

Library Meeting

I slowly drifted down the shadowed corridor, pausing here and there to look at a tapestry or a painting. Turning the corner at the end of the hall, my eyes looked towards the doorway I wanted. Stopping in front of the craved mahogany door, I listened for any sounds that emanated from the room beyond. Hearing only silence, I pushed the heavy doorway open. Casting a quick look around the room, I found it seeming empty. Slowly I strolled along the isles of bookcases in this ocean of books. As I move from one to the next, I passed catalogs of animals most of which were dead or long forgotten and volumes upon volumes of magical texts. The wealth of book were more than a person could ever hope to read in a lifetime. Pacing the room, lightly tapping each case that I pass softly saying the type of book that it hold until I reach the rows of books I had been looking for.

Turning down the first row, I slowly search through each shelf, looking for one book in particular. Quietly walking to the end of the row, I start to turn the end and nearly tripped over a person. Stretched out at the end of the row, totally enthralled in the book before him, he didn't seem to take any notice me. Leaning over, I peered at the books in his hands, suddenly my hair slide over my shoulder into the book in his hands.

“Oh, sorry.” I said as I stepped back. “I didn’t mean to disturb you.”

“Can I help you with something ?” he spoke softly as I met his blue eyed gaze. His black hair was cut short, in true to form guardsmen fashion, although his clothes were much better quality than most. He wore a half smile on his face, as if he knew more than I.

Chuckling softly I smiled and stepped over him and turned the corner to the other side of the bookcase.

“Nope, I am just looking for a book myself.” I replied as I continued my search among the sea of spines, again slowly moving through each shelf.

“Might I ask which one of these books would warrant the interest of a lady such as yourself?” He asked, even though he seemed lost again in his book.

I scanned though a few more before I answered him. Then suddenly pondered why he had picked the one he was reading.

“If you really must know, I am looking for a book on some rather nasty siege weapons.” I spoke frankly to him, as I continued looking. Then I suddenly happened upon the exact book I was looking for. “Ah, there it is. I was beginning to wonder if someone had made off with it again.” I muttered half to myself.

Pulling the book from the shelf in front of me I returned and started back towards him. Stopping at the end again, I looked down at him and wondered why he wanted to be so engrossed in that book.

“What has you so fascinated, that you would be indoor on a day like today?” I asked pointing to one of the windows that sunlight poured through. “Ancient sword play or some such thing?” I spoke softly to him, sure that he was just as feather headed as the rest of the guardsmen. Watched as he chuckled and glanced up at me before returning to his book.

“Well if you really must know, I am trying to learn a new language.” he replied, still chuckling as he continued to study the book on his lap. “Someone said I should expand my mind and vocabulary.” he finished, hiding the smirk on his face.

Letting out an exasperated sigh, I dropped my hands to my sides before rolling my eyes and then looked at him again.

“Ye gods, she has turned you into a bookworm. I think I need to explain to her *again* just what men are really for. Which I am sure she won’t listen to meagain.” I muttered loudly to myself

as I walked to the other end of the library. Settling into one of the window benches to read, I chuckled and pondered a question aloud. “When will she ever learn?”

Rising to his feet, he followed me part way and leaned against the end of the book case near where I sat, glancing at me once before speaking.

“How do you know I was talking of a woman?” he asked slowly, he thumbed through the book still in his hands. “For all you know I could have been talking about one of the guys in the guard.” he finished and looked up at me with a half smile.

Looking up from my book, I tilted my head and gave him a sickly sweet smile, then shook my head.

“I do not believe my sister would take kindly to being called one of the guys.” I said, trying not to laugh as his head whipped up to show a look of shock that past across his face. “What’s wrong? Didn’t think she told anyone?” I grinned and continued. “She’s my sister, even though she is queen. We still talk about the men in our lives. I am sorry if you thought it was a secret. Hells, even Mathrian knows, not like he cares one way or the other, but he still knows.” Noticing the slight look of worry crossing his eyes, I shook my head.

“You needn’t worry about him, They only have a political marriage.” I spoke, hoping to ease his fears.

Scoffing at me, I watched as a pained expression passed over his face, I knew that he didn’t believe Selaith or myself on the subject. Tilting my head to the side, I eyed him critically, wondering if he would make an attempt on Mathrian’s life or just resign himself to the fact.

“If that is what she want to call it fine by me.” He spoke, halfway under his breath. Shuffling his feet slightly where he stood, he made a failed attempt to hide the feelings that were plain on his face.

“Well now, Aren’t we a jealous one?” I said, noting all the signs he gave. Setting my book down, I slipped off the window seat and walked over to him.” No reason for you to be. There is nothing wrong with being someone’s lover. “ I said as I lifted his chin and smiled at him. “Hells, I am notorious for having 3 or 4. Even to men who are married. I’m not ashamed about and neither should you.”

Looking into his eyes I could see her fascination with him, naiveté showed in his eyes. A slight rush of energy flowed through me, I shivered for a moment and dropped my hand. Turning away from him, I started back toward the window seat before he stopped me. Startled I turned my head back to look as he smiled warmly at me before releasing my arm. I grabbed my book off the window seat and quietly left the library, wondering just to make of what had just happen and what it all could mean.

Several days had past and I found myself ghosting through the library again just before dawn. Unable to sleep, I had come to seek something to occupy my mind, as I was still trying to hide from the pain of losing Kevaris. Slowly I paced the seemingly never ending rows of bookshelves, pausing here and there to looking at books as memories flashed though my mind. Of long nights curled on the couch in my room, Kevaris's arms around my waist as we read through them and discussed the merits of whatever the book happened to be.

Sighing softly to myself, I stopped dead in my tracks as the hair on my neck rose. Everything in my mind screamed that I was no longer alone. Listening for a moment, I shook my head and sighed again. The energy that flooded the room I knew all to well. And parts of me wished that I never had to feel it again.

“Hello Mother.” I said without turning around, then continued my slow pacing and didn’t look back to see if she followed me or not.

A soft throaty chuckle sounded behind me as I moved down the row I was on. Stopping I turned on heel and looked to the figure I knew would be standing there. The deep green hooded cloak hid all the features that would have told anyone of whether the figure was a man or a woman.

Stepping forward, the air seemed to crackle in her wake, proving to me that my mother stood inside that heavy cloak. Drawing the hood back just enough to show her face, she looked at me with her normal half smile. Her flame red hair pulled back meticulously against her head, not a single wisp escaped. A pair of vivid emerald eyes watched me, a hidden wealth of power showed clearly in those eyes.

Crossing my arms as I looked at her, I sighed heavy and gave her a sarcastic. I knew my mother’s face all too well but I had hoped to live a bit longer without seeing it again.

“Just what do you want of me this time?” I asked, knowing the only reason she ever came to me was for help of some sort. Feigning a hurt expression, she looked at me and then smiled sweetly.

“What ever could you mean by that? Can’t I visit my eldest daughter whenever I like?” She spoke softly, a hidden laughter played across her eyes. “I only came here to see how you were faring after your...” She paused for a moment then almost spat the word out “...husband’s death. I know that he meant a lot to you.” She finished as a thoughtful look crossed her face, no doubt remembering her many failed marriages.

“I am faring as well as can be expected, Mother.” I replied shortly, trying not to let the pain show on my face. I had already grown annoyed with her failed attempt to come to the point for being here and bluntly confronted her.

“Tell me just what you want. I have no time for your games.” I said frankly stepping towards her. She could see I was in no mood for sentiments. She sighed and dropped her arms.

“Well if you want to be that way fine with me. Gods, you are so much like your father.” she said, softly chuckling. “Well seeing that you want to know so badly, I came to ask you for a favor. Your sister’s father need to have Soren back.” She continued carefully edging around some unknown fact.

“Why doesn’t he just recall him then? Or has he taken the mind set that he is above such things?” I retorted, not really wanting to know more that I already did. Not wanting to be a pawn in someone else’s plans.

“Well, He said that he is bound by some promise to someone which doesn’t allow him to recall mortal forms, like the one Soren now has. He need to die some how, other than by his own hand. Soren doesn’t know that he is needed and can’t. It would taint him.” She replied, stopping to shake her head and mutter softly. “Men.”

I couldn’t help but to laugh when I realized just what she was going on about. Shaking my head in disbelief, I tilted my head and looked at her. Wondering if I true wanted to know more, or if I should just walk away from the whole thing.

“And you want me to walk up to him and kill him.” I half muttered to myself, sighing again as she laughed. Righting my head, I looked at her again, wondering if she had truly lost it.

“No no, that just won’t do. He needs to die in a honorable way, such as in the service to the crown. You know, saving your sister in somehow.” She replied, slightly waving her hand in the air, as if to try and explain away something. “Men are always so honor bound, they can never do anything the way it should be. When will they ever learn that things can be handled easily, in other ways than by the sword in honor bound ways.”

Chuckling softly, I shook my head and sighed. Looking her in the eye one last time, I turned and spoke to her over my shoulder.

“I will see what I can do. I am promising nothing, mind you. But I shall see what can be done. This might take a while, you know.” I said as I walked away, unsure if I really wanted any part of this.

Without looking back, I could feel her gather her cloak around her again, then reach for energy and cast her spell. With a quiet sigh, she vanished, leaving nothing more than a wisp of mist to mark that anyone had been here with me. Glancing over my shoulder to make sure she had left, I swore softly to myself and exited the library, then headed back to my room to mull the whole thing over.

Weeks past and I only saw Soren from a distance, standing at Selaith’s door or passing through the courtyard. Nothing showed in his expression that my words had calmed his fears and I could do nothing more than shake my head. Careful I avoided treading upon his stolen moments with her. I made several attempts to corner him alone to speak with him, but to no avail.

A few days later, he found me.

I had been out for a long ride that day, trying in vain to mend the shattered remains of my soul. Returning my horse to the stables and quietly headed for my room, thinking of nothing more than a hot bath and a quiet meal in my room.

I opened my door only to find that my front room wasn't empty. Soren was sprawled across my couch quietly reading. Watching him for a moment in amazement, I turned and slowly closed the door.

“And just what I can do for you today, Soren?” I said, trying to hide the fatigue in my voice as I dreamed of the bath awaiting me. He looked up from his book and gave me a half smile, before closing the book and setting on the couch next to him.

“I came here to talk to you about something you said that day in the library.” He spoke softly but I could hear the hesitation in his voice.” Am I wrong in thinking you said I should make myself happy and not worry ?”

Dropping my jacket on the chair next to the door, I nodded and flopped into the other chair as I watched him quietly, wondering just what was on his mind. Picking up the bottle on the small oak table next to me, I poured myself a glass and took a sip as I waited.

“Aye, that basically what I said. Why? Finally want something for yourself, I take it.” I said in bemusement. Taking another drink I replaced the glass on the table.

Stretching in my chair, he simply nodded and got to his feet seemingly to head for the door. Getting to my feet, I moved to let him out, only to jump in surprise as he placed his hands upon my hips, stopping me dead in my tracks. A look of shock flashed across my face before I realized what I had done.

We stood there in the middle of the room, locked in each other's gaze for a moment before I looked away.

“ You realize she won't take kindly to this if she finds out.” I spoke finally, wondering if he even understood what could happen. Knowing that soon he had to die didn't help me in the slightest.

“What shall we do then?” He said quietly, never moving his eyes from me.

Stepping out of his grasp, I looked back at him for a moment, wondering if I really wanted him just to want him or because I was trying to fill the empty space in my heart. Shaking my head, I knew having a reason wouldn't matter. His death was to be and I knew that this was the quickest way for it to happen.

Moving back to him, I kissed him deeply before turning on heel and heading for the door to my bedroom, knowing there was no turning back now. Opening the door, I kept walking as I undid the wrist ties on my shirt. Pulling it over my head and tossed it across the room, I shivered as the wealth of my hair fell upon my back. Without having to look back, I knew that he had followed me by the sound of my bedroom door closing behind me.

Climbing onto my bed, I stretched out on my stomach and waited for Soren to lay down next to me. As the bed shifted under his weight, I got a pleasant surprise as I felt him slide his bare chest up my body and his soft kisses on my neck. Shuddering, I reached back and lightly ran my fingers thru his hair.

“Need you to understand something first.” I spoke softly as Soren continued to lightly kiss my shoulders and neck.

“And that would be?” Soren said in between kisses.

“That you understand that she comes first and that I am only using you to try and subside the pain in my heart. Granted, I am attracted to you, but I will never love you.” I said as I tilted my head back to look at him as he stopped kissing me and looked at me thoughtfully. Just when I thought that I would have to explain to him in more detail, he smiled and nodded slowly.

“I can live with that.” was all he said before running his hands up my back and along my arms to my hand. Leaning close, he whispered in my ear. “We're both killing pain.”

Nodding slowly, I turned onto my back and attempted to drown my sorrows in the comforts his body had to offer, knowing that it would be short lived and bitter sweet in the end. Burying that thought in the back of my mind, I concentrated on the man before me.

The candle at my bedside burned out long before we slept.

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Several days past before I saw him again, standing at Selaith's door, smiling slightly as I approached the door to talk with her. Exchanging polite hello's as he reached to open the door making everything look normal to his fellow guard. Leaned in slightly and barely whispered, tonight, as I began to step thru the door and a small nod was the only answer I gave.

Smiling to myself as I walked to the length of the room to where Selaith and Mathrian sat, they glanced up at my approach. Stopping a dozen paces from them, I quickly curtsied then moving on. Handed them the papers which had just arrived by a very tired courier. I leaning against the heavy marble table, I idly played with my hair and hummed tunelessly as I studied the papers scattered across the table.

Arching an eyebrow at me, Selaith gave me a bemused smile. Knowing that the only time I adhered to protocol ways when I was in a good mood. Mathrian on the other hand only gave me a slightly sour look, he had never been happy with the way Selaith had never made me play by the rules.

“My, aren't you in a good mood. So who is the man, Selina? Another one of my guards? Or have you finally worked your way thru all of them?” Selaith said as she looked over the papers in her

hand, only to hand them to Mathrian. “ I was beginning to wonder if you would ever return to yourself after.....” She stopped as I hung my head. “ .. sorry.”

“ It’s not your fault, Selaith.” I said shaking my head and turning to look at her. Giving her a bright smile to hide my pain, I tapped a paper on the table and changed the subject. “ So just what are we going to do about them? They are starting to be a hassle.” I finished as she gave me an exasperated sigh.

“ I am not truly sure. “ Selaith said as she picked up the paper and read thru the contents again hoping it would change.” I really hate to do it but I am thinking of offering them an alliance. If they don’t take it, war is the only other option and I would really like to avoid it if possible.” She finished dropping the paper back onto the table and looking at the man next to her. “ What do you think Mathrian?”

“It’s a sound idea, or we could offer them a different type of token.” He said as he glanced towards me, he didn’t like the fact that I hadn’t remarried since Kevaris died a year ago.

I snorted as Selaith laughed, watching us posture .

“In the nine hells, NO. I am never getting married again, Matty. And there is no way you can make me.” I said , watching his eyes burn as I called him by a name he hated. Selaith stepping between us with arms stretched out. “ Selaith, can’t you leash him or something?”

“Selina!!”

Selaith glowered at me, even though I could see the laughter in her eyes as Mathrian tired to recover his composure, instead of the sputtering and scoffing that he was doing now.

“ Alright you two, that is enough of that. Mathrian , you should know better by now that Selina is not a princess and can't be used for that type of marriage.” she said sharply at him before turning on me. “Selina ... you know he hates that. If you have nothing more productive to add,

then please leave and I will talk to you later.” She said as she turned to Mathrian and placing a hand on his chest, trying to calm him.

Bowing slightly to them, I turned and strode towards the door hoping that I would make it before my laughter escaped.

I didn't make it.

I was laughing as I stepped thru the door, at which both Soren and his guard mate look at me strangely. After the door was closed, I quickly grabbed the other guard and gave him a kiss, then Soren before strolling down the hallway. Giving each other a strange look and shrugged before shaking their heads. Soren standing there a bit stunned until his fellow guard nudged him and grinned.

“She’s a wild one, that one. Ya might want to stay away from her, she has had almost every guard here. I just can’t imagine why she would pick us guard's men over some of the noblemen who fawn over her.” he said chuckling. " But then again, she's damn good fighter."

“I have noticed that she is a bit wild. You would think that a blonde like that wouldn't have much..... “ Soren replied as he tapped his head and chuckled. “ So have you been one of her conquest, Trien? Or did that scar put her off?” He asked as he tapped Trien’s forehead.

Expecting Trien to shake his head no, he stood shock as Trien laughed.

“Where do ya think I got that scar? On the battle field? Not likely young pup. Let’s just say that it’s a badge of honor for being able to keep up with that demoness for one night.” Trein said as he returned to his post and did nothing more than smile the rest of the night, which left Soren with nothing more than his thoughts.

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Nightfall found me standing on my balcony, watching the stars slowly start to twinkle in the darkening sky. Selaith softly entered my room and made her way to where I was standing. Half leaning against the stone railing, I glanced over my shoulder at her and smiled.

“Thought it was you. How are things?” I asked as she joined me. “How’s Matty doin’?” I finished as I hung my head and chuckled.

“He would be better if you would stop calling him that.” Selaith said with a half smile on her face. “We decided on the treaty . It goes out on the first courier in the morning, after that, it’s up to them.” Sighing she dropped her hands onto the railing and idly played with the dark gray stone. “So who’s the new toy ?” she asked without looking up at me.

Continuing to watch the stars, I chuckled and shook my head. I knew that she would kill me if she knew. I pondered all the names I could have given her, some older and some newer, but only one leapt to mind that I knew I could trust. He and I had brief and stormy love affair, which ended in a rather large and nasty fight that had left more than emotional scars.

“Why do you ask? What, need help figuring out just who I am playing with this week? Never thought you cared so much about what or who I did.” I said, trying to hide the amusement in my voice and failing. Grinning at her, I shrugged and told her. “It’s not like Trein is that such a secret. We had allot of fun together and I wanted a safe person to play with.”

Hearing her sighs heavily, I knew what had been on her mind. Even though she wasn’t all that far off, I knew that I would have to be very careful and hide every trace of our activities. Which meant I was going to have a long talk with Soren later.

“I can understand you need to feel safe after what has happened this last year.” Selaith said, the relief in her voice bit at me hard, knowing that she had almost discovered us. “Well I had better

get back to Mathrian, I left him thinking over a move.” She stepped away from the rail and moved quietly towards the door.

“Got him on the run again, huh? “ I replied laughing. She turned and smirked at me. Turning away from the rail. “ Thank you Selaith” was all I said. She stopped and nodded before leaving my room, quietly closing the door behind her.

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The midnight bells chimed over the castle, finding me still on the balcony over-looking quiet country side. I was no closer to the answers that I sought. Mentally I kicked myself for getting involved with what Mother had asked. Muttering to myself I mused over the whole thing aloud.

“If I ever do this again, I’ll tell” I stopped short as another voice spoke behind me.

“Do what again?” Soren said as I whirled around to find him leaning against the door frame.

“Nothing that would interest you.” I replied half laughing, hoping he wouldn't press the subject. "Next time you might want to make a bit more noise when you come in, it might just save you from a dagger in the chest." I gave him a wolfish grin inspite of the cold chill that ran through my body at the thought.

Shrugging, he smiled and pushed off the door frame to join me on the moonlit balcony.

“Quite a view. I don’t think I have ever seen this far before.” He said softly as he put his hands on the railing and leaned on them. “ Makes me wonder if there is an edge to the land.”

Watching him quietly, I had to smile at his simple innocence and how he marveled over something I had seen for years. A thought sudden hit me and I grinned at him, knowing this was going to be an interesting night.

“Would you like to see the best view from the castle?” I spoke softly as I slowly slid over to him. Placing one arm around the front of his waist, I glanced at the moonlit country side and then back to him as he placed an arm around me. “So what do ya say? Interested?”

“I am not sure, where?” He asked, trying to hide his uneasiness. As I looked over his shoulder, he turned to follow my gaze. “I see.” was his only comment.

Half an hour later, we finally made it to the tower's hatch, narrowly missing a few guards and other castle servants that would have betrayed our secret. Climbing the short ladder, I lifted the heavy wood hatch, letting moonlight pour into the room below. Laying the door on the roof, I moved out onto the turrets roofing and took a moment to drink in the moonlight before turning back to see Soren following me out on to the roofing.

Watching him, I could see that his skin had paled slightly and he seemed a bit shaky. I began to wonder if bringing him up here was such a good idea, when he lifted his head above the turrets stones and gasped slightly. I had to smile as his face took on childlike features. Joy and wonderment filled his eyes as he started to drink in the sight before him.

“I never could have dreamed” He half whispered to himself as he slowly turned to take in the full view.

“You should see it in the daylight.” I said as I looked toward the mountain which I knew held my cabin and precious memories. Absently wiping away the tears, I turned to see him watching me.

“He must have meant allot to you. What happened to him?” He replied “ Or if you would rather not talk about it....” He stopped as I shook my head.

“There isn’t much to tell that isn’t commonly known. And yes, he did mean that much to me.” I paused for a moment to gather my thoughts and then turned away from the mountains to look the other way. “Kevaris was everything to me...” shaking my head “ ...and much more. We had only been married a few months, brigands attacked the Manor. He took a large group of guards to stamp them out. A stray arrow caught him in the chest as they were fighting. He died almost instantly. The guards that brought him body home said his last word was my name.” I finished as the tears began to spill. “ That was 6 months ago...”

Taking a slow breath, I steeled my will and forced back the tears and pain.