

NORTH X NORTHWEST

Chapter 7

“That was too much! I answered your questions truthfully!”

After clearing her thoughts, Lil stared at Ed with a disapproving look.

‘The slap wasn’t that hard, yet he’s grumbling and covering his cheek with his hand. Anyway, he has been a valuable companion, providing me with some helpful intel.’

Feeling a bit sorry, Lil handed him the apple she was holding.

“Eat.”

“Hm, you’re giving me your apple?”

Lil turned her head without answering him.

“Do you know when the Admiral will arrive? And how big is his fleet? Is his goal to annihilate the southern pirates?”

Ed took a bite from the fruit and answered Lil’s questions one by one.

“Normally, it’ll take two months to sail from the Mondovi Peninsula to Amiaeng, but the flagship⁶ might arrive much sooner than that.”

“Hm, what’s the name of that ship?”

“Visha.”

“So, the Admiral will arrive first?”

“Although the Admiral’s Visha’s the flagship of the fleet, it’s only a double-decked vessel with about 500 crewmembers and 64 doors.”

“Then, it must be fast.”

“He actually likes to sail it himself.”

“What? Himself? That admiral is... a strange guy. Then who’s in charge of the operation?”

“The fleet has a ship bigger than the Visha, when the Admiral’s leaving like that, the authority is automatically handed to the Captain of that ship. Even if the Captain doesn’t want it. Ha, the guy always complains about it, saying he’s suffering because of his damn boss.”

“Is he the Admiral’s closest aide?”

“Yes, he is.”

Lil slowly began to trust Ed.

‘It’s certain that his motive is to establish some kind of relationship with me because he’s so eager to answer. Besides, it’s hard to believe he’s lying to a prostitute. Today is my lucky day. The mother of all things must have sent him to me, wanting to save my scalp from that mad Admiral. Unfortunately, Ed’s a pervert, but on the flip side, if she’d sent me some nice guy, I probably wouldn’t be able to find him between the pirates.’

As a superstitious sailor, Lil was able to fully embrace Ed’s shortcomings.

She nodded her head, suddenly Ed’s voice rang out from the side.

“Now, can I ask you something?”

“What?”

“Why are you asking me about the Admiral?”

“Isn’t that obvious? It’s for business.”

“What kind of business?”

“The Navy’s much less tolerant than Amiaengs like you.”

“What? You’re dealing with the Navy? I thought you said you weren’t a prostitute?”

“Your perverted head can only think about the night. Don’t worry, I’m involved in a variety of businesses.”

“Hm, you’re such a secretive woman, it makes me want to know you more and more. Preferably while we explore each other deeply and...”

Before he could finish his sentence, Lil elbowed his stomach. Ed’s waist immediately folded in half.

‘If I let him keep talking, my ears would most likely fall off.’

“Hey, you perv, keep your thoughts to yourself.”

“Oh, it hurts! Why did you hit me so hard?”

‘Bullshit, I didn’t use much strength, he’s exaggerating again.’

Lil wasn’t interested in all his whining about being injured enough to die. So, she walked away and turned her head to the mansion that emerged beyond the building in front of them.

“Where are we?”

Ed, still pretending to be hurt, slowly opened his eyes. When he realised that his acting didn’t work, he quickly straightened his back.

“George Darlan’s mansion.”

“George Darlan? The Count of Amiaeng?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, was it this close?”

Ed looked up.

“ ... ”

Wondering how she could bypass the soldiers of the mansion, Lil came to a stop. After thinking about a solution, she pointed her finger at Ed.

“You told me about the women visiting the Count’s bedroom, right? Do you know how he gets them?”

“Why?”

“Why else?”

“Well...What? Is ‘Why else’ what I think it is? Is it like that? It is like that!”

Lil didn’t have the slightest intention of answering the pouring questions.

“Ugh, you really have a lot to say about this topic, don’t you?”

“...”

Ed didn’t answer. Lil, walking leisurely towards the count’s mansion, suddenly questioned him as she noticed he stopped walking again. She looked back at Ed, who was still standing in the middle of the road, wondering why he wasn’t catching up with her.

“What? Why do you keep stopping? It’s getting annoying.”

“The Count... is the worst pervert of them all.”

“So what?”

“So what? I’m sure he won’t be able to sit still when he sees you! With your beauty, who knows what he’ll do!”

“Whatever.”

In fact, that was what Lil wanted.

“What? You might get assaulted by a nobleman! How can you be so calm?!”

Lil laughed.

“Huh? You think you’re my lover or something?”

“You said you weren’t a prostitute!”

“What does that have to do with it? I’m going to give this count some free service for a chance to meet him.”

“Your taste isn’t bald fatties, is it? Earlier you said that you liked my appearance and if we both liked each other, we could satisfy our desires.”

Ed appeared as if he was wronged.

‘What’s wrong with him now? Where’s this sudden tirade coming from?’

She concluded she didn’t even want to know and watched him indifferently.

“I’m better looking than the Count, anyone would say I’m much better! No, the comparison itself is disgraceful! And yet, I have to chase you around endlessly just to maybe get one night with you. What’s so good about an impotent old man?”

“...”

“Mine is still strong!”

Without looking, Lil could tell where his index finger was pointing at.

“Shut up, just follow me. Before I make that ‘strong thing’ of yours useless too.”

A gasping sound broke out behind her, but Lil chose to ignore it.

‘If you don’t like it, then stop following me.’

“You’re so annoying. It’d be nice if I could just cut you off.”

“What? What did you just say?”

“Ah, I must have made a slip of the tongue, I’m sorry.”

Ed grew pale and shut his mouth.

As they walked a little further the count's mansion, located at the foot of the mountain, became visible. Lil stopped some distance from the main gate, taking in the beautiful estate. Inspired by the southern style, the building had no gardens or porches. Convex terraces and long stairs were provided with exquisite curves and the white colour seemed to be made from crushed corals straight from the ocean. If you didn't know the house was financed by taking bribes from pirates, it'd be truly a sight that left you speechless.

It didn't match the owner at all.

"So, when do his women go in to see him?"

"..."

Ed was still mumbling about what that pig of a count would do. He even glanced at her in an unusual way. Feeling tired of Ed, she shook her head.

"That's enough! I'll just find out myself."

Lil ignored Ed and walked forward. The guard, who was dozing off, sluggishly opened his eyes when she appeared. She laughed behind her fan as he was rubbing his face. After she smiled seductively, his flustered cheeks turned even redder.

"Huh, ahem a... woman. Are you a civilian?"

"Do I look like one?"

"That...yeah."

Lil smirked, she already knew how fascinating her smile was to men, to make it even more effective she fluttered with her eyelashes. Unable to maintain eye contact, the guard looked away first. His foolish eyes failed to cover his desire when he scanned her chest-exposed dress, curled hair, and thick makeup.

While fanning, Lil spoke leisurely.

“I’m Lil, I’ll serve the count tomorrow night. I’m here to learn the route.”

The guard’s legs trembled, incapable of taking his eyes off her bright red lips. He couldn’t stand it anymore, jumped up, and approached her. As the distance got closer, his face became full of intense temptation.

Ed alternately looked between the guard and Lil.

‘She acted so cold at first, but she’s very skilled. This isn’t just your average beauty, but Liloa...’

“Do I have to come in here tomorrow?”

“No, usually they enter through the side door at the east wing. If you have an appointment, the carriage will pick you up around midnight, so there’s no need for you to learn the route.”

“Oh, I see. Still, seeing such a beautiful garden, I don’t feel like I walked here in vain.”

“But who’s that guy?”

Lil replied calmly.

“He’s the guy the Madame sends to keep an eye on me.”

‘You said you weren’t a prostitute!’

Ed’s eyes seemed to be shouting.

‘It’s probably a good thing that didn’t leave my mouth.’

Lil’s gaze met Ed’s.

Signalling him that he’d be done for if he made a mistake here. So, Ed arrogantly raised his chin, pretending to be a real brothel bodyguard.

“Have you been working here for a long time?”

“No, I’ve been promoted to this place from the mainland of the Empire, after serving Count Debussell. It has just been a few days.”

Ed was barely able to hold back his laughter as he saw the guard proudly lift his chest.

'It's considered one of the worst demotions if a soldier working on the mainland was relocated in Amiaeng. Of course, Liloa will know that.'

"Will I see you at the side door of the east wing when I go in?"

"We take turns, it might be possible if you come at the right time..."

"I always wondered what the mainland would be like, can you tell me a story about that place?"

"Sure! What do you want to know?"

"Oh, my god! Who's that? Is that the Count?"

"No, he's the butler in charge of the affairs in the house."

"Then, is that the Count?"

"No, that's the Commander of the security force."

"Oh, I didn't know that the Commander would always be at the residence. "

"He's not always here, in the evening..."

'It's indeed a phenomenal ability.'

The guard stood closely next to Lil and spilt all the count's private affairs.

'The Liloa I know would certainly be reluctant to exploit her beauty like this. But it now seems she has a good reason to use this method. Well, she's of course free to do whatever she wants.'

Shrugging his shoulders, Ed kept observing Lil. She was using extraordinary techniques. When she got the answer she wanted, she leaned towards the guard, making her hair caress his nape and ear. The guard was visible endeavouring to feel the soft touches again. Lil let the poor guard go after he gave her all the data about his night shift.

'That's pretty useful information if you're planning an infiltration.'

Footnote:

6. Flagship: The ship in a fleet the commander is on.

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