

# NORTH X NORTHWEST

## Chapter 13

A dimly lit wagon turned around the winding path. Madame Rouge's carriage drove down the bumpy road with a rattling sound, going neither fast nor slow. They saw a four-seater wagon with two people in the coach seat.

*'Just as expected.'*

They took care of Madame Rouge's carriage in a blink of an eye. The two gatekeepers, horsemen, and guards were no match for Marenzio's strength and the experience of her crew in close combat. And they had Cesar, who was the most skilful of them all.

Since Lil primarily used guns, she withdrew from this fight. There was no reason to kill them, so there was no reason to shoot.

Alain tied the six people from the carriage tightly around a tree. They removed the prostitutes' dresses and took off the gatekeepers' coats. After the captives were drugged, they fell asleep immediately, making them easy to deal with.

Lil made her crew wear the prostitutes' dresses.

After a while, she finished tying the knot on Courant's dress and placed a wig on the boy's head. The boy turned around after he finished dressing up. Lil noticed his smooth face and boasted that bringing Courant with them was an excellent choice. She looked around with satisfaction. Alain, who was helping Marenzio, saw Lil turn around and burst out laughing.

"Captain. It looks great on you!"

"Can't you just shut up, Grandpa?"

“Oh, Courant! You’re going to serve the Count for real today!”

“I think Count Perv will lose his mind upon seeing you.”

Jericho and Marenzio, tucked into their sackcloth dresses, burst into laughter. Lil smiled as she stared blankly at the bizarre sight of sun-kissed muscle masses buried in pink and pale-yellow laces.

*‘They have no right to be laughing at Courant, seeing they didn’t even shave their beards.’*

“Alain. How can Marenzio finish dressing up alone? Step aside.”

Alain quietly backed away. Lil stepped on Marenzio’s broad back with one foot, firmly supporting her body with her other leg. Then, she grabbed the knotted string.

– *Squeak squeak* –

It was the sound of the fabric slowly ripping.

“Why can’t I pull this?”

Lil frowned, tightened the strings around her wrists, and pulled as hard as she could. In an instant, the top of the dress split into several parts and became tattered.

“Oh...”

She managed to save the last few pieces of thread that kept the dress together. The dress was barely covering Marenzio’s torso, but she thought that this was perhaps the better option, seeing it at least covered his entire body.

Not completely sure, Lil called him.

“Uh... Ma... Marenzio...”

“What is this? Captain!”

Marenzio, embarrassed, turned towards her.

“Ah!”

Lil covered her eyes with her hands. At her desperate attempt, she hit her head with her palms so hard that a slapping sound was heard.

“Marenzio! Agh, my eyes are rotting! Your chest... Is that your chest hair?”

The screaming Lil moved as far away from him as possible. The shocking scene of two shy raisins sprouting out of his thick bush was now engraved in her mind.

“Besides, why is it pink?”

At her voice, the sailors focused their eyes on Marenzio. Lil eventually started to laugh loudly, not knowing that all her wobbling and twisting was making the wig she was wearing fall down.

“Haha! Ha...phew, give me a second to calm down... ah haha!”

Marenzio slowly looked over his appearance, anxious he'd tear it more if he touched it.

“Haha! Ah...I laughed so hard that my stomach...”

Lil walked over to him and placed her hand carefully on his thick arm. The fabric was all torn on his shoulders, only the last pieces of stretched lace kept the dress together.

*‘In terms of build, Marenzio’s the biggest guy on the Bell Rock and apparently, this pink gown had the largest size.’*

The cute ribbons on the dress swayed helplessly with every breath he took.

Marenzio didn't hide his discomfort towards Lil. In an attempt to console him, she reminded him of the reason why he'd to join this crossdress operation, which was decided by a majority vote.

“Marenzio, the decision to choose you was not wrong. Look at your voluptuous breasts.”

His broad body seemed to be stuffed into a narrow sack. As a result, his breast muscles were pressed together, creating a tolerable cleavage. The only problem was that his chest was completely covered in hair.

Lil tried to push back some of the hair that stuck out with her finger.

“Have some confidence, Marenzio. Today, you’re the most sensual. No one can beat your looks, I predict you’re the one that will lay with the Count.”

In the wagon heading to the count’s house, the sailors were busy teasing Marenzio. This opportunity was rare. Marenzio was a guy who was proud of his rough masculinity more than anyone else. Normally, he’d get angry by all the mocking, but today he just smiled even after being ridiculed, having the most fun of them all.

*‘As the perv he is, the Count will probably go into heat and suffer a nosebleed when he sees him.’*

As soon as Lil took her eyes off Marenzio, a clear voice shouted from outside the carriage.

“Stop!”

The noise quickly died down. The wagon reduced speed and eventually stopped. A guard knocked on the door. Sitting by the window, Lil pushed the curtain to reveal her face, half-covered by a fan. Her thin face was often mistaken for that of a woman, even when she was dressed as a man. So, when she smiled, they passed the check without a problem. Before they knew it, the wagon started to move again.

“Hey, Captain. Your skills are no joke. I saw you smile with your eyes, I was almost deceived too.”

“Next time, should I use your rattle instead of the chain bullets, Jericho?”

“...”

“If you mess with me again, I’ll really do it.”

Lil laughed.

In front of the powerful man, Jericho shrunk and shook his head silently. In the meantime, the sound of horseshoes steadily slowed down. Someone in the coach seat knocked on the window.

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– *Knock knock* –

“Come in.”

A servant entered and bowed his head deeply. Ed gestured to stop with the greetings and give the report.

“Madame Rouge’s prostitutes have arrived, Sir. They’re a little later than usual.”

Ed stood up when he heard slightly different information compared to the reports he received the last few days. He walked to the window on the right side of the study and looked down. The dim carriage lantern lit up Lil’s face, which was half-hidden by her leisurely fanning.

Ed smirked.

“You’re finally here.”

He gave the order to turn off all the lights and close the curtains completely. As darkness fell, his excited heart began to beat. This was originally the count’s study, but after some effective threats, he could enjoy the place in silence.

Calmly waiting for Lil, Ed thought about his plans. He didn't come here to wipe out the pirates.

*'Since I'm in charge of the Admiral position, I needed proper cause to move, so I said I'd go down there to take care of the Amiaeng's pirates. But I don't really intend to use my fleet. Most of the fleet was still training around the Gulf of Gardel anyway. Even if I was bored to death and wanted to chase the pirates, I'd only do it after I found her. However... I found her already.'*

Two months had passed, but Ed thought the word 'already' was appropriate. Considering that there were several voyages in the meantime, they'd travelled at a phenomenal speed. What Ed said to Lil a few days ago was true. The Admiral was coming to Amiaeng in search of something. He simply didn't tell her that she was the one he was looking for.

*'When we first bumped into each other, I immediately recognized her. She was such a famous woman. In addition, I'd received a portrait of her from Duke Mireille. So, it was nearly impossible to not recognize her. Still, I can't believe I met her here. While I was tracking her whereabouts, I thought Liloa couldn't be in Amiaeng. As a result, when I met her here, I was speechless. I just stood there, completely dumbfounded and unable to respond to her. My surprise turned into curiosity when I saw her outfit. What was she doing in Amiaeng dressed like that?*

*The more I got to know her, the more different she was from the rumours. She was also different from the picture I'd drawn in my mind. Indeed, it'd been too easy to judge her only for her vivid appearance that moved in front of everybody's eyes. It might have changed my opinion a bit, but I've always been quite fond of her.*

*And that was all before I found out she dressed up like a man, naturally, I wanted to know even more. Thinking that maybe if I let her spread her wings, the wind will touch my cheeks as well.'*

Ed laughed.

At this point, he was impressed by the Duke of Mireille's resourcefulness.

*'He's truly one of the best businessmen in the Empire. He observed me to find out exactly what his opponent wants and what moves him. Within the Empire, including the western and northern continents, there are only a few rare inducements that could have made me move to this extent. It contains statues from the early Duasuhai, religious paintings expressing myths and relics from Goshidae, which are said to have mysterious abilities or to fulfil human wishes.'*

Therefore, the Duke of Mireille asked Ed to find Liloa, while promising a very fascinating price.

*'So, I turned my fleet to the South. The cause of this whim, that everyone was curious about, was quite simple. The reward was intriguing, but I was much more interested in Liloa. Especially the fact that Liloa, who supposedly died a few years ago, was still alive, made me excited.'*

The actual reason is a truth only known by Ed.

The public thinks that duke Mireille made a private request to the admiral, the greatest asset of the empire, asking to threaten the southern pirates who caused enormous damage to the business of the duke, thereby posing as a loyal servant to the emperor. In fact, the emperor was delighted that the duke had persuaded the admiral for him.

Ed admitted. Mireille was probably as smart as he was.

*'However, Mireille overlooked one thing: Although I never gave him a definite answer, he firmly believes I'd take Liloa back to the capital. But I don't intend to follow his will. A deal can only be made when I'm not interested in what the other party gains. In this case, I'll covet both Liloa and the reward. Besides, if Liloa decides that she doesn't want to go back, I'm willing to hide her.'*

Ed was already looking forward to seeing how the duke would react, finding out Liloa was under his protection.

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