

Kidnapped And Rejected

Chapter 201 - 208

Chapter 201

It was almost 12 o'clock at night.

When Daran stepped into the packhouse's lobby, he was immediately welcomed by a hectic crowd.

There was a worried and tensed expression on every maid and servant's face.

Casper stood in the center of the crowd, with Balvina by his side, and was roaring at the soldiers:

"-I don't fucking care how you find her! You can search the mountain and turn this pack upside down and it is fine with me! JUST FUCKING FIND HER!!!"

Daran's face tensed immediately.

"What is going on?" Morgana cried behind Daran's back.

Casper clenched his fists and gritted, "...Janet is missing."

Morgana rounded her eyes, "What do you mean missing? She was at the vineyard yesterday with me! And Daran told me that she drove back by herself earlier today. Where has she been since?"

"We wished that we knew!" Balvina said with a frustrated face, "The surveillance camera captured her going into the back mountain a couple of hours ago. But there has been no sign of her since."

Daran pulled out his phone and wanted to try Janet's number.

But Casper stopped him, "Don't bother. We tried that already. At first, it just kept ringing. Then her phone was turned off."

That was definitely odd.

Why would Janet turn off her phone?

“Let’s not get too wired up.” Morgana said, trying to ease up people’s nerves, “She went into the mountain, right? Maybe she went hiking. Let’s see if she comes back. tomorrow morning.”

“But hiking during the night? Without letting anyone know? It doesn’t sound like her!” Casper said urgently.

Anxiety boiled up in Daran’s chest.

He found this strange as well.

Then he thought back to the note that she left him on the pillow, which read:

Don’t want
to *wake you up*. *I am heading back to the packhouse first. Something I need to deal with. Come and find me when you are back.* Love, Janet.

...Something she needed to deal with...

Daran snapped his head up and hissed, “Where the hell is Westin!”

Blank shock showed in people’s faces.

“...W–We didn’t see him,” Balvina stuttered.

A soldier stepped up and said, “We searched the Lycan’s room earlier. Didn’t find Princess Janet there.”

“What about Westin and his own men?” Daran pursued.

The soldier shook his head, “Their rooms are all empty. No sign of King Westin, nor his men.”

“What the fuck-“Casper cried.

“Janet came back to talk to Westin,” Daran said in a hurried voice. “She is ending things with him. If their conversation didn’t go well-”

Balvina covered her mouth with her hands, “You think he will hurt her?!”

“How dare he!” Casper roared furiously, “This is the Blood Moon Pack! I don’t fucking care if he is a Lycan! I will skin him alive if he touches my sister!!”

Just then, Kass strode into the lobby with a group of soldiers behind him.

“I searched the mountain. I didn’t find Janet,” he said hastily. “But this guy said that he knew something.”

He called to the soldiers, and they brought up a steward.

The steward seemed panic-stricken. He dropped to his knees and cried in a shaky voice, “I—I talked to Princess Janet around dusk...”

“Why didn’t you say something sooner!” Casper rushed forward and grabbed the steward’s collar, “What did she say?!”

“She asked me where King Westin was...I told her that King Westin went into the back mountain, and she said that she would go find him...”

This confirmed Daran’s word!

Janet was really with Westin before she went missing!

“Search for Westin!!” Casper yelled, “Find the Lycans! NOW!”

“I have my men on it already.”

Kass looked up from his phone with an anxious face, “They just reported back...The surveillance camera captured a car leaving the packhouse and heading down south 2 hours ago...”

“They took Janet away!” Balvina shrieked angrily.

Daran turned on his heels abruptly and dashed to the front door.

Rage and hatred clouded his mind.

...Westin!

When he found that son of a bitch, he would fucking KILL HIM!

<hr/>Janet woke up from the slumber with a splitting headache and found herself in the back of a truck.

Memory from before she passed out came back to her gradually.

And she remembered, the conversation she had with Westin, how he hit her on the neck and knocked her out.

She tried to sit up.

But then she found that both of her hands and feet were tied up with ropes. There was also duct tape on her mouth, keeping her from crying out for help.

She also got a bitter taste in her mouth. Probably wolfsbane. To keep her from shifting.

Fury surged up in her chest.

...Westin!

Where was that fucking jerk taking her?!

She used her knees and elbows to crawl forward and approached the back door of the truck. The door rattled as the car drove forward and there was a crack between the doors.

She narrowed her eyes and peeked through that narrow crack.

They were driving down a freeway.

It didn't seem anywhere she had been to before.

The roadsides were lined with brown and withered vegetation. Everything seemed bleak and deserted. There weren't any buildings within her sight.

The moon was hanging in the middle of the night sky.

Janet remembered that she was knocked over before the night fell completely.

So if she hadn't stayed unconscious for more than one day, it probably would have been just a couple of hours.

And it was highly likely that they were still in Blood Moon Pack.

Which meant that there was still a chance for her to escape.

Janet took in a deep breath.

She gathered all her might and kicked on the rattling door with both of her legs!

BANG!

A loud noise echoed in the truck.

She kicked again.

BANG!

The truck halted to a sharp stop.

She perked up her ears and heard sounds of the door opening and closing, heavy footsteps approaching, and then-

The truck's door was wrenched up from the outside.

Westin stood outside of the truck. Silver moonlight depicted his handsome profile.

He looked at her furious face and lifted his lips into a faint smile:

“What is the matter? Are you hungry? Or do you need to pee?”

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Chapter 202

Chapter 202

Janet made a muffled *cr*

Her mouth was still taped.

She couldn't speak.

The smile on Westin's lips deepened as he said, “Oh my apologies. You can't talk without that duct tape on your mouth. But if I take that off, can you promise me to be a good girl and stay quiet?”

It sounded like he was talking to his lap dog!

Janet glared at him in silence. If one's gaze could kill, Westin would have died a million times.

Westin smiled. “I know that you are angry. But screaming is just a waste of energy Let me remind you that we are in the middle of nowhere. Nobody will come to your rescue

even if you cry out loud. So how about we keep things civil and have a nice conversation like the grownups? Deal?”

Janet wanted to rip off that smug face of his and tear it into a thousand pieces.

But she was in his hands now.

Struggling did her no good.

She had to deal with this delicately.

After a short pause, she gave him a small nod.

“Excellent,” Westin beamed.

He ripped that duct tape off her mouth.

Once her mouth was free, Janet immediately sucked in a deep breath, hungry for the fresh air.

“Why are you doing this?” she demanded at once.

Westin chuckled lightly, “Because I love you, Janet, and you are going to leave me for another man. Jealousy makes people do crazy things.”

“LIE!” Janet hissed, “You have no feelings for me! So stop insulting me with what you call ‘love’ and give me the truth!”

The smile on his lips faded a little.

“I do have some feelings for you, Janet. You can’t deny that,” he said flatly.

Janet gave him a look of deep disgust, “You are such a shameless liar. Just cut the crap, will you?”

Those words seemed to bite physically into Westin.

He took in a deep breath.

That charismatic smile on his face was completely gone now.

“Fine.”

He said darkly, crossing his arms, “I need a werewolf as Queen.”

Janet rounded her eyes.

That was his big reason?

He needed a werewolf wife, so he abducted her?!

WHAT THE FUCK!

“There are many she-wolves who are crazy about you. Like those maids in the Grace Ruin, even some girls in Blood Moon Pack! You can very well find a woman who is willing. Why the hell does it have to be me!” she cried angrily.

Westin clicked his tongue impatiently:

“Those lowborn women are good to have some casual fun with. They don’t deserve to be my queen.”

Janet’s body trembled in rage, “So I deserve to have you? Oh my! How lucky am I!”

Westin pretended that he didn’t sense Janet’s sarcastic tone and replies in an

“Inst a she wolt with a noble identity. You happen to have that. Plus you are my mate Everything works out perfectly

Except that he didn’t take her will into consideration!

What an egoistic prick!

“Why do you need a werewolf as Queen? I thought you found the werewolves beneath you,” she asked gruntly.

“That is none of your business,” he said, orthand.

Did he even listen to himself while he talke

“Then don’t expect me to play along!” she huttest, “I will right you tooth and nail! i will smash the fucking crown you place on my head and stomp on it so hard that

He caught her throat forcefully with one hand.

“Why did you choose Daran over me, lanet? Things would have been so much easier it you had made the right choice,” he said in a bleak voice.

She struggled, fiercely.

But couldn’t break free from his mon grip

“I am a much better partner than Daran. You know that,” he said while tightening his grip around her throat. “I know how to please a woman, how to make her laugh, how to satisfy her need. You could have it all, Janet. Why do you have to push me away?”

Janet couldn't breathe.

Her body began to twitch in suffocation.

Westin leaned in and whispered into her ears, “There are 3 to 4 days ahead before we arrive at the Lycan's land...I think it is better if you stay asleep.”

He squeezed his hand.

Janet's eyes rolled to the back.

She passed out again..

The Blood Moon Pack had lapsed into complete chaos since Princess Janet went missing.

All the soldiers were sent out to look for her.

Thes south,

camera captured Westin's car leaving the packhouse and heading

Daran and Casper brought an army with them and went down south following that lead.

But they lost track of Westin again near the pack's border.

The car that Westin took out of the packhouse was abandoned by the roadside.

They searched the car, but it was clean. There wasn't a shred of evidence that could lead the investigation for them.

Casper had the soldiers searched the border, inch by inch, exhausting **all** their resources, and turning the soil upside down.

He refused to leave until he found his sister.

But still, there were no signs of Westin and Janet whatsoever.

It almost seemed that they vanished in thin air.

On the third day, everyone was forced to face the harsh reality-

Janet was gone.

“FUCK!”

Casper cursed loudly and stubbed the cigarette butt on the front of his car with all his might.

The search team had just reported back to him: Today’s search was in vain, again. He and Daran were standing on the borderline, gazing into the distance. The sun was setting into the horizon, casting a bleak light onto the wilderness.

Another day was gone.

Chances of finding Janet became slimmer and slimmer with the past of time.

“It is all my fault.”

Casper said, raking his fingers through his hair, frustrated:

“I should never let the Lycans step into our pack! I should ask Janet to stay away from that bastard on day one-

“No. It is not your fault. I am the one to blame,” Daran said darkly. “I should have killed Westin long before and eliminated all risks. But I didn’t...I couldn’t.”

He didn’t have what it took to kill a Lycan.

...And **that** was what he blamed himself the most.

Casper took a quick glance at Daran.

The two of them didn’t have any shut eyes in days, but Daran was in worse shape.

His eyes were bloodshot. There were dark circles under his eyes.

Even under great stress, he was still very handsome with no doubt. But it seemed as though part of his soul was missing.

There was a haunted look in his eyes, a mixture of fear, frustration, and desperate determination.

“You should get some sleep,” Casper couldn’t help but say. “You can’t keep up like this. It will crush you.”

Daran said without hesitation, “I will sleep when I find Janet.”

Casper understood his worry.

But how long was that going to be?

If they were being realistic, it could be days, months, or even years before they found Janet..

Daran would definitely crush at some point.

Casper wanted to talk some sense into Daran. But before he said anything, a series of footsteps came from the near distance.

He turned around and found Balvina running towards them, with Morgana and Kass behind her back.

“Casper! Daran!” she cried in a hurried voice.

“What are you doing here!” Casper rushed to her, “I told you to stay and rest in the packhouse. You are pregnant-

Balvina grabbed his hand, breathing very fast, “Forget that! Morgana just told me that there was a way to find Janet!”

Daran jerked around abruptly, and his bloodshot eyes widened.

“What did you say?!” he snapped.

Morgana nodded hastily, “It just occurred to me...Daran, you are the only one who can take us to Janet!”

Casper blinked in a daze, “What are you talking about? Daran doesn’t know where they are either-”

“He doesn’t, for now, because it is impossible for us werewolves to track the Lycans.”

Morgana stared at Daran.

“Which is why I think it is time for you to become the Werewolf King, Daran.”

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Chapter 203

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There was a short moment of silence.

Then Daran spoke up with a tight frown, "We don't know if that will help us. find Janet."

"But we gotta try!" Morgana balled her fists, saying hastily. "The Lycans apparently don't want a Werewolf King. Why? Because the Werewolf King is the only person who has the power to stand up to the Lycans! Possibly the only one who can track. down the Lycans! That is our only chance!"

"Then let's do it!" Casper said hoarsely, "I am willing to make a deal with a devil just to get my sister back!"

All eyes were on Daran at the moment, waiting for him to make a decision.

Yet the furrow between his brows grew deeper.

And he still hadn't said anything.

"What the fuck are you waiting for Daran! Don't you want to get Janet back?" Casper snapped.

Morgana was equally perplexed, "Yeah, what is the hold-up? I thought this was what you want the most! You even made friends with Lance for this! We are handing you the crown right now. What the hell are you waiting for?"

Daran took in a deep breath, an anxious expression on his face.

He wanted this. Yes. But...

He could still remember how Janet accused him of being manipulative and power-hungry.

After that night in the vineyard, he decided to give up on his plan.

Janet didn't like a power-hungry man. Fine. Then he wouldn't be that g
guy.

He wanted to prove to Janet that between her and the power, she was the more important one.

If she found out that he crowned himself as King behind her back, would she be mad at him again?

But he couldn't stand her being mad at him.

What he couldn't stand was losing her forever.

"...Let's do this. Now," he said hoarsely.

Casper cried out at once, "Great! So how does this work? How can he become the Werewolf King?"

"Lance told us that this ritual involves the Rogue King offering his blood voluntarily to an Alpha," Morgana said quickly. "Kass, will you?"

Kass stepped up at once.

He pulled out a dagger and made a cut on his hand. Blood dripped down from his fingertips.

"What should I do? Feed my blood to you?" he asked.

"Hand me that dagger," Daran said.

Holding the dagger in his hand, Daran turned the point to himself and struck it directly into his chest!

Blood gushed out immediately.

The crowd gasped together.

"What are you doing!" Casper cried.

"It will kill you!" Balvina yelled.

"No...No it won't...That was how Lance did it..."

Daran held his wounded chest, his face quickly turning pale due to the blood loss.

"Now...drip your blood onto my wound."

He said to Kass, gritting his teeth in pain.

“...And say that you recognize me as King to rule both worlds, the werewolves and the rogues...”

Kass held his hand on Daran’s wound.

He squeezed his fists.

Blood dripped down, seeped into the wound, and mixed with Daran’s blood.

He began in a strained voice:

“I, Kastor Lane, the King of the Rogues, hereby recognize Daran Albright as the Werewolf King, sovereign of the werewolves and the rogues!”

Everyone held their breaths, staring at Daran’s bleeding wound.

“Look!” Balvina gasped.

A ray of light shone from his bleeding wound, as though his heart was just set on fire!

That light quickly spread to the rest of his body.

His veins were illuminated under his skin. It almost seemed that hot lava was flooding in his veins, not blood.

Daran made a painful cry and dropped down on one knee.

Veins popped on his forehead. His body trembled violently, as though going through some unbearable pain.

He snapped his head up-

Intricate patterns had crawled up onto his face, threading around his eyes.

And the color of his pupils has changed as well.

It became a golden red, like a burning fire!

“What is going on!!” Casper yelled, taking a step back. “Is that—Is that normal?!” Morgana cried back, “We don’t know! Nobody here has ever become King before!”

Daran arched his back in pain.

He opened his mouth.

A deafening howl escaped his throat.

He shifted into a giant black wolf—even larger than his original size—and the light within his body grew brighter.

With a booming noise, flames soared up, consuming the black wolf.

The scorching heat caused everyone to stumble back in panic.

“There is definitely something wrong!” Casper roared, “FUCK! If he burns himself, how will we find Janet?!”

Kass cried, “Don’t worry! Maybe this works like the phoenix’s rebirth! Dying in the flames and reborn from the ashes-

“But he is not a phoenix, isn’t he?! He is just a fucking wolf!”

The soaring flames burned for minutes before gradually dying out.

The crowd rushed in at once.

They found a giant wolf lying on the ashes.

Its whole body was now imprinted with intricate patterns. A patch of golden fur appeared on its forehead.

“Daran!” Morgana crouched down and called into its ears.

The wolf’s eyelids fluttered and then slowly opened up.

Those eyes were like fierce flames.

“I can smell the Lycans.”

Daran spoke up in a weak yet firm voice.

“They are gathered in the Alai Mountains down south. We should leave, now.”

<hr/>Janet slowly opened her eyes.

It felt as though she had been asleep for a very, very long time.

Her body was numb and stiff. Her mind was blank. It took her a long while to realize where she was.

She was still lying in the back of that truck, which was packed still right now.

She tried to pull herself up but couldn’t gather a shred of energy.

Probably because of the wolfsbane that they fed her.

Or simply because she hadn't eaten anything in a long time.

...How long had it been since Westin abducted her?

It felt like days, which meant that they had left the Blood Moon Pack already and it would be even more difficult for her to escape.

Janet struggled to sit up and came close to the truck's door.

Her hands were no longer tied.

So she raised a hand and carefully pushed the iron door.

It swung open a crack.

The door was not locked!

Janet reined her excitement as she pushed the door a little further, taking a peek outside.

She saw an endless green, accompanied by muggy heat.

The truck seemed to have driven into a rainforest.

And the best part was—nobody was around now.

Janet didn't think twice before jumping off the truck and dashed forward as fast as she could!

Her heart pounded in her chest as she stumbled through the dense woods.

She didn't know where she was going.

A heavy fog veiled the path ahead, making every step a gamble.

But that didn't matter.

As long as she was getting away from the truck, it was fine.

Her clothes clung to her skin as she ran. The mud-slicked ground made each step difficult. But she pushed forward anyway.

The forest was extremely quiet with the heavy fog, broken only by her labored breaths and hurried steps, creating an eerie atmosphere.

After what felt like 20 minutes, Janet finally saw a vague shadow behind the mist ahead.

Could it be a passerby?

Maybe she could ask for help.

Janet picked up her pace, closing the gap between her and that shadow.

And eventually, she saw clearly what that shadow was.

... It was the exact truck that she escaped from!

Janet stood on her spot, and froze, her chest heaving, with a chill running down her spine.

She had circled back to the beginning point.

What the fuck was wrong with this goddamn place!

A hand was placed on her shoulder from behind.

Janet jumped.

Somebody leaned close to her ears and whispered with a smile in his voice: "Welcome to the Lycan's land, my love."

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Chapter 204

Chapter 204

Janet's back became stiff.

Slowly, she turned around to face him.

You have been watching me the whole time?" she asked in a cold voice.

Westin gave her a crooked smile, "I didn't want to stop you from your daily exercise.

You have slept for days. It is good to stretch out a bit."

Janet suppressed the temptation to slap him, "Why did I circle back here? I ran straight ahead!"

"You thought you ran straight ahead. But the fog in these mountains had its own power. Outsiders are bound to get lost. Only Lycans know the way around it."

Janet bit her lips in frustration.

Fuck.

No wonder Westin untied her.

Now she couldn't escape even if she managed to find a moment alone.

"Speaking of which-"

Westin caught her chin, raised her head up, and stared into her eyes, "Do you know that Daran just became the Werewolf King?"

Janet was stunned, "What?"

"That is right. I just got a message back from my man, saying that he officially crowned himself earlier today. You see. He doesn't really care about you that much. Once you are gone, he simply can't wait to embrace his dear power."

Janet's heart rate quickened for a short moment.

But she quickly calmed herself down.

"You are wrong," she said.

The cocky smile froze on Westin's lips. "How so?"

"Werewolf can't track the Lycans. If Daran wants to find me, the only way is to become the Werewolf King first. He didn't do it for the power. He did it for me." Westin's face gradually darkened.

"You have a lot of confidence in him," he snorted.

"Of course because he is the man I love-"

Westin tightened his grip on Janet's chin abruptly.

“Do not say that you love him in front of me!” he hissed.

Janet stared back at him defiantly, “Why? The mighty Lycan King can’t handle a little truth?”

Just then, footsteps came from their backs.

A group of Lycans emerged from the mist. Standing up front was Edwin.

“My King,” Edwin said. “The elders and Lady Agnes are expecting you at the castle’s front gate-”

“Not now!” Westin growled.

Edwin held his head down low.

He and the other Lycans immediately drew back into the fog again.

“You should go,” Janet looked at him coldly. “Lady Agnes is waiting for you.”

Westin let go of her chin.

After a short pause, he spoke up in a business-like tone, “Let’s make a deal, Janet.”

“I am not interested in making any-”

“You will hear me out,” he said forcefully. “When I bring you in front of the elders later, I expect you to behave obediently. You will pretend that we are in love, and you

can’t wait for us to mate.”

Janet let out a loud, sarcastic laugh, “And why would I do that?”

“Because there is no escape for you, whatsoever,” Westin said grimly. “Work with me, you will have my protection in the castle. Disobey me, I will leave you to be skinned alive by the Lycans. Let me warn you—some of my people are not very fond of you werewolves.”

Janet narrowed her eyes.

She could tell that Westin’s threat was real.

And there was one thing that caught her attention particularly-

“Why do I need your protection in your own castle?” she asked.

Westin clicked his tongue but didn't say anything.

Janet continued, "Let me guess, your home isn't exactly a wonderland, is it?"

Someone is a threat to you, right? Possibly...the elders?"

Westin crossed his arms, a defensive posture, "Do you have to be such a know-it-all the whole time?"

"When my life is in danger, I prefer to stay on top of things."

He let out a short laugh, "I will fill you in about everything once we have a deal. So, Janet, do we have a deal?"

Janet quietly evaluated the situation for a while.

"Only temporary."

She said eventually, "I will put on an act with you in front of the elders. But you can't force me to recognize the mate bond."

"Fine." Westin shrugged, "In the end, you will come around yourself."

His attitude was condescending and arrogant.

He probably believed that Janet didn't have any choice but to work with him now that she was in his hands.

But Janet knew that the Lycan's land wouldn't hold her forever.

Sooner or later, she would find a way out of this.

She always did.

They briefly shook hands on their temporary partnership.

Westin blew a whistle. Edwin and the other Lycans stepped out of the fog again.

"Let us go," Westin said to them, hopping into the car.

The car drove forward, deeper into the mist that hung over the rainforest.

This time, Janet was granted the chance to sit in the passenger's seat.

She peered out of the car window.

The winding mountain road clung to the slopes like a serpentine ribbon, carrying them further into the heart of the majestic peaks.

The air grew crisper, and the scent of pine trees mingled with the distant aroma of wildflowers.

Then, as if emerging from the very stone of the mountains, a grand castle appeared in the valley below.

Janet couldn't help but let out a little gasp of shock

"Pretty amazing, huh?" Westin asked by her side.

Janet kept her eyes on that approaching castle.

She didn't want to admit it.

But it was the most amazing architecture she had seen so far.

The castle stood like a sentinel, its spires reaching towards the heavens, and its walls adorned with intricate carvings.

It seemed to defy gravity, nestled against the imposing backdrop of the peaks, and its towers touched the edges of the passing clouds.

The setting sun bathed the castle in a warm, golden glow, casting a magical aural over the entire valley.

Janet had seen many great architectures before.

The **exotic palace** built on the wasteland of the Grace Ruin.

See lanes could get a closer look at these people, a slim figure rushed in and threw herself into Weson's arms.

"Wesam" she gasped a sweet voice.

A slight smile appeared on Westin's as he held that woman tightly. "Agnes, how are you? I heard that you were sick"

"Don't listen to them. I am fine I just really miss you. That is all she said"

So this was the woman that Westin cared about the most

James surveyed her

She was dressed in a my long dress made of silk and lace. The skin fluttered in the hosen as she moved.

Be skin was pale, almost ansturen. The jaimes flush of rose touched the desi

langs could tell that she spent most of her in indoors.

Bet Jeanines were reimed, each time and contour sculed with the precision of a mastet artisan

High chestbones gave her an aristocratic elegance, and her one-like eyes pools of vulnerability, stacked with an intare swarmeSS

She possessed a fragile and pine worldly beauty firm made any man who save V in mer her

“Agnes”

Westin sounder around to face lane and intodved them. “I want you to me with To make my Tuture queen, Janet Nanning”

A warm smile tugged at Agnes’s lims as she stepped up and pulled are in for a nus

“Of course, I have been looking forward to seeing you. Jates,” sie said softly

She looked nice.

Yet later was on high aler

She still remembered how this woman called her “h-tempered and ill-namered behind her back

“Thank you.” Janer said, ather coldly

Agnes beckoned to a maid, who fought over a jug of water

“Janet. I want to personally welcome you to our castle,” Agnes smiled

She held the jug

Out of a sudden, she raised her hands and poured the entire jug of water onto Janet

SLASH

ice-cold water can down Janet’s body, drenching her hair and clothes

Janet froze on her spot, as water drops dripped down and formed a small pool underneath her feet

The dreer fiated

Agnes was handing the jug back to the maid, but Janet snatched the jug from her first

Using the jug as a weapon, Janet smashed it down on Agnes's delicate shoulder!
BANG!

The glass jug scattered into pieces.

Agnes let out a sharp cry, falling to the ground.

An astonished gasp could be heard from the watching crowd.

"What the fuck, Janet!" Weston snapped furiously.

Janet ignored him.

"Rumors about me are correct."

She said quietly, looking down at Agnes's horror-stricken face.

"I am hot-tempered and ill-mannered...so DO NOT MESS WITH ME."

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Chapter 205

Chapter 205

Agnes's body trembled on the ground,

She stared at Janet as though she was some sort of a monster.

"Agnes!"

Westin rushed to help Agnes up. He touched her shoulder to make sure that she didn't have a broken bone and then cried out to the others, "Get Lady Agnes to the medical room!"

Servants rushed over, along with the maid that Janet met in Blood Moon Pack, Fatima.

Together they supported Agnes's delicate body.

"Let's go, my lady," said Fatima as she cast a resentful look at Janet. "Let's go, my la

"Don't blame Janet, Westin."

Agnes tucked at Westin's sleeves before being taken away. There were tears in her eyes.

"She didn't know about our tradition...I should have warned her before I poured the water...it was entirely my fault," she sobbed.

Westin comforted her and promised her that he would come over and check on her later.

When Agnes was gone, he finally turned to Janet with a cold face.

"We welcome our guests by sprinkling water onto them. It is part of tradition," he said.

Janet snorted, "She didn't sprinkle. She poured. An entire jug of water. Or is insulting your guest part of your tradition?"

Westin frowned.

Just then, a grey-cloaked man stepped out of the crowd and said in a booming voice,

"The Lycan's castle is a sacred place. We splash water onto the outsiders to cleanse their bodies and souls and to prepare them before entering the sacred land. Your behavior was disgraceful, Miss Manning, and it was all because of your ignorance."

Cleansing her soul?

And her ignorance?

Janet let out a sarcastic laugh.

These Lycans were even more arrogant than she imagined!

“Your King chose me, a werewolf, to be your Queen. So I am not an outsider. You all are my subject,” she said in a freezing tone. “And to be perfectly clear—my soul DOES NOT need cleansing.”

“It is just a tradition-”

“If you want me to respect your tradition, you will first learn to respect me, your future Queen.”

The muttering crowd lapsed into silence.

The grey-cloaked man paused for a while before turning to Westin and said, “Your mate needs a good lesson on curtsy, my King. We can’t present her to the people. like this at the moment.”

“I am aware,” agreed Westin a little crossly.

He took Janet’s wrist and yanked her forward.

The crowd of cloaked people parted and made a way for them to come through, bowing as they walked past.

“You are dismissed!” Westin snapped.

Janet was dragged into the castle forcefully. She could hardly keep up with Westin’s long strides.

They crossed the front yard, into the vast foyer, through the corridors, and took several turns...

The castle was like a fancily decorated maze. Janet could hardly remember the way that they came from.

The inside of the castle was even more grandiose than its outside.

Janet caught a glimpse of the delicate tracery on the balconies, the stained-glass windows that sparkled like gems, and the glided mirrors and artworks that adorned the walls.

Yet before she could get a closer look, she was shoved into a room.

Westin closed the door behind him.

“I thought we had a deal,” he gritted.

“Yes, a deal.”

Janet crossed her arms, raising her chin proudly, "You asked me to play your mate, which is exactly what I did."

"What you did to Agnes-"

"Being nice to your mistress is not part of our deal."

Embarrassment flickered across Westin's eyes, "Agnes is not my mistress.

Janet shrugged

She was not going to argue that with him.

He could deny all he wanted. But she already sensed something wrong between these

LWO.

And you really should learn to respect the elders." Westin said, "The elders hold a really high position in our society. If you offend them, even I can't protect you."

"I don't want them to think that I am a pushover. Being tough **is my** way of survival. If you want a puppet that allows you **to** pull the strings however you want, you should release me and find another more submissive werewolf."

She really hoped that he could change his mind and realize that she was not a good choice for him.

Yet Westin **simply** raised an **eyebrow**, a mocking smile on his **lips**.

"Too bad. I want you. Only you," he sneered.

Janet let out a sign internally.

You don't want **my** instruction. Fine. Go out there and see how many days you can last in this castle. You **will** come back and beg for my advice in the end," he said in a rather condescending tone.

Janet rolled her eyes, "Are we finished here? Where is the dining hall? I am hungry."

"Ask the maids," he said impatiently and walked towards the door.

"You are not coming with **me**?"

With one hand on the doorknob, **he** turned around, smiling coolly, "You said you didn't want a chaperone. I respect that. Go to the dining hall and make yourself acquainted...Oh, there will be lots of elders at dinner. Good luck

He walked out and closed the door.

Janet snorted.

He thought a couple of elders could intimidate her.

He couldn't be more wrong.

She took a little walk around the room.

There were clothes in the closet, all of which were **flimsy** long dresses like the **one** that Agnes wore. And they were all in her size.

Whoever prepared these clothes wanted her to dress like a Lycan.

Yet Janet simply took a casual look at those clothes and closed the closet.

Still wearing her leggings and sneakers, Janet opened the bedroom door and left the room.

She stopped a maid in the hallway and asked for the way to the dining hall.

The maid took a critical look at her and asked, "Aren't you going to get changed **first**, my lady?"

Janet kept her hands in her pocket casually, "No. Something wrong with how I

"It is going to be a formal dinner so maybe you should dress up

"I am perfectly happy with the clothes I have on right now. Show me the way"

The maid pressed her lips into a thin line

But she chose not to comment and led the way for Janet.

The dining hall was full of people when Janet arrived

There were three long tables set in the room, lined up parallel to each other. All the seats by the table had been titled

Isople turned the tests in unison the second latet stepped in Many frowned at ence, looking critically at lanet's sportswest.

"Evening." Tanel said calmly.

Nobody responded to her greeting

Janet looked around the room. There was no open seat for her by the long table.

And no one not even servants and maids standing in the corner wanted to point to her seat for her.

"Can someone show me my seat?" Janet asked.

Her voice echoed in the large hall.

The large crowd responded to her with deathly silence.

Yet there was a raised platform located at the front of the hall, overseeing the entire

||'

The seats on the raised platform were still empty.

Janet stopped asking the others and started walking directly towards that raised plattor.

She was hallway through when a servant rushed over and blocked her way.

"Miss, I am going to have to ask you to leave," he said in a polite yet arrogant tone.
"Why?" Janet crossed her arms.

"There is a dress code. You are not dressed accordingly."

"There is a dress code for dinner in your own house?"

"Yes That is the upper-class etiquette, and how the Lycans behave. You are not qualified to eat in this place, miss," the servant replied.

There were some light snickers from behind.

Janet chuckled telly, "Good to know. But starting today, I am abolishing this stupid rule."

The servant's face changed abruptly, "You don't have the right-"

“I have every right. And you will start to address me as Lady or Queen, instead of Miss” Janet looked at him with disdainful eyes. “Now move. It is against the upper–class etiquette for a servant like you to block my way.”

She walked around the servant and marched up that raised platform.

There were two chairs arranged on that platform.

Janet pulled out one chair and calmly took her seat.

Now she could see everyone beneath her clearly. They were all gazing at her with a mixed expression of contempt and shock

“That is where the King sits!” cried someone in the crowd.

Janet smiled, “The King is not present today. As his future Queen, I am taking his seat instead. Is there a problem?”

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Chapter 206

Chapter 206

People exchanged looks in silence.

“There is a problem,” said a deep voice from the crowd.

A middle–aged man stood up from the long table in the middle. He had dark curly hair and a thick beard, dressed in a grey cloak.

“And that problem is?” Janet asked.

“You are not mated to the King yet. You haven’t had a proper ceremony. Hence, you are not qualified to sit on the Queen’s seat,” said the man.

A faint smile appeared on Janet’s lips, “What is your name?”

“...Elder Lamonte from the House of Shadow, my lady.”

“OK then, Elder Lamonte. The decent thing for you to do is to arrange a seat for me before I arrive, instead of accusing me of sitting in the wrong seat when I can’t find a single place to dine in this large dining hall. Don’t you agree?”

Elder Lamonte cleared his throat, awkwardly.

“My apology, Lady Janet.” he said, “I will have the servants arrange a seat for you right away. So please leave the King’s seat.”

“Don’t bother.”

Janet let out a cold laugh.

“I don’t feel like moving right now. Tonight, I am sitting right where I am.”

People gasped.

The dining hall erupted. There was an outbreak of mutterings and boos.

“It is not your call to make!” Elder Lamonte said loudly over the noise, “If you keep acting like this, I am going to ask the guards to forcefully remove you from this dining hall-”

Just then, the massive double door of the hall swung open with a cracking noise.

A slim figure gracefully made her way into the room.

“Don’t do that, father. Don’t ask Lady Janet to leave,” said this newcomer in a sweet voice.

Janet looked over—it was Agnes.

Elder Lamonte looked stunned, “But Agnes, sweetheart-”

“Lady Janet is new to our world. We should welcome her warmly instead of forcing our rules upon her. And I am sure Westin won’t mind his future wife taking his seat for just one night.”

Agnes’s voice was soft and gentle, but it easily quieted down the entire hall.

People seemed to respect her greatly.

“But she just smashed you with a jug earlier today. She doesn’t deserve your kindness...” muttered a girl.

Agnes smiled, "That was an accident. I have forgiven Lady Janet already. Now, why don't we raise our glasses together and toast to our future Queen?"

She beckoned to a maid, who hurried over bringing her a glass of champagne. People all looked reluctant.

Yet Agnes had already raised her glass.

So out of their respect for Agnes, one by one, people picked up their glasses and said in unison:

"...To future Queen."

There was a clear hint of reluctance in their voice.

Janet took a sip of her wine, looking at Agnes coldly.

This Agnes was quite something.

Either she was really a sweet and kind girl as she appeared, or she was in fact a master of deception.

She was even better than Harper.

Harper knew nothing but screaming, crying, and making a scene.

Yet Agnes knew how to manipulate people's minds.

By playing the innocent victim here, she had successfully painted Janet as the bully.

Janet knew that she should be extra careful while dealing with Agnes.

The servants and maids filed in and brought food onto the table.

Janet put her worries aside and started enjoying the dinner.

It was quite a feast.

The Lycans had great taste in food for one thing.

Between the third course and dessert, Agnes walked up to the platform with a couple more girls.

"Lady Janet," Agnes curtsied to Janet.

“Lady Agnes,” Janet nodded nonchalantly.

The girls didn’t seem willing but curtsied to Janet anyway.

“Allow me to introduce.” Agnes smiled, “This is Lady Issa from the House of Abyss, and Lady Kalinda from the House of Shadow-”

Janet interrupted her, “House of Shadow?”

Hours of Chadow and

Janet interrupted her, “House of Shadow?”

“The Elder Council had 3 houses, House of Light, House of Shadow and House of Abyss,” Agnes explained. “The elders and the royal family share this castle together.”

Janet nodded.

No wonder there were 3 long tables in this dining hall.

Each house had its designated section.

Agnes went around introducing all the girls and then turned back to Janet, “I just received a message from the King. There will be a Spring Ball in 5 days, a perfect opportunity for you to make your first appearance. The King wants us to prepare you for the ball-”

“What is there to prepare for?” Janet leaned back in her chair and asked, “I know how to dance.”

The girls exchanged a look of indignation

“You need to work on your etiquette!” Issa snapped, “Or you will get laughed at during the ball and bring shame to our King

“Then it is the people laughing at me who need a lesson on manner,” Janet sneered. The girls’ faces went red in anger.

“You should be grateful that Lady Agnes is willing to spare her time and trim you! Kalinda said crossly, “She is sick, and her shoulders are injured thanks to you. If you

ask me,

she really shouldn’t be wasting her time on a barbarian like you

“Kalinda, that is enough!” Agnes chided gently.

Janet crossed her arms, looking at them one to the other, pondering

“Lady Janet, please? Can you at least do this for me?”

Agnes begged, tears gleaming in her doe-like eyes.

“King Westin gave this task to me. If you say no, I might get blamed by him...”

“Fine,” Janet said abruptly.

Agnes rounded her eyes, smiling through her tears, “Really? You will let us train you for the ball?”

“Yes. I am actually quite curious of the Lycan’s etiquette.” Janet said idly, “Shall we start tomorrow? Where do we meet?”

“We can do it in the Drawing Room. That is where the girls and I normally hang out. Or if you prefer, we can do it in your room instead-”

“The Drawing Room it is.”

Janet said firmly, rising from her seat, “I am full. Good night. And I will see you all tomorrow.

She walked down the platform and headed to the door.

She heard a light mumble from her back:

...What a graceless lowborn...”

Janet let out a short internally.

To be honest, she really didn’t give a fuck about the Spring Ball or the stupid etiquette that Agnes planned to teach her.

There would be people laughing at her at the ball. So be it.

She survived brutal battles. Some silly girl’s teasing and mockery were basically nothing

Yet she was desperate in need of information.

She needed to get a better understanding of the Lycan’s court, the castle, and the misted forest that separated her from her loved ones..

She would wait till tomorrow and see what she could get out of those girl's mouths.
<hr/>The next morning, Janet had breakfast in her room and headed to the Drawing, Room.

The Drawing Room was where ladies in court normally hung out.

They had a similar room back in the packhouse of Blood Moon Pack

But Janet and her friends weren't really interested in music, needlework, and paintings and rather spent their time outdoors. So that room was deserted later.

A maid led Janet to the door and then quietly left.

Janet pushed the door open for a crack.

She first heard gentle piano music waltzed through the air.

Then there were whispers behind the music.

Why did you agree to train that lowborn? You should let her make a total fool of herself at the ball."

That sounded like Kalinda's voice.

Agnes said in a gentle voice, "Westin asked me..."

"Then you should have said no. The King, adores you. Everybody knows that! He really won't mind it you say no."

Agnes sighed, "But if helping Janet makes Westin happy-

"You know what will really **make** the King happy? You accepting his proposal, Agnes!"

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Chapter 207

Chapter 207

Janet balled her fists.

Westin proposed to Agnes before?

Yet he kept telling her that Agnes was not his loved one.

What a liar.

Agnes chided gently, "Don't say that, Kalinda. Westin never proposed to me."

"But he wanted to, apparently. If the elders hadn't forced him to marry a werewolf, he would definitely propose to you."

"No, he won't." Agnes said in a flat voice, "Keavy was his best friend. Even though Keavy was dead for a long time, Westin still respected him too much to do that."

Janet rubbed her chin.

The relationship between Westin and Agnes seemed even more complicated than she thought.

She remembered Westin telling her once that Agnes was mated already..

Now it sounded that Agnes's mate was this man named Keavy, who was the best friend of Westin.

But he was dead already.

"Honestly, Agnes, haven't you considered remarrying?" that Issa girl asked, "How many years have it been since Keavy-"

Agnes sighed, "5 years."

"Yet you are at the prime of your years! You can't waste it. Just whisper to us. If you want that lowborn werewolf gone, there are many ways to make that happen..." Janet let out a cold laugh.

She wrenched the door open and marched into the room.

Soft, ambient light bathed the room, filtering through heavy velvet curtains that framed tall windows.

A grand piano occupied a corner, its dark wood gleaming under the glow of an ornate chandelier.

In the center of the room stood a coffee table. Set on top were carefully curated art books, delicate porcelain figurines, and a vase of fresh flowers.

Plush armchairs and sofas, upholstered in a soft fabric that invited touch, surrounded that coffee table.

Agnes and her chaperons were sitting in the armchairs and sofas right now.

Kalinda straightened her back the second Janet stepped in. She looked tensed.

“You should knock! Where is your-” she hissed.

“My curtsey? You already knew that I have none,” Janet chuckled icily. “And are you afraid of me hearing anything?”

Kalinda huffed, “I am not afraid of anything! I can say that to your face: You are the third woman in Agnes and the King’s relationship!”

“Kalinda!” Agnes cried in fume.

Janet raised an eyebrow, looking at Agnes.

“Keavy is your husband?” she asked Agnes.

Agnes bit her lips, a sad look on her face.

She took off a locket from her neck and handed it to Janet, “My mate, my husband, at proud soldier of Shadow House, and also....the King’s best friend.”

Janet opened the locket.

There was a picture inside, of Westin, Keavy, and Agnes. They were all grinning brightly at the camera.

“How did he die?” Janet asked quietly.

Kalinda growled. “Hey!”

“That is alright. I don’t mind.” Agnes shook her head, tears forming in her eyes.

“He died of food poisoning. A horrible tragedy. He is the only man I ever loved... Yes, the King and I grew up together. I won’t deny that we are close. But there is nothing romantic between us. I swear, Lady Janet.”

Janet stared at her, pondering

Agnes's expression looked sincere.

...But food poisoning?

Janet couldn't help but found that odd. And a bit too convenient.

Maybe there was something more that she had yet to discover.

"Are you ready to begin your training?" Agnes asked

Sure," Janet said, handing the locket back to her.

Now was not a good time to dig too deep into Agnes's dirt. She had plenty of time afterward.

"Great," Agnes beamed.

She invited Janet to sit with them by the coffee table and began the lecture.

She started off with dining etiquette.

A lady should always sit upright with proper posture at the dining table. Avoid slouching or leaning too far back

Agnes even asked the maid to place a needle on the cushion behind Janet's back. If Janet got sloppy and leaned back at any time, that needle would prick her.

She asked Janet to stay in that posture for at least 20 minutes.

All the girls were staring at Janet, waiting to taunt her when she got pricked by a needle.

Yet 10 minutes, 20 minutes, and then 30 minutes had passed.

Janet still held her posture elegantly, without any sign of getting tired.

The girls were disappointed.

Even Agnes found that amazing.

"Have you had any lady's training before?" she asked.

Janet shrugged, "No. But I have had military training. I can stay in the bush perfectly

still for more than a day waiting to snipe an enemy.”

The girls’ faces changed, looking afraid.

They all knew that Janet was a Gamma.

Although they were all Lycans, they had never held a sword in their entire lives, let alone getting blood on their hands. Unlike Janet.

Agnes gulped, nervously, “That...That is great. Well, shall we practice walking? Since you already mastered dining etiquette.”

They all stood up and lined up by the wall.

Agnes demonstrated how an upper-class Lycan lady walked.

Each step should be taken with a measured and graceful gait. Head held high, with shoulders back. No slouching or dragging feet.

The most important part was walking in a perfectly straight line.

Agnes had the servants bring in a balance beam, like the one used in gymnastics.

She asked Janet to change into her high heels and walked from one end to another on the beam.

Janet frowned this time.

She was not very good with high heels.

“Is that really necessary?” she asked, “I know how to walk.”

Kalinda had been waiting to insult Janet. She immediately raised her voice and cried, “But you walk like a peasant! No man will want to dance with you at the ball if you don’t work on this.”

Janet rolled her eyes.

She picked up her skirt and stepped onto the balance beam.

She made a step. Her body swayed at once. Yet she regained her balance at once. She took another small step, looking carefully at her feet-

BANG!

A sharp pain came from her back

“Keep your back straight and shoulders back,” Agnes said, holding a wooden stick. Janet glared at her, “Do not hit me again.”

Agnes blinked, innocently, “My apology. I just want to fast-forward your learning process-”

Is this how you did your lady’s training?” Janet asked icily, “With people hitting you constantly?”

Agnes smiled, “No. But we are Lycans. We are born with grace. And I thought you have a thicker skin as a soldier than the rest of us and you can handle a few **minor** slaps...Or was I wrong?”

The girls snickered.

Janet took a deep breath, ignored her, and continued walking

She didn’t make it to 3 steps far before sensing another lashing coming her way. Janet turned abruptly and seized the stick just in **time**.

“I said-”

Janet stared at Agnes’s horror-stricken face and hissed:

DO NOT HIT ME AGAIN

- milead cerraraton of fear and anger flickered across her

Agnes’s chest heaved. A mixed expression of fear and anger flickered across her eyes.

She tried to pull her stick back from Janet’s grip but failed.

It felt as though the stick was jammed into a rock!

The crowd around them was agitated.

Issa snapped, “Let go of Lady Agnes!”

“You cheap lowborn! What are you doing!” Kalinda cried, “Is that how you treat a nice lady who was trying to help you? I wonder what the King sees in you! You rude, ill-mannered, inferior-”

“Shut it!” Janet snapped.

She snatched the stick from Agnes and dumped it on the floor.

Then she kicked off her high heels, stepping down from the balance beam.

“Let me tell you what your King sees in me,” she let out an icy laugh, staring at Kalinda.

There was a golden crossbow hanging on the wall on top of the fireplace. A gorgeous decoration.

Janet marched over and took the crossbow down.

All the girls froze in their spots. After seconds of stifling silence, people started screaming.

“What are you doing!” Kalinda shrieked, crouching down and covering her head with both hands.

“Guards! Guards! She is trying to kill us!” Issa yelled.

Janet rolled her eyes and walked to the window.

She pushed the window wide open. Fresh breeze gushed in, expelling the thick sweet smell of scented candles.

“See that flag?” Janet pointed at the distance.

Roughly 200 meters away, a red flag was hanging on one of the turrets, fluttering in the wind.

The girls clustered together, looking at her fearfully.

Janet raised the crossbow and aimed at that flag.

SWOOSH!

The arrow flew out, across the air and shot on the rope that bound the red flag.

The flag fell at once.

Janet turned around calmly and scanned those astonished faces.

“That is what you King’s see in me,” she said with a mocking smile. “Now, is any one of you like to have a try?”

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Chapter 208

Chapter 208

Chapter 208

A deathly silence fell upon them.

The ladies stood perfectly still, holding their breaths.

Nobody dared to move an inch.

“No?” Janet chuckled icily, “That is what I think.”

The guards outside of the door heard Kalinda’s cry for help and came rushing in.

“Is there anything wrong, my lady? We heard screaming,” asked the guard.

Agnes swallowed, “We...”

Janet spoke up before she did, “I was simply doing a little show to entertain the ladies. Nothing to worry about. Right, Lady Agnes?”

She gave Agnes a warning look.

“Yes... Yes, that is right.” Agnes confirmed with a pale face. “We were just having fun.”

The guards nodded and exited the room.

“Look”

Janet turned to face the horrified crowd, “I might be an ill-mannered person, but not an unreasonable one. I can keep things civil as long as you promise not to mess with me on purpose. Can you at least give me that?”

“We didn’t mess with you on purpose...” Kalinda murmured in an indignant voice.

“Oh? Then it is my wooden stick on the floor?” Janet said icily.

The girls bit their lips in silence.

They exchanged looks of uneasiness with one another.

A faint voice came from the crowd at this very moment:

“...I...I think what you did is pretty cool.”

Janet looked over and found a petite girl standing at the back of the crowd.

She flinched when she met with Janet’s eyes but plucked her courage and continued anyway:

“Y–You must be pretty good at darts and game of quoit.”

Janet smiled, “I wouldn’t say I am a pro, but not too bad either.”

A pink tinge appeared on that girl’s pale cheek as she stuttered, “My name is Annie, from the House of Light. And I...I want to be good at those games too. There is a Carnival each year in the village. But I can never get the first prize in darting and quaiting games...”

“Well.”

Janet shrugged, “If you like, I can teach you sometimes.”

“Really?” Annie gasped.

“Yeah, why not? I have ample time on my hands now.”

Annic beamed.

A couple of other girls’ rigid faces unstiffened.

The tension caused by the crossbow cased.

“Can all the she–wolves in your herd shoot?” asked a ginger–haired girl curiously.
“Some, not all.”

“I wish I could learn how to shoot,” the girl groaned. “I want my brother to teach me, but he said that it was a very un–lady thing to do–”

“Then your brother is right about that,” Agnes said in a sullen voice.

The whispering crowd quieted down at once.

All the girls looked at Agnes's grim face, nervous.

"Lycan is the strongest species in the world."

Agnes said in a loud, freezing voice, "Thanks to our noble bloodline, and the bravery of our King and soldiers, ladies like us would never have to roughen our delicate hands."

"Yes. Shame on you, Annie!" Kalinda snapped, glaring at Annie, "Leaning how to shoot? You are degrading yourself to a lowborn!"

Annie bit her lips with tears circling in her eyes.

Yet she didn't dare to talk back.

"That is not fair." Janet said sternly, "Shooting and fighting are not **men's** privileges. A girl can learn about those stuff too."

Agnes turned to her with a fake smile, "With all due respect, Janet, you know very little about the Lycans. Maybe keep your opinion to yourself?"

Janet looked at her.

She could tell that Agnes was pissed.

Probably because Agnes considered herself the leader of this small group, yet part of her thunder just got stolen by Janet.

"I am tired." Janet said, raising an eyebrow, "How about we pick this up tomorrow?"

Agnes seemed relieved, "Alright. Tomorrow then, at the same time."

Janet gave a simple nod to the crowd and walked outside.

Before the door closed behind her back, she heard Kalinda and Issa scolding the "traitors" within the group...

Janet showed up at the Drawing Room every day for the following 5 days. Agnes never crossed the line again.

So they managed to keep things civil.

A surprising benefit of the lady's training was that Janet became friends with Annie.

When Agnes and her little gang were not looking, Annie would secretly share her snacks with Janet.

Janet also promised to teach her shooting when they had the chance.

5 days passed and it was soon the date of the Spring Ball

At around 7 o'clock around dusk, Janet stepped into the garden with all the ladies

Luminous fairy lights dangled from the branches of trees, making this whole place look like a fairyland

The blooming flowers were a sweet fragrance to the air, their vibrant colors painted

Drapes hallowed softly, catching, the best hues of the setting sun, creating an

"This is truly something" Janet murmured.

Annie giggled by her side, "I know, right? The Spring Ball is the most important social event of the year. All girls look forward to it!

Formally dressed guests were lined up by a winding pathway leading into the garden. Servants were busy checking each of their coats before they entered. Janet waited with the group

When it was almost their turn, she heard Annie gasp.

Janet followed her gaze and looked over and saw a maid in the corner, trying to carry a barrel of bees by herself.

The barrel was too heavy for her. The maid tried a couple of times and couldn't get it off the ground. A desperate look appeared on her face,

"What poor girl!"

Annie whispered into Janet's ear, "She will definitely get punished by the head maid later."

Janet stared at that maid.

She took off her coat and handed it to Annie, "Can you check in *my* coat for me?"
"Well, where are you going? You are going to be late for the entrance...Janet!"

Janet picked up her skirt and walked up behind that maid.

"Do you need a hand?" she asked.

The maid jerked around, a look of utter terror on her face,

“I saw you couldn’t lift the barrel. Where do you want this?” Janet asked again patiently

The maid bent her back abruptly, her voice shaking in fear, “Miss..Lady...I–I can’t bother you with this nonsense...”

“I honestly don’t mind.”

Janet put her arms around the barrel and carried it up easily, “Now. Where is **this**

The maid was astonished by her strength and gasped, “T–This way...Thank you so much, my lady!”

They took a narrow path and hurried into the garden.

In the heart of the garden, a grand gazebo decorated with cascading roses and ivy stood as the focal point.

Twinkling lights and delicate ribbons adorned the structure, dancing in the warm breeze and the soft melody of a distant orchestra.

Elegant tables rounded the gazebo, with candles and blooming centerpieces arranged on top.

The maid steered Janet across the garden.

On the way, she received many strange looks from all directions.

It was definitely odd for a lady in a fancy gown and high heels to carry a barrel of beer on her shoulder.

But Janet ignored all those gazes.

The maid asked her to set the barrel on one of the beverage bars and bowed to her **again**, “My Lady, I can’t tell you how much I appreciate **your** help...”

Janet wanted to tell her not to worry about it.

A deep, sexy voice came from her back at this moment:

“Is this what you do now? A porter?”

“M–My king!” the maid gasped.

Janet jerked around.

Westin stood a few steps away, with a casual smile on his gorgeous lips.

He was exceptionally handsome tonight.

His tailored black suit, adorned with subtle silver embroidery, accentuated his broad shoulders and lean physique with an air of refined elegance.

His enchanting eyes caught the glimmer of fairy lights, reminding her of the starry night sky.

Janet felt a flutter in her chest despite her will.

Westin walked over. His eyes fixed on Janet's face. The smile on his lips deepened.

"Who put you up to this heavy labor?" he asked.

Janet took in a small breath, "...Nobody. I was simply helping out a maid."

Westin chuckled, "Carrying a barrel on your shoulder...That was quite an entrance. You got everyone's attention."

Janet let out a short laugh, "Do you feel ashamed? That your mate is a graceless lowborn?"

"No...On the contrary."

Westin leaned in and gently brushed a rose petal off her shoulder.

His smiling eyes were even brighter than the night sky.

I like that my Queen is different than the others," he whispered into her ears in a hoarse voice.

Janet held her breath involuntarily.

Their last meeting from a couple of days before wasn't exactly pleasant. She was being acrid and him mad.

But right now, this very moment, it made her feel that-

"Westin!"

Janet looked up abruptly.

Over Westin's shoulders, she saw Agnes standing a few feet away.

There was an expression of malice

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