

A STORY BY CAMILA PONTES

MONTBIANC ESCAPADE



LADY ENYA

"THEY'RE COMING."

Her heels click-clacked through the wooden floor as she approached the great dining hall. As wide as it was tall, with walls adorned in fancy wallpaper and copper sconces holding thick candles, the great dining hall featured a long mahogany dining table with chairs upholstered in lamb wool and blackened leather.

The dim weakening light of the dying day crept through the openings between the thick floor-length curtains. As the horizon drowned in a dusking sun, the silver maiden left her bed to crawl up the sky and shine her pale light. Way too bright for Enya's taste, in fact. The moon, after all, was just the pathetic sun in disguise. The world would be much better if covered in a stunning pitch blackness, as if looking into the abyss itself.

The woman in her onix dress and crimson cloak approached the curtains by the side, gently wrapping her fingers around a piece of its cloth and fiercely closing the gap from which the light ventured in, as if holding a cushion over the face of a dying man. Her burgundy tinted lips curled a smile.

"Make arrangements for the conflict. They will wait no longer." She signaled to the man behind her, whose grim died on his lips. Even though he was elegantly dressed in satin and fur, and armed in silver and steel, her voice was no different than it would have been if she had casually addressed the leftovers of her servant's plate.

"Right away, ma'am," he managed to slip a murmur through his teeth, unsuccessfully trying to mask his growing displeasure.

"And Vyesant?" her voice made him freeze.

"Yes, m'lady?"

"Make it quick."



VYESANT

Her soft voice still echoed in Vyesant's mind while he walked down the stairs and made his way to the back door.

Lady Enya had been like that since she arrived. All silk smooth and tailored lies. She could look like a rose in bloom, but her thorns were dagger sharp, and he had tasted her piercing retaliations one too many times. He clenched his sharp teeth in frustration. If only there was anything he could do.

Outside, the turmoil was growing stronger. Those damned beasts were getting ready to attack, that much was certain. Lady Enya was right after all – as much as he hated to admit. Tess tried to argue they would come during daylight, for this was when Montblanc would be most vulnerable, but Lady Enya predicted they would wait until the first full moon night, when they would be at their peak, for this was their only chance of success.

And she was right. As the day slowly died, he could feel them getting closer. Hell, Vyesant could even smell their nasty stench already. Soon, their brittle peace would be broken, a hundred years of humming silence would be torn apart, all because of that stupid of a beast down in the dungeons.

All because she decided to capture him.

Had they killed him in the battleground as they often did, they wouldn't have been held accountable. These were the fatalities of hunting, and so it had been for over a century now. But when she kept him alive and dragged him into their walls, she turned the tides against them. Now, they had a hostage, a prisoner, a captive. Those bloody wolves could smell him, and they knew Montblanc had been the one to break the ceasefire. All the blood soon to be spilled, all the destruction, the felled allies, the gutted bodies torn under their vicious claws...

All that blood would be on his hands as well.

Vyesant realized he had been standing still in front of the door that led to the backyard, to the spawn brigade his sister Tess would be commanding. His hand hovered over the doorknob, as if an invisible barrier prevented him from touching it. Only the barrier was his own, as his trembling rage boiled what tied his hands together. There *was* something he could do, if he managed to be quick.

The man turned around and walked as fast as he could without running through the corridors full of meaningless hanging art and tapestry. He raced down a seemingly endless flight of stairs to a completely dark cramped hall with a metal door. When his hands took the key from the enormous keychain he stole and twisted it into the lock,

VYESANT WASN'T SHAKING ANYMORE. HE WAS ECSTATIC.

Inside the moist corridor of the dungeon the instant smell of rotten food and wet dogs hit him hard. His immaculate shoe soles had never seen such filth, for not even he or Tess were allowed down there.

Still, he walked his forbidden path to the last cell, the only one closed shut.



ARNOU

ARNOU NEVER THOUGHT HE WOULD GO DOWN LIKE THIS.

No tearing flesh nor ripping guts or silver swords. Just a dungeon of silvery bars and him curled in a humiliating ball of pain and hunger. They've dressed him in scraps of cloth and metal chains for a collar, tied him down like a rabid dog, but none of that bothered him.

What truly bothered him was the never ending hunger.

Not even the sound of steps against the stone floor interested him. He knew better than to hope for food from these bastards.

Then, a voice came from just the other side of the gate. In the corner of his eye, he caught a glimpse of what seemed like an apparition. A pale figure with charcoal hair slicked perfectly cascading over his back, dark plum purple gloves wrapping around the silver bars.



"Listen up, stray. I don't have much time, and neither do you." Down there, in the deafening silence, his hoarse voice sounded like a thundering scream. His heart surely would have skipped a beat, had it been beating at all.

The scraping of the keys against the metal gate brought Arnou back as if coming out of a trance. He got up and jumped against the bars as a ravenous wolf. His skin sizzled under the silver, and the man in gloves didn't even flinch.

"They'll find me soon if I don't leave, and they'll most certainly kill you on the spot if they see you outside these bars over my dead body, so don't go getting any ideas."

The pale man put his face near the bars and his blue eyes glowed in the dark. His breath smelled of lamb and blood, and through his parted rosy lips, beautiful fangs shimmered resplendent.

"Besides, I ate cooked meat tonight. It's disgusting, but if you eat me, you'll feast upon putrid blood. You'll vomit for three weeks. Now that we've cleared that out, you know what day's today, right? You feel it in your doggy bones. They're coming for you. Be ready for them."

The blue eyed freak smiled slyly, and Arnou heard a gentle *click* coming from the lock.

"Just make sure you go after her first.

"THE ONE IN BLACK AND RED."

As the gate slowly sprang open, a weak distant howl was heard from outside MontBlanc, and many more followed.

THE WHITE MOUNT WAS ABOUT TO BE DRENCHED IN SCARLET.

"It seems I'm late for the party. See you out there."

As the vampire left the dungeon, the prisoner began to turn.

**THEY'RE COMING FOR YOU.
BE READY FOR THEM.**



TESS

Tess carelessly sipped the blood from her chalice. It was deep dark red, just barely thick, and its rich metallic flavor filled her mouth. From all the humans out there, it was the young women she loved the most. Ripe as pears, sweet as berries, and scared like little sheep. She'd bleed them dry everytime if that didn't mean she'd have to find another one in a week or so. Keeping them tied up was easier, they'd fester in their fear until it was time for harvest.

Of course she was sad to give her collection up like this, but at the end of the day, it was for the sake of Montblanc. Besides, there would always be more young maidens to be collected.

She approached the barn, delighting in the cries coming from the inside. Tess glazed through the door, forever invited into her blood farm. A vile looking man, crooked as a hook and ugly as the pest greeted her, with a smile of rotten teeth.

"Have they been prepared?" Tess asked, without even looking at him.

"Yes, M'lady, they're ready for your blessing", he heaved a crispy noise that sounded like a laughter.

"Then, blessed they shall be. Leave us be, Darach. And take your filthy pets away from here before they turn, or they'll become my girls' first meal."

"No need to ask twice, M'lady", he giggled, picking from the ground a cat and a rat. "Come, Claws and Tails, it's time to leave."

One by one, the restrained girls tilted their sobbing faces, exposing their necks to her mistress, whose fangs pierced and bled them into her throat. Tess drank them dry, not a single droplet wasted to the floor as they would slowly lose the pinkness in their cheeks, the life in their eyes.

Their bodies dropped to the floor as dummies, their limbs being pressed in wrong directions. Bones broke, and yet not a single grunt or cry was heard. The girls who were food now were nothing, and they stood still over hay and dirt before their death was turned horridly into something else.

Tess watched patiently, for she knew what was coming. Then, one of them started twitching. Then another. Soon, all of them began their danse macabre. Their stomachs twisted and twirled and blood gurgled through their throat and back into the floor.

THEY WERE BEING UNDONE.

Their screeches became a vile symphony, all their guttural asynchronous voices making Tess recoil in brief rejoice.

Then, after flirting with mortal death, they were brought back by a single drop of Tess' blood on their tongue. One by one, they've been pushed to death from the living, only to be brought back as an undead horror.

Tess smiled.

SHE ALWAYS FOUND IT AMUSING TO SEE THEM DIE A SECOND TIME.

"So this is our secret army?" scoffed the familiar voice behind her, and she turned to face her brother riding his black stallion, Nightmare. "Your packed lunch?"

"Do not mock me, brother. They will soon become ravenous and fearless. They will tear the damn wolves apart."

"I am not", the smile he bore dimmed, and he unmounted to walk towards his sister. "It's a beautiful force, and it's all under your control. You will win this war, not Lady Enya. You know that, right?"



Tess faced him silently. Even after centuries together, she could not figure out exactly what he was implying whenever he looked at her like that.

“It is not wise to say things like that when you know she could hear it.”

“She is probably too busy with her honored guest right now.”

“Vyesant, what did you do?”

“I cut Arnou loose,” a smile ripped her brother’s sacred face. “Wasn’t she who wanted him? Now she can have him whole.”

Tess froze still and, for a few seconds, the only sounds to be heard were the dying girls contorting in pain.

“Oh brother, what have you done?”

“I’ve broken us free, Tess. With your army and Arnou on our side, we can take Enya down for good, and reclaim what has been ours by right! Montblanc belongs to us. Join me, please.”

She looked at her spawns, most of them already undead, with all white eyes and waiting for orders. For the first time in decades, Tess allowed herself to feel a sliver of hope.

“Rise, my dear damsel army. We’ve a war to win, and tonight you hunt for the first time.”

THANK YOU!

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