

# Chosen Mate of the Beastmen Empire by Lewis Reed

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Kian pressed his lips into a thin line, unmoved. Even as Magnus shoved the fasting pill toward his mouth, he didn't open it, tilting his head slightly to avoid it. "I'm going to Herb Peak."

Magnus let out a dry laugh. "Go ahead," he said, throwing his hands up, done with it. "Don't expect me to take you. If you wanna go, walk there yourself."

The sect was massive, with the two peaks miles apart. Without spiritual energy to activate arrays or command spirit beasts, it'd take days to reach Herb Peak on just two mortal legs.

Not to mention the vast undeveloped stretches in between—there might be wild beasts in the mountains that could snatch this kid up and eat him. Or maybe he'd starve or exhaust himself to death before any beast got the chance.

Magnus watched Kian coldly. Even the most stubborn people had their limits. He didn't believe this kid actually had the guts to trek to Herb Peak on his own.

"You're really doing this?" It took only a couple of seconds for him to crack, his eyes widening in shock.

Kian bolted forward several yards in a single step, showing no hesitation. His upright, bamboo-like figure radiated determination. He wasn't just talking—he meant to find Nyx.

"I must owe you two something from a past life!" Magnus grumbled, claiming he was done but still chasing after him. With a yank, he hoisted Kian up.

He lifted Kian into the air, channeling energy to use a swift-travel technique, when his gaze suddenly landed on rustling in the forest below. From up high, he could see everything clearly.

Nyx pushed through the bushes and emerged, tilting her head up. Two pairs of eyes locked onto her, and she gave an embarrassed look. "Uh. I'm late."

She stood just outside the boundary wall, having heard every word of their conversation.

"Today was a fluke—I got too caught up planting and lost track of time," she explained to Kian. "It won't happen again, I swear."

"I'll come tomorrow, and the day after, until your injuries are healed. I'll come pick you up and take you home." Her eyes were warm and bright, as if saying 'I'll always be good to you.'

As their gazes met, the quiet anxieties and unease in Kian's heart melted away. He broke free of Magnus's grip, leaping to the ground. For the first time, he ignored all notions of propriety and pulled Nyx into his arms, as if he wanted to meld her into him.

Magnus's expression froze as he stood awkwardly to the side. Being a third wheel didn't bother him.

What got him was that he'd just badmouthed her behind her back, and she'd heard it all. There couldn't be anything more embarrassing than this. For a moment, his eyes darted around, avoiding Nyx's gaze.

Whatever, it wasn't like this was the first time he'd said something harsh about the little rabbit. He'd never given look to her face either—she was probably already used to it.

kind

It didn't make a difference if she hated him even more now. But badmouthing someone face-to-face and behind their back were two different things.

Face-to-face was criticism; behind their back was gossip. If word got out, his reputation as an elder would be ruined. Would the little rabbit go tattle to her master? Cyan would definitely laugh at me,' he thought.

"Elder Magnus?" Nyx watched as Magnus's face went through a rollercoaster of emotions—embarrassment, resignation,

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frustration, and then a faint hint of despair.

She called out to him a few times, but he didn't seem to hear her. So she pulled out the lunchboxes, took her mate's hand, and found two cushions to sit on. "I'm starving—let's eat first."

As she opened the lids, she chatted casually with Kian. "I was in a rush tonight, so I only made one veggie dish. If Magnus doesn't want any, I guess you'll have to handle the extra portion."

Before she finished, she suddenly felt a prickling on her back. Turning reflexively, she saw Magnus had somehow appeared right behind her, like a looming shadow.

Nyx nearly jumped out of her skin. Kian patted her soothingly, helping her calm down. She tested the waters cautiously. "Elder, wanna eat some?\*

Magnus's eyes were glued to the third lunchbox, his tone stiff. "That's for me?"

Seeing Nyx nod without hesitation, his feelings grew even more complicated. A "thanks" lingered on his lips for ages before he mumbled it out vaguely.

Setting aside matters of the heart, this little rabbit really had a good nature—to return kindness for his grudges.

He took a deep breath, awkwardly softening his demeanor, trying to speak nicely to Nyx for once. "What's this? Smells pretty fragrant."

As he spoke, he couldn't resist picking up a piece and popping it into his mouth. His eyes widened instantly, then squinted as he chewed quickly.

The bamboo shoot hit his tongue, and the fragrance exploded several times over. The texture was crisp and tender, the flavor so fresh it almost made him swallow his tongue.

He wolfed down most of the portion before finally pausing to exclaim, "Good stuff!"

Never mind the abundant spiritual energy it held, free of any alchemical toxins like in pills—just the taste alone made him think the culinary cultivation methods for spiritual plants were on another level. The ingredient itself wasn't ordinary either.

The remaining bit, he didn't want to finish too quickly—he needed to savor it.

"Is this some rare spiritual plant you got from Cyan's stash?" he asked, a bit sour. "I knew Cyan was hiding the good stuff from me, but he's generous enough to let his disciple have it."

No clue what kind of rare treasure this was—he'd never even seen it before. Probably because it'd been turned into a dish, he couldn't tell what it originally looked like.

Nyx munched on a shoot, puzzled. "These are white bamboo shoots I grew this afternoon."

Not only were they far from "rare," Eileen had said they weren't worth much. Yet now they were being called good stuff.

Seeing Magnus's skeptical look, she pulled a bamboo shoot from her storage pouch and handed it to him. "This is it."

Her planting obsession kicked in again. She took out another shoot, pressed it into the soil, and waved her hand to summon a tiny spiritual rain.

The shoot sprouted upward rapidly, growing into a towering white bamboo in moments. Its roots spread out in all directions, producing a new batch of chubby white shoots that looked delightfully plump.

Just that one plant filled the courtyard with a refreshing, heart-soothing fragrance. Magnus stared, dumbfounded. In a daze, he finally understood what Cyan meant by "exceptional talent."

Even the most ordinary spiritual plant, under her touch, jumped several grades in quality. The spiritual energy it held could

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rival refined pills.

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"Then what about the medicinal herbs she could grow? he wondered. Alchemists prized three things: cauldron, flame, and quality herbs.

The thought that Nyx might grow high-grade herbs worth their weight in gold sent Magnus into a mix of excitement and restless frustration, like he was sitting on pins and needles.

'Why did I have to go and offend her? Not just once! he screamed inside.

Nyx glanced warily at Magnus, feeling like he was acting weird tonight—like he might transform or something. She whispered to Kian, "You don't need a medicinal bath for healing tonight, right? Wanna come back to Herb Peak with me?"