

Growing Responsibilities

It was a new day and Roslyn Tiloral reflected on all she had to accomplish as she sat at her vanity, allowing the servants to prepare her hair. First, she had an appointment to meet with her mother. She was not entirely sure what the meeting was concerning, however, she had suspicions. With her recently reaching her tenth year, it was time for the family to determine her path forward. The idea made Roslyn scoff—which caused the servant braiding her hair to pull accidentally on one of the strands too tightly, forcing Roslyn to wince at the sudden pain.

“Apologies, My Lady.” The telv woman quickly said.

“It was no fault of your own.” She assured the woman. She wanted to rub the area but knew that would just require her to sit there longer to correct her hair.

The woman gave Roslyn a moment to collect herself before continuing. Roslyn herself went back to her thoughts. She and her family knew exactly what her future would entail. This meeting was simply part of the ceremony. She would attend the Royal Academy of Avira just as all previous Dukes and Duchess of Tiloral had. As the next in line for the duchy after her mother, she had obligations that were required of her. Attending and performing well at the Academy was one of them.

After she met with her mother, she was sure there would be something else to accomplish. A free block of time in the middle of the day inevitably was filled with whatever her mother wished. Luckily, that time was followed by a scheduled stroll through the market. She needed to purchase something new for the court her grandfather was holding in a week. There was a new House in the city that needed to be acknowledged. *Sounds excessively boring.* Although, the fact that the court was being held exclusively for one new House told her that it was an important new noble. *Likely a Marquess. Seems fitting for grandfather to establish relations with a new march. Anything else would not require much fanfare.*

After Roslyn finished getting ready for the day, she stepped from her suite and saw Ser Roderick and Ser Janine waiting for her. Her two telv knights gave her a slight bow and Ser Roderick greeted her. “My Lady, good morning. I trust you are well?”

Roslyn inclined her head just so. "I am. I had my morning repast in my suite and am ready to begin the day." She looked to Ser Janine, who maintained her schedule. "We have a meeting with the Marchioness, correct?"

Ser Roderick raised a brow as he usually did when Roslyn referred to her mother in such a way. *I must practice. Mother expects it.*

Ser Janine, however, showed no outward reaction. "Yes, My Lady. We will see what Lady Tiloral has for you at the meeting, I suspect. She should be leaving to return home soon. I believe the meeting consists of duties she wishes you to fulfill after she leaves."

Roslyn refrained from scoffing. "Of course. The Lady has ample demands upon my time and we will see them done."

She took the lead as the three of them made their way across the ducal palace to the wing that housed the Ducal Heiress while she was in residence. It was situated next to a courtyard that separated the Ducal Palace from the estate reserved for her mother's younger brother. That estate was palatial in itself due to its function of hosting the current Count or Countess of Strathmore. This required the wing to have offices and other administrative areas set aside for the governance of the city itself, which was the role the second child of the Duke fulfilled. *That will be my brother one day. When mother takes her seat as Duchess, I will be required to move into the castle at Maireharbora.* Roslyn herself would inherit a courtesy title of Viscountess upon her fifteenth birthday, which technically had land attached to it, but was land the Duchy would never own in truth. The Ayeval Forest was untamable and one of the Great Val Forests that were holdings of Eona's Guardians. A fact that never seemed to deter the duchy's ambitions of conquering the land. It was a title that would last her until she assumed the position and duties as the Marchioness of Maireharbora.

The Duchy of Tiloral had the privilege of being one of the wealthier duchies within the kingdom, and the ducal palace reflected this. Its status was second only to the Duchy of Avira. However, Roslyn personally did not count that duchy, as it was firmly a holding of the Royal Family, and the Crown Prince held the title of Duke of Avira. Roslyn herself was firmly within the noble faction. She saw how often her grandfather and mother complained at the stranglehold the royals liked to put them under. They seemed almost fearful of the influence and power of the Duchy of Tiloral. This was a constant source of frustration for her grandfather, who had always been loyal to his kingdom.

Her mother had remanded her several times when Roslyn had expressed her feelings on the subject and desire to support the noble faction. She remembered what her mother had said. *‘We have to remain neutral, Roslyn. We cannot choose a side. Our status demands it.’ Hmph, I don’t see why we have to remain neutral when the royal family constantly pushes us and treats us as a threat to their power.*

Tiloral was host to three important cities within the kingdom and its only access to the sea. This also required the duchy to play host to the only naval forces within the kingdom. While the Royal Fleet was larger, the duchy’s fleet was nothing to scoff at. In fact, the duchy’s fleet was made of more modern ships, and in her opinion, stronger ships. Their role was to defend the limited coastal access of the kingdom, while the Royal Fleet was more expeditionary in function. *The roles should be reversed. It’s an embarrassment for such old ships to be seen more than our own glorious vessels. That will change when I am duchess.*

While Strathmore was not as large or economically infused as the largest city in the duchy, Maireharbora, the city was a key location to facilitate trade with both the dwarves of Dirn Loduhr and the Kingdom of Meris. Maireharbora was *the* port of the kingdom, and as such, was the second richest and largest city in the kingdom. It also gave her mother influence and power that was equivalent to most of the other duchies. *As it should, it is only right that we are respected for all that our family has accomplished, even with the pressures we withstand.*

The group entered the wing itself and was met by one of her mother’s advisors, Ser Primrose. “My Lady, the Marchioness is expecting you. Right this way, please.” She gestured down the hall and Roslyn followed the woman to the office she had expected to find her mother in.

As they reached the door, it opened and several people filed out. Roslyn noticed them as various members of the Guilds. Lady Batteux exited last and smiled at Roslyn. “Lady Roslyn, it is lovely to see you. How are you today?”

“I am well, Guildmaster Batteux. You have business with the Marchioness I see.”

The woman did the same raised eyebrow that nearly everyone else did when she referred to her mother by her proper title. “Oh yes. Nothing too serious, just discussing potential business with your mother.”

“I look forward to hearing about it, Guildmaster. Now, please excuse me. I do not wish to waste the Marchioness’ time.”

Lady Batteux seemed slightly surprised but recovered quickly, as expected, from the head of the Guilds in Strathmore. “Then I bid you a pleasant day.” She gave a respectful bow of her head and moved to follow her fellows.

She observed as the group walked away, remembering what she had been told about the Lady and how the Guildmaster of Strathmore’s branch for the Banking Guild was fairly unique amongst the organization. Primarily, the fact that she was a noble was something the Guilds usually sought to avoid. However, Lady Batteux was an odd case. Her nobility derived from a favor the kingdom owed the Guilds. She did something to impress the Banking Guild, and that favor passed to her in the form of a minor peerage.

Ser Primrose led Roslyn into her mother’s office while Ser Roderick remained outside. Ser Janine was permitted to join the meeting and sat quietly in a chair near the entrance to maintain notes for Roslyn to review as needed.

Her mother was standing at her desk with her back to the door, looking down at what appeared to be a ledger of some sort. As the door closed behind Roslyn, her mother closed the ledger and turned around.

“Ah, Roslyn. Thank you for coming. How are you this morning?”

Roslyn took a deep breath. They were in private. It was an appropriate time. “I am well, mother. Of course, I could not neglect to attend our scheduled meeting. I see you met with the Guilds. A productive meeting, I hope.”

Her mother waved her hand as if it were no bother. “Yes, yes. They wished to discuss all of these new people that have appeared. You have heard of them. The terrans. An entirely new race of people that appeared after the Flash.”

Roslyn squinted her eyes in thought. She *had* heard mentions, but nothing definitive. “I may have heard a passing mention, yes.”

Her mother smiled and gestured to the two chairs in front of a fireplace. “Please, join me.”

As mother and daughter sat down, the servant's door opened and one of the servants brought in a tray of tea. Roslyn had her tea with a single cube of sugar while her mother scooped a small measure of honey onto a spoon and stirred it in. Roslyn sat back and enjoyed her delicious drink. Her mother used her title and position in Maireharbora to reserve some of the finest teas that came in by ship. This particular variety came from a small tropical kingdom in the south. The aroma was floral with a tinge of herbs and spices. It was exquisite.

They spoke brief niceties while they sat and Roslyn counted down the time until her mother would finally address the real reason she was there. Her mother did not simply invite her over for tea without requiring something. When she set her tea back onto the saucer and placed it on the table next to her, it seemed to be the queue her mother needed.

"My dear, I wanted to discuss a few important topics with you today, which is why I called upon you." Her mother said.

Roslyn simply nodded. Nothing the woman had said required a response.

"It is time for you to start taking on responsibilities befitting your status. You will soon leave for the Academy as expected of you, and your grandfather and I believe you should be given duties until that time."

That's strange. There is no back and forth. No questioning of a path. "Of course, mother. I look forward to beginning the path ahead of me in the name of the duchy."

Her mother narrowed her eyes slightly. "That is expected of you, yes. Surely, you did not consider anything other than what is required of an heiress?"

Again, Roslyn was surprised. She knew she was in line for the duchy, but everyone else... *Ah, there's my mistake. I considered incomparable circumstances. That will not happen again.*

Roslyn tipped her head in acknowledgment of her fault. "I did not consider alternatives. I made a slight error. My apologies, mother."

Her mother stared at her for several heartbeats, taking the measure of her. Finally, she nodded. "Very well. See that such errors do not occur in the future. Your role was given to you at birth. There has never been but a single path for you to follow. Now, where were we? Ah yes, the Academy. You will attend next year, therefore you will need to leave soon. This will give you

ample time in order to winter in Drakensburg. The manor there will be prepared to accept you and your retainers.”

She looked down in thought. Reaching that city gave her only a few months to leave. While the distance to the capital was only about four hundred kilometers, the travel would take her months. Winters in West Ikios were severe, and the roads became even more dangerous during the worst part of the season. Usually, wintering just meant the time between the festivals of hearth and love, which was about forty days.

She considered the route and realized she may need more than just Ser Roderick and Janine to join her. Roslyn had never been to the capital herself. It was exciting. Especially since she would be representing her House and the duchy.

She looked up at her mother. “I will be prepared. Will you be here when I leave or are you departing for Maireharbora soon?”

“I will be departing within a fortnight. The ferry to Fen’s Crossing has already been reserved.”

Roslyn nodded. Fen’s Crossing was a town that sat on the opposite side of Lake Gori from Strathmore, it was the quickest way to travel there since the southern end of the lake bordered the Kingdom of Meris and the northern land route added a week to the travel time.

Fen’s Crossing itself was a testament to the ingenuity of the people in the Tiloral Duchy. The founder of the town had a brilliant idea a few decades ago to establish a small ferry port at a key point for trade and travel. The prime location and successful venture of his company caused the small village and port he built to spiral into a large town. It was unfortunate that barely a decade later, he drowned while attempting to sail one of his ferries alone and drunk. His estranged brother, who was a sailor from Maireharbora, inherited the fledgling empire and kept the name in honor of his late brother. The brother used the funds earned from the ferries to even purchase several ocean vessels in her mother’s city. The venture Fen started so long ago was now a prominent merchant shipping company with routes all along the Aegis Sea.

Roslyn glanced at the window, trying to gauge the time. “Was that all you wished to discuss, mother?”

Her mother chuckled ruefully. “Roslyn, do you desire to leave my company so soon?”

Roslyn jerked her head. “No, of course not, mother. I merely considered that you have many pressing needs upon your time and did not unduly wish to burden you with idle talk.”

Her mother sighed. “Roslyn, I am your mother. Could you please speak to me as such?”

“My apologies, mother. I simply wish to maintain proprieties as you have instructed.”

Her mother tilted her head backward and closed her eyes. Roslyn was not sure what the problem was. It had been made clear to her numerous times how she was to speak when in her mother’s presence. *Is she testing me? Do not worry, mother. I will not make a mistake again.*

The marchioness took a deep breath and refocused on Roslyn. “Moving on. You have some time set aside today. Father wishes for you to go to the temple complex as a representative of the ducal court. You will present the monthly donations to the Temples there.”

Roslyn barely kept herself from groaning in displeasure. There were six temples in the square. One temple for the pantheon overall, one temple each for the four major gods, and finally one for the collective minor gods. Such a task would take her longer than the time she had blocked out for the day.

“All six temples require donations?”

Her mother nodded her head. “They do. However, you will not need to travel to each to provide a donation. It will suffice if you personally handle the donation to the Temple of the Celestials. The retinue your grandfather sends with you may accomplish the task for each dedicated temple.”

“I will see it done, mother.”

“See that you do. This is but the first of the responsibilities you may expect. You should expect more over time as you get older and more mature. There will also be duties to perform within the capital, however, father wishes to speak of that himself before you leave. Now, be off. You do not want to waste time if you still wish to go to the market.” Her mother said.

Roslyn stood and bowed her head. “Thank you for the tea, mother. I hope to see you again before you depart.”

Her mother embraced her, then kissed her on either cheek. “You will. Now, be off with you.”

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Roslyn followed Ser Roderick and Ser Janine as they walked up to the vast plaza leading to the Temple of the Celestials. The other eight members of the ducal house had split up to go to each of the other temples dedicated to the gods. They had arrived early, which gave Roslyn time to slow down and enjoy one of her favorite hobbies: *architecture*.

The grand plaza was four hundred twenty meters long and three hundred and forty wide. She stopped just as they got to the perfect location just inside the entrance to the square. It was a spot where she had to always stop to appreciate the beauty before her. If she turned and looked out from where she was, she would see across the main thoroughway to the large domed Temple of the Stars and its gardens and obelisks.

To her left and right were the two massive colonnades that were five pillars deep that curved to create an elliptical center plaza that contrasted the trapezoidal entrance to the grounds. Vines spiraled around each of the columns in a beautiful display of greenery to contrast the white marble. In the center of the plaza was a large reflecting pool that surrounded the Tree of Eona. An imposing weeping willowy thing that towered over any structure around save the temple itself at over ninety meters tall. The trunk was easily twenty meters around while its canopy reached out twenty meters on either side before cascading down.

It was beautiful, and from where she stood, you could just see the temple cresting over the top of the tree. The temple complex was the largest in all of Ikios and one of the reasons Strathmore remained such a center of power, despite Maireharbora’s financial strength, or the capital, with its being the center of the kingdom. The complex held the central Temple of the Celestials, where administrative functions for each of the four churches were accomplished. Behind the temple were the gardens and buildings dedicated to the different functions of the churches. She looked one last time to the left and right of her. Inside the colonnades were two entrances, each that led to the individual temples of the gods. Those temples were where the high priests of the city resided, along with the central members of the clergy.

Roslyn took a deep breath and then nodded with a contented smile, ready to continue. The group walked around the tree and she caught sight of the colossal temple itself. It was a gorgeous structure, centered in the rear of the plaza and the anchor point to the surrounding colonnades. It was built of white stone with four columns that were nearly as wide as the tree they had just passed. Each column represented one of the four domains of the celestials: night, day, life, and death. There was the enormous Door of the Celestials centered between the columns dedicated to Alos and Eona. A door that remained locked until Alos himself would open it and usher in a new age.

There were two much smaller doors to the left and right that were used as entrances for the public. Ser Roderick led them to the door on the left, as that was reserved for nobility and priests or priestesses. *All architecture should evoke such feelings and inspiration in those who view it.* She really felt that art expressed within architecture was a sign of a healthy society. *When I am duchess, all buildings will be required to be thought-provoking as well as functional. We should all strive to build such lasting legacies.*

The temple guards at the entrance quickly let them in and an older telv priest greeted them right after entering. The man promptly bowed and addressed her. “Lady Tiloral, it is an honor to have you today. Please, the Archpriestess is expecting you.”

Roslyn’s eyes widened. “I would not wish to impede upon Her Holiness’ time. I am simply here to make a donation to the church.”

The man smiled. “She mentioned that you would say that. It will be quite alright. Please, right this way.”

She glanced back at Ser Roderick and Ser Janine, only to notice them looking at each other with surprised expressions. With a shrug, she turned and followed the priest through the temple. Roslyn barely had time to look at the art and tapestries that adorned the walls as they walked through the main hall and into one of the hallways that led deeper into the temple.

Roslyn walked behind the priest and slowed once she entered one of the private sacella. She gasped as she noticed that right to her side on a wall in the small out of the way place of worship was the painting of *The Love of Light and Life* by the artist Keira Dornas from over a century ago. She quickly jerked her head to Ser Janine and opened her mouth to call out how fortuitous it was to see, but noticed both knights had already adopted a reverential bearing and were viewing the painting themselves.

Roslyn turned and took in the view. The painting was every stroke of the masterpiece she'd heard about from her grandfather and had even read about in numerous books but had yet to see in person. She barely noticed the priest smile and politely stand aside to wait for her.

The painting took up almost the entirety of the wall, and she could not help but gaze upon its beauty. It depicted the moment Alos stepped foot on the world eons ago. It showed him stepping down onto a moss-covered land with the sun rising from behind him. His face was full of surprise and infatuation from his first sight of Eona. The goddess herself was rising with the grass, trees, and even birds of all types flying into the sky as her nature responded to the heat and life-sustaining nourishment of the sun. Eona focused her piercing gaze on the fiery being who would capture her heart as she reached out to touch him. A swirl of green tones from the scene of the life goddess merging in the center of the painting with the red hues of the sun god.

Roslyn knew from her books that there were hints hidden that referenced the births of Tenera and Relena. There were many conspiracies surrounding the painting and its possible secrets. Unfortunately, she didn't have time to delve deeply enough to locate them. She sighed. *At least I got to see it. This is magnificent.*

The last feature she noted before turning away was that on either side of the painting, in recessed platforms within the wall, were statues of Alos and Eona. Both statues were leaning out to peek around the painting to look at each other with longing and love. The quality of the painting of the two statues made them appear so lifelike that she had to double-take just to make sure they were not people posing.

She smiled and shook her head. *That would be silly.* With one last longing gaze, she reluctantly turned to follow the priest out of a small door and into a hallway. They followed along for another ten minutes through hallways and even tunnels. Passing a solitary priest or priestess here and there, but largely, the route they took was devoid of people. What she did see, though, were statues galore. They depicted prominent priests and priestesses of the past with varying levels of wear. Finally, they ascended a set of stairs that led into a building that was behind the main temple on one of the hills.

Inside were the Paladins of Alos in their ceremonial red-tinted armor and helmets with their distinct half cape and white tabards with their golden sunburst. The lead paladin with a golden trim to his armor stepped forward and bowed before removing his helmet, revealing an

older sun elf man with a scar over his left eye. “Lady Roslyn Tiloral, welcome to the inner sanctum. I am Praetor Xoreth of the Paladins of Alos. Her Holiness is expecting you.”

She nodded her head in appropriate deference. The paladins were an order to be respected, for they gave their lives to the church and trained extensively in martial combat, even to the point where they eschewed relationship attachments. They stripped even their surnames and statuses upon joining the order. They were elites by even elite standards. Despite not being nobles, the paladins were what knights wanted to be when they grew up.

As Roslyn stepped forward, two more paladins moved to block Ser Roderick and Ser Janine from following. They both looked between her and the paladins, but Roslyn nodded to her telv knight. He returned the gesture and stepped back, with Janine following his lead.

She walked into an office that was only slightly smaller than her grandfather’s. Roslyn wasn’t sure why, but that one fact made her happy. She immediately noticed the old sun elf woman standing by the large window to the side. Her white, red, and gold robes billowed slightly from the wind. The Archpriestess of the Celestials wore an elaborate sunburst head ornament that doubled as a way to hold her grey hair in a bun.

The woman turned, a smile on her face directed at Roslyn and the Praetor. “Roslyn! I am just delighted to see you. I do believe you were barely old enough to bounce on my knee the last time I saw you.”

Roslyn barely held back her surprise. She could not remember ever meeting the Archpriestess. Her grandfather and mother, of course, would have, but that was simply since the holy district and the temple complex itself were within the city. The Archpriestess and the Temple of the Celestials were not *technically* a part of the kingdom. They and all temple lands were considered sacred and, as such, neutral from the affairs of governments. Roslyn did not expect to meet a sovereign of the church until the current Archpriestess’ successor’s successor took up the mantle after she became duchess.

Roslyn placed her right hand over her heart and bowed. “Your Holiness, it is an honor to meet you. Please forgive me. I do not recall meeting you previously.”

The woman surprised her by wrapping her in a grandmotherly sort of hug and looking down at her. “Nonsense. None of that, my dear. Come, Milla has prepared some tea for us.”

Roslyn could only nod repeatedly as the Archpriestess wrapped an arm around her and guided her to a small table pre-set with tea. Her mind was in a whirl as she sat down and the orkun woman she suspected was Milla served her sugar and provided some small pastries. The Archpriestess immediately picked up her cup and started drinking. After a large sip, she placed her cup back down with a clank.

“Thank you for joining me here, Roslyn. Did your grandfather give you any hints as to why we would meet?”

Roslyn quickly shook her head. “He told my mother he wanted me to drop off donations to the church.”

“Ha! Oh, that sly dog!” the woman started laughing until she was coughing. Milla rushed over with a glass of water and helped the older Loreni take small sips.

The Archpriestess smiled. “Oh, I got a bit excited there! Where were we? Oh! Of course, Das had your mother deliver the news. We all know that man can’t hide the truth to save his life.”

Das? She has a nickname for grandfather? Roslyn nodded. Still as confused as ever.

She hesitated for a second, but then she asked. “Your Holiness? Why... exactly am I here? What didn’t my grandfather tell me?”

The Archpriestess’ face turned serious. “The world is changing, my dear Roslyn. A new people have been brought to us from another place amongst the stars. Which is *Revelation* unto itself. A world untouched by Alos and Eona or the Sisters. There has been a *Seeing*.”

Roslyn gasped. *A Seeing? There hasn’t been one in centuries. Why am I here?* “But, Your Holiness. What does that—”

“What does that have to do with you?” Her Holiness finished for her.

Roslyn nodded meekly.

“Why, my dear, it is because you were in it.”

Roslyn froze. *I was in it? What? Why? How?* There was no way that it could be her. She was too young. She did not do anything to deserve such a thing.

Her Holiness took her silence as a sign to continue. “There wasn’t much, dear. It was barely flashes of events to come. We are unsure of your role or involvement, if any. You were older in the images and were with another girl. Someone who we could not identify. There were only flashes of her eyes that burned and dark hair, but she was with you.” Roslyn heard the door open behind her but did not turn around to look. She was too engrossed in what the Archpriestess was saying. “Therefore, because it *could* be something and as a courtesy to my friend, your grandfather, I will be assigning a paladin to your protection.”

Her brows shot up, and she turned her head, seeing a paladin standing there. The sun elf man had his helmet off and stood there was a serious look on his face. His short cropped hair gave him an aura that many soldiers had, yet the way his hair looked as if it almost had waves in it elevated his appearance drastically. Roslyn almost suspected the light-skinned sun elf was former nobility just by how he held himself. *Or that could just be his paladin training. I probably shouldn’t ask.*

She jumped in surprise when the Archpriestess spoke from right next to her. “This is Evocati Khalan. I have assigned him to provide your protection until such a time as the Seeing can be fully interpreted. He is to not leave your side except for what is expected for propriety’s sake.”

Roslyn scowled. *I don’t need a minder from the church. They aren’t even part of the House!*

The Archpriestess clearly read her mind, because she answered what was unspoken. “Your grandfather has already accepted this. In return, Evocati Khalan will follow your, *and only your*, directives. Treat him as you would any of your personal knights. He knows the details of the seeing intimately.”

“In Alos’ Name, I am at your service, My Lady,” Khalan said.

Roslyn slowly nodded. *If grandfather already approved of this, there isn’t anything I can do.* “I understand.”

“Good. Now, you must be quite busy. Please excuse this old woman from taking up so much of your time.”

Roslyn giggled. “Your Holiness, you jest. It has been my pleasure.”

The Archpriestess smiled with mischief in her eyes. “Now, when you see your grandfather, I want you to say this...” The old sun elf bent down and whispered into Roslyn’s ear.

Roslyn laughed so hard that she snorted.

“I will.” She promised.

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It had been a week since her Eona-shattering meeting with the Archpriestess of the Celestials. Mother had left back for Maireharbora just a few days prior, and she had set aside time to have tea with Roslyn before departing. The topic, of course, was her meeting with the sovereign of the church.

Roslyn could barely believe she had been a subject of a Seeing. However, every time she looked around, the proof was there in Khalan’s presence. The paladin had easily integrated into her daily life with Ser Roderick and Ser Janine. While Roslyn had expected tension or slight pushback from her two knights, they seemed to take the addition in stride. Roderick spoke extensively with the sun elf about Roslyn’s safety, and Janine explained how her schedule worked. *It’s almost like they were told beforehand. Grandfather...*

She was nearly ready to meet with the Duke in question. Roslyn looked over her dress one last time in the mirror. She wore her new gown, and it was definitely one that she loved. It was a scarlet red color—as appropriate for her House—with a subtle diamond pattern weaved into the fabric. The skirt draped to just above the floor, and you could just see her kirtle peaking from the split in the front of her over gown that had a line of golden buttons holding it together. Her farthingale was quite uncomfortable, and she did not wear it daily even if it did give her skirt a beautiful shape. Luckily, she only had to wear it for events like the important court session she was about to attend. They embroidered the stomacher of the bodice with gold stitching depicting the gryffon from her House Coat of Arms. The sleeves of her chemise were gathered at the elbow and wrist with a frilled cuff. They were a bit frustrating to make just right, but in the end, they looked perfect coming from under her padded shoulder rolls. They braided

her hair into two ropes that were then braided back into her hair forming a crown at the back of her head. With her blonde hair, she almost imagined the tight braids as gold.

She wore an intricate golden rope necklace that had a large ruby smoothed into a convex shape and set within what looked like the frame of a portrait at first glance. The setting was actually a miniature replica of the mirror her grandmother had given her just before she had passed away, which itself was a beautifully crafted silver frame that surrounded the smooth, reflective glass. Roslyn had it hung on the wall next to the door in her bedchamber so that she could see it just before leaving the room every morning.

With a nod, she turned and walked to the door leading to the hallway, her two servants following behind at a respectful distance. Ser Janine opened the door for her and followed out to where Ser Roderick and Evocati Khalan stood. All three had their finest armor on and polished to almost a mirror finish. The white fabric of the Evocati's order tabard was pristine with not a single piece of lint marring its image. His red armor almost glowed in the sunlight from the nearby window. It made her proud that all three of them looked so presentable for they surely looked better than any of the other attending noble's personal guards.

Roderick and Khalan bowed and her knight gestured down the hall. "Shall we, My Lady? His Grace would like to meet with you before the court to inform you of what to expect. With your mother having departed, you will fill the role she normally would."

Roslyn nodded. "As expected. Please, lead the way, Ser Roderick. I cannot walk especially fast in my gown."

The older knight smiled and nodded as he acknowledged her request. She followed along with Janine at her side and Khalan a few steps behind. The paladin was the most vigilant of her protectors, however, he had the social ability of well... a rock. For one, he was far too direct in his speech. While beneficial in his duties, it did not endear him to any of the nobles he spoke to on her behalf. Janine had laughed and suggested he simply become the foreboding presence that warned any troublemakers away. She was not sure, but Roslyn believed he had appreciated the gesture more than he let on. She'd observed him plenty over the past week, and she was starting to notice his tics. For example, he had a slight twitch in his left index finger whenever he had to speak to a noble other than her or her knights. *If we're forced to work together, I can at least make it bearable for him. No need to put him into uncomfortable situations.*

They made their way to her grandfather's office at only slightly less than the normal pace. She ensured she was extra careful when walking, tripping and landing on her face would not do her any favors. The door was already open, and it seemed he was waiting for her. Her protectors took up positions with her grandfather's guards as she walked through the door. Roslyn saw the Duke of Tiloral smile as she entered the office. Her grandfather rose and approached her, greeting her with a gentle embrace and a kiss on either cheek. "My dear Roslyn. I am delighted to see you. How are you?"

"I am well, grandfather. I was told you wished to meet with me before court?" She asked.

"Yes, of course. I wanted to inform you of what to expect. This will not be a normal court and likely will be the talk of the polite society for weeks."

That caused Roslyn to quirk her brow. *For weeks? Nothing stays on the fickle minds of the nobility for that long.* "Why? What is so important about this court? I was under the impression it was simply a House acknowledgment. Nothing you have not done before. I suspected it was out of the ordinary due to a marquess or some other noble that would be beneficial for you to have relations with."

Her grandfather chuckled, which caused her to narrow her eyes. *What did I miss?* "You are as astute as ever, my dear. However, this House is more than just a marquess." *More? Another duchy? Why would he...* Her thoughts were interrupted as he continued. "The acknowledgment is for the House of a princess. A terran. One who has been displaced to our kingdom by the Flash. A former advisor of mine, Ser Siveril, is her majordomo. We discussed, and in return for closer relations as her House grows, I will acknowledge it."

"A terran princess? But? I have not heard anything about terran royalty." She was confused even more.

Her grandfather chuckled again and Roslyn was starting to feel patronized. He seemed to notice her growing frustration, however. "I apologize, Roslyn. I am not laughing at you. It is just you have been so busy with your own important situation that you have not been around to join the court. The princess has been the talk of court for the past week. This is likely why you did not hear about it. Already our fellows are jockeying for position and influence for what it would mean to have her on their side. Luckily, Ser Siveril is as shrewd as he is stubborn. He has been working tirelessly to ensure they have an ironclad position against any who would wish to take advantage of the House."

Roslyn felt herself deflate slightly, it was understandable. She had been busy with everything concerning the church and the Academy that she had not attended court since before she had met with her mother about her future. “So, what shall be my role for the court, grandfather?”

The duke smiled and turned, reaching for a small box that was on the desk. He presented it to her, which made her just look up at him in confusion. “What is this, grandfather?”

“Open it!” he said with a smile.

She lifted the lid from the small box and saw a small signet ring made of gold. There was a stylized ‘T’ embossed sitting in what looked like the outline of the House shield crest. She looked up at her grandfather. “What is this?” She asked again.

He placed his hands on her shoulders and peered into her eyes. The violet of his irises had faded with age, but they were no less piercing in their focus. Creases had long since formed at the corners of his eyes, clearly from all the smiling he did. She had to admit that her grandfather was a kind and compassionate man. It was what made him so loved within the duchy. It was a shame her mother did not receive the same sentiment. *He is who I wish to emulate when I am duchess.*

He smirked, noticing he had lost her to her thoughts. “Roslyn, you will soon depart for the capital. You will represent our House there in the royal court and the Hall of Lords. When you reach your twelfth birthday, you will sit in on the Council of Lords to relay my will. As the future duchess, you must grow into your responsibilities. I have faith in your ability to maintain the honor and influence of our House. All the ducal staff within the capital will assist you with this. I will not leave you to flounder. Lord Riggell will advise you, just as he has me for the last twenty-five years.”

Roslyn nodded, feeling tears form in her eyes as she looked down. As one fell, her grandfather gently wiped it away. “Remember, you are a Tiloran. Be proud, for I am of you. You have grown into a fine young lady. When you attend the Academy, be kind, be open-minded. Relationships you form there will last your entire life. How else did you suspect I knew Vania?”

Who? Roslyn squinted and glanced up at her grandfather. “Who is Vania?”

Her grandfather pulled back his arms and laughed. “The Archpriestess! You just met with my oldest friend from the Academy.”

Roslyn’s eyes widened. *That’s why she was so familiar! Oh!*

She put on a serious face and tone. “The Archpriestess says to come to visit her sometime soon, ‘Flaming Toots.’”

Her grandfather’s eyes shot wide. “She did not! She told you?”

Roslyn smirked. “No, of course not. What does that mean, grandfather? She said ‘Das’ would tell me.”

He started laughing deeply. “Oh, I’m going to have words with her.” He stepped back and leaned against his desk, shaking his head. “You see... When we were young, Vania once gave me a jar of peppers and dared me to eat one. She was quite rude about it and made fun of me. Being a Tiloral, I could not back down from such a challenge to my honor. Therefore, I took the entire thing and upended it into my mouth.” He squinted and groaned softly. “Suffice it to say, it was an exceedingly poor decision. Later in the day, we were walking to the library, and the peppers were running their course. My stomach was rumbling, and I felt like I had to pass gas. Well... to tell it short... my *toot* was *flaming*...”

“Grandfather! That is disgusting! Why... why would you tell me that?!” Roslyn’s hand was covering her mouth. The Duke of Tiloral speaking about his... *toots*? However, her old grandfather just laughed even harder.

“You did ask! You can blame Vania the next time you see her. That woman has not let me live that down in forty years, but do not worry. I have some fascinating stories about her... would you like to hear—”

“No! I most assuredly do not. I do not need to hear anything about the Archpriestess of the Celestials.”

Her grandfather laughed so hard that he had to wipe away a tear from his eye. Meanwhile, Roslyn just stood there, flustered. Finally, her grandfather regained control over himself. “Ah. Thank you for that, Roslyn. I do enjoy moments like these. Now, as I was saying. Roslyn, you need more friends. The Academy will be a great time for you to socialize and meet

people. It is an important part of being a duchess. We have not pushed you thus far, but as you get older, it is expected. *Please*, try to find a friend.

Roslyn squinted her eyes. “Grandfather, I don’t need a friend. I am perfectly content without one.” She paused, thinking of some unlikely scenario. “However, I suppose if one were to fall from the sky, I would not say... no.”

He smiled. “That is all I ask of you. Now, about court...”

The two of them finalized details about the court and how she would sit in her mother’s appointed chair behind his Seat. She would be required to meet with people and socialize after the acknowledgment, including introducing herself to the *terran* girl. She could do that, she supposed. It was just court. Nothing too strenuous.

* * *

Roslyn arrived at the grand hall at the appointed time with Khalan at her side. Roderick and Janine were already inside, waiting for her. She and the paladin stepped in through the door in the back reserved for members of the ducal palace. They strode to the area where the Seat of the Duchy resided and saw several of her cousins and her uncle, Count Dorma. The Count of Strathmore smiled as Roslyn approached, but then his smile faltered when he looked at the paladin with her.

He quickly composed himself and greeted her. “Roslyn! I heard you would be joining us today. Such a pleasure. It was unfortunate that I was unable to see your mother before she departed for Maireharbora.” *I doubt that, uncle. You two do not agree on absolutely anything. Although, to be fair, it’s nearly the same for her and me as well.*

“That is unfortunate, uncle. She is quite busy, as I am sure you can understand. She needed to return but was saddened she would miss this event.”

Her older cousin Esme smiled. The girl was seventeen and the second oldest of her uncle’s children. Roslyn’s mother waited much longer in life to bear children. Esme was also betrothed to the third son of the Duchy of Breland. Esme raised her hand slightly to get Roslyn’s

attention and greeted her. “It is so good to see you, cousin! I believe I am seated next to you today.” Roslyn groaned internally. *Oh... swell.*

“That is wonderful, Esme! You will have to tell me all about how Academy is going for you. I, myself, depart soon to attend.”

Esme’s eyes widened. “That is delightful! I cannot wait to see you around before I complete my studies!”

Roslyn put on her best apologetic face. “I apologize, Esme. I meant that I would be leaving to attend the Royal Academy. As I am sure you are aware, the travel to the capital will take some time.”

Esme scowled but quickly recovered and returned to her fake smile. “That... is just wonderful news. I am happy for you. To be accepted is a prestigious opportunity.”

Roslyn nodded. “Thank you, cousin. It is simply something expected of me, as part of my preparation for future duties and responsibilities.”

The older girl’s scowl did not leave her face that time. “Well, I look forward to speaking with you after we take our spots.”

“Of course, cousin.”

Why couldn't your brother be the one to attend? He's much more agreeable.

She glanced at Khalan, who simply raised a brow at her before returning to scan the crowd. Roslyn caught sight of several people she knew of but refrained from leaving the area reserved for members of the House. She would resist being sociable until after the acknowledgment. Content, simply watching the crowd grow and move amongst themselves, she stood off to the side, waiting for everything to begin. It didn’t take long, but eventually, her wish was fulfilled. Her grandfather’s majordomo announced her grandfather, and the crowd went silent as he walked in.

He proceeded to his Seat and stood in front of it to address the gathered nobles. “My friends, noblemen, and noblewomen of the Duchy of Tilorai. I know everyone is aware of why we are here, but allow this old duke a moment to drone on.”

Roslyn and her cousins took that moment to take their seats and listen to the Duke's speech.

The crowd laughed and politely clapped. A woman in the crowd called out, "Hopefully, not too long of a moment!" which garnered more laughter, including from her grandfather.

He raised a hand, and the crowd quieted. "Yes, yes. Countess Orlen, please see me after the acknowledgment so we can speak of your upcoming fête. I have but a few suggestions about how *this time* will assuredly be exciting."

Roslyn didn't get the joke, but the court burst into laughter, including the countess who booed her grandfather.

The current Duke of Tiloral continued his speech. "Now, the acknowledgment of a new House is not just a formal, legal thing—it is that—it is also the welcoming of a peer. A new *player* in the game, if you will. A potential partner or relationship. This time is the same, but also different. You all have heard of the terrans and their appearance in our world. People of all sorts of backgrounds, some seemingly more fascinating than the next. There have been several that the duchy has been assisting and working with to learn more about how to integrate these people safely into our society. Because make no mistake. These people are refugees, exiles, and displaced. They require our great kingdom's largesse and one cannot say the Duchy of Tiloral will not step up and help those in need!"

"Hear, hear!" The crowd called out with excitement.

"Now, this House. This House is home to a most unfortunate displacement. A young royal, a princess, was torn away from her home and her people. Her mother, also ripped away from her kingdom, even now seeks to gather up as many survivors of this event as she can to ensure they are all safe and welcome. We will provide this welcome!" He turned and returned to his Seat. After he sat, he nodded at one of the guards by the main doors.

The tall double doors opened together and one of the ducal attendants stepped in, followed by an older elf that she knew as Ser Siveril, a long-time friend and former advisor to her grandfather. Behind the knight was a girl who was about a head taller than her. She had dark curly hair that was pinned up in an elaborate style. Her dress was almost of a similar style to Roslyn's. However, there were no sleeves or padded shoulder rolls. Her neckline was a bit more rounded as well, and she did not wear a necklace. Her dress was a beautiful blue color with black

and silver accents. On her stomacher was a strange silver creature that looked like a lizard, except it had wings and elaborate fire coming from its mouth. The girl had a more full face like a telv, but Roslyn had to admit the girl looked beautiful, even with her small, rounded ears.

Flanking the girl were two female knights, a telv and a high elf, who to Roslyn's dismay, had gorgeous armor that looked far better than her own knights. The way the armor shined and was accented by dark blue fabric with silver stitching almost had Roslyn rethinking her House's chosen colors. The high elf even had her face painted with a similar blue color that made her especially striking.

Bringing up the rear of the group were three girls of various ages. All were high elves and carried themselves as nobility. They were likely the ladies-in-waiting of the princess. *Good, she has people to help her navigate our society. She'll need it.*

The attendant stopped the group at a respectful distance before addressing everyone. "Your Grace, presenting House Reinhart." The telv bowed to her grandfather and moved away.

The older majordomo for the girl took a step forward and bowed. After he stood straight, he introduced the princess and the House.

Roslyn watched the girl as he spoke. She looked nervous, yet focused. Once her knight finished speaking, he moved to the side to let the princess step forward. Princess Gwyneth gave a slow, respectful nod and said, "Thank you for inviting me to your court, Your Grace. I look forward to a positive relationship between our Houses." The girl had a fiery determination that impressed her. There was something about her that Roslyn couldn't quite place, but so far, it was not a bad showing. *Or at least it shows that she listens to those schooling her.*

She glanced at her grandfather as he stood up and gave a slight bow in return before welcoming her and verbalizing the acknowledgment. He immediately followed that up by talking about how the terrans were a topic of the court, and even that they had discussed the House Reinhart itself.

The shifting of the crowd to the left pulled Roslyn's gaze away from the girl. One of the nobles stepped out into the open. Roslyn wasn't sure who she was, so she leaned closer to her cousin and whispered. "Esme, who is that?"

Her cousin squinted as she peered at the man. “I think that is Marquess Angwin. Yes, that is him.”

Roslyn nodded. The marquess moved forward and launched into a diatribe that spoke to how Ser Siveril was not enough to support the princess and that some other noble of higher standing—he meant himself—should manage the House. *That is absurd. He can't do that.*

She looked at her grandfather, ready to interject on the princess' behalf. However, she saw the small nod of his head before Ser Siveril stepped forward and rebutted the marquess.

What followed was a back-and-forth debate between the two nobles, and it impressed Roslyn at how restrained Ser Siveril remained. She ignored most of it, especially when another lady joined in on Ser Siveril's side. A viscountess, if Roslyn was remembering correctly.

Roslyn looked for the princess and saw her speaking to two nobles, a telv woman and a high elf man. Only the high elf knight remained with her. Roslyn scanned the crowd and could not immediately find the others.

“This is the most fun court has been in ages!” Esme whispered from her left.

“I do not know what Marquess Angwin is doing. He is clearly in the wrong,” Roslyn said.

Esme nodded. “Certainly. House Angwin has always tried to increase their standing. They wouldn't be content even if they ran the duchy.”

Roslyn narrowed her eyes. She did not like that. *Some people should learn their place.*

“Oh, look, the princess is done speaking with those two,” Esme said.

She looked back at the princess and saw the telv noblewoman moving away. Princess Gwyneth spoke to the high elf knight and seemed to be looking over at Roslyn and her cousins. Roslyn smirked as she caught the terran princess' eye. The girl slowly raised her hand and held it awkwardly next to her head. After a moment, her hand was still up, and Princess Gwyneth didn't seem to want to lower it. *I bet she forgot she raised it! Oh, that's too cute. Awkward... but cute.* Roslyn giggled into her hand, which caused the princess to narrow her eyes and then jerk her head toward her hand when she noticed it was still up. With a quick motion, the arm moved to her side.

The princess slowly lifted her head and looked at Roslyn. When she was sure the girl was focused on her, Roslyn smiled and waved back at her when Gwyneth smiled. Roslyn felt a moment of concern when the girl spoke, then looked quickly around for her knight. *She's right over there! Wait...*

An older high elf walked up to her and Gwyneth noticed him right before he reached her. She watched them speak to each other and tried to observe the girl's face. She was not able to see her fully, because she was slightly turned away, but from what she saw, Gwyneth seemed more and more confused as the conversation went on. The two seemed to be arguing, and the count kept gesticulating as if he were talking down to her. Roslyn quickly turned and looked at Khalan. "Evocati Khalan, please come here!"

She knew Roderick and Janine were nearby, but he was right there and thus quicker.

"Yes, My Lady?" Khalan asked.

"Do you see the princess over there that was introduced?" She pointed at where the high elf was arguing with the girl.

Khalan leaned closer and zeroed in on where she was pointing. "I do." He squinted. "That... seems like an issue."

She tried to see what Khalan was talking about and stood up from her chair. She watched as the princess spun around and started to walk toward her knight, but then the old elf grabbed her wrist and jerked her back. Roslyn gasped and cried out. "Khalan! Help her!"

Khalan moved toward the scene. Roslyn caught sight of Roderick and Janine hurrying toward her, but ignored them as she focused on Gwyneth. Khalan stopped walking as they watched the female knight pull her sword and step toward the elf gripping the princess. *Oh no. This is bad.*

She turned toward Roderick and Janine. "We need to help her!"

Roderick shook his head. "My Lady, we must remain by your side. Especially if hostilities erupt."

Roslyn scowled at her knight. "They will erupt *if* we do not help her, Roderick."

She looked back as the Reinhart knight argued with the man while taking slow, purposeful movements toward him. Roslyn almost cried out when she saw the people behind the knight start moving toward her.

“Khalan, now!”

The paladin nodded and started forward again, only to freeze when suddenly the girl’s arm burst into flame.

“No!” Roslyn cried out in fear for the girl. *Please, no! Alos, save her!* The man assaulting the princess jerked his arm back with a scream. Khalan moved only to get blocked by guards who had started rushing to the area.

Roslyn nearly rushed ahead of herself, only to freeze. The fire that was engulfing the girl’s arm wasn’t bothering her. Roslyn ignored Esme’s cry of surprise from beside her as the princess lifted a hand and all the fire flew from her arm, forming a ball of flame. She raised her other hand and formed a *second* orb of fire. With a simple flick of her wrist, the two orbs started rotating around her in increasingly large circles. The girl looked around, almost threatening anyone to attack her. The crowd quickly took a collective step... or five back.

Roslyn looked at Khalan, who was utterly frozen and staring at the flame. She could only imagine what was going through the Paladin of Alos’ mind. *The girl is controlling fire as if it were not a wondrous feat of the gods.*

Barely a minute passed as Gwyneth stared everyone down. Then she lifted her hand slightly and the two orbs of flame flew back. The girl looked at the spheres while they flew in circles around each other. She wasn’t even sparing a glance at the noble who clutched his burned forearm and said something threatening that only made the man whimper.

Gwyneth glanced over at her knight, then turned and looked directly at her. Roslyn’s eyes went wide as she noticed that her irises looked as if they were burning. She then did something that surprised Roslyn even more. She smiled. *It’s her.*

Gwyneth looked back at the whimpering elf and pulled her hand in closer to herself, which caused the two orbs to combine into one large sun. She heard Khalan gasp and say something about Alos. Before Roslyn could even think further on the subject, the Princess closed her fist and the two spheres collapsed and blinded the entire hall in a bright flash of orange light.

What happened next was almost a blur to Roslyn. The magic Gwyneth showed mesmerized her and took away her focus. She caught sight of the guards rushing to block out a circle around the princess and her knight. At the back of the circle, she nearly missed seeing the other knight punch a guard, who collapsed in a crash of metal and move past to get to her princess. *They're ready to fight all of grandfather's guards. Why aren't they helping Gwyneth? Can't they see the other man is at fault?*

She looked over at her grandfather, who was speaking to Ser Siveril from behind two of his guards. Khalan looked at Roslyn. "That has to be her. I need to report this to the church."

Roslyn narrowed her eyes. "Not before we help her! Why are the guards surrounding them?"

She looked back and saw one of the head guards arguing with the blonde telv. Roslyn stepped toward her grandfather and was about to plead for him to do something when the telv and the two guards broke out into a fight. The woman blocked a swing of the guard's blade, then quickly hit him twice before grabbing his armor and *throwing* him at the female guard. Khalan grunted appreciatively next to her. "Not bad."

Roslyn looked up at the paladin indignantly. "*Not bad?* They're going to get killed!"

Khalan turned his head and looked down with a raised eyebrow. "They will be fine. If it looks like it will turn bad, I will go assist."

Roslyn jerked her head back in surprise. *I have been asking you to go help this entire time!* Roderick cleared his throat from next to them. "That may be a bad idea, Evocati Khalan."

Khalan regarded her knight for a moment before scoffing slightly and refocusing on the action in front of them. Gwyneth interrupted the two female knights talking. The telv woman turned with a furious expression on her face directly toward her grandfather. Both guards in front of him shifted and started to pull on their blades. The knight called out, anger lacing every word. "Duke Tiloral, is this how the duchy handles affairs such as this? Do you condone a noble attacking and attempting to force a *nine-year-old child* into a marriage?"

Roslyn gasped. *That man tried to do what? And she's only nine? I'm older than her? She's a head taller than me!* She shook her head. There were more important things to consider.

Like how to convince Roderick and Janine to throw that man into a dungeon. *Or maybe Khalan can enact Alos' Justice.*

They watched as her grandfather pushed past his guards and told everyone to stand down, having guards escort the burned elf to a doctor. He then glanced back and caught Roslyn's attention. He gave her a slight nod, then turned to the princess and invited her to speak privately.

She looked at the paladin who had a hand on the pommel of his sword. She moved closer to him and whispered. "Evocati? What are we going to do?"

He whispered in response. "We will wait to see what His Grace does, then I will go to the church." He took a deep breath. Roslyn listened as he whispered to himself. "She's just a child. What Monster..." Khalan trailed off and went silent, but she could see the anger on his normally stoic features.

She placed a hand on the knight's armored forearm. "Let us go, Khalan. We should meet with my grandfather after he meets with the princess."

* * *

Roslyn patiently waited for her grandfather in a separate office where one of his attendants had led her and her protectors. It took some time, but finally, her normally happy and energetic grandfather entered the office. He looked exhausted and worn out, and just emotionally drained. She immediately jumped up, and Khalan moved forward as well.

"Are you okay, grandfather?"

The duke took a deep breath and ran a hand through his hair. "I did *not* need that to happen, but yes, I am fine. The princess is fine, as well. I deeded her some land in the city and two smaller plots for her knights. That was the least I could do. I also pledged to ensure such a thing did not reoccur."

He looked at Khalan. "I will summon the Count before me and pass judgment. I would request a member of your order to be present. As a witness, you would be preferable. However, I know your duty."

"I will ensure one of my brothers or sisters is present."

Her grandfather nodded. He then turned to Roslyn and, finally, smiled down at her. "Also, the princess would like to meet you."

Roslyn gasped as her eyes shot wide.

* * *

A knock resounded at the door, and Roslyn looked up from her studies. Before she could call out, it opened and her grandfather entered. She pushed back from the desk she sat at and stood. "Grandfather! What brings you here?"

She received a kind smile in reply. "We received an invitation for you."

Roslyn perked up. "She sent one for me finally?"

Her grandfather chuckled and handed her a small card. She looked down and saw that it was an invitation to the princess's celebration of her tenth year. Roslyn quickly scanned the card for the details. *It's in a week! That's not nearly enough time!*

Her eyes darted back to her grandfather in alarm. She scowled at his amused expression. "It is in a week! That's not nearly enough time! I need a gown, a gift, I... I need—" Her grandfather interrupted her by placing a hand on her shoulder.

"Whatever you wish to get her as a gift, we will see it done. It pleases me to see you this excited to meet someone your age. I will send a messenger to inform Ser Siveril of your attendance as the representative of House Tiloral and the duchy."

She nodded. Her mind was racing as she considered various ideas of what to get the princess as a gift. What does a princess even need? Roslyn thought back to how the girl looked and what she wore. *What she wore!*

Roslyn smiled. She knew *exactly* what to get Gwyneth.

She glanced over at Janine, who sat at a table with Roderick. Her knight smiled at her and nodded. Roslyn nodded back before looking back at the duke.

“Grandfather? I need access to the vaults and a letter.”

This will be perfect.

I hope she likes it!