

Chapter 79 78-2 (Bonus Scene 1/2)

After the meal, the families strolled around the greenery of small trees and flower beds, mingling with other families and teachers. Pups either left their parents' side to play with their friends or were clung onto tightly by their respective parents as their teacher spilled every detail on their grades and behavior in class. Some grinned with pride while others hid behind their parents' legs, which were as good a hiding spot as having none.

Little Ken was well-loved in terms of character and behavior, but could use some help in sports.

Reida and Ianne were a lovable pair mostly due to their inquisitive nature, but their chatter during lessons was incredibly hard to stop. The teachers - especially the science teacher - appreciated that their chats were about the scrawls of facts and processes on the board, but he made it a point to note that he'd appreciate it more if their discussion didn't come when he was still talking and trying to get the pups to pay attention.

Lewis was adored by many but remained an enigma to some - he was too quiet. Several teachers were concerned about this and his tendency to keep to himself, even during recess.

Enora didn't know about her siblings and cousins but she was beyond relieved her teachers hadn't said anything too bad about her. And that was only because - unlike them - her teachers had to call her parents every few weeks (or days) when she was caught doing something she shouldn't be doing. The feedback was already given through those phone calls, so there wasn't anything new to add.

Grateful that her archery win wasn't dampened by the impromptu

feedback session, she capitalized on the positive mood and asked her parents if she could go to the pond with Greg and Sush later that evening. When the "of course" came from her mother's lips and her father gently brushed her hair as a sign of acquiescence, the pup leaped into the air in excitement then ran over to Uncle Greg two feet away to tell him.

Lewis wasn't far and he heard this. With a frantic tug on his mother's skirt, he said, "Mommy, I wanna go to the pond, too." He didn't even know which pond he was talking about but he knew he wanted to go.

Annie was hesitant, not because of Sush or Greg, but because her husband had issues with Greg, justifiably so. Turning to her husband, she linked, 'This is Lewis coming out of his shell, Christian. He's never asked to go out before. He could start taking pictures that are not within the confines of home.'

'We could always take him to a few places for that during the weekends, my duchess,' Christian answered briskly, reluctant to let his pup anywhere close to Greg. He may as well throw his son into a tank of sharks... Scratch that. Lewis would most likely be safer if he was tossed into a tank of sharks. Who knew what Greg would do?

Annie tried again. 'He wants to go because Sush is going, Christian. You know that.'

Facing his wife with a deep frown, his hushed link echoed, 'Annie... It's dangerous. He's dangerous.'

Granted, Greg had never hurt the Paw-Claws, who he stood by and protected over and over again, but that didn't mean the same courtesy was extended to the Blackfurs. They couldn't stand each other with their moral compasses not always pointing in the same direction. They may have been civil in recent years, but civility didn't connote unbridled trust. What if Greg did something to Lewis?

'We could go with them,' Annie suggested, placing her hand over his, her thumb grazing his knuckles as the tension in his body loosened under her touch, the stubborn glint of onyx in his eyes fading away.

Accidentally catching his son's pleading gaze ping ponging between him and Annie, he released a conflicted sigh. He cast a glance at Greg, who was updating Lucy and Xandar about the hunters while Sush let Enora drag her around as the pup pointed to various parts of the kindergarten and telling her where the classrooms, playrooms, lunch room, teacher's lounge, and restrooms were, and also where she hid when she shot Lionel MacDonald with her classmate's crossbow.

Christian remained pessimistic. He knew Sush, but what was the degree of power she had in her relationship with Greg?

Flickering his gaze back to the other duke who now had one hand in his pocket in a serious pose, Christian responded to his wife, 'I doubt he'd say yes to that. It's his and Enora's bonding session, and now with Sush - for them to warm up to each other, though I doubt Enora needs any coaxing.'

'If Greg says we can tag along, would you be okay with Lewis going?'

Christian instinctively met his son's gaze again. The boy seemed to have deduced that it was his father's permission that remained pending, which made him say, "I pwomise to keep my toys before bed next time, Daddy. Can I go to the pond with Sushi?"

Well, when he put it that way...it actually sounded like a good deal.

Lewis normally played before bed and although he kept the toys on some nights, he'd actually fall asleep amongst them on most nights, so the mess would either be there until the next day; be kept by their housekeeper, Mrs. Clifford; or be cleared by Christian and Annie themselves.

Leveling himself with his pup, he ruffled the boy's hair and said, "Let's go

ask Uncle Greg."

Lewis's anxious face lit up and he made a dash toward Greg, surprising his parents with his speed, making Christian ask Annie, "Could he always run that fast? He always takes forever to come in from the garden for dinner."

Lucy was saying something about having to be careful when Lewis boldly stepped next to Greg, pulled at his pants and asked if he could join him, Sush, and Enora at the pond.

Xandar's brows shot to his hair.

The words that Lucy was going to say drifted from her brain, no longer retrievable.

Greg began suspecting he was in a dream. That, or Little Blackfur ran up to the wrong creature.

Eyes finding the other duke, Christian's face was in equal parts disgruntled and reluctant when he uttered with visible difficulty, "May we join the three of you? Annie and I will be out of your hair - just watching."

And we'll be witnesses if you get our son poisoned or murdered, Greg added in his own mind since he doubted Blackfur knew about his no-violence-against-pups code.

After the longest five-second deliberation, Greg turned and his face softened when he called out, "Sweetheart."

Enora paused her tour-guiding and pulled Sush along as she sauntered back toward Greg, eyes widening in curiosity.

Getting down on one knee, Greg explained, "Lewis wants to come with us. What do you think? Should we get more bread for the pond later?"

Enora's eyes sparkled when she turned to her cousin. "You feed duckies, too?"

Lewis's eyes were on Sush until Enora's question came. Embarrassed to admit he'd never fed ducks before, he simply leaned into what he thought was the right answer. "Um...yes?"

"Yay!" Enora then turned back to Greg. "We need more bread later, Uncle Gweg."

Her uncle beamed as Lewis did a subtle leap of happiness, but the pup blushed when he met Sush's smiling eyes.

###

By the pond, each pup held a brown paper bag with stale bread. Lewis sat on Sush's lap after seeing Enora falling naturally into Greg's own.

Christian and Annie sat at one of the two benches nearby, eyes pinned on the pups at the pond.

Greg found the stares invasive, but Enora didn't seem to mind, nor did Sush, who was helping Lewis tear up the bread into smaller pieces. Since his niece and octopus were fine, Greg made no comment, and concentrated on not letting Enora assault the ducks instead, which proved to be a not-so-tedious task this time around. Perhaps her archery win got her to show mercy on the animals.

"Do you feed duckies often, Sushi?" Enora piped, pivoting to her after hurling another piece near the fourth duckling that was too slow to get any bread when the other three gobbled the food first.

"Not really," Sush answered honestly. The last time she fed anything - a duck in the pond, a fish in an aquarium at a friend's place - she was no older than ten. "I forgot how much fun it was."

Enora's head cocked. "What do you do for fun, Sushi?"

Sush's lips parted, but she abruptly stopped herself from saying that her job and the ongoing concerns in hunters' headquarters provided little time for rest, let alone fun, and chose to say, "Well, I either go to the park

for a walk or to the archery range for a few hours.”

Enora’s lilac orbs shimmered in excitement. “You go to the park, too?” Gaze shooting to her uncle, the pup eagerly chimed, “Uncle Gweg, Sushi goes to the park like us. But we never see her. We can go to the park with Sushi next time.”

In Enora’s mind, there was only one park in existence - the one Greg and her parents always brought her to. “Lewis, you wanna come to the park next time? We can see birds’ nests!” she asked even before Greg said a word in response, omitting to mention that seeing birds’ nests meant shooting them off the trees.

Lewis’s eyes lit up for a moment, then dimmed again when he cast a wary glance at his parents. “I’ll have to ask Daddy.”

Sush’s heart sank when Lewis’s face fell. Gently brushing the boy’s hair, she reassured, “As long as you keep your toys before bed like you promised, I’m sure your daddy will let you come.”

The boy brightened a little with that reassurance and the soothing sound of Sush’s voice. After finishing up throwing his share of the bread, he stood and got to work with his camera, taking pictures of the pond, trees, Greg and Enora, and many pictures of Sush - on the boulder, under the tree, near a duck when a duck waddled toward them.

The sight of Little Blackfur clicking with his camera reminded Greg of the pictures of Enora that he wanted from the archery competition, and he leaned closer to Sush to whisper a favor into her ear.

Eyes narrowed, Sush’s expression spoke louder than any words could, which screamed a clear-cut no.

I’ve changed the first paragraph of Chapter 60 from:

“It must have taken a lot out of you,” Sush taunted with a smirk when

they were in the car after dropping off Enora at the royal residence, promising to pick her up for ice-cream and a trip to the park later.

to


"It must have taken a lot out of you," Sush taunted with a smirk when they were in the car after dropping off Enora at the royal residence, promising to pick her up for ice-cream and a trip to the park next time.



Send Gift



Comments

 Watch Ads to Get 8 Vouchers