

A New People

Sloane sat off to the side while a guardswoman stood next to her. The woman was a telv who had clearly seen the wrong end of a bar fight one too many times. Which made a bit of sense as the woman was a solid two meters tall and undoubtedly made of stone.

“So, how’s it goin’? I’m Sloane. What’s your name?” Sloane asked the female mountain.

The telv looked down at her with a blank look. “Nemura.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Nemura. Sooo... do you know what they’re over there speaking about?” Sloane asked while watching Ser Gisele and Ismeld gesticulate rapidly while speaking to the guard captain.

They were showing the guards various scrolls and documents. *Likely the documents establishing my “nobility.”* Although, the deference he seemed to give Ismeld didn’t really match the way he appeared to address Gisele. *Something to explore later.*

Nemura shrugged. “Whether you get fined or not or if you’re a *menace.*” The last part she said with a small smile.

“And here I thought we were fast friends, Nemmy. But ya gotta go and call me a menace. Not nice, girlfriend. Not nice,” Sloane schmoozed.

Sloane simply got a raised brow at that, so she refocused on the knights defending her honor. Just thinking about it caused her to snort.

She tried to get Nemura to open up while the others spoke, but frankly, it didn’t go anywhere. The woman was a wall and she barely spoke to Sloane.

It took a while, and Sloane was a bit peeved she wasn’t able to be involved, but eventually, the exchange going on with the moon elf captain ended. Ser Gisele and the man started making their way over to Sloane and she stood up to not look rude. She wanted to make a good impression so that the knights wouldn’t get fined because of her.

Sloane looked over the captain as he approached. He was a moon elf about her height, which meant he was roughly fifteen centimeters shorter than the telv Amazon next to her. He was older, and if he were human, she would expect he was in his late forties. However, she had learned that the Loreni aged more slowly than other races. It wasn't as if they lived longer like she would have guessed. No, they simply entered what they called their waning years in the last five to ten years of their lives where they physically aged rapidly until they passed.

The Loreni life expectancy seemed similar to modern humans. Which, Sloane supposed meant that they probably *did* live a bit longer than humans on average. She had no idea how mana and magic would affect such things. She felt physically healthier than she ever had before, even more than when she was active in college. Sloane wasn't sure what mana was doing to her at all, but she knew that some improvements were going on.

She would definitely need to figure out a way to test and measure the effects.

Sloane was jolted from her thoughts when Nemura nudged her. "Huh?"

She then noticed the captain was looking at her with an unamused expression. "Baroness?" Sloane tilted her head, which he took as acknowledgment, and started over. "So, as I was saying, I am Captain Jorin. Ser Gisele and Ser Ismeld explained what had happened and that you're a bit of an eccentric... inventor?"

He paused then turned his head toward a raithe who was scanning the court. "Was there any damage, Quen?"

The guard glanced over at him. "None that I can see, Captain."

Captain Jorin nodded and faced her again, "Good. So, I'm not required to fine you, milady. Which is always a good thing. However, could we discuss what it was you were trying to test and why you did it in a courtyard filled with people?"

Sloane quirked her eyebrow, "To be fair, there wasn't anyone around when we were training. I didn't even see anyone come in until the end."

The captain closed his eyes for a moment and tried again, looking between the two of them. "Lady Reinhart, Ser Gisele, we have training halls or yards that can be rented out *specifically* for this purpose." He glared a bit at Ser Gisele, "*This* is a courtyard, *anyone* can walk through at *any* time."

Ser Gisele attempted to speak up but the Captain held up his hand, “Ser Gisele, I *understand* what you intended. However, at the very *least* this was a public disturbance situation that required guards to mobilize. That disruption itself is irresponsible.”

Sloane took the chance to speak up, “Captain Jorin, I apologize for the disruption. I was not aware that my alchemical device would produce such a loud noise. It is a non-lethal tool to help scare away beasts or to disorient bandits and the like. There isn’t any damage because there isn’t meant to be.”

Captain Jorin rubbed his chin as he considered what she mentioned. Ser Gisele gave her a questioning look, but Sloane was prepared.

She reached into her satchel and brought out one of her steel spheres. “This is one of the test devices. While this particular one isn’t functional, it’s a good way for you to see what it looks like.” She handed the sphere to him, causing a brow raise from Gisele—who luckily stayed mum.

The captain rolled the sphere in his hand as he examined it. *Yeah, okay, it’s a grenade.*

He looked up at her in disbelief. “This, did that? How?”

She smiled, “My apologies, Captain. That’s a trade secret. I’m still experimenting, and when it is complete, I will be selling them.” She reached out for the orb and he handed it to her. “Again, I apologize for the disturbance. We will endeavor to utilize the appropriate venues for future tests.”

Captain Jorin slowly nodded, still focused on the orb. “Thank you. If you start producing those in bulk, please come see me. I believe the guard would be interested in such a contraption.”

That caused Sloane to smile again. “Of course, Captain! I will keep you in mind. Thank you for your understanding.”

The man squinted his eyes a bit before he gestured to his other guards. “Guardsmen, let’s go. They’re cleared.”

Nemura nodded to Sloane as she passed, walking with the other guards out of the courtyard. Captain Jorin looked between them all before addressing them one last time, “Please, remember your word. You will use the proper location next time.”

“Certainly. We appreciate your discretion as well, Captain,” Ser Gisele responded.

The man just nodded as he turned and left.

The others approached them and Ernard spoke up, “Well, that went better than I thought.”

Ismeld shook her head, “No. It definitely did not. He now knows more about us than I wished to be known. He also didn’t mention the shield he clearly saw before Gisele quickly ended it.”

“He seemed a good man. I suspect that he will not use that knowledge for his own gain.” Cristole reassured her.

Sloane looked between Gisele and Ismeld. “So, my documents weren’t overly scrutinized? He didn’t catch that they were fake?”

Ismeld sneered at her, “Your documents are not fake. They are legitimate. It is simply your past that isn’t entirely truthful, but nobles have been elevated on less.”

Sloane tilted her head in confusion. “But... how?”

“That isn’t important for the time being. First, did you mean what you said? That sphere is going to be able to do what you did with your magic?” Gisele redirected.

Sloane narrowed her eyes but ignored Ismeld for the time being. “Yes, that is the goal. I am working on a way to do it. I have an idea. Testing that idea will come later as we get a bit more settled in.”

“Good, because having the ability you demonstrated will be an edge that we can utilize.”

Cristole nodded along as Gisele spoke. “I agree. Having *experienced* the effect, we definitely need this capability. It is as you’ve said before, a game-changer.”

Sloane smiled. “Oh, if you think that’s good... you should see some of the other ideas I have.”

Ernald laughed. “Describe them to us over lunch? I think I speak for everyone when I say, I’m hungry.”

Sloane chuckled. “Ernald, you’re always hungry, but yeah, let’s go. I think I have a few things you guys will be interested in.”

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Count Sylvain Kayser turned around as a knock resounded on the door to the chamber. He looked to one of the guards and nodded. The raithe hurried to see who would interrupt them. With a scrapping and creaking sound, the heavy iron door was opened to show one of the three leaders of the city guard, Captain Lars.

Lars was a moon elf like himself, a rarity in the kingdom. Sylvain was forced to employ the diluted raithe just so he wouldn’t have to abide by the sickly high elves or telv. Contrary to Sylvain’s perfect bloodline and features, Lars was more of a brute in appearance. However, the Count of Thirdghyll suffered no fools. While the Loreni’s dark purple skin may have been scarred and muscled, that, Sylvain supposed, befitted his position, he had intelligence that allowed him to handle...situations without supervision.

The Captain walked forward and bowed deeply with the appropriate amount of respect to his benefactor. Sylvain nodded his head, allowing the man to straighten. “My Lord, I have received word that another one of those... *terrans* has arrived in the city. A woman.”

Count Kayser smiled. “Wonderful. What more do you know?”

“She is currently staying in an inn in the central district and is escorted by six knights from an Order based within Blightwych,” Lars reported.

“The terran is being *escorted*?”

Sylvain ignored the coughing in the room behind him as Lars continued.

“Yes, My Lord. That is what they reported at the gate. Also, she later provided Patents of Nobility to Captain Jorin, establishing her as a baroness. A House Reinhart.”

“A baroness. A terran could not have become a baroness in the kingdom so soon. They have been here only a month.”

“Captain Jorin verified the authenticity, My Lord. You *could* contest them, of course, but they are not from Westaren. Evidently, one of the knights has the authority from the Crown of Blightwych to acknowledge nobility and establish a patent for a House that would be recognized within that nation,” the Captain explained.

“How did you obtain this information?”

A Blightwych *baroness* would be troublesome. However, not insurmountable.

“From guardsmen that responded to an incident in a courtyard near the inn. Ironically, it was Captain Jorin’s thoroughness that provided this gem.”

“An incident?”

“Yes, there was seemingly a minor scare due to the group's training. The terran frightened some citizens with an alchemical concoction of some sort that caused a bright flash of light and loud noise during the spar. No damage was noted so she was let go. I do not know more as of yet. The report hasn’t been filed.”

“We can work with this. You stated that you know where the terran is staying while in the city?” Sylvain confirmed.

The guard next to the door was startled as a large crash resounded nearby in another chamber and a muffled scream came through the walls.

Lars continued without hesitation, “Yes, My Lord. There is one more thing, however. The knights were given an invitation to your upcoming ball in Vilstaf. They mentioned interest in attending.”

Sylvain considered this revelation and then nodded. “We can work with this. This will allow us to meet her, and possibly gain information that way. I would like to see for myself what a terran baroness is like. Perhaps she will hold information that will be beneficial to us.”

“That was my thought as well, My Lord.”

“Good, keep an eye on them. Gain as much information as you can. This will allow—”

A quiet snip, followed by a piercing howl of pain came from behind Sylvain, interrupting his discussion. He turned around in annoyance.

“My apologies, My Lord.”

With an exasperated sigh, Count Kayser addressed his subordinate, “You couldn’t wait *one more minute*, Kynthia? Very well, I suppose we can continue.”

He looked back at the Guard Captain. “Information, Captain. I will need it before the ball.”

Lars nodded. “Yes, My Lord. Have a good day, My Lord.” He finished quickly before turning and walking to the door, where the guard let him out.

Sylvain looked back to the gagged terran male and female strapped and hanging vertically to two tables side-by-side. The male had blood dripping from a nub where a finger had been.

The Count of Thirdghyll walked to the male and removed its gag.

“Please... please stop...” It whined pathetically. “We’ll do whatever you want. Please just let us go.” It was crying.

Sylvain laughed. “No. I don’t think you will. You have given me nothing of use. Unlike the others of your kind.” He glanced to the side at a table that held seven spheres of various colors.

He grabbed the male’s chin and turned its face to the pile of discarded... carcasses. It winced at the movement. “They provided all they could in the end. What I do *not* know yet, is what are those spheres? And how does it relate to the witchcraft that you beasts can do?”

He walked over and removed the gag from the female’s mouth. “We don’t know witchcraft! I swear...I-I-” Annoyed, he shoved the gag back into its mouth.

The male just broke down and cried until it started coughing, blood leaking from its mouth. Sylvain stepped back and examined the male, noticing the bruising on its ribs. *That’s unfortunate, bleeding internally will end any usefulness it can provide.* He would need to ensure Kynthia restrained her urges slightly.

The male terran tried to speak, but couldn’t get anything out except coughs and eventually gave up and fell into a sobbing fit.

Pathetic. The males of this species are simply pathetic.

Sylvain glanced at the female and observed it staring at the male with fear and concern in its eyes. Sylvain smiled. With his decision made, he turned back to the crying mess in front of him. “I suppose you don’t have anything that I need after all.”

He pulled out his dagger and slashed across its neck. The male’s eyes went wide in shock as it started to gag on blood. The female yanked at its restraints and screamed into the gag to no avail. The male slowly suffocated as it stared back at the female, not taking long to finally stop moving.

Satisfied, Sylvain looked to Kynthia. “Prepare this one for processing. Drain it first.”

His raiithe surgeon smiled with glee as she responded, “With pleasure, My Lord. We’ll get information out of this other one yet. I have several more methods I can utilize.”

He walked to the female, watching the thing thrash helplessly as Kynthia removed the expired male from the straps. “Now, you shouldn’t have any distractions and you *will* tell me all about your magic.”