

House Reinhart

After the Reverberation of Mana, many Houses were created and dissolved. A surprising number of these were created by the newly arrived terrans and their benefactors with hidden agendas. These Houses were unique in that they brought fresh ideas from their origins that potentially had widespread impacts. The older more established factions clamored to take advantage of these Houses and draw them within their respective spheres of influence. In many, success or failure depended solely on where they were formed or the connections they developed.

- *A History of Mana. 184 SA*

Gwyn awoke to a soft light peeking through the curtains that adorned the room she was in. *Her room.* She reached up above her head and stretched her arms and legs out while yawning exaggeratedly. She sat up, looked around in the dimly lit room, and flopped back down on her bed. *The oh-so-soft bed.* Gwyn really didn't want to leave the comfy place of sleepy safety. She'd actually had good dreams sleeping here. Clearly, she should never have to leave it.

There was a gentle knock at the door, that was *way too far away.* So Gwyn just raised a hand and grunted loudly. Which caused the door to open and produce the harbinger of all that was evil—the person that would make her get out of bed.

Gwyn opened a single eye and peeked to see who it was coming in. She saw an elf—*no, a high...elf...Loreni?* Gwyn really needed to remember that.

What if calling them only an elf upset them because they thought it was a bad word or something. Ugh, it's just the short name, like man for human. Yeah, that's it. Gwyn considered.

“Your Highness? Are you awake?” the woman quietly asked. She sounded nervous to Gwyn, which she thought was really weird. Gwyn was just a kid.

What was her name? Elaine? Vivi? Bob? Kiki? Do you love me? Gwyn giggled, then froze. *She had given herself away to the enemy.*

The high elf woman relaxed. "I see you are indeed awake, Your Highness. Would you like assistance in getting ready for the day?"

Gwyn tilted her head and sat up. "You'll help me get ready? My mom always makes me get myself ready. Well, except my hair. I'm really bad at that."

She smiled. "Of course, I'll assist you. I would be honored to help you with whatever you need, princess."

Gwyn groaned and pretended to be a dead fish as she was released to the will of gravity. "It's Gwyynn."

The woman chuckled. "As you say, Your Highness. Now, let's get you ready. We spent the evening getting you some clothing that should be adequate for the time being. Majordomo Siveril and Ser Taenya have indicated that you will be going shopping soon."

Gwyn grabbed a pillow and put it over her head, groaning into it. She felt the blanket get pulled back, exposing her to the elements. She grabbed the pillow and dramatically flung it to the other side of the bed. "Fiine, I'll get up."

She sat up for the third time and looked at the woman who stood there patiently holding a dress. A *dress*. Gwyn sighed. "Miss..." she trailed off a bit, not remembering the woman's name. "Do we have something *other* than a dress? I wore a dress here that Mr. Onas got me and I just...I don't like them."

The woman smiled. "My name is Emma, Your Highness. It's okay if you didn't remember it, you were very tired when the majordomo introduced everyone. We have a lot of servants here."

Gwyn smiled sheepishly. "Sorry..."

Emma waved it away. "No, no. Please, Your Highness. Don't apologize. I will be your handmaiden. I am here to help *you*. Please do not hesitate to ask me for absolutely anything. I will either see it done or ensure another of the house does.

"Now, on the topic of clothing. It would be best if you wore a dress, milady. It is seen as appropriate for one of your standing," Emma explained.

Gwyn rubbed her hand over her face, ending with it resting over her mouth and chin, and a finger aside her nose. “Fine, I’ll wear the dress,” She mumbled into her hand.

“Now, let’s get you ready for the day! Then I can show you to your dining area for breakfast.”

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Gwyn followed Emma to the dining room, which was a very big room. The table that was in the center could easily have twenty or more people sitting at it. She didn’t remember it being that big when she followed the Majordomo around the night prior.

Gwyn noticed the four guards with serious expressions standing around the room first. Next, she looked at the table where there were seven people seated, however, the fancy chair next to them at the end was empty. Which was exactly where Emma was taking her. When they reached the other end of the table from those there, they all stood up, which caused Gwyn to quirk an eyebrow at them. *Were they waiting for her?*

The older majordomo spoke up first. “Your Highness, good morning! Please, we have your seat ready.” He gestured to the fancy chair.

Gwyn nodded, and as she got to the chair that Emma pulled back for her, they still hadn’t sat. She glanced around and wondered if she should sit. With a mental shrug, she sat down and let Emma push it in for her. It was much too big for her to try and scoot.

She looked around, seeing Taenya smiling at her from her left. The majordomo to her right with a serious expression. Sabina and Theran were missing, which left five people who she didn’t know filling in the other seats. There was a man with ears like Taenya, a telv, at the far end on Taenya’s side. He had brown hair that was made all nice looking. There was an older woman next to the majordomo, she sort of looked like a young grandma, but one that still worked a lot. and she had really long ears. Even longer than Keston’s, and those were pretty long. She had two piercings that had earrings connected by a chain that hung down a little bit from her ears. They were pretty.

The other three were two men and one woman. They were all older and looked to be around the majordomo's age.

Definitely not used to this. She thought when she realized the group all seemed to be waiting on her. So, she spoke up, "Uhm, good morning everyone."

Taenya smiled a bit bigger, probably because Gwyn figured out what they were waiting on. *She acts more and more like a mom every day.* Gwyn almost looked away when Taenya spoke up, looking to one of the servants to the side. "Please bring Her Highness her breakfast."

"At once, Ser," The man responded and walked out a side door.

Taenya looked at Gwyn. "While we wait for your food to arrive, Majordomo Siveril would like to introduce everyone."

With a nod, the man in question joined in. "Yes, Your Highness, allow me to introduce the ladies and gentlemen that will assist us in fully establishing your House."

He turned slightly to the woman on his right. "This is Lady Maeva Batteux. She is the head of the Banking Guild within the entire Tiloral Duchy."

"Your Highness," She said with a dip of her head. "I look forward to what the Guild can do for you."

Siveril gave a nod and continued, "Next we have Niles Balfiel, he is the House Esquire."

The man next to Taenya lowered his head and paused before raising it again. "It's a pleasure, Your Highness."

"Next, we have three individuals who wish to establish ties with your house from the beginning. We have Viscountess Sanna of House Olacyne, Baron Camus of House Trenlore, and Baron Hagen of House Urileth. They are here to petition to allow their daughters to join your House as your ladies-in-waiting," Siveril explained.

All three important people gave their greetings and said nice things. *They clearly just want to use her. Like Raafe had warned her.*

It was okay, Gwyn would just use them more. She needed as much information as she could get if Gwyn was going to find her mother. Surrounding herself with people who could give

it would be useful. Taenya wouldn't let them take advantage of her. *I won't either. I'll burn them if they try.*

Gwyn slowly looked at them all and committed their names and faces to memory. It was a task she had gotten much better at since learning magic.

“Thank you everyone for the kind greetings. I look forward to finishing anything that needs to be done so House Reinhart can be started. I also hope that I can meet your daughters and get to know them first.” *She hated speaking formally. It was so tough.*

The majordomo smiled. “I'm glad.” He looked to the three nobles. “I will coordinate with you after breakfast on a proper time for your daughters to arrive and meet Her Highness. House Reinhart looks forward to a mutually beneficial relationship with your Houses.”

Lady Sanna smiled and stood up. “Thank you, Ser Siveril. Efficient as always. House Olacyne looks forward to a lasting and productive relationship. I will ensure Helena is available upon request.”

She turned and curtsied to Gwyn. “Your Highness, thank you for your time.”

The barons followed suit and gave similar statements before they all took a step back, turned, and walked out of the room.

Gwyn looked around confused. “Are they not staying to eat with us?”

Siveril's eyes widened slightly, but Taenya politely chuckled. She placed a hand next to Gwyn's to get her attention. “They were here just to meet with you. Breakfast will be between the five of us. For the moment, Guildmistress Batteux and Niles are far more important to our House. Plus, their business will take a bit longer. It's polite to conduct such over a light meal. We'll finish any extra details after we eat.”

Lady Batteux laughed a bit at that. “While I would not presume to be more important than a viscountess, I do believe what we start this morning will be far more impactful in the short term.”

“Just so. However, thank you, Ser Taenya, for your words of confidence. My role, Your Highness, is to ensure you are protected legally and that your House flourishes,” Niles offered.

“Niles will be with you at nearly every large deal or transaction you accomplish, Your Highness. As an esquire, he may also be empowered to be able to act in your name, should you so choose. Which will be beneficial for many aspects, due to your age,” Siveril elaborated.

Gwyn nodded, adults never took kids seriously. *Having an adult that would get whatever she wanted would be perfect.*

There was a bell that chimed, and Gwyn looked around as people came into the room with trays of food. She looked at everything that was coming out and noticed it was more of the same bread, cheeses, and fruit. *A little disappointing, a fancy house should have a better breakfast.*

Where was the milk? The brioches and pastries? Eggs? Gwyn sighed. Taenya noticed and leaned over toward her. “Princess, later, you and I can talk to the head chef. We’ll make sure you get some foods that remind you of home. Is that okay?”

Gwyn smiled then whispered back, “That’s perfect. Thank you, Taenya.”

She snuck a glance at the majordomo, seeing a small smirk and a twinkle in his eye. He winked at her and turned to the Guildmistress. “Lady Batteux, we will be establishing an account for the House itself with the Guild. We have ample funds available. I believe...” he glanced at Taenya, who nodded. “that Onas Fenren of the Fenren Trading Co. will also be registering House Reinhart’s controlling interest.”

Lady Batteux’s eyes grew and she sputtered, “Onas Fenren is entering his company into a contracted subordinate position *under* House Reinhart?”

Taenya took over. “He is. Here is a sealed affidavit affirming such.” She said as she handed a scroll over to the Guildmistress. Gwyn noticed Mr. Onas’ wax seal holding it together.

As the Guildmistress opened and read the document, Niles spoke up, “House Reinhart will also like to add Her Highness’ mother to the House account with full access. The only request Her Highness has is that any such access is noted and that the Guild will inform the House immediately with the documentation. As her mother is currently far from Strathmore and thus the House, Her Highness wishes to maintain documentation to ensure ample funds are available.”

Gwyn picked at her food, not really feeling it. She drank another gulp of water and took a bite out of her bread. She froze when she heard Lady Batteux's response.

The Guildmistress paused. "Her mother...a Queen."

Gwyn's eyes went wide. *Oh... that's bad. Mom is going to be so mad.*

Niles looked to Taenya, who smoothly joined in. "Yes. Her Royal Majesty Sloane the First."

Oh... s-sh...SHIT. I'm dead. So dead.

Gwyn started breathing quickly. *Keep calm. Breathe. They can't know.*

Gwyn calmed down, keeping to the lie.

There's no going back now.