

THE HUNTED

||| A Story By Al Diegel |||

CHAPTER ONE

As nature takes her final breaths, before the winter arrives, the townsfolk of Seattle, Washington are preparing for the harshness of winter. One girl in particular, Molly Brewer, was working on this day. Her first day working at her family's coffee shop, *The Brewer's Brew*. Then, her first customer walks in, a lady with long red hair, freckles, a black leather jacket, jeans, and brown boots,

"Hello," Molly said, "welcome to The Brewer's Brew! What would you like to have?" The lady looks at her,

"I'll just have my usual." Molly looks at her, blankly. Then, she responded in a stuttering mess,

"I'm sorry, this is my first day here. What is your usual...?" The lady looks up at the menu behind Molly, then politely tells her,

"My usual is a medium chocolate stirred coffee with a teaspoon of milk and sugar."

"Alright, and what's your name?"

"Jade," she responded, "I thought you would have recognized me." Molly looks up from writing her name on the cup,

"Oh, wait a minute. It's you! You were Ted's best friend, right?"

"Yeah. Him and I aren't friends anymore. We dated for like a week and he cheated on me so I left him on the streets. Literally, I threw him out of my house via the front door."

“Wow.” Molly looks down at the cup, before looking back up at Jade, “Anyway, I’ll be right back.” Molly quickly shuffles to the barista in the back, her brother. She shows him the paper which had Jade’s order on it. Her brother looks at the paper, then at Molly,

“Wait, Jade’s here?”

“Yeah.”

“I’ve had a crush on her for a while now...”

“Max, you’re an adult that’s not even in school anymore. And she’s a minor, the same grade as me.”

“I can still have crushes, jeez! Just give me the damn order.” Max snatches the paper out of Molly’s hand, before she walks back out to Jade. Molly comes back to Jade leaning forward on the counter.

“Your order will be ready soon.”

“Alright...” There was an awkward silence between the two. Then, Max walks up to Molly and hands her the hot coffee.

“Here’s your coffee, Jade.” Molly shakily holds out Jade’s order. Jade takes the coffee and thanks Molly,

“We should hang out again, like the good old days. You know, outside of school.”

“I’m available after my shift today.”

“Oh, alright. I can wait out here for you if you’d like.”

“Yes please!”

Molly goes on with her shift, taking orders of customers looking for something hot as the cold winter approaches. All she can think about

is Jade, she couldn't get her out of her head. Finally, her shift comes to an end, as she quickly clocks out and rushes outside to find Jade sitting at a table with an umbrella.

Jade waves to Molly, and she waves back. She walks over to Jade and sits next to her at the table,

"So, what do we do now?" Molly asked. Jade looks at her,

"I don't know. By the way, what was your name again?"

"Oh, my name's Molly. Molly Brewer... My family runs this coffee shop, and they wanted me to work here as the rest of my family does."

"Oh that's really cool! I'm Jade, Jade Clayton! And I work at the Walgreens near the school." Molly looks over at her brother, Max, staring at them from his car,

"I think we should go somewhere else... I don't have my own car yet, do you have a ride?"

"Oh, yeah. But do you have a helmet with you?"

"No... why?"

Jade walks over to a fully black motorcycle and sits on it, "Because you might want one." Molly stared shocked at Jade, her face a slight hue of red. Molly walks over and gets behind Jade on the motorcycle.

"What happens if I fall off?"

"Don't worry, put your hands around my waist." Molly does what Jade tells her to do and puts her hands around her waist. Jade holds onto her hands with one hand as she starts up the motorcycle, "You ready?"

“I guess...” Then, Molly’s phone goes off, “Oh, I gotta take this...” Molly pulls her phone out of her pocket and picks up.

“Hello? Yes, mom, I’ll be safe... Wait, how'd you know? ... Oh, of course he told you... I love you too mom, I’ll be back by then I promise...” Molly hangs up the phone and puts it back in her pocket. Jade looks back at her,

“Are you ready to go now?”

“Yep!”

“Alright, hold on tight!” Jade pulled out of the lot and sped down the road. Molly tightens her grip on Jade, scared she might go flying off the back. Jade looks back at Molly, “Don’t worry princess, you’re not gonna fall off as long as you hold on to me, alright?”

“Alright-...”

Jade rode all the way to her house, where she parked the motorcycle in the garage. Molly carefully got off the motorcycle, holding onto Jade as she got off. Jade got off the motorcycle as well and directed Molly into the house, and into the kitchen, where Jade’s mom was preparing dinner. Jade introduces Molly,

“Mom, this is my new friend, Molly!” Her mom looks at her skeptically,

“A *friend*, huh? Let’s see how long it takes before you two are smooching upstairs.”

“Mom!”

“Oh, I’m just messing with you honey. Is she going to be staying for dinner?”

“Molly, can you stay for dinner?” Molly looks at her phone, then back at Jade,

“I’m sure my mom wouldn’t mind.”

“Great! Now Molly and I will be upstairs in my room!” Jade exclaims before she grabs Molly’s hand and takes her upstairs to her room. There, Molly is greeted by a faint purple glow from the lights in her room. Molly looks around, fascinated like in a trance. Jade sits down on her bed,

“So? What do you think?”

“It’s really nice! Is your favorite color purple?”

“No, it’s green.” Jade laughed a bit, and so did Molly. Molly looks around, and then at Jade. Jade looks down at the floor, then back up at Molly,

“Hey, do you have any plans tomorrow night?” Molly lets out a small *huh?*, then responds,

“No... Why do you ask?”

“No reason... Do you need a ride home after school?”

“I’ll be fine. I’ll probably be needed at the coffee shop.”

“Oh.” Jade looks down at the floor, “Well can I still take you somewhere? There’s a place I want to show you.”

“Oh, sure.”

Then, Jade’s mom yells from downstairs, “DINNER’S DONE!!” Jade rushes downstairs, Molly right behind her.

“Mom, is it alright if we eat upstairs?”

“Alright, just don’t make a mess.” Her mom hands them each a plate of spaghetti with meatballs, then they rush back upstairs. Jade sits down on the bed with her place. Molly hesitates, but Jade tells her it’s alright. They eat their dinner while they chat about school. Then, Jade says,

“Hey, do you think you’d be alright to stay the night here?” Molly paused what she was doing and looked up at Jade, who started laughing as Molly had spaghetti sauce on her face. Jade leans close, “You got a little something on your face. Here, let me get it-” Molly quickly backs away in shock,

“I-I got it...” Molly quickly wipes away the sauce then looks at Jade’s wide-eyed face. “What’s that face for?!”

“Oh, nothing. You just look kinda cute-...”

“O-Oh-... Thank you...? You look really pretty-...” Molly looks away, blushing before pulling out her phone,

“I-I’m gonna ask my mom if it’s alright to stay the night-...”

“Alright...”

Molly texted her mom and put the phone aside as she laid down on the bed. Jade laid beside her,

“You alright, man?”

“Yeah... Just a little tired is all...” Molly sighs, “Do you ever wish you could live in some magical fantasy land where you didn’t have to worry about the struggles of life...?”

“Can’t say I have. But if it was with someone as cool as you, I wouldn’t mind. Why do you ask? Are you secretly from a magical fantasy world?” Jade laughs, and Molly laughs with her,

“I wish...” Molly looks at her phone, then back at Jade, “Oh, my mom said she’s alright with me staying here for the night. She said my brother is gonna come pick me up tomorrow.”

“Your brother is that Max guy, right?”

“Yeah,” Molly nodded, “the one who also has a fat crush on you...”

“Isn’t he, like, 20?”

“Yeah. He’s turning 21 in January... I can’t blame him though, you’re pretty cool.”

“Are you saying you got a crush on me too?”

Molly jumps forward, “Wait, that’s not what I meant! I- uh-... I mean it in a friendly platonic way-...” Jade chuckled,

“Sure princess. I’ll believe you.”

“Why do you call me princess, by the way? N-Not that I have a problem with it, just wondering...”

“I don’t know. I just called you that to be funny on the motorcycle, but I kinda forgot your actual name, so I just continued to call you princess...”

“Oh,” Molly laughs, “well my name’s Molly. B-But you can still call me princess! If you want-...” Molly sits back down next to Jade.

Jade yawns and stretches her arms upwards, “I think we better get some sleep. We still have school tomorrow after all.”

“Yeah. But where can I sleep?”

“We can share my bed. It should be big enough.” Jade laid down on the bed, and Molly laid right next to her.

The next morning, Jade’s alarm wakes Molly up, along with Jade. Jade gets dressed for school while Molly rushes downstairs. Soon after, Jade follows.

“Why are you in such a rush?”

“Sorry, I thought I slept in too late...”

“Oh, it’s alright. We’re pretty close to the school so I usually wake up a little later. Anyway, I can ride us to school if you want.”

“Sure.”

Jade takes Molly to the garage where they get situated on her motorcycle. Jade revs the engine before pulling out of the garage and speeding down to their school.

Once there, Jade lets Molly get off at the front before going to park her motorcycle. Molly walks up the door and enters the school. Jade follows shortly after.

They both go along with the school day. Afterwards, they meet up in the front of the school. Jade hands Molly a piece of paper,

“Here, this has my phone number on it. Call me whenever you’re able to.”

“I will, don’t worry.” Molly puts the paper in her pocket, “Also, do you mind taking me to work? My brother messaged me at lunch saying he won’t be able to pick me up after school.”

“Sure! When do you need to go to work?”

“Around 5.”

“Sweet, then I have somewhere to take you first.”

“Oh yeah, you mentioned it last night.”

“Here, hop on,” Jade says as she pats the second seat on her motorcycle. Molly gets on, holding tightly onto Jade as they sped out of the lot and down the road.

“So where are we going?”

“To the lake. It’s a really nice spot.”

“Union?”

“Yeah.”

They arrive at Union Lake and park the motorcycle on the side of the street. Molly looks upon the lake, in awe. Jade sits down far from the tide, and Molly sits next to her. There were no sounds, except for the howling wind blowing through their hair. Molly looks over at Jade,

“Hey, Jade?”

“Yeah?”

“Do you think I could just... stay with you?”

“Stay with me? Like, live with me and my parents?”

“Kinda...? I just... I just don’t feel right in my own home... But while I was over at your house last night, I just felt like I was having a good time... I don’t have anyone to hang out with, because I only have two brothers and neither of them have the same interests as me...”

“Molly... I-...”

“And my parents want me to be Christian like them, but I just can’t... I don’t like boys! I like girls!”

“Molly!” Jade yells, startling Molly. Molly begins to cry a little bit. Jade looks at her, “I’m sorry... I didn’t mean to yell... I was trying to get your attention, but you couldn’t hear me...”

“I- I’m sorry... I got distracted venting to you...”

“No no, it’s alright...”

Molly slowly slides her hand closer to Jade’s. Then, their hands contact. Jade’s hand jumps from shock and looks at Molly. Molly looks up at her,

“I- I’m sorry...”

“No, it’s alright... It just startled me... I wasn’t expecting it.”

“Can I... hold your hand...? For comfort...?”

“I... Sure...”

Molly grabs onto Jade’s hand, holding onto it gently. Jade’s hand starts sweating, and her breathing gets shaky. Then, a car pulls up behind them. And Molly’s Mom walks out from the driver’s side,

“Molly Rosemary Brewer!!” Her mother sternly and furiously walks over to Molly.

“Mom?!”

“Molly, what do you think you are doing here?!” She grabs Molly by the arm and pulls her up and towards the car, “You’re supposed to be up at the shop! Taking people’s orders! Not hanging out with your faggot girlfriend!!”

“I’m not dating her I swear!!”

“Just wait until your father hears about this!”

“No! Mom! Please!” Jade quickly stands up and rushes towards the car to help Molly,

“Molly!” Jade yelled, reaching her arm out. Molly’s mom backhands Jade across the face, sending her face first into the ground. Before she had the chance to stand up, the car was already gone... Jade rushed home on her motorcycle, tears rushing down her face.

She parks her motorcycle in the garage and rushes inside and hugs her mom. Her mom, shocked, hugs her back,

“What’s wrong, honey?” Her mom says, her voice calm and gentle. Jade looks up at her, the hand mark from Molly’s mom on her face,

“It’s Molly, well not really her, but her mom... We were having a moment, and then she showed up and tried to take Molly by force and when I tried to stop her she backhand slapped me and I fell to the ground and I’m scared I’ll never see Molly again!”

“Woah woah, slow down Jade... You’re having another panic attack, let’s get you some nice warm tea. And we’ll talk to your dad as well, alright?” Her mom wipes the tears off Jade’s face and gives her a kiss on the forehead. Jade responds,

“Alright...”

Meanwhile, with Molly...

Molly sits in the backseat alone, with her mom driving silently.

“Mom... I-...” Molly tried to get out some reasoning, but her mom interrupted her,

“I don’t want to hear it! We do nothing but make you feel loved and show you how special you are to us, and you go turn your back on us as if everything we’ve said meant nothing to you! We raised you better than this! We raised you to not let those fags brainwash you into thinking what they do is good!”

Molly slumped down in the car seat, a tear running down her eye. They arrive home, and they enter the house. Molly’s dad rushes over to her and hugs her... She doesn’t hug back. Molly’s mom pulls him off of her,

“Don’t make her think what she did was right! She was holding hands with another girl, one of those faggot girls from her grade!” But then, Molly pushes past both of them and rushes upstairs to her room, but is blocked at the top of the stairs by her brothers, Max and Sam, who are both adults around 20. She pushes past them and slams her door shut and locks it. She pulls out her phone and tries to call Jade. Jade picks up. Molly tries to talk, but her voice is shaky from crying,

“Hello? Jade? Are you there?”

“Molly?! Are you alright? Are you okay? Are you safe? Are you hurt?”

“Yeah... I’m alright... Just... Just scared... I’m scared my parents are going to hurt me in some way...”

“If it helps, we can sneak you out and you can live with me at our house... Just like you said...”

“But... What if my parents found out where I went? They have life 360 on my phone. They can track my location.”

“My parents can help you turn it off before we leave your house, alright?”

“Alright...”

“Listen princess, I don’t care if it risks something bad happening to me and my family, I’d do anything to be able to hangout with you again... So don’t worry, we’ll figure out what to do. But until then, can you be strong for me?”

“I-I guess I could...”

“Alright, now sit tight... We’ll get working on a plan... I’ll call you back when-”

“Wait! Can you text instead...?”

“Sure, I’ll text. And text us back when you’re in your room, alright?”

“Alright...”

“Alright, I’ll see you soon princess! Stay strong!”

“Wait!...”

“Yeah?”

“I... Never mind, I’ll tell you when you come get me...”

“Alright, see you soon! Bye!!”

“Bye bye.”

Jade hangs up the phone, and Molly slides the phone underneath her pillow. Then, she hears her parents’ stomps up the stairs. They attempt to open her door, but it’s locked. They bang on it, demanding her to unlock it. Molly cowers in fear on her bed, but then Jade’s words echo in her head... *Stay strong*... She hops off the bed and walks to the door. She unlocks it and opens it, making direct eye contact with her parents.

Her mom looks beyond pissed, while her dad only had the same stern expression he usually has. Her mom looks at her,

“Molly! You are in serious trouble! First you sneak out to see this girl that brainwashed you, but then you lock your door! You are grounded for a week!”

“What?!” Molly hears her phone buzzing from under her pillow. She slams her door shut and locks it again. She rushes to her pillow and pulls out her phone. She sees a text from Jade, telling her to look outside her window. She looks out her window and sees Jade hanging on to the side like some kind of superhero.

Molly gathers some of her most favored items into her backpack and quickly opens the window and climbs out with her. They rush to Jade’s motorcycle and drive off to her house. But, not too far from Jade’s house, the motorcycle runs out of fuel.

“No no no no no!! I thought I refueled!!”

“Jade, what’re we going to do now?”

“Don’t worry, Molly. My house isn’t too far from here...”

They get off the motorcycle and quickly walk to her house. Molly finds a small, shiny crystal on the ground and picks it up. It glows a bright red. Jade looks at it, confused,

“What is this?”

“I don’t know...”

Then, they both mysteriously disappear... with the motorcycle... They end up in an Aspen Forest. Then, 7 people on horseback pass by and snatch Jade.

“Jade!!!”

“Molly!!”

Molly tries to rush after them, but she can't run fast enough...

“Jade... No...”

Then, she is approached by what seemed to be three knights. But, before she could say anything, one of them quickly knocked her out...

CHAPTER TWO

Molly wakes up in a small room, tied to a chair, the three knights in front of her. She looks around in a panic,

“Jade? Jade!” Molly yelled, but one of the knights, a woman, shut her mouth,

“Shut up and tell us where Lord Jäger’s forces plan on going!”

“What? Who are you talking about?!”

“Lord Jäger? The guy responsible for Lonia’s troubles. So stop acting stupid!” Then, one of the other knights put his hand on her shoulder,

“Clothilde, enough. If she doesn’t know, then she doesn’t know.”

“You’re too soft, Aldaric! She could be faking!” Then, the third knight steps forward,

“How about we start with the basics.” He leans over in front of Molly, “What’s your name, little girl?” Molly slumps down in her chair, then speaks quietly and softly,

“M-M-Molly-...”

“Molly?”

“Y-Yeah-...”

“And where are you from?”

“Seattle, Washington...”

“Seattle Washington? I’ve never heard of such land. Where is this located?”

“In the United States?”

“Never heard of that! How far is it?”

“Depends, where are we?”

“Lonia!”

“I’ve never heard of that before-...” Molly shrugs her shoulders. Clothilde slams her foot on Molly’s knee,

“Cut the act!”

“I’m not acting! Jade and I found this weird crystal on the ground and when we picked it up, we appeared in this strange world! I’m not joking! I have the crystal in my pocket!”

“Then show us!!” Clothilde yells, “Or we’ll kill you!”

“Clothilde! So sorry Molly, we will not kill you.”

“Man, you’re such a buzzkill Garrit!”

“And you’re too cruel and unjust.”

Molly slowly shifts her chair away, then the chair falls over. Molly tries to pull herself back up, but she can’t when she’s still tied to the chair. Aldaric walks over to her and pulls her back up, and reaches into her pockets in search of the crystal. Then, Molly yells at him,

“Hey! Don’t you know it’s very rude to go through a woman’s pockets!” Molly kicks Aldaric in his shin. Clothilde pulls out her mace and readies to attack Molly, but then the crystal falls out of one of her pockets. Molly looks at it, then at them,

“See? I told you I had the crystal!” Clothilde picks it up and looks at it closely,

“This is just rose quartz...”

“What?! But-... But-... You gotta believe me, I mean just look at me! I bet you’ve never seen this kind of clothing in this world before!”

“Maybe she’s telling the truth, Clothilde.” Garrit said, “Let’s just let her go.” Then, a man enters the room, an older man, with a vibrantly colored robe and tall boots fit for a leader. Then, he speaks in a shaky, low voice,

“What do you three think you are doing? I could hear you from outside. That is no rose quartz,” The man takes it from Clothilde’s hand, “It’s a crystal that grants the holder immense power. It’s a crystal that Lord Jäger is after. Which is rather strange that it fell into the hands of some random little girl.” Molly gives him a mean stare,

“Little?”

“Yes. Little as in young. Definitely not little in size.”

“Excuse me?!”

“Look at you! You’re chubby like a marshmallow!!”

“EXCUSE ME?!?!” Molly kicks the man between the legs before falling forward in the chair. The man drops the crystal on Molly’s head. Aldaric grabs the crystal before putting Molly upright again. Aldaric looks at the man,

“Hans, what do you suppose we do with this girl now?”

“Just let her go! She’s just a damn brat!” The man, still clutching his groin in pain. Aldaric approached him,

“I think one of us should stay with her to make sure she’s not part of Jäger’s forces,” Aldaric said in a calm tone, “And I’m willing to do just that.”

“Oh please,” Clothilde smacks the back of his head, “you just want an excuse to follow a girl home to fuck her!”

“I DON’T LIKE BOYS!!” Molly yells. The three knights and Hans stare at her, blankly.

Hans leaves silently, Garrit follows. Aldaric tries to talk to Molly, but Clothilde pulls him by the ear. But before leaving, Clothilde untied Molly from the chair and let her go. She darts out of the room, looking behind at the small shed.

She wanders through the strange forest, for what seemed like hours. Then, she collapses next to a tree, shutting her eyes.

She wakes up in a pitch-black void. She looks around, for someone. Then, she sees Jade. She screams her name, but she can’t speak. Then, Jade disappears in the shadows of the void.

Then, she jolts up awake again, this time she’s in a room. It seems like a small clinical building. She tries to get up, but her head is pounding, making it very hard to stand up. A nurse walks over to her,

“Oh, you’re awake! How do you feel?”

“I... I feel weird... My head hurts...”

“Yeah, when we found you, you were rolling around in the woods, screaming ‘Jade!’. Who’s Jade? Is she a friend? A sister?”

“A girl I like...”

“Oh...” The nurse gives Molly a disgusted look.

“I-I think I’m going to head out on my way...” Molly tries her best to stand up from the bed, and walk out of the clinic, but the nurse grabs her by the arm and pulls her back to the bed.

“Don’t worry, you need to stay here and rest! You aren’t fully healed yet.”

“I’m alright, really I am. So can you please let go of my arm so I can go rescue Jade?” The nurse’s grip on Molly’s arm tightens. Molly struggles from her grasp.

“No, you must stay and rest!” Then, the nurse’s grip slips and Molly falls to the ground. Molly quickly runs out of the clinic, and stands before a large town, full of houses, shops, people, and churches.

She looks around frantically, as her heart beats faster and her eyes start to tear up. Breathing gets harder, her head starts pounding, and she starts to run through the streets, pushing past people. She ran into a space between two buildings and hid behind a barrel of apples. The ringing in her ears gets louder, as the sounds of people become quieter. Then... there is nothing but silence, then a voice...

“Hello? Little girl?” It sounded like a man. Molly was trying to look through her tears. The man reached his hand out to her, “Are you alright?” Molly grabs his hand, and he pulls her up. She wraps her arms around the man. She looks up, and she sees Aldaric, the knight from earlier. Molly quickly lets go and steps back. Aldaric steps forward towards her,

“What’s wrong?”

“You... You’re one of the knights from earlier!”

“My name’s Aldaric...”

“Whatever... You all tied me to a damn chair and accused me of working for what’s-his-name.”

“Lord Jäger.”

“Shut up! I just...” Molly takes another step back, “I’m just scared... This is a whole new world, and people are just... different...”

“Well, I can show you around town.”

“No, thank you. I think I got it... I don’t plan on staying anyway...”

“Suit yourself. But it might help to have someone to protect you from Jäger’s forces. I mean, at least you don’t have to worry about his horsemen taking you. It already took the three of us all our energy just to drag you.”

“Excuse me? Are you calling me fat?”

“Not fat, just a little on the heavier side.”

“Wow,” Molly said sarcastically, “so flattering!”

“You’re welcome.”

“THAT WAS SARCASM YOU DUMBASS!!”

Molly stomps out of the alleyway, and swiftly runs through the streets, weaving through crowds of people. Then, she accidentally runs into a boy about the same age as her. She falls to the ground, hitting her head hard on the stone paths of the town. The boy turns to her and lends his hand out,

“Are you alright, miss?” The boy said in an innocent voice. Molly helps herself up after rubbing her head,

“I’m fine... I don’t need help with anything!”

“Are you sure? Because the knight running towards you says otherwise.” Molly looks behind her and sees Aldaric running towards her through the streets. “My name’s Gunther. What’s your’s?”

“Molly, my name’s Molly. Sorry but I have to go, bye!!” Molly quickly runs through the crowds again, and Gunther runs after her. Molly looks back, “Why are you following me?!”

“Because I’d like to get to know you better!”

“Well I’m kinda busy trying to avoid people right now!” Molly quickly enters a building and closes the door behind her. Gunther bursts in and holds the door shut to hold back Aldaric,

“So why is he chasing you?”

“I don’t know... He’s just weird...”

“Why are we hiding in the church?”

“The...” Molly looks around, her hands shaking, “the church...?” Molly walks down the aisle, past the rows of pews. Gunther looks at her in confusion,

“Yeah... What’s wrong...?” Molly looks at him,

“Okay, so this is going to sound weird... But I think I’m from another world where the church isn’t really as in control as it is in this world. I... I don’t believe in god or anything like that... And my parents are very religious... And I ran away from them and now I’m starting to regret it...”

“Oh... I- I’m sorry... Don’t worry, not being religious isn’t shunned upon here.”

“But, it seems people in this world look at me with disgust when I mention I’m gay...”

“Y-You’re gay-?” Gunther looks at the ceiling, then back at Molly, “Wait what does gay mean?”

Molly stares at him blankly, “It means I like girls, not boys.”

“Oh-...”

Then, Aldaric kicks open the door. Gunther stands in front of Molly, trying his best to protect her. Aldaric pushes him aside,

“Miss Molly, I am taking you into custody for running away from an authority and breaking into holy grounds!”

“No!” Gunther yelled.

Aldaric grabs Molly by the arm. Molly’s eyes filled with tears, and her body began to tremble. She was escorted out of the church, citizens staring at her. She could feel the piercing stares from the townsfolk. Aldaric throws Molly in a horse-drawn cart. Her eyes start to shut as the cart gets pulled along on a bumpy stone road...

An hour later, she wakes up on a comfy bed made of cloth. She looks around at her surroundings, it’s a well decorated and furnished room. She gets up from the bed and leaves the room. She looks around at the paintings on the wall, as she walks down the stairs. One painting seems familiar, it looks like a painting of Clothilde, a Priest, and a little boy. She reaches the bottom of the stairs, and is greeted by Gunther.

“Hi Molly!”

“Gunther? What’re you doing here?”

“This is my home...”

“Oh, why the hell am I here?”

“I don’t know. My mom brought you home when you fell asleep in the knight’s prison cart.”

“Who’s your mom?”

“One of the knights.” Gunther gives her an innocent smile. Then, Clothilde walks into the room. She wasn’t wearing any armor, but a long dress with a cooking apron.

“Oh, you’re awake.”

“Y-Yeah... Say, why’d you bring me to your home?”

“Well, I didn’t trust Aldaric to be near you. And after Gunther told me what happened in town, my suspicions were pretty close to accurate. God knows what he would’ve done to you. It definitely wouldn’t have been something a faggot like you would like.”

“Could you... maybe not call me that...? It’s... kind of offensive in the world I came from.”

“Oh, sorry... The church only called people like you that word, and I never thought anything of it...” Clothilde hands Molly a beige dress and a pair of black dress shoes, “Change into these. It’ll help you blend in”

Molly looks at the clothes she handed her, “Any... undergarments...?”

Clothilde sighs, “No, I don’t believe I have any in your size... So are you alright with just wearing whatever undergarments you have already? Not like anyone is going to see them anyway.”

Molly sighs and walks back upstairs to the room she woke up in. She undresses out of her clothes and puts on the dress and shoes. She walks out of the room and back down the stairs. Clothilde gives her a pat on the head and then takes her to a table,

“Sit here, I’ll get you some food and water.”

“You seem so... different than when I last saw you... When you three were interrogating me.”

“Well, interrogating you isn't easy if I acted like a caring mother to you. So, I acted more intimidating. Did it work?”

“Sort of... Although, I kinda liked it too...”

There was an awkward silence. Then, a priest walks into the house. He walks over to Clothilde and gives her a kiss on the cheek,

“Hey there honey.”

“Hey sugar.”

“Who’s the guest?”

“Oh, this is Molly. She’s from another world and just needs somewhere to stay for a bit.”

“Well, don’t get too comfy. After breakfast, we’re heading to the church for service.” The priest took out a napkin and coughed up some blood, then continued, “Oh, I forgot to introduce myself. I’m Shepel, Shepel Frank. And I’m the Priest of the second largest church in Lonia.”

“And I’m Molly, Molly Brewer. And I am from a world where Churches are optional to go to.”

“They’re optional here too, but almost everyone likes to go anyway. That’s why there’s so many churches, can’t fit everyone into one.”

“Could just build one big cathedral.”

“Yeah, but it’d take a lot of time and resources.”

Clothilde walks out of the kitchen with scrambled eggs on a piece of toast, “Here you go, Molly!” She places the plate in front of Molly. Gunther looks at it in awe from across the room. Clothilde looks at him, “Gunther, you already had breakfast.”

“But mom! That was just a small snack compared to that!”

“I gave you a ham and egg sandwich!”

Gunther gave up arguing with her, knowing that he’d most likely get in trouble if he continued. Shepel sat next to Molly at the table,

“So, what’s this other world like?”

“Well, there’s a lot of conflict, everyone’s angry with everyone, and there’s practically a war happening between the pride community and the churches...”

“Pride community?”

“Oh, right. That’s probably not a thing in this world... But, it’s basically a bunch of different people that just feel different about their sexuality... I don’t know how to really explain it... But I’m part of it, because I like girls, not boys.”

“Are the years different there? It’s currently 1518 here.”

“Yeah, it seems I’m 100 years ahead...”

“So that makes you from the future technically?”

“Technically, yeah.”

An awkward silence falls on them, but is broken by Clothilde. As she takes the empty plate from Molly to put it in the kitchen for later cleaning. Shepel gets up from the table,

“Well, we better head to service. You ready, Molly?”

“Yeah,” Molly stands up, “Is it a good idea for me to be going to church? I mean, I... I don’t really believe in any of that stuff.”

“As a high ranking member of the church, it is my duty to allow anyone to attend,” Shepel’s voice bellows, “even if they do not share the same beliefs as us!” He gives Molly a warm smile.

They leave the house and make their way to the church a few buildings down. Clothilde holds Molly’s hand gently to keep Molly calm. People passing by give Molly strange looks. She looks down at the ground to ignore the people.

They arrive at the church. Shepel walks up to the front as Clothilde, Gunther, and Molly sit among the many pews. Molly looks around the church, the room starts to feel like it’s getting smaller. Her breathing begins to get heavy and her heart beats rapidly. Clothilde clutches onto Molly’s hand and gently caresses her hand. Molly can feel her heartbeat returning to normal speed, as her eyes start to tear up. She hugs Clothilde tight.

Afterwards, they exit the church. Molly looks out into the distance and sees a large fortress looming over the forest. Clothilde stands behind Molly and puts a hand on her shoulder,

“That’s Jäger’s fortress. That’s where he’s probably keeping Jade captive. Don’t worry, we’ll have all the knights of Lonia storm the fortress. Although all our previous attempts proved futile...” A single tear runs down Clothilde’s face, “But with that stone you found, we should have no trouble this time!” Molly looks up at her,

“Are you alright?”

“Yeah, I’m alright! Why do you ask?”

“I saw a tear run down your face...”

“It’s nothing. I’ll be alright.”

Gunther loudly whispers in Molly’s ear, “Her sister was in one of the old stormings.”

“Oh...”

“Gunther! You don’t need to go telling people about that!” Clothilde scolds him. Shepel intervenes, stepping between them,

“Let’s just head home before it rains.”

“Sorry honey, but I have to head to the barracks. Molly will be staying with you two. If you want, you can take her into the market. Maybe she’ll find something she likes.”

“Alright. I’ll see you tonight.”

Molly walks over to Clothilde, “I want to come with you...”

“W-What-?”

“I want to come with you... to the barracks...”

“Molly, I don’t think I can bring you... Not because you’re not allowed, but because they’re all just like Aldaric...”

“Horny perverted weirdos?”

“Yeah...”

“Then why do you still go?”

Clothilde smirks “Because those bitches know not to fuck with me.” Shepel laughs,

“And because they know who she’s married to. And they think I’d put a curse upon them if they mess with her.” Molly looks up at Clothilde,

“Please, I want to go with you...”

“Alright, I’ll bring you with me. Just-... Just stick close by to me so you don’t get swept away by the others...”

“Alright.”

Then, Molly’s phone started ringing. Everyone is startled, except Molly. She takes out her phone and accepts the call. She hears Jade’s voice on the other end...

“MOLLY?! ARE YOU THERE?!”

“JADE?!”

“MOLLY!! THANK GOODNESS YOU’RE ALIVE... I DON’T KNOW WHAT I WOULD’VE DONE IF YOU DIED...”

“I’m alright, just sticking by some cool knights that’re gonna storm the fortress to rescue you.”

“HE DOESN’T HAVE THEM STORED IN THE FORTRESS...
HE HAS STORED AT A HU... DUNG...N... HIDD... TO...”

“JADE! No no no, the signal! I’m losing signal!”

“DON’T WO... PRINCESS! I... BEL... IN... YOU!”

Then, the call abruptly ends.

“Jade... No...” Clothilde puts a hand on Molly’s shoulder,

“Don’t worry Molly, I promise that we’ll try to at least get Jade... I
promise...”

“Thank you, Clothilde...”

“Now, let’s go to the barracks...”

“Alright...”

Clothilde and Molly walk away, Clothilde’s hand still on Molly’s
shoulder.

CHAPTER THREE

Clothilde and Molly arrive at the barracks. Molly looks around, pinching her nose from the putrid smell.

“Ugh, Clothilde, why does it smell so bad here?”

“They’re guys, Molly. They probably don’t shower.”

They continue, walking past knights of all types. All of them give Molly glares as she passes by. Molly holds onto Clothilde’s arm, so as to not lose her in the barracks.

“You doing alright, Molly?”

“Yeah,” Molly sighs, “just feeling a little off...”

“Don’t worry, everything will be alright. Once we storm the fortress, we’ll find out where they’re keeping the others. I promise, we’ll find them.”

“Alright...” Molly looks up at Clothilde, “Hey... Why do you want to help me? Shouldn’t I be some weird sinner girl in your eyes...”

“Well, even if that’s so... I shouldn’t make you suffer... I believe that you’re a kind individual. Who cares if your beliefs don’t align with me. We’re knights, and our job is to help and protect people from Jäger’s forces.”

“Oh...” Molly sighs.

Clothilde opens the door, and her and Molly go through. There, they see Aldaric and Garrit talking to Hans. Clothilde walks up to them,

holding Molly's hand gently to keep her comforted. Aldaric gives Clothilde a nasty look,

"Clothilde, what're you doing bringing her here?"

"She wanted to come with me. And I wasn't going to let our guest alone with my husband and kid if she didn't want to."

"And why are you so protective of her?"

"Because as a knight, it's our duty to protect everyone, regardless of what they've done. Unlike you, I still remember the oath we took when we got knighted by King Dietrich."

"Whatever."

"Whatever? WHATEVER?! HOW DID YOUR SHITTY ASS BECOME A KNIGHT?! YOU'RE LAZY, YOU NEVER TAKE YOUR TURN TO CLEAN THE BARRACKS, YOU NEVER ATTEND MEETINGS UNLESS THERE'S FOOD, AND WORST OF ALL, YOU ARE A MISOGYNISTIC ASSHOLE WHO ONLY GOES OUT WITH WOMEN BECAUSE OF THEIR BODIES!!" Clothilde's face was red, and Molly was wide-eyed and afraid.

Aldaric storms out of the room, and Molly holds onto Clothilde's hand. Clothilde starts to calm down, as she sits down at the table in the center of the room.

Hans looks at Garrit, "Garrit, can you please sit outside of the room." Garrit nods and stands up. Hans stops him, "while you're out there, find Aldaric and make sure he doesn't wander off."

"Right." Garrit leaves the room. Hans and Clothilde stare at each other, tension in their eyes. Then, Hans speaks,

“Clothilde, I know you’re upset, but there’s no need to out Aldaric’s personal problems and situations to others.”

Clothilde didn’t say anything, only sat upright in her chair, arms crossed.

“You three used to be such good friends, almost sibling-like. What happened to you three?” Clothilde sighs,

“Hans, sir. I know Aldaric acts like a good guy when he’s around you and Garrit, but around anyone else, and it’s almost like he becomes a different person.”

“Is this about that thing you claimed he did to you at the Knight Camp? You still have no proof of that ever happening.”

“WHY DO I NEED PROOF?!” Clothilde screams, “THERE WERE OTHER WITNESSES WHO SAW THE EVENT!! JUST ASK ANYONE ELSE WHO WAS AT THE TRAINING CAMP!!” Clothilde looks at Molly, then back at Hans, “And if you don’t do something about his behavior, I’ll leave the Knights. Because now I’m starting to see why women don’t join the knights often.”

Hans looks over at Molly sitting on the floor behind Clothilde, “If you’re not a knight, then how would you expect yourself to protect her? She was put into your hands because you are a knight. And if you do not wish to be a knight, then she will be stripped from your protection and be given to Garrit or Aldaric.”

“NO!” Molly screamed, quickly rushing over to hug Clothilde, “I don’t want them. I especially don’t want Aldaric. I want Clothilde. She’s nice to me, she cares about me, and she actually wants to help me...” Hans nods,

“Very well then... Clothilde, if you stay as a knight, I will talk to Aldaric about his actions recently. But now,” Hans stands up, “We need to plan the next siege of Jäger’s fortress.” Hans walks over to the door and opens it. Garrit and Aldaric fall backwards, before standing up quickly. They both quickly rush to the table to sit down.

Molly sits at the chair next to Clothilde. Hans stands up,

“Alright, so we need a plan to storm the fortress. Any ideas?”

“I think we should just get all our knights and just barge in with our weapons drawn!” Aldaric exclaims, proudly.

“I agree with Aldaric!” Garrit added

Clothilde slams your hands on the table, “No! The knights still have nowhere near enough training to fight Jäger’s forces. Instead, we should at least train them against his arms.”

“Wait,” Molly looks up at Clothilde, “he has guns and you guys don’t?”

“Correct,” Hans responds, “and that’s because anytime we come close to replicating his advancements, he strikes us. So we’ve just given up and stayed on the defense... Praying that one day, God will save us.”

“But what if he’ll never come?! What if he’ll never help?!” Molly yelled, “You all have to learn to not always rely on God to save you from every conflict!”

“SHUT UP!!” Garrit screamed, slamming his fists on the table, “You may not believe in his grace, but that’s because you’re just some little girl from a far-off land!! There, you might’ve been all good at saying that stuff, but here... YOU WILL NOT SAY ANYTHING LIKE THAT!! AND IF THAT’S WHAT YOU REALLY BELIEVE, THEN

YOU CAN LEAVE AND TEST THE WRATH OF LORD JÄGER YOURSELF!!” Silence fell amongst them all, soon broken by Molly,

“You know what... Maybe I will...”

Leaping from her chair, Molly rushes out of the room. Aldaric attempts to get up after her, but Clothilde pins him to the wall with her Mace before running after Molly herself.

Clothilde runs through the barracks, pushing through all the other knights. Upon leaving the barracks, she sees Molly running towards the fortress. Clothilde screams her name, but Molly doesn’t look back. Clothilde runs after her through the forest.

Clothilde begins to lose her breath, and her legs begin to ache. Then, she trips over a large exposed tree root.

“MOLLY!! DON’T GO TO THE FORTRESS!! HE’LL KILL YOU MOLLY!! MOLLY!!!!” Clothilde reaches her hand out in hopes of Molly turning around... But Molly never turned back...

Molly continues to run through the forest, dodging roots and stones and bushes. Then, she’s met with a group of trained guards, armed with magically powered firearms. She bumps into one of them by accident and falls on top of them.

“Hey! Get on your knees and put your hands on your head!” One of the guards yelled. Molly, tears running down her face, does what they tell her to do. Then, suddenly the guards start to levitate upwards. They all panic as they go above the trees of the forest.

A woman in a fluffy gray shawl, dark purple leggings, and black high heel boots. She wields a large wooden staff, with a glowing purple orb on the top. Molly looks up at her,

“Who... Who are you?”

“My name,” the woman turns towards Molly, “is Elise Braun.” Elise helps Molly up, “I’m one of the many magic users from the small village out west. What about you? Who are you and where do you come from?”

“Oh, my name’s Molly... Molly Brewer... I come from a different world, but I found some kingdom where I was supposed to stay... But...” Molly’s eyes begin to tear up again, “I ran away... I just couldn’t handle it anymore...”

“Well hey, maybe I can take you down to Weston. You can rest up at our inn and have your wounds patched up at the clinic.” Elise puts Molly’s arm around her shoulders, and puts her own arm around Molly’s waist. They both walk carefully through the forest.

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“So, Molly was it? Tell me, what were you doing in the woods?”

“Well, I was trying to get to the fortress so I can rescue someone... Someone close...”

“I see. Well, you shouldn’t go without knowing some way to defend yourself. You’ll just get yourself either captured or killed.”

Then, past the trees, Molly sees Weston Village. They enter the town, and pass by children playing, traders bartering, and magicians using their magic for all different purposes.

Elise takes Molly to the clinic.

“Mein Liebling! I have another patient that is in need of help!”
Elise yells towards one of the nurses. He rushes over,

“Oh you’re back from the forest so soon?”

“Yes, I found this girl who must’ve come from Lonia.”

“Set her in one of the beds, Elise. I’ll tend to her after I help Emeric.”

“Right.”

Elise helps Molly onto one of the soft linen beds. Molly softly grabs onto Elise’s shawl,

“Elise, why am I here...?”

“Because, your wounds need to be tended to. You must’ve gone through a thistle bush, your legs are all torn up.”

“The nurse... You called him your love in German...”

“Yeah, he’s my boyfriend. He’s a nurse, so he uses healing magic.”

“It’s not magic, darling,” He walks up to them, “it’s medicine.”

“You can’t just give it a made up name.”

The nurse only just sighs. Molly looks at him, at his face. Then, she asks him a strange question,

“Have you ever been to Lake Union...?” He drops the small glass bottle he was holding and looks at Molly, her face weak.

“What are you talking about...?”

“I’ve seen your face before... It looks familiar... You used to go to the same schools as me, you graduated in 1994...”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about... You must be thinking of someone else... I never went to a school in the states...”

“How do you know about the states...?”

“THAT’S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!!”

Elise looks at Molly, then at the nurse, then back at Molly, “What’s going on?”

“Theo, how long have you been trapped here...?”

“JUST SHUT UP!!” He rips some fabric off a linen roll and wraps it around Molly’s legs. He turns away, “Now please, leave my clinic...”

Molly reaches out and grabs his nurse gown, small tears running down her face, “What’s your last name...”

There was nothing but silence... Then, he speaks softly...

“Clayton... Now please leave...”

“Are you... Are you related to Jade...?”

“Please leave...” His voice starts to get shaky.

Then, Molly’s phone begins to buzz again... She picks it up and puts it on speaker...

“MOLLY!! I FINALLY GOT MY SIGNAL WORKING!! SEEMS LIKE THOSE CLASSES MY DAD USED TO ME THROUGH YEARS AGO FINALLY PAID OFF... ANYWAY, ARE YOU ALRIGHT? HOW ARE YOU DOING?”

“Yeah... I’m alright... Just got cut a bit in the forest... Don’t worry, I’ll be coming to get you soon enough... I promise...”

“THANK GOD YOU’RE ALRIGHT!! IF I LOST YOU, I DON’T KNOW WHAT I’D DO WITH MY LIFE... OH! THE SIGNAL PROBABLY CUT OFF LAST TIME I TRIED TO TELL YOU, BUT I’M BEING HELD IN A HIDDEN DUNGEON IN A CLEARING!!”

“What?! So I almost got myself killed for nothing...?”

“IT WASN’T FOR NOTHING PRINCESS!! WHATEVER HURTS YOU ONLY MAKES YOU STRONGER!! WAIT, HOW ARE YOU GETTING SIGNAL?! YOU’D HAVE TO HAVE SOME SORT OF HOTSPOT NEARBY!!”

“Oh, about that... I found someone else from our world... He must’ve been trapped here for a while... I think you might know him...”

“OH! OH! WHAT’S HIS NAME?!”

“Theo Clayton? He has the same last name as you so I assumed...”

“.....”

“Jade...?”

“I’M ON SPEAKER, RIGHT...?”

“Yeah...?”

“GOOD..... DAD IS THIS WHERE YOU’VE BEEN FOR THE PAST 6 YEARS?!?!?!”

Theo grabs the phone, “I don’t know who you think I am, but I don’t have a daughter... Only a son...”

“DAD!! IT’S ME!! I USED TO BE YOUR SON!! BUT THEN... I.....”

There was silence once again...

“MOLLY, PLEASE... GET HERE WHENEVER YOU CAN...”

“Jade...”

“MOLLY... I...”

“Jade, I promise to you that I’ll save you...”

“THANK YOU... MOLLY... I... I...”

“Jade, are you alright...?”

“YEAH... I’LL JUST TELL YOU WHEN YOU FIND ME...”

“Alright... Well, see you later...?”

“SEE YOU LATER, PRINCESS.”

Then, Jade hangs up the phone. Molly sits there in silence. Elise looks up at Theo. Theo’s eyes begin to tear up, his hands begin to tremble. Elise quickly walks over to him and wraps her arms around him.

Molly tries to get up, but her legs go numb and she falls to the ground. She crawls back up to the bed and rests her legs upon a pillow.

“So... Y’all have Uno...?”

Silence falls upon them...

CHAPTER FOUR

After resting her head and her legs at the clinic, Molly gets up and attempts to leave the clinic again. But Theo stops her,

“Molly, where are you going? You need to stay off your legs for a little while longer.”

“I’m going to go find the dungeon where they’re keeping Jade. Not like you’d ever want to find her...”

“What’s that supposed to mean?!”

“I think you know what that’s supposed to mean, Mr. Clayton...” Molly turns her back towards Theo and limps away slowly. She makes her way towards the inn, but Elise finds her and runs up to her.

“Hey there Molly! What’re you doing out here so soon? Shouldn’t you be resting at the clinic?”

“I... I don’t want to be in the clinic...”

“Why? Is something wrong there?”

“Not really... I just don’t wanna talk about it...”

“Oh, alright. Well do you need my help with the inn? I doubt you have any of our currencies.”

“Sure...”

Elise leads Molly into the inn, and hands the innkeeper some coins. The innkeeper hands Elise a key, and leads them to one of the rooms.

“Just don’t break or ruin anything.”

“Don’t worry sir, Molly and I will be alright!”

The innkeeper walks away as Elise and Molly enter the room, locking the door behind them. Molly lays down on one of the beds, resting her legs on an extra pillow.

“So,” Elise starts, “what’s it like in your world? Theo hasn’t told me anything about this before...”

“It’s... different that’s for sure... No magic, barely any kind people, and just... everyone’s morals are different here... I don’t know how much longer I can last here...”

“How long have you been here?”

“Only a few days... But Theo’s been here for 6 years, and if he hasn’t found a way back, then there must be no way back...”

“Hey, don’t say such things! There’s gotta be a way back to your world! Theo seems to love it here, considering rules in this world are probably more freeing.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, here you can do basically anything you want as long as it doesn’t result in someone else’s injury or death! Which is why he’s taken such a liking to me.”

“Wait, how old are you? You look like a teen, but you act like an adult...”

“Oh, I’m 17!”

“WHAT?!?!?”

“What’s wrong with that?”

“WHAT’S WRONG WITH THAT?!?! EVERYTHING!! HE’S LIKE 42!!”

“Like I said, rules are more free.”

“EW!!!”

“Alright, you can calm down now.”

Molly lets out a heavy sigh, “Sorry, sorry... I just... That’s just... I can’t think about that without feeling disgusted...!”

Elise gets up and grabs a bottle of liquid from the small bedside table, “Do you want to drink until you forget it?”

“I... I don’t drink...”

“Oh come on, it won’t be that bad. Plus, we’ll be in here with the door locked. The worst that could happen is probably that we trash the room. But hey, that’s what money’s for!”

“Alright, fine. I’ll have a little bit.”

Elise opens the bottle and pours some of the liquid into the two glasses on the table. Elise sits on the bed next to Molly and hands her one of the glasses. They both chug down the glass, but Molly’s face scrunches up,

“Ew, it’s sour!”

Elise just laughs it off, “It’ll taste better the more you drink!”

Elise continues to pour more and more into Molly’s glass, as well as her own glass. They continued until the bottle was empty. They both felt strange. Molly looks at Elise,

“Elise, why do I feel kinda dizzy and tipsy~?”

“I think maybe you’re a teensy weensy little bit drunk~.”

“I’m not drunk, you’re drunk~.”

Then, Elise and Molly both burst out laughing. Elise falls onto Molly’s stomach. Elise sits up on her knees on the bed, placing her rear on Molly’s thighs.

“Elise, what’re you doing~?”

“I don’t know~... But I think you look really cute~...”

“No~! You’re really cute~!”

Then, Elise inches her face closer to Molly’s, but Molly pulls her close and kisses her directly on the lips. Elise lets out noises as they both passionately exchange kisses until dusk.

While still holding onto each other, Elise slides off of Molly and lays beside her. Molly slides her hand down Elise’s body. But, then Molly begins to get tired and weak, her eyes begin to shut...

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In the morning, Molly wakes up next to Elise. Their hair and clothes all messed up. Molly looks under the blanket, and notices that her and Elise are almost completely naked. Molly screamed, waking up Elise. Elise jumps awake and looks at Molly,

“What?! What’s wrong?! OH MY GOD!! WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT?!”

Molly, her eyes tearing up, looks at the bottle on the nightstand,

“I-... I-... I think we got drunk... We must’ve done some pretty hardcore stuff..... I don’t wanna be here anymore...”

“Me neither... Oh god, Theo is going to kill me...”

They both rush to get their clothes back on. Molly rubs her neck in pain, and notices a bruise and a small bite mark,

“Elise, did you give me a hickey?!”

“What’s that?!”

“You bit and bruised me!!!”

“I’M SORRY!! I DON’T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT!!!”

After getting fully dressed, they both rush back to the innkeeper and give him the key back. They rush back to Theo at the clinic in a panic. Theo stops them before they rush in and whispers to them,

“What are you two doing? You are going to make people think there’s something to panic about.”

Elise puts her hands on Theo’s shoulders and whispers to him calmly,

“Molly and I got drunk and had girl-on-girl sex...”

Theo stares at Elise silently, then at Molly, “Did you make her do this?! Are you trying to convert her to your kind?!”

“Don’t bring Molly into this! I was the one that suggested we drink a bit of wine!”

Theo pushes Elise's hands off his shoulder, "Why did you feel the need to tell me all this...?"

"Because, it felt wrong to keep it a secret from you..."

"Please leave my clinic..."

"But... Theo..."

"Leave... Please..."

Elise runs out of the clinic, her eyes crying a river, leaving Molly by herself with Theo. Molly walks towards him,

"Theo... I'm sorry... I... I didn't want this I swear..."

"Why do you stay here? To torment me?"

"I... I just want to help..."

"If you want to help, you can just leave... You'd honestly be better off without the people in this world... You may have only been here for a few days, but I've been here for 6 years... And trust me, there is no way back to our world, we are forever trapped here in this world... I've tried... Do you think I'd be stuck here as some damn nurse if I'd never tried...? These people are so simple, yet so difficult at the same time..."

"Theo... if we can get to Lord Jäger's fortress, maybe he'll have some magic ability that can take us back... If you just come with and help me save Jade, I'll make sure we return you home... I promise..."

Theo turns towards Molly, tears in his eyes, "I do not wish to return home... Not now... Just please leave me be... You've already taken my girlfriend from me, and now you're planning to take my son from me..."

“I’m not planning to take Jade from you! And I did not want to take Elise from you! And I’m sorry that you feel like I’m stealing the people you loved!”

“Stop calling him Jade! At least... around me...”

“I will continue to call *her* Jade! As that is *her* name!”

“Why are you so persistent to annoy me?”

“Because...” Molly paused, “I actually don’t have a good reason for that-...”

“Well it’s annoying... Please leave...”

“Nope.”

Then, Molly hears loud clanking of metal getting closer and closer. She turns around to see Clothilde running at her, screaming her name. Molly jumps back, but Theo pulls out a sword and swings it in front of Molly, shielding her from Clothilde. She swings her mace into Theo’s stomach, sending him into one of the beds.

Clothilde hugs Molly, tears flowing down her face,

“Molly, I’m so so sorry. I shouldn’t have let Garrit continue saying those things... Molly, I’m sorry...”

“Clothilde... Why’d you come back for me...?”

“Because, you’re almost like the daughter I’ve never had. I care about you, and I don’t know what I’d do if you got yourself killed.”

Theo stands back up, readying his sword,

“Sorry, but Molly is now under protection of the Weston Village. She is to remain here.”

“Yeah, no. Your military is too small to be able to hold a Lonian person under protection.”

“That’s not how this works!”

“YES IT IS!! Now scram you little rat before I pulverize you like I did with some of the forces on my way!”

Theo takes a few steps back. Molly hugs Clothilde,

“Thank you for saving me... But there’s someone I have to go find before we leave...”

“Sure. Do you know where they are?”

“I might have an idea...”

Clothilde takes Molly’s hand, “Then lead the way.” Molly and Clothilde wander the dirt roads of Weston. Molly leads Clothilde into the inn, walking up to the innkeeper,

“Hey innkeeper, did Elise come back through here?”

“Yeah, she did. She’s in the first room.”

“Alright, thank you!”

Molly runs to the room where Elise is, but the door is locked. Molly knocks on it gently, and Elise responds...

“Who’s there...?”

“It’s me, Molly...”

“Molly, what’re you doing here? Did Theo send you to get me...?”

“No, he didn’t. I came by my own choice... Please, let me in...”

There was silence, followed by Elise falling off the bed and walking towards the door. She unlocks the door and quickly runs out to hug Molly,

“I’m so sorry I ran away and left you with Theo...”

“It’s alright... I came to ask if you wanted to come to Lonia with Clothilde and I...”

“Yes. Please, yes. Anything to not be in the same town as Theo!”

“Alright, are you alright with walking a long distance-?”

“Yeah, I’m a magic user! I’m used to running around the forest!”

“Alright then let’s go.”

They leave the inn, after returning the key to the innkeeper. While walking past the clinic, Theo gives Molly a mean glare.

They walk through the forest. There was silence between the three, but Clothilde breaks it,

“So, Molly. Who’s your new friend here?”

“Oh, her name’s Elise. She’s a magic user.”

“A MAGIC USER?! I thought only Lord Jäger had magic!”

“I saw her use magic with my own eyes!”

Molly and Clothilde both look towards Elise, who was eating red berries off a berry bush in the woods.

“ELISE!!” Molly screams, “DON’T EAT RANDOM BERRIES IN THE FOREST!!”

“BUT THEY TASTE SO GOOOOOOOD!!!!” Elise responds. Molly slaps the berries out of Elise’s hand.

Clothilde laughs, “How are you a magic user?! Don’t they tell you this stuff?!”

Eventually, they reach Lonia. Elise gazes upon the massive church in awe. Elise, still looking up at the church, grabs onto Molly’s hand.

“Elise? Are you alright?”

“Yeah... It’s just that this place is definitely way more different than I last remembered... The churches weren’t *this* big.”

“You’ve been here before-?”

“Yeah, I used to live here when I was just a little girl...”

“Oh... And you moved to Weston?”

“No, not really... I... ran away...”

“Why’d you run away...?”

“Hey, let’s not get depressed now... Please...” Clothilde interrupts, “We’ve all already had quite a time recently... A break from the depressing shit would be lovely.”

“Right...” Elise replies, looking down at the ground. Molly’s hold on Elise’s hand tightens. Clothilde leads them back to her house, where Shepel and Gunther were waiting for them outside.

“Molly!!” Gunther screamed, “You’re alive!”

“Clothilde, hunny, are you alright?” Shepel approaches Clothilde, “Your armor looks all dented and ruined.”

“I’m fine... I came across some of Jäger’s Forces in the forest. They’re making patrols, getting closer and closer to the edge of town.”

“Let’s get inside. Dusk is beginning to fall.” Shepel says, leading the others inside.

They all rush inside, except for Elise. She hesitates, even letting go of Molly’s hand. Molly turns back towards her,

“What’s wrong?”

“I still don’t... entirely trust Lonians yet...”

“Don’t worry, Elise... I’ll make sure nothing bad will happen to you, I promise...”

“Alright...”

Molly takes Elise by the hand and gently leads her into the house. Elise stays close to Molly, holding onto her hand tightly. Clothilde hands Molly some new clothes,

“Here you go Molly, your current clothes must be dirty. You should probably change into something cleaner.”

“Oh, alright-... Thank-”

Molly goes up the stairs, Elise following right behind her. Molly enters a room and locks the door behind her. Elise knocks on the door,

“Molly, can I come in with you...?”

“Oh, sure.” Molly unlocks the door, and lets Elise inside before locking the door again, “Just don’t do anything weird...”

“I won’t-...”

Molly begins to undress slowly, as Elise sits on one of the beds. Molly looks over at Elise, “Y-You aren’t weirded out by... y-y’know... me u-undressing in front of you-?”

“Nope!”

“A-Alright-...”

There was a loud silence between the two as Molly took off her mud-covered shirt. Elise’s face starts to turn red,

“O-Oh-...” Elise said to herself.

“What’s wrong?”

“N-Nothing-... It’s just that-... I didn’t expect myself to get kinda flustered seeing you like this-...”

Molly looks at Elise blankly, her face also turning slightly red. “W-Well-... I already have someone I like-... I wouldn’t want to just go with someone else behind her back like that...”

“Well, it wouldn’t be cheating if you two aren’t together yet...”

“Yeah, but... It just still feels wrong...”

“I get what you mean... But still didn’t that one night feel nice...?”

“I don’t know, Elise. It probably felt nice during the time it happened, but I can’t help but feel guilty for it...”

Elise stands up and walks towards Molly slowly.

“Hey, what’re you doing?”

Elise grabbed Molly by the arms and pulled her in for a kiss. Molly tries to push away, but she's not strong enough. Molly pulls her head away,

"Elise! What the fuck are you doing?! I can't breathe!"

"Quiet, they'll hear us..."

"Elise! I told you I don't want to do this!"

"You said you felt nice when it happened. So..."

"Because of the alcohol you idiot!!"

Elise blankly stares at Molly, blinking profusely. Molly pushes her to the floor, "I don't like you in that way, I'm sorry. I like Jade, and only Jade! I don't want to be with anyone else!"

Molly swiftly puts on the clothes Clothilde gave her. Elise stands up, tears in her eyes,

"I just want someone to love me..."

"Elise, you can't force someone to love you... That's not how love works..."

"But..."

"No 'but's... Just... Please don't think I hate you, because I don't hate you. It's just... what you did just scared me, and made me feel unsafe..."

Elise nods slowly. Molly, fully dressed, gives Elise a hug, slowly caressing her back,

"Now, let's go downstairs. They're probably waiting for us..." Molly takes Elise by the hand and leads her downstairs. Molly sits down

at the table with Gunther and Elise. Shepel and Clothilde are in the kitchen. Shepel whispers to Clothilde,

“Hunny, what’s wrong? You seem worked up...”

“Remember 7 years ago, on my first ever mission...?”

“Yeah, it was to save the people of Weston from Jäger’s Forces again, right?”

“Yeah... Well, this girl... Elise... I remember her from that mission...”

“She’s from Weston right? Maybe when you were there, you saw her often?”

“No... She played an important role... She was originally part of the opposing forces in Weston. She used to be part of a squadron of his force here in Lonia...”

“You don’t think...”

“Yes, I think she might be a spy... Possibly even a lone soldier. It’d explain her ability to use magic...”

“It would...”

Molly peeks around the corner, but falls onto the floor. Clothilde and Shepel quickly look towards her. Clothilde panics,

“How much of that did you hear?”

“None of it, I just came in here cause Gunther wants me to ask what’s for dinner.” Molly responds.

“Good, just making sure you didn’t get any of that... But anyway, dinner’s going to be a little late tonight...”

“AWWWWW” Gunther groans.

“Don’t worry! I’m starting it now!” Clothilde yells, “It’s going to be Shepherd’s Pie.” Clothilde turns towards Gunther, Elise, and Molly, “Say, how about you three go to the market. Here’s some coins to spend.”

Clothilde hands Molly some small coins, and pats her head lightly, “I’m putting you in charge, Molly. If Gunther gives you trouble, tell me when you get back. I sadly can’t really punish Elise like I can with Gunther, but make sure she’s behaving.”

“Alright, I will. I won’t let you down!”

“There you go! Now go have fun in the market! I’ll come to the market to get you three when dinner’s done!”

“Alright!” They say in unison. Molly, Gunther, and Elise rush out the door and to the market in Central Lonia. Elise looks around in awe,

“Wow! I’ve never been in the Central Market before! So many cool things! How much money did she give us?”

Molly opens up her hands, counting the coins, “20 coins!”

“Only 20?” Elise responds

“HECK YEAH!!! 20 COINS!!! THAT’S TWICE MY ALLOWANCE!!” Gunther screams in excitement, and Elise jumps back.

They all run around to different market stands, looking for something to buy with their 20 coins. Then, Elise points at a Book of Magic,

“Look! A Book of Magic! Molly, maybe we could teach you magic so you can go rescue Jade!”

“You really think I can learn magic?”

“Yeah! I mean, I learned it! You saw me use it!”

“Yeah... But what if I’m not able to-?”

“Don’t worry about that! Cause you got the best magic teacher ever... Me!”

“Yeah!” Molly turns to the woman behind the counter, “How much for that magic book?”

“Your soul!” The woman said menacingly. Then, she clears her throat, “Actually, it’s 25 coins.”

“25?! We only have 20!”

“Tell you what, beat me in a magic duel and I’ll let you have it for 20. If you lose though, you don’t get the book.”

“But I don’t know magic...” Elise pushes Molly to the side,

“I do! I’ll take you on that challenge!!”

“Very well, Elise Krenz.”

“Wait, how do you know my name-?”

“You’ve bought from my shop in Easton before, remember?”

“Oh... right... Anyway, when and where are we going to have this duel?”

“How about... in the forest, right now?”

“Deal!”

“Great, meet you then.” The lady walks away. Elise turns to Molly and Gunther,

“This is going to be so much fun!”

“I don’t think this is a good idea...” Gunther warns.

“Don’t worry, my magic should definitely be strong enough to go against her.”

“But she’s the Witch of Easton!”

“So?!”

“She’s never been beat before!”

“DO YOU REALLY THINK I’M TOO WEAK?!?!?”

“YES!!”

“BOTH OF YOU!! STOP!!” Molly scolds. Gunther and Elise look at her, shock on their faces. “I-I’m sorry... I didn’t mean to raise my voice-... I just don’t like it when people argue and I didn’t want you two to start arguing...”

“Molly, if you’re going to be soft, then you’re not gonna be able to defeat Jäger!” Elise adds.

“I’m not being soft! I just...”

“Yeah, you’re being soft!” Elise responds.

“Gunther...?” Molly looks at Gunther. He looks at her, then at Elise, then back at Molly,

“Elise, please just stop...”

“She needs to learn to toughen up if she wants to defeat Jäger!”

“Well you’re being too tough on her!”

“Fine! I’ll be nicer...”

Then, amidst the crowd, Molly heard her phone ringing again. She takes it out and puts it on speaker. It’s Jade again,

“MOLLY! I JUST WANTED TO CHECK IN! HOW CLOSE ARE YOU?”

“I’m currently trying to get a Book of Magic so I can fight my way to you. I promise, I’m trying my hardest to get to you...”

“PLEASE HURRY!! I OVERHEARD SOME GUARDS TALKING ABOUT PURGING THE DUNGEON TO MAKE ROOM FOR MORE!!”

“Shit! I’ll try!”

“BY THE WAY, YOU’RE NOT CLOSE TO MY *DAD* RIGHT NOW... ARE YOU?”

“No, I’m not. I’m somewhere else.”

“GOOD, I HAVE SOMETHING I WANTED TO TELL YOU THEN, BUT I DIDN’T WANT TO SAY IT INFRONT OF HIM...”

“What is it?”

“MOLLY... I-... I LIKE YOU, MOLLY... I’VE WANTED TO TELL YOU SINCE THAT NIGHT AT LAKE UNION... BUT I DIDN’T WANT TO TELL YOU EARLIER BECAUSE IT SEEMED LIKE YOU WERE FEELING DOWN AND I DIDN’T WANNA MAKE YOU FEEL WEIRD...”

“Jade... I like you too...”

“PLEASE COME AS SOON AS YOU CAN... I MISS YOU AND CAN’T STAND ANOTHER SECOND WITHOUT YOU...”

“I’ll try...”

“ALRIGHT, SEE YOU THEN... PRINCESS.”

Jade hangs up the phone. Molly turns towards Gunther and Elise, “Now, let’s go find that witch and win that duel!”

CHAPTER FIVE

Molly, Gunther, and Elise walk to the forest, the sun slowly fleeing. They find the woman again, standing at the edge of the forest. She lets out a small chuckle,

“You three actually came.” She turns towards the forest, “Well, choose which of you three will be fighting.” Elise steps forward, holding onto her wooden staff. The woman nods before turning around.

She immediately goes in for an attack, surrounding Molly and Gunther in a magic force field before kicking Elise to the ground with her tall heel boots. Elise drops her staff, but stands back up.

“Ms. Krenz, if you wish to be able to save the people from his forces, you’ll need to be able to stay on the attack and defense.”

“How’d you know I was planning-?”

“I’m a witch, darling,” she interrupts, “I can read minds. I always know what you’re thinking.”

“That’s not fair!”

“Neither will he! I am only preparing you! But you only get one shot at this whole ordeal... so make it count!”

Elise grabs her staff again and casts a levitation spell on her. She starts to fly upwards, but she incants a small spell quietly to herself, breaking the spell.

Elise casts a spell on herself that makes her faster, then casting an ice spell that covers half the woman's face in sharp ice. She falls to her knees,

"Alright alright, you win Elise..." She says quietly. But Elise doesn't stop, instead she readies a large magic ray. Molly tries to call Elise's name, but the force field cancels all her attempts at sound. Molly looks into Elise's eyes... They were empty... lifeless... cold...

"Elise...?"

Then, a large green ray of light came out of the staff tip. After the smoke cleared, the destruction had been seen. Trees, unearthed and scorched. Grass, nothing but ash and dust. And the witch, nothing but a pile of dust... The force fields disappear, and Elise falls to the ground. Molly quickly runs over to her,

"Elise?! Elise!! Elise please don't be dead!!" She tried to lift her up, but couldn't. "Gunther! Come help me!" Gunther nods and rushes to help. Molly holds her by the legs, and Gunther by her arms. They carry her all the way back to Clothilde's house.

Once there, Molly kicks open the door, startling Clothilde. She rushes over,

"Oh my god! What happened?! Where were you three?! We went to the market and you weren't there!!"

"We wanted to get the Book of Magic from the Witch of Easton." Molly responded, "And she said we could have it if one of us could defeat her in battle. And Elise stepped up and she was doing good, she made the witch forfeit... But then something must've snapped in Elise's head and she killed her with some large green magic death ray... And now she won't wake up..."

“Alright, let’s get her to one of the beds upstairs. You two wait at the table,” Clothilde puts Elise over her shoulder “I’ll take her upstairs.” Clothilde marches upstairs with Elise on her shoulder. Then, suddenly, Elise jolts up awake and kicks Clothilde in the face with her heels. Clothilde throws her onto the ground,

“WHAT THE FUCK?! I’M TRYING TO HELP YOU!!” Clothilde stares into Elise’s eyes, they’re empty. She doesn’t respond. “Elise...? Are... Are you alright-?” Clothilde approaches her carefully, one of her hands on her mace’s handle, anticipating whatever Elise might try to do next.

Elise points her staff at Clothilde, and readies another death ray. Clothilde hits the staff with her mace, then quickly strikes Elise in the neck. Elise’s body slumps down again. Clothilde carries her into one of the rooms and places her on one of the beds.

She then walks back downstairs to serve Molly and Gunther dinner. Gunther looks up at her,

“Mom, what happened up there? Your eye... It looks painful...”

“It’s... It’s nothing...”

“Are you sure...?”

“I’m sure... I... I just fell... Don’t worry about it, just eat up so it doesn’t get cold...” Clothilde walks into the kitchen, reaching into a cupboard and pulling out an eyepatch,

“I’ll just have to take a visit to Dr. Helfgott tomorrow...”

Molly finishes eating and rushes upstairs, but Clothilde stops her, “Hey, where do you think you’re going?”

“Upstairs to check on Elise.”

“You just gonna leave the dirty plate on the table.”

Molly sighs and walks back to the table and takes it into the kitchen. She places it in a small wooden bucket with other dirty dishes.

“Thank you, Molly. Hey, I’m sorry that sounded rude... I’m just... really tired after today... Listen, you’re almost like a daughter to me... And you three really freaked me out by wandering off... I don’t know what Shepel and I would do if you and Gunther got hurt...”

“It’s alright...”

Then, Clothilde hugs Molly, tears running down her eyes, “I love you, Molly. I love you like a daughter.”

“I... I love you too, Clothilde. Like a mom.”

Clothilde pulls away, “Sorry, I’m just having a day... And I know you’ll have to return to your real world after all this... I’m sorry you got caught up in all this...”

“I think it’s nicer here, my world has so much hate... Hell, my own parents hate me...”

“Well, if you wish, you can stay here. You and Jade both.”

“Thank you, Clothilde...”

“If you wish, you can call me mom...”

“Alright... Mom...”

“Alright, now you get going... And tell me if anything happens with Elise, alright?”

“Alright.” Molly rushes upstairs, and into the room where Elise is sleeping. Molly walks up to her and gently shakes her, “Elise? Are you alright? Are you awake?” Elise slowly looks over at Molly,

“Molly?”

“Elise. You’re alright...” Molly caresses her cheek.

“Molly,” Elise starts to cry, “I’m sorry I hurt so many people...”

“Elise, don’t worry about it. It was just the witch...”

“No... You don’t understand... I’ve hurt lots of people... I’ve hurt so many... Molly, I must warn you...”

“What is it, Elise...?”

“I... I used to be a part of Jäger’s Forces... It’s the reason I know the types of magic I know... He has a safety protocol embedded in all of us... Making us all violently aggressive and immoral when in stressful situations, and when wanting to protect what we care about... Which is usually him... But it wasn’t him I wanted to protect when we fought the Witch of Easton... It was you and Gunther... As much as he annoys me, I care about him to some degree... Please don’t tell him I said that...”

“Elise... Why would you keep this from us...?”

“I’m sorry... I didn’t want you guys to hate me... To leave me... Just as he did... He left my whole squadron in Weston during the siege... He doesn’t care about his forces... Clothilde was there, saving the people of Weston... And I was there, attempting to stop her... But then, she hit me pretty hard with her Mace... But somehow... I survived... Theo was there... I don’t know why, but I fell in love with him that day... And he fell in love with me, or so it seemed...”

“Elise...” Molly jumped at Elise, wrapping her arms around her, “I’ll never hate you, I promise... How about we all get some rest tonight...? It’s been a long day...”

“Yeah...” Elise chuckles, “I guess it has been...”

“Alright, now goodnight Elise.”

“Goodnight, Molly...”

...

In the morning, Gunther enters the room to wake Molly and Elise up, “Guys! Wake up!” Molly jumps out of bed and falls onto the floor.

“What?! Is something wrong?!”

“We have to go get the magic book!”

“Oh shoot! You’re right!” Molly gets up and shakes Elise gently, “Elise, wake up! We gotta go get that Book of Magic!” Elise slowly sits up,

“Do we have to do it so early...?”

“Well, we don’t HAVE to... But it’d be nice to get up bright and early to at least get ready.” Molly replied. Molly pokes Elise’s hair, “And you’ve got a bad case of bead-head, so you need to brush your hair.”

“Brush... my hair-?”

“Yeah! Do you not know how to brush your hair...?”

“No... I’ve never been taught.”

“Alright, I’ll brush your hair alright?”

“A-Alright...”

Molly takes a brush from the dresser, and starts to brush Elise's curly hair.

"Ow!"

"Sorry! It keeps getting stuck in your hair! I'm not trying to hurt you!" After a minute of brushing, Molly puts the brush down, "There we go. Now your hair isn't in knots anymore."

"Oh- Thanks," Elise runs her fingers through her hair, "I can run my fingers through my hair without them getting caught now!"

"Now let's rush back off to the market."

Molly and Elise rush downstairs where Gunther was waiting for them.

"Hold it you three." Clothilde adds, "Where are you going?"

"To the market to get that Book of Magic." Molly responds.

"How about I come with you three? To make sure nothing bad happens again."

"Mom," Gunther groans, "we'll get strange looks if we're getting escorted by a Knight."

"Hey! I am your mother, Gunther. Besides, no one will know I'm a knight."

"Gunther, I think it'd be nice to have her come along." Molly remarked, "She's fun to be around."

"You only like her presence because you've only had to deal with her for a few days."

"Gunther!" Clothilde scolds.

Clothilde escorts Molly, Elise, and Gunther to the Central Market.

“Alright, now where is the witch’s market stand?” Asks Clothilde.

“Over here,” Elise walks over to an empty stand with nothing but piles of books. Elise walks behind the counter and reaches up for the Book of Magic. She blows off all the dust on the book, before handing the book to Molly, “Here you go Molly. Read the contents of this book, and you should learn magic in no time... I don’t know if it’ll be possible or not though... As Jäger would just inject magic into us, giving us the ability to use a special type of magic he created.”

“Oh-... Wait, a minute,” Molly turns to Clothilde, “mom, what happened to that power crystal thing that you, Aldaric, and Garrit took from me?”

“Oh,” Clothilde responds, “I actually have no idea where Hans put it. But I’ll try to find it after my visit to the clinic.”

“It might help with conjuring magic.”

“Yeah, it might...” Clothilde pauses, then she looks at Molly smiling, “Also, you finally called me mom.”

“Yeah... I just think I’m comfortable enough to call you mom...”

“Well it makes me very happy that you feel comfortable enough.”

“Can we quit with the sappiness?” Elise scolds, “We have magic to learn and people to save.”

“Hey, you don’t tell me what to do. You may be a Krenz, but you are not above me.” Clothilde crosses her arms. Molly looks over at Elise,

“Wait, I thought you said your last name was Braun-...?”

Elise begins to panic, “Oh, did I? I-I-I don’t think I said Braun, I think I said Krenz from the very start.”

“Elise, don’t lie to me.” Molly grabs Elise by the shoulders and pulls her close, “What is your last name?”

“What if I don’t, hm?”

“I’ll tell Gunther about how you feel about him,” Molly whispers.

“Fine, my last name is Krenz! I lied originally! I told you my last name was Braun!”

“Why would you keep it a secret-? Why would you lie about your last name? Why would it matter?”

“Because,” Clothilde states, “she didn’t want you knowing she was related to Lord Jäger, also known as Theodore Krenz... Or she at least didn’t want you thinking so. Maybe they aren’t related at all, and they just happen to have similar names.”

“No... No, he is... You’re right... He’s my dad... I was afraid to tell you, because I thought you wouldn’t trust me...”

“If you’re his daughter,” Molly approaches Elise, “Then why are you trying to help us?”

“Because... What he’s doing is wrong... Just because he’s my dad doesn’t mean that I have to be a part of his plans...”

Gunther hugs Elise, and she pushes him away, “WHY ARE YOU HUGGING ME?!?!?”

“Molly told me to do it before we left!”

“MOLLY!!!”

Molly chuckles, “What? I thought you would’ve liked a hug.”

“NOT FROM HIM!!!”

“That’s not what you said last night.”

“MOLLY I TOLD YOU NOT TO TELL ANYONE!!!”

Then, Molly’s phone starts to ring and she picks up the call. But, there’s a strange voice instead of Jade,

“PERSON FROM THE OTHER WORLD...”

“Who is this...?”

“I AM LORD JÄGER, AND I HAVE SOME RANSOM DEMANDS YOU WILL MEET. OR ELSE YOUR LITTLE JADE HERE PERISHES.”

Clothilde grabs the phone, “What are your demands?!”

“ALL I WISH IS THE CRYSTAL OF POWER. COME ALONE, MOLLY, WITH THE CRYSTAL... IF SO, I’LL RELEASE JADE AND YOU WILL BE ALLOWED TO RETURN HOME. BACK TO YOUR FAMILIES, FRIENDS, AND YOUR ORIGINAL LIVES. YOU HAVE 2 DAYS... SEE YOU THEN... MS. BREWER...”

Then, he hangs up. Molly stares blankly at the phone, then up at the fortress in the distance. Clothilde puts her hands on Molly’s shoulders,

“Don’t worry Molly, we’ll figure something out.”

Molly looks down at the ground “I’ll meet his demands...”

CHAPTER SIX

Clothilde takes Molly back to the barracks, and meets up with Hans again to explain the ransom situation.

“So, what is the issue...?”

“He’s demanding the power of crystal and Molly alone.”

“You, Aldaric, and Garrit. I want you three to escort Molly to the fortress. Make sure to stick with her until you get to Jäger, then, strike him with an attack.”

“With all respect, Hans... I don’t think I want Aldaric and Garrit to go near Molly... Is anyone else available...?”

“No, just them...”

“Then I’m escorting her alone.”

“Clothilde... Don’t be stupid...”

“Stupid...?! It’s not stupid to want to protect someone I care about dearly! She is almost like a daughter to me!”

“I’m saying it’s stupid to want to do this alone!”

“THAT’S BECAUSE ALDARIC AND GARRIT HAVE DONE NOTHING BUT HURT MOLLY!!”

As Clothilde and Hans begin to argue, Molly slumps down in her chair. *Remain calm, you’ll finally be able to see Jade again. You should be happy, you should be excited... You shouldn’t be sad...* She thought to herself.

“Molly...?” Clothilde attracts, “Are you alright...?”

“Oh... yeah-. Just thinking about stuff.”

Then, Gunther barges into the room. Clothilde turns around, “GUNTHER?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!”

“I HAVE SOME GREAT NEWS MOM!!”

“Gunther, is this important enough to interrupt this meeting...?”

“N-No... I guess not...”

“Alright, can you please tell me afterwards? This meeting is very important...”

“Alright-...” Gunther slowly closes the door, and Hans continues,

“Either way, I won’t let you lead a siege by yourself. For as long as you are a knight of Lonia, you must do as I say.”

“If being a knight of Lonia means just letting some innocent person die because you’re too pissy, then maybe I don’t want to be a knight anymore.”

“Wait, Clothilde...”

Clothilde stands up, gently taking Molly by the hand and walks out of the room, and out of the barracks. Gunther and Elise approach them, holding hands. Clothilde down at their hands,

“Gunther... Was this that great news you wanted to tell me...?”

“Well-... Yeah sorta-.”

“Gunther... Have you not forgotten... SHE IS LITERALLY THE DAUGHTER OF LORD JÄGER!!!”

“And so what if she is... She’s already stated she has none of the same intentions...!”

Clothilde sighs, “Fine. But if you pull anything stupid, Elise...” She runs her thumb across her neck, “I’ll make sure you won’t do it again...”

Clothilde feels the barrack door opening behind her, and moves out of the way. Garrit pops his head out,

“So I overheard your conversation with Hans... And I snuck the Crystal of Power out of the storage. Here, do what you need to do to finally end this war between us all.”

“Oh, thank you Garrit.” Clothilde puts her hand out as he drops into her hand.

“Anyway, good luck!” He slams the door shut. Clothilde quickly rushes home with Molly, Gunther, and Elise. Shepel is sitting in a chair, reading a large book. He looks up at them,

“What’s up with the rush?”

“Hunny,” Clothilde responds, “I’m going to take Molly to Lord Jäger, along with the Crystal of Power... Are you alright with watching Gunther and Elise while I’m away?”

“Yes, I’ll be fine. You go do what you need to do.”

“Alright, I’ll be back I promise.” Clothilde gives Shepel a kiss on the cheek before darting out the door with Molly.

They rush to the forest, Clothilde holding Molly’s hand. Molly stops her at the edge of the forest,

“Wait, Mom...”

“Hm...?”

“I... I just wanted to let you know that I don’t want to go home, I’m not going to take his deal, but I think we can trick him into thinking we’re going to give up the crystal... And then attack him...!”

“Alright, it’s your decision.” Clothilde reaches down to give Molly a hug., “Now let’s go kick some Krenz ass!”

“Yeah!”

They continue to rush through the forest, weaving through the trees and pushing aside shrubs. Eventually, they reach Jäger’s Fortress, standing tall and strong. Clothilde holds Molly’s hand tightly as they approach the fortress gate, towards the two men standing on guard, armed with Magic Weapons. One of them yells,

“Halt there Travelers! None shall pass into the impenetrable Fortress!”

“Wait,” Molly responds, “We have the Crystal of Power-!” Molly pulls the crystal out of her pocket, “And he told me he wanted me to bring it to him, that he’d like to see me personally.”

“Of course,” The other guard said, “You must be the person from the other world. Follow us, we will escort you from here.” The guard grabs Molly by the arm and tugs lightly to make her follow. She doesn’t budge,

“I’m not going unless Mom comes along too!”

“How old are you? You still need your mommy?”

“I’m 17, and she’s going to make sure no trickery happens.”

“Fair enough, come along you two.”

They follow the guard through the fancily decorated halls of the fortress. Molly looks in awe at the marble statues, oil paintings, and decorated pottery. Molly holds on tight to Clothilde's arm. Clothilde looks down at Molly,

"Don't worry Molly, everything will be alright. I promise I won't let harm come to you."

They continue, and eventually reach a large heavy door. The guard opens it slowly, revealing a large hall with large church-like windows, only without any color, the light from the sun shining upon both sides like magic. At the end of the hall, stands a man, wearing a large black cape-like cloak, and a crown of metal with shiny green gems embedded into it. The man speaks,

"So you actually came. Thank you for the escort guard." The guard nods and leaves the hall, closing the door behind him. The man, Lord Jäger, continues, looking at Molly, "I thought I told you to come alone."

"I had to bring her with me, to make sure you wouldn't play any dirty tricks. And if I somehow ended up hurt, then she'd kill you!"

"Child, do you know how many knights have tried to kill me? Too many to count on all the guards' hands. And all have failed. But regardless, a deal is a deal. Hand over the Crystal of Power, and you'll get your friend back. Jade walks out from behind him, with magic cuffs around her wrists.

"Jade!"

"Molly!" Jade tries to run towards Molly, but Jäger stops her,

"You can return to her, after she hands me the crystal."

Molly pulls out the Crystal of Power, and walks up to Jäger, placing it in his hand. At the same time, he pushes Jade towards Molly, falling into her arms.

“Molly!”

“Jade! Are you alright? Are you hurt? Thank god you’re alive!”

“Molly,” Jade’s eyes start to fill with tears, “I missed you so so much! I was so worried you would’ve forgotten about me!”

“I can never forget you, Jade. I love you too much.”

“I love you too, Molly.”

“Now,” Jäger remarks, “do you wish to return home or not?”

Molly looks at Jade, then back at Jäger, “No, I’m going to stay here in this world. With my new friends and family.”

“Y’know, I’m not even sure how the crystal ended up in your world.” Jäger rambles while walking over to a large machine. “It shall remain a mystery I guess, unless the culprit decides to show herself.” He places the Crystal of Power into a small slot in the machine, starting it up. The whole room began to glow a neon green, “Well, it’s too bad you don’t want to return... Guess you’d rather die!”

Jäger turns around, quickly thrusting his sword towards Molly. But, Clothilde parries with her Mace, hitting Jäger in the stomach after her swing.

“Molly, take your girlfriend and get out of here! I’ll handle this man’s tantrum! And something bad happens, tell Shepel what happened! And make sure Gunther and Elise don’t do anything crazy with each other!” Jäger’s eyes widened at the mention of Elise,

“Did you say... Elise...?”

“Yes, your own daughter has turned against you! Honestly, you are a really shitty parent!”

All of a sudden, the machine blows up, filling the room with a green smoke. When the smoke cleared, Jäger looked back at the machine... Molly was standing there, holding the Crystal of Power. She points the crystal at him,

“Woah woah! Little girl! We can talk about this! Oh who am I kidding! You don’t know Magic! I got rid of every Book of Magic in this world! You don’t know how to use that crystal!”

“Oh really?” Molly’s grip on the crystal gets tighter, “Then maybe I could just break it?”

“NO! Don’t break it! Give it to me and I’ll show you its true potential!”

Then, Jade walks up to Molly and gently takes it from her. Molly looks up at her,

“Jade...?”

“While being his prisoner... I overheard some magic spells, and I think I know just the one to use.” She confidently holds the crystal, as it glows a bright green. Jäger reaches his hand out,

“Wait, child, you don’t want to do this!”

“And why not?”

“Because if you kill me, every guard in this place will come after you and kill you!”

“Then so be it.” She aims the crystal at him, “time for the hunter to become the hunted!” Then, she encants an old spell. There was silence between them all, as nothing happened. Then...

A huge green death ray shot out from the crystal, vaporizing Jäger to nothing but dust. But, the crystal also shattered into a million pieces. Molly jumps at Jade, wrapping her arms around her,

“We’re alive Jade! And we can finally be together!”

“But, what about our world...? How will we get back...?”

“That’s just it, Jade... We won’t! We can stay here! Where you and I can live with each other and start a life together!”

“But... But I never got to say goodbye... My mom...”

“Oh... Right... I forgot you actually had a loving family at home...”

“Molly, please tell me you have your phone on you... Maybe I can connect to her from this world...”

“Oh, yeah. Here-...” Molly hands her phone to Jade. She puts in some numbers and waits for someone to pick up. Then, a voice picked up the phone,

“HELLO...? WHO IS THIS...?”

“Mom, it’s me... Jade...”

“OH THANK GOD YOU’RE OKAY! IT’S BEEN A WEEK! WHERE ARE YOU?! ARE YOU HURT?!”

“I’m alright, Mom... You’re not really gonna believe what’s happened the past few days...”

“YOU DIDN’T GET KIDNAPPED BY THEO DID YOU?!”

“No no, I didn’t... I somehow ended up in this weird other world and then I got captured... But Molly saved me... And she and I will be living here in this world... But don’t worry, I’ll make sure to call you every so often, I promise.”

“ALRIGHT... JUST PLEASE DON’T DIE!”

“I promise I won’t, mom.”

“ALRIGHT, NOW GO HAVE FUN WITH YOUR FRIEND.”

“I will. Also, it’s... it’s my girlfriend now...”

“I ALWAYS KNEW YOU TWO WOULD START FUCKING!!”

“MOM!!! NOT IN FRONT OF MOLLY!!!”

“I’M SORRY, BUT THAT WAS TOO FUNNY. ANYWAY, GO HAVE FUN NOW. REMEMBER TO CALL BACK OCCASIONALLY.”

“I will, bye.” Jade hands up and hands Molly her phone back, “Here you go, Princess. Do you have any plans now?”

“No, not really...” Molly looks over at Clothilde, “But there’s somewhere I’d like to take you...”

“Oh? Is it romantic?”

“Kinda, yeah...”

“Then let’s go!”

Clothilde escorts Molly and Jade through the halls, where guards were laying lifeless on the ground. Molly holds onto Jade’s hand,

“What happened to them...?”

“Oh, Jäger’s control over them went away. And with how long they were under control, their brains were held into shape by his magic. So, without his magic, their brains become mush.”

“O-Oh-...”

They walk through the forest carefully until they finally reach Lonia. Clothilde leads them back to her place, where Gunther and Elise are waiting outside.

Molly introduces Jade to everyone, and brings her up to date with everything that Molly encountered. Then, Molly brings Jade outside to watch the sunset together.

“Molly, the sunset is beautiful...”

“Yeah, it is...”

“Not as beautiful as your adorable face!”

“Jade,” Molly covers her face, “you’re gonna make me blush!”

“I think you look cute when you blush.”

“JAAAAAADE!!”

Jade laughs a little, “I’m just messing you, Princess. But seriously, you are beautiful and cute.”

“You are too, Jade.”

“I love you.”

“I love you too. Also, have you ever kissed anyone...?”

“No, why?”

“Well...” Suddenly, Molly jumped at Jade, kissing her on the lips, “that’s why...”

Jade sits there blankly, her face as red as a tomato,

“I’m sorry! That was so sudden! Are you okay?”

“Y-Yeah-... I’m okay-... And don’t be sorry, that felt really good... Just maybe a warning next time, alright princess?”

“Alright!”

Molly looks off into the sunset, as Jade wraps one arm around Molly’s waist, pulling her close to her.

THE END

AAAlex Games' Moral Themes Chart + Age Rating

Moral Themes:

Moral Themes are a good way for us to communicate to you what to expect from this project. Please feel free to refer to the Moral Themes below.

V = Violence: *Amount of detail of gore, blood, and dark horrific scenes.*

F = Family & Friends: *Amount of focus on relationships between loved ones (lovers, friends, family).*

B = Balance: *Amount of focus on the balance between Good and Evil*

C = Cruelty: *Usage of themes of abuse (verbal, physical, and/or sexual).*

<i>V</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>
<i>10</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Age Rating:</i>	<i>M (16+)</i>	<i>Reason:</i>	<i>Sexual Assault</i>

Personalized Message

This Is A Personalized Message Written By AAAlex (Al Diegel) About This Project:

Howdy, reader! If you're reading this, that means you were interested in checking out this small tab! This is actually the SECOND AAAlex Games Project to use the Moral Themes Chart. The Moral Themes were originally just used for CRONTIKE, and was established by Sean and I during a small discussion about writing future CRONTIKE Stories.