

# Under The Oak Tree

## Chapter 151

Proofreader – Nymeria

Ruth didn't want to bump into the princess as much as possible; unfortunately, that didn't happen. Extensive labor was required as the construction for the huge road connecting Anatol and Namhae Port began. The knights were going out several times a day to defeat monsters in the territory whilst protecting the enormous number of people that began to work on the foundations.

Given this situation, Ruth couldn't keep locking himself in the tower. He was directly placed into the subjugation team and was in a position where he could be easily harassed by Princess Agnes. Rather than feeling sorry for him, Max was envious.

Everyone in Anatol could help with Riftan's work, but Max seemed to be excluded from that. Even Yulysion and Garrow went out of the territory to defeat monsters or to run errands for the knights, while all Max had to do was quietly plant flowers in the garden inside the impenetrable castle walls.

Of course, managing and supervising the castle was not a leisurely job. However, Max could hardly shake the feeling of being a child left alone in an empty house.

As those kinds of days continued, she even started feeling skeptical about learning magic: no matter how much she polished her skills, she couldn't even go out of Calypse Castle, so what was the use of defensive magic, magic that creates light, and magic that arouses wind?

When she first learned about magic, she had fantasies of becoming a great adventurer and going on expeditions with Riftan, but that dream had long been broken. There was no way she was going to be involved in any dangerous adventures. Realizing that made her feel lonely and alienated, but she couldn't honestly tell anyone.

All the servants were kind, but it was not suitable to confess how she was feeling to them. On the other hand, Riftan was very busy and in a sense a partner she couldn't be honest with the most. In the end, all Max could do to end her suffocating loneliness was to mechanically go through day by day.

"You are not eating well these days. Perhaps you feel uncomfortable somewhere..."

Rudis anxiously asked Max, as she was having a late lunch. She shook her head and smiled forcibly. She waited until late for Riftan to return, causing her to sleep less hours and it noticeably weakened her stamina and made her lose her appetite, although her body wasn't ill.

“Your under eyes has darkened. How about taking even just a nap?”

“T- Thank you for your concern. H-however... the s-spice vendor will c-come this a-afternoon.”

“Then, would you like to have your dinner in your bedroom tonight so you can rest?”

Max shook her head.

“T-there are guests...I can't h-have my meals a-alone in the bedroom. I-it's the mistress' duty.”

“The guests would understand if you're feeling unwell...”

“I-I'm really okay!”

””” ”

Rudis' persistent suggestions felt a little annoying, so she sharply cut off the conversation and the maid shut her mouth.

Max broke the bread piece by piece in an uncomfortable silence and forced it into her mouth. Surely, her body felt heavy and tired, however lying down in bed in broad daylight and doing nothing seemed to only generate self-destructive thoughts. Thinking that it would do her mental health better to move around busily, she left the food she was eating, got up, and wore a cloak.

Before meeting the vendor, she thought of looking around the kitchen first.

“Madam, here you are!”

As she was leaving the room, an urgent voice was heard from the hallway. Max turned her head and widened her eyes when she saw Rodrigo running.

“W-what's going on?”

“It looks like there was a problem at the road construction site. Several workers were injured because of monsters, I received word to send guards and relief supplies.”

Max felt the blood drain from her face. Riftan must have been at the construction site and yet, such a problem arose, which meant that it had to be a very terrible monster running wild.

Her fear rushed in for a moment, but she managed to gather her composure.

Didn't she learn how to deal with a problem like this last winter with Ruth? But in reality she could barely recall the instructions Ruth had given then.

"A-at once, p-please load in the wagon...n-necessities. K-kettles and firewood...bowl and c-clean cloth, needle, thread, medicinal herbs...e-everything you need!"

"Yes, madam."

"P-prepare the wagon, they m-might also need blankets, p-please load it. W-where is the person who came to r-report?"

"He is in the field, preparing with the guards."

"I need to know e-exactly w-what kind of situation it is. P-please load your luggage in the w-wagon and go in the front of the castle's gates."

Rodrigo bowed and immediately ran down the stairs. Max also went out in a hurry. She couldn't rely on Ruth this time. Thinking she had to respond calmly despite being alone in this... Max rubbed her palms, which were soaked with cold sweat, against the hem of her clothes and crossed the garden. As she passed the gate, she saw several guards loading three wagons and ran straight to them.

"I-I heard there was a problem. T-he news...w-who brought the news?"

"That's me. I received instructions from Sir Uslin Rikaido to come here and get the supplies needed."

A middle-aged soldier wearing a helmet came forward. Max, swallowing dryly, asked.

"I-is the situation serious? H-how many were injured?"

"About 20 workers were injured, and around 15 guards who were doing rounds were seriously injured. The wizard administered first aid to those who were seriously injured, but since there are still remaining monsters to be defeated at the forefront, about half of the injured are being neglected in order to conserve magic..."

Hearing that there was still a battle going on made Max's fingertips cold.

"T-the lord...i-is he safe?"

"It's hard to give a sure answer since the subjugation isn't over yet, but he is Lord Calypse. He will be fine."

Max was able to calm down a bit with the soldier's confident words.

"G-good. Hurry...p-please prepare."

The soldier nodded and went back to the wagon. Max resolutely gleamed as she watched weapons, tents, and food being loaded on top of the wagon. As the soldier said, Riftan was the best knight on the continent, there was nothing to be worried about. All she needed to do was to focus on doing her part. Max clasped her hands together and prayed silently in her heart.

Shortly after, as soon as everything was ready, they rode the wagons and made their exit through the city gate. The guards were embarrassed that Max was following them, but they couldn't object to the doing of the lord's wife, so they just quietly led the carriage.

Max silently gazed at the rapidly passing landscape with a breathtaking tension. The carriage descended from the hill and swiftly passed through the town square, reaching the southern gate. In front of the gate there were bricks, sandbags, and two carts carrying patients entering the half-open door. Max leaped off the carriage and ran to them at once.

"M'lady!"

She was examining a pale-faced worker who had a splint tightly wrapped around his broken leg when she heard a new voice coming from behind. Max found Yulysion running towards her in an armor and her eyes widened. However, he was a hundred times more surprised than her.

"W-what are you doing here?"

"T-there was an accident...so I c-came along with the s-soldiers. The injured...d-did you bring them?"

"There was not enough transportation to bring all of them, so we only brought a few patients."

She glanced at the three men laying on the cart. They weren't suffering from a fatal injury but all of them seemed to be seriously bleeding. She unwrapped the tight cloth around the man's thigh sitting at the far end and inspected it to see if there were any foreign objects in the wound. Fortunately, the wound appeared to contain no sand or dirt. She then proceeded to tear the man's pants longer to make sure that there weren't any misaligned bones, and applied healing magic.

As the accumulated mana in her body rapidly decreased, she suddenly felt dizzy: she had never healed such a big wound before.

Does it really take this much mana?

She felt a large amount of mana being expelled from her body and her arms trembled.

“M'lady, are you alright?”

Yulysion gazed down anxiously at her pale face. Max casually smiled and administered healing to the other two workers. Although her mana rapidly decreased, causing a cold sweat to form on her back, she quickly recovered from it. She asked the guards to bring the injured to the treatment center and got on the wagon again.

Yulysion urgently chased after her.

“M'lady! It's dangerous out there. There's no need for you to go, just go back to castle...”

“W-what are you talking about! I-I am the lord's wife. When t-there is a p-problem in the territory...o-of course I must help. Look. These people, I h-healed them.”

“But m'lady hasn't practiced magic for a while, and outside the territory, monsters might appear...”

“I-I can also do my part! Didn't you say the o-other day? E-even when I encountered a w-werewolf, I didn't e-even blink. T-there's nothing to worry about.”

Max spat out in a cold tone. Her pride was hurt since she was being treated like an incompetent child by a 16-year-old boy. She wouldn't have learned magic in the first place if she thought of being stuck in the castle, she learned magic diligently to be able to offer help.

Max ordered the coachman to drive, and her carriage began to roll strenuously out the gates. Yulysion swiftly climbed onto his horse to follow alongside her. She pretended not to notice that he was shooting anxious glances from the exterior windows of the carriage and focused on restoring her mana as much as possible.

It wasn't long before the road leveled out and Max saw the bricks stacked at the end of the road. A simple bell was installed, surrounded by soil, sand and bricks. She jumped out of the wagon and saw a huge monster lying on the open road, surrounded by broken oaks. She instinctively stepped back.

Yulysion jumped off her horse and quickly ran to help her.

“It's a dead wyvern. This is the one responsible for this whole mess. “

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Mar blushed, ashamed that she showed Yulysion such reluctance, especially after boasting that she was not doing much of a thing. She did her best, but seeing and being in the presence of an enormous monster for the first time in her life made it difficult to maintain a casual face.

With terrified eyes, she glanced at the giant wyvern lying dead with its long tongue sticking out. It was a horrifying monster at least 40 kvet long (12 meters). Its head was just like a crocodile's and its broken wings resembled that of a bat; its heavy body was coated in a black of the exact shade of charcoal.

“As for dragons... they are ten times bigger than a wyvern.”

Goosebumps rose all over Max's forearms. How in the world did they fight against such a terrible monster? As Max vaguely imagined the scene coming into reality, a sense of fear came upon her.

“Madam, your complexion doesn't look good. Indeed, returning to the castle...”

“I-it's okay. It's just that my ma-mana is still recovering...it hasn't fully recovered yet.”

Max hastily composed her face and turned to the guards, giving instructions to first make a fire and boil water. Some soldiers who were standing guard in the area approached them to help unload.

“The i-injured people...w-where are they?”

“This way. Open spaces are in danger of being attacked by wyverns, so the injured are amongst the trees.”

“Wh-where's R-ruth?”

“The wizard is helping the lord in Cabro valley. It seems that a group of wyverns migrated there during the winter. Nearly twenty wyverns were sighted, so all the other wizards were sent on that subjugation mission.”

“T-twenty?”

Max’s heart shook at the news of Riftan fighting twenty of such enormous monsters and her stomach twisted with anxiety. She held back the urge to run in an instant to where Riftan was and barely squeezed out her voice.

“T-then...people who can p-perform healing magic...there’s n-no one left.”

“Though I immediately called for the herbalist in the village, we are having a difficult time due to the high number of injured people.”

Yulysion pointed to an old woman caring for patients in one camp.

””” ”

“A-alright. I want to prioritize s-seeing the badly injured people f-first.”

She took some steps and glanced around quickly. Men covered in dirt and dust were lying down on messy beds made of dirty cloth. A soldier pointed to one of them.

“He was a sentry guard on duty. When the wyvern threw him, his head hit against a rock, making him lose consciousness. He’s still breathing... however, his body has grown colder. Please examine him first.”

Max bent her knees to take a look at the young soldier. His scalp was lacerated from the head to the temple, and his shoulder bruised black. After checking for any broken bones, Max placed her hand on the wound and generated healing magic.

A warm heat escaped through her palms and beads of sweat formed on her forehead. Max stopped midway for she couldn’t heal the wound completely as it would drain her mana and would have nothing left for the other patients.

“I-I only administered first aid. His wounds... wash it cleanly and when he r-regains consciousness, please give him some w-water to drink. The guards shall g-give him some medicinal herbs r-right away. “

“Alright.”

“I, alone... it’s difficult to h-heal all of the Injured. Right now... Is there a-anyone else who needs immediate t-treatment?”

“There are two more people who are unconscious...”

Max swallowed a groan inwardly and talked with firm determination.

“Please l-lead me to them.”

After Max administered healing magic to the two unconscious patients, she was completely exhausted, and her body drooped.

Will it really be like this when using magic?

She had never experienced such a strong dizziness before, that she felt a faint anxiety.

“M'lady, are you alright?”

“I'm just tired from using h-healing magic... I-I will recover soon so... d-don't worry.”

Earnestly hoping that was true, Max sat down against a tree for a moment and took a breath. Meanwhile, the soldiers arranged their luggage in the wagons, set up tents among the trees, made sleeping bags, and carried patients. The campfire was lit, able to boil water, and sentries on patrol surrounded the area to guard. Max watched the busy scene, waiting for the dizziness to subside, then got up and staggered, gradually gaining a clearer vision.

She stubbornly went that far; she couldn't stop and rest now. Max scooped up some water from the pot, moistened her lips with the lukewarm drink, and began to see the injured again.

Fortunately, she was able to treat the injured more skillfully than she thought; perhaps, it was all thanks to her previous experience.

After meticulously cleaning the wounds, she sprinkled some hemostatic powder that Ruth previously gave her and wrapped the wounds in clean cloth; broken and dislocated bones were aligned and tightly wrapped with a splint with the help of the soldiers. She also made sure to have everyone drink water infused with anti-fever and detoxes. Max knew that, although they appeared to be fine now, later on they could develop high fever.

“Madam, this is the last person to be treated. His wound is quite big, will you be okay?”

A middle-aged soldier with a shaggy beard asked whilst guiding her to the wounded soldier lying on the edge of the camp. Max looked at the man whose shoulder had a big gash. The wound didn't look like it could be fixed by a simple plaster of cloth. She would have to use a thread and a needle to sew it up, just like what Ruth taught her, but she didn't have enough confidence to do it.

“This... This person is t-the last one... injured?”

“Yes, all the other people who were injured have already been tended to. Those who are well enough to move will be brought to Anatol once the scouts return.”



Max looked around, all the guards and workers wrapped in bandages were seated to one side drinking the prepared herbal soup. It was unlikely that someone from that group will suddenly get worse. Max, who was slightly worried, drew out the remaining mana she had and casted a healing spell on the wounded soldier.

As her magic left her body, her sight suddenly flashed white, but unexpectedly she quickly recovered from it. Perhaps, she was getting used to doing it bit by bit. With a sigh of relief, Max stood up from her seat and Yulysion ran to her at once.

“M'lady, when the sun sets, it will be more dangerous here. You should go back to Anatol at once.”

“Any news from...the R-remdragon Knights?”

“It looks like a couple of wyverns are hiding deep in the valley and they're having difficulty. However, it won't take long.”

“W-well, then...I'll go back t-together with the knights. I-it will be more s-safe.”

Yulysion's face was traced with conflict.

“Wouldn't it be better to go back as soon as possible and rest? Your face is as white as a sheet of paper.”

“If I sit by the f-fire and r-restore my mana...I will s-soon be okay. I'll do that quietly. What I'm w-worried about is Riftan.”

Yulysion's eyes widened, as if surprised by what she said. It was strange for Riftan Calypse to be an object of concern. Perhaps people didn't even have a single worry for the knight who defeated the red dragon, however Max knew about the extent of Riftan's recklessness, and her guts turned with concern. Even if it was him, he wasn't immortal.

“If they don't come back by the dark... I-I'll return to Anatol.”

Yulysion sighed with resignation as he looked at Max's stubborn face.

“If that's what it takes you to go back... then, alright.”

“T-thank you.”

“Indeed, if the knights really don't come back by sundown, you'll have to certainly go back to the castle. When it gets dark, monsters...”

At that moment, Yulysion pushed Max's body and drew out the sword from his waist. Before Max could even understand what was going on, she rolled to the ground. All of a sudden, the sky was covered with a dark shadow and heavy steps resonated, making

the ground vibrate. Max gasped, crippled on the floor. An enormous monster with bright red eyes was standing in front of them with its mouth wide open, displaying a sharp set of teeth. It was unbelievable that such a humongous creature so silently.

Half of the camp was blown by the gust from the creature's wings. Had Yulysion not immediately pushed her body, she would have also been sent flying like dust.

"Run!"

Yulysion yelled whilst waving his sword that gleamed blue against the light. As the monster's wings were torn by the sword's blow, its large body leaned. A strong wind was generated, trees shook and fell, the ground trembled as if there were an earthquake.

"Hurry, get the madam!"

"Please, come this way!"

One of the soldiers grabbed Max's arm, grimly pulling it and they started running. Max staggered as she followed the soldier, running away from the monster; her foot was caught in a stone and she fell against the ground. Her arm that was held by the soldier was throbbing, as if it was yanked out and her scraped knee hurt, as if it was going to split.

"M'lady! A-are you alright?"

She quickly tried to get back on her feet but the sight before her eyes shook her, making her dizzy and her stomach painfully knotted; she couldn't endure it anymore. Max laid on the floor and vomited. Her heart, swollen with fear, hurt like it was being stabbed by knives. Her mouth was wide open, as if forgetting how to breathe, desperately trying to get back up; at that moment, a golden flash of light appeared, making everything bright. Max looked back with terrified eyes. A huge fire was burning the enormous monster.

"Riftan!"

Princess Agnes' sharp voice rang in the air like a whip, and then someone jumped in the fire to the swaying monster and swung his sword heavily.

The head of the enormous monster who measures about 50 kvet (about 15 meters) flew in the air like a beheaded rooster, and the monster's body collapsed, falling, and causing the ground to shake like there was an earthquake. Max stared at the scene with tears streaming down her face, her vision then turned black.

"M'lady! Are you alright?"

Yulysion ran to her with urgency and lifted her body, but her limbs fell like their bones had melt and disappeared. Max, who leaned against the boy's body and shook uncontrollably, before losing all senses and slipping into unconsciousness.

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“Breathe slowly. Yes, just like that...” Riftan said.

Max struggled to breathe as if her head was underwater. She bent towards the floor, her stomach pressing over her knees tightly. Someone began to rub her back gently.

Her shoulders still shook. Slowly, Max opened her eyes and saw a familiar scene. She was back in her bedroom, a familiar red hue from the candlelight subtly lit the room. It was easy to tell it was night now. After staring around a bit longer with a confused expression, she moved and moaned softly and someone brought a cold, brass bowl to her mouth.

“Hurl if you need to”, Riftan said.

Max looked at him, her eyes still wet. Over the strands of his tussled hair, she saw that blood was still splattered over his face.

“You feel sick because you’ve wasted too much mana. You’ll feel better after throwing up.”

Max pressed her shaking hands against her chest and began to cough what little was in her insides.

“Ru-Rudis....pl-please call fo-for her.”

“It’s okay. Keep going.”

Max closed her mouth and shook her head. Her stomach was upset and she was starting to cry again. She didn't want Riftan to see her like this.

"Ru-Rudis..." Max said. Please call for her.

Max tried to wrest herself out of his arms, but he only moved the bowl to the side and pulled her body against his chest. She continued to resist, but Riftan's arm was too strong.

He cupped her chin and pushed two fingers into her mouth, lightly squeezing the back of her tongue. Eventually, Max vomited a sticky residue onto Riftan's chest. Her body convulsed, and tears began to run down her face more freely.

"Ssssh...It's alright." Riftan said.

He rocked her body back and forth, as if she were a small child, and patted Max on the back. Her face stung from her shameful appearance, as she spewed everything that came to the surface. Her face, hands, and dress were covered with sticky vomit.

"Don't cry", Riftan muttered, and wiped her face with a clean sleeve. Yet unlike his soft gestures, his expression was grim and tense, his mouth straightened into a thin line as he unfastened the straps on Max's back and undressed her, then he removed his shirt as well. When the cold air touched her naked skin, she instinctively leaned against his body.

"" "

Riftan swiftly pulled her closer and rubbed her cold back. Max fell deeper into his arms, seeking to get warmer. She pressed against his hard abs and twisted her legs against his.

"F\*ck."

Riftan's cheeks became red and a sheen of sweat began to perspire on his forehead. His body became hotter to Max's touch, as if he were made of burning iron.

She could feel his heart thumping to a quicker rhythm against her chest, yet his arms still held her gently.

Max struggled to stay awake as he wiped her face with a towel and undid the pins out of messy hair. She moved to rest her chin naturally over his shoulder.

When had Riftan returned to the castle? What about destroying the huge monster? Her body trembled as she began to feel sleepy.

“Your body is too cold”, said Riftan touching her with his hot hands. When he saw that she felt faint, he lifted her and rested her body near the bathtub in front of the fireplace.

Max entered the bath and waited for the hot water to warm her body, but she still felt colder than ever.

“Wh-why?” she said.

“Losing mana feels like losing blood”, Riftan said, bluntly. “You’ll feel cold and light-headed.”

He scooped water into one of his palms and poured it over her shoulders.

“I can’t believe that d\*mn b\*\*\*\*\*d didn’t watch out for you. No, I bet Ruth never dreamed you would be this hasty.” His tone was full of disapproval.

Max delicately lifted her eyes and saw his expression. Riftan’s eyes shone dangerously from anger. He retrieved a thick towel, dried his hands, took off his pants and rested Max’s back against his chest.

“You’ll feel warmer if we share my body temperature”, he said hugging her.

He deftly moved her into a bridal position, placing her between his thighs and hanging one arm loosely over her waist. Max could feel Riftan’s p\*\*\*k harden against her but could do nothing to comfort him, his hot skin distracted her. She pressed against his body like a young chicken poking for her right to lean against her mother hen’s breast. He drew a sharp breath as he continued to hold her and his hands began to shake.

She ignored his struggles, she was so cold and dizzy that it felt as if her body was a hundred years old.

“Hold on for a bit, even if you don’t want to”, Riftan said.

He began to rub every inch of her body for a long time in the bath, holding her tightly until the water began to cool. Max staggered as she tried to stand and leaned against Riftan. He wrapped her in a towel and made sure she was properly dried, before clumsily dressing her in her nightgown.

“Drink a little, even if you feel sick”, he said. He moved a cup towards her.

Max opened her mouth and barely took a sip, yet when the tap water entered her taunt stomach, she felt inclined to throw up again.

It would have been pointless to bathe if Riftan hadn’t anticipated her gagging. Max looked at his messy hands in shock, but he wiped his hands on a towel casually and wiped the residue on her face. Tears of shame began roll down her cheeks.

“I’m sorry. Don’t cry”, Riftan whispered gently, as if he thought he was hurting her, and began kissing her forehead while Max continued to tremble and cry.

When she felt a little better, she became aware that he had to be tired too; he had left on his last venture to fight so many dangerous monsters. Max moved away slightly to face him and said.

“I-I’m so-sorry to di-distract y-you. I-I’m fine now. Y-you’re busy.”

Riftan’s eyes flashed.

“You may be fine, but I’m not.” His voice shook slightly, as if he were withholding his emotions. “Do you know how I felt when I saw you lying on the road? I thought you were dead.” His face contorted with pain. He rubbed his face roughly with one hand, trying to calm down, then he talked in a subdued voice. “Anyway, don’t worry about useless things. Just sleep now.”

He covered her eyes with his hand. As Max’s vision blurred, her exhaustion took over her again and she began to fall back like a broken doll. Before she lost consciousness, she felt Riftan rubbing her cold feet with his hands, her stiff calves, and her neck, trying to give her more warmth.

Max wanted this night to never end, but could not fight her exhaustion any longer. She soon fell asleep as if put under a spell.

Max opened her eyes when she felt bright light shining over her eyelids. She looked around in confusion, still half-asleep, and soon realized that Riftan was still asleep beside her. This was different than her usual routine to wake up alone.

Max paused.

While he was asleep, he seemed so defenseless with his smooth, dark bed hair and his chest raising up and down slowly as he breathed. She looked at his long black eyelashes that left shadows over his cheekbones; his eyelashes looked like the tips of a black butterfly’s wings. When she reached out to touch them, Riftan’s eyes flashed open. Shocked, Max pulled her hand away.

“I-I’m sorry. To w-wake y-you up, I di-didn’t mean.”

Riftan blinked as if he were not fully awake before sitting up and stared at her.

“How are you feeling now? Sore?”

“I-I f-feel good now, t-thank you.”

He rubbed her forehead and the back of her neck. Max's body was warmer compared to last night.

"Can you drink some water?"

When Max nodded, Riftan held Max by her shoulders and lifted a cup against her mouth. She wet her dry lips with the tap water and sighed gratefully.

"Th-thank you."

"You should eat, too. A weak broth at least. And..." He looked down at her naked b\*\*\*\*s showing through the gap of her nightgown and paused for a moment. "... change of clothes, too", he finished.

Max blushed and quickly covered herself with the bedsheet. Riftan had seen her body many times, but when he stared at her that way, she felt embarrassed. He stared at her shy figure for another moment before getting out of bed and pulling on some pants. He rang the bell and instructed a maid to bring clothes and food for the Lady.

Max sat with her back against the pillow, trying to untangle her messy hair. Her head throbbed and her limbs still shook a bit, but it was nowhere near as terrible as yesterday. Her shoulders relaxed in relief, it had been a terrible experience.

"Lay down some more", Riftan said.

"I-I r-rested a-lot."

She held the bedsheet tightly over her body as Riftan came closer and touched her arm.

"I told you to lie down."

"I-I'm okay. R-really."

"F\*CK, I don't want you to say that you're okay anymore!"

Max quailed from Riftan's sudden outburst and her shoulders drooped. He pushed her firmly by the shoulder to make her lay down and rest.

"I'm trying to hold my temper, don't test me."

"I'm so-sorry. I d-didn't know m-magic w-would a-affect me I-like this."

"You think I'm mad at you?" Riftan muttered softly. He gripped Max's shoulder firmly. "Do you understand what almost happened? If I was late, you could have been permanently injured! At the worst, you may have died."

He clenched his teeth and stopped speaking.

Note – LN: ...Let's just enjoy this chapter.

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“I don't know if I should strangle you or the idiots who let you exit the castle gates”, Riftan said. “What were you thinking about going to that monster-infested area? Did you forget? I ordered you to stay away from danger.”

“B-but, I w-was alone in t-the c-castle. I s-should h-help o-outside as well.”

“Of course you should have stayed in the castle!” Riftan beat his fist against his chest. “Why do you think I work from morning until night? Who do you think these city walls and castle were built for?!”

His voice rose almost to a roar until he met Max's white, tired gaze and he closed his mouth. His shoulders shook fiercely as he tried to pent his emotions.

“Don't even think about leaving this room today”, he spat in a suppressed tone, as if someone were choking him. He turned away from Max, picked up a shirt that had fallen to the floor and left, closing the door behind him.

She kept her eyes on the closed door, confused. Riftan was often impatient and had a crass way of speaking, but this was the first time she had seen him this upset.

Was he that shocked about her condition? Max began to worry. This was the second time he had gotten upset with her because she had fainted. Of course, he would be tired of her by now. Her heart was still racing from Riftan's outburst as she tried to calm her heartbeat, when someone knocked on the door.



“My Lady, I brought a change of clothes and your meal. May I come in?”

“Ye-yes, come in.”

After hearing Max’s confirmation, Rudis entered the room with a large tray.

“I have brought some herbal soup for your health. How are you feeling, my Lady?”

Max tried to smile when she saw she was worrying her maid.

“I-I’m okay. Y-yesterday, I used m-more mana t-than I expected.”

“Your condition yesterday seemed severe”, the maid said carefully, before setting the tray by the bed. “The Lord was very worried. When he left, he told me to treat you well, my Lady.”

Max’s tense shoulders relaxed, and relief washed over her. She felt better knowing that he still didn’t seem to be completely uninterested in her.

“L-Lord Calypse, w-where did he go? Ye-yesterday and t-throughout the night, he b-barely rested to c-care for me. H-has he l-left the ca-castle again?”

””” ”

“He has left to the training grounds, my Lady”, Rudis said kindly, spreading the outfit she brought on the bed. “I am ready to dress you, at your convenience.”

With her help, Max changed into a new and soft dress before returning to bed and partaking in a clear soup. While she was busy, the maid lit a fire in the fireplace and prepared some tea. Max peeked at her and began to ask some questions.

“Perhaps, do you k-know what h-happened to t-the other people?”

“Other people, my Lady?”

“B-because the monster s-suddenly appeared where t-there were a lot of injured people. T-there was chaos”, Max said.

Her words were faint as she remembered people flailing in the air with just a flutter of the monster’s wings. Rudis saw her Lady white and tired face and talked measuredly.

“I am not quite sure about the details, my Lady. Should I inquire further?”

“Y-yes, please do”, she smiled nicely and nodded.

“While I’m gone, the Lord has told me that you must stay in your room and rest.”

Max nodded again. She wasn't sure she had the energy to leave the room anyway, even if Riftan hadn't said anything. Rudis transferred the kettle from the fire to the shelf before taking her leave. Max set her bowl of soup aside and laid down to rest in the bed, recovering, until the maid knocked on the door a while later.

"My Lady, the princess has requested an audience with you."

"Oh, wait!" Max said, surprised.

She rose quickly out of bed before getting dizzy and fell back. She was underdressed, wearing only a thin linen dress. She could not welcome her Royal Highness in such simple attire, and yet, she couldn't deny an audience with Agnes either. Max moved again to stand in front of a mirror. She brushed her hair that had gone poof like a cloud and pressed a wet towel to reduce the swelling around her eyes.

Her efforts didn't change her appearance much, but at least her hair had settled a bit. Max returned to bed.

"P-please come in."

The door opened and Agnes and Rudis entered the room. Max gazed at Agnes outfit, disheartened.

The princess was in high spirits and wore an elegant blue dress that highlighted the curves of her body, her long blond hair was braided and swayed nicely as she walked. It was a stark contrast to the pants and bulky clothing she usually wore.

"Maximilian, how are you feeling?" Agnes said.

"I-I'm okay, thank you. P-please forgive my a-attire. It is r-rude to greet you i-in this condition."

"Etiquette is unimportant right now. I'm sorry I didn't request an audience with you earlier and came on a whim. I saw your maid questioning the guards about what happened yesterday and decided to come and explain the situation to you myself." She sat in a chair Rudis had offered her and gave Max a half-smile. "I also want to apologize."

"S-sorry?"

"Yesterday, the soldiers and I had planned to corral the wyverns into the valley and pick them off one by one. If I had conjured the barrier properly, not a single wyvern would have escaped past the knights, who were trying to corner them. But there was a hole in my barrier..." Agnes sighed. She fretted and moved a strand of her hair away from her forehead. "My mistake caused a mess for everyone and even got you, Maximilian, injured. I am really sorry."

Max was surprised that the princess was admitting her mistake. Agnes was the highest-ranking person currently at Calypse Castle, she did not have to apologize to anyone there and did not even have to assist them the day before. She quickly rose her hand to deny the princess' claim.

"N-no. P-please don't a-apologize to me, Y-Your Majesty. E-even though y-you d-did not have to h-help, y-you fought at the f-front for Anatol. If you h-had not helped us at all y-yesterday..."

"I didn't do it for free", Agnes laughed with her trademark, easygoing smile. "Yesterday, we caught twenty-three wyverns, twenty-three gemstones, monster bones, and skins. They even overpaid me for the little help I offered."

Max looked at her, dubiously. She didn't know the exact worth of all the materials that Agnes had listed, but understood they were of high value.

"However, because of my mistake, I will talk to Riftan to divvy the spoils. My conscience wouldn't let me do otherwise", the princess said sadly.

"D-did a lot of people get hurt?" Max asked. "Y-yesterday, how d-did the people fare?"

Max didn't care much about the monsters' fate or the spoils of war, she only wanted to know what happened to the people she treated.

Agnes saw her anxious look and seemed to choose her words carefully, then she talked slowly.

"Six people were critically injured, but received prompt treatment with healing magic and are now safe. The others had minor injuries. However... two civilians got trapped under the wyvern while we fought the monster. By the time the fight was over, one of them had already ceased to breathe."

Despite the princess' calm brief, Max turned white from shock. Her back became cold as she took in the news that someone she had seen yesterday, someone who was in the same time and place as her, was now dead. Did her healing magic save anybody? Max lowered her eyes and whispered softly.

"W-what I did o-out there was meaningless."

"Absolutely not!"

Agnes wrapped her hand around her fingers and gave her a probing, distinct look. Max was surprised by how warm her hand felt against her cold fingers.

"Some of the people who survived the wyvern monster attack only survived because you, Maximilian, healed them with your magic. You were very brave."

“N-no. I-it’s nothing w-worth bringing up”, Max said, self-deprecating herself. Her eyes were still downcast. “It w-wasn’t just me w-who d-decided to help. A-and I had an o-obligation as the Wife of L-Lord Calypse. Although R-Riftan d-didn’t I-like me out t-there.”

“It was more than just dislike. When he saw you on the ground, he almost turned insane. Dear God, to think that the Mahgo, the same one who didn’t even blink twice in front of a real dragon, would act like that!”

Max was annoyed with the princess’s words. It seemed that what Riftan said about the princess getting on people’s nerves was true. She muttered, a little resentful.

“Riftan w-was worried about me b-because he is a k-kind person. He k-knows my b-body is weak. My health is o-often not good.”

For some reason, Agnes gripped her stomach and began laughing at her retort.

“Ah, of course. That guy is a kind person.” Tears formed under her eyes and she gasped for breath.

Max was confused. She did not find the situation funny and grew angry, believing she was being ridiculed. The princess noticed her change in demeanor and collected herself.

“What I mean to say is, Maximilian, you did a great job out there. Don’t worry about how Riftan took it. Once he calms down and thinks straight, he will be proud to have a brave and capable wife.”

When she recalled Riftan’s attitude, Max didn’t think Agnes opinion was very convincing, but she did not disagree out loud with her.

“I see. T-thank you for telling me.”

“I mean this sincerely. Listen, didn’t you only start to learn healing magic to prepare for an attack like that? Not many noblewomen would go that far.”

Max’s cheeks glowed with shame. She hadn’t learned magic for such a noble cause as Agnes had thought, she had only been shrewd enough to believe that once Riftan grew tired of her, he might still keep her around if she was adept at magic, instead of throwing her away. She avoided the princess’ gaze and said uncomfortably.

“I s-started learning m-magic last winter, b-but my skills are s-still not very good.”

“To heal seven critical patients in on day, considering you are a beginner, that is a great feat!” Agnes said casually. “Maximilian, you may be a prodigy for healing magic.”

Translator note – LN: When Agnes says “Maximilian” a lot, she is saying that in place of “Lady Calypse,” which insinuates that she wants to have a close relationship with Max. Yay, best friends!

Nymeria – Still vibing with Agnes here B)

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## Under The Oak Tree

### Chapter 155

Proofreader – Nymeria

“Although, I can’t really compliment you for being reckless enough to let yourself run out of mana.”

“W-well, that was my first time healing such big wounds... I-I didn’t know how much mana would be consumed. When mana is depleted... I didn’t even know what was going to happen.”

“You learned from someone who is the incarnation of irresponsible, and it’s unreasonable.” Suddenly, Princess Agnes’ tone became bitter. “I can’t believe that man didn’t bother to teach you the criticalities when using magic. I recommend that you switch to a reliable teacher as soon as possible.”

“Ruth... is a good teacher. Even though he’s busy, he tries all his best... to teach me.”

“But it wasn’t enough.”

Max was trying to defend Ruth but soon bit her lip shut due to the princess’ coldness. It appeared that Agnes’ hostility against Ruth was worse than she thought. Max closed her mouth because she didn’t want to have a pointless argument with Agnes, but assuming the silence was an affirmation, the princess spoke in a subtle tone.

“How about coming to the capital with Riftan? I will arrange for you to learn magic from a prominent wizard in the palace. If you’re sincerely eager to learn and practice magic, it is crucial that you learn from a credible teacher.”

“I-I’m satisfied learning from Ruth. Also, Riftan I-leaving Anatol... I don’t s-see it happening.”

“If the Lady says she wants to live in the capital, I’m sure he would change his mind. Please give it a thought. In Drakium, you will be able to live more luxuriously. Grand banquets are held daily in the palace and there are a lot of sights to see in the city. You will be able to freely socialize with other ladies.”

Max looked up at her charming face with gloominess. The capital had to be overflowing with ladies who were as beautiful and vivacious as the princess. Her husband might soon find her a bore if they lived amongst gorgeous people, standing out like peacocks. But even without such worries, Max wasn’t even remotely interested to the life in the capital, so she spoke with utmost resolution.

“Although I’m thankful for your o-offer... I am c-content with my life here.”

As if trying to persuade Max, the princess smacked her lips and sighed deeply.

“I see, both stubborn as oxen.”

“Princess Agnes... do you want to b-bring Riftan along with you t-to the capital?”

“My father wants to keep Riftan close by. He intends to increase the unity within Whedon by showing to the nobles that he is loyal to the royal family. If the nobles see that a powerful knight follows the king, the loyalty of the lords to the royal family will strengthen.” The princess suddenly casted a bitter smile. “That’s the reason why they tried to force me and Riftan to marry. The king fears that Riftan will betray Whedon and escape to Libadon or Osyria, since rulers all over the land want to covet the strongest knight.”

“Riftan... cherishes Anatol. This land... he has n-no intentions of a-abandoning it.”

””” ”

Max urgently spoke, surprised that the royal family had such deep suspicions about Riftan’s loyalty. The princess shrugged lightly, and gently agreed.

“I think so too. I saw how Riftan gambled his life and death bringing Anatol back to life. If he had any intention to move to a different kingdom, he wouldn’t make such efforts. If anyone told the king about this, he will be surely relieved.”

Max carefully looked at Agnes’ face, then spoke.

“Your majesty... are you here t-to spy on Riftan?”

Instead of answering, the princess smiled vaguely, but that alone was enough to answer Max's question.

“I didn't mean to disturb you for so long... it looks like I confused you. I should get going now.” She got up from her chair and smiled softly. “You have to take enough rest for a day or two for you to recover your depleted mana. I wish you get well soon.”

“T-Thank you.”

For the first time, Agnes' cold blue eyes sparkled with compassion. The princess momentarily gazed gently at her and then turned around to leave the room. Max lied down on the bed, exhausted.

It seemed that Max had forgotten how to sleep. She barely opened her eyes and looked around, the sun was going down and a dim shade hovered over the room. Max rubbed her stiff eyes and sat up. Although she slept for a long time, her head was hazy and she felt lethargic.

“How are you feeling?”

Suddenly, a voice spoke from a distance; Max turned her head, startled. Riftan was seating in front of the fireplace with his long legs stretched out.

“W-when did you come b-back? I heard you went t-to patrol...”

“I came back right away once I received the reports on the accident from the knights. I thought that you need someone to watch over you.” He muttered darkly in the dark and gently touched the cat's back sitting on his lap. “I couldn't function properly because I was anxiously thinking whether you were sleeping soundly on the bed or not.”

“I was j-just in the bedroom...”

“I know. I kept watching.”

Max rolled her eyes at Riftan's blunt response. For how long had he looked at her? Riftan definitely needed a break just as much as her. She looked at his face worried as he walked in front of the fireplace and placed the cats clinging onto him into the basket.

“You must be starving because you couldn't eat properly and slept for a long time. I've warmed up the soup, can you eat?”

“I think I can eat a l-little”

Riftan grabbed the ladle and stirred the soup inside the pot, took a scoop and poured it into a wooden bowl.

“It’s hot, be careful.”

Max took the bowl and mixed the clear soup with a spoon. It was a thin soup made with finely chopped herbs, barley and eggs. She blew the misty steam coming from it, scooped it with a wooden spoon and placed it in her mouth. As the hot, adequately salted soup dripped down her throat, her stomach rumbled, as if eager for that moment. Only then she felt how extremely starved she was and pushed the food into her mouth. Riftan, who was sitting on the bed looking at her, sighed with relief.

“Seeing that your appetite has returned, you really must be feeling well now.”

“I k-keep saying I’m okay.”

“Whether you feel well or not, you say that you are.”

He replied coldly, walking back to the fireplace and hanging a small kettle over the fire. Max held her spoon and glanced at him cautiously. Was he relieved? He looked calmer than when he left the room, but he still looked nervous. Riftan, who was staring at the flame with thoughtful eyes, suddenly opened his mouth.

“I heard that Agnes stopped by to see you earlier... Did she say anything weird?”

“She didn’t s-say much. Just this and that...”

Max said that their conversation was nothing important, wondering if she could tell him that Agnes had suggested going to the capital and that she refused. He looked at her with a puzzled face.

“Really?”

“Yesterday t-the princess said that b-because there was a whole in the barrier t-the camp was attacked a-as the monster escaped... S-she seems to feel at fault. She said t-that I was in danger b-because of her... and she a-apologized to me.

“... Right.”

After that, an unfamiliar silence clouded them. Max became restless and looked at Riftan’s eyes. She couldn’t figure out what to do with her husband who was obviously mad at her.

Usually, when her father was in a bad mood, she used to hold her breath and keep out of his sight as much as possible. She was aware that if she had said anything, it would only fuel his anger.



However, her husband silence made her feel worse as it went on. Riftan, staring at the fireplace with a hardened face, spat out in a subdued tone.

“Maxi, such thing should not happen ever again.”

At his low-pitched voice, her shoulder shrunk. She didn't need to ask him for clarification to understand what he meant with “such thing”. As Riftan poked the firewood with a rod, he slowly turned his head and looked at her intensely.

“I know you're just trying to fulfill your responsibilities as my wife, but this place is different from the Croix duchy. There are countless monsters loitering Anatol's territory and I don't know where or what dangers lurk. Did you hear about the people who died on the chaos that happened?”

She stiffly nodded. For a moment, there was a strange hesitation that lingered in Riftan's eyes, but he spoke sharply, as if shaking it off.

“It could have been you.”

Max's stomach turned cold, and the hair at the back of her neck stood. If Yulysion didn't immediately push her out of the way when the monster flew, she could have been fatally injured. When she couldn't deny the fact of Riftan's words, he spoke a in a tone that was slightly harsher.

“You have no idea what you're doing. You used your healing magic to your body's limit. If only I knew that it would get to that point, I would have contradicted you when you said you were learning magic.”

“That's b-because I'm s-still inexperienced. From now on... I'll be caref-“

“There won't be next time.” Riftan declared icily.

Max looked up at him with confusion. “A-anything I wanted... You said I could d-do anything I wanted.”

“That's as long as what you're doing doesn't put you in danger!”

As if Riftan had lost all his patience, he stepped over to the bedside and fiercely cried out.

“You are my wife. It's my duty to keep you safe and protect you. I can't stand it when you're in danger. I can't bear it when you struggle or suffer. The same thing can't happen again.”

“Then w-what should I do? You fight d-dangerous battles... W-what do I do when you're amid all k-kinds of hardship...”

“You don’t have to do anything.”

Riftan shook her body and clasped her face with his hands.

“I keep telling you that I don’t want anything. Taking care of Calypse castle or overseeing the wellness of this house, that alone is more than enough to me.”

Max wanted so bad to violently oppose, but she couldn’t find the words to say, she only trembled pathetically. She did those things because she wanted to help Riftan, she wanted to be someone useful, so she put all her strength into improving herself. However, he didn’t need any help from her, and it was difficult for her to accept that fact. As she kept her mouth shut, Riftan turned her face to him and muttered, begging.

“Please... Don’t make me worry.”

Max was crying, devastated. How could she reply? To the man who lost his sanity worrying for her, she couldn’t stand being stubborn and nodded weakly. Riftan pulled her and tightly embraced her. She leaned on his shoulder and her voice came out from her throat that felt rigidly locked.

“I’m s-sorry for w-worrying you.”

A moist, hot sigh flowed down her neck. She slowly closed her eyes as she felt Riftan’s large hand cradle her head. She didn’t know why, but the warm, strong arms that once provided her exceeding comfort, now felt suffocating.

Note – LF: It’s because Riftan has made her world so small in the effort of protecting her T.T I know Riftan loved Maxi to death, only if Maxi knew. But still, she has been living in a small world ever since, she needs to have her own will.

Nymeria: Ugh my heart is crying, I understand why he feels so anxious about her being in danger, but as LF said she now needs more freedom!

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## Under The Oak Tree

## Chapter 156

Proofreader – Nymeria

Max had to stay locked up in the bedroom until her body had recovered completely. Because of how great Riftan's restlessness was, even when she left the room to see her business she had a row of nervous servants to attend her. Even after her mana had completely recovered and her dizziness subsided, Riftan couldn't ease up. Thanks to that, Max had the time to postpone her duties of hospitality to the guests and train the cats in her room instead.

"Ron is the b-best skilled."

She murmured dryly, waving a mouse-shaped doll that Rudis made for the cats. Just over the course of a few weeks the gray cat, which swung its front legs vigorously to s\*\*\*\*h the doll, grew unnoticedly. Roy was being un-cat like, acting cute on top of Max's knees while Laura, the white cat, which as unbothered as a queen seemed disinterested with such a childish toy, licking the soles of her feet from a distance. So far, Max had observed that Laura was a grim and savvy cat, and she showed no interest to anyone aside from Riftan. While Max was stuck in her bedroom, she tried tirelessly to get Laura's attention but to no avail, the cat didn't even pay any attention to her.

"Ron will be a great mouse-hunter. He is the largest, most curious, and belligerent cat. Roy is too meek, while Laura doesn't do anything to avoid staining, getting her white fur dirty. The chef told me that these two guys are gluttons and have to fix their eating habits."

"Y-you mustn't. They're still young... w-when they grow up, they will b-become useful too."

She hugged the cats to her chest as if to protect them. Max knew that it was natural for animals to be thrown out if they couldn't pay back the food their consuming, but she hated it when animals were treated harshly during her childhood. She felt that she had no power to do anything about it and that she was no different from the useless livestock.

Seeing Max's determined expression, Rudis talked with a gentle smile.

"Even if you wanted to do as the chef said, it's impossible for them to get hungry. The maids secretly take turns feeding them snacks and even the drivers throw them food when the cats sneak under the table. Just look at how chubby they are."

Rudis grabbed Ron's forearms and lifted him up. Max sighed lightly as the cat's small, supple, and soft body stretched out like a flour dough.

“Is it a-already okay for them to leave the castle and w-walk around? They’re still so small...”

“That shouldn’t be a problem, we’ll just let them in the kitchen or the bedrooms. Everyone will watch over them.”

Max waved the mouse doll at the cats, looking down at their cute little faces that showed how they were satisfied and relaxed. While caressing their soft fur, she felt a slight comfort for her boredom and gloomy heart.

“Shall I prepare you a meal soon?”

“It’s a-already time to eat?” Max looked at the window, the sun was floating in the middle of the sky. “I’m not hungry y-yet.”

“The lord instructed me to make sure that you eat all meals of the day.” Rudis firmly stated, placing the rebellious, grunting cats into a deep basket.

Max sighed. To Riftan, she was perfectly stigmatized as a woman as weak as a chick. He was a man unusually overprotective, but recently he had grown almost paranoid about taking care of her. Even when she was sitting on the bed while reading a book, Riftan would worry about her getting a papercut or her arms getting a cramp from holding the book for too long. Max had already grown a little tired from the frustration that came from his pesky worries.

””” ”

It’s not that I don’t like it, but...

Perhaps because Max grew up in an environment where she was treated harshly for over 20 years, she was not comfortable with Riftan’s excessive attention. She was happy to be pampered lightly but being treated like an infant who couldn’t even put food inside her mouth, it was sickening.

“Kindly wait for a while, I will bring your meal from the kitchen.”

“Then... please.”

Max got up and sat down on the table when Rudis left, hoisting the basket with the cats to prevent them from destroying expensive rugs or furniture. On the table there were half-burned candles, fruit bowls, and magic books piled haphazardly. While waiting for her meal, she scanned a few pages of a book hoping to read something, but she grew tired of it and closed the pages.

After realizing that Riftan had no intention of letting her do anything but be the hostess of the castle, she had lost all the motivation to study healing magic. She propped her

chin against her palm and sighed. Outside the castle, the road construction was in full swing, the guests were busy exploring the estate, and yet there she was, stuck in a room and lounging, thinking about her old days.

Back in Croix Castle she used to be locked in a room too, out of everyone's sight. On the days she got to wander around and some guests happened to see her, her father...

"Maximillian, it's me. Can you talk for a moment?"

A voice interrupted her thoughts and Max rose from her seat in surprise. A woman hurriedly opened the door and entered the room. Princess Agnes stood in a white dress, alone, without any attendants. She smiled at Max apologetically.

"I'm sorry to come here so suddenly, but I seldom have a chance to see your face."

Max blushed in embarrassment. Hosting dinners for guests coming from faraway lands and ensuring their comfort were the hostess's critical tasks. Not showing your face to dinner for a few days was considered poor hosting and neglecting the guests,

"I-I apologize for neglecting my duty. F-for my body to recover..."

"Oh, you still haven't restored your depleted mana?"

"It's not like that. I'm fine n-now. Riftan's just very worried..."

As the words spilled out of her mouth, the princess' forehead creased and sighed.

"Just as I thought. When it comes to Maximillian, Riftan acts impossibly uptight. Staying in the room too much is not good for your health either. You have to move around to revitalize your body, am I right?" She sneaked closer to her with a playful smile. "In that sense, why don't you go out with me today?"

"G-go out?"

"It looks like the spring festival in the village is going to start today. I heard about it when I went to the market the other day." The princess took a couple steps back and spun around gracefully. Max's eyes widened as her hem and twisted blue belt fluttered. Only then that she remembered about the festival. "Do you still have the belt that I bought for you?"

"I-I have it. But..." Max murmurs shyly. "Riftan w-won't let me... go outside of the castle."

"If you have the proper escort, there will be no problem on that." The princess spoke confidently, but Max, who had been plagued by Riftan's peculiar anxieties, was skeptical.

“Thank you for your invitation. However, without my husband’s permission...”

Max trailed off, unsure if the princess who had travelled across continents would understand her situation. Princess Agnes wore a serious expression.

“Fine. I will be the one to ask permission for you. Unless you hate the idea of going to the festival?”

Max hesitated for a moment and then shook her head slowly. Honestly, she was curious about the spring festival. As if the princess could see right through her feelings, her blue eyes shone vividly and she grabbed Max by the arm.

“Then get ready, I’ll take care of the talking so you won’t have to worry about anything.”

It was embarrassing that the princess’ attitude towards her was like how one would treat a younger sibling, but Max didn’t say anything and changed into a white dress, tying the red belt made of twisted cloth around her waist. Finally, as she stepped out of the room, the princess held her hand and strode alongside her through the hallway.

“Riftan will surely be at the training ground since I heard that he wasn’t supposed to visit the construction site today.”

“W-will it be okay?”

“After cleanly slaughtering the wyvern herd, no monsters have approached the site. There’s a possibility that monsters will approach the area to plunder the workers but Ruth has installed a monster detection magic on the field so any attack will be foreseen.” As if it was hard for her to admit, the princess spoke with twisted lips. “He is sloppy, but he’s excellent with crafting magic tools. If he says it works, it really does. Because of that, Riftan doesn’t need to guard the site all day.”

“T-that’s good news.” Max finally smiled brightly after a long time. She was relieved that she didn’t have to worry about Riftan going out of the territory.

The princess lead them straight to the training grounds. Contrary to what she was expecting, it was empty; no intense drills were going on like the usual. As Max looked around with curiosity, the princess explained that she forgot that the training hours had changed since the knights had to rotate in order to supervise the site. Max smiled bitterly at the fact that she, who was the wife of the Lord, knew less than a guest, the princess knew better about the schedule of the Remdragon knights than her.

“Everyone is probably in the conference room now.”

The princess greeted the guards lightly and stepped into the knight’s quarters which was next to the training ground. Max caught up to her closely, she had never stepped

foot in this area, despite living in Anatol for several months. Her heart pounded, feeling as if she was entering a forbidden place.

“You’ll excuse me.”

Without any hesitation, the princess opened the doors to the conference room and entered. Max held out her head and peeked inside. In a gloomy room lined with wooden chairs, tables, spears, helmets, and armor, Riftan and five other knights were gathered, discussing some matter. Their gazes shifted instantly to Max and Agnes.

“What brings you here? You said you wanted to take a relaxing break today.” Riftan talked in a way that clearly showed that the princess was being a nuisance. Not yielding to Riftan’s heartless attitude, she simply shrugged her shoulders and stepped forward to face him.

“I came because I have a matter to discuss. I want to take Maximillian with me to go out and see the spring festival, would that be okay?”

Riftan’s dark face quickly hardened and showed a cold expression. He looked back and forth at Agnes, then at Max, who was standing behind her and looked away sharply, like there was no room for a chance.

“My wife has only recently recovered. I’ll ask someone to escort you, so go by yourself.”

“Your wife looks very healthy to me. Isn’t she?”

The princess squinted her eyes at Riftan and then looked at Max, the eyes of all the people who were in the conference room flew towards her in unison.

Note – Nymeria: When Agnes complimented Ruth I totally felt like a proud mum, God I love him so much lmao

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## Under The Oak Tree

Proofreader – Nymeria

Note – Nymeria: Since some of you struggle with names, a quick reminder! In this chapter you'll see Sir Gabel, Sir Hebaron Nirta and Sir Elliot Caron ?

Max stood up properly and fixed her posture. As the princess said, her health was completely restored and was in perfect health. She had a good complexion, a reddish tint on her cheeks, and her face had gotten plumper. However, anxiety was still written all over Riftan's eyes when he looked at her.

"I'm sorry to say that she still needs to rest. Moreover, there are a lot of visitors right now in Anatol which makes the security unstable. Sending my wife, who hasn't fully recovered her health, to a dangerous place..."

"Dear Sir Calypse. I'm not saying that we are going to a battlefield. What I'm saying is that we are only going to a fun spring festival with innocent country girls. Do you know that worrying too much can make you sick?"

The princess interrupted his words and retaliated bitterly, glaring at him with fierce blue eyes. Riftan darkly glared back at her, unfazed. Even the knights shed a cold sweat witnessing such authoritarian gazes, but the princess didn't blink an eye and even snorted at his words.

"You can't intimidate me. If you're really worried, then go to the festival with us."

"Spending so much time on such useless events...!" Riftan, who started shouting, immediately bit his mouth when he saw Max's defeated face. She quickly rearranged her expression.

"I d-don't mean to be a bother to you, Riftan... I'm oka-"

She habitually tried to say that she was fine, but suddenly remembered that he hated it when she said that and bit her tongue. When the awkward silence subsided, the princess, imposing high pressure, folded her arms in front of her chest and glared at Riftan; even the knights who were silently sitting glared at him.

"Can you not be like that and give us permission? There's nothing wrong with going to the village spring festival."

"That's right. Your wife has every right to enjoy Anatol's festivals to her heart's content. If you try to tie her up too much, she'll hate you, Captain."

As Hebaron and Gabel tried to convince him, Riftan scowled at them. The knights shrugged heavily and shut their mouth. Riftan, who was silent for a long time with a disgruntled expression, finally got up from his seat with a sigh.



“Fine. Prepare the carriage. I will go with you.” He said reluctantly, then he squinted his eyes at Max and clicked his tongue. “However, if you show any sign of exhaustion, I’m taking you back to the castle right away.”

“Y-Yes...!”

Max nodded, her face lighting up with joy. She was guilty of taking his time while he was busy, but she couldn’t hide the fact that she was happy he was about to go out with her. When Riftan started picking up his things, Hebaron cleared his throat and approached him.

“I will come with you. The more escorts, the better.”

””” ”

“Sir Nirta is only interested in seeing the village girls.” Out of nowhere, Gabel stepped in front of him.

“Please bring me with you this time. I’ll be chivalrous and keep the spirits of the innocent virgins high at the Spring Festival.”

“Man, this jerk is no better than me...”

“Elliot, come with me.” Riftan cut off their bickering at once. “Don’t even let those two guys near the village. I don’t want to see Anatol’s women holding illegitimate children knocking on the gates.”

“Captain!”

He ignored the complains and walked out of the conference room, his arm around Max’s shoulders. The princess merely shrugged her shoulders and followed them.

They headed for the village riding a modest carriage in an effort to avoid unnecessary attention from the people. Riftan and Sir Caron wore hooded robes with minimal ornament and dressed as casual as possible, while Max and Agnes wore dark colored cloaks over their white dresses.

However, when they reached the town square, upon noticing that there were more village women than they had expected, the princess threw off her cloak right away.

“Even without the cloak, it doesn’t seem like we’ll stand out.”

“It’s better to disguise ourselves for safety.”

“Wearing this robe will only make us look more suspicious.” As she spoke bluntly, she let loose her shimmering blonde hair. “Everyone’s dressed for the occasion, we can’t be the only ones dressed like this, right? Isn’t it?”

“Uhm... that... I’m...”

“Don’t be like that, take yours off too, Maximilian. Don’t miss the opportunity to flaunt yourself.”

As she pulled on the hem, Max took off her stuffy cloak, pretending to be defeated. Riftan, who had been sitting stiffly with a disgruntled face throughout the entire journey, started to open his lips, and then dropped the tense on his shoulder, as if he had lost energy.

“... Do whatever you want.”

“Are you going to do whatever you want?” The princess replied sarcastically, while removing the cape from Max, who was trying to put it back on.

Riftan frowned, but the princess wore an innocent expression and ignored his glare. Sir Caron, on the other hand, looked out at a distance to the window, not wanting to intervene in their flag fight.

Max who was stuck between them, pretended to stretch out the pleats of her skirt. After a long time, the carriage halted, and Max released a sigh of relief. The air felt tight and cramped in the carriage.

“This spot is quite far from the square where the center of the festival is.”

The princess mumbled as she was escorted by Sir Caron, whilst descending from the carriage. Elliot replied with a gentle smile.

“The square is a little cramped because there are a lot of festival booths installed. Besides, isn’t spring best enjoyed on fields where there’s grass?”

Max followed the princess and got off the carriage, scanning the area with a curious gaze. Tents of various colors were erected at regular intervals in a wide field that shimmered in blue. People were doing business with their seats spread out, sitting around tables playing card games, enjoying alcohol, and eating food in street restaurants.

“Go and have a drink or something.”

Riftan tossed a coin at the coachman. Max, whose head was busy turning side to side scanning the area with curiosity, was pulled by Riftan possessively to his side. The elderly coachman took off his hat, bowed gratefully, and drove the carriage to shelter. It

seemed that there were a lot of visitors who brought carriages, and there were several wagons packed at the back of the tent.

“It seems that there are more tourists this year.”

“Isn’t it because of the reputation of the Remdragon Knights? Obviously, more and more travelers are growing curious about the land protected by the world’s mightiest knights.” The princess wore a proud expression.

Max listened to their conversation and watched the lively festival scene. It seemed that more people were gathered than the time she had visited the market with the princess. There were shabby-dressed men who appeared to be tourists, bards performing with their hats off, young ladies who were there to join the festival, various alcohol and food for sale, and some guards who patrolled for safety.

“Maximillian, there it is!” The princess suddenly pulled Max who was overwhelmed by the festival. Max followed as they ran towards a tent. Young girls were selling garlands beside a stage decorated with colored flags. “Everyone is wearing a flower crown, so I thought they had to be selling them somewhere.”

The princess bought two and put one for herself and placed one on Max’s head. Max touched it with a quaint expression. The prickly stalks, tangled with her wavy hair, felt ominous, but she couldn’t refuse the favor. She smiled awkwardly with gratitude and the princess turned away with satisfaction.

“Doesn’t this just make us feel like dryads? Right?”

“It...r-really looks good on you.”

“You, Maximillian, looks really lovely too.” She complimented with joy and pulled Max’s hand back. “Now, let’s got to the tent over there and play a card game.”

“Stop wandering around.”

Riftan who had been tailing them closely, blocked the path in front of the princess. As he pulled Max back into his arms, he gritted his teeth threateningly.

“My wife isn’t your maid that you can just drag anywhere you want. If you need something to drag around with you, then bring a f\*\*\*\*\*g dog!”

“Oh my, my, my. You’re really rude with your words, aren’t you?”

Princess Agnes pouted and Max’s face turned blue. The princess didn’t exactly say that she doubted Riftan’s loyalty, but she was still part of the royal family. If the princess got offended and told King Ruben anything negative about him, that might the spark for a disaster.

“Ri-Riftan...! What a disrespectful way to talk to her highness!”

“Yes, right! He’s rude!”

Max grew paler in front of the princess. “You can’t speak that way...t-to a lady. You’re a knight. You have to be polite.”

“That’s right! That’s right!”

Riftan looked down at Max with a confused face and sent death glares to the princess. Agnes grabbed Max’s hand without batting a single eye, but with a sullen smile.

“We came out to play so let’s leave the colic, unscrupulous man and enjoy the festival to our heart’s content. They should quietly stand back and watch us relax and enjoy.”

Max glanced back at Riftan with anxious glances and followed the princess, pretending to be defeated. Honestly, she also wanted to freely enjoy the festival and the princess’ stubborn attitude didn’t bother her either.

Unlike her who always lingered and hesitated, the princess seemed to be someone that had to run and satisfy her curiosity. When she wanted to see something that looked new or strange, the princess grabbed her hand and ran without hesitation, and Max actively participated in all kinds of games. Getting caught in the passionate momentum, she also began to enjoy the festival to her heart’s content. Even her anxious thoughts seemed to have been blown away amongst the noisy, festive, atmosphere.

Note – Nymeria: Riftan saying that he didn’t want Hebaron and Gabel’s illegitimate child around the town made me laugh so hard! And ngl, this chapter Agnes sent some gay vibes! Ahah

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## Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 158

For the first time in her life, Max gambled by playing dice. She mixed in with the crowds to watch a street performance, tried beer that had a musty odor and tasted a pie which had a beef-tasting filling. When her stomach was filled with these exotic peasant foods, Max was egged by Agnes to participate in a javelin toss.

Agnes threw a javelin to demonstrate as she explained nicely to Max. "You have to hold the back part of the javelin to toss far. Hold it here and angle it properly for the right projectile before you release."

Max stumbled onto the platform and swallowed, Riftan was watching her from a distance with his arms folded. She hoped that if she performed well with the javelin, he would trust her ability and worry less about her. Max threw the javelin with a determined look on her face, and yet, instead of reaching the flag, the javelin bounced off the floor in less than five cubits\* (1.5 meters) from her feet. Her face turned hot. Even the twelve-year-old boy who played before her had done better.

"Miss, you need to aim your pole upward!" a scraggly-bearded spectator laughed. He handed her the javelin again.

Max was still embarrassed. She wanted to run away from the platform, but knew that if she fled, the crowd would only laugh harder. She closed her eyes and threw the javelin again. This time, it sailed in a high arc and passed by the second flag finely. Max looked back to get Riftan's attention, but her excitement quickly left her.

Two women in flamboyant, typical Romani clothes were writhing their bodies around Riftan and Knight Karon in a curious way. As one of the two Romani moved closer to Riftan, Max felt her insides boil. She went down from the game platform and rushed to his side in a cold fury.

"Ri-Riftan!" she yelled.

He had an annoyed look on his face from garnering the strangers' attention and he was still standing with his arms folded, but he was now looking heavenward above everyone's heads. At Max's call, four pairs of eyes met hers at once. Although she was briefly intimidated, she soon wedged herself between Riftan and the Romanis. She gave a strict look at the women.

"Wh-why are you ap-approaching my husband?"

"Omo, omo! Did husband and wife go together to the festival?"

The two Romanis clapped their hands and laughed without fear, they had a strong smell of alcohol about them. Max frowned and stepped back. The women began circling her slowly, grinning playfully, like cats preying on a fish.

“I envy you. To have such a handsome man as your husband”, one said. “Hmmm, can you share? Just lend him to us for a little bit”, added the other.

Their impudence made Max blush. She had been taught that all ladies had to be modest, so she was baffled at how those strange women could get drunk in public and approach a married man like that.

The devilish prostitutes then tried to catch the dragonslayer’s attention, the same one who could not usually be sidetracked. Max clung to Riftan’s arm.

“No, I can’t share him!”

“Oh, don’t be like that, let us borrow him for a little while.”

“A-absolutely not. Not even for a little bit!” Max cried, trying to catch Riftan’s eye. She wanted him to be on her side.

””” ”

Riftan, who had been still as a rock, moved his eyes in a frenzy and passed a hand roughly over the side of his face. His neck, which was usually a crisp copper color from being sunburned, was now turning red.

“Er, yeah”, he muttered, looking away from everyone. He struggled to find something else to say. “She says... you can’t borrow me.”

It was such an odd statement that Max stared at him in disbelief. Suddenly, someone laughed out of nowhere.

“Huhuhu!” Agnes laughed nonsensically. “No one’s going to believe this. That the Mahgo could say something this stupid...”

The princess, who had pursued Max, grabbed her sides and kept laughing loudly. Through her blurry tears, she made eye contact with the drunk Romanis.

“Huhg! I wanted to enjoy a good man, but it looks like this one has two women”, one of them said, breaking eye contact with Agnes. She shrugged and coolly stepped back, as if the game wasn’t fun anymore.

“There’s nothing we can do, sister. Let’s go over there and enjoy some more drinks”, the other said.

The Romanis sighed from discontent and waved their arms before turning away. “It was nice to meet you all”, they chimed. “If any of you men change your mind and want to have some fun, we’re staying at the Reddin Inn.” They left smoothly with their bums moving, as if they were cats wagging their tails in the wind.

Max squinted at their retreating backs. How dare these women try to seduce a married man so impudently?

Agnes, who still somehow exuded the c\*\*\*y demeanor of a princess while doubled over laughing, approached Max. Her shoulders were still hunched as she tried to catch her breath.

“It’s not uncommon for women like that to approach Riftan. Strong men are popular these days.”

Agnes wiped the tears from her eyes and pulled Riftan’s hood over his head. “You’re the one who needs to cover your face, not me or your wife. You’ve made Maximilian jealous, Riftan.”

“What the hell do you mean?” Riftan shouted and turned to look at Max. “I was telling them to shove off, but they were more stubborn than I thought.” Max returned his look, doubting him. “It’s true, I was telling them to leave!”

His expression seemed to be half-embarrassed and half-joyful. She raised her eyebrows, studying his face. When she saw the corner of Riftan’s mouth lift upward, she grew angry and pulled on Agnes’ arm.

“W-we should just enjoy this f-festival. And Riftan, you c-can do whatever you want.”

Before he could reply, she rushed off with the princess. Agnes giggled before following in-stride.

“That’s a good idea, Maximilian. Let’s have fun, just the two of us.”

The women ran like the wind, leaving Riftan and Sir Karon to dwell on their humiliation. They headed to the green field where music was playing.

Young women adorned with the traditional Uigru fabrics tied around their waists were dancing on the plush, green hill. Without missing a beat, Agnes took Max’s hand to join in.

“We’re dancing too!”

Max fell in and was swept away by the other women who danced around her. They spun around and around, hand-in-hand; Agnes, peasants, and noblewoman alike. The dance consisted more of jumping than your typical waltz, but the moves were fun and natural to dance to. All the ladies seemed to dance from pure joy to the sound of the music. Without much thought, Max followed the group along the hill to a field.

The melody began to become grow more fast-paced and slightly unrefined, unlike the soft, elegant music present at Croix Castle. The lively, traditional beating of the drums,

the soft echoes of the lute, and the whistling sound of the pipes blended to create a lovely melody. It sounded like thick reeds blowing in the woods. The ladies' footwork began to speed in time to the music, as the notes echoed in the sky.

Max felt the soft yet rough melody go through her body and felt joy from dancing for the first time in her life. The women laughed when the tambourine began to play. Even the bystanders started to tap their feet strongly in time to the beat. Someone began to sing nicely along to the lute:

And so, the knight picked up the broken body

As the spirit flew away

The oak tree spirit that he loved

Only he remained alone on the hill

The wind shaking the gentle branches of the oak tree

Beside him

Darling, when the snow melts

And the season changes

New leaves will sprout from my body

And I will sing a song for you

Ah, the wind is my voice

That I hope will relay to you

It was a song strangely familiar to Max. Perhaps because it was about the story she had heard before, about the legendary Sir Uigru and the dryad who loved him.

The maidens with the traditional fabrics around their waists sang along to the sad lyrics. It was a stark contrast to the playful melody the instruments continued to play. It all sounded so odd together, that Max began to laugh out loud until her body shook and she felt dizzy. She had never remembered laughing so hard like that.

Her heart strummed quickly to the drumbeat, and her blood seemed to flow through her veins more quickly throughout her body, all the way to her fingertips. She felt free. Had it always been this pleasant to stand under the sun and move freely just for the fun of it?

"Maxi." Someone grabbed her arm.



She looked up only to see Riftan with his hood over his forehead. He was staring at her with burning eyes and Max suddenly felt aroused to see his desire showing on his taut face. He led her out of the crowd while Agnes, who was still dancing with the other maidens and enjoying the festival activities, did not even look their way.

Max began to breathe raggedly as she kept up with Riftan. The music and voices of the festival participants were fading behind them. He held her by the waist and looked around them urgently, as if trying to find a seclusive spot. She felt his enthusiasm vibrating, as he leaned her body against hers. Max began to heat up, suddenly thinking of his touch or a kiss. This was all a new experience for her. Even her slight anger towards him seemed to fuel her passion.

“Ri-Riftan...”

“Here.” He pulled her into a densely covered area and kissed her roughly, as if he could not hold back anymore. His hot breath swept over Max’s lips as he pushed his tongue in.

It wasn’t enough. Max began to desire him more, as if she were drinking him in, but only tasting salt water. Riftan groaned as she reciprocated his l\*\*t and pushed her against a tree. She wrapped her arms around his neck and leaned her back against the rough bark. Their moist lips overlapped again, and his hot, soft tongue began to eagerly explore her mouth.

Max groaned and laid her hand by Riftan’s collarbone, feeling his pulse from the neck. His soft tongue, which was the only soft part of the man, continued to pursue hers, as if searching to taste all of her sensitive parts. Max was feeling dizzy from her inability to breathe.

“Ri-Riftan...” she said again.

Her lungs were swelling up as if desperate to explode. He pulled her up by her thighs and Max felt his touch over her thin dress. She shuddered as her legs wrapped against his hard body.

It was hard to believe they were acting like that in public while close by, the festival was still going on.

Have I lost it? Max caressed Riftan’s chest and shoulders, then grabbed his clothes and pulled him closer.

Riftan reacted like a hungry dog, dribbling kisses along her neck. He pushed her dress slightly upward and stuck his hand underneath her clothes. His hot palm and callused fingers felt rough against the sensitive areas of Max’s b\*\*\*\*\*s.

She sighed, thrilled by his warm touch, and rubbed her forehead against his shoulder. Riftan pushed his hardness against her stomach as he kept massaging her b\*\*\*\*s. A warm sensation began to spread through Max's body, as if a flame was burning in her stomach.

She spread her legs further when she felt the familiar ache to accept him and desperately tugged at his robes, rubbing herself to him, as giving him permission. Then Riftan grew intense, as if he demanded to feel more skin, and his body seemed to shake from excitement as he lifted the hem of her dress.

At that moment, a loud roar emitted in the sky.

Note – Nymeria: Okay first of all, Riftan that “you can't borrow me” sounded SO stupid, I was dying from laughing. Second, a very steamy scene after a long time!

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## Under The Oak Tree

### Chapter 159

Proofreader – Nymeria

Max looked up, startled. Fireworks were cascading over the festival grounds, scattering flashes of light everywhere. Max was entranced by the magnificent scene but Riftan groaned shortly beside her ear.

“F\*ck, Agnes.”

Max understood: clearly, Agnes had initiated the fireworks display. Then she came to her senses, panicked, and tried to push Riftan away.

“W-we should go and see w-what happened.”

“She’s having fun again. That woman loves being a pain in the a.” **He sighed and let out a shaky breath, trying his best to calm his growing desire. He wiped his face, where his excitement was easy to read.** “Fk, what’s Elliot doing, letting this go on?”

“Y-you should help.”

Again, the loud eruption of explosives resounded in the air. Riftan slammed his head against the tree and began cussing out. Max didn't know how she could help him. Her body was still leaning against Riftan's, which was still burning like a hot fire. When she heard people cheer on the festival grounds, Max came back down to Earth, and a wave of embarrassment overwhelmed her.

Dear God... Sir Karon must know what we were up to. What did he and the passerby think when they saw us leave quietly?

Hot steam seemed to blow out of her ears and Max began to cry out from shame, her face turning a deep red. Riftan sighed at her discomfort and reluctantly set her feet on the floor.

“D\*\*n, give me a minute. Let me calm down.”

Like a small, discouraged boy, he collapsed onto the ground and pressed his forehead against his knee. Max kneeled next to him and waited for him to cool down completely. In-between her legs it was still throbbing from the desire and the roof of her mouth was dry.

She was so embarrassed about the situation that she couldn't raise her face and Riftan's mood was the same, if not worse. He had dug his head over his knees only for a few seconds when another spark suddenly flashed in the sky. He gritted his teeth.

“That d\*\*n woman. I'll exile her from Anatol.”

“Oh, d-don't say that. She is a guest from t-the royal family.”

“Should we let unwanted guests stay here?” Riftan said bluntly, glancing at Max.

“You've gotten pretty close to her lately, have you?”

Max gave an uncertain look as the question floated in the air. Although she and Agnes were polite with each other and had played in the festival hand-in-hand, she still didn't know her true character. Max was too honest to reply that they had a good relationship, so simply said with a nervous laugh, “S-she seems like a nice person a-and is kind to me.”

””” ”

“Aren't you tired of her dragging you around?”

“It's okay. A-actually, I feel I have more energy than usual”, Max said trying to placate him.

She waited for his answer, wondering if it sounded convincing enough, but in response Riftan just looked down and curled a few strands of Max's hair between his fingers, then tugged them behind her ears.

She shuddered at his touch. A few soft leaves fell and left a pale green shadow over his sharp face as they fell to the ground. Riftan, who had been staring at Max quietly for a while, muttered softly, "Today is the first time I've seen you so happy, enjoying yourself... having fun."

"Th-this is my first time at a town festival", Max answered, caught off guard by his serious gaze.

"Do you want me to hold a festival every day?" Riftan said, seriously.

"D-don't be ridiculous,"

"I'll pay for them all."

He looked like he was being too serious, so Max clasped her hands and turned pale. "Y-you mustn't. N-next year. It w-would be nice enough to c-come here together again."

Riftan's eyes became unfocused. He closed his eyes, thinking deeply about what she said. "Yes, next year, the two of us..."

Before he could finish speaking, another BANG rang out and his brow furrowed. He stood and said distractedly, "Let's head back. I need to put this out before she burns all of Anatol."

Max clumsily stood as well. Riftan patted her clothes, took her hand, and led the way out of their spot behind the tree. She still felt light-headed, as if she were walking on a cloud. A warm, spring breeze flowed around her body, as if hugging her. She couldn't even remember why the festival was being held in the first place.

At the top of the hill, Agnes was still emitting fireworks into the sky with her magic. She only stopped when Riftan came to berate her and stuck her tongue out at him. At his terrible gaze, Sir Karon muttered his apologies for not being able to control the princess. Riftan's dark mood didn't dissipate as he walked down the hill among crowds of spectators, he stared at every face who caught his eye with a menacing glare. Agnes' followed him, morosely.

"You needn't be so angry. Everyone enjoyed the lights", she mumbled.

"Some of these people might've recognized you. Christ. You're a blond, blue-eyed wizard. Isn't that typical of a Capitol citizen?" He locked eyes with the princess and said menacingly, "Please be aware. You're a king's daughter, and some people here want to hurt you."

“Don’t be so stiff. If anyone tries to harm me, I can take care of myself.” She clamped her mouth shut upon Riftan’s cold gaze. She rolled her eyes, but eventually said softly, “I may have overdone it a bit this time since I was excited.”

“You went overboard”, Riftan said fiercely through his teeth. He looked around. Although he wore a hood, there were still many young townspeople who seemed to recognize him. Even worse, Agnes, the person who had magically set off the fireworks, was in his presence.

Spectators were watching them and whispering, the word was spreading among the festival participants that the Lord Calypse and an elite wizard were among them. To avoid trouble, Riftan and the group headed straight for the main road.

“Please, wait one moment. I’ll bring up the coach”, Sir Karon said quickly once they broke from the crowd.

Looking back, Agnes said sincerely, “I am sorry that our outing ended early because of me. I only wanted us all to enjoy ourselves more.”

“Oh, it was a n-nice surprise. I enjoyed your magic. It w-was amazing! I d-didn’t know a technique like that existed.”

Agnes beamed from Max’s praise. “I learned how to make fireworks when I was at the Wizarding Tower. The fireworks are a bit noisy, but cool to the touch. Since it burns quickly, it won’t affect its surroundings either. I often conjure them for annual celebrations.”

“I see. T-This magic is for entertainment.”

Maxi lowered her eyes, a bit disappointed in herself. A while ago, she had almost become comatose from wasting too much mana, even after trying to preserve as much magic as she could for her patients. Yet Agnes had emitted scores of fireworks and looked perfectly fine: to the princess, that amount of mana was miniscule. Max felt an inferior gap between herself and Agnes again.

While Riftan was checking the carriage, Agnes leaned in and whispered in Max’s ear, “By the way, it looked like a scene from a tale.”

“Y-yes?”

“When Riftan took the dancing Maximilian into the forest.” Max’s face began to turn as red as charcoal burning in a fire, but Agnes didn’t stop. “What did you two do in the woods?”

“A-agnes!” Max almost screamed.

Agnes giggled and scampered into the carriage. Riftan, who was checking that the jockey was still sober, looked at the princess retreating back in surprise. Max shook her head to show that nothing important had happened and quickly followed her into the carriage. Agnes was leaning against the carriage door when she saw Max's expression and laughed.

"Your face looks red like a plum. Aren't you too innocent to be a married woman?"

"D-don't laugh. Please."

"That's a hard request to obey. I enjoy teasing you, Maximilian." Agnes blue eyes shone brightly while her laughter turned into suppressed giggles.

Max began to sweat, not knowing how to respond to this odd behavior. The princess smiled gently.

"Thank you for coming out with me today. I'm glad we were able to make some happy memories together before I head back."

Max's eyes widened at this remark. "H-have you finished your duties here?"

"I should head back to the Capitol soon. I see it's pointless now to convince that man to come with me", she said pointing outside at Riftan. "I should be satisfied now that I've confirmed he's doing well."

Max's breath stopped as she heard the admiration in Agnes' voice. She wasn't sure if Agnes favored Riftan as a man or admired him as the invincible Mahgo.

Agnes looked at her and her countenance became serious. "If you have the time, please consider stopping by the Palace at least once. I'll guide you from there to every corner of the surrounding Capitol."

"Th-thank you for the offer."

"I mean this sincerely. It's a formal invitation", Agnes raised her finger in emphasis.

Max averted her eyes to hide her embarrassment. The princess did not seem upset to be leaving Riftan alone, which made her a bit more relieved. If Agnes really did have feelings for Riftan, she would not be this kind, Max considered. If that was the case, the princess would have stayed longer and taken advantage of her situation in Anatol to win him over.

After another moment, Riftan and Sir Karon finished their discussion and entered the carriage. Once all the passengers were seated, one of them knocked on the partition, and the carriage began to travel back to the Calypse estate.

Looking out through her window, Max saw the fields, green from early spring, pass her by. Soft leaves rustled in the wind, as if a spirit were singing faintly.

It was a lovely scene, but also somehow lonely.

Note – LN: Agnes is having fun at everyone's expense lol

Nymeria: I'm sorry for the delay, tough period. This is a bonus chapter to make amends! <3

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## Under The Oak Tree

### Chapter 160

Proofreader – Nymeria

The next day, Agnes and her men began to prepare for their journey back to the Palace. With Rodrigo's help, Max reviewed the packing list while coordinating the servants to prepare for their guests' departure.

The original plan was to consult with Riftan to provide a gift to the King, but the monster bones and skin took up most of the available space in the horse-drawn carriages. Besides, between Agnes' spoils from the monster raids and the purchases she had made in town, the servants could only fit four tapestries and six ruby-encrusted wine glasses in miscellaneous places.

"Ha-have you inspected the carriages?" Max asked Rodrigo.

"Yes, my Lady. I replaced one of the wheels and fed the horses. The blacksmiths also plan to check the horseshoes prior to departure". Max continued to scan the packing list as Rodrigo briefed her. He watched her quietly for a moment before saying nervously. "My Lady, it hasn't been long since you've recovered. If you need rest, please leave everything to me."

Max gave him a sour smile. Riftan's overprotective personality seemed to have spread amongst the servants. It was now a recurring theme for someone to ask her to rest whenever she was engaged.

She moved her thin body, watching the skirt of her pale, green dress swish faintly. Did she look sickly? She knew she didn't look particularly strong, but she wouldn't break from standing either. Max raised her head and said assuredly.

"I-I'm not sick. I have had enough r-rest, thank you. I-I'm fine now."

"I'm glad to hear that, my Lady, but please don't overwhelm yourself."

"Yes, I know", Max said wryly, unperturbed by the butler's words. She turned to focus on the servants scurried around the castle. She wanted to help the busy staff and didn't want to be treated like a weak, old man. She strode down the corridor with a nonchalant expression to look professional.

Agnes and her knights were inspecting their weapons, magic artifacts, and other equipment near the Great Hall. A knight had told Max that crossing the Anatolian Mountains in itself was already a dangerous journey, so they had to prepare for monster ambushes. The knights dressed their horses with protective armor and installed sharp blades on the flat roofs of the carriages to prevent monsters from roosting there. Finally, the knights began to check their personal armor for defects. Even the attendants were lightly armed with swords and leather armor. Instead of going home, the party looked like they were going to war.

"Maximilian!" Agnes waved at her happily. "Thank you for helping my men and I pack."

"Yes. PI-Please let me know if there's a-anything else you need".

"We just need enough food and water now to reach the estate of Baron Luvein. Any more goods, and it will be dangerous to maneuver. The extra weight will slow our movement." Agnes viewed Max's packing list and nodded in approval. "Looks accurate."

"Y-you requested medicines this morning?"

"Thirty shekels of detoxifying potion (about 330 grams), and twenty shekels of recovery potion (about 220 grams) will be enough", Agnes said.

Max wrote down the quantities before handing off the list to Rodrigo. The princess watched the transaction with a sad smile.

"" ""



"I've had a headache since dawn. I considered prolonging my departure a couple more days, but my father has sent an urgent message." She sighed, motioning to a messenger hawk resting on one of the carriages.

Max's eyes widened. "Ha-has something happened at the Capital?"

"The typical drama. Another territorial dispute", Agnes rubbed her forehead. "After the rainy season, the b\*\*\*\*y fools who have been locked inside all day tend to make noise, as if they're bears waking up from hibernation. There really is never a peaceful day."

Max's heart fell. She remembered the Knights of Croix often leaving the estate for one of her father's campaigns. Knights seemed to spend most of their lives on the battlefield.

"R-Riftan will also have to depart a-at some point." Max said deeply, trying to hide her dejection.

"Yes, if the conflict grows large enough to require the Remdragon Knights", Agnes said with her usual, cheerful attitude, checking that the goods were secured tightly on her saddle. Max hid her face, trying to review the packing list again, but her eyes were too blurred with tears to read the words properly. She bit her lip to hide her disappointment.

"When that time comes, Maximillian, you can come too."

Max rose her head. "M-m-me?"

"Aren't you a wizard?" Agnes tilted her head, surprised at her response. "If a crisis is large enough to require Riftan's assistance, his group will need healing magic as well. There are too many conflicts in this world and not enough wizards to support. He may need your help soon, Maximilian."

"Oh, I-I'm not sure if I would be helpful. I o-only started learning magic a while ago. The l-last time I used healing magic, I fainted. I do-don't seem to have that much mana".

"Your magic will improve exponentially with practice", Agnes said, frowning. She seemed to have expected a more enthusiastic response from Max. "I heard from the knights you only started learning magic a few months ago. You've done impressive feats as a beginner, Maximilian."

"I h-have only done simple healing spells. Ruth does many other types of magic. I-I've tried other branches of magic with him, but h-have not advanced much."

"It's not uncommon for wizards to excel in certain branches. Most likely, Maximilian, you have an affinity for healing magic. If you train for a few years and take some risks outside of the castle, I have no doubt that you will become a great healer in a few years." Agnes seemed so convinced about Max's potential that even she almost began

to wonder if she did have some innate talent. The princess lowered her voice to encourage Max, "Do not forsake the talents that God has given you."

Max stared blankly at Agnes' blue eyes, at a loss for words. She had lived almost twenty-two years being called a stammering fool by her father. Since she had arrived to Anatol, she pretended to act like a distinguished noblewoman, and was often discouraged about her poor performance. Yet now, a powerful wizard like Agnes who had traveled across the entire continent said that Max had a gift. She looked at the princess nervously, trying to see if she truly meant what she had said. Agnes' expression was tender, but her eyes were firm. She seemed sincere.

Max swallowed before saying, "I'll try my best."

"You can do it", Agnes smiled, trying to motivate her, then she lightly tapped on her shoulder before checking on her knights.

You can do it. Those simple words seemed to produce a ripple in Max's mind, as if sprouting a new idea that she could control her future.

An extravagant dinner was set in the dining hall as an informal farewell party for the guests. It was a bit too simple to call it a feast, but the guests enjoyed their meal without complaint. Every Remdragon Knight was present to wish Agnes' and her men good luck on their journey. After a short farewell ceremony, the knights lined themselves outside the castle.

Agnes leapt onto her red-brown horse without delay, wanting to camp at the foot of the mountains before sundown.

"Thank you all for your generosity. I had a wonderful time", Agnes smiled at Max. She was thanking her host as etiquette demanded, as expected from a princess.

"N-no. I wish I had been a better host".

"Let's end the formalities here". The princess looked over shoulder, making sure her party was ready to leave. Three stocked carriages and her attendants were behind her, her knights to her left and right were all staring at her, ready for the command to depart. Six additional Remdragon Knights had temporarily joined Agnes' party. They had been ordered by Riftan to escort Agnes' safely out of Anatol. "We should get going".

Hebaron, who was part of her entourage, gave a huge grin while scratching his back.

"You came like a typhoon making a mess and now you're leaving like thunder. Do you have to make a big impression on everyone who crosses your path?"

"I do hate the idea of leaving a mess", Agnes said.

“It’s because you’re too impatient and reckless.” Riftan, standing in the front row with his arms crossed over his chest, muttered cynically under his breath and Agnes laughed as if Riftan’s suspicions were ridiculous.

“Lord Calypse is the last person who should be teaching me about patience.”

“Don’t even think about discussing patience with me”, Riftan warned. “I haven’t raised my voice at you once. I’ve been enduring your presence for the past few weeks while you’ve tried to coerce me with your schemes.”

“Haven’t raised your voice?” Agnes repeated him, bewildered.

Note – Nymeria: Agnes leaving ? I’ll miss this typhoon, I love seeing how she gives courage and boosts Maxi’s confidence.

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