

## Part 18. Jeremiah



**Eva married Quentin** two decads later. It happened without incident, and without ceremony. Contrary to past traditions, marriages in New Andover were private, a few minutes oiciated by councilman or priest. The day was like any other. Except for Jeremiah.

For him, the day was di erent because Eva didn't meet him in the corridor to walk to the archiver's enclave together. He hadn't noticed how much faster the walk had seemed with Eva being the central figure. They used to compare their latest tome finds, exchanging recommendations or warning the other.

On her wedding day, he expected Eva to be at his door, her small pink lips and a smile that reminded him of the steam rising in a cleansing closet, slow and sure.

Sometimes, her smile was quiet, and he thought of the grass peeking through the dirt. Sometimes she showed up without a smile, like the last few days, and he thought of his Marme fixing dinner, face tense.

Jeremiah lingered at the door. He wasn't sure you needed to go to the archiver's today. Weddings meant a full day, mostly for marital duties. The enclave would be empty.

The Wells tome was like a firebrand beneath his bed, and Jeremiah felt its heat rising every night. He had tried memorizing all the important parts, but his brain had trouble holding on. It was similar to holding water in his hand; it stayed for a bit, but eventually seeped through the cracks. Now he wanted to learn, and remember, other tomes, but his brain was near to bursting.

Ordinances were simple, and he knew them all. Obey Da. Obey Marme. At age 16, every woman has her place.

Chapter 7 of Well's tome? Jeremiah was confounded by the contents.

Weeks before, Eva mentioned another author she enjoyed, Russ something. He planned to look through the R's to find out more. Checking for a certain author could be a chore, and it would be faster with help.

Undoubtedly, Naltag would assist, but his invisible Aura was distracting, even as it was an asset. His mind ran through the smallest of people he knew, landing on Drevin last.

If only Drevin was not so close with Easton. Anything one did, the other found out about. Si ing through forbidden tomes would be shared quickly.

Besides Eva and Drevin, no one could help Jeremiah. When Darden was around, the two did everything together, even share tilling shi s. Then Darden's Marme became UnDesirable, and Darden sentenced to reprogramming. Jeremiah hardly saw his old friend anymore, and when he did, Darden didn't see him at all. Darden didn't see much of anything, it seemed.

Someone brushed by Jeremih, and he assumed it was Naltag. Then he spied Kilah's braids bouncing as she hurried past, and he had no idea. A stupid one.

"Kilah!"

She is ceased skipping. "Yes, brother?"

The size and shine of her eyes never ceased to amaze him. He smiled.

"Come," he beckoned.

Jeremiah wished to have a private conversation away from the open doors of enforcer training happening a few paces away.

A er he finished talking, he could tell it was going to work. Kilah appeared eager. She wasn't like other girls. She was smart, and reminded him of Eva. It was probably why he chose her for the task.

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