

Part 7. Jeremiah



In the morning, Jeremiah expected to wake with the stranger staring down at him. Maybe she had been standing vigil over him for hours, all night, watching his chest rise and fall. Had she sat down? Had she slept?

Jeremiah lay, staring at the cement ceiling, waiting for the stranger to grab him by the shoulders, shake him, and tell him to wait for morning ordinance.

The space she had occupied in his dorm was empty. He assumed the cold feeling would return, evidence of her cloaked presence, but an inspection of the dorm yielded nothing.

Musta dreamed her.

at

The guilt he had dispelled in denying her had manifested into a realistic dream, so realistic he had pulled his parents into it.

Over his bowl of fativa, Da asked him, "Your assignation proved satisfactory?"

Jeremiah's brow rose slightly. "Yes, sir."

"Positive?"

"Yes."

"No more nightmares then?"

That part of his dream was real. Marme's worried eyes and so hands checking him over for fever. Da's tired and lined face, demanding to know why they had been called. The stranger's hair, the cool slippery strands running through his fingers.

She's real, she's here, and I have to find her.

~*~

Jeremiah strolled leisurely, taking the long way to Quinten's office. He told himself the only reason for doing was to find her but it was also a relief to not walk by enforcer training. To miss out on Easton's gloating smile.

As the day continued, no creeping cold feelings alerted him to the stranger.

Jeremiah dropped less leaflets as he had the day before, but only because his mind was focused elsewhere. Eva initiated spots of conversation, which he dismissed. He had no time to indulge a girl's trivial needs. Quentin begrudgingly complimented his Apprentice skills, although he did so by comparing Jeremiah to Eva. He took the low blow with grace. In private, he was displeased.

"Time passes, you be fast as Evangeline," Jeremiah muttered on his trip back to the domicile.

Fast as a girl. HaAs if it was a pace he strived for. Nay, he strived to outpace her.

He forgot what most of his day had been devoted to, and ate his fativa in silence. Marme le o serving him seconds. Da nodded at Kilah to sit still and eat.

"Marme, water." Kilah swung her legs in her seat, ignoring Da's command.

"Marme's done serving. Get for self."

Marme frowned at his tone, but she sat. Kilah returned with her water, doing her best to settle in her chair quietly.

"How's assignation?" Da turned to Jeremiah.

All of Quentin's half-compliments and half-insults still roved round his head. He issued a generic response to Da. From his father's grunt, he had said the right thing.

In bed, he counted the ridges in the concrete ceiling. The ritual usually helped him sleep, but it wasn't tonight. His brain was too full: Easton's smile, Eva's sure hands, the assignation, and Da's inevitable disappointment. There was no room for the stranger. Indeed, Jeremiah had moved past her, believing her to be a part of his naivete. A trick, a dream.

And then he felt it.

~*~

[Continue reading next part](#) □