CEO Reincarnation

Chapter 2: New Management

The first year of Vivienne, no, Katarina's new life was, put simply, an exercise in humiliation.

Not the usual, corporate kind, where a rival CEO smiled at you across a boardroom table while they bought your subsidiary out from under you.

No, this was the kind where a six-foot-tall woman with arms thicker than Katarina's entire body held her up in the air and made noises like "bwah bwah bwah" while wiggling her around, and Katarina couldn't do a single thing about it because her arms were the size of sausages and she'd just shit herself for the third time today.

[... I used to manage a hundred-year-old company.]

That thought came to her a lot during those early months.

Usually while Brynn, one of her new mothers, the big one, was doing something insane, like holding Katarina in one arm and shadowboxing with the other while narrating her technique in a language Katarina didn't understand yet. She'd make little punching motions with Katarina's tiny fist and then cheer like Katarina had just knocked someone out, and the worst part was that Katarina's baby face would betray her every single time by smiling, because apparently infant facial muscles had no loyalty whatsoever!

[Stop smiling! We are not enjoying this!!!]

The language was the first thing Katarina's CEO brain latched onto.

Whatever these people spoke, it wasn't anything from Earth, which, yeah, she'd figured that much out from the horns and the skin colors and the general state of things. But the sounds had patterns and her photographic memory was still intact, thank God, so she started cataloging.

Every word Brynn shouted, every soft thing Seris whispered, every conversation she overheard between her mothers while they thought she was sleeping. All of it went into the mental filing cabinet.

By month three, she had a working vocabulary of about forty words. By month six, she could follow most of what her mothers said to each other, even if she couldn't say any of it back yet because her mouth was still mostly good for drooling and screaming.

Seris, the other one, the one with the black hair and the purple eyes and the purple skin and the kind of body that would've caused car crashes back on Earth, was not what Katarina had expected from someone whose energy in the delivery room had been "bored royalty." Turns out Seris was a doting mother in the most embarrassing way possible. She'd hold Katarina against her chest and just stare at her for minutes at a time with this lovestruck expression on her face, like Katarina was a jewel she still couldn't believe she owned. She also flirted with Brynn constantly, even while holding the baby, which Katarina had opinions about.

[I am right here. I am literally right here.]

Oh, and breastfeeding was... well, an experience.

[I am a thirty-two-year-old woman. I ran a billion-dollar company. I am currently latched onto a tit that is bigger than my head.]

That was not an exaggeration. Seris had the kind of chest that would've gotten her millions of social media followers back on Earth. Here she was, humming some little tune while Katarina nursed and occasionally running her fingers through the black fuzz on Katarina's head.

[This is sustenance. I am acquiring vital nutrients for my physical development. That's all this is.]

Seris kissed the top of her head.

[... Stop it.]

The first time Seris took Katarina outside was around month four, bundled up in a cloth sling against her mother's chest, and that's when Katarina got her first real look at the world she'd been reborn into.

The Montecardi estate sat at the edge of a red-rock canyon that dropped into water so blue it looked fake.

The estate itself was old pavilions and cracked walkways. Katarina could see how this place might have been pretty, oh, about a hundred years ago, but its best days had long since passed. The vineyards were nice, though.

The port town below was alive with people, some of them dark-skinned like Brynn, some pale like Seris, all of them with horns and unusual hair colors.

Oh, and most of the women were walking around topless.

Just... out there. Tits everywhere, like shirts hadn't been invented yet and no one had gotten around to filing that particular patent.

Katarina's baby eyes went wide, which she couldn't control, and her lesbian brain went [I see] in the most neutral tone it could manage while a woman with blue skin and a rack that would have started wars back on Earth strolled past them carrying a basket of fruit on her head.

[Hold on a moment, these are... all women?]

She wasn't sure about that, actually.

See, they looked like women. Most of them had feminine features. Wide hips, breasts, soft faces. But Katarina had seen herself during bath time...

... And she had a dick.

Her parents hadn't reacted in any weird way to seeing it when they bathed her. So, naturally, Katarina could conclude...

[They all have dicks.]

She looked around again with fresh eyes. Yeah, now that she was paying attention, a few of the less-clothed ones confirmed that theory pretty definitively.

[Holy shit. I have been reincarnated into a world of women with dicks. Huh.]

Her brain filed that away under "things to process later" and moved on.

Seris walked them through the port town, stopping to chat with literally everyone they passed like she was running for mayor, and Katarina cataloged all of it.

The place was lively, warm, and full of people who laughed and yelled at each other across the street and smacked each other on the ass. Nobody looked particularly stressed about anything, ever, which was so alien to Vivienne Ross's entire life experience that Katarina almost didn't know how to process it.

[These people have an entire economy to manage and they're just... vibing? Incredible. No wonder this family is broke! You shouldn't be happy! You should be working!!!]

No one listened.

The tossing incident happened about two months after that, when Brynn had some friends over.

They were all built like professional wrestlers, all loud, all drinking something that smelled strong enough to burn Katarina's poor, little nose, and when Brynn held Katarina up and announced something that got a big cheer from the crowd, Katarina had just enough time to think [oh no] before Brynn tossed her straight up into the air.

Not a little toss, either, not a gentle "whee, up we go" kind of thing. Brynn launched her baby a good six feet up, and for one very long second, Katarina, former CEO, former youngest partner in company history, current infant, hung in the air like a majestic bird... before promptly falling like said bird had been shot.

Then Brynn caught her, one-handed, and the crowd erupted.

Katarina's heart was hammering so hard she could feel it in her tiny ears. Brynn was holding her up like a trophy and saying something that sounded a lot like "that's my girl" while her friends hollered and clinked their cups together.

[I hate this. I hate all of this.]

Brynn did it again.

Three more times. Katarina screamed each time, and each time, it came out sounding less like terror and more like laughter, and each time, Brynn's stupid, scarred, yellow-eyed face split into that massive grin, and each time, the crowd cheered even louder.

[These people are insane. I am going to die here!]

She didn't die, obviously. Brynn's hands were huge and she caught Katarina easily every time. Seris, for her part, spent the whole thing clutching her own chest and swinging between laughter and yelling at Brynn, which was a pretty good summary of Seris as a person.

Soon, months passed, and Katarina grew, and her vocabulary expanded while her body refused to keep up. She started understanding full conversations, picking up grammar rules, mapping the syntax of a language that had no Earthly equivalent. She could think circles around every single person in this canyon but she still couldn't walk three steps without eating dirt, which was frankly insulting.

Which brought her to right now, standing on two wobbly legs in the main hall of the Montecardi estate, with Brynn crouched five feet in front of her and Seris kneeling off to the side with her hands clasped together.

Katarina took a step, then another one. Her legs shook and her balance was garbage. She'd piloted a company through two recessions and she couldn't manage basic bipedal locomotion.

Third step. Fourth. Brynn’s yellow eyes were wide and her big, stupid grin was trembling at the edges.

Fifth step.

Brynn scooped her up and crushed her against her chest, and then Seris was there too, wrapping her arms around both of them, and both of Katarina’s mothers were crying. Not the polite kind of crying, either. No, this was the ugly, heaving, snot-running-down-your-face kind, the kind that Vivienne Ross had never once seen directed at her in thirty-two years of being alive.

"She did it," Seris kept repeating through her sobs. "She did it, Brynn, she did it."

Brynn couldn’t even talk. She just held Katarina tighter and made a noise that sounded like a bear trying not to cry, which was exactly what it was.

Katarina, wedged between two warm, blubbering idiots, felt her eyes sting.

[That’s the baby hormones. I’m not… that’s just the body doing its thing.]

Sure it was.

[Screw it. If this is my new life, I’m going to make the most of it.]

Then she squirmed out of Brynn’s grip, took one confident step forward to prove a point, and fell face-first.

[… Curse this toddler body!]