

Chapter 19 - Death by Fighting

When Anklet told her she would be trained on how to fight, Solene wasn't surprised. She assumed it was because of the hostage incident in the wedding boutique that was why Henri ordered it. She couldn't complain though. Her grandfather had already trained her how to fight in the past. If she didn't stop those trainings when she reached high school she would have probably become a black belter now.

Solene just nodded in understanding and went to the bathroom to take a bath. When she watched her reflection in the mirror, her mouth immediately gaped and a visible blush colored her cheeks.

She wasn't too innocent not to recognize the angry bruise on her neck that looked particularly like a kiss mark. Remembering her moment with Henri, she bit her bottom lip. So this was what he meant by 'flaunt it however I like.'

She couldn't do that of course not because she was ashamed of it. No. Never. It just wasn't within her comfort zone to actually show a delicate, special thing to other people.

After her bath, she tried on different clothes that would suit her activities and would cover the kiss mark. She ended up choosing a spandex turtleneck long-sleeved shirt that was loose on the neckline and super comfortable on the skin. She partnered it with stretchable leggings and a pair of sneakers.

She spent most of her morning with the wedding team and over lunch, they were able to finalize the whole concept of the wedding.

By afternoon, Patricia guided her to the south wing gym. Once the door to the gym opened, Solene couldn't take her eyes off of the facility. The place was enormous. It looked like it stretched

from one part of the mansion to another part wherein all the equipment known to be used by athletes could be found.

There were four boxing rings in the far side of the gym, a set-up of trampolines, weights, dumbbells, weapons of any kind, and more...more than she could imagine in a mansion to have.

"Seriously, what does the Rantzen family need this fully equipped gym for?" Solene asked, turning to Patricia for answers.

The maid just gave her a tight-lipped smile and said, "Ms. Anklet will explain everything to you, Miss. I believe she is already inside. There, look!"

She pointed to a woman whose hair was done in a low braid, dressed in training clothes, and wearing gears and straps to hold her steady as she almost finished the thirty-two-foot climbing wall.

Solene's jaw dropped. Wow. She had tried wall climbing a few years ago but it was just in a height of fifteen feet. She was winded when she was able to reach the top. Now, if she'd try climbing this towering wall during her training, her lungs would likely collapse.

"Want to try, Milady?" Anklet offered enthusiastically. She sat on top of the wall and waved a hand.

Solene's eyelids fluttered and she stepped back. "Uhm, sure, but maybe next time. I need to prepare myself for the difficult climb."

Anklet smiled in response. Without warning, she jumped down, stretching her arms and legs as if she was about to bellyflop into a pool.

Patricia squeaked, surprised by the act. Solene however anticipated this already. There were only two ways to go down a

wall-climbing facility and it was either through the back stairs or through jumping off the wall—with safety straps of course.

When Patricia saw that Anklet was alright, she lowered her head towards Solene and informed, "I'll leave you to Miss Anklet's care, Milady. I'll return later to help you prepare for dinner with the Master."

"Thank you, Patricia," Solene acknowledged, deep inside her heart drummed at the mention of her dinner date with Henri.

"Let's start, Milady?" Anklet asked with a wide smile.

Solene watched the fit and beautiful woman stretch her hand to point the way. It was the path leading to the boxing rings.

"Sure," she answered, ready now to learn new moves to help her protect herself.

Four hours later, Anklet finally called for a break. Solene silently nodded but at the back of her mind, she felt thankful. Such was her rigorous training. They first reviewed the basics of karate since Solene was already acquainted with it. Second was krav maga. And the third was a practice spar with Anklet using these two types of fighting system.

Solene sat down on a bench a bit winded and sweating. She threw a look at Anklet and was surprised that the woman looked fresh and energetic still.

"Anklet, can I ask you something?" she said just as she wiped her forehead dry with a towel.

The one addressed stopped jabbing the punchbag and turned to face Solene.

"Sure, Milady, what is it you want to know?" she said.

"How long have you been under the employment of the Rantzen Family?" Solene's brow tipped up.

"Just a month, Milady," Anklet answered without delay. "Mr. Reynold employed me especially to see to your safety."

"Did you learn all these skills just for this job? Being my bodyguard I mean." Solene stood up and approached her with two bottles of water in hand. She handed the first bottle to Anklet and she accepted it.

"Not entirely, Milady. Since a child, I was trained to fight for another purpose."

"May I ask what purpose is that?" Solene's curiosity increased. If Anklet was trained since young, then that said purpose would have been very important.

For a moment, Anklet considered her answer. Her eyes wandered around until it fell past Solene.

"Hi," two voices caught Solene's attention then. Turning around, she found a young girl about ten to twelve years old and a boy about five or six standing a couple of feet away from them. She was holding the boy's hand while he was hugging a penguin plush toy with his free arm.

Their clothes were too formal for Solene's liking. The young girl was wearing a light yellow Sunday dress with her hair braided on both sides while the little boy wore a miniature version of a tuxedo.

"Lady Charlie, Young Master Lloyd, good afternoon, what brings you here?" Anklet stepped forward and tipped her head briefly.

"We just want to meet big brother's bride," the young girl stated.

"Milady Solene, these are Master Henri's siblings. Lady Charlotte Roan Rantzen and Master Lloyd Jason Rantzen," Anklet introduced.

Solene was taken aback. Siblings? Her mind commented. She sure didn't meet these two youngsters in the family party last

night.

"Hello, a pleasure to meet the two of you," Solene offered her hand for a handshake but the older sibling stepped forward and briefly hugged her.

"Can I call you Big Sis?" Lady Charlie asked, her eyes twinkling.

Solene gave her a small smile and answered, "I don't see why not."

"You may call me Charlie or Roan, whichever you like," the girl stated with a big smile.

Solene shifted to the little boy half hiding behind Lady Charlie and knelt down to join his level.

"Hi there Lloyd, come forward, you don't need to be scared of me," she stated.

The little boy gradually closed the space between them and suddenly touched a big chunk of Solene's pony-tailed hair.

"Are you a ghost?" said the boy.

Solene smiled widely and shook her head. "No, but I wish I was. That would be cool, right?" she stated.

The boy glanced at his sister as if to show his delight and then turned back to Solene.

"I like you," he said, stepping forward and giving her a sudden hug.

Solene, despite once again stunned at the gesture, gently patted his head and said, "I like you too, Lloyd."

"Young Master!" Another person entered the room and Solene remembered this was the assistant head of the house, Cassandra.

"Oh no, we're spotted," Lady Charlie muttered under her breath, showing how displeased she was with the new arrival by

throwing a frown.

"Lady Charlie, you shouldn't bring your brother whenever and wherever you like. He still has class to attend to," Cassandra exclaimed, partly winded.

"Yeah, whatever, Cassie," the girl stated with a roll of her eyes. She directed her attention back to Solene who remained quiet and observant. "We should go," she informed. "Glad to finally meet you, Big Sis."

"As do I," Solene stated. She smiled at Cassandra's way but the latter just gave her a cold once-over. Solene mentally took note of it. This woman sure had been throwing her glares since the moment she arrived in the estate.

"They are a bunch of intelligent kids," Solene stated to Anklet, putting this issue with Cassandra at the back of her mind. "Henri never mentioned them to me."

Anklet remained silent as she noticed a presence behind them.

"Excuse me, Milady Solene, it is time to prepare," Patricia, who entered from another doorway, informed, bowing her head and lowering her eyes on the ground.

Anklet released a deep sigh. "I guess we will have continue our training after your honeymoon, Milady."

Solene considered the woman's words and quickly cleared her throat. Honeymoon with Henri...she mused. She never thought of that from happening at all. If the man was always busy with his work, would he actually give her this phase of their marriage to begin with?

"Uh...sure, thank you Anklet," Solene answered instead, choosing to put the notion of a honeymoon to rest. She'd just have to survive their dinner date and their wedding first.