

16 16-His Ego Is Too Big

Helanie: 1

I slowed down, chewing my food as their gazes lingered on my face for a while.

"A whole week?" Lord McQuoid asked, while Norman tilted his head, as if trying to understand something.

"Yes," I replied, lowering my head swiftly, feeling ashamed to talk about the past week. Thankfully, no more questions came my way. Once the dinner ended, I cautiously lifted my gaze to watch Norman wipe his mouth and hands with a napkin before standing up.

Even the way he rose was so graceful. His cologne was also incredibly strong. No one moved as he exited through the door.

I wasn't eager for him to stay and listen to the conversation, but I suppose he had to be involved.

The moment I cleared my throat and slid to the edge of my seat, he paused and remained

standing, his hand resting on the back of his chair.

"I have a request," I said directly to Lord McQuoid, though it seemed everyone was eager to hear what I had to say.

"Sure, what is it?" he replied, a little hesitantly, trying to avoid his son's gaze as Norman silently observed our exchange.

"I've heard a lot of good things about the academy, so I was wondering... what test do I need to pass in order to be part of it?" I asked, and the room fell silent for a moment.

Not a single person moved until Charlotte suddenly burst into laughter. As all eyes turned toward her, she quickly raised a hand to cover her mouth, apologizing with her eyes.

"I wish I could help, but my sons run the academy. Norman and Maximus are responsible for admissions," Lord McQuoid said, glancing at his son, who adjusted his sleeves before gesturing for me to speak with him.

"Come to my office," Norman said, turning away but not yet leaving the room.

Without hesitation, I rose to my feet and followed him.

"You don't need to do all that," I heard my mother tugging gently at my old sweater, but I ignored her and hurried after Norman.

That's when he began walking forward again, making sure I was following him. We hadn't had a pleasant interaction since my arrival, so I wasn't sure what he intended to show me in his home office. However, when he started climbing the stairs, I realized his office wasn't on the second floor.

I wanted to ask him which floor we were heading to, as my legs were starting to cramp. He disappeared from sight after I had to stop to catch my breath.

Still, I pushed forward and eventually arrived on the fifth floor, sweaty and out of breath. The storm had quieted down a bit, though it was still raining. The clouds continued rumbling, displaying the immense power they held.

I found Norman standing there with his hands in his pockets.



"You want to be a part of my academy, but you can't even climb a few flights of stairs without looking like you're about to collapse," his comment made me straighten up, though I remained kneeling to ease the throbbing in my veins. 1

"That's because... I've never been trained. Isn't your academy known for training its students?" I asked, panting heavily. The look of disappointment and disgust on his face made me want to throw myself down the stairs just to escape his judgmental glares.

"We train those who can be trained. You don't even have a wolf--what exactly do you intend to accomplish at our academy?" he spat out, throwing my weakness in my face. I lowered my head in shame.

He wasn't wrong. I didn't have a wolf to rely on, no extra strength to protect myself.

"Maybe I just need a good trainer to bring out my wolf," I tried to reason with him, but he remained as rigid as ever.

"And what makes you think we would change our academy's rules just for you? We accept the best

students, not someone we have to train from scratch. If we operated that way, the academy would be overrun with students by now. We sift through admissions and select only the elite," his voice was unwavering, cold.

"Can I at least know what the tests are?" I asked, feeling it was my right to understand what lay ahead. If I failed, I would take responsibility for it myself.

"No! You are dismissed. Go pack your things, if you even have anything, and be ready to leave. Your attempts to find ways to remain a part of our family are pointless," he said, clearly thinking I wanted to stay with them, which was why I was asking about admission to the academy.

"I'm not--" I tried to explain, but once again, he cut me off, raising his hand to silence me. His attitude was starting to wear on my patience.

Why did he hate me so much? Was it because of his mother, or did he simply have a problem with the idea of having a sister? 3

He walked away to his office, leaving me to trudge back downstairs, exhausted, as if he'd worn me out just to prove a point. I was

disappointed, feeling like a complete failure. 1

Everywhere I go, I'm told I don't belong. First, I had to leave my pack, then I was kicked out of my mother's home, and now I'm apparently too weak to even ask about the admission criteria.

I returned to my room and found Charlotte and her mother sitting together on the bed.

Charlotte was in tears, and her mother was gently comforting her. The way they both looked at me made me wonder if it had something to do with me.

"Did you... get admission?" Charlotte asked through her sobs. Her mother's hand continuously ran through her daughter's hair, trying to soothe her.

"Did he take you to his office to give you the forms?" she sniffled, pressing on with more questions about the academy.

"Charlotte! Stop hurting yourself like this. You'll make yourself sick," Aunt Emma said softly, looking at her daughter with such love and concern. I couldn't help but wonder what Charlotte had done so right to deserve such affection. But why couldn't I be loved by my

mother? 1

"No! It's not fair. She'll get admitted and become the center of attention, all independent and everything," she cried. Was that really what was making her so upset?

Did she even know the life I had lived?

"I didn't get any forms," I said honestly, feeling a little bad for her. The thing she worried most about was how much attention I would receive. 2

I knew her life wasn't necessarily easy--I wasn't one to judge--but it was nothing like mine. Tomorrow morning, I'd be asked to leave, while she would cuddle up and sleep in her warm, cozy bed. Yet she compared her life to mine.

"Really? He didn't give you any forms?" Her face lit up, which caught me off guard.

"No. I'm too weak to even be considered a student at the academy," I finished, looking away as the smile on their faces slowly crushed my heart. 1

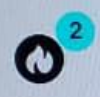
I lay down on my lonely mattress and turned my face to the wall while they remained behind me

on the bed, whispering about me for the next few minutes.

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