

Mated To The King's Gamma by Jessica Hall, Mated To The King's Gamma, c9

The next day

The only time I got to see Ivy was in small glimpses or brief, very brief words before being called back for my chores. However, after finishing the washing, I hung it out. I had woken up extra early this morning, hoping to get my chores finished early. I had been building up the courage all day, and now it was nearing. I was already talking myself out of it.

Yet as I set the basket down on top of the empty washer, I wandered into the kitchens to see Clarice. She was going over staff time rosters, her glasses perched precariously on the edge of her nose before she pushed them back with her index finger to the bridge of her nose.

Stopping next to her, I glance around at the cooks preparing for dinner, yet even though I knew I had two hours before I was needed to be back here, I still hesitated, chewing on the inside of my lip, trying to find the words.

Yet the entire time, all I could think about was Mrs. Daley's reaction when I asked her and the punishment I got for my stupidity of thinking now I had shifted, she would allow it. As much as I despised remembering that place, I found myself sucked back into the past.

"Mrs. Daley?" I whispered behind her, making her jump as she stood at the kitchen counter sipping the fresh brew I had just made her.

"What is it?" she snaps, and I flinch at her bitter tone. Her eyes narrowed at me, and I instantly regretted thinking of asking for anything.

"I... I wanted... I," I stuttered terribly, trying to get the words out.

"What is it? Spit it out before I lash you," she snarls.

"I wanted to know if I might be allowed to shift and go for a run. I will be quick, and I will stay close to the orphanage," I whispered, dropping my gaze to the floor. Mrs. Daley laughs and grips my shoulder, making me look up at her.

"Where is the other rogue?"

"She said she would cover afternoon tea for me if you allowed it. And I finished all my chores and even changed your bed linen and

made you that banana pie you like, it's in the fridge," I told her, hopeful. How f****d up is hope? It will destroy every desire you ever have when you are repeatedly shown how cruel one could be until you are hopeless and no longer believe in the good in people? Always question the intention behind every good deed?

"Oh, in that case, of course. Go on," Mrs. Daley looks at the clock above the door, and so do I. Excitement bubbled within me, and I felt giddy. She was really going to let me go!

"Be back at 4 PM for afternoon tea; you earned it," she told me.

Thank

you, thank you, Mrs. Daley" | almost cried at how happy I felt as I rushed off to tell Ivy. Ivy told me not to ask, that she would never allow it, but I had to try, and Mrs. Daley felt generous. It must have been knowing that we made her favorite pie.

"Stay close to the forest line, Abbie. Don't wander," Ivy told me with worry in her eyes as I stripped my clothes off behind the garden shed. Ivy stared back at the orphanage worriedly.

"She said yes," I remind her.

"I know, but it isn't like her, Abbie. Maybe you should stay."

"Probably because she knows next month, we won't be her problem and is feeling generous," I tell her,

too excited to find fault with Mrs. Daley's permission.

I shifted and darted toward the trees while Ivy went to finish the afternoon tea for the kids. However, when I returned, Mrs. Daley was waiting. I could see my clothes waiting in a pile behind the shed. Happy, I moved toward her, seeing Ivy in the kitchen window, who waved and smiled at me. Only then do we both

spot the patrols rushing up the side of the orphanage building. Their sight made me halt, and my tail tucked between my legs.

"There she is, she tried to run, filthy f*****g mutt tried to run, she has come scampering back," Mrs. Daley said, pointing to me and my eyes widened when I saw they had the kids skipping ropes in their hands. I whimpered, backing up and glancing at the window to see Ivy's horrified expression in the window as they stalked toward me.

Turning my gaze to the four patrolling men, I backed up when they used the kids' skipping ropes as whips, caging me in and giving me nowhere to escape, and I couldn't even shift, or I would be naked. My wolf yelped and whined as they lashed me repeatedly when I heard Ivy's blood-curdling scream reach my ears.

“No, no, stop. Stop! She didn’t do anything!” Ivy screamed.

Lifting my head, my fur was ripping out everywhere, the grass—covered in snow white and grey, brown fur when the skipping rope lashed across my snout and eye, and I yelped loudly before weight crushed me as Ivy tossed herself over the top of my cowering form. Yet, they didn’t stop, and they just whipped her too while Mrs. Daley laughed and told them to hit us harder.

A hand gripped mine, jolting me out of the memory. “Abbie, are you okay, Dear?” Clarice asked.

“Yes, sorry.” I tell Clarice, staring back at her. I went to walk off, losing my courage as memories assaulted my mind. It wasn’t worth what would happen. I would shift later in my room, I thought to myself.

Turning away, Clarice doesn’t let go of my hand, instead pulls me back to her. “Abbie, what is it? Did someone hurt you? You’re as pale as a ghost,” she says, peering up at me worriedly.

“No, it’s nothing. Want some help?” I ask her, looking at what she is doing.

“No, but you finished all your chores, so you can have some time off. Are you sure there wasn’t something you needed?” Clarice asked. I nibble my lip, trying to remind myself Clarice wasn’t Mrs. Daley.

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