

Chapter 114

At the end of that momentous trial, Greg and Sush had a private candlelight dinner date in their newly purchased home, which had two extra rooms specifically allocated for Enora and Lewis whenever they wanted to spend a few nights there during the holidays. The property was situated within the kingdom but was only a twenty-minute drive to the newly built hunters headquarters, so Sush would see warriors and archers standing guard on her way to work everyday.

Despite the disappointment in how things ended with Hazel's case, Sush woke up with a smile every morning to admire the mark on her neck through the mirror and the other mark on her nape where the five-limb octopus morphed into a crown with five spikes. At a cursory glance, the latter mark looked like a crown, but upon closer inspection, she could see that it was merely an evolved version of her five-limb octopus, its limbs stretching further upward and covering part of its head.

As the new commander, she now had the abilities of a chameleon and archer as well, though her opinionated forelimbs were still her favorite part of herself. Having made peace with her past, she had no doubt that she was living the dream. She had a career she loved, a healthy professional circle, a mate that was a wild animal in bed and a complete gentleman whenever he wasn't getting her wet and making her beg and scream. An annoying gentleman sometimes... maybe a little arrogant too, and he could occasionally be a little demanding to their subordinates, but he made her smile nonetheless.

As their wine glasses tapped with a cling, Greg uttered, "I have to admit, nothing the Forest of Oderem could offer would top the months of public embarrassment and tainted legacies of the fallen heroes, save in the Traffic Cone's case. The forest could have done a better job with

her.”

Her lips quirked at the sardonic nickname - heroes. Scoffing, she tried not to let the Hazel debacle get to her like it still did whenever she thought about it, and chose to instead say, “Larissa’s case came as a shock. I thought they’d let her off the hook like they did Hazel.”

As Greg poured more wine into her glass, he uttered, “Traffic Cone is easily perceived as being mentally insane, even in court. That warning hazard can act. The Red Devil, on the other hand, looked better than fine, which was probably the issue.”

Swirling her drink as Greg’s fork pierced into his food, Sush said, “It doesn’t really seem fair, does it - Larissa, I mean - the man cheats on his wife, who then resorts to act out of justifiable anger, and it’s the wife who ends up with a death sentence?”

Greg responded nonchalantly, “Blame the justice system in human territory. Whips - that sometimes result in death - are issued here in the kingdom if affairs are ever brought to court.”

Some of the wine Sush was pouring in through her lips slipped out and she almost choked. “Seriously?” she asked while reaching to her mouth with the back of her hand.

Greg placed his cutlery back on the table and leaned over with his napkin to gently dab away the excess as he explained matter-of-factly, “Infidelity doesn’t just disrespect one’s marked mate, it disrespects our Goddess who bestowed the bond, so yes, it’s treated as a crime.”

“Wow,” she murmured, too shocked to speak any louder as Greg’s hand and napkin left her face, but not before his thumb brushed across her chin and jaw in an affectionate graze.

As they returned to their meal, they went over their plans for the next day , being the start of their honeymoon. They agreed to postpone it until the trial was over, and now that it was, they were handing the reins to

their subordinates - Sush to Millicent, Patterson, and Kenji; Greg to his top four - as they themselves took an extended leave from work.

The mavericks and hunters had been sharing everything since Sush and Agu took the helm of their respective departments, from knowledge in tech to sketches and prototypes - much to Kenji's excitement. As the new Chief Octopus, he was ecstatic to own some of the mavericks' gadgets, even working with Baxter and a few others over the phone to tweak and enhance the creations. He was also enjoying the fact that his hands could work on one thing while his mind thought through something else, a sentiment shared by many octopuses who had accepted their non-verbal but highly opinionated forelimbs.

Kenji used to think that he didn't have the mental capacity to multitask, but the new ability had proved him wrong. He was still based in the east, but continued working closely with the west, flying over once a month to check on the western octopuses' progress and aid in setbacks if Sush ever needed an extra brain and pair of hands.

The collaboration between hunters and the kingdom was revolutionary, and many celebrated the interspecies couple who couldn't care less about public support or lack thereof but appreciated the well wishes nonetheless.

While doing the dishes together, Sush and Greg brainstormed something that they had been building for Enora and Lewis because the pups were going to stay with them for a week during their two-month break from school. They went over the mechanics and necessary precautions over and over again, suggesting modifications to make sure everything would be safe yet fun, novel yet surmountable.