "everything has its match." Even without any strong measures, she managed to tame the master completely.

It was a good thing, in theory, that someone could persuade the master. But the master's infatuation with the lady was deeper than he imagined. If she were ever used by someone or something happened to her, the master would likely lose his sanity and act out of control.

Arlong was worried and made a secret decision to protect the lady at all costs.

If Nyx knew what Arlong was thinking, she would be very touched. But she was currently in a crisis and had no time to think about anything else.

The room was in a complete mess.

The vase on the table was shattered, and no one had cleaned up the mess. Some lilies were scattered, and two of them had fallen to the ground.

The bedding on the bed was a tangled mess, with pillows scattered all over, some kicked to the edge.

Nyx had an unnatural blush on her face as she leaned against her mate's shoulder.

"Should I call a doctor? How do you feel, Nyx, Nyx?" Erik gently stroked her face, continuously asking in her ear.

The sound reached Nyx's ears, but she couldn't process the meaning. Her mind had become sluggish, like a muddled mass, and she mumbled, "Hot... No... doctor..."

Erik was at a loss, beads of sweat forming on his forehead.

He thought, 'It's entirely my fault'

He knew the flowers were problematic, but he had some vague, hard-to-explain thoughts and didn't rush to have them removed.

But he never expected her to pick up the vase so carelessly and inhale its scent up close.

Even the safest of fragrances, if inhaled in excess over a short period, could become a potent poison.

Closing his eyes, Erik struggled internally, hesitating, but finally made up his mind.

Nyx was already married to him, and she had even said she liked him. Although he was still a bit anxious, it was all progressing naturally.

"No... leg..." Nyx suddenly regained some clarity in her mind. She didn't know where she got the strength from, but she shoved the male figure in front of her and scolded, "Don't you want your leg anymore?"

Such a severe injury, and he still dared to kneel on it.

Erik lowered his head in embarrassment, not daring to argue. His face was red,

his ears were red, and his eyes were red from holding back tears.

Seeing his pitiful expression, Nyx softened, her tone gentler as she coaxed him, "Sit down properly."

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Nyx only realized later that she had been deceived. There was nothing wrong with Erik's strong body.

The 18-year-old male was full of ener

After eating all the supplement-filled dishes for so long, he had already recovered.

When Arlong returned, he happened to run into a few servant women leaving with used water containers in the courtyard. He looked up at the bright sky and couldn't help but show a confused expression.

He thought, 'It is broad daylight-why is the master in such a hurry to start sex today?'

Filled with curiosity and surprise, Arlong, unguarded, walked toward the window he usually stayed by.

As he got closer, his expression suddenly changed. He heard sounds from inside, quickly took a few steps back, almost stumbling to the ground, shocked.

He thought, 'Has the master's body recovered? I really didn't mean to listen. This

is something the master must never know, or I would either lose my life or become deaf, never able to hear anything again."

Shock turned into embarrassment, and embarrassment turned into fear. Arlong's emotions changed rapidly, but ultimately, he settled on joy.

It seemed his efforts hadn't been in vain. It was also thanks to Nyx that the supplements cooked in the kitchen were all consumed by the master without waste.

Arlong nearly wanted to kneel in gratitude, as if he could already see his adorable little master, all plump and cute, waving at him in the not-so-distant future.

He thought, 'This food remedy is so effective; I must continue with it, and I should also make sure to give Madam a good supplement too.'

Arlong kept making plans in his mind, his heart heavy with worry for the future of the Duke's household.

The sun set, and the light inside the room slowly faded into dimness.

Worried about Nyx's health and not wanting her to go hungry, Erik barely held himself back and ordered someone to bring the meal.

Servants entered one by one and lit the lamps.

Nyx, utterly exhausted, sluggishly lifted her eyelids. When she saw the food on the table, she froze for a moment, then became furious.

She thought, 'How dare you make these dishes again?'

She suddenly raised her head, her eyes full of resentment as she stared at

Arlong. His hands and feet froze, unsure where he had gone wrong to upset the lady.

Erik, feeling jealous, cleared his throat a few times, trying to draw Nyx's attention back to him.

Nyx ground her teeth together. She thought, "That's right. The one who tricked me wasn't Arlong. Arlong wouldn't dare to

up

make

like this.'

a

lie about his master being sick. Someone must have ordered him to do it; that's the only way he would have acted

"You're not allowed to eat," she snapped, banging her hand on the table.

She thought, 'He is as strong as a beast, yet still he wants to try it?'

Erik, holding a piece of stir-fried shrimp with chives, jumped in surprise at the sound.

"Okay, I won't eat," he said, naturally feeding the dish to Nyx. He also gently rubbed her hand. "Don't bang the table; bang

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me instead."

The table was so hard, he thought it hurt her hand to strike it.

Arlong stood by, feeling that the scene before him was very strange, but he didn't dare question it.

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Other than his master, it was probably impossible for any man in the household to be so completely controlled by a woman.

It was always the women who served their husbands at meals.

But Erik didn't seem to notice anything wrong. He fed Nyx one bite after another, making sure she was full, and only when she allowed him did he quickly finish the remaining food in a flurry.

After the intimate contact, any previous awkwardness was completely discarded, and the cold-faced Erik dropped his act, revealing his bottomless devotion as a loyal servant.

Arlong watched helplessly as his master was completely caught up in Nyx's world, obeying her every command. He felt conflicted and didn't know what to say. Nyx, on the other hand, had fully adjusted to this.

The only downside was probably that her body was too frail, while her mate Erik was too young and full of energy.

Exhausted, Nyx couldn't wake up in the morning, sleeping deeply until it was well past noon, only getting up to have a late brunch.

"Where's Pale Wolf?" she asked, noticing someone was missing from the table. She looked around but couldn't find the familiar figure.

Arlong, who had grown used to his master calling Pale Wolf by the lady's nickname, lowered his head and explained, "Master is in the study."

"Has he eaten breakfast?" Nyx asked with concern. When Arlong nodded, she didn't press further.

Lately, Pale Wolf had occasionally been busy in the study. She had heard that the Voss family had been helped by Banon, and now Pale Wolf was working to pin the blame on Rohan once again.

Nyx couldn't involve herself in the political matters at court, nor could she offer much help. But she wasn't idle; she had someone bring the Duke's account books to her bedroom, set up a small table, and spent her time reviewing the accounts from the comfort of her bed.

She had been in charge of the household finances for some time now. Arlong still couldn't understand how Nyx, who had never studied anything, could seem to know everything. She organized the account books clearly and even managed to uncover a few hidden spies working against the household.

The former trusted accountant wasn't happy at first, but after observing her for a couple of days, he became obedient, even wanting to beg her to take him as her assistant.

Nyx gave him a trial, found him useful, and kept him on while teaching him along the way. This, of course, made Pale Wolf incredibly jealous a few times. Whenever the two of them were a little too close, Pale Wolf would cause trouble,

insisting Nyx come closer to soothe him. Today, with no one around to bother her, it was quiet, but Nyx felt a bit unaccustomed to it.

At lunchtime, Pale Wolf still hadn't returned, and Nyx was even more surprised.

Since she had entered the household, this was the first time they hadn't eaten together.

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Thinking that Pale Wolf was probably too busy, she confirmed with Arlong that he had eaten well and didn't disturb him.

But by dinnertime, the usually clingy Pale Wolf was still nowhere to be seen.

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"Where's Pale Wolf?" Nyx called out, tapping the window to summon Arlong.

"The master is busy with work, and it seems he won't be able to come back and rest tonight." Arlong carefully glanced at Nyx's expression, silently hoping that she wouldn't be upset.

Not just tonight, but for a while, Erik wouldn't be seen by Nyx.

Last night, Jinx and Jules went to meet the contact sent by Banon with false information, and they successfully brought back two antidotes for the Moonshade Poison.

The doctors at the mansion tried to figure out how to treat Erik's leg. They worked through the night and finally made some

progress.

The news was reported to Erik early this morning.

Upon learning that the poisoning during the treatment would be much more painful than usual, Erik hesitated for a long time, and then decided to stay in the study under the pretense of working. He didn't want Nyx to see him in such a state, drenched in sweat and grimacing from pain.

Arlong didn't agree with this decision.

Treating the leg injury would take time, and after the wound healed, additional time would be needed for rehabilitation, to practice walking. Avoiding seeing Nyx for so long could affect their relationship.

To maintain the stability of the relationship between Erik and Nyx, Arlong tried to reason with Erik, urging him repeatedly.

Erik was moved, but after experiencing the pain of the poison during the first dose, he firmly stuck to his original decision.

Erik thought, 'It will be just too embarrassing if she sees it.'

He knew that Nyx probably wouldn't mind, but he still didn't want her to see him in such a pitiful state.

He wanted to hide like an injured wild animal, heal by himself, and reappear before his mate only when his wounds had fully healed and he felt strong again.

He thought that when they met again, Nyx would be pleasantly surprised to see his leg healed.

At night, he wouldn't have to sit still all the time. He could try different positions, and recently, he had learned a lot of new things, just waiting for the opportunity to put them into practice, to win Nyx's favor and keep their relationship fresh.

Unable to persuade Erik, Arlong reluctantly took on the task of hiding the truth from Nyx. "Since the master injured his leg, he has accumulated a lot of unfinished work. Now Aurelius is urging him, and he has to get back to work.

"The master hopes to finish the work as quickly as possible and then come to accompany you."

Nyx immediately understood. She thought, 'So it's because Erik has been slacking off for too long and has been caught by his superior.'

Although Erik was a military officer, he also had a civilian post in the Ministry of Defense. Besides leading troops in battle, there was a lot of work to handle in daily life.

Because of his leg injury, Erik had been in a state of neglect, staying behind closed doors and avoiding work for so long. Aurelius had been considerate, only now starting to urge him.

Nyx didn't dare underestimate the authority of the feudal rulers.

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Although it seemed that Pale Wolf and Aurelius had a close relationship, there was still a difference between ruler and subject. In the interstellar age, workers who slacked off might only get fired, but in this era, if one angered Aurelius, they could lose their life.

"I understand," she sighed. "You don't need to stay here with me. Go look after him, and remind him to rest early. Even if he has to stay up late, he should be careful not to overwork and ruin his health."

Putting aside her worries about Pale Wolf's schedule, the fact that he wouldn't be coming back tonight seemed like good news for her.

Since that day when she first had sex with Erik, Nyx had been exhausted by Erik for many days, with no free time at all. She had long been longing for a chance to take a rest.

Just knowing she wouldn't have to be fucked around all night brought a hint of joy to her face.

She thought, 'Finally, I'm free. Finally, freedom.'

Arlong hadn't expected that Nyx would so easily accept the fact that Erik wouldn't be coming home for the night.

He looked up in surprise and immediately saw the joy hidden in Nyx's expression, freezing in place.

Arlong thought, 'How could this be? Doesn't the lady even wonder if the master is out with another woman?'

He had prepared for a round of questioning, but Nyx didn't ask anything at all, leaving him with no use for the answers he had planned.

"This is bad. Could it be that the lady has grown tired of the master?" Arlong thought, as his heart skipped a beat.

Nyx had no idea what Arlong was thinking. She was still smiling as she advised, "Tell Pale Wolf not to rush things."

If he rushed to finish the work and compromised its quality, Aurelius might be displeased, potentially damaging Pale Wolf's reputation with him.

When Arlong heard this, he thought it meant Nyx wanted Erik to come back later.

He returned to Erik, sweating nervously, and didn't dare say his thoughts aloud. He only mentioned that Nyx was concerned about Erik's eating and sleeping.

Erik, who had just endured the poisoning and was drenched in sweat, his face pale, still smiled when he heard Nyx's advice to rest. It seemed to ease his pain a little.

"Since Nyx is afraid of the cold, light the heater for her, and give her a hot water bottle," he whispered to Arlong. "You stay by the window and make sure she's okay."

Usually, he would be the one holding Nyx to sleep, but tonight, Nyx would have to make do with a hot water bottle. He wondered if she would have trouble sleeping, but he knew that his own insomnia was inevitable.

Without the warm, fragrant body of Nyx's beside him, Erik tossed and turned in bed, unable to sleep.

Late at night, after enduring another episode of the poison, he took a bath, put on his outer robe, and quietly slipped out under the moonlight.

"Master?" Arlong, stationed outside Nyx's window, heard a noise and opened his eyes. He saw an unexpected figure in the yard and, for a moment, thought he was seeing things.

He thought, 'Didn't the master say he wouldn't return tonight?'

"Shh," Erik frowned and raised a finger to his lips, signaling for silence so he wouldn't wake Nyx.

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He carefully pushed open the door, leaving a small gap for ventilation, and tiptoed inside.

A wave of heat hit him as the heater was blazing hot,

Erik looked satisfied as he cautiously sat on the edge of the bed and gently touched Nyx's hand.

It wasn't too cold, but it wasn't warm enough either.

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Inside the blanket, the temperature of the hot water bottle had already dropped,

and he thought it couldn't keep her warm for the whole night.

As soon as he slipped under the blanket, Nyx instinctively clung to it, wrapping her arms and legs around it like an octopus as she drifted into an even deeper sleep.

She slept soundly until dawn. When she woke up, only Nyx was left in the bed, and there was no one else around.

She rubbed her eyes, as if still half-asleep, groggily getting up and looking around, and then suddenly smiled.

Although she didn't see anyone, Nyx was sure Pale Wolf had come back last night.

For several nights in a row, Erik had been sneaking into her bed, diligently playing the role of a bed-warmer. Before dawn, he would slip away without a trace, leaving his good deeds unnoticed.

Arlong couldn't understand what Erik was doing and kept his mouth shut, not realizing Nyx had already noticed.

The other people in the house didn't know anything about it.

The first day Erik rested in the study, the house was quiet.

After he had rested there for three days, whispers began to spread around the house.

After ten or fifteen days, rumors started circulating, saying that Erik had grown tired of Nyx and hadn't visited her in a long time. Nyx had fallen out of favor.

Since it concerned Erik, no one dared to discuss it openly, and the rumors didn't reach Nyx's ears.

Nyx only vaguely felt that the attitude of some of the servants had changed, and they didn't seem as enthusiastic as before.

The supplements that used to be delivered regularly from the kitchen had also been reduced, and eventually, they stopped coming altogether. Even the variety of dishes had become much simpler.

But Nyx was busy sorting through the ledgers and didn't have time to think much about it.

Arlong followed Erik during the day and guarded Nyx in the courtyard at night, working nonstop, so he had no idea that someone in the house had dared to mistreat Nyx.

Several small attempts went unpunished, further emboldening these people.

Around noon, Nyx looked up from a pile of ledgers and rubbed her slightly aching forehead. "What time is it?"

"It's noon." The assistant also put down his pen and ledger, confirming the time.

He suddenly realized something wasn't right. "Why hasn't anyone brought lunch yet?"

Normally, at this time, Nyx should have already had her lunch and started her afternoon rest.

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the wettatit & face immediately darkened. He'd been in the house for a long time and had managed things for many years. He knew better than Styx that some of the servants here were sneaky and unreliable.

When Erik was with Nyx, the kitchen never failed to deliver lunch on time.

Today's situation, whether intentional or just a slip-up, meant that some careless servant had stopped showing respect for Nyx

"Someone?" His voice carried an edge of anger.

He usually turned a blind eye to many things, but this time, it concerned Nyx, and he couldn't let it slide. He had to deal with it harshly

Several young maids came running in response, sensing the tension in the air. They lowered their heads and trembled nervously.

"What time is it? Why hasn't anyone brought lunch yet?" The assistant's voice was sharp.

He hadn't resigned and was still the steward of the Duke's Mansion, only taking orders from Erik and Nyx. He held a high position in the household, and his words carried weight.

The maids, who were used to dealing with the gentle Nyx, were so nervous at being scolded that they almost burst into tears. "The kitchen... the kitchen didn't send anyone..."

They were stationed outside the courtyard, mainly responsible for attending to Nyx's daily needs, like bringing water, changing clothes, and combing her hair. Delivering meals was the kitchen's job and wasn't really their responsibility. "The kitchen didn't send anyone? Don't you know to follow up? Don't you know to

hurry them?" The assistant was burning with anger. "You're all just sitting there like wooden dolls. What good are you?"

Nyx saw the maids on the verge of tears and quickly cleared her throat, signaling to the assistant with a look.

These maids were just a little slow, but they usually worked diligently. She didn't think they were doing this on purpose.

"As for the kitchen, could you please go check what's going on?" Nyx protected

the maids, not wanting to excuse the kitchen staff. "Do what needs to be done and report back to me. Don't tell Pale Wolf."

Erik had been so busy lately, only coming back at night to rest for a short while. She didn't want to add these trivial matters to his plate.

"Also," Nyx added, "tell the kitchen they don't need to send food today. I'll handle it myself."

The assistant didn't think much of it, assuming she wanted him to send someone to buy food from a nearby restaurant. He nodded, still seething with anger, and left with a stormy expression.

In the kitchen, several servants were sitting around eating when the steward suddenly arrived, startling them so much that they dropped their fork. Seeing the steward's grim expression, they didn't dare to joke around and nervously greeted him. "Steward Hussain."

"You've got some nerve," Enzo Hussain sneered. "You even dared to cut Madam's meals."

Upon hearing this, a few of them couldn't help but gasp, breaking out into a cold sweat.

They thought, Was, was it discovered? But even though Steward Hussain usually checks the accounts with the madam, he never eats with her. How could he have noticed something was missing from her meal? Could it be that the madam complained to him?

"We're just taking advantage of the madam's gentle nature, thinking she won't argue. That's why we dared to secretly keep

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some expensive supplements, selling them for money to buy alcohol. If we had

known the madam wasn't so tolerant, we would've done it more secretly. The group lowered their heads, secretly regretting their actions. Enzo looked down at everyone, taking in their reactions, and felt he had the

situation figured out. He thought, 'Looks like not everyone is in on it. It's just a few bold little thieves causing trouble.'

"Alexis, Harley, Maxim..." He called each name, accurately pointing out the guilty

ones, then ordered his subordinates, "Give them twenty lashes and throw them out of the mansion."

Instantly, there were sounds of people nervously bowing and begging for mercy.

"Please spare us!"

"Please, have mercy!"

"Please, Steward Hussain! We'll never dare again!"

"I've already been lenient with you," Enzo said coldly, staring at them. "You didn't deliver the meals to the madam and let her.

go hungry. If this gets to the young master's ears, you can forget about keeping your lives."

"W-What?"

"This is unjust..."

"We didn't do it!"

"We would never dare not deliver the meals to the madam?"

The group was shocked and immediately cried out in protest.

They just wanted to secretly make some profit, never intending to anger Nyx.

Even if Nyx had lost favor, she was still with Erik, and they knew she could easily deal with them.

"Hmm?" Enzo furrowed his brow.

Seeing their expressions, he didn't seem to think they were lying.

"You, explain. What happened?" He pointed to an honest-looking maid. "Why wasn't the madam's lunch delivered?"

The maid was also shocked. "We prepared the food long ago and asked someone to deliver it."

"Where is the person who was supposed to deliver it?" Enzo asked. "Who was in charge of delivering the meal to the madam?"

There was a brief silence. Everyone instinctively looked at each other, then lowered their heads and reported to Enzo, "He's not here."

"Normally, I'm the one who delivers the food, but today I'm ill and couldn't meet the madam," a young servant spoke up, coughing as he explained. "Myles took over for me and left a long time ago, but he still hasn't come back." Myles Hussain was Enzo's nephew.

The servant secretly glanced at Enzo's face and saw that Enzo's expression had darkened.

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In a remote, abandoned courtyard, loud voices of shouting and laughing echoed.

A few jars of alcohol were placed around, and several men sat together, playing a gambling game.

"Myles, you're still playing? Aren't you going to deliver the food to the madam?" asked one player.

"Not going, not going," the drunken Myles, red-eyed, angrily slammed his cards on the table. "What do I need to deliver the food for? Didn't we agree that my debts would be paid with this meal?"

At that, everyone fell silent for a moment.

"You're serious?" The winners looked visibly upset.

They had been playing fine until Myles suddenly joined them and said that if he lost, he'd use the food meant for Nyx to cover his debt. Nobody took him seriously. They thought he was joking, and since the game

wouldn't take long, they didn't mind a small delay in delivering the food, so they didn't refuse.

They never expected Myles to sit down and refuse to leave, playing one round after another, losing a pile of games, not paying up, and shouting for one more round.

The way he was acting, it seemed like he really was going to use Nyx's lunch to avoid paying.

The group exchanged looks, unsure of what to do.

Sure, this expensive meal could easily cover the card debts, but they couldn't sell it, and they weren't so hungry as to risk getting beaten or even thrown out of the mansion to eat Nyx's food.

"We don't want this; give us the money." They threw down their cards and grabbed Myles by the collar.

"You're not without money. Why are you refusing to pay?"

"Isn't your uncle the steward of the mansion? He should've given you plenty of money, right?"

They often played cards together, and Myles was always bragging about his uncle, Enzo.

They thought, 'How could someone who manages the finance in the house possibly be short of money?'

Myles was shaken so hard that his head spun. He let out a groan, barely holding back the urge to vomit.

His face looked terrible as well.

Enzo never gave Myles any money; Enzo was too strict with him.

If Myles could get money from Enzo, he wouldn't have gambled with them. He would have gone out to the brothels and casinos by now.

These were things Myles never told anyone. If he did, he would definitely be laughed at.

"He just won't give me money," Myles grumbled, "We agreed to use this meal to settle the debt, but it's you guys who are backing out."

"You guys aren't scared to eat, are you?" He seemed to have found their weakness, sneering as he grabbed a tender chicken and shoved it into his mouth, chewing while muttering, "You're all so timid. Are you afraid the madam will punish you?"

Seeing everyone staring at him in shock, Myles got carried away with alcohol, speaking more boldly, "What's there to be afraid of? She's lost the young master's favor. What's she even worth now?"

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"So what if she's the master? She's just a woman, with no real skills. The young master doesn't care about her, so she has to listen to my uncle. "Back when she was with the Voss family, she was also the madam, but she didn't

seem to have much status, Myles said with a creepy laugh. "Look at her bony, thin body. I really don't know what the young master sees in her. "She's got a pretty face, but probably feels like nails to the touch. The young

master was probably just interested for a while, but now that he's lost interest,

he'd rather stay in his study every night than see her." The others fell silent, not daring to speak. They thought, "The rumors about the madam losing favor aren't confirmed.

'She still lives in the main house. If she truly lost favor, why wouldn't the master send her to the side rooms or another courtyard? Instead, he stays in the study himself?"

'Everyone would gossip just for kidding, but this guy is seriously daring enough to offend the madam!

"Don't worry, my uncle's here. Nothing will happen." Myles waved his hand. "He'll definitely protect me."

He thought, 'My uncle doesn't like seeing me being useless, but he definitely dislikes the madam even more. A woman who hasn't even studied, who doesn't

know any better, has the nerve to manage the accounts and take control of the household's finances from my uncle.'

"Since she started managing the accounts, several of our playmates who used to play cards with me have been kicked out of the house," Myles sneered as he looked at the others. "I just want to teach her a lesson."

To Myles, the ones who got kicked out were way better than the ones still here.

They were generous with Myles, took him out for debauchery, and even when he lost money in cards, they never pressured him for it. They liked hearing him talk about Enzo and loved listening to his bragging.

Just thinking about how those good days were ruined by Nyx made Myles grind his teeth in hatred.

He finally came by an opportunity for revenge today. He had planned to add something to her meal, but on the way, he met these people playing cards. He changed his mind and decided to let her go hungry instead. Myles continued, "The young master doesn't care about her now. For so many

days, he hasn't even seen her. As long as my uncle doesn't intervene, she has no one to complain to."

"Shut up!" A furious shout suddenly interrupted him.

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Nyx instinctively turned her head to look, but saw nothing. She thought, 'It was probably the sound of the wind rustling through the leaves.

She figured it was about time, stood up, and lifted the lid off the big pot simmering with fish soup. A wave of heat hit her face, carrying a rich aroma.

The fish was fresh, of excellent quality, and the broth had a beautiful milky white color. Even the little maid who usually didn't like fish or complained about its smell was staring at it hungrily, swallowing her saliva.

Nyx thought, 'It would taste so good if I could dip some flatbread in that hot soup...'

The fragrance spread through the whole courtyard, and the rustling from the bushes grew louder, even more intense than before.

But Nyx had no time to investigate. She was busy ladling the soup, one bowl after another. She gave a subtle glance to the shy little maids standing over there, and they sheepishly came over.

Everyone got a bowl.

In the courtyard, the sound of people slurping their soup could be heard.

After eating something greasy, drinking some hot soup to balance it out felt so comfortable.

Nyx served herself a small bowl, took a sip, but it was too hot, so she set it aside to cool off before drinking.

In just that short time, the noises behind her grew louder and more urgent, now clearly beyond what the wind could make, and it became impossible to ignore.

Before she could turn around to check, a white something suddenly flashed out and darted toward her.

Nyx blinked, and she heard startled exclamations coming from the courtyard.

"Madam!"

"Madam, be careful!"

"A cat!"

"Where did this cat come from?"

The shadow guards almost moved out, but when they saw it was a false alarm, they were relieved-fortunately, they hadn't acted yet.

The royal family loved cats, so it became a trend in the common folk as well, seeing cats as omens of good fortune. As a result, cats couldn't be harmed.

This beautiful, clean white cat must have been well cared for by someone. If it died here, it could cause trouble for Nyx.

The guards had escorted Nyx out once, and on the way back, they sensed someone was following them. They were about to make a move but then realized the person's target seemed to be the white cat following Nyx, probably the cat's

owner.

This cat was unlike any ordinary breed-it looked extraordinary, majestic, and incredibly agile, almost ghostly in how it

moved.

They had thought it had left, but they hadn't expected it to be so persistent. Quietly, it had sneaked into th had been lurking there ever since.

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They thought, 'It makes sense now. With such a fragrant smell, even the most battle-hardened of us couldn't resist it. How could a little cat? It surely couldn't resist the temptation.

The guards smelled the various aromas in the air and tried hard to keep their stomachs from growling, their faces pale.

They could see it, smell it, but they couldn't eat it. It was the worst kind of torture for them.

They thought, 'We are all servants of the Duke's family, so why do others have it so good while we have to suffer like this?'

Their resentful gazes were almost tangible.

Several of the maids shuddered, suddenly feeling a strange sense of being watched, like someone had their eyes on them.

They glanced around, saw nothing, but quickly turned their attention back to the little cat that had shown up uninvited.

The little white cat seemed to have a clear target. It happily circled Nyx, pawing at her sleeve, rubbing against her legs, and meowing to get her attention.

When Nyx didn't move, it seemed a bit impatient. It shook its ears and used its trick-flopping onto her feet, rolling onto its back with its soft belly exposed, as if inviting her to pet it.

"So cute..." The maids' eyes lit up. Forgetting about manners, they couldn't help but quietly squeal.

"Look! It really likes the madam!"

"A lucky beast bringing blessings-this is a good omen!"

"Congratulations! Congratulations, madam!"

Compliments and flattery filled her ears, accompanied by the cat's playful meowing.

Nyx stood there, stunned, for a long while, unable to process what was happening.

Nyx could easily recognize her mate anywhere.

Not only did the dark hair symbol on the cat's forehead show his identity, but this mischievous little cat that liked to seduce people could only belong to one person

in the world.

She thought, 'So, Aurelius is actually here in this world?'

The situation felt rather complicated, and Nyx's mind seemed to freeze.

In this world, she was human, and so was Pale Wolf. Neither of them could transform into their beast forms.

Aurelius was completely the opposite. As soon as he appeared in front of her, he was already in beast form.

She thought, 'Can he still turn into a big White Tiger? Can he turn into a human? If he is truly a small cat in this world, it is a big problem. We can't even communicate; how are we supposed to face the challenges together?'

Nyx's mind was flooded with countless questions. She stood frozen in place, not moving for a long time.

The little white cat shook his head, trying every possible tactic, but still couldn't get a pet. He felt wronged and anxious. He thought, 'Could it be... that she doesn't like cats?'

The thought of such a terrifying possibility made his fur stand on end. He immediately scrambled to his feet, jumping back a little, afraid of annoying her.

He quietly watched Nyx's expression, his ears drooping sadly behind his head. He was already considering the possibility of never turning back into beast form for the rest of his life.

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Nyx's slender, slightly cool hand suddenly touched his head.

Every sensation amplified in that moment. Aurelius tensed up, feeling his heart racing.

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Before he could even feel joy, his body lightened, and before he knew it, he was swept off the ground and into Nyx's arms.

"Whose little kitten is so cute? Nyx decided to set aside the complex issues for now and unceremoniously buried her face in the cat's belly, taking a deep breath. "Since you've come to me, you're mine now."

Her warm breath spread across his most sensitive stomach, and Aurelius couldn't help but tremble all over. His thick fur was the only thing hiding his blush; otherwise, he

would have turned into a pink little kitten for everyone to see. "Madam... The maidservants were stunned by the sudden turn of events. They instinctively tried to stop Nyx.

They thought, Most cats here are wild and hard to tame. Though this little cat seems affectionate, it isn't one of the household pets. We don't know its temperament, and with its sharp claws and teeth, there's a risk it might hurt the madam

They reached out to grab him, but before they could even touch a single hair, the little cat let out a pitiful whine, as if frightened, and curled up sadly in Nyx's arms.

The scene was a bit strange.

The maidservants exchanged glances, a strange feeling rising in their hearts, as if they were the villains trying to separate the innocent cat from its beloved owner.

The little white cat pressed his fluffy head tightly against Nyx's chest, looking weak, pitiful, and helpless.

Every time Nyx petted him, he trembled slightly and mewed quietly.

It was a warm scene.

Nyx's expression was complex. She thought, 'Such a scheming cat!'

After being together for so many years, she had seen plenty of these tricks and could spot them instantly. However, she didn't call him out in front of everyone, giving the little cat some face. After kissing his belly, she also gave his round little face a gentle kiss.

"Are you hungry?" she asked gently, picking up the soup bowl. Without hesitation, she used her own spoon to scoop some soup, blowing on it before offering it to the little cat.

Aurelius had just seen her drink from this bowl and use this spoon. His face turned red, and he eagerly moved closer.

The fish soup was rich and fragrant, a flavor even the palace chefs couldn't replicate. The little white cat was completely enchanted, digging in and finishing the whole bowl of soup.

He got what he wanted, nestling in the arms of the woman he had fallen for at first

sight. His fluffy tail wrapped around her wrist, and he drank three bowls of soup with an open appetite, then playfully pointed at the other dishes with his paws.

"Do you want meat? Want shrimp?" Nyx pulled out a napkin to wipe his already clean face, shaking her head as if disapproving. "Those are too salty, with a lot of seasoning. Little kittens can't eat that. It'll make you shed fur."

Of course, if he were a Beastman, it wouldn't matter.

The little white cat mewed in a high-pitched voice, clearly acting cute, his blue eyes gazing at Nyx with longing.

Nyx stared at him for a while, her thoughts becoming clearer.

She smiled slightly, as if unable to resist his persistence, and nodded in concession. "Alright, just this once. Don't expect it again."

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The meat dishes had corded a little, just right for the file ca Aurele oherently car in

Myw's lap, accepting her feeding He treasured this opportunity, but inside, he was already secretly planning how to charm his way ints getting more food nem The maidservants were utterly shocked.

Nyx was feeding the cat with her own bowl. It seemed like the really liked it, wanting to keep it around. But this cat's appetite was way too big

For such a small body, no one knew where all the food was going. He actually ate more than all of them combined, and He looked full of energy, as if He hadn't eaten too much at all.

Many amazed glances were directed at the little white cat. He didn't care,

continuing to eat while pushing closer into Nyx's arms, naturally showing off his soft fur and warm body.

Nyx couldn't help but smile. She gently stroked the dark hair on his forehead. 'Let me give you a name...

The little white cat stopped eating and sat up straighter, raising his head, his ears

perking up as if eagerly awaiting Nyx to name him.

He thought, 'Does she think I look majestic and should be given a powerful name to match?

Nyx cupped his face in both hands, unable to resist anymore, and kissed him.

"Cotton Candy"

She thought, 'So well-behaved and soft, what else could it be but Cotton Candy?

A faint fragrance followed by one kiss after another. The little white cat let out a trembling sound, his four paws almost as if his soul was about to leave his body. tensed,

He couldn't think about what Cotton Candy was or why he was called that-his

mind was filled with the soft feeling of Nyx's lips. He thought, 'I feel so good-she likes little cats.

In just a short time, Aurelius's thoughts had drifted far away, imagining Nyx entering the palace with him, becoming his consort, his empress.

But then, his gaze landed on her hairstyle, and his body suddenly stiffened. He was too late. The woman he admired was already married.

If she hadn't married a good man, he could've used the excuse of saving her to take her by force, making it all seem justified. But unfortunately, she married Erik.

Although they often fought and sometimes even physically clashed, Aurelius knew deep down that Erik was not a bad

person.

Just thinking about the rumors-Erik, after marrying, was said to be so loving with

his wife, enjoying each other every night -made the little white cat's tail droop, his ears flattening.

"What's wrong?" Nyx didn't understand why his mood suddenly dropped so low.

She gently petted his little head. "You don't like that name? Or is it that you don't like me kissing you like this?"

Worried she might misunderstand, the little white cat quickly pressed himself against her, offering his soft belly.

"Looks like you do," Nyx smiled, her eyes curving. "Well, that's good."

"It's perfect. I'm so bored during the day and could use someone to warm my bed at night." She stroked the little ...'s fur. "You're all fluffy and warm, probably better than a hot water bottle, right?"

"But you're a bit too small."

seemed to be talking to herself, muttering softly.

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He wasn't small. His human form was quite tall. The little white cat puffed out his chest proudly

For a brief moment, it felt happy, but then it suddenly realized-she was someone

else's wife. It wasn't his place to turn into a human form to warm her bed. He deflated, feeling down again.

"Madam, if you're keeping a cat, should I inform the young, master?" a maid, watching the interaction between the cat and Nyx, gathered the courage to speak. "The young, master hasn't been back in days. Maybe you could take this opportunity to go find him and meet him?"

It wasn't really their place to interfere with the matters between Nyx and Erik, but when Nyx was out of favor, some people couldn't wait to take advantage, even refusing to deliver meals. They were angry on Nyx's behalf, unsure of what to do.

They thought, 'If only the lady could regain her favor, with the young master supporting her

Aurelius perked up, catching some important information. He thought, 'Erik hasn't been back in days? Where has he gone?

"Taking care of a cat is no reason to bother him." Nyx shook her head calmly. "His

Majesty has been urging him to deal with his backlog of official duties. Once he's done with that, he'll be back. You don't need to worry"

The little white cat turned into a puffed-up ball. He thought, 'When did I ever urge

Erik to handle official duties?

He hadn't expected Erik who had always been honest, even a bit foolish, to learn how to lie-using the emperor as a shield, disappearing during the day and staying out all night.

This didn't match the rumors he had heard before.

Aurelius frowned.

He wasn't really interested in Erik's love life. Whether the rumors were true or false, it didn't matter to him, so he never bothered to figure it out.

But now, it seemed like most of those rumors were probably false, and Erik might not even like his wife.

Nyx stared at the little white cat, watching him deep in thought. His round blue eyes sparkled as he switched between excitedly spinning in circles and angrily sharpening its claws, causing her to chuckle.

Hearing her laugh, Aurelius snapped out of his thoughts and nuzzled her gently, feeling a pang of sympathy.

He thought, 'She is so wonderful, yet Erik doesn't know how to appreciate her.

Not only does he lie to her, but he also leaves her to be lonely in an empty house.

If it were me, I would never let her suffer like that.

He was excellent at warming beds. The little white cat flicked his tail, eager to rush into the room and show off his bed-warming skills.

But just as it was about to jump out of Nyx's arms, she quickly grabbed it.

"Alright, I was just joking. Once you've eaten and are full, you should go home. You can't stay here," Nyx said as she stood up, holding him in her arms and walking toward the door. "You're someone's little cat, right?"

"A little cat with an owner can't just stay out overnight. Your owner will be worried."

No matter how the little white cat spoiled and rolled around, it seemed like she couldn't understand his hints. She carried him all the way to the Duke's Mansion and, sure enough, saw a few men crouching nearby.

One of them was slightly older with a humble demeanor, while the others were tall and strong, looking like w guards.

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Nyx narrowed her eyes and spotted a familiar face among them-it was the "constable" from earlier, the one who had driven away her stalker and helped her

out in the market.

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The group of seven stood frozen, staring at Nyx, motionless like statues carved from weathered stone.

It wasn't until the little white cat let out an annoyed growl that they snapped out of their trance. Shaken, they quickly regained their senses, looking down and no longer daring to meet the woman's gaze, their faces filled with awe.

They thought, 'It is astonishing that someone can hold Aurelius as if she is holding an ordinary pet. No, even an ordinary pet wouldn't be this well-behaved...

Seeing the little white cat nuzzle against the woman's shoulder, everyone couldn't help but wonder if they were seeing correctly. They thought, 'Is this really His Majesty?'

But the unique dark hair on his forehead was undeniable; it was indeed Aurelius.

Aron wiped the sweat from his forehead and quickly stepped forward to greet him.

But the little white cat stayed there, unmoving, as though he hadn't seen Aron, completely ignoring him and giving him nothing but a cold, turned back.

Aron could only brace himself and bow to Nyx. "This... this is..."

"Is this your cat?" Nyx smoothly picked up his unfinished sentence.

"N-no, no..." Aron shook his head repeatedly, his face turning bright red as he stammered even more.

He thought, 'How could I dare call Aurelius his cat? Even if it were just a verbal joke, it would be a serious crime.'

Hearing the slightly shrill voice in front of her and seeing how nervous he looked, Nyx quickly understood his identity and made a clearer judgment about her mate.

After being the lady of the Duke's Mansion for so long, she wasn't as clueless as when she first arrived in this world.

She had overheard conversations about the current emperor, who was young and had spent a long time living at the Duke's Mansion as a child, being childhood friends with Pale Wolf, with whom he shared a deep bond.

That seemed to fit perfectly.

She pretended not to know, lowering her eyes and thinking. She asked, "Then... is it your master's cat?"

The little white cat made a short sound.

Aron immediately understood and nodded in agreement. "Yes, that's right."

While lowering and raising his head, he sneaked a glance at Aurelius, struggling to hide the strange expression on his face.

After serving Aurelius for so many years, he had never heard Aurelius make such a soft and delicate sound-this was truly a first.

Aurelius didn't like anyone touching his fur, and he rarely even transformed into his beast form. But today, it seemed like a completely different person, as though his personality had changed completely.

"Go on; you

should

go

home now." Nyx rubbed the little cat's head. "You can come find me again if you have time."

She couldn't really keep the ruler of a nation locked up at home as her personal warming pet, neglecting state affairs.

Hearing this, Aron opened his arms in preparation to welcome the cat back, but the little white cat ignored him completely.

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The cat hummed and purred in thy's arming her righty with both pres day on wang ber

Myrarma,

There was no morning court tomrose few if he der go back tonigh

Aron, panicking, scratched his head in frustration, completely be a to brow to bend fr

"No use in being stubborn Nyx was unretrating, separering the life cars werk and orging. Therese any selle waiting for you. Go back now, so we'll meet again next fina

There was no turning back from this

Aurelius threw a fit, rolling and acting pitiful, porting on a show Best despite her breeds e confer be wamed and had to reluctantly hop out of Nyx's arms, looking back with each ep and clearly wiling to leave

"Goodbye, Nyx smiled, waving at him, then turned to leave, so they wouldst lock each fear for so long the

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and have little cat regret it and start whining again.

The little white cat stayed where he was, watching her figure disappear at the Duke's gates before finally reacting on geze He shook his fur and glared at Aron, saying in human speech. "Foolish"

Compared to the not-so-smart guards, he had always thought Aron was quick- witted, but this time. As data cands on

"You should have told her that your master is busy and unable to keep a cat, and that none of you are good a king can f one. Ask her if she could temporarily take me in and look after me... Aurelius bluntly ungesch

Aron stood there, stunned, his mind struggling to keep up with Aurelius's thoughts. He thought. Ha Majesty wants to le outside the palace?

Actually, if it were at Duke's Mansion, there wouldn't be much of an issue. The Duke's family has been trusted by Acetons for generations, and Aurelius himself had once lived there as a child. He and Erik were very close friends

"I want to sleep with her," Aurelius said boldly, his eyes burning with desire. 'She said she wants me to warm her bedr

"I already agreed to it, but she kicked me out. Do you think she's not satisfied with me?" He lowered his head to inspect himself, wondering if his fur wasn't fluffy enough or soft enough, or if something else was wrong

Aron was struck like lightning. All his thoughts were instantly interrupted, and he felt like he was about to explode.

He shouted, "Your Majesty, you can't!"

Then, he thought, "This is absurd. She's a married woman. She's Duke Read's wife.

Having served Aurelius for over ten years, Aron had always been a firm supporter of him.

Aurelius had been intelligent since childhood. After ascending the throne, he displayed rare and outstanding talent, showing both kindness and decisiveness, a ruler the likes of which came once in a lifetime.

But at this moment, Aron could see the signs of a foolish ruler in Aurelius.

He thought, 'As the emperor, he was declaring that he wanted to warm a woman's bed. Does that even make sense?

Looking at Aurelius's serious expression, Aron couldn't detect any hint of joking. Despair started to grow inside him, as if he could already foresee a terrible future where the royal family and Duke's Mansion would split apart.

vise him.

"Your Majesty, you cannot do that," Aron said, braving the risk of angering Aurelius as he desperately tried t "Erik and his wife are in harmony. If you forcibly break them apart, it will not only hurt the feelings of Duke's Mansion, but the lady will also harbor resentment toward you..."

As he spoke, Aron furtively glanced at the little white cat's reaction, only to see that he wasn't angry. In fact, his tail was held

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high, showing signs of a happy mood.

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"Who says they're in harmony? Aurelius narrowed his eyes, flicking his tail as he quickly walked ahead. "Back to the palace."

He was going to send someone to investigate what exactly was going on between the woman he had fallen for and Erik.

He didn't want to force her into the palace, he wanted her to like him and follow

him willingly. So, he needed to plan carefully, figure out what she liked, and slowly win her over.

Nyx returned to the courtyard.

A few young maidservants had already cleaned the kitchen and the dishes, but when they saw that Nyx didn't bring the little cat back, they all looked a bit disappointed.

"There really is an owner?"

"Oh."

"Since the lady likes it, why not just buy it?"

They thought, 'It's rare for such a spirited cat to come to the door and get along so well with the lady. It would be wonderful if it could stay with her and keep her company. It's such a shame it couldn't stay.

No matter how much its owner asks, the Duke's family could afford it, and surely the owner would be willing to sell as a favor to the Duke's family

"It's okay," Nyx said with a light laugh, shaking her head confidently. "It'll come back to find me."

The maidservants exchanged glances, each seeing the confusion on the other's face, not understanding why Nyx was so optimistic.

They didn't dare voice their thoughts but silently hoped the cat would come back a few more times and not disappoint Nyx.

Nyx returned to her room to rest.

The room fell silent. She closed her eyes and lay down, gradually feeling her mind clear up. Then, suddenly, she realized something was off.

She thought, "What has Pale Wolf been so busy with lately?"

Since the emperor was Aurelius, all her previous concerns were gone. Aurelius might assign Pale Wolf official duties, but he wouldn't force him to do

anything. At least, he wouldn't push Pale Wolf to the point of only focusing on work and spending all his time in the study, leaving no time to be with her.

Nyx furrowed her brows slowly.

That night, the room was pitch dark when Erik appeared quietly. He first removed his outer robe and shook off the cold at the heater, and then carefully climbed into bed and gently pulled Nyx into his arms.

"Pale Wolf... Nyx murmured in her sleep, causing Erik to freeze.

He held his breath and looked down at Nyx, who had her eyes closed and her breathing steady. It didn't seem like she was awake-probably just talking in her sleep. He quietly let out a sigh of relief but instinctively shifted his injured leg away.

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The next second, Nyx suddenly opened her eyes, staring straight at him "What happened in your be

Without warning, Erik's pupils contracted violently, and he gasped, newly falling at the he

Nyx reacted quickly and grabbed him, but her grip was too weak and light to stop bins. Instead, die newly got potted hom

with him.

In the critical moment, Erik managed to steady himself, preventing both of them from falling to the good.

He panted heavily, holding Nyx tight, not even bothering to hide his ley. The scars were fully exponed, dew to wrpose to sec.

Nyx's eyes were wide awake now, and her gaze precisely caught sight of the wound, which looked very different from betre Her eyes widened in surprise, "Your leg..." She leaned in for a closer look, making sure she wasn't mistaken. "Is it much better than before

Seeing Pale Wolf trying to hide his injury, she had thought it had worsened, and it had made her heart sink. Yot so, the realized she had been wrong.

A smile appeared on her face, and the icy look in her eyes melted away.

"How are you awake?" Erik carefully watched her expression, and seeing she seemed to be in a good mood, he dared to wh "Couldn't sleep?"

He thought, 'Usually, she sleeps soundly, so why is she suddenly unable to sleep tonight? Could something have happened during the day?'

He should have kept quiet, but the moment he spoke, Nyx immediately stiffened and said, "Come on, what have you been hiding from me lately?"

Erik's face turned pale, and his guilt was impossible to hide.

He had always been an honest, almost clumsy person. He rarely lied, so when he did, the pressure weighed heavily on him. Now that he'd been caught, he was panicking, unable to control himself.

"What are you panicking about?" Nyx raised her hand and pinched his ear, squinting her eyes and pretending to threaten him. "Did you secretly keep a concubine?"

"No!" He was desperate to clear up the misunderstanding, his eyes reddening. "I don't have a concubine."

With no way to hide it anymore, Erik decided to come clean. "I just wanted to heal my leg before seeing you."

"Jinx and Jules got the antidote from Banon, and the doctor worked overnight to find a way to detoxify. I've been treating the poison and the injury these past few days," he revealed everything, worried Nyx wouldn't believe him.

He lowered his head, feeling both guilty and scared, waiting for her judgment. He added in a small voice, "I really don't have a concubine."

Before meeting Nyx, he hadn't even had a mistress. He was a complete blank slate in that regard.

All these years, he had never been particularly interested in relationships, but he was deeply drawn to Nyx.

He could find many people to vouch for him, but if Nyx didn't trust him, it wouldn't matter how many people spoke on his behalf.

For the first time, the fearless Erik felt a deep sense of unease, his lips pressed tight, looking as if he might burst into tears. He appeared utterly pitiful.

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"Okay, I understand." Nyx relaxed her grip, then gently touched his soft ear, soothing him as she stroked his hair. "I was just joking. I believe you."

She thought, 'Who would keep a concubine in the study?'

She never doubted her mates' feelings for her; she faked suspicion only to make Pale Wolf a bit more obedient and honest.

"I can help with your leg, too. Why keep it from me?" She softened her tone and continued to ask, trying to get to the bottom of it. "Because detoxifying takes time," Erik, no longer willing to hide anything, answered honestly. "The poison flares up intermittently, and I might look terrible during those times..."

His pain tolerance was exceptional, but even he couldn't avoid appearing distressed when the poison acted up.

Nyx fell silent, quietly holding Erik close.

She thought, 'How much pain could there be that even Pale Wolf couldn't bear?'

She couldn't help but feel resentment toward the Heavenly Law who had designed all of this and a deep hatred for the unseen Banon.

"I understand." She bent down and kissed Pale Wolf's forehead. "Don't worry so much."

No matter what kind of Pale Wolf he was, she would never despise him.

"If you want me to stay with you, just stay here. If you don't want me to see you like this, then continue detoxifying in the study. It's fine, as the choice is yours." She gave him the option, letting him decide.

She could easily understand his thoughts by simply putting herself in his shoes.

In front of the beloved, everyone had their burdens. They just wanted to show their best side and hide the less flattering parts.

Erik lay on Nyx's lap, wrapping his arms around her slim waist. His nose filled with her sweet scent, and his heart, which had been racing, finally began to calm down.

"Give me ten more days, and the poison should be almost gone." His voice was hoarse as he estimated a rough timeline.

Once the poison was cleared, he would come back to stay with Nyx. "While I'm gone these days, do you feel lonely?" He realized too late that he hadn't been considerate enough, and felt guilty. "Don't just stay in the courtyard looking at account books. Have the maids take you outside for a walk. Buy whatever you want. If you need more money, just ask Arlong."

At first, it sounded like a typical wealthy man, only offering money and no affection. But in reality, his love was worth more than money. Nyx couldn't help but chuckle. She shook her head. "I am a bit lonely, but it's fine today. A little kitten came to the courtyard, so sweet and clingy."

"A cat?" Erik frowned.

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Erik didn't like cats, especially the cats that Nyx praised with such a smile.

Jealousy spread in Erik's heart as he jumped up from his bed and couldn't help but bitterly say, "You like cats? Didn't you say you liked Pale Wolf?"

"Yeah," Nyx replied without any guilt, "I like them all. I love fluffy little animals, and I think little snakes and fish are cute too."

Even when her other mates weren't around, she still knew how to play her part, her tone full of gentleness.

"You sure like a lot of things," Erik said, his jealousy growing stronger. "And they're so specific."

He couldn't help but start to wonder if Nyx had other little pets-cats, dogs, snakes, fish-besides him, Pale Wolf.

The usually oblivious Erik finally became a little sharp, but quickly managed to talk himself out of it. He thought, 'If she has pets, then let her have them. It doesn't matter; they are useless anyway. I am the rightful mate. I am the one who belongs by Nyx's side.'

"If you like that cat so much, then have someone catch it and keep it with you," Erik said, trying to act magnanimous. "Don't worry; the Duke's Mansion can afford a cat. We can even send more maids to take care of it, so you won't have to trouble yourself."

Even though he didn't like cats, if Nyx liked it, he could tolerate it.

"No need." Nyx waved her hand. "It has an owner; it's not a stray."

She could easily see through Erik trying to be tough. Sure enough, the moment she declined, she saw him secretly relax.

"Well, then, in a few days, I'll get you a little wolf," Erik said, pressing his lips together and adding, "A grey one."

If she really wanted a pet, then a little Pale Wolf would do. Since he and Nyx probably couldn't have children, they could treat the little Pale Wolf like their child.

"Okay," Nyx said, smiling as she nodded in agreement, then wrapped her arms around her mate's neck and kissed him.

It had been many days since they had been intimate. The young male was like a fire, igniting quickly and burning intensely.

For a moment, he forgot about his leg injury, being led by the woman he loved. A look of intoxication slowly appeared in his

eyes.

Outside the room, Arlong, realizing what was happening, instinctively blocked his ears and moved further away.

The night was filled with calls for water several times.

The maids in the courtyard, though busy, had joyful expressions on their faces.

They didn't know when Erik had returned, but Nyx had regained his favor.

They thought this was wonderful. They couldn't wait to see who would dare not to respect Nyx anymore.

The whole courtyard was filled with a happy vibe, and Erik, embracing his beloved, felt that the pain in his leg had lessened significantly.

Meanwhile, in the Palace, Aurelius was unable to sleep all night. He held the intelligence his subordinates had gathered, his expression unreadable.

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It was different from what he had imagined.

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The reports made it clear that Erik and his wife seemed to be deeply in love, inseparable, always together day and night. On the day of their marriage, Erik had shown little interest in her—he hadn't even appeared at the wedding ceremony.

But on their third day back from the wedding, he had accompanied his wife to the Voss family, stood by her side, and took action against the Voss family because they had mistreated his wife.

As for Erik's recent neglect, it seemed to have a reason.

It wasn't because he was tired of her; it was because Erik was recovering from his leg injury and didn't want his wife to see him in such a horrible state, so he stayed in the study, avoiding her.

Aurelius closed his eyes and threw the confidential letter aside, letting out a heavy, frustrated sigh.

He thought, "That makes sense. It is only natural for anyone to like Nyx. It would be strange not to like her. But Erik loves Nyx, and they are a legitimate couple. Where does that leave me?"

Aurelius, growing increasingly agitated, paced back and forth, unable to contain his frustration. He shifted into his beast form, sharpening his claws again and again.

He thought, 'No. No matter what, I won't give up. I just arrived too late; it's not necessarily over. Everyone has their own strengths.'

Aron, standing nearby, watched as Aurelius's expression shifted again and again, eventually morphing into a cat-like figure. He sharpened his claws and swished his tail, clearly not happy.

"Your Majesty, it's getting late," Aron said with a worried tone. "You should rest..."

He should have advised Aurelius not to leave the palace today.

Now it was too late. Not only had Aurelius become infatuated with a married woman, but his regular routine was also starting to fall apart. At this rate, it was unclear whether he would neglect his duties altogether.

Nyx was like the legendary disaster-bringer, a beauty who caused chaos. Logically, Aron thought he should despise Nyx, but after just a brief encounter and a few words exchanged, he found her gentle and generous, her eyes clear and pure, with nothing about her that matched the idea of a seductress.

Ultimately, it was the emperor who fell for her, not her fault.

"The Voss family seems to have two more daughters, both still unmarried," Aron carefully said. "Though they aren't from the same mother as Nyx, they do share the same father, so they must resemble her somewhat. Should Your Majesty summon them to the palace to serve you?"

Before he could finish, he met Aurelius's cold, piercing gaze and instinctively fell silent.

"I don't want to hear such foolishness again," Aurelius said, sitting straight, his forehead marked with the royal symbol, radiating authority. "It's one thing for me

to hear it, but if she hears it, don't blame me for not considering our past connection."

He thought Nyx was unique-there was no substitute for her.

ng with Joyce.

The two daughters of the Voss family had bullied Nyx for years, and now that the Voss family had fallen, Rohan would surely be executed. As for the two daughters, they would be reduced to the status of criminals' daughters. According to the law, they should be enslaved.

Aurelius remembered that those people hadn't been dealt with yet, and his eyes narrowed slightly.

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He thought, 'Should I give them to the Duke's Mansion as a gift and let Nyx take her revenge?'

On second thought, he felt that was not the right move.

Nyx was too soft-hearted. She was too kind to her maids, even giving them food she had personally cooked.

Even if he sent those three women to the Duke's Mansion as slaves, Nyx would probably never give them the punishment they deserved.

"How about giving Joyce and her two daughters to Banon?" Aurelius asked as he stood up and slowly walked toward Aron.

Banon's harem was complex, not an easy place to survive in.

Since these three loved to fight for favor, bully others, and scheme, it would be the perfect place for them.

Besides, they were already aligned with Banon, so they would likely fit in quickly.

As for if they would still be able to bully others, Aurelius didn't care.

Or perhaps they'd end up on their knees, finally experiencing what it felt like to be the one bullied.

If by some chance they managed to survive, that would be fine.

Once he finished settling things with Banon, he could deal with them again-he would never leave any threat to Nyx.

After years in a high position, Aurelius finally understood the true power he held. Sitting in this seat, he could remove anyone who harmed Nyx, ensuring she would never have to bear the pain of her past life.

From now on, she would be free and unburdened.

Suddenly, Aron broke into a cold sweat and knelt down. "I spoke out of turn."

After serving for so many years, he understood Aurelius's intentions clearly. Aurelius valued Nyx deeply. Nyx was the only one for him.

"By the way, I remember there's a secret formula in the palace, you add it to the water when bathing, and it makes the fur soft and fluffy?" The little white cat suddenly swished its tail and turned away, changing the subject and breaking the

tense

vibe.

Aron, realizing he was let off the hook, sighed in relief, "Yes, there is. Would you like to use it?"

"Yes, have someone prepare the water. I want to bathe," Aurelius said eagerly. "From today on, I'll use that secret formula every day."

Just like women made themselves beautiful for the ones they love, little kittens were the same.

The sun broke through the clouds, and the weather was clear.

Erik had been gathering strength for days and seemed tireless.

Nyx had brought trouble upon herself and had to keep up with him for most of the night. She was so tired in the morning that she couldn't get out of bed.

Outside the window, the sound of a mewing cat could be heard.

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It was familiar. No ordinary kitten could make such a delicate sound. Only her little cat had this talent.

A few maids whispered nearby.

"Little white cat... is that the one from yesterday?"

"Oh my, it's really back again?"

"It remembers the madam."

"Should we take it away? Don't want to disturb the madam's rest."

"The madam must be exhausted after last night..."

As they discussed, the meowing gradually changed in tone, as if the cat felt deeply wronged.

Nyx sighed helplessly and rubbed her aching forehead. She propped herself up with her tired body, opened the window, and scooped Cotton Candy up from where it was sitting. Closing the window, she lay back down, cradling it in her arms.

"Don't move; let me use your belly as a pillow," she buried her face into the little cat's fluffy fur and sighed contentedly.

She thought, 'It's best to stay in this beast form for now and not reveal his true identity, so that I can pretend to be silly for a little longer.'

She could barely satisfy Pale Wolf in bed and nearly lost her life doing so. If she

had to take care of a jealous little cat as well, Nyx couldn't even imagine how miserable it would be-she might not even be able to cry.

With his belly exposed, Aurelius stiffened shyly, curling up his four paws and not daring to move.

Compared to yesterday, his fur looked carefully groomed today, fluffy like a ball of white clouds. Nyx took a deep breath and smelled a faint, pleasant fragrance on him-like flowers and herbs.

She smiled knowingly and curved her lips slightly. "Washed so clean and white, and even delivered yourself to me. You must want me to kiss you, right?"

As she spoke, she suddenly flipped over and sat up, her drowsiness completely gone. Smiling, she pinned down the soft little kitten, her hands roaming as she kissed and petted him nonstop.

Aurelius had never realized how sensitive his entire body was. Just a casual stroke from Nyx's hands sent shivers cascading through him. Stimulated, his tail shot up as he twisted and rolled in Nyx's arms, pawing gently

at her arm. His movements were so light that not even a hint of his claws came out.

Rather than resisting, it seemed much more like a deliberate game of hard-to-get.

Nyx accepted it without hesitation, laughing as she grabbed his soft little paw pads with both hands, kneading them gently.

It wasn't until the maids came in carrying her washing items that she finally let go of the little Cotton Candy. She casually tidied up her messy hair by smoothing it with her fingers.

Without the strands of hair in the way, the ambiguous marks on her collarbone were instantly exposed for all to see.

Aurelius froze. In his mind, the maids' earlier whispers played back again. They had said that Nyx seemed exhausted from last night and should rest more. [Although Aurelius the young emperor had no personal experience with sex, he wasn't clueless. It didn't take much imagination to figure out what had happened.

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Last night, Erik had come back.

Even though he already knew from intelligence reports that their relationship as husband and wife was quite good and that they had consummated their marriage long ago, seeing it with his own eyes stirred an overwhelming jealousy in

Aurelius's

heart.

Tears pooled in the blue eyes of the little white cat, blurring his vision as he let out a pitiful snuffle.

"It... it's crying..." One of the maids noticed the sound and turned to look, her face full of shock. "Madam, is it sick? Should we call a doctor to take a look at it?"

They thought, 'If it isn't sick, why on earth would a perfectly fine cat be shedding tears? Could it have something to be sad about?'

The maids were on high alert, fearing that this mysterious cat might pass some illness to their frail mistress.

"He's not sick. He's perfectly fine," Nyx hurriedly clarified, cradling Cotton Candy

in her arms as she gently stroked him, coaxing him and wiping away the small pearly tears that threatened to fall.

She glanced down at herself, quickly guessing why he was upset. With a sigh, she instructed the maids, "Bring me a more modest outfit." This jealous little kitten must have gotten so mad that he lost his head. But since their reunion wasn't official yet, she couldn't treat him like before and

make everything fair for him. All she could do was cover herself up properly and avoid letting the marks show again, sparing him further unnecessary distress. When the clothes were handed over, Nyx didn't bother avoiding the little white cat. She calmly and decisively removed her thin nightgown right in front of him. Instantly, Aurelius forgot all about his sadness. Embarrassed, he turned his head away sharply, burying his fluffy face and not daring to look around.

Nyx didn't know he was actually a man, so he couldn't take advantage of this situation.

As for her taking liberties with him, kissing and petting him, he didn't particularly mind.

After dressing, Nyx lazily lounged back on the bed, unwilling to get up. She instructed the maids to place her breakfast on the nearby table, within arm's

reach. Then, picking up the little kitten, she asked, "Have you had breakfast yet?" Aurelius almost shook his head but stopped himself just in time.

Cats weren't supposed to understand human speech. He raised a paw to scratch his face, meowing casually to cover up.

Nyx couldn't help but laugh, but she didn't expose him. Stroking his soft little tummy, she remarked, "Looks like you haven't eaten yet."

The Palace wasn't far from the Duke's Mansion, but he had rushed over early in the morning. He probably hadn't had the time or the mood to eat properly. "Skipping meals isn't good for your health," she gently scolded before picking up a small bowl and scooping out some oatmeal. "Here, join me for breakfast." Because Enzo the head steward had lost his temper yesterday, punishing many in the kitchen—even his own nephew hadn't been spared, and Erik had returned last night and stayed with her, Nyx's meals today weren't lacking in any way. Over a dozen dishes filled the table.

She accurately picked out Aurelius's favorites, cooling them carefully before feeding him patiently.

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The little white cat quickly forgot his earlier unhappiness, obediently sitting in her lap.

Fle lightly patted Nyx's leg with his paw, urging her to eat too instead of just focusing on feeding him.

Once she was full, he could eat whatever was left.

"Alright" Nyx replied indulgently, picking up her bowl and crossing her legs into a more comfortable position.

She hadn't gotten out of bed, so she wasn't wearing socks or shoes. Her bare, pale ankles were clearly visible, faint red marks etched upon them.

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The usually chatty line suddenly fell silent. The soft mew disappeared

He stared intently at those glaring red marks, as if punishing himself, his expression filled with grievance and bitterness.

He thought, Why have I been one step too late? If we really aren't meant to be, then why did we meet?

Aurelius took a deep breath, forcing himself to hold back the sourness in his heart, and made a silent vow

Once he successfully rose to power, he would leave more traces behind, covering up all of this

His gaze was intense, almost tangible

Nyx was lowering her head, drinking some supplements, and she sensed his gaze. She awkwardly curled her toes, and in a daze, she recalled that before this test started, she had just endured an unbearable burden of life, one that began with this little scheming cat.

She pressed her lips together in frustration and flicked the little white cat on the head, which failed to recognize her.

Meeting its innocent blue eyes, she felt a pang of guilt. She picked him up, rubbed his head, and fed him some soup.

Little did she know, Aurelius's heart was also racing,

In that brief moment, he had thought that Nyx had mind-reading abilities, that she had seen through his hidden thoughts and had warned him by flicking his head.

But even if he had to be hit, he would still do it.

This time, the blow was absolutely not unjust.

The little white cat was resilient, unfazed by pain. He bore no grudges and spent the entire day following Nyx, always looking for ways to make her happy.

When the curfew was near, Nyx saw that he still hadn't left, so she took him outside to find someone.

Sure enough, those same people from yesterday were still at their usual spot. When they saw her, their expressions became a bit complicated.

Aron couldn't help but sigh.

If he hadn't seen it with his own eyes, he would never have believed that Aurelius had suddenly turned into such a lovesick fool, willing to spend an entire day wooing the woman he admired, even putting off state affairs.

Fortunately, Aurelius didn't completely ignore state matters, as Aurelius stayed up late to finish reviewing the memorials.

In the dead of night, after finally putting several thick stacks of documents back, Aron let out a sigh of relief and was about to step forward when he saw Aurelius pick up his paper and pen again.

Aurelius's face showed a gentle smile, the weariness in his eyes completely gone. He carefully wrote a letter, weighing each word.

The next morning, when Nyx saw Cotton Candy again, she was surprised to find a satin ribbon tied around his letter attached.

She raised an eyebrow and began to open it. As expected, the letter was from the little cat.

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The letter wasn't long, but it carried an air of nervousness and inexperience, clearly a first attempt at communicating with the person he liked. Every word was carefully crafted and deeply thought through.

He pretended to be the cat's owner, thanking her for taking care of the cat, while modestly but eagerly revealing his identity. Saying that his last name was Maximilian, he was eighteen years old, unmarried, and his home was near Duke's Mansion.

Everyone knew that Maximilian was the royal family's surname. Any discerning person could easily guess that the letter was from the current emperor.

Looking at the detailed personal information in the letter, which looked like a matchmaking profile, Nyx couldn't stop laughing, her shoulders shaking.

The little white cat sat beside her, watching her with confusion, unable to understand why she was laughing so much.

He thought, Do I make my romantic intentions too obvious, and she notices? Is she laughing at the idea of me falling in love with a married woman?

His heart was about to fall into the abyss.

But suddenly, Nyx hugged him and gave him a big kiss. "You're so cute.

"You, your master, is just too adorable..." she laughed so hard she could barely breathe.

The Aurelius in this world, compared to the one in the star realm, was naturally different in character, with subtle changes.

Unlike the almost unreal, perfect image Nyx had of the imperial ruler, the current Aurelius was more lively, with all his emotions on full display, real and unfiltered.

She thought it was so cute, and couldn't help but kiss him a few more times. The little white cat was blushing all over, feeling his face growing hot. He pawed at the letter and pushed it toward Nyx.

Besides the paper, there was something else inside. The letter also mentioned that it was a thank-you gift for taking care of the cat.

Nyx reached in, rummaged around, and pulled out a heavy jade pendant.

If Aron had seen this, he would have been shocked. This wasn't just any jade pendant. Since the first emperor's reign, every queen had inherited this jade pendant. While it didn't carry the power of the phoenix seal, it was still a symbol of the queen's status.

There was only one in the world, and yet Aurelius had casually given it away like this.

The jade was smooth and warm to the touch. Nyx ran her fingers over the intricate carvings and immediately understood that this was something important.

It wasn't something newly made. It seemed to have passed through many hands, enduring a long history, likely carrying some special significance. Thinking about her mate's identity, Nyx had a pretty good idea of what it meant.

"I'll keep it safe with me," she said helplessly, giving the kitten's head a little pat before tucking the jade pendant into her

clothes.

As for showing it off in public, she'd better wait a little longer.

Aurelius was already satisfied that she accepted it, purring happily for a few moments.

Nyx paused for a moment, then took out some paper and a pen, sitting down with the kitten in her arms, deciding him a reply letter.

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She didn't want to expose him just yet, so she treated him only as the owner of Cotton Candy. She filled a whole page with praise, continuously flattering how cute the kitten was, and even drew a little sketch of a white cat stretching on the back of the letter.

A few quick strokes outlined the shape, with some dark hair on its forehead, perfectly capturing all the features. Anyone who saw it would think it looked exactly like the kitten, and the drawer clearly knew the little cat very well. Aurelius squatted nearby, peeking over, his eyes sparkling as he watched Nyx draw.

Aurelius had had many portraits painted by various artists, some of them famous masters, but he thought none of them were as good as the one Nyx had drawn.

He was so happy, he didn't know what to do with himself, rubbing his head against Nyx's wrist in delight.

She even complimented him. She said his fur was soft and fluffy, that he felt great to the touch, calling him the cutest little kitten in the world.

Just by gathering the courage to send one letter, Aurelius experienced a joy he couldn't describe and was greatly encouraged.

For many days afterward, whenever he didn't have court, he would bring the letter

to Nyx, writing it himself at night and delivering it in the morning, eagerly waiting

for Nyx's reply. In the evening, he'd return to the palace with Nyx's letters, carefully storing them.

As he wished, Nyx and his relationship slowly grew closer with each exchange of letters, becoming more intimate.

He learned what colors, flavors, clothes, and jewelry she liked, and he kept track of every detail, occasionally slipping small gifts into the envelopes to win her favor.

His efforts paid off, and he always got a response.

In return, Nyx gave him a hand-sewn sachet as a gift.

Although she hung the sachet on the kitten's neck and clearly stated in her letter that it was for Cotton Candy, Aurelius unilaterally declared it to be their token of affection.

He hung the sachet in the most obvious spot on his waist, staring at himself in the bronze mirror, unable to take his eyes off it.

"Your Majesty, what is this?" Aron, who spent every day serving Aurelius and knew his wardrobe well, was surprised he hadn't seen this sachet before.

The sachet was exquisite, rivaling even the finest court-made crafts.

The base was a snow-blue satin, with a silver-white thread embroidered with a lifelike little white cat. The dark hair on its

forehead showed its status.

The fabric, the embroidery, and the design were clearly not something you could easily buy outside.

Aurelius couldn't hide the joy in his eyes. "It's something Nyx made for me."

After becoming pen pals for a while, he had softened her up enough to gain the right to call her by a nickname.

The only thing that bothered him was that Nyx still hadn't asked who he truly was. He didn't know if she genuinely didn't know or if she was deliberately avoiding it. Aurelius couldn't wait any longer. Although he was happy being her cat, he wanted to meet her, in his human true identity.

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By the time the sun was high and up, Nyx slowly woke up.

Pale Wolf had been a bit unruly last night, which left her feeling groggy and as if she hadn't rested at all.

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She blearily thought for a moment, then realized it wasn't a morning for court, so she wondered why she hadn't heard the cat's meow.

She called for her maid in a hoarse voice, washed her face with warm water, and began to feel a little more awake. "Has Cotton Candy not come?"

"No, he hasn't," the maid replied, also puzzled.

That cat usually disappeared for a day every five days, but other than that, it was always reliable, coming to find her early in the morning. According to routine, it should have come today.

The maids had even followed their mistress's instructions, bringing a variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables, along with a large piece of pork ribs. Nyx had planned to cook for Cotton Candy herself.

The meat and vegetables were ready, but the guest was nowhere to be seen.

Nyx rubbed her forehead. "Alright, I understand."

She wasn't particularly worried about Cotton Candy's safety. After all, his true identity was Aurelius, with many protectors around him. He had the whole world to care for, and sometimes, when urgent matters came up, it made sense he couldn't come to see her.

"So, should we still cook?" the maid asked, seeing that Nyx didn't seem very disappointed, and everyone sighed in relief.

They had been worried Nyx might be upset, spending the entire morning thinking

of ways to comfort her.

"Of course we should." Nyx yawned, stretching as she slowly got up.

She thought, 'The ingredients are already here, so why not cook? If Cotton Candy couldn't enjoy the meal, we could change things up and enjoy it ourselves.' With so much food, she and the little maid in the courtyard wouldn't be able to

finish it all. Since Cotton Candy wasn't coming, she would send some to Pale Wolf and, on the way, give his ears a good tug.

Thinking back to last night's events, Nyx couldn't help but grind her teeth.

Pale Wolf had been so disobedient. She was going to give his ears a good yank.

In the study, Erik suddenly felt an itch on the tip of his nose and sneezed loudly. When he looked up, he immediately saw an annoying face. Seeing the fake, polite

smile on it, he couldn't help but click his tongue and asked impatiently, "What do you want from me?"

His leg injury had nearly healed, and the poison had almost dissipated. So far, it hadn't flared up once today. If nothing went wrong for the rest of the day, he could

finally leave this cold, isolated study and return to the courtyard, where he could spend the day with Nyx like before.

Erik was filled with joy at the thought. But he hadn't expected Aurelius to show up and ruin his good mood.

He thought, 'Is this guy aware that my leg has healed and now wants to find something for me to do?'

In the past, he would have cursed and complained, but he would have still gone to

battle. However, this time, he really didn't want to listen to orders. He had gotten married, and now he had ties to hold him back.

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Just thinking about Nyx waiting for him at home made him not want to go off to

war, leaving her alone in an empty house,

Facing Erik's blunt question, Aurelius sat up straight, took a sip of hot tea, and replied calmly, "Is it wrong, to care about my subjects?"

"Who? Care about me? So kind of you?" Erik sneered, as if hearing the biggest joke, "Every time you show up, it's never for anything good."

The tension in the air was palpable, like a fight could break out at any moment.

But if you paid attention, you'd realize that between the two of them, there was

none of the usual formality or distance that should exist between a monarch and his subject.

In fact, they both felt quite relaxed in each other's presence. But clearly, others didn't see it that way.

Arlong nervously stood to the side, glancing disapprovingly at Erik, deeply

troubled.

No matter how familiar they were, the relationship between the emperor and his subject was different. He thought, 'Serving the emperor is like walking alongside a tiger. How could the master speak so rudely to His Majesty? 'Right now, His Majesty magnanimous and considerate of old ties, not holding it against the master. But who could say what would happen in the future? The

careless words spoken today might one day turn into a blade aimed at the master's neck!

Not far away, Aron had his head lowered, drenched in sweat. He felt guilty on behalf of Aurelius and didn't dare look up.

He thought, 'If Duke Read finds out that His Majesty had feelings for his wife,

would he take action? He certainly would. The hatred of a man stealing another's wife is something that could never be forgiven.

'When it happens, it might not just be a fight with fists, but swords might be drawn as well!

He didn't dare to imagine what a terrifying scene that would be.

The two servants subtly looked up, their gazes meeting, and they both saw the

same expression of fear on each other's faces, letting out a wry, sympathetic smile.

Aurelius, still drinking tea calmly, hadn't made any moves yet. He was thinking, nervous inside, and weighing how to casually run into Nyx and start a conversation with her later.

Erik, growing impatient, clicked his tongue and said, "You..."

He thought, 'How long are you planning to sit here? If there's nothing, just leave already!'

Just as he was about to speak it out, a servant suddenly called out from outside, "Madam has arrived."

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In an instant, the harsh words that had been on the tip of his tongue were swallowed back. Erik suddenly stood up and quickly walked toward the door. "Nyx? Hiss..."

When he saw Nyx holding a large food box, he hurriedly took it from her, but was caught off guard when she pinched his ear. He obediently lowered his head, following her pull without resisting.

He was so tall that Nyx had to stand on tiptoe to pinch his ear, which clearly took a lot of effort.

Erik instinctively wanted to kneel. Just before his knees hit the ground, he noticed out of the corner of his eye that his rival was walking out of the study. He immediately stopped his movement.

But the scene was enough to leave Aurelius speechless.

Arlong had long been accustomed to Erik's status, so he wasn't shocked anymore. But Aurelius and Aron were standing there, dumbfounded.

Aron cautiously raised his eyes to look at Aurelius. He thought, 'Nyx's temperament doesn't seem quite like what His Majesty has imagined. Will he not like her as much anymore?'

It wasn't until he saw the infatuation and envy in Aurelius's eyes that Aron froze, his face filled with despair as he shut his eyes, his fantasies shattered.

He thought, 'What is there to envy? The ruler of a country is envious of a servant being pulled by the ear by his wife?'

Nyx hadn't expected to see Cotton Candy's human form here, and she was startled. She quickly let go of her grip.

With so many people around, she wanted to give Erik some face. After letting go, she rubbed the spot where she'd grabbed, then looped her arm through Pale Wolf's. Her earlier fierceness vanished, replaced by her usual gentle, affectionate demeanor. "I brought you some food, and I made it myself."

Erik's ears turned red. He was unsure whether it was from shyness, embarrassment, or because Nyx had pulled them so hard they turned red.

"Thank you, Nyx," he said, taking her hand with one of his and carefully holding the food box with the other.

"I'm sorry about last night..." He knew why Nyx had been so upset and pulled his ear. Lowering his voice, he awkwardly apologized, "I went too far. I didn't expect..."

He hadn't expected that she couldn't take it.

"Stop." Nyx raised her hand to cover his mouth.

Although it was a whisper, it was so quiet around them that anyone with good hearing could catch it.

She could already feel a burning gaze filled with jealousy and reluctance staring right at her.

"We'll talk about this later," she muttered quietly, signaling that this matter should be put aside for now-it wasn't the time to bring it up.

Erik nodded with a red face, not asking what she meant by 'talking about it later.'

No matter how she wanted to handle it, he would just accept it. The vibe between the couple was incredibly intimate.

Aurelius stared at their intertwined hands, his heart aching with bitterness.

"My name is Aurelius Maximilian," he couldn't help but speak up. "Madam, it's a pleasure to meet you."

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10:00 Thu, 13 Mar 0

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It had come, just as expected. Aron looked desperate.

Nyx's attention was drawn back. Her gaze landed on the familiar face of Aurelius's, and her eyes widened in awe.

He looked so young. She was actually seeing the teenager version of Aurelius with her own eyes.

Just as Aurelius had hoped, she was meeting him again at the best age of his life.

Catching the admiration in Nyx's eyes, Aurelius felt his heart pound wildly.

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He thought, 'As long as this appearance could attract her, it's worth waking up at dawn to get ready. If she likes it, I would always be well-groomed whenever I see her

The moment they locked eyes for too long, Erik sensed something was off.

The term "madam" was normal, of course. But when Aurelius said it, it felt oddly off

There was an almost imperceptible hint of affection in his words, as if Aurelius wasn't just greeting someone else's wife, but calling out to his own.

Sensing this strange tone, Erik furrowed his brows, stepping forward to place himself between them. He shot an unfriendly, scrutinizing look at Aurelius.

His gaze shifted around Aurelius's face, slowly moving down, and landing on his waist, where he spotted a familiar satchel

In an instant, Erik's expression changed. He quickly stepped forward and reached for the sachet, but Aurelius reacted quickly, blocking the move and protecting his precious item.

It was just a brief glance, but enough for Erik to see clearly.

This sachet was definitely Nyx's handiwork-it was almost identical to the one hanging on his own waist, only the fabric color and the embroidery design were slightly different.

Following his gaze, Aurelius also noticed Erik's sachet with a Pale Wolf embroidered on it and squinted his eyes. He suddenly understood that he wasn't the only one who had one.

The two males ground their teeth silently, their bodies tense, both filled with the urge to tear each other's sachet apart.

The air was thick with tension, as though it could explode at any moment. Aron, trembling, knelt on the ground, praying that a fight wouldn't break out. Arlong stood confused and completely at a loss. He thought, 'Why does His Majesty also have a sachet made by the madam? Do they know each other?' But from the way His Majesty and madam spoke to each other, it doesn't seem like old friends. It feels more like a first meeting.'

Nyx cleared her throat twice, breaking the tense vibe.

Cats and dogs were never on good terms. They had fought like crazy in the stars before, but that was fine-they had boundaries, and they had the medical bay, so there was nothing to worry about.

But the medical standards in this time were limited, so it was best if they didn't fight-both would end up injured, and it would be a hassle to treat.

When they heard her voice, the males immediately snapped back to reality, each showing an even more a .eved expression than the last.

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"Nyx, why does he have a sachet too?" Erik asked, pulling Nyx into his arms and burying his face in her neck, his tone low

and defeated.

He couldn't understand how he had been outwitted.

1

"Well... this..." Nyx felt a little awkward and rubbed the tip of her nose.

She was simply used to serving drinks and thought that since Pale Wolf had one, Aurelius should have one too, so she gave him one.

Considering the situation, she even specifically emphasized that it was a gift for the little kitten.

But that emphasis obviously didn't help, and the sachet ended up on human-form Cotton Candy.

From the moment she met Aurelius, Nyx had expected there would be a love triangle, but she never thought it would happen so quickly, She was completely unprepared and caught off guard.

"Do you remember me telling you I met a very cute little cat?" After thinking it over, Nyx decided to play dumb, blinking innocently and raising her hand to gesture. "It's white, fluffy, small, with dark hair on its head, like a little tiger.

As soon as Erik heard her mention the little cat, he sensed something was wrong.

As she described it, his face grew darker, and he shot a venomous glare at Aurelius.

He thought, 'Shameless!'

That night, when Nyx casually mentioned meeting the cute little cat, he had already felt a subtle discomfort. He thought he might be overthinking it, unable to tolerate even a cat. He suppressed his feelings, even reflecting on himself. But now, he realized he hadn't thought enough.

He never imagined that the mighty Emperor would use his beast form to pretend to be a pet and get close to Nyx.

He thought, 'His Majesty, tired of ruling, came to be a pet for a married woman? He sure has some ulterior motives?'

Nyx felt Erik's muscles tense up and gently patted his arm, preparing to mediate.

"That little cat comes to play with me a lot. lately, so I gave him a sachet as a

gift."

She looked up at Aurelius. "The sachet is with you... so you must be Cotton Candy's owner, right?"

"Indeed," Aurelius said, looking at the two of them tangled together. He hid the jealousy in his eyes and smiled softly, gently stroking the sachet. "This item was indeed a gift from Madam to the cat.

"However, the cat has sharp claws, sharp teeth, and is very lively. It's easy for him to break things. Such a delicate piece, I couldn't bear to see it damaged, so I took

it for myself. Please don't blame me, Madam.

"I was really startled earlier." Aurelius lowered his eyes, his lashes trembling slightly. His tone carried a mix of grievance and fear. "Duke Read didn't hesitate to

try to take what's mine. If I hadn't moved quickly, the sachet would have been torn apart..."

Nyx took a deep breath. She thought, 'Here it comes again-the familiar scheming tone.

She wanted to laugh but couldn't. Hearing Pale Wolf's fist cracking, she kept holding his arm, afraid that if she let go even for a second, the next moment, that fist would end up on Aurelius' face.

"Let's eat first," she whispered in Pale Wolf's ear, gently coaxing him. "I made this myself. You're going to love it, and it'll get cold if we don't eat soon."

Warm breath brushed Erik's ears. His anger subsided by half as he smugly glanced at Aurelius.

3/5

+23)

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Erik thought, 'What does it matter if he worked so hard to get close? What does it matter if he managed to trick her into giving him a sachet? Nyx is still my wife. She just likes fluffy animals. Once I get her a little Pale Wolf to take care of, it naturally replaces that cat.

His anger quickly dissipated. Erik took Nyx's hand, and they sat down together.

He opened the food box, and the room was immediately filled with a rich fragrance.

Aron's eyes widened.

He had heard Aurelius praise Nyx's cooking skills before, but he thought it was just exaggerated flattery born out of admiration. Now, he was convinced to believe at least eight parts of it.

Such a delicious smell- even the royal kitchen couldn't make this. Aron wondered what it would taste like.

Under the watchful eyes of those around, Erik began eating. He scooped up a spoonful of hot soup, carefully blew on it, and fed it to Nyx.

"You eat it," Nyx took the spoonful of soup, shook her head, and said, "I'm already full."

As she spoke, she held Pale Wolf's hand and patted her stomach as proof. Seeing this, Aron forgot about imagining how delicious the soup might be. He carefully glanced at Aurelius, and sure enough, Aurelius was utterly unpleasant. Jealousy was twisting the little cat. For a moment, Aurelius almost forgot himself and wanted to turn into beast form, charging at Nyx to compete for her affection.

He took several deep breaths, struggling to hold himself together.

His tall figure swayed unsteadily, and Aurelius raised his hand to cover his abdomen, his entire body exuding weakness.

"Your Majesty..." Aron was shocked, quickly scrambling over to him. "What's wrong?"

Hearing this, Nyx looked up, her attention immediately drawn, and she hurriedly stood up.

She moved quickly, but Erik reached out to grab her. He missed, helplessly watching her walk toward the scheming, detestable rival.

"What's going on?" Nyx furrowed her brow, pulling Aurelius's arm without

question, her other hand feeling for his pulse.

The rhythm was steady, calm, and strong.

As she felt his healthy pulse, Nyx's eyes flickered with understanding, and she released her grip.

It was Aurelius faking illness-another old trick to compete for attention.

Aurelius had no idea he'd been seen through. He seemed unable to stand properly, weakly leaning into Nyx's arms, pressing his solid chest and abdomen against her.

His muscles felt incredible-firm yet perfectly soft, full of elasticity. Nyx instinctively squeezed, and immediately, she heard a deep, strained breath beside her, his body shivering slightly.

She thought, 'Wait, that probably isn't supposed to happen.

Realizing what she'd done, she awkwardly cleared her throat and looked up at

Aurelius, meeting his gentle, soft eyes.

pologized in a

"I'm sorry, Madam. I didn't mean to offend," Aurelius didn't press Nyx about why she'd touched him, as hoarse voice. "It's my fault. I didn't eat enough at breakfast, and my stomach condition flared up. I became weak and couldn't keep my balance."

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He looked so pitiful, and if Nyx hadn't just checked his pulse, she might have believed him.

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She helplessly rubbed her forehead, realizing she couldn't win against this little manipulative cat. "If you don't mind, would you like to eat something first to help?"

The goal was achieved. Aurelius immediately nodded, showing no hesitation, eager to sit down at the table.

He smiled, lifting his gaze to meet Erik's eyes, silently challenging him.

With a sharp snap, Erik crushed his fork in his hand.

"Pale Wolf," Nyx was startled and quickly rushed over to check if he had been cut by the broken fork.

Once she confirmed there was no blood or injury, she sighed in relief and turned to instruct Arlong to bring another fork and another set of utensils for Aurelius.

To avoid further tension between the two males, she cautiously sat down, her eyes never leaving them.

With her presence, the situation improved somewhat. At least the surface vibe seemed more peaceful, and no more forks were broken. Behind the scenes, both males subtly picked up the pace of eating, not wanting the food Nyx had cooked to reach the other's mouth.

Like a gust of wind sweeping everything away, the table was soon cleared, nothing left behind.

Aurelius elegantly wiped his mouth and thanked Nyx for her hospitality, complimenting her cooking.

Almost as if casually, he softly sighed, "Speaking of which, Madam, the dishes you made today are exactly the ones I love the most..."

Erik's face darkened. He thought about it and realized Aurelius was right.

"It's just a coincidence," he coldly shot a glance at Aurelius. "The dishes Madam made were chosen to suit my taste. If I remember correctly, you don't like sour food, do you?"

Erik had always loved sour flavors, while Aurelius's taste was completely different.

Back at their respective homes, they had ordered separate meals, each eating what they liked.

"I've suddenly developed a liking for it," Aurelius smiled and explained. "Does this mean if you like something, I'm not allowed to like it too?"

The air seemed to thicken with jealousy.

Aron, standing by, suddenly realized how familiar the scene before him seemed.

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Aron had entered the palace at six years old and had served not only the current Emperor but also overal of the late Emperor's consorts.

He remembered that at every banquet, the empresses in the palace would always compere fiercely, using every trick in the book to gain the late Emperor's favor

The scene was very familiar, but the roles seemed wrong.

Aurelius and Erik were now the ones vying for attention, a situation that seemed absurd.

Given their status and power, they could have as many women as they wanted, but instead, they were both fixated on Nyx.

Aron sighed helplessly and stepped forward to clear the table, swiftly gathering the bowls, plates, and food containers.

Seeing this. Arlong also came forward to help, his head lowered, not daring to breathe, already sensing what was happening. He thought. Why would His Majesty be interested in the madam?

Though the madam is wonderful, she and His Majesty have never met before- one lives in the inner court, the other in the palace. There should have been no reason for them to cross paths

Erik sat at the table, his mind beginning to cool as he started to ponder this issue.

After all these years, Aurelius had never shown up in beast form to find him. Erik thought, 'So why would he suddenly appear as a beast in his courtyard? So, he has already had his eyes on Nyx and has deliberately transformed into beast form to get close to her.'

Nyx had barely left when the vibe in the study changed drastically, becoming cold and filled with tension.

"When did you meet Nyx?" Erik decided to go straight to the point with an interrogation.

With the audience gone, Aurelius didn't bother pretending anymore. His gentle, pitiful demeanor disappeared, replaced by a strong, sharp aura. He raised an eyebrow. "Do you want to know?"

He wasn't going to hide anything, and there was a hint of pride in his words. "That day, I happened to leave the palace and saw her in the market. It must've been fate."

"The market?" Erik frowned, surprised.

Nyx hadn't mentioned it to him. He had no idea when she had gone out or visited the market.

"You didn't know? She didn't tell you?" Aurelius could see what Erik was thinking, and a pleased smile appeared on his face.

"That day, she went to buy some spices, some lamb, fish, shrimp, and flatbread. On the way, she was harassed by a few idiots, so I had my guards drive them off.

"I immediately fell for her. I transformed into my beast form and followed her all the way to your residence. She cooked for me, and the food tasted just as good as it does today," Aurelius added, showing a slightly embarrassed yet sweet expression.

"She seemed to like me, saying she was cold and lonely at night, needing a warm bed mate, and wanted to keep me..."

Erik clenched his fists, his knuckles cracking. He thought, 'Nonsense.'

Erik couldn't stop worrying about Nyx, secretly returning every night to check if the heater was working, or if her hot water bottle was still warm, even using his own body to keep her warm.

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He thought, 'She slept soundly in my arms. How could she be cold? How could she be lonely?

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Seeing that Erik didn't believe him, Aurelius grew slightly more serious before quickly returning to normal. I overheard her maid saying that you haven't been back in many days, and advised her to seek you out before the loses tovor..." "Nonsense!" Erik exploded, unable to hold back, slamming his fist on the table. "Lose favor? How is that possible?"

Not returning during the day was due to his leg injury and the poison. But every night, Erik secretly returned.

He thought, "The servants knew nothing and dared spread rumors about Nyx and me? There's no one else in my courtyard but Nyx. Who else could I dote on besides her? Nyx must've known about these rumors, yet she has never mentioned them

to me.'

A feeling of unease suddenly surged in Erik's chest, his expression growing serious. He thought, Has Nyx been hiding other things from me, too?

"Figured it out?" Aurelius fixed his gaze on him, his tone now cold and serious. "Being your wife, she has truly suffered a lot.

"I wandered around your residence and overheard many people talking about her losing favor. Some servants even dared to withhold her supplements and meals, and they didn't even deliver her lunch..."

No one would suspect a cat. Using his beast form as cover, Aurelius had overheard many hidden things.

Erik's eyes widened in shock.

"If it weren't for that, Nyx wouldn't have gone out to buy things herself, and I wouldn't have had the chance to meet her, Aurelius said, his icy demeanor melting as he smiled genuinely. "Fate must've thought you weren't treating her well, so it sent me to take over."

In the courtyard, Nyx was strolling leisurely when she suddenly heard hurried footsteps behind her.

She turned around and saw Arlong, panting heavily and looking frantic. "Madam, Madam... They're fighting, my master.... His Majesty and the master..."

He was anxious and flustered, speaking in disjointed phrases, but Nyx immediately understood what he meant. Her face turned pale, and she sprinted back in the direction she had just come from.

In just a short time, the door to the study was nearly shattered, and the area was in chaos. Two tall figures were locked in a fierce struggle, throwing punches without hesitation.

"Stop fighting!" Nyx ran over and pushed them apart with one hand on each of them, standing in between.

The two were so focused on fighting for her favor that the vibe had become too strange. She had stepped out for a walk to catch her breath, and also to give them some space to sort things out on their own before deciding what to do next.

She hadn't expected them to start fighting so soon after she left, not caring about their identities or images.

Hearing Nyx's voice, both males seemed to press pause at the same time, their wild energy instantly calming.

Aurelius's handsome face had a bruise, as if he had been wronged or hurt terribly. He knelt at Nyx's feet, looking up at her, and silently asking for her support.

Compared to him, Erik seemed to be in a better position, at least not having any visible injuries and standing nly.

He felt guilty and miserable, as though he had let Nyx down. He lowered his head, not daring to meet her eyes, even though he had taken a fair number of blows himself. He had no intention of playing the victim.

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The contrast made it easy to tell who was in the wrong.

Arlong's heart sank. He thought, 'It's over. Looks like the master isn't even a match for His Majesty!

Aron, kneeling awkwardly to the side, also felt this scene was strangely familiar.

In the past, when the palace consorts had conflicts, there had been times when they fought. How the matter was judged and resolved always depended on who could win Aurelius's favor and who Aurelius favored more.

After serving Aurelius for over a decade, Aron was surprised to discover that Aurelius actually had the talent to fight for affection. With an innocent expression, he could probably make even the late emperor's most beloved concubine from the past seem less favored.

Aron thought, 'But this doesn't seem like a talent worth praising!

Nyx pressed her hand to her chest and took several moments to catch her breath.

Her body was still too frail, despite having been nourished for many days. The two decades of depletion couldn't be easily reversed. After running just a few steps, she felt a sharp pain in her chest, and her face turned pale.

Seeing her in such discomfort, both males felt a pang of regret and guilt.

"Nyx," Aurelius leaned in and gently pressed his cheek to her hand, sincerely apologizing, "I'm sorry. We shouldn't have fought."

The gesture was natural when done by a little cat, but it was somewhat undignified when performed by the human form of an emperor.

The people around them quickly turned away, not daring to look at such a scene that could cost them their heads.

Only Erik, almost like in self-punishment, stared intently at Nyx.

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Erik watched as she didn't pull away. He saw her raise her hand to gently lift Aurelius's chin and touch his face.

That face was undeniably handsome and flawless, with no apparent imperfections. Even if Erik had deliberately struck it out of jealousy, it wouldn't have made it any less appealing; if anything, it would have made it even more pitiable.

Nyx was the kindest-hearted, and she would surely feel pain at the sight.

Erik's heart sank, as he thought, "They say that feeling sorry for someone is the beginning of liking them."

He couldn't help but want to rush over and interrupt them, but his feet felt as though they were nailed to the ground. The guilt weighed on him, making him doubt himself.

He thought, 'Aurelius might be right. It was my fault for not being good enough to Nyx, for not noticing her distress, which gave others the chance to take

advantage.

The air grew tense, and the surroundings fell silent.

Nyx gently stroked his face a few times before suddenly narrowing her eyes. In the desperate or hopeful gazes of the two males, she changed her attitude and firmly pinched Aurelius's cheek with her fingertips.

Aron gasped in horror, seeing Aurelius's handsome face being pinched and deformed right before his eyes.

He thought, 'How could anyone be so bold as to pinch His Majesty's face? Isn't this like plucking the tiger's whiskers?'

Aron instinctively took a step forward, but then his rationality kicked in, and he froze. He saw that Aurelius had tilted his head back to meet that slender hand, obviously willing and pleased with it.

After weighing his position, Aron withdrew, no longer foolishly thinking he could advise Aurelius. If he rushed in to stop them, it was likely that Aurelius would be displeased, ruining whatever good intentions he had.

Nyx, from her elevated position, treated Aurelius's face like dough, squishing it in various directions.

Years of experience told her that Cotton Candy was no fool and definitely wasn't losing out.

If it seemed like he was at a disadvantage on the surface, it was probably a show for her benefit.

Even if one was an emperor and the other a warrior, with their apparent difference in strength, no one knew better than Nyx that when her mates fought, they were usually evenly matched. Aurelius was no weaker than Pale Wolf and couldn't have been overwhelmed by him.

It was clear that the crafty Cotton Candy had intentionally made an obvious injury to make her feel sympathy, while secretly striking at more hidden spots on Pale Wolf.

Thinking back on her numerous experiences as a family mediator, Nyx felt both amused and exasperated.

She gave Aurelius's face a final pinch as a warning, then released him, not calling him out directly but signaling him to calm down with her eyes.

Receiving the signal, Aurelius blinked nervously, and quickly put on a contrite smile, standing up to gently brush off any dust on his clothes.

Having spent these days together, they had developed a certain understanding.

Nyx mostly obeyed him, but she still held her principles. For instance, when it came to staying over and warming her bed, as long as she didn't consent, no matter how much he pouted or threw a tantrum, it wouldn't work.

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If he insisted too much, she would warn him by pinching his face. When she pinched his face, Aurelius obediently stood there, the heat on his face lingering as he proceeded the

Nyx's strength was small, and her pinches didn't hurt, but they were strangely ticklish, and the places she touched felt like they were burning, the heat spreading straight to his heart.

He couldn't tell whether Nyx recognized him as Cotton Candy and used the same warning she did with his best friend

The thought of this possibility made his heart race wildly, and it took him a while to calm down.

He thought, 'No... She probably hasn't figured it out. No one could make such an unrealistic assumption before seeing it with their own eyes. The face-pinching is probably just her personal habit

Aurelius took a deep breath and began to think about how to handle the questions Nyx might have for him

Although it was Erik who made the first move, Aurelius knew it was his own provocation that started it, and he couldn't hold back from striking back. In the process, he accidentally broke the door.

To his surprise, Nyx didn't ask why they had fought. She simply waved her hand and instructed Arlong, "Go fetch the

ointment."

"Come here; sit down," she called to Aurelius.

Even though she already knew he was the emperor, her tone showed no trace of reverence.

Arlong and Aron crouched in a corner, not daring to make a sound. Rationally, they felt it was a great disrespect, yet for some reason, there was a strange sense that it was as it should be.

Under their anxious gaze, Aurelius obediently sat down.

Nyx gently cupped his chin, dipping her fingertip into the ointment and softly applying it to the wounds on his face.

The external ointments in the mansion had been improved by her, and they worked better than those concocted by the royal physicians. The beautiful Cotton Candy would never have scars marring his lovely face.

The proximity was too close, and his face felt ticklish as her hand brushed against it. Aurelius, inhaling the faint medicinal scent, froze. His usual calm demeanor in front of others disappeared, replaced by a blush that spread across his face.

Aron's mouth hung open. It was the first time he had seen Aurelius blush. Before this, he never dared to associate emotions like that with Aurelius.

The ruler of millions, the man above all, lost himself in affection, willing to show weakness in front of a woman. His expression was filled with tenderness.

Arlong, his face a complex mix of emotions, shook his head and clicked his tongue.

If it weren't for their positions, he might have been tempted to bless them.

But it was impossible, as he knew Nyx was Erik's.

He turned his attention to Erik, who had been silently standing nearby for a long time, feeling anxious,

He thought, 'Come on. Master. What are you waiting for? Bring out that fighting spirit from earlier. If you don't act now, when will you? If you keep this up, the lady might lose interest and become the palace consort instead.

No matter how much Arlong raised his eyebrows and tried to signal Erik, Erik remained stiff and unmoving, like a silent mountain.

His gaze darted away, unable to meet Nyx's. But his senses were too sharp-the

soft clink of the medicine jar against the

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table and the contrasting breaths, one light and one heavy, tortured him

constantly.

As Aurelius stood to leave, he brushed past Erik, lightly bumping his shoulder. Erik didn't react.

It wasn't until Nyx moved that he finally seemed to come to life.

Nyx stood up. Slowly, she walked toward him.

Erik held his breath in nervous anticipation, his lashes trembling. Gathering his courage, he lifted his eyes and met Nyx's gentle gaze.

"What about you, Pale Wolf?" Nyx asked, holding the medicine jar. "Where are your injuries?"

Compared to the nervous and formal demeanor of the two males, her mood was calm, filled only with the joy of reuniting with her mate.

After living together for so many years, Nyx had long since shed her youthful naivety and had become accustomed to managing her relationships with multiple mates.

Events like this-where two males fought over her-were nothing more than small squabbles in her eyes, easily settled with a little coaxing.

As expected, the situation quickly calmed down.

Nyx had only applied a little ointment to Aurelius's injury, and Aurelius, flustered and blushing, was soon coaxed into leaving, happily heading back to the palace.

The somewhat more stubborn Pale Wolf was easier to handle. At her calm inquiry, his eyes instantly lit up.

It was as if he had been condemned to death, waiting in despair for a long time, only to suddenly be granted a pardon. Erik felt so grateful, he nearly wanted to kneel and kiss Nyx's feet, offering up his heart to her.

Seeing him immediately start to undress without a word, Nyx's brow twitched. She raised a hand to stop him. "Let's go back first; we'll do it when we're there." Undressing in the study wasn't quite appropriate. Luckily, the study door had been shattered, and the room was in disarray. It would take some time to repair.

As Erik followed Nyx back to the courtyard, he still felt a sense of unreality. He thought, 'So, Nyx hasn't abandoned me?'

When Nyx carefully applied medicine to his injury, he tensed his abdomen and couldn't hold back the question, "You don't hate me, do you, Nyx?"

At his words, Nyx's hand trembled, almost poking his wound by accident.

She looked up in confusion, unable to follow her mate's train of thought.

She thought, 'After everything they've just gone through, it's normal for him to have some grudges. But shouldn't his usual line of thought be questioning whether I am fickle or unfaithful?

'At most, he'd doubt whether I have real feelings for him, but he shouldn't have directly jumped to wondering if I hate him.'

"Why would I hate you?" She couldn't make sense of it and could only temporarily blame it on the mischievous little cat. "What did Aurelius say to you?"

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Erik lowered his head, remaining silent for a long time.

Seeing that he seemed to be trapped in some dead-end, Nyx lightly tapped him with her foot.

In that instant, Erik jolted, his face flushing as he looked at Nyx in disbelief.

"If I hated you, why would I spend every day with you?" Nyx asked as she laughed, unable to suppress a smile.

The anxious, insecure Pale Wolf made her feel both fond and sorry for him.

The young Erik should have been a proud, outstanding individual, but in front of her, there was always a trace of self-doubt in his eyes.

She thought, 'Love brings worry, and love brings fear.'

Nyx could only hold her tall mate tightly and gently stroke his hair, letting him feel her emotions through their close

contact.

She loved him too.

Suddenly, a rough, hot hand grabbed her ankle.

The world spun, and Nyx instantly sensed something was wrong.

It was still daytime, and she had only been teasing him without thinking of

handling the situation, but it was clear that Pale Wolf was about to get out of her control.

"You haven't finished applying the medicine." She nervously pushed against his chest, her hands brushing against firm muscle.

The injury on his abdomen didn't take away from the beauty of his body; if anything, the scar added a special kind of allure.

Nyx, feeling a surge of distraction, coughed lightly to cover up her feelings. "Does it hurt?"

It must hurt. Aurelius had been rough, but he had only been careful enough not to damage the internal organs. Within that limit, he was merciless when it came to dealing with his rival.

Erik struggled to control his restlessness and couldn't focus on feeling pain. He shook his head. "It doesn't hurt."

If he was too honest, he'd just get bullied in bed.

Nyx smiled helplessly.

If it were some little cat being interrogated by her, it would have already cried its heart out, telling her how much it hurt.

Even though her clumsy mate was holding back his vulnerability, she still

comforted him by pulling him into her embrace, stroking his fur, or in this case, his hair as if it were fur.

"Sorry, Nyx..." Erik buried his face in her embrace, his arms tightly wrapped around her waist, softly apologizing.

Nyx could faintly feel a wet patch on her clothes and froze for a moment.

She thought, 'Is he crying?'

She cupped her mate's face and saw that his eyes were indeed red from tears.

80%

+23)

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It was the first time Nyx had seen Erik cry after years of living together.

Unlike Aurelius, who was skilled at using tears to manipulate others, the clumsy Pale Wolf didn't know how to use her sympathy and tenderness to compete for affection. The fact that he was crying now meant that he was deeply distressed.

"What's wrong? Is there another injury?" Nyx urgently took out a handkerchief to wipe his face, then lowered her head to check his leg. "Is the poison acting up again?"

The more concerned she became, the guiltier Erik felt. His voice became hoarse as he said, "The poison's already been cured. I'm sorry... I'll never leave you again."

"In these past days, did you suffer a lot while I wasn't by your side?"

"Suffer?" Nyx was startled and instinctively shook her head. "No."

During the day, she had little cats to play with, and at night, she had Pale Wolf to keep her warm. Life was carefree and peaceful, without any worries.

She looked at him with all seriousness, but Erik didn't believe her. He gently squeezed her delicate fingers. "I know everything. Someone in the kitchen withheld your food and didn't even bring it to you."

He had finally managed to get Nyx's body back to health, but people were secretly undermining her in his absence.

Erik's face darkened, and a low pressure surrounded him.

"I promise, I'll take care of those people. There will be no next time," he said,

standing up and kneeling on the floor, his back straight, and his upper body bowed in a posture of repentance.

The servants were indeed despicable, but what he couldn't forgive the most was his own negligence.

Nyx watched helplessly as his recently healed knee hit the ground, and she hurriedly reached out to grab his arm.

"It's not your fault." She finally understood what had been bothering Pale Wolf all along, shaking her head helplessly. "I told Steward Hussain not to tell you."

At that time, she had thought Pale Wolf was busy with official duties and didn't want to disturb him. Later, she simply forgot about the matter, and the servants hadn't neglected her since.

It was just a small issue, and Enzo could handle it.

In the past, when Pale Wolf was in conflict with Jaws, he had never even gained a title but was willing to risk his life to protect her.

When they fell to Earth, he was skilled in everything, from protection and guarding to massage and carrying their young. Even if he didn't do something well at first, he learned it quickly.

Now, in this world, having lost his memories and forgotten the past, he still gave her his heart the moment he saw her again.

The thoughtful actions of warming her hands and feet at night were not entirely unnoticed or unknown to Nyx. Even though he took advantage of the patriarchal society, he still placed himself lower, elevating her high above.

Nyx saw everything clearly. She thought, 'How could I despise this foolish Pale Wolf for just a small oversight?'

"Did Aurelius tell you this?" Nyx narrowed her eyes, and seeing Erik instinctively nod, she feigned confusion...w does he

know?"

Erik stiffened.

Even though he was on bad terms with Aurelius, he understood that royal secrets should never be disclosed.

2/4

80%

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Publicly, he should keep the secret, and privately, he didn't want Nyx to know that the cat she liked was actually spelan.

He is Aurelius, and in his household, there are no secrets," Erik mumbled, his words faltering as he became nervous, guilt written all over his face.

Nyx held back a smile, pretending to understand. "I see now?"

If both of them were pretending to be foolish, she could play along. She wasn't in a hurry to expose Cotton Candy's identity. After all, it wasn't her who was in a rush.

"Didn't you have enough to eat for lunch? She changed the subject again.

The food box contained only Pale Wolf's meal. The two of them had to share, leaving them both half-full and irritated.

The mention of food made Erik feel aggrieved.

This was his first time eating a meal cooked by Nyx, and it had been taken away from him halfway.

Aurelius who could turn into a beast had already been shamelessly eating and drinking beside Nyx, while he, the legal husband, had fallen behind.

"I'll make the dinner tonight," Nyx smiled and wrapped her arms around his neck, "This time, I'll make sure you're full

Having changed the subject twice, she successfully diverted Pale Wolf's attention, making him stop feeling guilty and upset.

As evening approached, the maids in the courtyard could only stand at a distance, unable to help.

They watched as Erik, busy as could be, worked in the small kitchen, helping Nyx with everything-washing vegetables, chopping them, killing fish, marinating meat, rinsing rice, and even chopping firewood and stoking the fire. He could do the work of ten.

Normally, these were not tasks a master should handle, but because of the peculiar relationship between Erik and Nyx, the maids dared not interfere. Even Arlong had been sent away, forbidden to stay and cause trouble.

With such an efficient helper, Nyx hardly had to lift a finger, and soon the table was filled with dishes.

However, after a satisfying meal, the inevitable could not be avoided.

Nyx raised a wolf to her own peril, and now the wolf had taken her away.

Exhausted, she closed her eyes, raising a hand to push the male pressing against her face away.

Erik shamelessly kissed her fingertips, the gloom in his eyes vanishing, replaced by satisfaction and joy. He pulled her close and held her tightly. "Let me warm your feet."

Erik thought that what he could do, that cat could never do.

By morning, the diligent bed-warming servant quietly rose, tucked Nyx's blanket in place, and tidied up her clothes.

Arlong had long been waiting in the courtyard. When he saw Nyx emerge, he quickly stepped forward and handed her a letter. "Master, we've figured it all out."

It hadn't taken much time. The rumors among the household servants about Nyx being neglected, mistreated, and deprived

3/4

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of food and supplements had all been thoroughly investigated.

+23)

At the thought of the things that had been uncovered, Arlong's expression darkened. He cautiously glanced at Erik, and sure enough, he saw that Erik's face looked terrifying.

Erik ordered, "Bring Enzo to see me."

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The study was silent, so quiet that even the drop of a pin would be clearly heard.

Enzo knelt on the ground, his face ashen.

On the side, Myles was tied up like an animal awaiting slaughter, drenched in cold sweat.

A drop of sweat slid into his eye, stinging him, but Myles couldn't care about the tiny pain. His blood surged with nervousness, his face flushed, his hands and feet cold, trembling uncontrollably.

After receiving a beating and being kicked out of the mansion, he had learned his lesson and had become much more obedient than before.

However, after recovering from his injuries, Myles slowly returned to his old ways. Yet, just two days after becoming arrogant again, disaster struck once more.

In the early morning, Myles was enthusiastically gambling at the table when a group of guards from the Duke's manor suddenly barged in, binding him without a word, and before he could react, he was brought here.

Seeing his kneeling uncle and Erik sitting high above, it felt as if cold water had been splashed on him, leaving him shivering from head to toe.

The painful memories of being beaten that day surged back overwhelmingly, and Myles was scared out of his wits.

He already understood that Nyx had never fallen out of favor, nor was she just a useless beauty.

Erik had genuine feelings for her and cherished her deeply, yet he had been foolish enough to cut back on her meals.

Myles thought, 'Would the young master have me beaten to death?'

Considering all the stupid things he had done, if not for Enzo secretly covering for him, he would have been dead for a long time.

But while he escaped punishment once, he couldn't avoid it forever. In the end, he couldn't escape his fate.

Overwhelmed with despair, Myles began trembling nonstop.

Enzo took a deep breath, then heavily kowtowed to the ground. "I deceived the master. I deserve to die."

Erik had long instructed him to take good care of Nyx. For her to have been mistreated was already his failure, and to make matters worse, the offender was his own nephew.

Even though Nyx had said there was no need to inform Erik, he should have confessed to him. Yet he had clung to a sliver of hope, hiding the matter, and had been living in constant anxiety ever since. Today, his secret was finally exposed.

"I submit to any punishment the master deems fit. I only beg... I only beg for the master to spare Myles's life..." Enzo pleaded desperately.

From Erik's expression alone, he knew this matter would not end well.

No matter what punishment awaited, he was ready to accept it. But Myles was the last bloodline of the Hussain family, his only selfish concern. He just wanted to protect Myles.

Erik looked down coldly at the uncle and nephew duo, his gaze icy and detached.

He had spent years at war and was rarely home. Used to leaving the household affairs to Enzo, he had trusted him

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completely, and nothing major had ever gone wrong in all these years.

Enzo was a loyal confidant, someone he trusted deeply. But he had overlooked the existence of someone like Myles.

"Strictly speaking. Myles is no longer one of the household staff, so I have no reason to deal with him," Erik said indifferently.

Before Enzo could breathe a sigh of relief, Erik suddenly changed his tone. "But he's been in close contact with spies planted here by Banon. What do you think should be done?"

At these words, Enzo turned pale. "He... he didn't do it intentionally..."

Halfway through his explanation, he stopped himself. He swallowed the rest of his plea and kept silent.

Intentional or not, the truth was that over the years, Myles had mingled with Banon's spies during card games, often boasting and inadvertently leaking information about the household.

That alone was enough reason for Erik to take Myles's life, not to mention the offense of mistreating Nyx, which had undoubtedly earned Erik's deep hatred.

At this point, there seemed to be no room for struggle.

With despair written all over his face, Enzo closed his eyes, hearing Erik's cold command: "Beat Myles to death with the rod. Have everyone in the household come and witness the punishment. Lock up Enzo and assign Stefan Moore to take his position."

Just a few words, and their fates were sealed.

Wails of agony echoed through the courtyard, and the scent of blood filled the cold air.

The household staff collectively held their breath, their bodies tense. Some felt satisfaction, others fear, but everyone shared the same thought—Never neglect the madam again.

They all knew clearly that Myles's downfall, along with Enzo's, stemmed from their lack of awareness and from offending the one person they should never have crossed.

Among the crowd, Arlong stood beside Erik, watching Myles's pitiful punishment. He shook his head and sighed quietly.

He knew very well that Erik, whether before or after his injury, was not someone cruel or ruthless by nature. Unless absolutely necessary, he rarely punished his servants.

In fact, many of those previously dealt with in the household were either spies planted by Banon or pawns used to mislead others. Most had not actually been executed but secretly relocated elsewhere.

Using the excuse of a "personality change due to trauma," Erik had taken the opportunity to thoroughly purge the Duke's

Mansion.

For someone like Myles, who had unintentionally leaked minor information in the past, Erik had chosen to turn a blind eye and let it slide. But Myles simply couldn't stay out of trouble.

Myles was foolish, and Enzo was negligent. When it came to matters involving Nyx, they dared to deceive Erik, crossing his bottom line. Nobody could save them now.

As Myles was left barely clinging to life, Arlong composed himself and stepped forward, ready to handle the aftermath.

"Madam?" A sudden exclamation came from the crowd.

The executioners instinctively halted their actions.

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Erik's body jolted, and he turned sharply, disbelief etched on his face as his gaze met Nyx's,

He froze for two seconds before striding forward quickly, taking Nyx's hand. His tall frame shifted just enough to block her view, shielding her eyes from the gruesome scene.

"Why... why are you here?" Erik had never imagined this side of himself would be exposed to the one he loved. For a moment, he was at a complete loss, the cold fierceness in his expression melting away, replaced by awkwardness and helplessness.

Nyx gently patted the back of his hand, offering reassurance.

Having endured interstellar wars, Earth's apocalyptic end, savage battles with wild beasts on the plains, and bloody struggles in the primitive era, she had developed stronger tolerance now. A scene like this couldn't faze her.

Even though her expression remained calm, Erik still stood firmly in front of her, refusing to step aside. His voice was low and heavy. "Don't plead for him, Nyx."

If Nyx spoke up, he wouldn't be able to refuse her. He would inevitably let Myles go just to satisfy her wishes. But if he didn't kill this wretched man, the anger in his heart would never subside.

"Who says I need to plead for him?" Nyx raised an eyebrow slightly. "I intend to deal with him personally. Is that not allowed?"

As soon as she woke up, she heard that Pale Wolf had been beating and killing servants. Alarmed, she quickly got out of bed and asked around to gather details.

It was only because he had missed delivering her one meal. Even if it was out of malice, in her eyes, it was a trivial matter- no reason to kill him. The way Enzo had handled it before didn't seem like an issue, but Pale Wolf clearly wasn't satisfied.

Nyx glanced at Myles, who was weakly lying on the torture rack, and clicked her tongue. "Spare his life, and leave him to me."

There were many ways to handle such a person, including thought reform and labor reeducation. Any of those would be better than taking his life.

A capable assistant like Enzo wasn't easy to find. He had been loyal to Pale Wolf for many years, and it wouldn't be right to waste his life over such a small matter.

Nyx's decision was final, and Erik couldn't argue with her. He had no choice but to nod obediently.

The house's doctor was highly skilled in medicine and, following orders, managed to keep Myles alive, preventing his death. However, he was beaten nearly to death and would require at least a year or more to fully recover.

"Calculate the medical fees and the cost of the herbs, and charge them to his account," Nyx instructed the medicine boy.

Upon hearing this, the ever-loyal Enzo lowered his head in shame and immediately reached for his purse. "I'll pay..."

She

Nyx was magnanimous. She had saved Myles's life and even restored him to his former position. From now on, his life belonged to her. He would gladly serve her, even risking his life. If he ever disobeyed, he would deserve the wrath of heaven.

"No need for you to pay," Nyx raised her hand to stop him. "Let Myles pay for it himself."

She glanced at Enzo. "He's already an adult. He should take responsibility for his own actions."

"Spoiling children is like killing them," she muttered, looking back down at the ledger. "Steward Hussain is a reasonable man. You won't fail to understand this."

It was because Enzo had spoiled Myles too much that he turned out to be a failure.

3/7

90%

+58)

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"What the lady says is right," Enzo replied, feeling even more ashamed. "But he really has no skills. If it's left to him, he might never be able to repay this debt."

He had raised Myles into a useless man. He wasn't without regret, but he felt helpless to fix it now.

The medicinal herbs were expensive, and even without considering interest, it would take Myles decades of hard labor to repay, if not longer. Enzo would have

to help him, whether he liked it or not.

Enzo just couldn't bear to ignore Myles.

Nyx waved her hand dismissively. "Whether he can repay it or not, it's still his responsibility to do so."

If he had no skills, he could learn. If he had no money, he could earn. As long as he hadn't repaid the debt, he would work tirelessly every day. The only money he made would go towards paying the debt, with just enough left to cover the most basic living expenses.

This way, he would have neither money nor time for leisure or ambling.

When Enzo understood Nyx's meaning, his eyes slowly brightened. "Once he recovers, before he starts working, he'll need some orientation training,"

Nyx added. During this time, she planned to cultivate a group of teachers. Some would teach reading and writing as well as thought reform, while others would teach basic math and science. Though these were often seen as useless skills by people of

this era, there would always be someone interested in learning.

If she didn't understand Emperor's true identity, she wouldn't have bothered with this, not wanting to get herself into trouble.

But since Emperor was family, she could confidently delve into the realm of technology. She had nothing else to do anyway, and who knew how long she would stay here? She might as well get some work done. Developing technology was important, but thought reform was just as critical.

"Until Myles passes the thought reform assessment, he won't be allowed to work," Nyx smiled.

Without the ability to work, he couldn't make money. As long as he hadn't repaid his debt, the house would only provide him with the simplest meals. If he didn't like it, he could starve.

Someone like him, who indulged in pleasures, would not be able to endure a life of eating scraps. To taste meat, he would have to work hard.

"Yes, madam." Enzo's eyes glowed with admiration.

Though some of the words she used were hard for him to fully comprehend, it didn't stop him from understanding her thinking.

He thought she was truly a genius.

On his sickbed, Myles gritted his teeth, groaning in pain. Suddenly, he felt a chill down his spine and shivered.

He assumed it was just the cold from his injuries, unaware of the fate that was about to befall him.

A heavy snow fell, covering the chaos and the cold vibe in the courtyard, restoring peace to the Duke's Mansion.

4/7

90%

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Inside the teahouse, the sounds of bustling conversation filled the air. The waiters were as busy as spinning tops, with steam rising from the tea on the tables, driving away the chill.

In the elegant upstairs room, a young man in fine clothes rested his eyes halfway, surrounded by attentive servants.

Some were massaging his legs, others kneading his shoulders, while others played music, sang, and danced, creating a lively vibe. The faint sounds of conversation drifted up from below.

You could hear a few wealthy youths boasting, a group of merchants discussing the hardships of the year, and some gamblers arguing over a few copper coins. Suddenly, someone spoke mysteriously, "Have you heard? The Duke's Mansion beat someone again. Although he didn't die, several doctors had to treat him, and it took a lot of medicine just to keep him alive."

The room immediately erupted into a clamor, waves of voices rising.

"What?"

"Where did you hear this?"

"Quick, tell us more!"

"My uncle's brother works at Duke's Mansion. A few days ago, I went to my uncle's house for a drink, and he happened to mention it." The person cleared his throat and lowered his voice. "I heard this matter is related to Erik's wife..."

He didn't know any more details.

Even though he was drunk, his uncle's brother was very reluctant to talk about the matter and only spoke in vague terms before refusing to say more.

The less people knew, the more they speculated, and soon whispers filled the teahouse.

In the private room, a man in fine clothes opened his eyes, his gaze landing on the three women who were kneeling and preparing tea. Suddenly, he spoke,

"Brisa, Paola, and Kaila, come here."

"Yes, Your Highness." The three women immediately got up and approached, their postures obedient and humble, heads lowered, but with a hint of humiliation in their eyes.

The three women were Joyce, Mila, and Kaya.

After the Voss family lost their power, they fell to such a state. They had thought that being brought to Banon's estate would be their salvation, but they were shocked to find that Banon treated them as ordinary servants, even stripping them of their previous names.

They had once resented it, but after witnessing Banon's cruel ways and seeing disfigured corpses being carried out of the estate, they had no choice but to accept their fate.

Even accepting their fate and obeying his every command, surviving in Banon's estate was not easy.

Unlike the other women in the estate, they had beauty and dancing skills, but no knowledge of serving others, a skill they had never learned.

Banon called for them a few times out of novelty, but quickly lost interest and left them abandoned in a corner.

The prince's estate was filled with women, all of them competitors. If one failed to earn favor, they were bullied by their peers and trampled underfoot.

When they were beaten and made to kneel in the snow, trembling from the cold,

the three women found their minds wandering, remembering their past.

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90%

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Those memories of enjoying luxury, bullying Nyx from a high position, felt as distant as if they belonged to a past life.

If they wanted to survive, they had to desperately get close to Banon. They used all their wits to be allowed to accompany him today, but now they could only kneel at a distance, boiling water and making tea, not even able to show their faces. Just when they had lost all hope, unexpectedly, things took a turn for the better. The brief flash of humiliation in their eyes disappeared quickly, and the three women, under the jealous gaze of the other women, smiled obsequiously at Banon, waiting for his orders.

Banon slowly stood up, looking down at them. "If I remember correctly, Erik's wife is the daughter of your Voss family, right?"

Upon hearing this, the three women stiffened.

They couldn't figure out what Banon was thinking, and didn't dare to make any sudden moves. They couldn't nod or shake their heads, awkwardly kneeling there.

"Don't be afraid," Banon stroked his chin and chuckled meaningfully. "Since we are family, I should take you to Duke's Mansion to visit your relatives and catch up."

The spies at Duke's Mansion had been removed too thoroughly, and the only one left, Jinx and Jules, was of little use. He needed to meet Erik in person. Previously, the intelligence Jinx and Jules had sent said that Nyx was not favored, and if he could find a chance to meet her, perhaps he could use her for something.

Banon's gaze fell coldly on the three women, with no warmth in his eyes.

If necessary, these three would be the gift he sent to Nyx. After all, she had been oppressed by these women for years, and surely she would enjoy taking revenge on her enemies personally.

A formal invitation was sent to Duke's Mansion, but it seemed to vanish without a trace, as there was no reply.

Banon was not surprised. When the appointed time arrived, he still went in person, bringing only the three women from the Voss family with him.

The three of them clustered around Banon, their makeup and new clothes revealing a faint sense of joy and smugness.

"Are you happy?" Banon glanced at them sideways, a smile that wasn't quite a smile on his lips.

Kaya, the most impatient, couldn't hide her excitement and answered with a bright voice, "Yes, Your Highness, I am happy." Recently, rumors had spread outside

that someone at Duke's Mansion had been beaten and nearly died. At first, it was said to be related to the lady of the house, but as the story spread,

it became a rumor that Erik himself had ordered her to be beaten to the brink of death.

Some thought it was absurd and unbelievable, but Joyce, Mila, and Kaya believed it without question when they hear

They thought, 'Someone like Nyx, who isn't liked, living with the bad-tempered

Erik, how could she possibly end up well? If it weren't the wife being beaten, why

would the Duke's Mansion waste medicine to treat her? It seems that Nyx is the one who has been beaten.'

"Thank you, Your Highness, for showing us such mercy and giving us the opportunity to reunite with our flesh and blood." Mila raised her sleeve to cover

her mouth, curtsying gracefully, and gave Banon a flirtatious wink.

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Her heart raced with excitement. She couldn't wait to see Nyx and witness her misery with her own eyes.

With their father dead and their lives so miserable, the only way for them to feel better was to see Nyx in an even worse situation.

90%

"Good, let's go then. I'll make sure you reunite," Banon laughed heartily, raising his hand to embrace one of the women's waists, caressing her while striding towards the hall.

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90%

Sure enough, in the guest hall, tea and wine had been prepared, and many servants were serving. Erik was sitting there, looking up at the visitors. He didn't rise to greet

them, but instead nonchalantly apologized, "My leg is inconvenient, I apologize for the rudeness."

"It's fine," Banon replied with a fake smile, nodding.

Erik was always so unruly. Even before his leg was injured, he didn't show much respect, and now he didn't even bother to pretend,

Thinking of how many times he had been disrespected over the years, Banon twisted his face slightly.

He thought, 'Only losing one leg is still too kind to this guy, When I become Emperor in the future, I would make sure Erik has nothing, and then I would trample him down and humiliate him'

Banon took a deep breath, temporarily suppressing his darker thoughts, hiding them deep within his heart. He chose a seat facing Erik and smiled, "You must have seen the invitation, so you already know the purpose of my visit today"

"Brisa, Paola, and Kaila." He raised his hand and lightly clapped twice, prompting three maids to step forward.

They approached their master without hesitation, dropping to their knees gracefully, lowering their gazes in submission, like completely tamed slaves.

Banon lifted the chin of Mila, the maid closest to him, exposing her face to Erik. He slowly stroked her face, his tone laden with meaning. "The slave girls bestowed upon me by Aurelius seem to have some connections to your wife..."

The slave at his feet, at his mercy, was Nyx's sister.

His attitude was so contemptuous, not only insulting Nyx but also humiliating the Duke's Mansion.

Erik's expression darkened immediately, and a fierce, wolf-like aggression appeared in his eyes.

He didn't care if he was insulted, but he couldn't tolerate anyone speaking about Nyx in such a disgusting manner.

Banon's eyes squinted with amusement, and he looked around. "Why isn't the madam here? Isn't she home?"

As he examined Erik's darkened face, he sighed dramatically, "I specifically brought Brisa, Paola, and Kaila to reunite with the madam... what a pity if she's not here."

With distinguished guests visiting, it was expected that Nyx, as the legitimate wife, would accompany her husband to receive them. Especially when the visitors were not only the prince but also her stepmother and sister, who had been reduced to slaves.

Banon believed that no one could resist the urge to see their enemy's downfall. Yet, Nyx was nowhere to be found.

Banon couldn't help but smirk. It seemed the rumors circulating outside were mostly true-Erik, this short-tempered, reckless brute, had indeed laid a hand on his wife.

No wonder Banon felt so unrestrained. The marriage had been a high climb for the woman, and now the family was in ruins. With no maternal family to rely on, Nyx was vulnerable to abuse.

But, when cornered, a rabbit would bite. A woman pushed to the brink could still make for a valuable piece in the game.

No matter how much Nyx had fallen out of favor, she still held the title of wife and the position of being at the bedside. As long as she was used wisely, she could be extremely useful.

The more Banon thought about it, the more pleased he became. He lightly tapped Mila's beautiful face and ordered, "Go

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dance."

As for the other two women, they couldn't remain idle either. One would play the zither, and the other would sing.

Neither Joyce nor Mila and Kaya were skilled at these arts, having learned them only after entering the prince's palace. Their performance could hardly be described as "exquisite," and it was even safe to say it was clumsy.

Banon, naturally a man of high tastes, was not impressed by such common performances. Women like these three would never catch his eye.

Looking down from his position of superiority, he sneered at their frantic efforts. He raised an eyebrow and turned to Erik, "The women of the Voss family are indeed beautiful, but they lack charm. They don't know how to please a man. I'm sure you agree, right?"

Banon thought the women from the Voss family were probably more knowledgeable and tactful than Nyx, who had been trained in the same family.

Word had it from Jinx and Jules that Erik had always been indifferent to his wife, and since the other two sisters had entered the house, Nyx had lost favor entirely.

Banon, who thought he understood men's tastes, had no doubt in this.

Even if Erik lowered his gaze to drink without showing any interest in the three women in front of him, or responding to Banon's question, he considered it a tacit agreement, which put his mind more at ease.

Just because the master wasn't interested in the performance didn't mean the servants weren't.

At the Duke's Mansion, there were usually no performances of song and dance. Today, such an event was rare, and the household servants were keenly interested, staring intently at the scene.

Under the watchful eyes of the crowd, Mila swayed her hips, her skirt swirling as Kaya softly sang lewd and suggestive songs. Joyce knelt nearby, her fingers now rough and calloused from performing such acts.

Their faces flushed with humiliation, as the many gazes from all directions burned into them.

Once proud ladies, they had now been reduced to mere playthings for anyone to pick at. Despite their resignation, they couldn't completely keep their composure. The shame gnawed at their hearts, but with the prince not stopping them, they dared not stop either. They could only force themselves to think of something else, trying to shift their attention away..

They thought not of themselves, but of Nyx.

They thought, 'With guests visiting, she hasn't appeared. It must be because she has been beaten to the point where she couldn't even face them, perhaps bedridden and unable to get up.

With such a fragile body, if she was already gasping for breath without any physical contact in the past, after such heavy beating, it's hard to imagine how long she could survive.

The thought made Kaya want to laugh, and she inadvertently missed a note, making the mistake quite obvious and absurd.

Banon's mood darkened at once. He put down his tea cup and ordered his attendants, "Slap her."

"Spare me..." Kaya's smile vanished instantly, her face drained of color. She fell to her knees, pleading desperately, "Plea Your Highness, spare me this time..."

Before she could finish pleading, a slap landed heavily on her left cheek, knocking her off balance. Before she could recover, she was pulled back upright, and her right cheek was struck hard again.

2/4

90%

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The sharp slaps and her pained sobs nearly drowned out the sound of the zither. Joyce and Mila stood pale, horrified, struggling to keep their breathing steady. People often spoke of Erik's bad temper, but Banon was no different.

As slaves and servants, they lived in constant fear, used to being beaten. But they never expected that the prince, who had been so favorably inclined towards them recently and had even brought them here to see Nyx, would suddenly turn on them in public, showing no mercy.

As Kaya was being beaten, they dared not beg for mercy, nor could they stop performing. They dared not make any more mistakes. But their hearts were in chaos, and the music faltered, as did their steps.

Banon looked down from his high perch. With just a glance, his two attendants understood his command and moved swiftly, the slapping sound of their hands blending into the chaos.

"Please excuse me," Banon slowly turned around, giving Erik a light smile and nod. "This king has always been compassionate towards beautiful women, but when it comes to discipline, I am never lenient."

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He blew on the steaming tea, took a small sip, and continued, "Women need to be disciplined more often to become gentle and obedient. Duke Reed, what do you think?"

"Heh," Erik sneered. "I can't agree with that."

He was pleased to see those who wronged Nyx get punished, but he found Banon's ridiculous theory utterly repulsive.

Banon laughed heartily, as if he believed Erik was just being stubborn.

He thought Erik didn't care about his image, but now he realized Erik was more concerned than he had imagined. Despite having beaten his legitimate wife into a state where she couldn't even face the public, Erik still wouldn't admit it.

He put down the

cup

and stood up. "I've had plenty of tea. I'll go to the toilet."

As he spoke, he ignored the three slaves still being punished and walked past them, striding out of the room.

He was eager to meet Nyx and claim this piece on the chessboard.

Erik maintained a calm expression and did not stop him. Instead, he motioned to two servants. "You two, guide Banon."

It appeared to be a simple task of guiding, but in reality, it was to keep watch.

Though everyone knew the truth, the servants could not blatantly follow the prince, so they remained outside the main hall, standing guard at the only entrance.

Just as the two of them settled into position, something darted out of the door and swiftly passed them, like a gust of wind, running quickly into the distance.

What was that?"

"It looked like a cat..."

The two of them relaxed and paid it no mind.

The orange-furred cat shook its ears in response to the conversation, its eyes showing a human-like disdain.

The ability to transform into beast form was a secret of their royal family.

Aurelius trusted Erik and might allow him to know this secret, but only to that extent. This secret was never meant to reach the ears of ordinary servants.

Chapter #77

Once he managed to shake off Erik's watchful eyes, he could freely roam the Dad's Mansion in base forms. Finding Byx would be no problem.

The cut's eyes burned with determination as it began searching for Nyx's figure.

With his heightened sense of smell in beast form, he could easily detect areas with a strong medicinal scent

But after wandering for a while, all he found were a few herb patches, a storeroom of medicinal materials, and the doctor's residence. He found an injured patient lying on a bed, but it was just an ordinary man.

Despite all his searching, Syx remained elusive, Banon crouched down in exhaustion, his confidence waning as dorks creeps in.

He thought, Has Nyx already been killed? Is Erik keeping this from me? Forget it.

I'm already here. I can't leave empty handed. If I can't find Nyx, I'll search Erik's study for any useful secrets

Time was of the essence, so he didn't hesitate.

Banon quickly made up his mind and walked confidently to the study door. With the swagger of a cat, he pushed the door open without hesitation.

At the sound of the door opening, the person seated behind the desk looked up.

Their eyes met. The orange-furred cat froze, its front paw hanging mid-air as its eyes widened. It froze in place.

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90%

Nyx was seated there. She had a slender, graceful figure, dressed in silk robes made exclusively for the palace. Cold and silver threads intricately embroidered delicate patterns all over, adorned with colorful jewels that radiated wealth and elegance.

But no matter who looked at her, the first thing they'd notice was her vibrant, stunningly beautiful face, capturing all their attention, making them forget to notice her clothing.

Even though she appeared somewhat unwell, with signs of poor health and a slight pallor to her complexion, it only added to her allure. Instead of detracting from her beauty, it made her seem more delicate, evoking a sense of pity.

Banon considered himself quite the womanizer, with countless women in his royal residence, but at this moment, when their eyes locked, he was completely captivated. For a moment, he was lost in her beauty.

It wasn't until a small, snow-white kitten appeared from behind a mound of papers and looked down at him with cold, piercing blue eyes that Banon shuddered, snapping back to reality.

He thought, 'His Majesty? How was he here?'

The unexpected situation hit them hard, and the orange cat stared in shock, eyes wide open.

Given Aurelius's trust in Duke's Mansion, his appearance in Erik's study wasn't entirely strange. What was strange was that he had appeared in this beast form, and sitting at the desk in the master's seat was a young woman.

She casually scooped up the little white cat, cradling it in her arms and playfully teasing it, rubbing its head, pinching its cheeks, even petting its fluffy belly-both hands inside, and smiling as she complimented, "So warm."

The little white cat, treated as a hand-warmer, showed no sign of reluctance. Its tail excitedly shot up in a straight line, and it let out a series of mewing sounds.

As a fellow beast form, Banon couldn't understand the cat's language-perhaps it didn't even have any meaningful words, just pure cooing and affection.

He stood frozen, his mind a mess. After several spins of thought, he couldn't make sense of the scene unfolding before him.

The dark hair on the little white cat's forehead was unmistakable. Earlier, when it had met his gaze, its entire being radiated imperial power. It was definitely Aurelius; he couldn't be mistaken.

But now, looking at this cat being casually handled by a woman, Banon couldn't, for the life of him, associate it with his royal nephew.

Not even an ordinary cat would be this docile.

Nyx raised her hand, and the little white cat immediately followed, retracting its claws and only using the soft pads to touch her skin. It clung to her arm, shaking its head, meowing and nuzzling her, appearing more like dough than a living creature, and even acting eagerly, displaying clear signs of affection.

Banon didn't have a term like "simp" in his vocabulary, so he couldn't find an appropriate description. He just felt that this scene was absurd beyond belief.

He thought, 'Is this really His Majesty? How could... how could he become a woman's plaything?'

Nyx casually glanced at the frozen orange cat, pausing her gaze on it for a moment. She quickly heard her mate's dissatisfied meows and hurriedly averted her eyes, skillfully calming the white cat. "Alright, I'll only look at you. Cotton Candy is the cutest little kitten.

"I've never seen this orange cat before. Where did it sneak in from?" She kissed the little cat's face while nonchalantly asking, "Do you know it?"

1/4

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G

With his identity about to be exposed, Banon tensed up, his fur nearly standing on end.

The little white cat flicked its tail and let out an annoyed meow.

Hearing the meow, Banon froze in disbelief before his body relaxed, suddenly feeling somewhat absurdly amused.

He thought, 'Is His Majesty pretending to be an ordinary little cat in front of this woman?'

He replayed everything he had just witnessed, and he was almost 80% sure of his conclusion.

390%

+58

If that wasn't the case, he couldn't come up with any other reason to explain why a woman could be so unafraid and so casually play with an emperor as if he were in her palm.

A mocking look flashed in the orange cat's eyes. It paced back and forth, sizing up the little white cat curled up in the

woman's arms.

Banon thought, 'How pathetic. If you like a woman, just keep her close and shower her with affection. Why go this far and make a fool of yourself? It's like a slave cat meowing for attention-can she even understand it?'

Nyx actually could understand it. After living together for many years, their mutual understanding had grown exceptional. Not to mention, the little scheming cat was always transforming into beast form to vie for affection, throwing tantrums and speaking in cat language.

Nyx had picked up the language long ago and had become fluent in it without anyone teaching her.

As the little white cat switched its tone and meowed a few more times, a knowing glint appeared in Nyx's eyes. She realized the orange cat was Banon.

Since Banon was an enemy, even if he was a big orange cat like Dollar, she wasn't particularly warm to him. She coldly withdrew her gaze and slowly resumed stroking her mate's warm, smooth fur, scratching his chin.

The little white cat purred contentedly, its paws stretching and retracting like a bamboo shoot, as if lost in a paradise of -pleasure.

Though he didn't want to admit it, Banon felt a twinge of envy. No one had ever treated him like that; it looked quite pleasant.

Beast form was a secret, known only to a few trusted subordinates. And they were all hard, serious men-definitely not suitable for such behavior.

As for the women in the royal mansion, whether they were favored or not, none of them were within his circle of trust.

The orange cat trembled with jealousy, irritated, and sat down, casting aside all thoughts of business. Instead, it began considering the possibility of disguising itself as an ordinary little cat when it returned to the mansion, just like Aurelius.

Pretending to be a cat wasn't difficult, but the women in his mansion... whether they were enchanting beauties or elegantly aloof, he had raised them like a pack of ambitious and venomous women.

He couldn't imagine them gently treating a slave cat.

He raised his head, looking at Nyx, and for a moment, it felt as if she was surrounded by a warm glow. His heart itched and he took a few steps closer.

Such a beautiful woman should be his-she should be by his side. Besides, he loved competing with Aurelius, whether for power, the throne, the world, or the women he desired. He would take everything Aurelius had and make it his own.

Driven by jealousy and ambition, the orange cat took three quick steps toward Nyx's side, trying to meow and reach out

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with its paws to tug at her skirt

Before Nyx could look down, a white blur suddenly dropped down from above.

Aurelius, whose domain had been invaded, revealed a fierce expression. Swiftly leaping out of Nyx's embrace, he raised his paw and struck the audacious fool who dared to cover his beloved.

With a terrifying sound, blood splattered onto the desk. Nyx was horrified and quickly stood up. Aurelio...

Her males often sparred and fought at home, but it was always controlled. This time, however, was different.

In her haste, she lost her composure and blurted out her mate's name before thinking

Instantly, both cats froze mid-fight. Banon's eyes were full of disbelief. He couldn't believe that Aurelius had just exposed his identity to a woman who hadn't even entered the palace.

The little white cat was no less shocked than Banon was, flustered and stumbling. He thought. How did Nyx know my identity? When did she find out? Did Erik tell her? Would she blame me for hiding it from her?

In his panic, Aurelius stumbled and fell to the ground, his fluffy body stained with blood. His ears and tail drooped weakly, looking pitiful and sad.

Nyx's heart nearly leapt to her throat. She couldn't care about anything else and rushed over, gently scooping him up and checking from his head to the tip of his tail. She found no injuries, only blood from others, and finally breathed a sigh of

relief.

"You scared me!" She hugged him in relief, pressing her cheek against his and scolding him playfully by flicking her finger on his nose, as a punishment for his reckless fighting.

"Nyx." Aurelius realized, only now, that her affection and intimacy hadn't vanished just because she knew his identity. He couldn't help but feel overjoyed, his heart racing with excitement.

Being flicked on the nose didn't feel like a punishment; it felt like a reward. He didn't feel any pain, only a slight itch in his bones.

He opened his mouth, wanting to apologize or show affection, but couldn't find the right words. He could only nuzzle her hand, purring.

Mid-fight, Banon lost his focus, staring at the sight of his opponent happily nestled in the soft, fragrant embrace of Nyx, the two of them so intimate.

Meanwhile, his body was covered in torn flesh, his nails broken. He sat helplessly on the cold ground, every inch of him aching, with a growing sense of confusion and helplessness.

He thought, 'How did this happen?'

The orange cat lay there, dazed for a moment, before slowly coming to his

senses. He copied the white cat's earlier weak posture, lying down and exposing his disheveled fur and bloodied wounds.

He thought it was he who was hurt. He was the one who was truly pitiful and in need of love and care.

As a fellow beast form, he didn't think Aurelius had any more advantages than he did.

Perhaps their earlier acquaintance and the fact that Aurelius held the throne were advantages, but considering how brutally he had just been beaten, without a word of warning, this woman, with her gentle and kind nature, must have disliked what he did.

Banon weakly called, trying to draw Nyx's attention to him.

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Nyx looked down and frowned at the orange cat, who was covered in injuries.

The air grew still as both cats' gazes followed her, watching her every move, every frown, every glance.

90%

+58)

Seeing Nyx's displeased frown, Aurelius moved his paw slightly, his fist tightening.

He ground his teeth in frustration, cursing himself for not acting faster or more fiercely, for not teaching this guy a better lesson. He thought, 'How dare he try to seduce Nyx right in front of me?'

Banon's eyes lit up, as if he saw a glimmer of hope.

He gathered what little strength he had left and slowly moved toward Nyx.

Though it was humiliating and painful, as long as he could steal Nyx away from Aurelius, he would have won.

"Someone!" Nyx suddenly called out.

4/4

AD

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58

"Quick, someone!" If the first call was casual, the second one from Nyx was clearly urgent and serious, as if danger was near.

Outside, hurried footsteps echoed as the patrolling guards rushed to the scene. Hearing the approaching noise, Banon froze, as if struck by lightning.

He suddenly realized that his actions had been sneaky and underhanded. If the Duke's Mansion people caught him, not only would it be hard to escape, but he would also lose all face.

The orange cat, who had just suffered a defeat, could no longer think about revenge. Covered in wounds, he quickly turned and fled, moving as fast as he could.

His speed was so fast that Nyx didn't react in time, but the little white cat, with sharp eyes, shot forward like an arrow, landing from above and stepping firmly on the orange cat's tail.

"Yowl!" Banon cried out in pain, losing all dignity.

As the guards entered at Nyx's call, they were greeted with the sight of the white cat, who had the domineering dark hair symbol on his forehead.

He stood tall, full of authority, his fur shiny and healthy, almost glowing, no longer resembling a mere beast, but the king of all animals. The orange cat, who had been subdued beneath him, appeared much rounder and bulkier in comparison, but cowered like a mouse.

The scene left everyone stunned for a moment, but after the initial awe, confusion and doubt followed.

The fully armored guards, with swords strapped to their sides, vigilantly scanned their surroundings. They found nothing unusual in the study and looked at Nyx in confusion.

They thought, 'Did the lady call us here to handle these two cats fighting?'

When they heard Nyx's urgent call, they thought someone had infiltrated with spies or assassins, disturbing Nyx in the study. They had prepared themselves for a fierce battle, only to be confronted with this.

The contrast was so great that the leader of the guards couldn't help but shake his head and laugh, letting out a breath of relief. It wasn't a big deal after all. Better this than a real crisis.

Everyone in the mansion knew that Nyx was the one closest to Nyx's heart. She was treated as delicately as if she were a fragile treasure. Nothing was more important than ensuring her safety and peace.

While the animal fightings weren't something to be alarmed about, the cats with sharp claws and wild tempers could indeed be dangerous.

A few guards cautiously approached and reached out to separate the fighting cats, to prevent them from accidentally harming Nyx in the heat of their struggle.

"Wait," Nyx spoke just as they moved, "The white one is mine."

She stepped forward, faster than the guards, and gently scooped up the fluffy Cotton Candy. Aurelius, whose aura had been as fierce as a tiger, immediately melted into a puddle, his tail curling around Nyx's slender wrist as he nuzzled her chest with his cute face.

Nyx could easily guess what he was thinking.

He was trying to act cute and win her over, hoping she'd forget the ferocity he'd displayed earlier during their fight. He likely also had the intention to assert his dominance, declaring to everyone present-and to the orange cat-that he was her favorite little kitten.

1/3

Mar

Chapter #79

"The most comming little kitten in the world, as always; she thought, as she couldn't help but chuckle, rapping his nose lightly.

Seeing the intimate interaction between the two, no one doubted their master-pet relationship. Some of the bolder yards even dared to flatter, "As expected of the lady's car, truly quite intelligent?"

"Yes,"

"It only recognizes the lady as its master"

"Who would have thought a cat could be so smart and loyal?"

Amid the lively chatter, Banon sat frozen on the floor, his expression vacant, his head tilted back as if he had lost his soul.

From earlier until now, everything that had happened felt like the most absurd and nonsensical nightmare. He couldn't believe his eyes of cars.

His Majesty is willingly acting as a pet to a subject's wife? he thought. No matter how much he despised and belittled this younger brother of his, he never imagined such a ridiculous thing

And then there were the guards' attentive and respectful behavior towards Nyx- Banon's gaze trembled.

He thought, 'Nyx is not the helpless woman neglected by her husband... She is clearly an evil cloaked in human skin. Aurelius and Erik have both been enchanted by her. Even I, a man who has slept with countless women, have just fallen into her trap, seduced by her allure.

The more he thought about it, the more he was convinced of this. Cold sweat broke out over his body as his mind raced, and he lowered his head, not daring to look at her graceful figure any longer.

Nyx, unaware of the tangled thoughts in his mind, didn't care. She turned and ordered, "Catch that cat and follow me."

A large group of guards, with great authority, escorted the orange cat, ensuring it had no chance of escape.

Banon, being held by the scruff of his neck, gave up on struggling. He closed his eyes and played dead, not wanting to see the mocking expression on Aurelius's face.

In the banquet hall, no one spoke, only the occasional clinking of bowls and fork broke the silence. The vibe was restless and odd.

The prince had yet to return, and his attendants couldn't help but worry, trying hard to hide their concern, but each of them was visibly uneasy.

The few confidants who knew Banon's plans were especially restless. They thought, Why hasn't the prince returned yet? Is the discussion with Nyx not going well? Is the woman refusing to cooperate? Or has something gone wrong?

After all, this was the Duke's Mansion, enemy territory. While the prince had the advantage of his beast form, acting alone was still fraught with danger.

Some of them couldn't sit still any longer and glanced at Erik. He sat composed in his seat, calmly serving himself if he knew nothing, yet there was an air about him that suggested he was in full control of the situation.

Just then, loud footsteps were heard from outside.

Irink, as

The first thing everyone saw was a woman's figure. Draped in a magnificent robe and exuding brilliance, her presence alone made it clear she was someone of high status.

The moment he saw her, Erik's usually calm and composed expression finally cracked. He stood up quickly, hurrying toward Nyx. "Nyx"

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"What are you doing here?" He grabbed her hand, anxiety clear in his voice. "Has something happened?"

.90%

438)

He didn't want Nyx getting involved in the mess with Banon, and Nyx herself disliked the deceptive, hypocritical social occasions. They had agreed that she wouldn't need to appear as the lady of the house today, and he would handle everything on his own.

He thought, The banquet hasn't even ended. Why has Nyx come to find me?'

The saying "worry makes one confused" applied to Erik when Nyx was involved. As soon as he faced her, his composure fell apart.

He looked her up and down, his gaze finally resting on the white furball in her arms. A flicker of jealousy and frustration passed through his eyes, though his rationality returned quickly.

With that white cat around, Nyx likely hadn't encountered any danger.

"I'm fine." Nyx reassured him, patting the back of his hand, "I just caught an unexpected visitor who wandered into the study and brought it here for you to handle.

As she spoke, she raised her hand, signaling for the two guards to step forward, awkwardly presenting the orange cat.

Everyone thought, 'It's just a cat. Why bother specifically bringing it to the young master? It could just be thrown out.

The guards didn't understand, and most people in the room were just as confused. They exchanged strange looks.

The sound of dishes shattering suddenly rang out in quick succession, interrupting the murmurs of disbelief from the crowd.

Banon's trusted subordinates trembled, unable to control their hands. They stared in disbelief at the familiar orange cat.

3/3

AD

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Despite its disheveled fur and pitiful state, even while being grabbed by the scruff of its neck, there was no denying-it was the prince.

Erik's expression instantly darkened.

Others were unaware, but he knew exactly what was going on. He recognized Banon's beast form.

After a few moments of silence, he gave a cold smile and, seemingly casually, pulled out the short blade at his waist, polishing it as he spoke. "Throw him..."

"Wait, please!" One of Banon's close aides, drenched in sweat, stood up, placing himself between the orange cat and the obviously hostile Erik. "This is the prince's pet. You can't just kill it!"

Their nerves were stretched to the breaking point, genuinely afraid Erik would lose his temper and take the opportunity to kill the prince right there.

The onlookers couldn't make sense of the unfolding situation.

Though they didn't understand why a pet would stir up such trouble or why Banon's subordinates were so tense, they too held their breath in anticipation.

In the midst of the silence, Erik suddenly scoffed, "Kill it? Why would I kill a cat? I have no need to bother with an ignorant beast."

Erik lazily lifted his eyelids, casting a sweeping glance at the anxious and irate enemies. "But if I recall correctly, the prince didn't bring any pets when he arrived. So, why are you all insisting this is his pet?"

The sudden turn of events had caught them off guard. They hadn't coordinated beforehand, and after a long pause, one of them stammered, "The prince let it wander off to play by itself."

Erik nodded as if he accepted the explanation.

Without letting the aides relax, Erik added, "In that case, the prince will have to come personally and pay the ransom to retrieve it."

His demeanor was casual, feigning ignorance, while inwardly, the aides of Banon were grinding their teeth in frustration.

The prince was in Erik's hands. They were at his mercy, and could only offer various concessions in exchange, but they were all rejected one by one.

It seemed Erik had already made up his mind not to let the prince go so easily.

Gradually, the aides' spirits sank. They exchanged a look with Banon, receiving a silent signal. Reluctantly, they made a large concession, offering up control over fifty thousand troops in exchange for Erik's leniency.

Fifty thousand soldiers was the maximum number of troops Banon was publicly allowed to command.

While Banon undoubtedly had more troops in secret, publicly relinquishing such power would leave him severely disadvantaged in future conflicts.

"This cat is badly injured and should stay here to recover for a while," Erik said calmly, using the orange cat as leverage. "You can come back to retrieve it once you've sorted out the trivial matters."

With the initiative now in Erik's hands, the aides of Banon had no room to refuse. They had no choice but to lower their posture and beg, "We'll handle it as soon as possible. Please, Master, take good care of it."

1/3

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The entire scheme had failed to bring any benefits. Instead, Banon lost both his face and his dignity, now held hostage.

As they left, the group's expressions were grim. When they saw Joyce and her daughters ignored in a corner, their faces became even more unpleasant.

"These three servants have ties with the lady. Would you like them, madam? What do you think?" one of Banon's subordinates asked with a forced smile.

Since they were useless pawns, Banon was tired of them and was willing to give them away as a goodwill gesture.

90%

(+58)

Erik and Nyx's harmonious relationship had turned out differently than they had expected. Small gestures and favors wouldn't sway Nyx, but if they could win her favor by sacrificing three slaves, it would be a step toward pleasing Erik. This was their last chance to be useful.

Hearing the question, Nyx paused for a moment, her thoughts momentarily pulled away from the current situation. She only then noticed Joyce and her daughters at the banquet.

After some effort, she recognized them. It had been a long time since they last met, and they had changed significantly.

Once a well-maintained noblewoman, Joyce now had streaks of white in her hair, her face showing wrinkles and signs of age. She looked at Nyx with a complicated expression.

Mila and Kaya appeared younger, with shyness on their faces. They lowered their eyes, unable to meet Nyx's gaze.

Their faces were flushed red, though it was hard to say whether it was from the pain of the slaps they had received or the shame of facing Nyx.

From her high seat, Nyx was dressed in fine clothes, her complexion radiant, clearly well taken care of.

Sitting there leisurely sipping tea, Nyx commanded respect, which only served to highlight the pitiful state of the three female slaves.

Once, Mila and Kaya had mocked Nyx, calling her inherently lowborn and destined to be trampled underfoot by them for her entire life. Now, the tables had completely turned.

As she recalled the past grievances, Kaya couldn't help but tremble uncontrollably, her teeth chattering and her body shaking. The thought of the kind of revenge that might await her if she fell into Nyx's hands filled her with fear.

↳

She thought, 'If only I had known this would happen...

"No need," Nyx said as she swallowed a sip of tea and set the cup down, allowing

Erik to carefully dry her hands.

She naturally took his hand, not sparing her former stepmother and stepsisters another glance.

Though they hadn't been deliberately

humiliated or punished, the three women seemed to have been struck by a resounding slap in the face, their every move scrutinized by mocking, cutting gazes as if they were being slowly tormented.

They had schemed to watch Nyx fall, but instead, they had become the ones to be humiliated.

Nyx, however, couldn't be bothered to enjoy the spectacle. She didn't even consider them worth her attention.

She and they were already worlds apart.

A small attempt to bribe her had failed, so Banon's household sent another round of gifts-pearls, silks, precious herbs, and an assortment of other items, all piled into a box.

With the most important hostage in

hand, no matter how many gifts Banon offered, they were deserved. and Nyx did not refuse them. She had them inventoried and stored, then listened with interest as Arlong told her about the current situation.

2/3

10:52

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Over the years, Banon's influence had been steadily dismantled, and now, he was only struggling in his final throes..

90%

"Banon really shot himself in the foot this time, hemorrhaging heavily and becoming useless," Arlong grinned, bowing to Nyx. "You truly are formidable, my

lady"

He thought, "The plan was flawless today. Everyone in the household is prepared, so no matter how hard Banon tries, he won't find anything useful here. It's all for nothing"

But no one expected Banon to fall into the hands of Nyx. It was truly ironic.

"What's so formidable about me?" Nyx smiled helplessly. "It's His Majesty's doing."

If Cotton Candy hadn't reacted quickly, Banon might have slipped away.

At the mention of Aurelius, Arlong's expression became awkward.

He thought he understood Erik's mind better than anyone, but now, he couldn't make sense of the relationship between Nyx and Aurelius.

It was all so absurd that he dared not speculate.

Regardless, Nyx was the wife of the Duke, and Aurelius was the sovereign-

Aurelius couldn't possibly make a move on a minister's wife.

In the study, all unnecessary people were dismissed.

After discussing the important matters, Erik didn't raise his head but extended his hand to signal the guest to leave.

Aurelius, in his usual attire, showed no signs of leaving and suddenly spoke up, "I want Nyx to come to the palace and become my Queen."

The shocking words made Erik snap his head up.

"I think you're insane..." Erik laughed in anger, almost snapping the pen in his hand. "You're going to steal your minister's wife? Do you want to be a fool?"

Because Nyx loved him, Erik had begrudgingly accepted Aurelius's interference, telling himself to be magnanimous, but that didn't mean he was willing to step down as Nyx's first husband.

"I am her first husband, married in full ceremony." As he spoke, Erik stood up straight, glaring at Aurelius.

At that moment, they were not master and servant but rather a primary wife and a concubine.

Aurelius didn't back down. "I beg to differ."

"I heard that the two of you didn't complete the wedding ceremony." He too stood, his sharp gaze unwavering. "If you

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