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## Suspect Invitations

Taking a deep breath, Gwyn turned from the view of the royal gardens and moved to reenter the ballroom. As she passed Amari, the paladin reached out, a comforting pat landing on her back.

Gwyn paused, her gaze rising to meet Amari's orange eyes. The woman's scar, a deep line slicing through her lip, seemed softer, as if the harshness Gwyn had first noticed in the Grand Temple had faded with time. Her hair, once short, had grown over the year that Gwyn had known her. It was now styled into tight braids on the top of her head, while the sides remained shaved. The sight brought a forced smile to Gwyn's face. "Thanks for being there, Amari."

Amari's reply was soft, but firm. "Always, Honored One."

The pair made their way back into the vibrant chaos of the ballroom, and almost immediately, Roslyn and Aleanora rushed toward her, their faces filled with concern. The familiarity of their presence only made her want to cry out more, but she knew she couldn't. She was...

*I just... ugh!*

"What happened?" Roslyn's voice was a mix of worry and anger, her eyes darting back toward the garden where Gwyn had disappeared with Prince Aran. "Did he—"

Gwyn's frustration was a boiling tempest within her, pushing her emotions to a breaking point. The words erupted from her before she could stop them. "I don't want to talk about it right now, Roz!"

Her tone was sharper than intended, and Roslyn jerked slightly, taken aback. Gwyn winced, her body twitching involuntarily as she felt the guilt immediately washing over her. Seeking to soothe her raging emotions, she summoned her [**Frozen Heart**], the magic swirling within her and tempering her feelings that threatened to boil.

She forced a smile on her face and straightened her back, relief flooding through her as it all went numb.

"No, Gwyn, you shouldn't be doing that," Roslyn instantly protested, her now glowing eyes narrowing with concern. "Drop the spell. Talk about your feelings."

Gwyn felt her eye twitch as her bestie admonished her.

## Manabound - Equilibrium

“I... I am just so frustrated right now, Roz...” Gwyn admitted with a heavy sigh, letting the **[Frozen Heart]** spell dissipate, luckily with a minimal reaction due to the short duration of use. “I’m sorry, Roz. He... he tried to apologize, and act as if we could just be friends or something.”

Roslyn’s gaze shifted to where Elora was still circulating among the other teenagers while a blonde-haired boy walked up to his sister and greeted the girls with her. Roz looked back at Gwyn, her eyes filled with understanding. “I wouldn’t believe him either.”

Gwyn shook her head, her lips pulling into a thin line. “Don’t worry. I don’t. I’m just so... *mad.*”

“Good. Be mad. Don’t suppress it, just learn to work with it,” Roslyn’s words were firm, filled with conviction. “We’re here for you. You can let it all out after this.”

“I want to just scream, Roz,” Gwyn admitted, feeling her eyes well up. “He... he...”

“I know,” Roslyn replied simply, her hand reaching out to squeeze Gwyn’s. In her eyes, Gwyn could see a resolve that matched her own, and she felt bad for snapping at her friend.

*Roslyn didn’t do anything. Don’t take it out on her.*

Aleanora, her eyes filled with genuine concern, offered Gwyn a small, comforting smile. “I can handle keeping people at bay if you wish, Your Highness.”

Gwyn shook her head, forcing a weak smile onto her lips. “I’m fine... I’ve got this.”

Roslyn, however, didn’t seem as convinced. Her bright violet eyes took in Gwyn’s clenched fists and the grim line of her mouth. “You’re clenching your fists,” she observed softly. “And I can see you grinding your teeth.”

She leaned in closer to Gwyn, her words a soothing murmur amidst the boisterous hum of the ongoing celebration. “Let’s go take a walk, Gwyn. We have a bit of time before the birthday speeches from the Crown Prince and the King.”

Gwyn hesitated a moment, glancing down at her white-knuckled hands before releasing a slow, steady breath. “Alright, Roz,” she conceded quietly, her voice barely audible over the noise. “A walk sounds good.”

The offer, though subtle, was an invitation for solace—a moment to breathe, to recalibrate—and for that, Gwyn was grateful.

With a nod of affirmation, Gwyn and Roslyn began their walk away from the ballroom and into the sprawling royal gardens. Aleanora chose to walk at a distance behind them, accompanying the two paladins, Amari and Khalan. The garden was a stunning sight, with exotic flowers that bloomed brilliantly under the starlit sky. The tranquility here was in stark contrast to the ostentatious chaos they had just left behind.

Gwyn felt a soft rush of wind as Roslyn broke the silence between them, asking, “Are you okay, Gwyn?”

She shook her head, her brown curls pinned to her head bobbing with the motion. “No, I’m not. I don’t know what’s wrong with me. I can’t explain it, and I feel like I’m angry all the time, and I just force myself to be happy or nice. The only times I feel good are around you. I can’t stand this stuff, I hate it and I just want it all to go away.”

A faint echo of surprise ran through Roslyn’s voice as she repeated, “You only feel good around me?”

Gwyn only nodded in response. “Yeah... I told you a long time ago, I really needed a friend. I really did, Roz. It’s been so tough, and I think... I think my magic is affecting me. At times I feel like I think a kid should feel, and other times I feel so calm and able to think clearly. Then other times I want to just rage. I think it’s my attributes, but I don’t know. Miss Maya says I am significantly more mature than other children my age, but she thought it was because of stuff I learned back home. I don’t know Roz. I feel... weird all the time.”

Roslyn listened in silence, her face painted with understanding and concern. “I can understand the strange feelings. I’ve had some too, but I’ve always had certain... expectations placed on me by my mother and House. Until I met you, I never wanted friends. I just wanted to do my duty, mainly because everyone I met always seemed so... different. Then I met you...”

Gwyn nodded, feeling a rush of affection for her friend. “Trust me, I understand. If it helps, I think you’ve changed too, but only since you started with your magic. I think it does something to us, and I don’t think kids our age were supposed to gain so many... Steps at once. I can’t prove it, but I want to talk to Maya about it...”

Roslyn couldn’t help but chuckle. “You know, I don’t think you’re ever truly relaxed unless you’re talking about magic.”

Gwyn huffed out a laugh, her eyes sparkling with passion. “I love magic. It’s everything to me, the one way I feel...” she trailed off, not really knowing how to vocalize her thoughts.

“In control?” Roslyn finished for her.

Gwyn nodded, grateful that Roslyn seemed to understand her. “Yeah... Otherwise, everything just seems like it’s slowly falling apart all the time.”

“But at least you know your mother is safe, yeah?” Roslyn asked, offering a comforting smile.

*Is she?*

“That’s just it, Roz. I don’t know if Mom is safe. I just know she’s... here. Hopefully, Siveril has found some more information since.” Gwyn replied, her voice lowering to a whisper.

## Manabound - Equilibrium

Beneath the ethereal glow of the stars, Gwyn and Roslyn walked side by side through the garden, their conversation falling into mutual silence that echoed the tranquility of the night around them. Their pace was unhurried, the quiet moment allowing them to exist outside the tumultuous reality of their lives, even if just for a brief while.

Far too soon, and yet enough to let Gwyn's anger and frustration subside, the distant sound of a loud voice announcing something pulled them out of their thoughts.

Roslyn sighed, "That was too fast. We should head back in... Ready?"

"Yeah, ready as I'll ever be, Roz," Gwyn stated with a nod. "Let's get this over with."



Standing in the periphery of the grand ballroom, Ser Taenya Shavyre watched as the King and Queen concluded their speeches, her hands coming together in a gentle applause. The room was a kaleidoscope of brightly clad bodies, while she wore her gleaming silver ceremonial armor that proudly featured the draconic visage of her House's crest on her chest, the dragon appearing to be protecting what lay underneath in an almost sensual manner as it looked outward, almost daringly.

As Crown Prince Kerrell stepped forward, his elegant wife, Lady Aiyanna, stood beside him, her silent grace as captivating as the gems studding her gown. Their elegance was captivating, but Taenya knew better than to be swayed by appearances alone, and the Crown Prince was one of the most poisonous vipers in the land.

Power held an attractive aura, after all.

The murmur of the crowd dropped to a silence as the Crown Prince began to address the ballroom, inviting all present to extend their congratulations to the young royal twins. As the crowd began to shuffle and move in response, a familiar presence approached Taenya.

Lord Edele, the high elf nobleman she had met secretly approached her, and while she wasn't surprised to see the man, it was interesting that he chose to approach her. The man held himself with impeccable posture, his back straight and his ebony hair, neatly arranged, framed striking brown eyes that held a glint of both amusement and interest as he gave her an exaggerated bow that had her roll her eyes.

"Ser Taenya," the man greeted her with a suave voice that made him sound so sure of himself. The man stepped next to her so that he too could watch the proceedings. "Looking lovely as ever. I must say, your armor is mesmerizing."

She ignored the man's flattery as she observed people walk past the two seated royal twins, passing along their greetings and well wishes.

Taenya took a deep breath as she watched Gwyn, Roslyn, and Aleanora make their greetings with the young royals, when no one went up in flames like kindling, she nodded to the man standing patiently next to her.

"Lord Edele," she greeted, her tone frosty, her gaze unwaveringly watching her charge, ready to rush forward if needed.

*Amari is there, but... just in case.*

The royals' reactions to Gwyn were not lost on her. Prince Kerrell seemed wary as if he had finally accepted that Gwyn was not a rival to be trifled with. Princess Elora, however, could not hide her distaste, her face a barely concealed sneer.

Beside Taenya, Lord Edele chuckled, a sound that grated on her nerves. *I can't stand his arrogance. He acts just like the royals he supposedly detests.*

"The young prince seems to have accepted that he will not make her bend or break. His sister, however, seems to be as stubborn as her father. A pity, that," he commented, eyes on the spectacle before them. "She will likely be the one to take the title of Heiress unless the prince can recover from the embarrassment your princess gave him. I can only imagine the conversation his father had with him."

Taenya maintained her cool, silent composure, watching as Gwyn's closest friend, Roslyn, stepped up to greet the young royals. There was an unwavering strength to the ducal heiress, a strong presence that was not easily swayed by royal posturing.

*She's been good for Gwyn.*

"Ah, Lady Roslyn," Lord Edele mused, a small smile playing on his lips. "That girl would have been a valuable ally if it weren't for your princess."

Taenya's eyes jerked to Edele, a cold fire filling her veins. "I've told you, leave my princess out of your politics. She wants nothing to do with them." She said, her voice as steel-edged as the blade she carried.

Her loyalty to Gwyn was unwavering, and she would defend her charge against the petty machinations of Aviran politics, regardless of who was scheming.

Lord Edele was no exception.

"Easier said than done, Ser Taenya," Lord Edele retorted with a coy smile. "Our fair kingdom has a way of dragging politics into the path of all Houses, whether they like it or not. Besides, she is a

royal in her own right—whether she actually rules a kingdom or not—and has chosen to establish a House here, one whose faction is growing. I dare say *politics* are expected at this point.”

Taenya's gaze had remained fixed on Gwyn, watching as her young charge mingled with the crowd, her every move a dance between appearing unthreatening and maintaining her dignity. The tension had been palpable even from this distance—she knew how much Gwyn disliked this.

*I don't blame her...*

Her thoughts were interrupted as she caught the elf's amused expression as he also observed Gwyn.

“Is there something amusing about my princess, Lord Edele?” Her voice was cold, matching the icy gaze she finally directed his way.

“Quite the contrary, Ser Taenya,” he said, seemingly undeterred by her tone. “I find your princess intriguing. Especially as the King has just acknowledged her status,” he added with a nod toward where Gwyn was speaking with the King.

Taenya couldn't make out what was said from where she stood, but it was clear that the king had, indeed, greeted Gwyn as a princess based on the reactions of those around them, and the slight scowl on the Crown Prince's face.

*Good, it seems that you're not the one in complete control, yet.*

She caught Lord Edele smiling out of the corner of her eye. “She brings a... freshness to the Game, one it has sorely lacked for centuries. A third faction? Oh, my the possibilities...”

His words had done nothing to warm Taenya to him. “I hope you remember that her 'freshness' has teeth,” she had said, her gaze drifting back to Gwyn. A small smile pulled at her lips as she watched her charge navigate the political minefield with aplomb. She looked to Lord Edele, her tone hardening. “Remember this, Lord Edele, Princess Gwyneth doesn't just bite, she breathes fire.”

The elf lord chuckled, seemingly unafraid. “A fiery maiden with a reptilian spirit like the one that protects your heart?” he replied with a gesture toward her chest. “I wouldn't have it any other way, Ser Taenya. It makes for a much more exciting Game, after all.”

“You would do well to remember,” Taenya warned. “That this maiden you speak so lightly of, is not afraid of embarrassing those who stand against her or those she cares for. She won't hesitate to take you down a peg if she feels you deserve it.”

“And I look forward to the day she tries,” Lord Edele had said with a smirk before he handed her a small scroll sealed with wax and a crest she didn't recognize. “Your princess is cordially invited to attend a... conclave with the True Nobility. The Briar Ring extends the right of hospitality, and her safety is assured. Her place—and that of her faction—in the Game along with the Ring's position will be

determined. I suggest you do not miss it,” the man said. “As always, a pleasure to see you,” he added with a wink before he turned, walking away and leaving Taenya to keep an eye on Gwyn.

And with a lot to consider.



Seated within the grandeur of the Tilor Estate’s dining hall, Gwyn found herself in the company of a formidable assembly. Roslyn, her steadfast best friend, sat by her side. The rest of the table was occupied by her three knights—Friedrich, Sabina, and Taenya—and the ever-watchful Amari.

Roslyn’s own paladin Khalan sat next to Amari, quietly attentive, while her knights Ser Janine and Ser Roderick maintained a reserved silence. Flanking Roslyn on the opposite side was Lord Riggell, a high-ranking elf nobleman who maintained House Tilor’s interests in the capital and in the Hall of Lords whenever Roslyn wasn’t able to attend.

The group’s discussion ebbed and flowed around a central topic: The Ring of Briars, a group of people that Taenya said called themselves the True Nobles.

“This is not a good idea,” Sir Friedrich voiced his opinion, furrowing his brows in deep thought.

Sabina seconded his sentiments, her tone equally grim. “This reeks of a trap, and Gwyn has expressed a clear desire to steer clear of politics. We thought we left that in the duchy with Count Norric to deal with while Gwyn attends the Academy.”

Lord Riggell sighed, shaking his head. “Regrettably, it’s not that simple,” he lamented. “Duke Tilor has been able to maintain neutrality because of our influence and military strength. However, these True Nobles are ardent anti-royalists. This clandestine group, the Ring of Briars, is unknown to me. I fear that merely even knowing of their existence could potentially endanger Lady Roslyn...”

Khalan turned his gaze upon the high elf Viscount. His voice was steady as he reassured him, “Lady Roslyn is under the Church’s protection. We will not stand idly while nobles threaten her.”

Amari followed up with a firm nod. “I concur. I will bring a well-armed squad with the princess. I will ensure that it is abundantly clear that any assault against either Honored One is an exercise in futility. The princess will be unharmed.”

“I’m right here, you know,” Gwyn interjected, her tone laden with frustration. They’d been discussing this elusive invitation for the past bell as if she weren’t in the room. She wanted, no, needed to be part of the conversation, not just its subject.

## Manabound - Equilibrium

Gwyn's remark had been met with a series of slightly guilty looks from the table, with Taenya managing a small, apologetic smile. "Of course, Gwyn. We didn't mean to exclude you. It's just..."

"Just what?" she had interrupted, shooting her adopted aunt a hard look. She might have been young, but she wasn't naive. These were dangerous times and she had every right to know the dangers that could potentially surround her.

"Well," Roz's knight Ser Roderick started but then stopped, glancing at his liege. Roslyn gestured for him to speak and the man exhaled before continuing, "As you've seen even in just the Tiloral Duchy, your... arrival... has ruffled some feathers. Some of the more traditional elements of the Game feel threatened by the changes you represent."

Gwyn had let out a small snort. "And so they've decided to start a club? How very mature of them."

The Tiloral Viscount piped up, "They're more than just a club, Your Highness. They're a powerful group of people, who have a lot of influence, and they're against what you represent."

"And that's why we should be careful," Taenya added. "They might invite you under the pretense of diplomacy, but we have no idea what they're actually planning. I do not like this Lord Edele."

"I have not been able to find out anything about this man, other than that he is aware of my role as Gwyn's... spymistress," Sabina said the last bit with a pained look toward Taenya, who seemed almost pleased with the admission.

Gwyn had huffed, crossing her arms over her chest. She hadn't wanted to play these games, but she also knew she couldn't afford to ignore these people. "Fine," she had finally conceded. "Let's prepare for this, and make sure we're ready for whatever they throw at us. But I won't let them intimidate me, and I won't let them manipulate me."

Her resolve had been met with nods of approval around the table. Despite their concerns, it was clear they all admired her spirit. Even Lord Riggell had looked impressed, giving her a thoughtful nod.

"Very well, Princess," he said. "The Tiloral Estate stands ready to assist you in any way we can, and is well prepared for any threats."

Roz nodded in agreement as well. "So, what's the plan?"

Taenya's stern expression set the tone for the conversation. "The meeting," she began, her words filled with a gravity that instantly seized everyone's attention. "Has been strategically set to coincide with Gwyn and Roslyn's three-week break from the Academy."



Her gaze swept across the room, ensuring she had their undivided attention before she continued, “We’ll be taking my Guards and Amari’s paladins to this gathering. Meanwhile, Friedrich will command Sabina’s Wynvers, ensuring the security of our estate in the capital and Ilyana will manage the townhouse.”

“I have a hunch,” Sabina announced, her eyes narrowing. “That the House meddling with Amanda Levings may be involved in this situation.” She clasped her hands together on the table. “I will do what I can to gather more information.”

Amari, listening attentively, spoke up. Her voice was quiet, but it carried in the silent room. “The Umbral Monk assigned to our House will arrive soon,” she disclosed, her eyes focused on Sabina. “He’s traveled a great distance to be here, and I’d like you to guide him. I will ensure that he is aware that you will act as his superior.”

Sabina gave a short nod in agreement.

Amari looked around. “For all intents and purposes, from now on Vicori Rollo and I are to be considered permanently assigned to House Reinhart.”

“And with your permission, Lady Tilorai, we will be with yours,” Khalan added with a look to his own younger paladin.

Taenya jerked her head toward the two paladins in surprise. “What? That...”

Both of the senior paladins nodded. “Trust us, we know. This is a situation that has never happened before. However, the world has changed, magic makes everything more... complicated. The status and security of the Honored Ones demand a more... permanent solution than what we have had until now. From now on, we are detached from the Holy Order’s Rolls. We report to our respective Houses—”

“What changed?” Gwyn asked.

Amari met Gwyn’s piercing gaze with a quiet resolve. “You did, Princess Gwyneth,” she revealed, her voice solemn. “You were part of a third Seeing.”

Silence fell over the room, thick and tangible. Everyone froze, their eyes darting between Amari and Gwyn. Slowly, Amari nodded. “The Church believes that you have a significant role to play in the future. They haven’t divulged details of their suspicions, and I haven’t seen this one, but they have stressed your importance.”

The room was still, each person grappling with this unexpected revelation. It was Roslyn who broke the silence. “What about me?” she asked, her voice small and hesitant.

Khalan turned to Roslyn. “The Church believes that you, too, have a role in this. In fact,” he added, “I personally believe that you’re crucial in ensuring that whatever is foreseen, comes to pass.”

## Manabound - Equilibrium

The air became heavier, tension coiling like a serpent ready to strike. Both of Roslyn's knights bristled, their faces darkening with protectiveness.

Gwyn felt a strange, new emotion wash over her.

Roslyn met Gwyn's gaze, a silent conversation passed between them—one of support, determination, and understanding. With a soft, confident smile, Roslyn leaned in closer to Gwyn. “Side by side,” she murmured, her voice as steady as her resolve.

Gwyn felt a sting of tears. But before they could fall, she reached under the table, her hand meeting Roslyn's in a solid fist bump. “Against the world,” she replied, her voice thick with emotion but unwavering.

Across the table, Gwyn noticed as Sabina's lips twitched into a gentle smile, her eyes meeting Taenya's.

Gwyn turned to Taenya with a questioning look. “And just where is this... *conclave* supposed to take place?”

Everyone turned to look at her knight, the table going silent.

Taenya looked at Gwyn directly, her voice steady. “That detail will be forthcoming, unfortunately.”

As the intensity of the meeting began to subside, attention turned toward the logistics of the rest of the school year. Sabina looked up with a bit of concern. “It might be best to steer clear of the Racine boy, Gwyn.”

Gwyn and Roslyn shared a look, a shared understanding passing between them. Gwyn then shrugged, a look of nonchalance on her face. “That's easy enough. I skipped over his class with the rank changes from the mid-terms.”

A nod of approval came from the mind mage. “Good.”

As the discussion began to wrap up, Taenya glanced around the room. “If there's nothing else..?” she began, her tone questioning. “I believe House Reinhart has quite a bit to prepare for.”

Lord Riggell rose from his seat. “Remember,” he announced, his voice ringing with a conviction that seemed to resonate within the room. “I am confident that I can speak for His Grace in saying that House Tiloral stands with its friends.”

Roslyn, taking her cue from the Lord, set her face into a serious expression. “And a Tiloral never forgets.”



Four weeks later, it was getting closer to the end of the academic year, and thus closer to the conclave. Sabina was away, trying to gather more information that would hopefully prepare them for whatever may occur while Taenya and Gwyn strode through the entrance of the Reinhart Estate as the carriage drove away behind them.

They walked past the now familiar coat of arms, set in stone and wood throughout the premises, an addition that their other human knight had commissioned proudly.

That human, Sir Friedrich, was waiting inside for them as they approached. He donned an ensemble of deep blue, silver, and black—the regal colors of House Reinhart. His attire was cut in the aristocratic style, sophisticated and polished, allowing him to blend seamlessly into any courtly setting, an aspect that impressed Taenya greatly.

“Gwyneth!” he called out, a wide grin stretching across his stern face, his eyes alight with joy as he waved them over. “We have news from Count Norric. Come, come. The messenger is here.”

In the receiving room, an older man clad in Reinhart colors was waiting. His silver hair was a clear indication of his age, but his eyes were bright and alert. Taenya recognized him immediately as one of the original House Guards. Upon seeing Gwyn, the man turned and bowed deeply, “Your Highness! My, you’ve grown!”

Gwyn merely rolled her eyes and thanked the man for his courteous gesture. Taenya approached him and inquired about the message. With a serious expression, the man reached into his satchel and pulled out a sealed scroll. “This was extremely important. Lord Norric insisted it reach you without anyone else knowing the contents.”

Taenya took the scroll with a nod, and after expressing her thanks, watched as Friedrich ushered the man toward the kitchens, speaking softly about food and rest. With the man dismissed, Gwyn’s expectant gaze fell upon Taenya.

As she unsealed and read the scroll, silence fell upon the room.

To Her Highness, Princess Gwyneth of House Reinhart,

Your Highness, I hope this letter finds you in good health and spirits. I write to you with news of great importance, delivered with urgency and discretion as befitting its nature.

I am pleased to inform you that Keston Haar and Kerala Fenren have successfully returned from their mission to the Kingdom of Westaren. They bring good tidings, having

secured a trade contract with the esteemed Farum Magical Goods Company. This marks a significant milestone in the advancement of our House's interests and is cause for celebration.

However, there is more information they bring, which pertains directly to the circumstances of your arrival. The ring you have been seen wearing which was obtained previously, as per their report, was crafted with the aid of one Baroness Sloane Reinhart.

As such, it appears that our previous information was in err. Your mother was actually present in Westaren with a group of Blightwych Knights and a Ser Ismeld d'Argin—a member of the Blightwych royal family, but Keston was disappointed to be unable to locate her.

Based on what we learned from the Banking Guild, we are confident that Baroness Reinhart traveled through the Sovereign City of Marketbol sometime after, with a destination of Swanbrook.

I have dispatched a courier to Marketbol in order to make contact with your mother's interests that remain within the city.

Yet, not all is lost. Your mother's contact and business partner, Reanny Farum, attests that your mother's destination in her travels is actually the Capital of Avira. It is unclear when she will reach the city, and her exact whereabouts are unknown at this time, however.

The fact that your mother is coming directly to where you are now can only be the work of Eona, Herself.

Eona Provides.

All information we have been able to gather gives me confidence in assuring you that your mother is safe. The now Ser Keston Haar has been dispatched to Maireharbora with dual responsibilities. While he will assist Miss Kerala Fenren in expanding the Fenren shipping business, his primary mission is to await your mother's arrival, no matter how long it may take.

When she arrives, Ser Keston will take it upon himself to guide her safely back to you. Be assured, all signs point to the fact that your mother is determined to find you, and Eona willing, she will soon be reunited with you.

House Reinhart within the Duchy of Tiloral stands ready to welcome her into its arms and provide whatever assistance is required.

I trust this news brings you hope and happiness. We will continue to support you in all your endeavors and anticipate the day of your reunion.

Your faithful retainer,  
Count Siveril Norric of Galehaven  
Majordomo of House Reinhart

As Taenya finished reading, she looked up to find Gwyn frozen in place, her usually vibrant eyes wide and glossy with unshed tears. Without warning, Gwyn lunged forward, her lithe frame slamming into Taenya's as she wrapped her arms tightly around her. The embrace was fierce, full of an unspeakable relief and a happiness that made their eyes flood with tears.

"She's coming here Gwyn," Taenya whispered.

Gwyn just cried more tears of joy, clenching tighter.

Friedrich stepped forward, placing a hand on Taenya's shoulder, adding to the tangible wave of emotion coursing through the room. Amidst the heartfelt sobbing and laughter, Taenya heard Friedrich whisper a prayer and a name with such a longing that it broke her heart...

*Katherine.*