

Falling For You (Levi Ackerman x Reader)

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Falling For You (Levi Ackerman x Reader)

by [cutelikeharry](#)

Summary

Levi had never been one to seek out romance, until he met Y/N. He believed his protectiveness toward her was just part of the job, or so he thought, until the day he nearly fell to his knees in despair when she went missing after an expedition.

Y/N, always overshadowed by her perfect older sister, who graduated at the top of the Training Corps and became the pride of their family, was constantly reminded of her failures. After being kicked out of the Training Corps, Y/N's path took an unexpected turn, leading her to work as a maid in Captain Levi's office. Despite her new role, she caught Levi's attention.

I update weekly :)

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Y/N, you’ve been assigned to clean the offices in the west area,” the supervisor said dismissively, barely glancing up from his clipboard. His eyes remained focused on the list before him, as if he were speaking to a mere piece of furniture rather than a person.

Y/N, exhausted from a long shift and heavy with the weight of her own thoughts, gave a silent nod. She had just finished scrubbing the floor in the room she was assigned to and was gathering her cleaning supplies. The hallway stretched before her, its emptiness echoing the hollowness she felt inside. Her footsteps echoed off the walls, a clear reminder of how lonely her life had become over the years.

Ever since failing to graduate from the Training Corps, everything had unraveled. Her parents had set impossibly high standards, and her failure had been a blow they could hardly accept. Her older sister, Anna, was their pride, a shining star who had excelled in every way Y/N had not. While Anna fought Titans as a respected member of the Survey Corps, Y/N had become a shadow in the background, struggling to find a place in a world that had cast her aside.

Desperation had driven Y/N to work as a maid after being disowned by her family. The job was far from glamorous, but it paid the bills... barely. She cleaned everything from restaurants to motels, and now, offices. It wasn’t for lack of trying. Y/N had applied to countless jobs, hoping to find something that might restore her dignity. But after a series of rejections, her options had shrunk until the maid work was the only thing left. Today was just another day of monotonous tasks, a day that felt as empty as the office she was about to clean.

Arriving at the office, Y/N set to work. The room was silent except for the ticking of a clock on the wall. As she wiped down surfaces and organized the books on the shelves, her thoughts wandered back to her family. Would she ever be seen as anything other than a disappointment?

Her thoughts were interrupted by the soft sound of footsteps behind her. Startled, she turned to see a man standing in the doorway, his posture stiff and his presence commanding. His expression was hard to read, but there was an undeniable authority about him. The atmosphere seemed to change, and her pulse quickened when their eyes met.

“Excuse me, sir. I’m almost done here. Just a couple more minutes,” she managed, her voice steady despite the sudden tension creeping into her chest. She quickly turned back to her work, trying to maintain her composure under the weight of his silent presence.

The man didn’t reply right away, instead scanning the room with a sharp attention to detail that made Y/N uneasy. As he stepped further inside, Y/N stole a quick glance at him. He was dressed in the standard Survey Corps uniform, the wings of freedom displayed on his back. His dark hair was neatly styled, and his expression was cold and piercing.

Captain Levi, humanity's strongest soldier, had a presence that commanded respect. He paced around the room with his hands behind his back, examining every corner of his office with sharp, almost clinical focus. When his eyes landed on the bookshelf Y/N had just cleaned, his expression darkened. He approached the shelf, dragging a finger across the surface, and then turned to her with a look of barely concealed irritation.

"Is this what you call clean?" He raised his finger, now coated in a thin layer of dust, and held it up for her to see. His eyes remained fixed on her, unwavering, making the silence between them feel heavier with each passing second.

Y/N's face flushed with embarrassment, her cheeks burning as she fumbled for words. "I'm sorry, sir," she stammered, her voice barely steady. Her hands trembled as she quickly grabbed the cloth, moving to clean the bookshelf once more. His harsh criticism stung, eating away at her already fragile confidence. Her movements became rushed and tense, as if fixing the mistake quickly might stop more of his cold disapproval.

Levi wiped the dust from his finger with a handkerchief, his expression barely concealing his disdain. He kept his sharp attention on her, silently observing her every flustered movement. Without a word, he crossed the room, his footsteps nearly silent as he took his seat at the desk. Even as he settled into his chair, his focus remained fixed on her.

The weight of his eyes on her felt like a physical burden on Y/N's back. She tried to concentrate on her work, but her mind kept drifting. Stories of Captain Levi's skills and his ruthless efficiency were well-known, but seeing him in person was different. He was a little shorter than she had imagined, but his presence was overwhelming, showing the respect and fear he commanded.

The sudden thud of papers hitting the desk snapped Y/N out of her thoughts, causing her to jump. Levi was already on his feet with his irritated face expression.

"You don't clean wooden floors with a mop that wet," he snapped. "You'll ruin the wood. It'll swell with all that water."

Before Y/N could even come up with a response, Levi crossed the room and snatched the mop from her hands. He didn't wait for her reaction, immediately wringing out the excess water with an effortless twist. Without a word, he began mopping the floor himself.

Stunned, Y/N stood frozen, her mind swirling between humiliation and frustration. She hadn't expected the captain to be so obsessive about something as simple as cleaning, and his sudden takeover left her speechless. The words caught in her throat, but the intensity in his sharp, focused expression kept her from speaking. She wanted to say something. Anything. But the weight of his presence silenced her.

"You can go now," Levi said, his tone leaving no room for argument as he continued mopping without sparing her a glance. "I'll finish this myself." His focus remained locked on the floor.

Y/N hesitated, her pride stinging from his abrupt dismissal. Levi's tone held a finality that made it clear arguing would be pointless. With a deep frown on her face, she turned on her

heel and left the office, her mind swirling with confusion and anger.

As she walked down the hallway, each step felt heavy with her simmering resentment. *'What an asshole,'* she thought bitterly.

The rest of her day was spent helping her colleagues with cleaning tasks, while Levi stayed in his office, focused on scrubbing every surface. Her colleagues exchanged knowing glances and whispered stories about Levi's extreme standards, describing an obsession with cleanliness that bordered on ridiculous. It was a reputation that followed him everywhere, and now Y/N had seen it up close, leaving her frustrated and in disbelief.

By the time she finished her shift, the sun had set. After changing out of her cleaning uniform, Y/N put on her regular clothes and headed to the bar to meet her sister. The bar was a favorite spot for members of the Survey Corps and the Garrison Regiment, a place where soldiers could relax and find comfort after a long day.

As soon as Y/N walked in, she was greeted by a wave of noise: clinking glasses, laughter, and the buzz of overlapping conversations.

She scanned the room and quickly spotted Anna sitting at a table near the back, waving her over. They had only recently reconnected after a long time apart, but the warmth of Anna's smile made it feel like no time had passed.

"Y/N, over here!" Anna called out, her face brightening as she spotted her sister approaching. Y/N managed to walk through the crowd and finally sat down next to her, soaking in the lively atmosphere. The bar was packed, and it felt like half the city had come to drown their worries in alcohol tonight. A few soldiers were already swaying on their feet, barely managing to stay upright.

"I'm so glad we could finally meet," Anna said warmly, wrapping her hands around Y/N's in a comforting grip.

"I missed you," Y/N replied with a beaming smile, squeezing Anna's hands. Her whole face lit up, the joy of their reunion clear in her smile and the way she stood a little taller, feeling lighter just being with her sister again.

Before they could continue, a tall, broad-shouldered man with brown hair approached the table with a grin. "Anna! Looks like you've brought company," he said, his deep voice booming through the lively bar. Without hesitation, he pulled up a chair and made himself comfortable, as if he'd been part of the conversation all along. Y/N was slightly taken aback, her surprise evident as she hadn't expected Anna to invite anyone else.

"Hey, everyone! Over here!" he called out, as he waved toward a group of cadets across the room. Almost immediately, more people began pulling up chairs and joining the table, their voices blending with the chatter and laughter in the bar. Y/N felt a bit overwhelmed, struggling to keep up with the sudden wave of new faces and the rush of conversation.

As Anna began introducing everyone, Y/N took a deep breath and braced herself. "Y/N, these are my friends. We're all in the same squad," Anna said, pointing to each one in turn. "This is

Petra, Eld, Oluo, and Gunther. And this is my little sister, Y/N."

Each one greeted her with a warm smile, and she did her best to remember their names. Y/N felt a bit overwhelmed, trying to keep up with the flood of new faces while wishing she could just catch up with her sister.

Despite their friendly demeanor, Y/N's greeting felt awkward and forced. She was exhausted from the day's work and wasn't in the mood to meet so many new people. All she wanted was to catch up with her sister. As she forced a smile and exchanged conversation, she couldn't help but hope that this unexpected gathering would turn out better than she had initially feared.

As they settled into conversation, Petra's eyes scanned the bar, a hint of concern in her voice. "Where's the Captain? I thought he was supposed to meet us here," she asked, glancing around the bustling room.

"He'll be here soon," Anna replied, taking a casual sip of her drink, before she set it down and turned her full attention to her sister. "So, Y/N, what have you been up to all this time? It's been a while since we last spoke," she asked, her voice warm but filled with genuine curiosity.

Y/N's heart skipped a beat at the question. She hesitated, feeling a flush of unease. The last thing she wanted was to reveal that she'd been working as a maid. Her experiences in that job felt mediocre compared to the achievements of Anna and the rest of the squad, and she worried about how they might perceive her.

"Uh, you know," Y/N began, trying to sound casual, "I've been...busy. Working, mostly."

Petra, sensing the awkwardness, jumped in with a friendly smile. "Anna mentioned you're not in the military. What do you do, if you don't mind me asking?"

Y/N forced a smile, her mind racing to find the right words. "Just a few different things here and there. I've been focusing on various jobs."

Petra nodded encouragingly, but a hint of curiosity sparkled in her eyes. "Like what?"

Y/N's cheeks warmed. She didn't want to go into details. "Well, I do some office work and occasional odd jobs. Nothing too special, really," she said, thinking that it wasn't technically a lie. She did work at an office, even if it was as a cleaner, and they didn't need to know that part.

Anna and her friends looked at each other, clearly interested but noticing Y/N's discomfort. They asked a few more questions, but Y/N's vague answers seemed to satisfy them for now. As she was about to say more, the sound of the bar's door creaking open caught her attention. The sound was almost lost in the bar's noise, but it made her glance over briefly. She didn't think much of it and turned her attention back to the people at her table, who were still introducing themselves.

As she tried to focus on the conversation, something made her look up again. That's when she saw the familiar figure moving through the crowd.

Captain Levi.

The recognition hit her suddenly, and her heart skipped a beat. Levi's presence was impossible to ignore as he walked deeper into the bar. The relaxed atmosphere of the evening vanished, replaced by a rush of panic. Y/N's nerves tightened as she understood the weight of his arrival, making her feel anxious and unsettled.

Levi scanned the room, and Eld, noticing him, waved enthusiastically. "Captain! Over here!" he called out. Levi followed Eld's gesture and made his way toward the table.

Y/N tried to mask her anxiety, but her hands trembled slightly as she glanced nervously at Anna. "Your squad captain is Captain Levi?" Her voice was barely above a whisper, her fear noticeable. The last thing she wanted was for him to recognize her and expose her lie. She tried to steady her breathing, her heart pounding in her chest. This was not how she had imagined this reunion at all.

Anna's eyes lit up with pride. "Oh, you've heard of him? Pretty cool, huh? I'm in the Special Operations Squad, we're handpicked by him. We're basically the best of the best, right guys?" She looked around at her squadmates, who nodded and smiled in agreement.

Y/N's hands began to tremble slightly, and she tried to cover her face with her hand, though she knew it wouldn't help much. Levi was making his way directly toward their table, and panic surged through her. Her heart raced, and she felt as if the room had grown several degrees warmer. She desperately glanced back at him, wishing he might somehow not recognize her. But as he neared, his eyes seemed to settle on her, making her face flush with an intense, uncomfortable heat.

Levi's presence shifted the atmosphere noticeably. Anna and her friends greeted him warmly, their smiles wide and inviting. Anna's face held a hint of satisfaction as she made the introduction. "Captain Levi, this is my sister, Y/N. She's joining us for the evening."

Y/N, feeling the weight of Levi's eyes still fixed on her, slowly lowered her hand from her face. She looked up at him, her voice trembling as she managed a nervous, "Hi."

Levi's eyes briefly widened in recognition before they returned to their usual, unreadable expression. It was subtle, almost imperceptible, but Y/N had caught the momentary shift. She knew without a doubt that he had recognized her. He gave a brief nod in her direction, a gesture that felt both formal and dismissive. "I'll get a drink," he said, his tone flat. He turned away, leaving Y/N with a mix of relief and anxiety.

Anna noticed the awkwardness between Y/N and Levi but decided not to comment. She could see that Levi's usual cold demeanor seemed even more pronounced tonight, and it was clear the others at the table noticed it too. She tried to downplay the situation with a casual wave of her hand, though her eyes showed she was concerned. "Don't worry about it," she said to Y/N, trying to sound reassuring. "He's always like that. Just enjoy yourself."

Y/N tried to focus on Anna's words, but the uneasy feeling in her stomach wouldn't go away. The brief moment of recognition from Levi, followed by his cold nod, left her feeling unsettled. She felt the eyes of the others on her and struggled to keep her composure.

Y/N, feeling the weight of the awkward interaction, slowly stood up, her legs feeling heavy with unease. "I'll order something too," she said, her voice trembling slightly despite her effort to sound casual. Anna watched her go, looking curious but choosing to stay at the table. Y/N made her way to the bar, her heart pounding rapidly. Levi was already there, leaning casually against the counter. She could feel his presence even before she reached him, the air seeming to grow denser around him.

When she arrived at the bar, she positioned herself close to Levi, trying to minimize the attention she drew. The bartender, a middle-aged man with a warm smile, approached her. "What can I get for you, Miss?"

Y/N hesitated for a moment, lost in thought about what to say to Levi and feeling the weight of the situation pressing down on her. As the bartender's question brought her back to the present, she flinched slightly, her focus momentarily disrupted. "Oh— Um...I'll have a water, please," she said, her voice barely steady.

Levi and the bartender exchanged a brief, puzzled glance at the plain request, with the bartender raising an eyebrow before nodding. "Sure thing. Anything else with that?"

Y/N hesitated for a moment, her mind flicking to the bills she would need to pay soon. She shook her head, her voice barely more than a whisper. "No, thank you. Just water."

The bartender, now a bit confused, looked at her with a touch of sympathy. "Would you like a slice of lemon in your... water?" he asked gently.

Y/N managed a small, grateful smile. "Oh, that would be nice, thank you."

The bartender nodded in response, then quickly prepared her drink. He handed her the glass of water with a slice of lemon in it. "Here you go," he said with a friendly smile.

Levi watched her, his eyes following her every movement. He could sense her discomfort and tension. Y/N turned slightly to check on the table where Anna and the others were sitting, making sure they weren't standing right next to her before she looked back to the front, avoiding looking directly at Levi.

Levi wondered why she didn't just walk back to her table now that she had her drink in hand. "You're still here?" his voice cut through the moment, and Y/N's heart skipped a beat. She clutched her glass tighter, her hands trembling slightly.

"Please," she whispered urgently, her eyes wide with pleading. "Don't mention anything about me working as a maid at your office. Please."

Levi looked at her with his usual expression, though his eyes betrayed a flicker of curiosity. The silence between them stretched. Finally, he replied, "It's none of my business anyway."

Y/N's breath hitched slightly as a wave of relief washed over her. Her shoulders, which had been tense, relaxed a bit. She managed a small, shaky smile, her voice trembling with a mixture of relief and gratitude. "Thank you."

She turned to head back to the table, her heart still racing. The bartender, having finished preparing Levi's drink, handed it to him with a nod. He accepted it and the two of them started making their way back to the table together.

When they reached the table, Y/N saw Anna staring at them, her expression hard to read but clearly watchful. Y/N's stomach knotted with unease. As they sat down, Y/N could still feel her sister's suspicious expression on them.

Anna broke the silence with a sharp, curious tone. "You two seem to know each other. Have you met before?"

The question cut through Y/N like a knife. Her anxiety grew as she realized Anna had been watching them closely, catching every moment.

Levi, as usual, remained calm and composed. He took a slow sip of his drink, his expression unreadable as he observed the interaction with detached interest.

With her heart racing, Y/N struggled to find the right words. Her mouth felt dry, and she could only manage a shaky, "Uh..." Her mind was a whirl of thoughts, trying to figure out how to handle the situation while Levi stayed silent.

Anna, clearly intrigued, pressed further. "So... do you know each other?" Her tone was curious, and the rest of the squad exchanged interested glances.

Y/N's thoughts scrambled to find a suitable response to Anna's question. She felt a wave of frustration and helplessness as her eyes darted between Levi and Anna. Levi sighed softly, his eyes reflecting a subtle understanding of her discomfort.

In a steady voice that revealed nothing, he said, "She works at my office."

The table fell into a tense silence, and Y/N could almost feel the weight of everyone's curiosity pressing down on her. Her frustration grew as she glanced at Levi, silently pleading for him to help her out of this awkward situation.

After a moment, Levi spoke again. "She helps me out with some tasks."

Y/N's heart raced, her anxiety mingling with a sense of relief at the clarification. She waited, holding her breath as Anna processed the information.

Anna tilted her head, clearly confused. "So... like an assistant?"

Levi nodded, his expression as impassive as ever as he looked down at his drink. "Yeah."

The room seemed to still for a moment as Anna turned her attention to Y/N. There was a subtle hint of disappointment in her voice as she spoke. "Why didn't you tell me you worked as his assistant, Y/N?"

Y/N felt a flush of embarrassment creep up her neck. She offered an awkward smile, trying to keep her voice steady. “Oh, I just didn’t think it was that big of a deal.”

Anna’s eyes narrowed slightly, her disappointment giving way to a touch of frustration. “But it’s kind of a big deal, isn’t it? Why keep it a secret?”

Before Y/N could respond, Petra interjected, sensing the tension and trying to defuse it. “Since when do *you* need an assistant, Captain?”

“Even I could use a bit of help sometimes,” he said, still looking down at his drink.

Y/N felt a wave of relief as she glanced at Levi. Her mind was still racing with the evening's surprises. Although the situation had revealed more than she had anticipated, Levi’s help had kept things from getting worse.

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The next morning, Y/N stood in front of Levi’s office door, her heart pounding in her chest. She had spent the entire night replaying the events from the previous day, her emotions caught in a tangled mess. ‘*Should I thank him? Or should I pretend nothing happened and just focus on my work?*’ She took a deep breath, trying to calm herself down. No matter how much she prepared herself mentally, she knew the moment she stepped inside, there would be tension in the room.

With a final sigh, she knocked softly on the door.

"Come in," she heard.

Y/N pushed the door open, her hand shaking slightly as she closed it behind her. The sight of Levi at his desk, absorbed in paperwork, did little to calm her nerves. He was completely focused on the documents before him, his expression as unreadable as ever. “Good morning, sir,” she said, her voice softer than she intended, laced with nervousness.

Levi didn’t look up. His eyes remained on his papers. Y/N felt the weight of the silence settling heavily on her. She shifted her weight, trying to think of the right words to say.

“Um... I just wanted to thank you for what you did yesterday,” she started, her voice wavering as she tried to express her gratitude. “For not telling my sister about my—about my job. It means a lot to me. I know she and my family have high expectations, and—”

“Don’t think about it too much. It was nothing.” Levi cut her off abruptly, still fixed on the paperwork.

Y/N’s voice wavered as she tried to continue. “But I—”

“Look,” Levi said, pausing his work but not looking at her. His tone was flat, almost bored. “What you choose to tell your family about your job is your business, not mine. I only helped you out yesterday as a favor. There’s no need to turn this into some kind of drama.”

His words hit her hard, and Y/N's shoulders drooped. "I understand," she mumbled, reaching for the broom. "I'll just clean the room and get out of your way."

Levi looked up for the first time, his expression as steady as ever. "If you can at least manage that."

Y/N froze, the hurt in his words cutting deeper than she had anticipated. "What do you mean?" she asked, her voice trembling.

Levi leaned back in his chair, arms crossed, his eyes locking onto hers. "Your sister mentioned how happy she was you finally found a decent job. Seems you were so useless that you couldn't even make it through the Training Corps."

Y/N's breath caught in her throat. "She said that?" she asked, her voice breaking. Tears began to well up in her eyes, blurring her vision.

Levi shrugged, his tone flat. "It's surprising. Your sister's an exceptional cadet. I didn't think her little sister would end up as a maid because you couldn't cut it in training. And let's not forget," he added, his voice turning cold, "your cleaning skills are pathetic."

The sound of the broom hitting the floor echoed through the room, causing Levi's detached demeanor to slip for a brief moment. He looked up to see Y/N's head bowed, her shoulders shaking. Tears streamed down her face as her hands clutched her dress tightly. The sight made him pause, surprise and regret crossing his features.

"You don't get it," Y/N whispered, her voice cracking as she looked up, unable to hide her tears. "It's always about her." A bitter smile twisted her lips as she wiped her eyes. "My parents have such high expectations. They're so proud of her and everything she's accomplished. I've always looked up to her, hoping that one day I might be good enough... that I might make them proud too. How do you think they'll feel when they find out I work as a maid?" Her voice broke, the pain evident in every trembling word.

Levi stared at her, his usually sharp eyes wide with confusion and something else he couldn't quite place. He hadn't expected this reaction, and he wasn't sure how to respond.

"I'm sorry," Y/N mumbled, quickly wiping her tears with her sleeve. She forced a shaky smile, her eyes still glistening with tears. "I don't want to bore you with my problems," she added, bending down to pick up the fallen broom. "I'm sorry for the inconvenience, sir, but I think I'll need to call someone else to finish cleaning your office for me."

Y/N hurriedly gathered her cleaning supplies, her movements hurried and unsteady. Without waiting for a response, she turned and left the office, her heart racing as she ran down the hallway. Behind her, Levi watched the door close with a strange, uncomfortable feeling settling in his chest. He wanted to call out to her, to say something, but he was at a loss for words.

For a long moment, Levi sat there in silence, the echo of her words lingering in the air. He hadn't intended for this to happen, and yet, the weight of her pain pressed heavily on his conscience.

He shook his head, trying to push the thought aside. *'This is why I don't get involved in other people's shit'*, he thought, turning his attention back to the paperwork in front of him. But despite his best efforts, the image of Y/N's tear-streaked face remained stubbornly in his mind.

Outside, Y/N stumbled into the cool, bustling streets. The midday sun was harsh and bright, but she barely noticed as she pushed through the crowd. She needed to find a place where she could be alone. She headed to the back of the headquarters, where the narrow walls offered some privacy.

Finally, away from prying eyes, the tears she had been holding back flowed uncontrollably. Y/N leaned against the cold stone wall, her legs giving out as she slid down to the ground. Curling into a ball, she hugged her knees to her chest, burying her face in her arms as she sobbed.

The shame of her display of vulnerability gnawed at her. She had always hated showing her weaknesses, especially over something she tried to downplay. But Levi's words had struck a deep nerve, revealing a wound she had long tried to ignore.

She wasn't sure why Levi's words had affected her so much. She had endured harsh judgments before, but hearing it from someone like him, cut deeper than she expected.

The exhaustion from her emotional outburst began to weigh on her. Her eyelids grew heavy, and before she knew it, she had drifted off to sleep, still curled up against the wall.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, Levi remained in his office. He moved to the window and opened it, letting in the cool night air. The sky outside and the countless stars caught his attention. No matter how long he had been on the surface, he never ceased to be amazed by the sky's beauty, a privilege he had never known in the underground city.

His moment of reflection was interrupted by a group of young men lingering near the building's exit. Their behavior was suspicious, their glances making him uneasy. From his position, they couldn't see him, but he could clearly watch their movements. Something about their demeanor raised alarm bells in his mind.

He watched as another figure emerged from the shadows, signaling to the group. They began to move cautiously in the direction indicated. Levi's eyes narrowed. He didn't like the look of this.

Closing the window, Levi returned to his desk, but his mind remained alert, troubled by what he had seen.

Meanwhile, Y/N stirred awake, her sleep disrupted by muffled voices nearby. Blinking to clear her blurry vision, she struggled to comprehend the shadows surrounding her.

"Are you sure this is her?" one voice asked.

"I'm certain it's her," another replied with confidence. "Look at her. She matches the description perfectly."

Before Y/N could fully grasp what was happening, a rough hand grabbed her arm, yanking her up with alarming force. Panic surged through her as another pair of arms clamped around her torso, pinning her arms tightly to her sides. A hand covered her mouth, muffling the scream that escaped her.

Fear gripped her like ice. She fought against her restraints, kicking and squirming, but her captors were too strong. The men looming over her were large, their faces obscured but their intentions unmistakable.

“Look at her. She must be worth a fortune,” one of the men said, smirking. “Her family will pay up fast. I'm sure of that.”

The realization of her predicament hit her hard. She struggled against them, but her weakened body couldn't overpower their strength. The more she resisted, the tighter their grip became, fueling her desperation and fear.

One of the men took a cloth and forced it into her mouth, tying it tightly to gag her. Her hands were bound behind her back before she was thrown over one man's shoulder like she weighed nothing. The group moved quickly, slipping into the shadows of a dark alley, taking Y/N with them.

Just as they were about to disappear into the darkness, a sharp voice cut through the night. "Oi!"

Chapter End Notes

Hi! You made it to the end of the first chapter. How'd you like it? 😊

This was originally a story about an OC named Diana that I wrote, but I decided at the last second to switch the name to Y/N.

I hope you enjoyed and continue reading. I'd love to hear feedback ❤️

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Oi!"

Levi's voice cut through the air, sending a chill down Y/N's spine. Her heart raced as she struggled to take in what was happening. Everything felt like it was moving too fast. The man holding her froze for a moment, panic flashing across his face, but it was too late. Levi was already dashing towards him, eyes locked in a deadly glare.

With frightening speed, Levi's boot slammed into the man's face in a brutal strike. The sound of bone breaking was sickening, echoing in the narrow alley like a gunshot. The force of the kick whipped the man's head to the side, sending him reeling, blood spraying as his nose crumpled. Y/N felt herself being yanked from his grip, her body thrown through the air like a ragdoll.

She barely had time to brace herself before she hit the hard brick wall. Pain exploded in her head as it slammed against the surface, leaving her breathless. Her arms, still tied, offered no protection, and her knees gave out, unable to support her any longer.

The world blurred around her, spinning out of control. Her breath came in ragged gasps, each one feeling more distant than the last. Her vision darkened, and she could feel her body shutting down under the pain.

Y/N's eyes rolled back as a wave of unconsciousness pulled her under, and the sounds around her faded away. The last thing she felt was the cold ground beneath her before everything slipped into darkness.

"What the hell?!" the man shouted, panic creeping into his voice as he looked down at his unconscious comrade lying on the ground. The two men still standing widened their eyes in fear, glancing up to see Levi in front of them like a shadow of death, his expression cold, showing no mercy.

The man on the floor groaned, trying to move, but his body barely responded. They couldn't tell if he would pull through after that kick. He looked more like a broken doll, lying motionless except for the occasional twitch of his fingers, hinting at a faint, lingering will to live.

The tallest of the remaining men, rage twisting his face, charged at Levi with a loud roar. His fist flew straight at Levi's face. But Levi moved with lightning speed, sidestepping the punch so easily it almost felt like a joke.

Before the man could react to missing his punch, Levi's boot slammed into the back of his knees. The sickening sound of bones cracking echoed as the man fell to the ground, his legs giving out beneath him. He tried to push himself up, dazed, but Levi was already on him.

With a quick twist of his body, Levi's fist crashed into the man's jaw, sending him sprawling to the ground, completely knocked out.

Levi straightened up, his eyes scanning the alley. The two remaining men stood frozen, paralyzed by fear. One of them had wide eyes, struggling to grasp how easily Levi had broken their comrade's bones. The other shook visibly, his face pale as he nervously glanced between Levi and the crumpled figures on the ground. They could only imagine the pain they were in, and the thought of facing Levi next sent a chill down their spines, making them painfully aware of how vulnerable they were.

"Scumbags," Levi muttered, his voice tight with anger as he stepped forward, his expression fixed on them. "What did you think you were going to do with her?" He lowered his voice to a chilling whisper, each word dripping with disdain. "Sell her? Assault her? You really thought you could get away with it?"

"N-no! Nothing like that!" one of the uninjured men stammered, raising his hands defensively as he tried to create some space between himself and Levi. "We were just going to demand money from her family for her freedom!" The tremor in his voice revealed his fear.

Levi's eyes narrowed, momentarily confused at the mention of their plans, but before he could press them further, the two men turned on their heels and ran, stumbling over each other in their desperation to escape. They disappeared into the darkness of the alley, leaving their unconscious companion behind in the dirt.

Levi watched the fleeing men disappear into the shadows. But instead of pursuing them, his focus shifted entirely to Y/N, who lay motionless on the ground.

His heart dropped at the sight of her. Her face was pale, smeared with blood, and her hands remained bound behind her. A deep gash ran along her hairline, the source of the blood that darkened her skin and matted her hair.

Kneeling beside her, Levi's breath hitched in his throat as he carefully unfastened the bindings around her wrists. His fingers trembled slightly as he removed the cloth gag from her mouth, revealing her pale lips. He paused, his attention lingering on her injured face, and an unfamiliar sense of responsibility gnawed at him. Why hadn't he been more alert? If only he had reacted faster, maybe he could have prevented this entire thing.

With a heavy sigh, Levi slipped his arms beneath her, one supporting her knees, the other her back. As he lifted her effortlessly against his chest, he couldn't help but feel a pang of worry. She was alarmingly light, her frame almost fragile beneath the thin fabric of her clothes. It was evident she had endured far too much, and the realization weighed heavily on his conscience, adding to the guilt that clung to him.

He tried to push the thoughts away as he carried her back to his office, but they lingered. He focused on the task at hand, knowing he needed to get her to safety and ensure she received proper care.

...

Y/N's eyes fluttered open, the brightness of the room stabbing through her heavy eyelids. For a moment, all she could feel was the horrible throbbing pain in her head, each pulse like a hammer against her skull. Her vision was hazy, the room spinning slightly around her, making it hard to focus. She groaned softly, instinctively raising a hand to her forehead, only to encounter the rough texture of a bandage wrapped tightly around her head.

The pressure of the bandage only intensified her headache, and she winced, biting back a surge of nausea that threatened to overwhelm her. What had happened? She blinked, desperately trying to make sense of her surroundings. This wasn't her bed. The dim light revealed that she was sitting in a chair inside an office. Levi's office. Panic fluttered in her chest, her heart racing as the memories began to crash over her.

Images of the alley flooded her mind. The brutal confrontation, the feeling of being dragged away, the strike that had sent her spiraling into darkness. Her breath quickened, confusion gnawing at her as she struggled to piece everything together. Why was she here? What had happened?

Before she could spiral further into her thoughts, the sound of the door creaking open behind her broke through the fog of her mind. The familiar figure of Levi stepped into the room, his expression unreadable as he paused to take her in.

"Oh, you're awake," he said calmly as he entered the room, carrying a tray with a teapot and two cups. He set the tray down on the table. Y/N's confused expression followed him, struggling to make sense of her surroundings.

"Y/N, right?" he asked, glancing at her as he poured the tea into the cups. The sound of liquid flowing felt oddly soothing, but it did little to settle the storm in her mind. She nodded, still too disoriented to form a coherent response.

"How's your head?" Levi asked.

"What happened? What time is it?" Y/N finally managed to ask, her hand still pressed against the bandage as she tried to ease the relentless pounding in her skull. Panic bubbled up inside her as bits and pieces of the night started to come back.

"A bit past midnight," Levi replied, his expression unreadable as he handed her one of the teacups. "Some idiots tried to kidnap you," Levi said flatly, his tone devoid of sympathy. "You hit your head on a brick wall. You've been out cold for a few hours."

"Kidnap me?" Y/N's heart raced as confusion turned into a sharp sense of dread. She brought both hands to her head, cradling it as the throbbing pain kept surging, her fingers pressing against her temples in a futile attempt to ease the ache. The nausea gnawed at her, making it hard to focus. She squinted, her vision blurry, as her attention drifted towards the cup Levi held out for her. Confusion washed over her, and for a moment, she simply stared at it, unsure of what to do.

"I don't want that," she muttered, her voice shaky as she recoiled, pushing the cup away with a weak hand. "I don't need anything."

“Drink it,” Levi insisted, his voice dropping to a low, commanding tone as he pushed the cup closer to her. “It’ll help with the nausea. Just drink it.”

Her eyes narrowed in suspicion. “How do you know I have nausea?” she shot back, a hint of defensiveness creeping into her voice.

“Because you look like you just crawled out of a fucking war,” he replied bluntly. “You can either drink it, or I can make this a lot worse for you.”

Y/N paused for a moment, studying his face for any sign that he wasn’t genuine. Finding none, she sighed reluctantly and took the cup from his hand. As she took a careful sip, warmth spread through her, slowly easing the tightness in her chest.

“Thank you,” she murmured, staring down at her cup as if it held the answers to her confusion. “I can’t thank you enough.”

Levi’s attention fell to the bandage wrapped around her head. Blood had seeped through the fabric, drawing his focus in a way he couldn’t quite shake off. He had seen countless injuries before, but something about this girl’s situation gnawed at him more than he cared to admit. “It was nothing,” he said in a neutral tone, trying to hide his concern.

He took a sip of his tea, watching her closely for a moment before speaking again. “Look, I’m not trying to insult you, but those guys said they wanted to kidnap you for ransom. How the hell does an underpaid maid end up in a mess like that?”

Y/N hesitated, insecurity flickering in her eyes as she fidgeted with the cup in her hands. Her fingers wrapped around the ceramic, seeking comfort in its warmth. “Well…” she began, the uncertainty evident in her voice, and she hesitated, searching for the right words.

Drawing in a deep breath, she steeled herself. “A lot of people don’t know this, but… my family is quite wealthy.” The admission felt heavy, each word laden with shame and sadness. Her cheeks flushed as she looked away, avoiding his piercing gaze. “They live in the inner district and serve the king.”

Levi’s brow furrowed in confusion, his interest piqued. “If your family has that kind of money, why are you working as a maid?”

Y/N winced at his words, and for a moment, she felt the familiar sting of disappointment. “Because…” She hesitated again, the pain of her reality settling in. “Because my family doesn’t want anything to do with me. They kicked me out when I failed to graduate from the Training Corps. So here I am, working in the only job I could find.”

Her voice trembled slightly, and she gripped the cup tighter, as if trying to anchor herself. “I know it sounds pathetic, but I had to survive somehow.”

There was a brief silence before she spoke again, her words coming out a little choppy as the shock lingered. “I… didn’t expect anyone to come looking for me. I thought… no one in this city knew about me.”

“Yeah, well, don’t get used to me swooping in to save the day,” Levi replied, his tone sharp but his eyes betraying a hint of annoyance at the situation. “Just keep your head down and stay out of trouble next time. I don’t have time to babysit.”

Y/N met his eyes, searching for any hint of warmth, but found only his usual coldness. She realized that just because he had saved her didn’t change anything. It was neither surprising nor comforting. She was still facing the man she had come to know.

Levi watched as Y/N stared down at the floor, her brow furrowed in thought. Finally, she broke the silence. “Well, I should get going,” she said, finishing her tea and setting the cup aside. “It’s late, and I have to come back in a few hours to clean again.”

“Don’t be an idiot,” Levi snapped, irritation lacing his tone as he leaned forward slightly, his eyes narrowing. “You just woke up from a concussion. You’d still be bleeding if it weren’t for that bandage.” His tone was sharp, but there was a hint of concern hiding beneath his annoyance.

Y/N bit her lip, knowing he was right. Even though she was awake, the relentless throb in her head felt like a hammer striking her skull again and again. She hated feeling like a burden, especially to him. He had already done so much, she didn’t want to impose any further. “No, seriously. I’m fine now. I just need to get home,” she insisted as she stood up.

But as soon as her feet hit the ground, the room spun violently around her, the walls tilting as if they were closing in. Panic surged through her, and she stumbled, nearly losing her balance. Before she could fall, Levi’s arms shot out, catching her with surprising steadiness. “Watch it,” he muttered as he steadied her, the warmth of his body contrasting with her cold sweat.

“Stop being reckless!” he said. “If you try to leave now, you’ll just hurt yourself more. You’re staying here tonight, understood?” His grip on her stayed firm, grounding her in the moment.

Y/N’s vision was still blurry, the spinning in her head disorienting. She managed a weak nod, unable to fully trust her voice. Levi gently guided her back into the chair, ensuring she was settled before stepping away to lean against his desk with his arms crossed.

“If you don’t mind me asking,” she said, her voice low and sluggish as fatigue tugged at her, “could you not mention any of this to my sister?” Urgency tinged her words, a desperation she struggled to express.

Levi’s eyes narrowed slightly as he leaned back, arms crossed. “You’ve got a talent for keeping secrets from your family,” he said, his tone flat and unimpressed.

“I just don’t want her to worry about me,” Y/N replied, her words slurring together as sleepiness washed over her, her eyelids growing heavier.

“Fine,” Levi said, his tone resigned but with a hint of acceptance. “It’s none of my business, anyway.”

“Thank you,” she whispered as her eyelids began to droop. Almost immediately, she gave in to exhaustion, her head resting against the cushioned back of the chair as the tension of the day slipped away.

...

Y/N stirred awake to the warmth of sunlight streaming through the window. As her eyes fluttered open, she took a moment to absorb the unfamiliar surroundings of Levi’s office. Confusion danced in her mind, and slowly, the memories of the previous day came flooding back. The injury, the chaos, the exhaustion that had overtaken her, and how she had somehow fallen asleep here.

As she shifted slightly, she felt the weight of something soft draped over her shoulders—a green cloak. She looked down at the Wings of Freedom insignia on the fabric, and realization washed over her. It was Levi’s cloak. The fabric was warm against her skin, carrying a scent that was uniquely his. It wrapped around her like a protective shield, and her heart clenched at the thought that he had placed it over her while she slept, a small gesture that made her feel cherished.

Before she could linger on the comforting thought, the sudden creak of the door opening sent a jolt of adrenaline through her. Her pulse quickened, and she fumbled with the cloak, instinctively pulling it away from her face, heat rising to her cheeks as embarrassment flooded her. It felt as if she had been caught in a private moment, exposed in a way that made her heart race.

Levi stepped in. His expression remained as unreadable as ever, but Y/N noticed the subtle way his eyes flicked to the cloak now resting on her lap. “Ah, good. You’re awake,” he said, his voice flat as always. “You’ve been out for a while. It’s past noon.”

He watched her, and Y/N could feel the weight of his attention. She shifted in her seat, the cloak sliding down her arms as she struggled to find her voice. “I... I didn’t mean to fall asleep here. I’m sorry,” she stammered, the embarrassment rushing back in full force.

Internally, Y/N groaned, frustration bubbling up as she scolded herself for sleeping in. She was already far behind on her cleaning duties, and now, she’d have to rush just to catch up. A sense of urgency settled in her chest, a tight knot forming as she glanced back at Levi. Confusion flashed in her eyes as she noticed a cloth wrapped around his head. The kind she typically used while cleaning. Before she could ask her question, he pulled out another cloth from his pocket, tying it around his nose and mouth.

“Sir... why are you dressed like that?” she asked, standing up awkwardly and folding the cloak with care, placing it neatly on the chair.

Levi pulled the mask down slightly. “Your cleaning sucks,” he stated bluntly, his tone flat but firm. The words struck her like a cold wind, and she flinched at the reminder, feeling the sting of his critique more than she’d like to admit.

“I remember. No need to repeat it,” she muttered, a hint of hurt creeping into her voice. Her chest tightened with frustration, and she felt the urge to defend herself, to explain that she

was trying her best under difficult circumstances.

Levi's expression didn't soften. "I'm particular about cleanliness," he stated, as if it were the most obvious thing in the world. "If you're the one assigned to clean my office, I'll show you how it's done."

Y/N swallowed the knot in her throat, nodding stiffly, her resolve hardening. "I understand. I'll do my best." She gathered the cleaning supplies.

As she began her work, she could feel Levi hovering behind her, his presence like a weight pressing down on her shoulders. The intensity of the way he was watching her made her self-conscious, and every now and then, he would correct her with short, clipped instructions, never letting a mistake go unnoticed.

"Dust the windows first. Otherwise, you're just smearing the dirt around," Levi instructed as she wiped down the glass, the cloth gliding awkwardly in her hands.

Y/N bit her lip, trying to focus on his guidance as she dusted carefully before returning to the window with a wet cloth. Her heart raced, and she hoped her efforts would satisfy him this time. Just as she began wiping it in circular motions, Levi let out a frustrated sigh, his brows furrowing deeply as he pinched the bridge of his nose.

"No, that's not how it's done," he murmured irritated making her spine tense.

Before she could respond, he stepped in closer, invading her space. She could feel the heat radiating from him as he turned her towards the window, grabbing her hand with an almost harsh grip. The sudden contact jolted her, and she struggled to catch her breath. His hand was rough yet controlled, and as he leaned in, he effectively caged her between him and the glass, one hand guiding hers while the other pressed against the window frame, forcing her into position.

"Side to side," Levi instructed. "If you clean in circles, you'll create static, and that'll just attract more dust." His proximity made her heart pound harder, drowning out his words. She nodded dumbly, lost in the heady mix of confusion and warmth. Was he even aware of how close he was?

"Did you understand?" he asked, finally releasing her hand.

Y/N blinked, struggling to pull herself together as she turned her back to him, desperate to hide the flush creeping up her face. "Yes. I understand," she stammered. Her hand still tingled where he had touched her, the sensation lingering.

Levi gave the room a quick look, inspecting every corner. "Good. We're done here," he said, stepping back.

Y/N nodded and forced a smile, trying to sound casual, though her heart still raced from the unexpected moment. "I'll go now. I still have other offices to clean," she added, hastily gathering her supplies.

“That won’t be necessary,” Levi said abruptly, causing her to stop mid-step. She turned to him, confusion flickering across her face.

“I handled it,” Levi said, his expression flat but the tension in his shoulders gave him away. “I checked the office assignments, so I cleaned the areas you were supposed to take care of before you woke up.”

Y/N’s eyes went wide in disbelief. She couldn’t understand it. Levi, the guy who had criticized her every move, had actually done that for her? Why? Questions flooded her mind, but she held back, afraid that asking them might break the delicate bond they had started to build.

"Don't read too much into it," Levi muttered, looking away as if her surprise had embarrassed him. The mask still covered most of his face, but she could sense a subtle shift in his demeanor. "I couldn't sleep, and cleaning helps me relax." His admission was almost vulnerable, a crack in his stoic facade.

A soft giggle escaped Y/N before she could stop herself, and Levi's eyes darted back to her, clearly caught off guard by her reaction. “Thank you...” she said. A genuine smile tugging at her lips as relief washed over her. Without waiting for a response, she turned and slipped out of the room, closing the door behind her.

Chapter End Notes

When you finally use your perfectionist mom's cleaning tips for something 😊

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

A few days passed, and Y/N settled back into her usual routine. Her head injury had healed faster than she expected, though there was still a slight ache. It didn't slow her down, though, and she got back to work like nothing had happened. She spent her days cleaning up around headquarters, scraping by on her low salary, and sometimes catching up with her sister, Anna. All the while, she made sure to keep up the act that she was more than just a maid. Whenever Anna asked how things were going, Y/N would put on a smile, change the subject, and Anna never caught on.

Despite her efforts to keep everything the same, something kept nagging at her. The guilt of lying to her sister weighed on her every time they talked. But she wasn't ready to tell Anna the truth.

Her interactions with Levi hadn't changed much. They had settled into a kind of neutral space. He no longer criticized her cleaning, which felt like a minor win for Y/N. But there was something different about him lately. He seemed distant, even more than usual, like something was weighing on him, but she couldn't figure out what.

'He's probably just busy,' Y/N thought to herself as she walked through the bustling market. *'After all, he's a captain. He must be under a lot of pressure with the Scouts and all the expeditions.'*

"Y/N, did you even hear what I just said?" Anna's voice suddenly cut through her thoughts, snapping her back to reality.

Y/N blinked, realizing she had been zoning out while following her sister through the bustling market. "Sorry, what were you saying?" she asked, shifting the basket of vegetables she carried and shooting Anna an embarrassed glance.

Anna shot her a sideways look, her brow furrowed in irritation. "Seriously, what's going on with you? You've been spacing out all day." She stopped walking, turning to face Y/N with crossed arms. "What are you thinking about?"

"Nothing," Y/N replied, a bit too quickly, as she turned away. "Just... work, I guess." It was a half-truth. Work was part of it, but more than that, she couldn't stop wondering what was going on with Levi. The way his eyes seemed distant lately, the slight tension in his shoulders... it was hard not to notice.

Anna raised an eyebrow, unconvinced, but didn't press further. "Stressed out too, huh? Is Captain Levi giving you a hard time as well during work?" she muttered, glancing around as they resumed their walk. Her tone softened as if she was thinking aloud. "You know, he's been on edge lately. People are talking about it."

Y/N felt a flicker of interest at the mention of his name. "On edge? Why?" she asked, trying to keep her voice casual, though her curiosity betrayed her.

Anna sighed, shaking her head slightly. "Apparently, he and Commander Erwin are working on some new strategy to increase the survival rate during expeditions outside the walls. More and more Scouts have been dying because of the Titans... it's getting really bad."

Y/N's stomach twisted at the news, and her pace slowed. So that was why Levi seemed so preoccupied. The weight of leadership, of witnessing his comrades fall time and again, must hang over him all the time. She had never considered it like that before. What it must be like to bear that kind of responsibility every day. It stirred a feeling of sympathy in her, an understanding she hadn't had before.

"That makes sense," Y/N said softly, more to herself than to Anna. "He's got a lot on his plate."

Anna glanced at her, noticing the shift in Y/N's tone. "Yeah... He doesn't show it, but I think it's really getting to him. And I guess with some of the higher-ups constantly breathing down his neck, he doesn't get a moment's peace."

Y/N nodded, her thoughts drifting back to Levi. She found herself wondering if anyone had ever asked him how he was holding up, or if anyone even noticed the strain beneath his calm facade. She certainly hadn't, not until now. The realization made her feel guilty for being so wrapped up in her own problems.

Anna bumped Y/N lightly with her shoulder, snapping her back to the present. "Come on, snap out of it. You're not the only one with stress. Let's finish shopping before all the good stuff is gone."

Y/N smiled faintly, grateful for the distraction. The market bustled with activity as the sisters strolled past various stands, the scent of fresh produce and spices filling the air, but Y/N's mind remained elsewhere. She needed to find a way to thank Levi for everything he had done for her. Her thoughts had been circling this all day. How to express her gratitude for him saving her life and taking care of her.

It didn't need to be anything extravagant, just a small gesture. The problem was she barely knew him beyond his cold behavior and obsession with cleanliness. What do you even give to someone like him?

As they walked by a tea stand, Y/N's eyes were drawn to the different jars of loose-leaf tea. An idea sparked in her mind. Tea. She recalled how Levi had offered her a cup that night in his office. He must like tea, right? It seemed like the perfect gift. Simple, thoughtful, and not too much.

Anna, noticing her sister's pause, raised an eyebrow. "What caught your eye?" she asked casually, then followed Y/N's focus to the tea stand. "How many teacups do you have to prepare for Captain Levi, anyway? That seems like something he'd be picky about."

Y/N stiffened at the reminder that Anna still believed she was Levi's assistant. That lie was starting to weigh on her. She forced a laugh, though it came out a little awkward. "Yeah, he's a bit particular," she muttered, trying to play along as she stepped closer to the stand and scanned the various blends.

The vendor's eyes lit up the moment he noticed Y/N's curious interest in the tea display. He clapped his hands together, clearly excited to have a potential customer. "Ah, looking for something special today?" he asked, rubbing his palms together dramatically. "You've come to the right place! We've got the best selection, sourced from all over. Fresh, fragrant, and perfectly aged." He picked up a jar and held it up like he was unveiling a rare treasure. "Here, this blend has a floral scent with just a hint of spice. It's perfect for unwinding after a long day."

Y/N nodded politely, trying to seem engaged as the vendor went on about aromas, textures, and the art of brewing. His enthusiasm was almost overwhelming. Meanwhile, she struggled to determine if *'undertones of citrus'* would even matter to someone like Levi. Honestly, she could barely keep up with half of what he was saying.

'What even is 'woodsy earth'? It just sounds like a fancy way of saying dirt...'

"Now, this one here," the vendor said, puffing out his chest like he was about to unveil something amazing, "is our absolute best." He held up another jar filled with dark, fragrant leaves. "It's the highest quality tea you'll find around here. Rich, deep flavor, smooth texture—perfect for someone who appreciates the finer things in life."

Y/N's eyes flicked to the price tag dangling from the jar and felt her heart drop to her stomach. *'How can dried leaves be worth this much?'*

She took a slow step backward, already planning her escape. She'd have to make up some excuse, maybe claim she forgot her change at home or something. But before she could bolt, Anna swooped in.

"Oh, I've seen that one before!" Anna leaned over, squinting dramatically at the jar as if trying to place it in her memory. "Yeah, that's right, Captain Levi drinks that all the time. It's his favorite."

Y/N froze mid-step, her heart racing as she glanced at her sister, her eyes wide with panic as she subtly tried to signal Anna to keep quiet.

The vendor's face lit up like he'd just won the lottery, rubbing his hands together with excitement. "Captain Levi, huh? If it's good enough for humanity's strongest, it's good enough for anyone! Great choice, miss!" He smiled widely, already reaching for the pouch to package the tea.

Meanwhile, Y/N felt like she'd just been thrown off a cliff, her mind racing. She shot a glare at Anna, whose grin only widened, clearly loving every moment of this.

"Oh, he's really picky about his tea," Anna said with a teasing grin, nudging Y/N's arm as if they were sharing a secret. "Looks like you're trying to get on his good side, huh? That's so

sweet of you."

'Sweet? I'm about to blow my entire salary on these dry leaves!'

Clearing her throat and putting on a tight smile, Y/N managed to say, "Well... I guess I'll take it." Her voice came out a bit higher than usual, revealing her inner panic. The vendor, however, was too caught up in his excitement, wrapping the tea with all the flair of presenting a gift for royalty.

"Excellent choice!" he said cheerfully, sealing the pouch with more ceremony than seemed needed. "I'm sure Captain Levi will really appreciate the gesture."

'Oh, will he now?' Y/N thought bitterly as she dug into her bag, reluctantly giving up an amount of money that made her want to cry a little. She handed it over with a tight smile that probably looked more like a grimace.

"Thank you so much!" The vendor said enthusiastically as he took the money from her. Y/N held onto the money a little too tightly, making the vendor tug it gently from her grasp, looking a bit confused. She squinted her eyes as the money slipped from her fingers, feeling a mix of regret and disbelief that she had just spent so much.

Finally, the vendor handed her the small, overpriced pouch of tea as if it were a priceless treasure. Y/N sighed, staring down at the little bag like it had betrayed her. Meanwhile, Anna looked far too pleased with herself, her smug smile making Y/N want to strangle her.

"Well, you're welcome," Anna teased, throwing in a wink. "I can't wait to see the look on the Captain's face when he realizes how thoughtful you are."

Y/N snorted, almost ready to toss the pouch at her sister's head. "Yeah, right. Thoughtful," she muttered under her breath, stuffing the tea into her basket as if it were a cursed object. "At least I've got the *'finest tea within the walls'* to give him."

Anna laughed, clearly amused by all of this. "Hey, at least you're keeping his standards high."

Y/N bit back a groan, though the corners of her lips pulled up despite herself. *'Yeah, just what I need. High standards and an emptier coin purse.'*

As they continued walking through the market, Y/N imagined the likely scene: Levi accepting the tea, giving her that trademark stoic, unimpressed stare, and simply muttering a curt "thanks" before shifting his focus elsewhere.

She shook her head, a bittersweet smile creeping onto her face. *'This better be the best tea he's ever had.'*

...

The day after, after finishing her work with nothing left to do, Y/N stood outside Levi's office. Her heart raced as she clutched the pouch of tea, her palms sweaty with nerves. Taking a deep breath, she tried to steady herself. *'What if this was a bad idea?'*

Finally, she gathered the courage and knocked softly.

"Come in," Levi's voice called out.

Y/N pushed the door open slightly and peeked in. Levi was sitting at his desk, leaning his head on his hand, and looked exhausted. Dark circles lined his face, and his usual serious expression felt even heavier tonight.

"Good evening, sir," she said, her voice a bit shaky as she entered, uncertain if it was the right moment to disturb him. As soon as she spoke, she sensed the tension in the room grow thicker.

Levi barely glanced up from the papers scattered before him, his frown deepening at the sight of her. He looked even less welcoming than usual. The silence stretched between them, making her shift uncomfortably under his cold expression.

"...actually... I think I'll come back another time. Excuse me," she stammered, stepping back, the urge to flee rising within her.

Just as she turned to leave, Levi's voice stopped her. "What is it, Y/N?" His tone was terse, irritation clear in his eyes. He narrowed them slightly and let out a quiet sigh, clearly frustrated by her hesitation.

Y/N's throat felt dry as she turned back to face him, the pouch of tea still clutched in her hands. She took a small step forward, forcing herself to meet his eyes. "I—I just wanted to drop off something that I got for you," she finally managed.

Levi raised an eyebrow, doubt evident in his eyes. "And *why* would you get me anything?" he asked, clearly baffled by the gesture.

Y/N's heart raced, nerves and excitement swirling within her. "I... got this for you as a thank you for saving me the other night and for everything you've done for me," she said softly. "You've also seemed a bit... overwhelmed lately."

He stared at her, evaluating her sincerity, and she felt the atmosphere shift slightly. "And you thought I needed a gift?" Levi asked, his tone softer but still edged with disbelief. "I'm not some charity case, Y/N."

"I get that," she said, a nervous laugh slipping out, sounding almost strange to her. "But I thought it might help ease some of the tension you've been carrying lately."

He studied her for a moment longer, clearly taken aback. "Fine," he said. "Just give it to me."

With a shaky breath, Y/N stepped closer to the desk, holding out the pouch to him. As Levi took it, his attention shifted from her to the tea, and for a brief moment, she dared to hope that she had finally done something right. Maybe this time, he wouldn't brush her off so easily.

Levi paused, a slight frown forming on his brow as he opened the pouch. He hesitated, his eyes widening as the familiar aroma wafted up to meet him.

“Is this...?” His voice faltered, surprise crossing his face as he glanced at Y/N. “Why the hell did you buy this?”

Y/N felt a surge of anxiety, shifting her weight from one foot to the other. She looked down at the floor, her heart racing. “Do you not like it?” she asked.

Levi’s expression hardened, concern flickering in his sharp eyes. “You realize how expensive this is, right?” His tone was firm and irritated. “You shouldn’t be wasting your money on things like this, especially when you’re barely getting by.”

A lump formed in Y/N’s throat, but she forced herself to speak. “I just wanted to thank you for everything,” she explained embarrassed. “I heard it was your favorite.”

Seeing her disappointment, Levi’s irritation faded a bit. He sighed and ran his fingers through his hair, the tension easing as he looked at her. “Look... Thanks, okay? But this tea is too expensive,” he said firmly. “I’ll take it this time, but don’t do this again.”

An awkward silence fell between them, filled with unspoken words. Y/N’s heart raced as she wondered how to reply. So...did he like the gift or not? The uncertainty ate away at her. Just as she opened her mouth to say something, Levi broke the silence.

“I’ll go make this for us,” he said, standing up and passing by her.

“Us?” Y/N asked, surprise in her voice as he paused at the door.

Levi glanced back at her, irritation flashing in his eyes. “If you went through all this trouble, you might as well give it a try,” he said, his tone straightforward and firm.

“Oh— No. That won’t be necessary,” Y/N protested, shaking her hands in front of her anxiously. “Really, there’s no need to share.”

“Too bad. You’re trying it whether you want to or not,” he said irritated. With that, he turned and walked out, the door clicking shut behind him.

Y/N stood there awkwardly for a moment, glancing around the room in silence. After a few seconds, she finally decided to sit down in one of the chairs in his office.

After a few minutes, Levi came back, carefully balancing a tray with two steaming cups of tea. He set it down in front of Y/N. “Don’t burn yourself,” he said in his usual flat tone, his eyes meeting hers for a brief moment before he focused on his own cup.

Y/N nodded and carefully picked up her cup. After taking a sip, a smile spread across her face. “It’s delicious,” she said, surprised at how much she enjoyed it.

Levi took a sip from his cup. “What did you expect?” he replied flatly.

Y/N studied him for a moment, noticing how relaxed he looked while drinking the tea. It was a rare sight. “You really enjoy drinking tea, right?” she asked, genuinely curious.

Levi glanced up. "It's not the worst way to pass the time," he said, taking another sip, his tone hinting at indifference. "Better than some of the other junk people drink." He set the cup down, and for a brief moment, she caught the faintest flicker of satisfaction in his eyes.

Y/N couldn't ignore the dark circles under his eyes or the way his expression seemed distant, like he was teetering on the edge of exhaustion. "You don't sleep much, do you?" she asked softly, concern leaking into her words.

He glanced up briefly again, then returned his attention to the tea, his tone dry. "Not really. A couple of hours here and there, if I'm lucky."

A pang of sympathy twisted in Y/N's chest. "That's not healthy."

He shrugged casually, but his expression stayed as tough as ever. "I've managed this long. It's not like I'm falling apart."

As their conversation continued, Y/N took the chance to ask him more questions, wanting to know more about him. Even with Levi's cold, short answers, she felt a small comfort growing between them, his usual guardedness easing just enough to create a connection. But as she kept asking, she noticed Levi's brow beginning to furrow, a hint of annoyance creeping into his expression.

"What do you like to do when you're not working?" she asked, her curiosity bubbling over.

"*Why* do you want to know?" Levi asked, his brow knitting together, clearly thrown off by her sudden interest in his life. "You really ask a lot of questions, don't you?" He couldn't figure out what drove her curiosity. For Y/N, it was straightforward; she didn't know much about him, and no one else seemed to either, which only made her want to learn more.

Y/N flinched at his sharp tone, instinctively straightening her posture. "I'm sorry, sir. I didn't mean to bother you."

He sighed, the tension in his shoulders easing slightly. "Cut the formalities. Just call me Levi."

After a brief hesitation, she nodded. "Okay... Levi."

Levi set his cup down, his expression turning serious again. "I have a question for you. Why exactly did you get dismissed from the Training Corps?" he asked.

The question hit her like a blow. She hesitated, biting her lip. "Well... I've never really been good at many physical skills," she admitted, her voice shaky. "But besides that... I couldn't really manage to use the ODM gear," she confessed, shame evident in her downcast eyes.

It was clear to Levi that there was more she wasn't saying, a sense that she was hiding something deeper, but he chose not to push. To her surprise, his expression softened, a rare glimmer of understanding in his eyes. "Believe it or not, it's quite easy once you get the hang of it," he said reassuringly.

Y/N managed a small smile, though it was tinged with sadness. "I bet you were probably the best cadet of your generation when you were in the Training Corps," she chuckled, her thoughts drifting as she imagined him as a perfect soldier.

Levi shook his head slightly. "No one showed me how to fight with ODM gear. I'm self-taught."

Y/N stared at him in disbelief, her brow furrowing. "Huh? How did you manage that?" she asked, genuine curiosity creeping up through her embarrassment.

Before Levi could answer, a sharp knock on the door interrupted them. Commander Erwin stepped inside, his presence instantly filling the room with authority. Levi immediately stood from his chair, straightening his posture as he faced Erwin. "Levi. Can I have a word with you?" Erwin's voice was calm but carried an authority that made Y/N instinctively straighten in her chair.

Levi's expression hardened. "Alright," he said, shooting a glance at Y/N. "You can go now."

Y/N nodded and headed to the door. She had been prepared to leave, but as she turned to go, she overheard bits of the conversation between Levi and Erwin. Her curiosity sparked, making her pause just outside the door, straining to catch their words as they drifted into the corridor.

"The new expedition is close, and we still don't have a solid plan to increase survival rates," Erwin said frustrated as he paced the room.

Y/N's mind raced, recalling something her sister had mentioned about the same issue.

An idea began to take shape, one she had formulated during her time in the Training Corps during their theory classes. But self-doubt gnawed at her. Could her idea really make a difference? What if they dismissed her?

As the tension in her chest built, she hesitated, contemplating whether to voice her thoughts or retreat into silence. Maybe it would be better to stay quiet. After all, who was she to interrupt the Commander? But what if her idea could actually make a difference for the Scouts? The possibility flickered in her mind.

After what felt like an eternity of internal conflict, she took a deep breath, her heart pounding fiercely in her chest. This could be her chance to contribute. Gathering her courage, she knocked lightly on the door, then pushed it open just a crack, peeking inside. Levi and Erwin both turned their attention to her, their expressions a mix of surprise and confusion.

"I'm sorry to interrupt," she blurted, "But... I might have a concept that could help."

Levi frowned, holding a hand out slightly as if to stop her from continuing. "This isn't your place, Y/N."

Y/N felt her heart drop at his words, but she pressed on, determined. "I understand that, but I really believe I could help—"

Levi opened his mouth to interrupt, annoyance flickering in his eyes. “Y/N this is not the time to—”

Before Levi could finish, Erwin raised his hand subtly, a silent signal for Levi to let Y/N speak. His attention shifted between the two of them. “Let her speak, Levi. If she has something to contribute, it’s worth hearing her out.”

Y/N stepped inside, her heart racing as she tried to suppress her nerves. “I know I’m not the first person you’d expect advice from,” she began, “but during my time in the Training Corps, I learned a lot in my classes. I came up with a plan back then, and I think it could help now.”

Levi's attention lingered on her, unreadable as always. Meanwhile, Erwin tilted his head slightly, encouraging her to go on.

“One of the biggest issues the Scouts face is the lack of instant communication during expeditions,” Y/N explained, her hands fidgeting nervously at her sides. “If someone spots a Titan or is in danger, there’s no immediate way to inform the others.”

Her heart sank momentarily. But she pressed on. “I remembered how the Garrison Regiment uses different colored flares to signal various situations. I think we could incorporate that with a better formation strategy to help reduce the number of deaths.”

The silence felt heavy, and Y/N’s stomach twisted with uncertainty. Maybe this was a stupid idea after all.

But then Erwin broke the silence, his tone thoughtful. “Would you be interested in explaining this formation in more detail?”

Y/N felt a rush of relief mixed with excitement. “Yes! I’d love to,” she replied, steadier this time, now as her confidence slowly began to rise.

...

Levi, Erwin, and Y/N stood in the quiet, empty classroom, the only sound the faint rustle of paper as Y/N paced in front of a blackboard. She felt anxiety and excitement coursing through her, her fingers trembling slightly as she gripped the chalk. With a deep breath, she began sketching her idea, drawing an arrow-shaped formation. The carts were at the center, with the commander positioned at the front, while different positions were organized to flank the sides and rear for more effectiveness.

As she illustrated the structure, her heart raced. “The front and sides of the formation would consist of groups responsible for using flares to signal any incoming Titans,” she explained, feeling butterflies in her stomach. “The nearest group would shoot a flare, creating a chain reaction, allowing you to have a clear understanding of where each Titan is located before redirecting the formation.”

Erwin leaned forward, his expression intent and appreciative, the corners of his mouth lifting slightly. *‘He’s actually listening’*, Y/N thought, her confidence building as she spoke. Levi

stood off to the side, arms crossed over his chest.

When she finished, Erwin nodded thoughtfully, a small smile breaking through his serious demeanor. “This has a lot of potential. We’ll need to refine it, but I think it could work.” The warmth of his approval sent a wave of pride washing over Y/N, her chest swelling with newfound confidence.

As Erwin and Levi began discussing the details, she felt a spark of excitement. Y/N joined the conversation, her earlier hesitation fading away, replaced by a sense of purpose. They poured over the plan, Erwin guiding her with questions that challenged her thinking, while Levi, though still reserved, offered sharp insights.

The hours slipped by unnoticed as they worked, her adrenaline driving her forward. By the time the first light of dawn crept through the windows, a solid plan was in place, and Y/N felt a swell of pride in her chest for the contribution she had made.

Chapter End Notes

I know that the formation was Erwin's idea in the anime/manga 😊 This is just for the plot

Although I do know that during history men used to take credit for women's inventions and discoveries 😞 I don't think that would be the case with Erwin though 🤔

Chapter 4

Y/N wiped down the shelves in Captain Levi's office, scrubbing every corner with the precision he demanded. Today was the day Levi and the rest of the Scouts were supposed to return from an expedition, and the thought alone made her anxious. She didn't want to give him any reason to be irritated. She'd made sure the place was spotless and cleaned to his impossibly high standards. But even the repetitive motion of dusting did little to calm her nerves.

The formation was already being tested out there. Captain Erwin had put her plan into action. All she could do now was wait, hoping that any moment now, they'd be back. The uncertainty gnawed at her. What if her plan, meant to save lives, had put more people in danger? The possibility sent a chill through her.

But it wasn't just the plan that weighed on her. Her thoughts kept circling back to her sister. She wasn't sure why. Anna was strong, always had been. She could handle herself out there, right? But Y/N couldn't shake the uneasy feeling. Her sister was out there, relying on the very plan Y/N had drawn up. The idea that something could go wrong, that Anna could get hurt because of a mistake in her strategy, made her chest tighten. If anything happened to Anna because of her formation, she'd never be able to forgive herself.

But then she reminded herself, Anna was with Levi. He was her captain, and if anyone could keep her safe, it was him. Or at least, that was what she wanted to believe. Knowing Anna was under his command should have reassured Y/N. But instead, her mind began to drift toward Levi himself.

She wasn't sure why, but she found herself more worried about him than she would've expected. It didn't make sense. He was humanity's strongest soldier. She tried to remind herself of that fact, but the fear lingered.

Her hand paused on the shelf. Why was she so concerned? It was stupid. Levi didn't need her worrying about him. He'd survived countless expeditions, faced more danger than most could even comprehend. And yet, no matter how much she tried to reason it away, the thought of him not coming back filled her with a dread she couldn't explain.

Suddenly, the door to the office slammed open, and Y/N jumped, her heart racing. Levi stormed into the room, his expression as cold and sharp as ever. The air around him seemed heavy, but at that moment, she couldn't stop the wave of relief that hit her. He was safe and seemingly unharmed.

"Sir, you're ba—" she started, her voice trembling with anxiety and relief, but he cut her off.

"Levi," he snapped, barely sparing her a glance. "How many times do I have to tell you? It's Levi, not sir. I'm not that old, you know." His annoyance dripped from his words.

"Sorry," she mumbled, forcing a grin, hoping to lighten the mood. "I just—are you okay? Is Anna safe?" The concern in her voice was genuine, and she could feel her heart rate

steadying as she awaited his response.

“Yeah,” he replied, his tone clipped, but the irritation in his voice softened slightly. “She’s fine. Just a bit shaken up, but it’s always like that.”

Y/N sighed and a wave of relief washed over her, lifting the knot of anxiety in her chest. “I’m glad to hear that. I was so worried.”

Levi slammed a stack of papers onto his desk, as he sank into his chair. Y/N stepped back, confusion swirling in her mind. He didn’t seem like himself. A tension radiated from his shoulders that she hadn’t noticed before. She hesitated, glancing at him, her brow furrowing in concern.

“What are those?” she asked cautiously.

“Post-expedition paperwork,” he replied, his eyes flicking up to meet hers. “We need to notify all the families of the deceased.” His words cut through the air like a knife, the gravity of the situation settling heavily around them.

The weight of his statement hit her hard, like a punch to the gut. Dread filled her as she imagined lives lost, the faces of those who wouldn’t return. Had the formation failed? The thought made her stomach churn, guilt settling heavily on her.

“Commander Erwin wants to see you in his office. Now,” Levi’s voice sliced through her spiraling thoughts.

“Um...why?” she asked, her voice faltering as dread crept in.

“Now,” he repeated, his tone sharper this time.

His intensity made her flinch, and she nodded, swallowing hard. Her heart raced at the urgency in his tone, and she felt a pit of anxiety form in her stomach as she stepped out of the office. Had she messed up badly? Levi’s attitude towards her only deepened her unease.

Standing in front of Erwin's door, her hand trembled against the wood, a chill coursing through her. The seconds stretched into an eternity before she finally tapped lightly, praying for strength as she braced herself for whatever awaited her inside.

“Come in,” Erwin’s voice called from within.

Y/N pushed the door open, stepping into the room with her heart in her throat. Erwin sat at his desk, looking as composed as ever.

“Please,” he gestured for her to sit, and she complied, her mind racing with the many ways she might apologize.

Before she could speak, Erwin began, “Your formation plan was a complete success. I’m sure Levi already informed you.”

Y/N blinked in surprise, her mind reeling. *'Success?'* she thought. That didn't make sense. Levi had seemed so angry, so distant. "But... Captain Levi... he seemed upset," she stammered, her confusion evident.

Erwin's expression softened slightly, understanding the emotional chaos swirling within her. "Levi is... complicated. But make no mistake, your plan worked. The survival rate increased significantly."

Y/N felt her heart swell with disbelief, confusion, and pride flooding her. "I—I thought it had failed," she said, her voice barely above a whisper.

Erwin gave her a warm smile as he began, "I admire every one of the scouts," he said reflectively. "They risk their lives for the sake of humanity, each contributing in their own way. Some of them are like you. They might not be the best in combat, but have other strengths...strategic strengths that are just as vital." The sincerity in his voice warmed her.

A blush crept up her cheeks at his acknowledgment. She had always been aware of her combat shortcomings, and hearing Erwin recognize her strengths was both humbling and encouraging. "Thank you," she murmured, her heart fluttering.

Erwin stood and walked around his desk, sitting directly in front of her. "I spoke to Ex-Commander Shadis about you. It's been a while, but he still remembers you quite well. He mentioned that, just like you told me, you were exceptional in theory but struggled with the physical aspects of training."

Y/N looked down, a flush of embarrassment creeping into her.

Erwin leaned forward slightly. "I spoke to him in detail about the results of your formation plan. It saved many lives, Y/N. And with some convincing, I've managed to secure an opportunity for you."

Y/N's head snapped up, her eyes widening in shock. "An opportunity?"

Erwin nodded, his expression serious but kind. "You've been granted permission to rejoin the Training Corps, with the condition that after that, you'll join the Survey Corps. Your strategic mind would be a tremendous asset to us."

Y/N felt as if the ground had vanished beneath her feet. The weight of his words pressed down on her, suffocating and thrilling all at once. Rejoin the Training Corps? Join the Survey Corps? She had never expected this. Never even dreamed it was possible.

For now, all she could do was sit there, reeling as the reality of the situation slowly began to sink in.

Erwin, noticing her prolonged silence, leaned forward slightly, concern etching his features. "Are you all right? If you don't like the idea, we can definitely discuss it."

She stuttered, searching for the right words but finding none. An awkward smile crept onto her face, but it was tinged with uncertainty. "I... I don't know. It's just so sudden."

Erwin gave her a reassuring smile, his eyes warm. "I understand this is a big decision. But I want you to know that I believe in you. I think you'd be a tremendous help to the Survey Corps." His hand rested gently on her shoulder, grounding her in the moment.

Y/N's mind was a battlefield, torn between the desire to prove herself and the fear of failing again. Erwin, sensing her internal struggle, continued, "You don't have to decide right now. Take some time to think it over. I'd appreciate it if you gave it serious consideration."

He explained that she'd be rejoining the same group of trainees she'd started with, that she would soon graduate alongside them, almost as if she'd never left. The idea was overwhelming. Y/N managed a weak smile and thanked him, though her voice was laced with the uncertainty she felt.

As she walked back to Levi's office, her thoughts were a chaotic mess. She could barely breathe as she approached the door. What if she failed again? The thought terrified her. While they were busy training and honing their skills, she had been mopping floors and cleaning toilets.

When she entered Levi's office, it was clear he'd been waiting for her. His sharp eyes met hers. "Did Erwin make you an offer?" he asked flatly.

Y/N's frustration bubbled to the surface. "Looks like you already knew about it," she shot back, crossing her arms, increasing the tension between them.

Levi's expression remained unreadable, but his tone was sharp. "I was hoping you'd make the right decision and reject that stupid offer immediately. For your own sake." His words stung, cutting through her excitement like a knife.

His words struck a nerve. Y/N, still unsure, took a deep breath and replied, "I'm not sure yet. I need to think about it."

Levi's expression was as unreadable as ever, but his voice cut through the air with sharpness. "I was hoping you'd make the right decision and reject that stupid offer immediately. For your own sake."

Y/N felt a sting at his words. She took a deep breath, trying to steady her racing heart. "I'm not sure yet. I need to think about it."

His patience snapped, and his eyes narrowed. "You're out of your mind if you think you're accepting that offer. How are you going to defend yourself out there when you can't even stand up to people?"

A wave of anxiety tightened her stomach, but she stood her ground. "I'm not sure," she admitted. "But this might be my only opportunity to prove that I am capable of something."

Levi's frustration peaked, his voice rising with anger and an edge of fear. "You'll get yourself killed the minute you step out of the walls! Do you even understand that?"

Y/N's heart raced, but she held his stare. "I don't mind dying." Levi seemed taken aback for a moment. Her voice was absolutely free of hesitation. His expression softened for a second at her words.

"I have no friends, barely any family. If it means I can finally do something meaningful, I'm willing to risk everything for the sake of humanity."

His expression darkened, and for the first time since she'd known him, he lost his composure entirely. "You have no idea what you're talking about!" he yelled, making her flinch. "You're not taking that offer! You're not joining the Survey Corps! End of story!"

Y/N stood frozen, shock washing over her at his outburst.

He scoffed, frustration etched into every line of his face. Without another word, he stormed past her, leaving her alone in the office. Her heart sank as the door slammed shut behind him.

Levi marched through the empty corridors, his mind racing. *'What's that reckless brat even thinking?'* he thought. The thought of Y/N willingly throwing herself into danger without a second thought made his blood boil. *'She can't be serious.'*

He recalled the earlier conversation with Erwin, who had laid out the plan to reinstate Y/N into the Training Corps. *'She's not ready for this,'* he thought, shaking his head as he recalled Erwin's reassurances. The commander had insisted that she would undergo intense ODM training and tactical lessons. *'She needs to master the basics first,'* is what Commander Erwin had said, but how? There were only a few months left until she joined the Training Corps. Would she even be able to keep up?

How is she supposed to survive against real Titans? The question gnawed at him as he navigated the halls. It wasn't just about her skills. It was about her stubbornness.

His mind drifted to Keith, who had only agreed to Erwin's plan after being assured of Y/N's intense training.

He was not sure why, but every time he thought of her rushing into danger, a tight knot formed in his chest. He couldn't shake the image of her standing in front of a Titan, unprepared and vulnerable.

Levi took a long walk to clear his mind, but no amount of distance could ease his worry.

Finally, he returned to his office, expecting to find Y/N still there, perhaps lost in thought or going over plans. But the room was empty. *'Where the hell is she?'* His frustration turned to concern, the knot in his stomach tightening.

"Stupid girl," he muttered, pacing back and forth.

...

Y/N had made up her mind. She was tired. Tired of being a maid, tired of feeling like a failure, tired of keeping secrets from Anna, and most importantly, tired of living a life

without purpose. *'I need to do this,'* she thought, her resolve hardening as she gathered her courage.

With a deep breath, she left Levi's office, her heart racing. She walked straight to Erwin's office, each step heavy with the weight of her decision.

When she reached the door, she knocked firmly. Erwin's voice came through, inviting her in, and she pushed the door open.

As she entered, she noticed Erwin looking up, surprise flickering across his features. "Y/N," he greeted, setting aside the papers he'd been reading. "I wasn't expecting you back so soon."

Y/N squared her shoulders, taking a deep breath to steady her nerves. "Commander Erwin, I've made my decision," she said confident, "I'd be more than glad to accept your offer to join the Training Corps and then the Survey Corps after graduation."

Erwin's eyes lit up with pride, his expression shifting to one of approval. "I'm glad to hear that, Y/N. You have no idea how much this means to us."

His words ignited a flicker of hope within her.

"I'll make the necessary arrangements for you to start as soon as possible," Erwin continued, his tone serious but encouraging.

Y/N nodded, a smile creeping onto her face. "Thank you, Commander. I won't let you down."

Erwin smiled at her. "I know you won't."

...

Levi was seated at his desk, going through a stack of papers, when a sharp knock at the door interrupted his focus. "Come in," he called out, half-expecting another soldier or perhaps Erwin. But when the door creaked open, Y/N stepped inside.

He felt a rush of relief at the sight of her, but that was quickly overshadowed by the unease settling in his stomach. He had a feeling he knew what was coming. Levi stood, moving closer to her as she entered, his posture instinctively protective.

"Look, Y/N," he began trying to sound calm. He took a moment to gather his thoughts. "I get it. This is a big chance. But you need to be smart about it. Most people don't make it past their first expedition—"

She cut him off, "I don't care. This might be the only chance I get to show that I can achieve something in life."

Levi's expression narrowed, frustration mingling with concern. "This isn't a game, Y/N. You're talking about facing Titans, not just some minor challenge." He took a step closer, trying to convey the seriousness of his words. "You think you can handle that?"

“I just handed in my letter of resignation,” she continued, her tone unwavering. “I won’t be working here as a cleaner anymore. I’m going to start training soon, and hopefully, I’ll join the Training Corps shortly after that.”

His heart sank. ‘She’s serious,’ he thought, a wave of frustration washing over him. “You’re making a mistake, Y/N,” he said quietly, the words heavy with concern. “I just hope you realize how dangerous this decision is.”

Y/N met his eyes head-on. “I know what I’m doing.”

The tension crackled between them, and for a moment, Levi struggled to find the right words. He wanted to shake her, to make her understand the implications of her choice, but the determination in her eyes held him back. ‘*She’s so damn stubborn,*’ he thought, exhaling sharply.

“I really hope you do,” he finally said, his voice softer as he turned away, unable to maintain the intensity of the moment any longer. Y/N nodded with frustration, and with that, she walked out of the office.

Days passed, and their interactions shifted into a strained silence. Y/N continued her duties, but every time she passed Levi’s desk, she felt the tension wrap around her. It saddened her, knowing he disapproved, but she also felt a sense of freedom in her choice.

On her last day of work, Levi didn’t even show up to his office. Y/N cleaned as usual, feeling a sense of finality in every task. When she finished, she handed in her uniform, the reality of her situation finally sinking in. Fear gnawed at her. Fear of failing again, fear of making the same mistakes, fear of leaving behind the job that had been so hard to get.

But as she took a deep breath and stepped out of the office for the last time, she reminded herself of the decision she’d made.

Chapter 5

Y/N clutched the piece of paper tightly in her hands, her palms sweaty as she followed Erwin's directions. The area around her was quiet, almost too quiet, making her feel unsure if she was in the right place.

Eventually, she spotted a figure in the distance. A tall, young man with light brown hair and a friendly demeanor, dressed in the Survey Corps uniform.

'That must be him,' she thought.

Taking a deep breath, she approached the guy. "Excuse me," she began, her voice trembling slightly. "Commander Erwin sent me here."

The young man turned, his eyes warm with a welcoming smile. "Ah, yes. Y/N, right? Nice to meet you. I'm Moblit Berner." He extended his hand, which she shook gratefully.

"Yeah, that's me. Nice to meet you," she replied, trying to steady herself. "So, you're the one who'll be training me?"

"Yep! I hope you're ready for it," he said, his tone light. "No need to be nervous. We'll start from the basics, and by the time we're done, you'll feel like a pro."

Y/N nervously chuckled upon hearing that before saying, "I sure hope so," forcing a smile. She felt a little of her anxiety melt away at his friendly demeanor.

Moblit seemed to sense her nerves. "Do you have any experience with ODM gear?"

Y/N hesitated, the memories of her past failures pressing down on her. "I...still need a lot of practice," she admitted quietly.

"Perfectly fine," Moblit said, chuckling lightly. "We all start somewhere. Let's cover everything from the ground up."

As he explained each component of the ODM gear, she focused intently, her heart racing at the memories of her previous attempts.

Despite her knowledge of the theory, she knew understanding the mechanics on paper didn't mean she could master them in the field.

"Here, put this on." Moblit handed her a training scout uniform. Y/N took it, a wave of nostalgia washing over her.

She changed into it and the feel of the fabric brought back memories, some good, others painful, of her first attempt at training.

"Alright, let's start with something simple," Moblit said, guiding her to a balancing exercise. "Just focus on your core and find your center."

Y/N nodded, remembering how she hadn't struggled too much with balancing during her earlier training. After a few tries, she managed to get the hang of it, swaying in the air between two cords.

“Great! Now, let's move on to using the gear,” Moblit encouraged, clapping his hands together.

But this was where everything started to unravel. After multiple tries that had all ended poorly, she felt the familiar surge of nerves as she attempted to maneuver through the air again. The speed of the gas propulsion threw her off balance, and before she knew it, she was tumbling through the air, her body folding awkwardly.

Moblit sighed but quickly masked his frustration. “It's okay, Y/N. Don't be too hard on yourself. Everyone learns at their own pace.”

“I know, but...” She glanced at him, embarrassment burning her cheeks. “No matter how hard I try, it feels like I'm wasting your time.”

Moblit shook his head, stepping closer. “You're not wasting my time. We'll get there. It just takes practice. Let's go through it again, okay?”

Y/N nodded, though her heart sank. The days rolled on, and while Moblit remained patient, she could sense his growing concern. They seemed stuck, circling the same basics, and she felt trapped in a loop of her own making.

“Let's try again, Y/N. Just breathe,” he said gently.

Taking a deep breath, she replied, “Right. Breathe. I can do this.”

As she prepared to try again, a small voice inside her whispered, *‘I just have to push through. I can't let fear hold me back this time.’*

One day, they were in a forest, practicing maneuvers, and Moblit instructed her once again. “Okay, aim at two nearby targets and shoot the grapple hooks.”

Y/N took a deep breath, trying to steady her shaking hands. She shot at the trees, hitting the targets with no trouble.

But as soon as she activated the gas mechanism, panic shot through her. The speed sent her hurtling forward, her back arching awkwardly as she fought to regain control. It was no use. She ended up crashing into the ground, a cloud of dust enveloping her.

Moblit rubbed his temples, frustration simmering beneath his usual patience. “It's okay, let's call it a day. We'll pick up where we left off tomorrow.”

As they walked out of the training grounds, Y/N felt the weight of her failures pressing down on her. “I'm sorry,” she apologized, her voice barely above a whisper. It felt like the hundredth time she'd said it.

“Don’t worry. It’s okay,” Moblit replied, trying to keep his tone light. “Like I said, everyone learns at different speeds. It also took me a while to get the hang of it.”

Y/N looked up at him, confusion etched on her face as she sensed something off in his tone. After a brief hesitation, she mustered the courage to ask, “How long did it take you to master it?”

Moblit shifted uncomfortably, avoiding direct eye contact with her. “Uhm... just a couple...” he replied uncertainly.

Her suspicion deepened. “...Weeks?” she probed further, the tension noticeable. Moblit finally met her eyes but quickly looked away again. “Hours...” he confessed.

A slight gasp escaped Y/N's lips as the weight of his words sank in, draining her motivation and will.

Realizing his mistake, Moblit hurried to reassure her. “No, no, but it’s okay, really! I promise you’ll get the hang of it soon,” he said, forcing a smile to sound as optimistic as possible.

“Hey, how about you come with me to meet my squad leader? She is always full of energy and enthusiasm. I’m sure you’ll cheer up.”

Y/N hesitated at first but eventually agreed and they made their way to Headquarters. When they arrived, Moblit opened the door, revealing a figure with long brown hair tied up in a ponytail, holding a large jar filled with what looked like hair. The person turned around, and the light reflected off their glasses, causing Y/N to pause for a moment.

“Moblit, you’re finally here!” Hange exclaimed, excitement radiating from her as she flashed a huge smile. She didn’t seem to notice Y/N at first, too focused on showing Moblit the hair-filled jar.

“Look, Moblit! Someone brought back a sample of hair from an abnormal titan. Some of it even still has the root attached! You know what that means, right?”

Moblit raised an eyebrow, slightly overwhelmed but used to Hange’s eccentricity. “Yes. I can imagine you’re excited.”

Curiosity piqued, Y/N stepped forward. “Still attached to the root? That means it still has DNA. We could use that to research why abnormal behave the way they do.”

Both Moblit and Hange turned to her, their expressions shifting. “Oh—Commander, this is Y/N,” Moblit introduced her. “The cadet that I was instructed to train.”

Hange’s eyes lit up even more “Exactly! It still has Titan DNA!” she exclaimed, grabbing Y/N’s hands in hers, her enthusiasm infectious.

Hange began explaining, with excitement as she went into the potential insights the sample could provide about titan behavior. “This could change everything we know! Imagine understanding their behavior!”

As Hange shared her ideas, Y/N leaned in closer, completely absorbed in the conversation. Hours slipped away, the sun setting outside unnoticed. Moblit eventually took a seat in the corner, allowing Hange and Y/N to continue their discussion.

Y/N felt a surge of confidence as they spoke, the fear of her earlier failures fading into the background. It was thrilling to connect with someone so passionate about the same things she was.

But the peaceful atmosphere was abruptly interrupted by a sharp knock at the door.

Moblit, Hange, and Y/N all turned their attention to the door as it swung open. Levi entered, his expression more annoyed than usual. His attention fell directly on Y/N, his eyes cold and filled with disappointment.

“Levi! What brings you here?” Hange greeted enthusiastically. “This is my new friend Y—”

“I know who she is,” he said bluntly, interrupting Hange. His tone sent a chill through Y/N and making her heart sink.

He shifted his focus to Y/N, his voice sharp. “What are you doing here? You’re wasting your time when you should be training. You’re supposed to graduate soon, and from what I’ve heard, you haven’t made much progress.”

Y/N felt shame wash over her, and she instinctively looked down, avoiding his piercing eyes. “I was just—” she started, but the words caught in her throat.

“Come on, Levi. Give her a break. We were just chatting,” Hange interjected, trying to defend her, but Levi wasn’t having it.

“Stay out of this, four-eyes. You’re partly to blame for this,” he shot back, his words cutting deep.

Y/N struggled to respond, feeling overwhelmed by his criticism. Levi sighed heavily, then delivered the final blow. “I’ll be the one training you from now on.”

Both Moblit and Y/N were taken aback, their expressions shifting from surprise to worry. “But—Captain Levi, how will you manage to train her with your busy schedule?” Moblit asked, concern lacing his tone.

“I’ll worry about that myself,” Levi simply said.

The next day, Y/N arrived at the training spot to find Levi already there, waiting. He had told her to meet him in the training grounds first thing in the morning. She was surprised and grateful, but also nervous, knowing how serious Levi was about training.

“Good Morning,” she greeted him cautiously.

Levi turned around and took a moment before answering. “Wow... at least you’re punctual,” he remarked dryly.

Beside him was a suitcase containing the ODM gear she would use. “I don’t think I need to explain to you how to put it on, do I?” he asked, and she shook her head.

Y/N put on the gear, and Levi instructed her to show him what she had learned so far. Determined not to mess up, Y/N carefully went through each step, but once again, she ended up getting awkwardly yanked around one again.

Levi sighed deeply. “*Fuck*—Alright, you know what? Forget everything you’ve learned in the past few days,” he said firmly. “You’re overthinking every step.”

He then went on to give her advice in a way she hadn’t heard before, explaining how she needed to tighten every muscle in her body, even slightly pinching her shoulders to emphasize his point. “You have to stay stiff, or you’ll keep ending up in the dirt like a pig,” he added bluntly.

“While you tighten every muscle in your body, also make sure to slightly lean forward when reeling herself,” he said as he walked in circles around Y/N, inspecting that she was actually tightening her muscles. “And clench your butt,” he said finally stepping away from her, making Y/N’s face heat up with embarrassment at his comment.

“Now, aim at higher points and try again,” Levi instructed, his tone more patient than she expected.

...

Y/N trained intensely with Levi from early morning until late at night for days, incorporating wooden Titan silhouettes into her practice, focusing on cutting the nape.

Despite her progress, guilt gnawed at her, taking up so much of Levi's time, especially knowing how little sleep he usually got. Now, it was probably even less, but as the days passed, Y/N began to notice a real difference in her skills.

One evening, as the sun dipped low in the sky, Levi broke the silence. “Your moves have improved,” he stated, his tone flat but carrying an undercurrent of approval.

Y/N’s heart soared at the compliment. “Really?”

“Yeah,” he replied, glancing at her with a serious expression. “Erwin and Keith have been keeping up with your training. They think you’re ready to rejoin the Training Corps.”

Y/N's eyes widened in disbelief. “Are you serious?”

“You’ve got the basics down. Keith has agreed to take you back. You start tomorrow.”

Y/N couldn’t hold back her excitement. She smiled brightly at him, her joy spilling over. Levi watched her, a slight sigh escaping his lips as he observed her happiness.

Training with her stirred something bittersweet in him, reminding him of the comrades he had lost along the way.

“Thank you!” Y/N exclaimed, unable to contain herself.

“Don’t get too ahead of yourself. You’re back in, but it doesn’t mean you’re done learning,” he said.

Y/N chuckled, “I know. But you’ll see. I’ll prove I can handle it,” she said, a teasing smile forming on her lips.

“Sure, whatever helps you sleep at night,” he replied dryly.

The wind picked up, rustling the leaves around them, creating a brief pause. Y/N smiled at him, feeling a bit more relaxed.

“Come on,” he added, turning on his heel. “I want you to see something before we call it a day.”

“What is it?” Y/N asked, trying to keep up with his pace.

“You’ll see,” he replied, glancing back at her, his expression unreadable.

Levi guided Y/N to the top of Wall Rose, and with the help of their ODM gear, she climbed up with relative ease. However, her heart raced with every meter they ascended. As she reached the top, a mix of pride and unease settled in, but she quickly shoved the feeling aside.

The sun was setting, casting brilliant colors across the horizon. Y/N stood in silence, taking in the breathtaking view beyond the walls. She had never realized how expansive the world was.

Levi stood beside her, arms crossed as he watched her absorb the landscape. The wonder in her eyes reminded him of his own first venture beyond the walls.

The tranquility shattered when sounds of movement below interrupted them. Y/N snapped out of the moment and cautiously approached the edge. As she peered over, unease gripped her chest. Below them, five or six medium-sized Titans, their desperate movements to reach them sending a chill down her spine.

Y/N felt her legs grow heavy, her eyes widening in fear. She had only seen them in reports, but this was different. The distance to the ground only intensified her anxiety. Levi noticed her tense posture, recognizing the signs of fear that could lead to disaster for inexperienced cadets.

“There’s something every cadet seems to fail at,” Levi said, his tone cold and steady. “It’s a mistake that leads to most of their deaths, especially when they lack experience.”

Y/N remained frozen, her breath hitching as her attention remained fixed on the Titans below. The ground felt impossibly far away, a dizzying distance that sent a shiver through her body.

Levi stepped closer, positioning himself just behind her. “Do you know what that is?” he whispered, his voice low, sending a shiver down her spine. “The ability to react, even when faced with death.”

Y/N slowly turned her head, confusion knitting her brow. But before she could fully process his words, she felt his palm firmly press against her back, and in an instant, he pushed her off the edge.

Y/N slowly turned her head, confusion clouding her mind as she tried to understand Levi's words. Before she could fully process what he meant, she felt his palm press firmly against her back, and in an instant, he pushed her off the edge.

Her mind raced as she plummeted through the air, unable to grasp the sense behind what had just happened. Panic gripped her heart, and adrenaline kicked in. As she neared the Titans, her hands shot to the handles of her ODM gear, firing towards the wall in a desperate attempt to survive.

One side latched onto the wall, but the other failed, sending her hurtling towards it at a dangerous angle. Her body slammed against the wall with brutal impact. "Agh!" she cried, instinctively clutching her leg in pain, just before the ODM gear detached, leaving her to fall again.

As she descended, a Titan's hand reached for her. Gritting her teeth, Y/N swung her blade, slicing off its fingers in a frantic effort to save herself. The Titans looming closer, her death seeming inevitable.

One of the Titans was quick enough to catch her, its massive hand pinning her arms to her sides. She struggled, but exhaustion from the day's training and pain from her earlier impact left her body unresponsive.

Panic surged through her, the Titan's gaping mouth growing closer with every second. The sheer terror of the moment gripped her, freezing her thoughts as the end seemed inevitable.

In a swift motion, the Titan's nape was suddenly sliced clean through, and its arm severed, causing her to tumble to the ground as its grip released her just before the remaining Titans were dispatched in a matter of seconds.

Y/N felt herself being lifted, the sudden motion so swift and forceful it knocked the wind out of her. Before she could fully process it, they landed back on top of Wall Rose with a heavy thud. She sank to the ground, heart pounding, body trembling from the rush of fear. Levi stepped back, his back to her, the silence between them thick and unsettling.

Y/N hugged her knees, trying to steady herself, but tears streamed down her cheeks. She clung to her legs, while Levi stood in front of her, facing away, ignoring her quiet sobs. This wasn't what she had expected from training, especially not being pushed off the wall without warning.

"Is that all you can do?" Levi asked, his voice cutting through her thoughts, still not looking at her. Y/N stayed silent, ashamed, her eyes fixed on the ground.

"Do you really think you'll survive out there?" Levi continued, his tone sharp. "You froze in place and barely reacted. What just happened was nothing compared to what scouts endure. And out there? No one's coming to save you."

Y/N knew he was right, but there was a flicker of pride within her. Even if it meant facing death, she was trying. She kept her head down, feeling the weight of his words settle over her.

Finally, Levi turned to her, his expression softening slightly as he sighed. He crouched down to her level. "Listen... Y/N," he said, his voice quieter now, "Joining the Scouts is a bad idea. You shouldn't throw your life away so carelessly. And as for your family... who cares what they think? It's your life. Why risk everything just to please them?"

He pulled out his handkerchief and offered it to her.

Y/N shook her head, refusing the handkerchief and wiping her tears with her sleeve instead. Levi frowned slightly but put the handkerchief back in his pocket.

"I've made my decision," Y/N said, her voice shaky. "I'm not backing down now that I've finally made it into the Training Corps. I don't care if I'm not the best or if I die trying."

Levi stood up, disappointment flickering in his eyes as he looked down at her. "If that's how you feel... then I wish you the best of luck out there."

...

Y/N walked in silence beside Levi, her injured foot a constant reminder of the day's disaster. Her mind was a storm of confusion, sadness, anger, and each painful step only deepened those emotions. She kept her eyes on the ground, not daring to look at him, unwilling to face the person who had pushed her off that wall.

The memory kept replaying in her head. The moment he shoved her, the cold, detached look in his eyes as she plummeted. She had trusted him, and in that split second, it felt like he had betrayed her. She couldn't make sense of it. Why would he do that? Did he even care?

Levi walked beside her, his usual confident stride subdued, tension clinging to the air between them. He knew he had pushed her too far, but in his mind, it was necessary. Too many scouts had died because they weren't ready for the brutal reality they faced.

Neither of them spoke. The silence was thick, each unspoken thought weighing heavier with every step.

He glanced at her as they walked. She was limping more severely, her face twitching in pain every few steps. His eyes narrowed slightly. "Your foot. How bad is it?"

"It's fine," she replied, not even looking at him. Her pride held her up more than her injured foot did. She didn't want to seem weak. Not in front of him.

Levi wasn't buying it. "You're limping like hell. Let me help."

"I said I'm fine." Her voice was sharper this time, but exhaustion clung to every word. She didn't want to rely on him. Not after today.

"Tch. Stop being stubborn." His tone hardened, though not without a trace of concern. "You're only making it worse. Let me help you."

Y/N's resistance faltered. She was tired and hurting. With a heavy sigh, she finally gave in. "Fine."

Levi stepped closer, slipping her arm around his neck and wrapping his arm around her waist with a practiced ease. "Lean on me," he instructed.

As she shifted her weight onto him, her pulse quickened. The sudden closeness made her heart race, and she could feel her face flush with warmth. She hated how easily he could make her feel this way, even after everything. Vulnerable. She clenched her jaw, angry at herself for feeling anything at all.

The walk back to the barracks was silent, but the air between them crackled with tension. Y/N was still fuming inside, but too drained to let it out. Levi, for his part, was focused on getting her there without causing her more pain. He was aware of the anger radiating off her, but he stayed quiet.

As they reached the barracks, Levi gestured toward the door. "Go ahead," he muttered.

Y/N paused for a moment, her fingers twitching as if to say something, but nothing came. Without a word, she walked inside, her silence screaming louder than anything she could have said.

Levi followed behind, his thoughts a tangled mess, though his face remained as impassive as ever.

He led her inside. The room was lined with bunk beds, and Y/N stopped in front of the only empty one. Levi quickly grabbed clean bedding from a nearby shelf and laid it out with quiet focus, the silence between them thick with unspoken words.

Y/N watched him surprise. His sudden shift in demeanor threw her off, the contrast between his usual distant attitude and this moment of quiet care leaving her unsettled. She wanted to demand an explanation, to ask him why he was acting this way, but the words stuck in her throat. She was too tired, too drained from the day's events to start a confrontation.

Once he finished, Levi straightened, his eyes briefly meeting hers before he spoke. "The other training scouts are out for late-night drills," he said, his voice softer than usual. "They'll be back soon. You'll be fine as long as you keep your foot elevated and don't push yourself too hard."

Y/N nodded automatically, not quite sure if she even processed his words. She still couldn't bring herself to meet his eyes for more than a few seconds. Instead, she sat down on the bed he had just prepared for her.

Levi exhaled, his usual attitude flickering for a moment. "I know today was rough," he said quietly. "But it was necessary. You need to understand what we're up against."

At that, Y/N finally looked up, her eyes filled with hurt and frustration. “I get that,” she said, her voice trembling slightly. “But did you really have to push me like that? No warning, no explanation?”

Levi’s expression hardened for a second, but then something softened in his expression. “Believe it or not, I want you to survive,” he replied, “If you freeze up in front of a titan, you’re dead. You have to be ready for that.”

Y/N swallowed, the knot in her throat tightening. “I know...”

Levi stepped back, creating a bit of distance between them. “Get some rest,” he said, his tone firm. Without waiting for a response, he turned and left the room.

Y/N watched as he left, the door clicking shut behind him. Her chest felt tight, the mix of emotions swirling. Anger, confusion, even a strange sense of gratitude. She sighed, her fingers smoothing out the blanket she’d just wrinkled by sitting on it.

As her thoughts drifted, she found herself remembering the days in training. How she used to sit in this very room with the others. Sasha with her endless appetite, Christa’s kindness, the raw talent of Mikasa and Annie. A small smile tugged at her lips despite the heaviness in her heart. Would they even remember her?

Her mind wandered to the boys. Armin, kind and encouraging, someone she had always been comfortable around. Marco, always supportive. Even Connie and Jean, who teased her but never with malice. And then there was Eren, whose relentless drive and motivation had always pushed everyone around him.

The sound of footsteps broke through her thoughts, followed by familiar voices approaching the door. Her heart skipped a beat, and she turned her head just as the door swung open.

Mikasa, Sasha, Christa, and the others from the training corps stood frozen in the doorway, their eyes wide with surprise. For a moment, no one said anything, the silence thick with disbelief.

Then, Sasha broke it, her voice incredulous. “Y/N...? Is that really you?”

Chapter 6

Days turned into weeks, and weeks into months as Y/N got back into the routine of training with the others. It felt good to be moving again, and she appreciated how Levi's training had pushed her to become stronger. His tough guidance had helped her more than she had thought.

When she returned to the Training Cadets, it felt more like an interrogation than a reunion. Everyone bombarded her with questions: 'Where have you been?' 'Why are you back?' 'How did you get permission to join us again?' It was exhausting, but she managed to dodge the parts she didn't want to share, like her parents disowning her or her time as a cleaner.

Though she was busy with training, she hadn't seen Levi in a while. He crossed her mind often, especially when she was pushing herself to improve. She wondered what he was up to and when she would get to see him again.

The Cadets were nice to her, making her feel welcomed. It was as if she had never left. She had grown particularly close to Armin, who had always been a good friend. Before her absence, they had often found themselves at the back during training, both struggling with physical challenges. They could relate to each other, which made their friendship genuine and supportive.

After months of hard work, graduation was just a day away. Everyone was talking about where they hoped to join next. Survey Corps, Garrison, or Military Police. Only the top ten would be allowed into the Military Police, and while she knew she didn't belong there, she was proud of how much she had improved. The idea of joining the Scouts excited her the most. It meant she could see her sister more often, and that made all the effort worth it.

The day before graduation, Y/N strolled alongside Armin as they headed back to the barracks. Their conversation came naturally, shifting between shared interests and memories from their time in training.

Suddenly, she stopped mid-sentence, her breath catching as she fixed her attention on a figure in the distance. Armin glanced at her, his brow furrowing in confusion. "Y/N? What's wrong?" He followed her line of sight, and his expression shifted as he spotted Captain Levi standing there, seemingly waiting for her.

The tension in the air thickened, and Armin quickly sensed that this was a moment he shouldn't interrupt. "Uh, I should go find Eren," he said, forcing a smile. "We'll talk later, okay?" He stepped back, casting a glance between Y/N and Levi before hurrying away, aware of the weight of the situation.

Y/N stepped closer to Levi, her heart pounding nervously. It had been months since they'd last seen each other, and their previous encounter had not ended well.

"Congratulations on your graduation tomorrow," Levi said, not sounding very proud.

Y/N felt momentarily set back by his words, as they almost sounded sarcastic. But she decided to brush it off completely, trying to focus on the positive. After all, she was about to graduate, a milestone she had worked hard for despite the odds stacked against her. "Thank you. I've improved since we last met."

Levi's attention barely flickered, his expression as cold and unreadable as always. "Improved, huh?" He tilted his head slightly, his eyes scanning her. "You really think a few months of training is enough to handle what's out there?"

Y/N was a little thrown off by his response, but she shook it off once again. "I've been working hard," she said. "I know it's risky, but I feel ready. I've made a lot of progress."

Levi's eyes narrowed, his arms crossing in front of him. "You've come a long way? Sure, maybe. But you're still far from ready. Excitement or effort won't keep you alive when you're surrounded by Titans. You're still too naïve."

Y/N's jaw clenched. The harshness of his words stirred the frustration she had been trying to suppress. "Why do you always do this?" she shot back. "Why can't you just admit I've gotten better? I'm not the same person who left the Training Corps a few years ago."

"This isn't about just improving, Y/N," he said. "It's about surviving. And right now, you're not ready for that out there. You're trying to prove something to your family, to everyone else, but all you're doing is putting yourself at risk."

Her hands clenched into fists at her sides. "It's not just about proving myself! I want to fight because I believe in it. I want to stand beside all of you because I know I can." She glared at him with frustration. "Why can't you see that?"

Levi's expression hardened. "Tch. You're too emotional. That'll get you killed. This isn't some fairy tale, Y/N. It's reality, and right now, you're not ready for it." He exhaled sharply, frustration flickering in his eyes. "If you join the Survey Corps. You'll end up dead."

Her frustration boiled over, causing her voice to rise. "You don't believe in me at all, do you? After everything, you still think I'm just some weak girl who can't do anything right! Even when I worked for you, you always found something to complain about."

Levi's expression remained cold, but something flickered in his eyes. Regret? Concern? She couldn't tell. "You need to see the reality of this. Why can't you understand that? The truth is, you're not ready. You can barely hold on your own."

Her fists clenched tighter, nails digging into her palms as she fought back the urge to scream.

"I'm not the same! I've worked harder than ever! I've given everything!" She felt her voice falter slightly.

"Let's be honest for a moment. The only reason you're back in the Training Corps is because Commander Erwin insisted. It's likely because we're short on men. If it weren't for him, you'd still be stuck as a maid."

Y/N felt like she had been punched in the gut. Her breath caught in her throat, and she stared at Levi in disbelief. The way he had said it, like her efforts, the formation strategy she had planned, her determination, meant nothing. As if she was only there due to a lack of scouts and not because she had any potential or skill.

"So that's what you think of me?" Y/N's voice trembled. "That I'm only here because you needed more people? That I don't deserve this?"

Levi stayed silent for a moment, his eyes locked on hers. Finally, he sighed, his voice softer. "I'm just stating the facts."

The pain in Y/N's chest grew but it was quickly turning into anger. "I've worked hard. I've pushed myself to my limit. I've given everything. And you—" her voice cracked "you still think I don't deserve to be here?"

Levi's expression softened, just for a second, but his tone stayed firm. "If you can't handle the truth, then maybe you're not ready for the Scouts."

Those words shattered what little hope Y/N had left. She fought to hold back the tears burning her eyes. Without another word, she turned on her heel and walked away, every step heavier than the last. Levi didn't stop her, but his expression was unreadable, like he knew he'd gone too far.

As Y/N made her way back to the barracks, Levi's words replayed in her head, each one more painful than the last. She had always looked up to him, admired his strength, his resolve. At one point, she thought of him as a friend. Now, all she felt was betrayal.

When she returned to the barracks, she pushed open the door and entered the room, trying to hold herself together. She couldn't break down now, not in front of everyone. But as soon as she stepped inside, she was greeted by the girls, but their smiles quickly faded when they saw Y/N's expression.

"Y/N, are you okay?" Christa asked full of concern.

Y/N forced a smile, trying to brush it off. "I'm alright. I just had a long day."

But the girls weren't buying it. Sasha stepped forward, her usual carefree personality replaced with genuine worry "You don't look like it's just a long day," she said, "Did something happen?"

Y/N hesitated, not wanting to burden them with her troubles. "It's nothing. Just... training, that's all."

Ymir raised an eyebrow, clearly not buying it. "You sure about that? You look like you're about to punch something—or someone."

Christa stepped forward, her voice gentle. "You can talk to us, Y/N. We're your friends. We're here for you."

The sincerity in her voice nearly broke through Y/N's defenses, but she still couldn't bring herself to talk about the fight with Levi. "It's really nothing, just a misunderstanding," she mumbled, trying to keep her tone light.

Mikasa's expression hardened, her protective nature kicking in. "I'm strong. If someone is bothering you, I can take care of it." Her tone was serious, and the cold, determined look in her eyes made it clear that she wasn't joking.

Y/N couldn't help but feel a small spark of warmth in her heart at their concern. She shook her head again, this time with more resolve. "It's ok Mikasa. You don't need to do that. I can handle it."

The girls exchanged glances, their worry still evident, but they respected her decision not to talk about it for now.

Sasha, trying to lighten the mood, grinned and nudged Y/N gently. "Hey, if you ever need to take out some frustration, we can always sneak into the kitchen for some extra rations."

Y/N couldn't help but laugh. A small but genuine laugh. "I'll keep that in mind, Sasha."

...

Levi searched for Anna, and after a few minutes he found her in the stables as she brushed her horse. The sound of the brush moving against the horse's coat was the only noise in the quiet space. Levi observed her for a moment before stepping forward.

"Anna," he called out, his voice cutting through the silence.

She glanced up briefly, acknowledging him with a nod before returning to her task. "Oh, Captain. How are you?"

Levi leaned against the stable door, his arms crossed over his chest. He wasn't one for small talk, so he got straight to the point. "I wanted to talk to you about your sister."

Anna's hand paused mid-stroke, but she didn't look at him. "What about her?"

Levi watched her closely. "She rejoined the Training Corps a while back. Took some convincing on Commander Erwin's part, but she was allowed to return."

This time, Anna's reaction was more noticeable. Her back stiffened, and she slowly turned to face him, her eyes narrowing slightly. "Convincing? Why would Commander Erwin go out of his way for her?"

"She left the Training Corps a few years ago, didn't she? Couldn't keep up, ended up working at my office...."

Anna's expression hardened, but she didn't interrupt, letting him continue.

"Erwin saw something in her," Levi went on, his tone matter-of-fact. "He believes she has potential, something worth developing. That she could be useful for the Survey Corps. So he

pushed for her to come back, made it clear she should be given another chance to prove herself."

Anna scoffed, her eyes flashing with something like disdain. "And did she? Prove herself, I mean."

Levi tilted his head slightly, considering his words. "Well, yeah. She is graduating tomorrow."

That piece of information seemed to hit Anna harder than anything else he had said. For a moment, she looked genuinely surprised, her composure slipping. But then, just as quickly, she masked it with indifference.

"Graduating, huh?" Her voice was flat, emotionless. "Well, good for her."

Levi wasn't convinced by her tone. He could tell there was more beneath the surface, but he wasn't the type to snoop around deeper than necessary. Still, he felt the need to push a little, to find out how Anna felt about all of this.

"She's your sister," he reminded her, his voice carrying a subtle warning. "You don't sound too happy for her."

Anna's eyes met his, her expression icy. "She made her choices, Captain. I'm not obligated to be happy about them."

Levi studied her for a moment longer, noting the tension in her posture, the sharpness in her tone. There was something there, something that didn't sit right with him, but he couldn't quite put his finger on it. He wasn't about to get into their family drama, though. It wasn't his place.

"Just thought you should know," he said finally, pushing off the stable door. "She'll be in the Scouts soon enough."

"To be honest, I thought you'd be more worried about her safety. You're her older sister, after all." Levi said as he held the door open.

Anna didn't respond, her attention seemingly back on her horse, but the way she gripped the brush a little too tightly didn't escape Levi's notice. He gave her one last look before turning and walking away, an uneasy feeling settling in his gut.

As he left the stables, Levi couldn't shake the thought that Anna's reaction was far from what it should have been. He wondered briefly if he had misread the situation, but dismissed it with a shake of his head. Reading people was never his strong suit, and he had other things to worry about.

But even as he tried to put it out of his mind, the conversation lingered, a reminder that there was more to Y/N's return and her relationship with her sister than at first glance.

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Don't worry. I'm not rewriting the entire Battle of Trost 💀😓 Levi and Y/N reunite again at the end of this chapter.

The graduation ceremony finally came. Y/N stood in line with the other cadets, all of them standing at attention as the top 10 were announced: Mikasa, Reiner, Bertholdt, Annie, Eren, Jean, Marco, Connie, Sasha, and Christa.

Those ten were given the option to join the Military Police. Y/N wasn't part of that group, but she didn't mind. She was proud just to be standing there, having made it through. It was something to be proud of. After one last salute, they were dismissed. It was over.

Everyone made their way to the mess hall, a sense of relief in the air. Conversations filled the room as people talked about which branch they'd be joining: the Garrison, Survey Corps, or Military Police.

Most people didn't seem too excited about the Survey Corps, except for Eren, who was loudly insisting he didn't go through all that training just to hide in the interior—he wanted to kill Titans. Thomas tried to calm him down, saying it was impossible, but Eren was fired up. After giving his reasons, he stormed out, with Mikasa and Armin trailing after him.

A few minutes later, Armin came back and sat down next to Y/N.

“Is Eren okay?” she asked, a bit concerned.

Armin smiled softly. “Yeah, he's fine. Just being Eren.”

Y/N smiled back. “Good to hear.”

After a brief pause, Armin turned to her. “Congrats on graduating, Y/N,” he said, his smile widening.

“Thanks,” she replied, feeling warm at his sincerity.

“What branch are you joining?” he asked, his tone curious.

“The Survey Corps,” Y/N answered without hesitation.

Armin's eyes widened in surprise. “Really? You had great scores. Wouldn't the Garrison be a better fit for you? And... safer?”

Y/N shrugged. "My sister's always been my inspiration. I want to help humanity, help take back Wall Maria..." She glanced down at her hands. "Besides... it was part of the deal to let me rejoin the Training Corps."

There was a quiet moment between them, but Y/N quickly broke it with a question of her own. "What about you, Armin? Which branch?"

"I've dreamed about seeing the world outside the walls for as long as I can remember. So... Scouts for me too."

Y/N laughed. "You're joining the Scouts with your test scores too? Guess we're both crazy."

Armin chuckled, and they shared a moment of light laughter, both knowing they were stepping into something far bigger than themselves.

The rest of the night went by in a blur of talking and saying goodbyes. Y/N felt excitement and nervous at the same time. Graduating didn't feel real yet, but the thought of what came next was starting to sink in. As the mess hall emptied, she headed to her bunk, her mind wandering to the Survey Corps and what was waiting for her. Sleep didn't come easily, with thoughts of Titans, and missions on her mind.

The next morning came quickly, and before dawn, the Survey Corps had already gathered outside. A crowd had formed, watching the soldiers prepare for their next expedition. Y/N stood with the other cadets. Murmurs spread through the group as they spotted the elite soldiers, especially Levi.

"Did you see him? That's Captain Levi," one cadet whispered, eyes wide with admiration. "I heard he's as strong as a whole brigade."

Y/N kept her head down, not joining in with the excited whispers. She didn't want to look at him, not after all the arguments. The memory of his words still stung, making her chest tighten. She didn't know how she felt anymore. If angry, embarrassed, or just tired of it all.

Levi, however, didn't seem to share the same hesitation. His eyes swept over the crowd and quickly found her, even with her head lowered. But he didn't linger. With the mission ahead, he dismissed her just as easily as he had before.

The crowd eventually thinned out, and Y/N was left with her thoughts as the day moved on. After the excitement of graduation and the tension in the air, it felt surreal to shift back into daily duties so quickly. That day everyone was assigned to various tasks around Trost District. Y/N and a small group of cadets were sent to clean and maintain the cannons stationed along the wall.

She found herself working alongside Marco, Jean, Christa, and Daz. The group was in a good mood, even though some were still unsure about which branch to join. Each cadet was excited to talk about their plans now that they had graduated.

Jean, as usual, was talking loudly about his decision to join the Military Police. "I can't wait to live in the inner city," he said with a smug grin. "Life's easy there."

Y/N let out a small laugh. “Maybe, but the people there can be awful. All they do is talk badly about each other and treat everyone like dirt.”

Jean raised an eyebrow. “Oh yeah? And what would you know about the inner city?” he teased, his tone playful but with a bit of an edge.

Y/N just smiled, choosing not to engage too much. Jean wasn’t finished, though. “You’re just bitter you didn’t make the top 10, huh? Military Police isn’t even an option for you.”

Before Y/N could respond, Christa cut in, trying to calm things down. “Jean, don’t be so harsh.”

But Jean just shrugged. “I’m just saying the truth.”

Y/N, keeping her smile, brushed it off. “It’s fine. I was always planning to join the Scouts anyway.”

Jean chuckled again. “The Scouts? Didn’t know you were in such a rush to become Titan bait.”

She let his comment slide once again, focusing on her task as Jean turned his attention back to Marco, continuing to talk about his future plans. The conversation was background noise to Y/N as she went back to work, trying to ignore the nagging feeling of dread that always came with thinking about Titans.

That was when it happened.

A bright flash of light. Intense heat. A gust of wind so powerful it nearly knocked them all off the wall. They all stumbled, barely catching themselves as the ground shook beneath them. The air was hot, almost burning, and they had to shield their faces.

Without warning, Y/N and Daz lost their balance and fell from the wall. Instinct kicked in, and Y/N quickly fired her ODM gear into the side of the structure. Her heart raced as she dangled there, trying to catch her breath and process what had just happened.

Then, she saw it. The Colossal Titan.

Her blood froze. The towering figure loomed above the wall, its massive body terrifying. The wall trembled beneath them, making it hard to hold onto the cables. Y/N glanced at the breach, and her stomach sank.

The wall had been destroyed. Titans were pouring into Trost.

Christa and Daz gasped, and Y/N brought her hand to her mouth in shock. Jean’s voice came out in a whisper, barely audible. “No... this can’t be happening.”

In what felt like a heartbeat, the Colossal Titan vanished, leaving a hole behind. The destruction was done, and now the city was exposed.

Y/N and the others barely had time to process what had happened before they were called back to headquarters. Panic spread through the cadets like wildfire. Some were so overwhelmed they started throwing up. The fear in the room was almost overwhelming, but Y/N did her best to stay calm. She couldn't afford to lose her head now.

Captain Kitz from the Garrison entered with a grim expression. He quickly explained the formation and the situation: they needed to defend the wall until the evacuation was complete.

Y/N was assigned to a group in the middle, positioned between the front and rear. Her hands shook slightly as she prepared herself.

...

Y/N's team quickly spread out, and she launched herself into the air, using her ODM gear to navigate through the chaos. The sky above darkened, as if it would rain soon.

As she maneuvered through the remains of the district. She kept her eyes on the streets, making sure the path remained clear for the civilians fleeing the city. Just as she was guiding a group of terrified residents toward the evacuation exit, she spotted Mikasa nearby. With a quick maneuver, she landed next to her.

"Mikasa, is everything going as planned?" Y/N asked, slightly out of breath, scanning the area for any sign of danger.

"There was a setback," Mikasa said, calm and firm regardless of the chaos around them. "A greedy man with a cart was blocking the way, but it's taken care of now."

Y/N nodded, feeling relieved.

"Is everyone out?" Mikasa asked.

"Yes. I'm sure of it. But I need to find the supply team soon. I'm almost out of gas," Y/N admitted worried.

Mikasa gave a brief nod before Y/N took off again. She moved quickly through the district, now finding the streets empty.

Suddenly there was a scream, and Y/N's eyes widened as she heard it. She stopped on one of the rooftops, scanning the area, and then her eyes landed on a Titan looming ominously near a house.

She squinted, trying to see what was happening. A mother was trapped inside, holding her baby and panicking. Y/N hesitated for a moment, unsure of what to do. Her gas tank was almost empty, but the urge to help pushed her fear away. She launched herself onto a nearby rooftop, using the last of her gas.

Y/N's eyes focused on the Titan in front of her. It's awkward attempts to reach the scared mother filled her with dread, and the screams echoed painfully in her ears. She gripped the handles of her swords tightly, her hands shaking, knuckles white from the effort. The Titan's

huge height and her low gas supply made it feel almost impossible to attack. Panic filled her mind, making it hard to think clearly.

Y/N sheathed her swords and descended to the ground, waving her arms to draw the Titan's attention away from the mother.

“Hey! Over here!” she shouted, her voice cutting through the chaos. The Titan turned, its focus now on her, sending a chill down her spine. As it began walking toward her, Y/N turned and ran, the Titan following closely behind.

“Get out of here! Now!” she yelled at the mother, urgency in her voice as she sprinted through the narrow streets.

Without hesitation, the mother grabbed her baby and sprinted from the house.

Y/N's heart pounded in her chest as she sprinted through the narrow streets, the ground trembling under the steps of the Titan behind her. She quickly scanned the area, eyes darting from building to building, searching for an open door. Spotting one just ahead, she calculated the distances in her head and stopped running a few meters before the entrance.

She shot both of her grappling hooks horizontally, securing them to the walls on either side of the street. Her breathing was rapid, her hands trembling as she detached the Main Unit from her ODM gear, leaving it hovering just above the ground. Holding her swords tightly, Y/N ran into the house, dashing up the stairs two at a time. She reached the window, throwing it open and pressing her back against the wall beside it.

Y/N risked a glance through the window, seeing the Titan slowly turning the corner, blocking out the light as it approached. She bit her lip, praying that her plan would work. The Titan's heavy footfalls grew louder, closer.

Suddenly, it tripped over the Main Unit, one of the grappling hooks detaching from the wall under the weight. The Titan stumbled and fell forward, crashing onto the ground.

Y/N didn't waste a moment. She leaped from the window, swords drawn, and with a swift, precise strike, she sliced through the Titan's nape. She landed on its back, breathless and momentarily stunned that her plan had actually worked. But there was no time to celebrate. Titans could be lurking nearby, and she was out of gas.

Finding her Main Unit on the ground, she quickly reattached it to her ODM gear and shot her grappling hooks toward the nearest rooftop. The wires slipped slightly under her weight, but Y/N remembered her training. She used every ounce of strength to climb, pulling herself up until she reached the top.

Sitting down, she took a moment to catch her breath, her mind still reeling from what had just happened. A small smile crept onto her face as realization dawned on her. “My first Titan kill,” she whispered to herself, disbelief and pride mixing in her voice. The smile widened, and before she knew it, she was on her feet, jumping in excitement. “I did it!” she screamed happily.

Just then, she spotted Marco in the distance, part of her team. Waving her arms as she called out to him.

Marco saw her and quickly made his way to her rooftop. "Y/N! Is everything okay?" he shouted relieved.

"Marco! I'm out of gas," she explained, still catching her breath from the adrenaline rush.

"I'm almost out of gas too," Marco replied with a concerned expression. "I've been looking for the supply team, but I haven't found them yet."

Y/N nodded, understanding the gravity of their situation. Without a second thought, Marco offered to carry her as they continued their search. They moved from rooftop to rooftop, until they finally spotted a group of cadets gathered on a distant roof.

Marco landed softly, Y/N still holding on as they joined the others, finally stepping down together.

The withdrawal signal had been fired a few minutes ago, and yet, no one climbed up to the walls. The supply team had likely run into complications, leaving everyone stranded. Y/N sat on the rooftop with the other trainees.

She began to walk around on the rooftop, her mind racing with thoughts of the lives she had saved and those she couldn't. Then, her eyes fell on Armin sitting alone, looking distressed. Concerned, she walked over to him and knelt down to his level.

"Armin, are you alright?" Armin didn't respond.

"Where's the rest of your team? Wasn't Eren with you?" she asked gently, trying not to act worried.

Armin's expression grew even more troubled, his hands trembling slightly. Y/N's heart sank as realization washed over her.

"Eren... and the rest of your team... they're all gone, aren't they?" she whispered.

...

Erwin rode up to where Levi stood, while surrounded by other scouts. Petra was right beside him, her face pale after losing one of their comrades. "Levi," Erwin said. "We're pulling back."

Levi narrowed his eyes in disbelief. "Pulling back? We can't just give up. Are my men dying for nothing?"

"The Titans are moving north, towards town."

Levi's breath caught in his throat. Petra gasped beside him.

“Just like five years ago...” Erwin continued, his tone serious. “Something’s happening in town. The wall... may have fallen,” he muttered, and the weight of his words pressed heavily on Levi.

Without hesitating, Levi and the others began to ride. As they moved, Hange trotted up next to Levi, a teasing smile on her face.

“So, Levi,” she said, her tone light despite the tension. “Worried about the love of your life?”

Levi didn’t look at her, keeping his expression as cold as ever. “What nonsense are you talking about now, four eyes?” he replied.

Hange chuckled, moving her horse closer. “Come on, it’s obvious. I’ve never seen you care so much about someone’s training.”

“If by ‘care’ you mean the bare minimum attention I give her, then you’re more delusional than I thought,” Levi shot back, his eyes fixed on the path ahead.

Hange laughed, but her look was sharp. “Levi, I’ve known you long enough to see through you. You’ve never acted like this with anyone else.”

Levi tightened his grip on the reins. “My relationship with Y/N is strictly professional,” he said, still focused on the road.

Hange grinned. “Who said I was talking about Y/N?”

For a moment, silence fell between them. Levi nudged his horse forward, picking up the pace to create some space.

Hange’s smile widened as she shook her head, her voice light. “You’re not as hard to read as you think.”

Levi brushed her off, but her words lingered in his mind. Was it really like that? No way. He was just... careful. That was it. If Y/N messed up, Erwin would probably blame him. That’s why he was invested. Nothing more.

But even as he tried to convince himself, doubt nagged at him. His thoughts wandered back to her. How she had worked her way back into the Training Corps and graduated. She had even created a formation for the scouts and put in all her effort. He had to admit, it was impressive.

Levi shook his head, trying to clear his mind. This wasn’t the time to get distracted. His squad was counting on him. He glanced at them, his eyes landing on Anna, who rode with a calm expression. She seemed so composed, almost indifferent. Did she not care that her sister might be in danger? What was going on in her mind? Her reaction to Y/N’s graduation and joining the Scouts had seemed off. Why had she looked so... annoyed? It didn’t make sense.

The squad moved quickly towards town, the walls of Trost coming into view. As they got closer, the Survey Corps spotted a huge boulder blocking the gate. Their breath caught as they all stared in disbelief.

Commander Erwin's voice broke through the shock. "Switch to ODM gear! Get to the other side, now!"

The Scouts followed orders without hesitating, shooting their grappling hooks as they climbed the wall. Levi reached the top first and spotted a huge Titan slumped in front of the boulder. Eren, Armin, and Mikasa were close by, looking just as shocked.

Suddenly, two Titans came lumbering toward them. Levi shot forward, diving down with deadly speed. In one smooth motion, he sliced through the napes of both Titans, their bodies collapsing as he landed on their backs.

He turned to the trio below him. "Hey, brats," he called out. "What the hell is going on?"

Before they could respond, Eren's eyes rolled back, and he went limp, collapsing into Mikasa's arms.

"Eren!" Mikasa shouted, panic in her voice as she caught him, holding him tightly.

Levi narrowed his eyes as he took in the scene. He noticed the fear and exhaustion on their faces, but something else caught his attention. He looked at Armin, who was still kneeling on the ground, watching Mikasa hold Eren.

That's when it clicked. Armin was Y/N's friend. The one he had seen her talking to that night.

"Hey, you," Levi called out. Armin looked up, his blue eyes wide with fear and fatigue. He trembled slightly under Levi's intense stare.

Levi wasted no time. He leaped down, landing in front of Armin. Without thinking, he grabbed the boy by the collar and lifted him off the ground.

"Where's Y/N?" Levi asked, urgency in his voice.

Armin stuttered in fear. "I—I don't know," he managed, his voice shaky.

Levi's grip tightened, his expression hardening. "What do you mean you don't know?"

Armin struggled to speak, his breath quickening. "I—I... everything happened so fast. The Colossal Titan breached the wall... people were evacuating... Eren turned into a Titan. We were trying to seal the wall, but the plan didn't work at first. We were all scattered, fighting for our lives. I—I have no idea where Y/N is. We didn't have a clear formation..."

A knot of dread twisted in Levi's stomach, panic creeping into his chest. It felt raw and intense, gnawing at him with every second that passed.

"Tch," Levi said frustrated as he let go of Armin, letting him drop back to the ground.

He launched into the air with his ODM gear, scanning the chaotic battlefield below. His heart pounded as he searched for any sign of Y/N. Every face he saw, every cadet in uniform who wasn't her, only deepened the anxiety twisting in his gut.

He landed beside a group of training cadets. “Have any of you brats seen Y/N?” he asked, his voice coming out harsher than he intended.

The cadets exchanged nervous looks, fear clear in their eyes. One by one, they shook their heads. Each negative answer felt like another blow to Levi’s already fraying nerves. He clenched his teeth, frustrated with their responses, and continued his search.

Dread twisted in his stomach, spreading through him like poison. The longer he went without finding her, the more desperate he became. His breath quickened, and his chest tightened with a sense of fear he hadn’t felt in years. He moved from one cadet to the next, asking if they had seen Y/N. Most of them shook their heads or answered uncertainly, making his anxiety grow even more.

Using his ODM gear, he searched the city, scanning the streets, rooftops, and alleyways. As he moved through the air, his instincts took over, and he started slicing through Titans in his way, trying to release the tension building in his chest. But even that didn’t ease the fear gnawing at him. The city felt endless, and the thought of her lying somewhere, hurt or worse, tormented him.

Levi landed on a rooftop, clutching his chest as he realized his breathing had turned ragged. He still couldn’t find her anywhere. Guilt crept in, reminding him of their last conversation. He had made her feel like she didn’t belong, like her efforts didn’t matter. And now, she might be gone. He had always known that the military wasn’t the right place for someone like her.

An abnormal Titan charged at him, jumping from a distance with its mouth wide open, ready to attack. But Levi didn’t flinch. Without looking, he moved quickly and sliced through its nape, watching it collapse to the ground. He stood there, fists clenched so tightly his knuckles turned white, his hands shaking. She was too young to die. He wanted her to live. He was so tired of losing people. But why was he feeling this way? It had been years since someone’s death affected him like this. So why now?

A hissing sound broke through his thoughts. Levi’s eyes snapped back to the abnormal Titan he had just killed. Gas was escaping from its stomach. Something he had never seen before. He tightened his grip on his sword, ready to attack if needed. But then he noticed a sword sticking out of the Titan’s belly. Stunned, he watched as the blade slowly sliced through the flesh, creating an opening. Fluid poured out, followed by what looked like a person.

Y/N rolled out of the Titan’s stomach, landing on her hands and knees. She gasped for air, coughing violently as she struggled to breathe.

Levi couldn’t believe what he was seeing. He descended from the rooftop, walking slowly, still in shock. Y/N stayed on the ground, her hands and knees pressed into the mud as she kept coughing. She was drenched in Titan fluid, her hair and uniform soaked through.

He stopped just a step in front of her, staring in disbelief. Y/N finally looked up, realizing the captain was standing there. His expression was a mix of shock, worry, and relief.

“Sir... you’re ba—” she started to say, but Levi didn’t let her finish. He dropped to his knees in the puddle of stomach fluid and wrapped his arms around her tightly. He didn’t care about the mess or how she smelled. He just needed to hold her close.

Y/N’s eyes widened in surprise, confusion washing over her. Everything had happened so fast. She could feel Levi’s arms trembling and hear his heavy breathing as he hugged her even tighter. It was maybe too tight, but she didn’t say anything. She sensed that he wasn’t okay, so she stayed quiet, not questioning what was happening.

They remained there in silence, the only sound around them was the slow, steady calming of Levi’s breath.

As Levi’s breathing finally steadied, he began to collect his thoughts. He wasn’t sure how to break the embrace, still processing what had just happened. But one thing became clear to him, even if he didn’t want to fully admit it yet.

He did have feelings for Y/N.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Look at what @01Alessandra did for me 🥺 <https://pin.it/5ZxMXEDRP> She looks so pretty! Thank you again! You are so sweet 😊❤️

"Protect him at all costs!" Dietrich's voice cut through the chaos. "Protect Eren until he reaches the gate, even if it costs you your life. Don't let any Titans near him!"

"Don't let them interfere! Protect Eren!" Jean shouted to Y/N, Marco, Connie, and Annie. His voice pulled them back to reality.

They jumped from the wall and followed Dietrich's command. As they spread out, they attacked the Titans, closing in on Eren.

The battlefield was a complete chaos. People were dying left and right, devoured by Titans. Y/N's heart raced as she witnessed Dietrich being swallowed by a Titan right before her eyes. Her stomach twisted, but she forced herself to focus. There was no time for this.

Y/N glided through the air with her ODM gear. The screams of the dying filled her ears, but she pushed forward, determined to see this through.

Suddenly, a loud crash echoed, followed by Eren's scream as he dropped the boulder into place, sealing the breached wall. Everything seemed to freeze. Y/N and the others stared in disbelief, almost unable to process the reality.

"Everyone... your deaths weren't in vain," Rico whispered to herself, shooting a green flare into the sky to signal their success.

A smile spread across Y/N's face as relief washed over her. They had done it. She jumped from the rooftop, activating her ODM gear, ready to regroup with everyone else, when something in the corner of her eye caught her attention.

An abnormal Titan was standing on a nearby rooftop, its eyes locked onto her. Time seemed to slow as Y/N, still in mid-air, realized what would happen. The Titan leaped from the roof, its massive body hurtling toward her with its mouth wide open.

She barely had a moment to react. Her smile twisted into a look of pure terror as the Titan's jaws closed around her. Y/N screamed as she was swallowed whole, sliding down the Titan's throat and landing with a splash in its stomach fluids.

Gasping for air, she poked her head out of the fluid, her entire body shaking with panic. The stench inside the Titan's stomach was unbearable, and she nearly vomited as she tried to

catch her breath. Y/N felt the remains of other cadets around her, those who hadn't been as lucky. She started to scream for help but quickly realized it was useless. No one would hear her from inside the Titan.

"I can't die like this," she told herself, her voice trembling with fear. She hadn't come this far just to end up as another meal.

In the pitch-black darkness, she felt around her torso and found her swords still attached to her gear. A glimmer of hope sparked in her chest. Drawing one of the blades, she stabbed at the Titan's stomach with all her strength. The skin stretched but didn't puncture. She tried again and again, each attempt failing as she kept falling back into the stomach fluid with every movement of the Titan. The tissue was too loose.

Suddenly, a risky idea struck her. It was desperate, but she had no other choice. She was starting to feel lightheaded from the lack of oxygen, and her time was running out.

Taking a deep breath, Y/N detached both gas canisters from her ODM gear and opened the valves fully, releasing the gas into the Titan's stomach at a rapid pace. She squeezed her eyes shut as the gas filled the confined space, holding her breath with all her might. The pressure inside the Titan's stomach began to build, the skin growing tighter.

Grabbing her sword again, Y/N mustered her strength and thrust it toward the stomach wall, but before the blade could reach the skin, the Titan moved, causing her to lose her balance and fall back into the fluid.

Instinctively, she screamed as she fell, the Titan's unpredictable movements worsening her situation. Then, suddenly, everything stopped. The Titan collapsed, likely killed by someone outside, she thought.

She was nearly unconscious. Her vision blurred as she pushed through the pain and disorientation, blindly thrusting her sword in what she hoped was the right direction. To her shock, the blade finally punctured through. Gas started escaping through the small hole.

With a final burst of strength, Y/N slashed her sword through the Titan's stomach, creating an opening. Stomach fluid poured out, and she, with it, spilled onto the ground. She landed on her hands and knees, gasping for air and coughing violently.

After a few moments, she managed to catch her breath and look up. Her eyes met Levi's.

...

Levi kept Y/N close, the world around them fading as they shared that brief moment of quiet regardless of the chaos. It felt like time had stopped, though in reality, only a couple of minutes had passed. Neither of them wanted to break the silence.

As Levi embraced her, Y/N felt a whirlwind of emotions inside. Relief at being alive battled with the exhaustion that left her feeling weak and unsure of how to respond to this sudden closeness.

Confusion clouded her thoughts, especially since their last encounter had ended in a fight. This entire situation didn't make sense. Until now, he had never let her get this close, let alone hug her. On top of that, she was covered in stomach fluid and reeked, yet Levi seemed unfazed.

Her body and neck were stiff from tension, but cautiously, unsure of herself, she relaxed slightly, resting her chin against Levi's shoulder. The rapid beat of his heart through their uniforms made her blush, and she kept her eyes half-open, battling exhaustion. In his arms, she felt an unexpected sense of safety.

"Y/N!" a voice suddenly called out, shattering the moment. Both of them tensed, and Levi instinctively pushed Y/N away just in time as Armin appeared at the entrance of the alley.

Armin's eyes widened in shock at the sight of Y/N on the ground. "You're alive!" he exclaimed, rushing over and dropping to his knees beside her.

Levi stood up and took a few steps back to give them space. Y/N looked up at Armin, forcing a smile despite her exhaustion and pain. "I've been better," she said, her voice barely a whisper.

Armin looked at her for a moment, concern on his face, before gently asking, "Are you okay? What happened?"

Y/N nodded weakly. "I'll be fine. Just... give me a minute." After a brief pause, she asked, "Mikasa and Eren... are they okay?"

Armin's expression grew grim as he replied, "Mikasa's fine, but... the Military Police came and took Eren."

Levi's attention snapped back to them, surprise flashing across his face. "The Military Police?"

Armin nodded, looking up at Levi. "Yes, they arrived shortly after the breach was sealed. They said they were taking Eren for questioning."

Levi's expression hardened. "Where did they take him?"

"I'm not sure," Armin replied, worry creeping into his voice. "But I think they might be bringing him back to the city. They were questioning his motives, and there's talk of—"

"Execution," Levi finished, his voice cold. Without another word, he turned and activated his ODM gear, leaving the alley with urgency.

Y/N remained on the ground, still processing what had just happened, confusion swirling in her mind.

...

A few days had passed since the chaos at Trost, and Y/N walked through the busy streets of the city, her head down as she moved through the crowd. She tried to push her thoughts away,

but they kept coming back. Memories of the recent events flooded her mind.

She had somehow survived being swallowed by a Titan, a miracle that still left her in disbelief. The Trost District had been retaken, but not without significant loss. The haunting image of Marco's lifeless body, among countless others, lingered in her mind. The task of collecting the dead bodies had been grueling.

Then, there was Eren's trial, an event that had nearly cost him his life. Although she hadn't been invited, Armin had filled her in on the details afterward. Eren had been handed over to the Survey Corps, where he now trained with the Special Operations Squad, testing his Titan abilities at an old Scout Regiment headquarters hidden within Wall Rose.

Y/N felt lonely all of a sudden as she thought about her sister, Anna. It had been too long since they last hung out. Anna was likely busy with Levi and his squad.

Levi... Just thinking about him made her face heat up. She blushed as memories of their embrace came back to her. So much had happened that she had almost forgotten that moment in the chaos. Now, in the calm afterward, embarrassment flooded her. What had she been thinking, resting her chin on his shoulder like that?

She stopped walking, suddenly aware of a few passersby staring at her as she covered her face with her hands, trying to hide her reddening cheeks. The noise of the city faded into the background as she tried to shake off her embarrassment.

Her hands slowly lowered as she continued walking, her thoughts still tangled. Why had Levi held her like that? It wasn't something she had expected from him, especially after all they had been through. Yet, in that moment, it had felt so natural, so right. But now, she couldn't help but wonder why. What had it meant?

Pushing the thoughts aside, Y/N made her way to the Titan Research field. Ever since the Survey Corps had managed to capture two Titans after the battle of Trost, Hange had spent most of her days with them. She had even given them names: Sawney and Beane. Every day, she invited Y/N to assist with the research.

As Y/N approached the site, her thoughts were abruptly interrupted by a scream. She flinched at the sound, hurrying toward its source. There, she saw Hange, spear in hand, charging at the two captured Titans, her face twisted with a mix of sorrow and determination.

"Commander, there's no need for you to scream," Moblit said, concerned, trying to calm her down.

"How can you expect me not to scream? Look at him! He's in complete agony!" Hange shouted as she pulled the spear out of Beane's body. "My poor Beane. I'm so sorry. Hang in there," she added before thrusting the spear again.

Y/N stood frozen, confusion and fear washing over her as she witnessed Hange's violent outburst. It was one thing to study Titans, but this... this felt wrong. She glanced over at Moblit, who seemed equally disturbed by what was happening.

Later, back at headquarters, the three of them sat in a heavy silence. Hange slumped in her chair, looking completely drained. "I can't ever do that again. I won't be able to handle it," she muttered.

"Well, at least now we know their only weak spot is their nape," Y/N said, trying to lighten the mood.

Hange sighed deeply, her eyes filling with tears as she took off her glasses to wipe her eyes. "My poor babies. Especially Beane... he was in so much pain."

Moblit and Y/N exchanged worried looks, listening as Hange spoke, her usual energy replaced by sadness. It took a while, but eventually, she started to regain some of her normal self.

After a long pause, Hange turned to Y/N, her curiosity returning. "So, what have you been up to lately?"

Y/N shrugged with a small smile. "Nothing much, to be honest."

Hange raised an eyebrow, surprised by her answer. "Really? I thought newly recruited members had to attend classes to learn about the new formation."

Y/N replied, "I attended them at first, but Commander Erwin said it wasn't necessary for me. Then he offered for me to join you and Moblit to help with research."

Hange smiled, her curiosity piqued. "Well, if you don't have any plans, why don't you join me tomorrow? You could stay with us and the Special Operations Squad at the old headquarters."

Y/N blinked, caught off guard. "I—I think I'd feel out of place..."

Hange waved her hand. "Oh, come on! You've graduated, and you've helped me a lot. You're one of us now. Plus, you could help with the research on Eren."

Y/N hesitated, feeling a bit uncertain. "Are you sure?"

"Of course I am!" Hange smiled wide. "It'll be fun!"

Y/N smiled back. "Alright, I'll join you."

The next day, Hange, Moblit, and Y/N made their way to the Former Survey Corps Headquarters. As they arrived, Y/N looked up at the building, surprised by how well-kept it was despite being abandoned for so long.

"This place is in really good shape for having been left alone," Y/N commented as they stepped inside.

Hange chuckled. "That's probably Levi's doing. I bet he had his squad deep clean everything."

Y/N nodded, a small smile creeping onto her face. “Yeah, that makes sense.”

Once they settled into the old headquarters, the atmosphere changed as they heard footsteps approaching. Tension filled the air as Levi and his squad entered the building. Eren walked next to Levi, looking tense, while the rest of the squad followed closely behind. They stopped short when they saw Hange, Moblit, and Y/N.

Levi’s eyes locked onto Y/N, then shifted to Hange. “What is *she* doing here?” he asked, irritated.

Y/N opened her mouth to respond, but Levi cut her off. “I wasn’t talking to you,” he snapped. His eyes stayed on Hange as he repeated his question, “What is she doing here?”

Hange remained calm, though her usual cheerfulness dimmed a bit. “Levi, chill out. Don’t be so harsh. I brought Y/N with me because she’s been helping with research. I thought she could be of use, especially with Eren’s situation.”

Levi’s expression darkened, his anger barely contained. “I told you it might be dangerous here, and you brought her?” His voice was low, but the way he spoke made everyone in the room shift uncomfortably. Eren looked down, unsure of where to focus his attention, while the rest of the squad exchanged uneasy glances.

Ignoring Y/N completely, Levi focused solely on Hange, his frustration evident. The tension in the room felt thick, and Y/N’s heart sank under the weight of Levi’s disapproval.

Finally, Levi turned his attention towards Y/N, looking her up and down. She wore a long-sleeved pale green dress, and she felt her face heat up under his intense stare. “What are you wearing?” he asked, sounding more accusatory than curious.

Y/N’s embarrassment washed over her as she realized what he meant. She had been so focused on helping Hange and settling into the new environment that she hadn’t even thought about her attire. She stared at the floor, avoiding his piercing look.

“Where’s your uniform?” Levi asked, his tone demanding an answer.

Y/N swallowed hard before speaking as she looked down. “It got ruined after the incident in Trost... I haven’t had a chance to get a new one yet.”

Levi’s eyes narrowed, and his lips pressed into a thin line. “So you can’t even use ODM gear while you’re here?”

Y/N stayed silent, the weight of his disappointment pressing down on her.

Levi scoffed softly, shaking his head. “Do yourself and the others a favor. Don’t get in the way,” he ordered, his tone as harsh as ever. “I’m not going to risk the lives of my squad to protect you if you get into trouble.”

His words stung, but Y/N forced herself to nod, knowing arguing would only make things worse. Levi’s cold expression didn’t change as he turned away, clearly finished with the conversation.

The rest of the squad stood there, unsure of what to do, until Anna, who had been lingering near the back, stepped forward.

She wrapped an arm around Y/N's shoulders, pulling her close in a reassuring gesture. "Don't worry," she said softly. "I'll be by your side the whole time." Her grin was warm and familiar, making Y/N feel a little better.

Y/N leaned into her sister's embrace, grateful for the comfort. Despite Levi's harsh words, having Anna by her side made her feel more secure.

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Levi gets jealous. He and Y/N spend a night together (not like that tho... at least not yet 😊)

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone who has read my work, left comments, and/or given kudos. It means so much to me, and I truly appreciate it! 🥰🥰💕

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Hange, Moblit, and Y/N had arrived not long ago, and while Hange immediately began chatting with the other members, Y/N found herself standing quietly off to the side. She watched the others with curiosity and uncertainty, still trying to adjust to the unfamiliar surroundings. Though she had been welcomed, there was still a lingering sense of being an outsider, a feeling that was hard to shake.

As she stood there, lost in thought, a familiar figure approached her with a warm smile. It was Petra, her bright eyes filled with kindness as she made her way over to where Y/N stood.

“Hey, Y/N,” Petra greeted her, her tone soft and friendly. “Remember me? We didn’t get to talk much during that one time at the bar.”

Y/N’s face lit up with a smile as she saw her. “Of course, I remember you, Petra,” she replied, her tone genuine. “Yeah, it was a busy evening. I didn’t expect so many people to be there.”

Petra chuckled, nodding in agreement as she stood beside Y/N. “It can get a bit overwhelming, can’t it? I’m glad we have the chance to talk now, though.” She glanced around briefly, making sure the others weren’t close enough to overhear their conversation before she continued. “How are you finding it here?”

Y/N let out a small sigh, her eyes briefly drifting toward where Levi was standing, talking with some of the other squad members. “It’s... different from what I’m used to. But I’m trying to adjust,” she admitted.

Petra gave her an understanding nod, her expression gentle. “It’s not easy, I know. But you’ll get used to it. And don’t worry too much about Levi. He’s tough on everyone.”

Y/N appreciated Petra's attempt to comfort her. "Thanks, Petra," she began, her voice wavering slightly. "I really appreciate you saying that because sometimes it feels like... well, like I'm not really welcome here." As she spoke, she could feel her eye slightly twitching.

Petra's brow furrowed slightly, and she placed a reassuring hand on Y/N's shoulder. "You are welcome here, Y/N. Don't let anyone make you feel otherwise. And if you ever need someone to talk to, I'm here for you."

Y/N felt a warmth spread through her chest at Petra's words. It was comforting to know that she wasn't entirely alone, that there were people like Petra who genuinely cared. "Thank you, Petra. I really appreciate that."

Their conversation continued, growing more comfortable as they shared small stories and experiences. Petra talked about some of the more lighthearted moments she had experienced with the squad, and Y/N found herself feeling comfortable around her.

After the break, everyone gathered outside again. Y/N and the others stood in a wide clearing near the old headquarters. Eren was testing his Titan-shifting abilities.

Y/N and Anna stood at a distance, watching the scene unfold from afar, while the rest of the squad gathered closely around Eren. Levi had explicitly told Anna to keep Y/N away from them, his stern expression making it clear that he didn't want her getting too close.

As they watched, the silence between the sisters grew heavy. Finally, Anna broke the silence, her voice slightly nervous as she spoke. "So..." She hesitated, then continued, "I heard that you graduated from the training cadets. You'll be joining the Scouts soon?"

Y/N's face lit up with a smile, happiness evident in her expression. "Yeah, I'm really happy about that," she said, her voice full of genuine excitement.

Anna tried to mirror her sister's enthusiasm, but her smile was awkward and didn't quite reach her eyes. Y/N noticed that something seemed off but decided to ignore it, not wanting to dampen the moment.

Anna cleared her throat, trying to find the right words. "How... how did you manage to learn to use ODM gear after, well, you know... being horrible at it?"

Y/N chuckled softly, the memory of her early struggles with the gear not as painful as it once was. "Levi trained me in a different way, one that no one else had tried before," she explained simply.

Anna looked at her sister with confusion, clearly not satisfied with the vague answer. "But how did he teach you? I remember you couldn't even do the basics," she pressed, her tone insistent.

Y/N glanced to the side, thinking back to the intense training sessions with Levi. It had been grueling, but something had finally clicked for her. After a moment, she spoke again, her voice softer. "I'm not sure, but... I think it was when I realized that we basically use the same

muscles and similar techniques as when we ride horses. Once I focused on that instead of, you know, what was beneath me... everything started to make sense.”

Anna stared at her in silence, processing the explanation. Y/N continued, now looking directly at her sister. “Do you remember when you taught me how to ride horses? And how we used to ride in the inner district when we were kids?” A fond smile tugged at Y/N’s lips as she recalled those memories. “It’s one of the happiest memories I have.”

She remained silent, her expression unreadable. Sensing the tension, Y/N nudged her sister’s side with her elbow, trying to lighten the mood. “So I guess I also owe it to you for learning how to use ODM gear,” she added with a chuckle.

Anna’s smile was still awkward, but it softened as she wrapped her arm around Y/N’s shoulders, pulling her closer. “Well, you better use that knowledge to good use now that you’re joining the Scouts,” she teased, her usual demeanor finally starting to return.

Their conversation was suddenly interrupted by a loud crash. Eren’s Titan form had collapsed onto the ground, steam hissing as it began to dissipate. Y/N’s eyes widened in concern. “What’s going on?” she asked, worry creeping into her voice.

Anna quickly reassured her, her tone calm and experienced. “It’s just over-exhaustion. It happens almost every day,” she explained, though there was a hint of sympathy in her voice as she watched the scene.

Y/N felt a pang of sympathy for Eren as well. She watched as Oluo and Gunther climbed onto the back of the Titan, carefully retrieving Eren’s unconscious body from the rapidly evaporating flesh. Petra, who had been watching from a distance, noticed Anna and Y/N standing nearby and signaled for them to come closer.

As they approached, Y/N watched with a mix of curiosity and concern as Gunther carried Eren’s limp body away from the steaming remains of his Titan. Levi turned to his squad. “Bring him to headquarters. That’s enough for today.”

Y/N glanced at Anna, who gave her a reassuring nod before they followed the squad back to the old headquarters.

As the other scouts focused on cleaning and maintaining their ODM gear, Eren and Y/N retreated inside the headquarters. The atmosphere outside was filled with the familiar sounds of metal as the scouts meticulously cared for their equipment. Inside, however, a different sort of care was being provided.

Eren sat on a bench, his movements slow and stiff. Y/N knelt on the floor in front of him, carefully unpacking a small first aid kit. He flinched as Y/N dabbed disinfectant onto the raw wounds scattered across his arms, causing her to pause. “Are you alright?” she asked softly, her eyes concerned.

Eren nodded, though his jaw clenched from the sting. “Yeah, I’m used to it by now. This happens sometimes... when I’m low on energy, parts of me don’t separate as cleanly from the Titan body.”

Y/N's expression softened. "Levi's command must be strict sometimes," she offered, trying to understand the weight he bore.

Eren's lips curled into a small, tired smile. "Yeah, he's tough, but it's what we need." They both fell into a brief silence, Y/N focused on cleaning his wounds with as much care as possible.

"Armin told me about your trial," Y/N said after a moment, her tone lighter. "He mentioned Levi gave you quite the beating." Eren chuckled, though there was a hint of weariness in his eyes. "He did. But I understand why he did it. It was the only way to win the trial."

Y/N smiled, sensing a need to lift the mood further. "Armin and Mikasa are both really worried about you. Especially Mikasa. She seems to care a lot about you." Eren didn't respond immediately, just nodded slightly as Y/N continued. "You know," she said with a playful grin, "when I first met the three of you, I was almost sure you and Mikasa were a thing."

Eren blushed, quickly turning his face away. "It's not like that," he mumbled, his voice clearly embarrassed and a bit defensive.

Y/N noticed his discomfort and let out a small, apologetic laugh. "Sorry, I didn't mean to make it awkward."

A brief silence followed, but Y/N suddenly tried to stifle a laugh, her shoulders shaking slightly. Eren noticed and gave her a puzzled look. "What's so funny?"

Y/N hesitated, not wanting to tell him, but Eren's curiosity only grew. "Come on, just tell me," he insisted.

"Alright, alright," she said, still chuckling. "I just remembered...you know, when I first met Armin..." She paused, struggling to contain her laughter. "I almost... I almost mistook him for a girl."

Eren couldn't help but burst out laughing at that, the tension between them dissolving. "You're not the first person to think that," he admitted, his laughter blending with hers.

Both of their laughs got interrupted by someone stepping into the room. Eren and Y/N both looked up, their laughter dying in their throats as they met Levi's gaze.

His eyes were slightly narrowed, focused with a sharp intensity that showed bitterness or resentment. The heavy shadows beneath his eyes and the downward angle of his eyelids added to the unsettling atmosphere he exuded. It was clear he was upset, his expression showing the struggle of someone dealing with emotions he didn't want to face.

"Eren," Levi called out.

Eren immediately straightened his posture, his face draining any remaining amusement. Just then, Petra arrived, stepping into the corridor only to see Levi's back. Sensing the tension in the air, she leaned against the wall, deciding it wasn't the best time to intrude.

Levi continued, his voice cutting through the air like a blade. "There's enough to do. Go help the others with maintenance."

Eren stuttered slightly, caught off guard by the sudden shift in tone. "Y—Yes, sir," he managed to say before standing up and leaving the room, brushing past Petra, who remained quietly in the hallway, listening.

Levi turned his attention to Y/N, his gaze just as intense, but he refused to meet her eyes, staring off into the distance instead. "Y/N," he said, his voice making her tense up immediately. "Yes?" Y/N responded, trying her best to look him in the eye, but her eyes dropped to the floor, unable to face his piercing look.

"Using first aid supplies on Eren is a waste," Levi stated bluntly. "He can heal his wounds on his own, thanks to his Titan-shifting abilities." Y/N hesitated before she managed to murmur, "I understand...I'm sorry."

Levi gave no further comment, his expression unreadable as he turned and left the room. As he passed Petra in the hallway, she caught a glimpse of his face, noting the conflicted emotions that flickered briefly.

Y/N didn't see Levi for the rest of the day, and by the time evening rolled around, she found herself back with Hange and Moblit. While Levi's attitude from their earlier encounter left her with an uneasy feeling, she decided to focus her energy on something productive. Hange, always enthusiastic about Titan research, eagerly welcomed Y/N's help.

The three of them spent the evening analyzing various samples and discussing potential theories. Y/N appreciated the distraction, even though her mind occasionally drifted back to the strange tension between her and Levi.

...

Later that night Y/N shared a room with Anna and lay on the lower bunk bed, staring at the wooden slats above her. She rolled from side to side, trying to find a comfortable position, but no matter how she turned, sleep wouldn't come. The unfamiliar surroundings of the old headquarters, with its creaking floors and drafty stone walls, seemed to keep her awake. Frustrated, she sighed and sat up on the side of the bed, her feet dangling just above the cold floor. She looked out the window and saw nothing but a pitch-black sky. 'It must be past midnight by now' she thought.

She wondered if Anna was also awake. Quietly, she climbed the wooden ladder of the bunk bed and peeked over to see her sister sleeping peacefully, her breathing even and calm. Y/N smiled softly at the sight, her sister's calmness a stark contrast to her restlessness. With a soft exhale, she climbed back down, not wanting to disturb Anna. Y/N decided to go for a walk around the headquarters. Perhaps a little movement would tire her out enough to sleep.

The floors felt cold against her bare feet as she wandered through the dimly lit corridors in her white long-sleeved nightgown. The quietness of the night made every sound seem louder, from the creak of the old floorboards to the faint blowing of the wind outside. As she turned a

corner, Y/N noticed a faint, warm light spilling out from a room with a semi-open door. Curiosity piqued, she approached the door and peeked through the small crack.

Inside, she saw Levi sitting on a sofa by the fireplace, a cup in hand, held in his usual manner. He was still dressed in his day clothes. The grey shirt he tended to wear underneath his uniform jacket. His posture was more calmed and relaxed than normal. The warmth of the fire cast a soft glow over his features, highlighting the sharp angles of his face. He appeared deep in thought, his eyes focused on the fire as if lost in his own world.

Y/N stood there for a few seconds, simply watching him, lost in thought. Remembering how Levi tended to have restless nights most of the time. She watched him for a few seconds, finding the sight oddly comforting. However, her quiet observation was cut short when Levi suddenly looked to the side towards the door, immediately meeting her eyes through the small opening.

Y/N gasped, embarrassment flooding her as she quickly turned to the side of the door, pressing her back against the wall. Somehow, she hoped he hadn't seen her.

A moment later, Levi's voice cut through the silence. "So now we're spying on people in the middle of the night, are we?"

Y/N winced, her cheeks burning. She hesitated before peeking around the door again. "I—I wasn't spying," she stammered, knowing full well how unconvincing that sounded. "I just... I couldn't sleep," she admitted softly.

Levi's expression remained unreadable as he raised an eyebrow. "And you thought watching me through a crack in the door would help?"

Y/N felt her face grow even hotter. "I—no, that's not—" she stammered, then stopped, realizing how silly she must look. She took a deep breath, composing herself. "I really couldn't sleep," she repeated more firmly.

Levi regarded her for a moment before sighing. "Are you going to stand there all night, or are you going to come in?"

Surprised by the invitation, Y/N hesitated before pushing the door open and stepping into the room. She walked over to the sofa and sat down, leaving a respectful distance between them. The warmth of the fire was comforting, and for a moment, they sat in silence.

Levi glanced at her briefly, seeing the nightgown she wore and her bare feet on the cold floor, before returning his attention to the fire. "If you're gonna be wandering around at night, you should at least wear something warmer," he remarked.

Y/N looked down at her dress and brought her feet up onto the sofa before hugging her knees. "I didn't really plan on being out for long," she admitted quietly.

Levi leaned back slightly, taking a sip from his cup. His usual coldness was still there, but there was a subtle softness to his tone that made Y/N feel a little less on edge. "So, can't sleep, huh?"

She nodded, bringing her feet up onto the sofa and hugging her knees. “Yeah... I guess it’s just hard to adjust to the new place,” she said, trying to make sense of her restlessness. “I don’t know... maybe it’s just nerves.”

“It happens,” Levi said, his eyes still on the fire. Y/N found herself lost in thought, her attention drifting back to Levi, watching him as he drank his tea, before his eyes flicked to her again. “You’re staring.”

Y/N blinked, realizing she had been staring at him. She quickly looked away, feeling her cheeks heat up. “Sorry,” she mumbled.

“I’d offer you some, but the caffeine would only keep you awake longer,” he said, a hint of dry humor in his voice, as he rested his cup to the side.

Y/N smiled faintly, appreciating his attempt to lighten the mood. “I understand,” she said, relaxing slightly in his presence.

Without another word, Levi stood up and walked over to a small table in the corner of the room, fidgeting with some stuff Y/N couldn’t quite see. A moment later, he returned with a different cup in hand, holding it out to her. “Drink this,” he said, his tone leaving no room for argument.

She looked at the cup, then back at him. “What is it?” she asked, a bit wary.

“It’ll help you sleep,” he replied softly.

Y/N put her feet back on the ground and took the cup from him, feeling the warmth of the liquid inside. She brought it to her lips and took a small sip, the taste unfamiliar but soothing.

Levi sat back down next to her, his own cup in hand. They sat in comfortable silence for a while, the crackling of the fire the only sound between them.

“Thank you,” she said softly, breaking the silence.

Levi glanced at her, his expression unreadable again. “Don’t mention it,” he replied, his tone a bit softer than before.

They both sat in front of the fire, the only sound in the room being the crackling of the wood. The silence between them felt comforting, not awkward or tense. She finished her drink before putting her mug to the side.

A small smile tugged at her lips as a memory from her childhood resurfaced. Levi noticed the change in her expression and glanced at her. “What’s with the smile?” he asked, his tone still flat, but his curiosity was genuine.

Y/N looked up, her smile softening. “This... it just reminds me of when I was little. My parents, Anna, and I would sit by the fireplace like this with hot drinks. We wouldn’t say much, but it was comforting.”

Levi remained silent, his eyes fixed on her as she spoke. There was no change in his expression, no smirk or smile. But something in his expression softened, a silent understanding passing between them.

Y/N turned her attention back to the fire, the flickering flames reflecting in her eyes. The warmth of the room, combined with the drink Levi had given her, was beginning to make her feel drowsy. But she didn't want to leave the comfort of the moment just yet.

"Things were simpler back then," she added, her voice barely above a whisper.

"Things usually are..." Levi said.

Y/N continued talking, her voice growing softer as she reminisced about old memories. "I remember... there was this one night... there was a thunderstorm for hours... Anna and I built a fort out of blankets in front of the fire..." Her words began to slur as exhaustion overtook her. "We pretended... we were in a castle..."

As she trailed off, her head slowly leaned to the side until it found a resting place on Levi's shoulder. The sudden contact made him flinch slightly, but he quickly stilled himself, glancing down at her. Her breathing had evened out, and the tension she had carried earlier was completely gone.

His thoughts drifted as he watched her sleep. Normally, he wouldn't have allowed anyone to get this close, especially not at this hour. He would have told them to leave him alone, to give him space. But with Y/N, it was different. Something about her presence made him feel less inclined to push her away.

Levi sighed quietly, shifting slightly to make sure she was comfortable. He could have moved her, woken her up, and sent her back to her room. But as he looked at her now, so peaceful and content, he found that he didn't want to. Whatever it was that kept him from pushing her away, it was enough to make him let her stay.

A strand of hair had fallen across her face, and Levi hesitated for a moment before gently tucking it behind her ear. Her face was peaceful, a small smile tugging at the corners of her lips even in her sleep, making something stir within him, something he didn't want to acknowledge.

His eyes widened slightly as the realization hit him, and before he could stop himself, a small chuckle escaped his lips, followed by a faint smirk. "There is no fucking way," he muttered under his breath, running his hand down his face in frustration, then through his hair as if trying to rid himself of the thought. He shook his head slightly as if denying what was so obvious to him now. But despite his efforts, his eyes returned to her, unable to pull away.

He leaned back slightly, letting her rest against him as the fire continued to crackle softly. Eventually, the fire burned down to embers, and the room grew cooler.

Levi carefully maneuvered Y/N so she was lying down on the sofa, slipping a pillow under her head and putting a blanket over her. He watched her for a moment longer, his expression

unreadable, before finally leaving the room. As he closed the door behind him, he thought to himself that he should get some rest as well.

...

The next morning, Y/N woke up to the first light of day, the glow filtering through the window, the smell of the now-extinguished flames lingering in the air. She blinked a few times, feeling the softness of the pillow beneath her head and the warmth of the blanket covering her.

Sitting up, she rubbed her eyes, the memories of the previous night slowly coming back to her. A smile spread across her face as she realized what had happened, certain that it had been Levi who had tucked her in. The thought filled her with a sense of warmth, knowing that despite his cold exterior, he had a kind heart.

She stood up and quietly made her way back to her room, where Anna was already awake and finishing getting dressed. As Y/N entered, Anna glanced over with a teasing grin. "Sleepwalking, huh? Didn't think you'd make it all the way to the sofa downstairs."

Y/N chuckled, playing along. "Yeah, must have been really tired."

Anna shook her head with a smirk. "You're lucky you didn't end up in the stables," she joked.

Y/N rolled her eyes playfully as she pulled on her jacket, laughing, "Yeah, I don't think I'd live that one down."

Anna chuckled, "You'd be the talk of the Scouts for weeks," she teased. "And I'd be right there to remind you every chance I get."

Y/N smiled, feeling a sense of comfort. It was a rare moment of normalcy that she didn't want to take for granted.

As the sisters continued getting ready, down in the basement, Hange made her way downstairs, her steps sluggish, her hair even more chaotic than usual. She rubbed at her eyes, still half-asleep. With a loud yawn, she descended the stairs, reaching for the door handle to the basement.

Opening the door, she squinted into the dimly lit room, only to see a shadowy figure hunched over in the corner. Hange's heart jumped, and she let out a startled scream, stumbling back a step. "Wha—"

The figure jerked in surprise but then turned slightly, revealing Levi, who was scrubbing something furiously on a washboard. Hange blinked, her initial terror melting into confusion. "Levi?"

Levi didn't respond, his jaw clenched as he focused on the task at hand. The wet sheet was getting a rough treatment as if it had personally offended him.

Hange took a cautious step closer, still trying to piece together what she was seeing. "Uh...Levi? Why are you doing laundry at—" she glanced at the dim light coming from a small window, barely illuminating the basement, "—at this hour?"

Levi had purposely waited for Eren to head upstairs before sneaking down to the basement, hoping to avoid any awkward encounters. The last thing he wanted was someone questioning why he was up so early, washing his bedding with such intensity.

Hange tilted her head, her confusion growing. "Is this some new cleaning routine of yours?" she joked lightly, though her eyes narrowed as she tried to read his expression. "Because I gotta say, you look a bit...disturbed."

Levi turned his head slightly, the deep shadows under his eyes making his expression hard to read. His usual sharp expression was replaced with something darker, almost haunted, and it sent a shiver down Hange's spine.

"Levi?" she asked again, this time with more concern than humor.

Levi finished wringing out the sheet and tossed it into a nearby basket with a sharp, final motion. He straightened up, rubbing the back of his neck as if trying to shake off whatever was bothering him. He muttered something under his breath, just loud enough for Hange to catch a few words.

"This is why I prefer sleeping on chairs."

Hange blinked, clearly catching the mumble but not understanding. "Huh? What was that?"

Levi didn't answer, simply grabbed the basket and walked past her, his expression still dark and unreadable. Hange watched him go, as Levi disappeared up the stairs.

Chapter End Notes

Any theories as to why Levi was doing laundry? 🧠 I imagined Levi's jealous face to look similar to Mikasa's.

Next chapter will be up this weekend.

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Levi has a wet dream about Y/N and has to deal with it the next day 💧

Chapter Notes

TW: a little bit of spice...? 🔥

Enjoy! 😊

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Levi stirred from sleep, his consciousness slowly returning as he lay in bed. The room was dark, the only source of light a faint glow from the moon filtering through the curtains. The darkness felt thick, almost suffocating, and his mind was sluggish as it tried to shake off the remnants of sleep.

He sat up, heart pounding for reasons he couldn't quite place. He felt like he'd been pulled from a dream, but the details were already slipping away, leaving only a vague sense of unease. The silence of the room was heavy, broken only by the sound of his breathing.

Levi shifted slightly, his body tense as he tried to figure out what had woken him. As his vision adjusted, he noticed a dim light spilling in from the corridor connected to his room. His brow furrowed in confusion.

The building had been quiet for hours, and no one else should have been up, let alone in his room. But as his eyes adjusted further to the dim light, he saw a figure standing by the doorway. He squinted, trying to make sense of what he was seeing. The figure was silhouetted against the light, but as the seconds ticked by, the details became clearer. Her nightgown was the same as always; baggy, white, and long-sleeved, obscuring her figure. Yet, the light behind her made her silhouette unmistakable. His breath caught as he realized who it was. Y/N stood in the doorway.

Levi's eyes widened in disbelief as she leaned casually against the doorway, her arms stretched out, framing her body. The light from the corridor, made her appear ethereal, almost otherworldly. But it was her face that captured his attention.

Her usually innocent eyes were now darker, half-closed, and filled with a lustful intensity that sent a shiver down his spine. They were locked onto his, holding him captive with an

expression that was both seductive and mysterious. Her lips, which usually held a soft, natural color, now seemed more plump and inviting, the faintest hint of a smile playing at the corners. The entire atmosphere around her was seductive, and magnetic, pulling him in despite the confusion swirling in his mind.

'What the hell...?' he thought. He couldn't tear his eyes away. His thoughts scrambled for a logical explanation, anything that made sense of what he was seeing.

"Y/N, what... what are you doing here?" Levi's voice came out rougher than he intended, the confusion evident in his tone. "I thought you were asleep on the sofa."

Y/N didn't answer, just kept looking at him with that same expression, her eyes roaming over his body as if she was drinking him in. Her lips curved into a seductive smile, but she remained silent, her eyes never leaving his. It was like she was daring him to make the first move, to give in to whatever this was.

The atmosphere in the room was charged, the tension thick enough to cut through. Levi's pulse quickened, his mind racing. This wasn't like her at all. Y/N was usually reserved, nothing like the woman standing before him now. He wanted to ask her what was going on, why she was acting this way, but the words seemed to die in his throat.

'Why isn't she saying anything? Why is she looking at me like that?' His mind was a whirlpool of conflicting thoughts, his usual calm and collected demeanor slipping away with each passing second. This wasn't how things were supposed to go. Y/N was his subordinate... this wasn't right. But the way she was standing there, her lips slightly parted, her eyes dark with desire made it hard to remember why he needed to resist.

Before he could gather his thoughts, Y/N stepped forward, with an almost hypnotic grace, each step measured, her eyes never leaving his. Levi's breath caught in his throat as she approached the bed and climbed onto it.

She pressed her hand against his chest with a firm, yet gentle push, causing Levi to stumble back onto the bed. He barely had time to process what was happening before she climbed onto him, her body pressing against his with an intoxicating warmth. The sensation of her curves aligning with his form left him speechless, his breath catching as she took control in a way that was both surprising and undeniably seductive.

Her knee pressed between his legs, sending a shock of sensation through him. He was so focused on her proximity, the way her body felt pressed against his, that he didn't even notice her finger until it was on his lips, silencing any protest he might have made.

"It's okay, Captain," Y/N whispered. The way she said his title ignited something in him, sending a rush of heat through his body. Just hearing the way she called him *'Captain'* made his pulse quicken, leaving him in a mix between desire and confusion. Why was she doing this? And why did it feel so... right?

Levi's eyes followed the path of her finger as it traced along his lips, slightly parting them. His heart was racing now, his thoughts a chaotic storm of conflicting emotions. He could feel

the heat of her body, the closeness of her face to his, and it was making it hard to think straight.

“What... what are you doing?” he asked, his voice shaky, barely above a whisper. He didn’t sound like himself, didn’t feel like himself. He was always in control, always the one who kept his emotions in check. But right now, all of that was slipping away.

She didn’t answer right away. Instead, she leaned in closer, her lips hovering just inches from his, close enough that he could feel her breath against his skin. The temptation to close the distance, to give in to the desire that was building inside him, was almost unbearable. “I know you want this too, Captain,” she whispered.

His body was betraying him, his heart thundering in his ears, his breathing shallow and uneven. He could feel himself hardening, a reaction he couldn’t suppress, and it only made his confusion deepen. This wasn’t like him. This wasn’t supposed to happen.

Y/N noticed, of course, she did, and she smirked at him, a teasing, knowing smile that made his stomach twist. “Look at you,” she murmured. “Even you can’t resist. Can you, Captain?”

Levi’s mind was in conflict, his thoughts a tangled mess of confusion and desire. He knew he should stop this, that he should push her away, but the way she was looking at him, the way her body pressed so intimately against his, made it impossible to think clearly.

She must have sensed his inner conflict, because her lips curved into a teasing smirk, her eyes gleaming with mischief. “What’s the matter, Captain? Cat got your tongue?”

Levi’s eyes widened, his heart hammering in his chest. He felt a rush of frustration, mixed with an insatiable hunger that he couldn’t ignore when he heard those words. She was right there, practically begging him to give in. And for the first time in his life, he didn’t have the strength to resist.

“Fuck it,” he muttered under his breath. With a sudden burst of energy, he grabbed her by the waist and flipped her onto the bed, pinning her down beneath him as he hovered over her, his breathing getting heavier.

Y/N gasped in surprise, but it quickly turned into another smirk as she looked up at him, her eyes gleaming with excitement. Levi could see the hunger in her eyes, could feel it reflected in his own. He was tired of holding back, tired of the confusion and the hesitation.

He grabbed her jawline, tilting her head back to expose her neck. The scent of her skin filled his senses, and before he could think twice, he pressed his lips against the soft flesh, trailing wet, heated kisses along her neck, down to her collarbone, and then between her chest. His other hand found her hip, pulling her closer to him, her body arching up into his touch. Y/N moaned softly, the sound sending a fresh surge of excitement through him, and he felt a desperate need to claim her, to make her his.

He fumbled with the buttons of his shirt, his hands shaking with a mix of anticipation and urgency. Once it was off, he wasted no time in lifting Y/N’s nightgown, revealing her body to

him. With only his pants and her panties in the way, the way she looked at him with that same enticing expression made his head spin.

There was no more hesitation or confusion. Levi leaned down, his lips crashing against hers with a passion that matched the intensity of the desire coursing through him. Levi's hands instinctively moved to her waist, pulling her body closer to him, Y/N let out a soft sigh. His fingers brushed against the curve of her hip, sending shivers down her spine.

He fondled her right breast, his thumb tracing circles around her nipple, causing it to harden beneath his touch. Y/N's head tilted back, her lips parting slightly as she arched her back, pressing her breast further into his hand. He took advantage of the invitation, his mouth descending onto her left breast, his tongue licking the nipple before his lips closed around it, sucking gently.

Y/N let out a moan, the sound sending a jolt of pleasure through him, making him harden even more than he already was. He could feel her heart beating faster, her breath hitching as she spread her legs, closing the remaining space between them, while he continued to suck and tease her nipple.

He trailed kisses up her neck, his lips finding hers again, his tongue slipping into her mouth. Y/N met his kiss with equal passion, her hands reaching up to tangle in his hair.

Levi's erection throbbed against her, a primal urge coursing through him, begging to be unleashed. Y/N broke the kiss and she stared deeply into his eyes. Her eyes sparkled with amusement as she noticed the effect she had on him, a sly smirk spreading across her face. "You want me, don't you?" The husky tone sent shivers down his spine, and he couldn't help but nod, his chest rising and falling heavily as sweat glistened on his upper body.

With that same sly smile still plastered on her face, Y/N's hands grasped Levi's shoulders, her fingers digging gently into his skin as she pushed him back, forcing him to change position. He complied, his eyes never leaving hers, as he lay back on the surface beneath them.

Y/N's eyes sparkled with amusement as she straddled him, her legs on either side of his hips. She sat down slowly, her weight settling onto his lower abdomen, and Levi's eyes fluttered closed as he felt her heat radiating onto his skin.

She lowered her body, passionately kissing him again, her hands traveling through his hair, the soft strands slipping through her fingers like silk. Levi's hands, meanwhile, had found their way to her butt, squeezing it gently, his fingers digging into the soft flesh. The pressure sent a wave of pleasure through her, and she moaned into his mouth, her lips parting slightly as she deepened the kiss.

As she sat on his lower abdomen, she could feel his erection straining against his pants, pressing against her core. The sensation sent a shiver down her spine, and she rocked her hips slightly, applying gentle pressure to his crotch.

She broke the kiss and crawled backwards, never breaking eye contact with him. "What are you doing?" he asked, his eyes narrowing slightly as he watched her move away from him. Y/N lowered her eyes, a smirk spreading across her face her hands resting on his thighs.

Y/N's attention drifted downward, her eyes locking onto the prominent bulge in Levi's pants. She could see the outline of his erection straining against the fabric, and her lips curled into a smile. Her fingers slowly crept into his waistband, and she started to pull it down. Her eyes lingered on the sight for a moment before she tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and looked up at Levi, a mischievous glint in her eyes. Levi's eyes locked onto hers, his pupils dilating as she moved her hands slowly. "Let me help you with that, Captain," she said.

But then, just as the heat of the moment threatened to consume him entirely, everything shifted. The room around him began to blur, the sensations fading away as if being pulled from his grasp.

Levi's eyes snapped open, drenched in sweat, his breath coming in heavy gasps as his body jerked upright in bed, his heart still pounding in his chest.

The room was dark, but this time there was no seductive light, no figure in the doorway. Just the empty room, the faint hint of dawn beginning to creep through the window. Levi blinked, disoriented, the memories of the dream still clinging to him like a shadow.

'What the hell was that?' he thought, running a hand through his hair, feeling the dampness of sweat on his forehead. He could still feel the echoes of the dream, the phantom touch of Y/N's hands, the taste of her lips on his. It left him feeling raw, exposed, and... ashamed.

'I'm not some damn teenager', he scolded himself, disgusted by how easily he'd lost control in the dream, by how real it had felt. He could still feel the remaining arousal in his body, a reminder of just how far he'd let it go.

Levi shifted, and that's when he felt it. The dampness beneath the sheets. *'Oh god... please no,'* he thought, a deep sense of disgust creeping in as he slowly lifted the bedsheet. Dreading what he might find. His heart sank when he saw the evidence of his release. The feeling of shame, guilt, and disgust crept over him.

"Shit," he muttered.

...

Levi exited the basement with a basket full of laundry, his steps purposeful as he made his way outside. He had made sure to wash other clothes alongside the bedsheets, hoping to avoid any suspicion or unnecessary questions. Although his squad rarely questioned his actions, Levi always took precautions to maintain control over situations. He stepped out into the sunlight, the day's warmth greeting him as he moved toward the clothesline.

Outside, the early morning sun cast a soft glow across the grounds. Y/N and Anna were standing nearby, their laughter carried on the gentle breeze. As he stepped into the light, Levi's attention was immediately drawn to Y/N. Her smile, framed by the sunlight, seemed to radiate warmth. The way the sun illuminated her face made her appear even more beautiful in Levi's eyes, and for a moment, he found himself staring, captivated by the sight. He felt something stir within him. An unfamiliar sensation that made his chest tighten. She looked so peaceful, so happy.

Y/N noticed his expression, and their eyes met. Levi flinched, his jaw tightening as he forced his expression into a scowl, quickly turning away to focus on hanging the laundry. His movements were sharp, almost angry, as he struggled to push the memories out of his mind.

Y/N's smile faltered, her brows knitting together in confusion. What had she done wrong this time? Was he annoyed at her for falling asleep on the sofa last night? Maybe he really wanted some alone time. She looked down, feeling a pang of uncertainty.

Anna noticed the change in Y/N's mood and followed her attention to Levi. "What's his problem now?" she muttered, her tone laced with annoyance.

Y/N sighed, not offering an answer as she spotted Petra approaching them. Petra greeted them with a bright smile, but there was something a little too eager in her eyes as she looked at Y/N.

Petra glanced at the two sisters, then fixed her attention on Y/N with a curious glint in her eyes. "So...Captain Levi, huh?" she asked, her tone playful.

Y/N blinked, not understanding what Petra was getting at. "What about him?" Petra's smile widened. "What do you think of him?"

Y/N hesitated, her mind racing. "Um...he's a good captain. Strict, but fair."

Anna raised an eyebrow, wondering where this conversation was heading. Petra seemed unusually interested in Y/N's opinion of Levi.

"Sure, sure," Petra nodded, "but don't you think he's...I don't know, a good catch?" She gave Y/N a teasing look, trying to gauge her reaction.

Y/N, oblivious to Petra's intentions, shook her head slightly. "Well... he's a bit cold at times. I mean, he's not exactly the easiest person to talk to."

Anna tilted her head slightly, giving Petra a curious look as if to ask what this was all about. Petra caught her glance and subtly tried to signal with her eyes, hinting at what she was getting at. Anna raised an eyebrow, still not entirely sure what Petra was trying to imply.

"Cold, yeah," Petra acknowledged, "but he's also strong, reliable, and has a certain... charm, don't you think?" She added, trying to steer the conversation in a particular direction.

Y/N thought about it for a moment, her brow furrowing. "I suppose so. But honestly, he just seems really strict most of the time."

Petra's grin widened as she leaned in closer, her voice lowering a bit. "Oh, come on, Y/N. There's more to him than that. Haven't you ever noticed how he sometimes looks at you? Like when you're not looking?"

Y/N blinked in confusion. "What? I... I don't think so. What are you getting at, Petra?"

"Let's just say," Petra continued, "I've noticed a certain... interest in his eyes when he's around you."

Y/N, still processing what Petra had said, felt a mix of emotions; confusion, disbelief, and something else she couldn't quite place. "I... I don't know, Petra. That doesn't sound like him at all." Petra chuckled softly. "Maybe not, but you never know. People can surprise you, especially when it comes to matters of the heart."

Y/N, now unsettled, tried to push the conversation out of her mind. She wasn't sure she could handle the idea of Levi having feelings for her. The mix of confusion and frustration was overwhelming.

Petra glanced over at Levi, who was still hanging the laundry with a stern expression. "You know," she began, "maybe you should help him out. It's a lot of work for one person."

Y/N was taken aback. "What? I—I don't think he really wants my help, Petra," she said hesitantly, glancing over at Levi. His tense posture didn't exactly scream 'welcoming.'

"Nonsense," Petra insisted, gently nudging Y/N forward. "Go on, give him a hand. It'll be fine."

Y/N sighed, feeling a bit unsure, but she eventually gave in. "Alright, alright," she muttered, slowly making her way over to Levi. As soon as she was far enough away, Anna leaned closer to Petra.

"What is going on?" Anna asked in a low voice, her curiosity piqued. Petra leaned in, her voice almost a whisper. "I saw Levi step into the room when Eren and Y/N were talking. The way he looked at them...he seemed annoyed, almost like he didn't want them together."

Anna's eyes widened in realization. "Wait...you're saying Levi was jealous?"

Petra nodded with a knowing smile. "I'm almost sure of it."

Anna's attention flicked back to Y/N, who was now approaching Levi, then back to Petra. "Oh," she said, understanding dawning on her, a hint of disappointment in her voice. "Oh..."

Meanwhile, Y/N had reached Levi, who was so absorbed in his thoughts that he didn't notice her until she was right next to him. She pushed aside a blanket he had just hung up, using it like a curtain as she stepped closer. "Captain," she called softly.

Levi's eyes widened in surprise, his heart skipping a beat at her sudden proximity. He quickly masked his reaction, his face tightening as he avoided making eye contact. "What is it, Y/N?" he asked, his tone sharper than intended.

Y/N noticed his discomfort but decided to shrug it off. "I thought you might need help with that," she offered, her voice gentle.

"I'm fine on my own," Levi replied curtly, grabbing another item from the basket. He didn't want her anywhere near him right now, not after what he had dreamed.

Y/N, determined to help, leaned forward, reaching for the laundry basket, her hair falling slightly into her face. She tucked a strand behind her ear, her eyes locking onto his. "Let me help you with that, Captain," she insisted.

Levi froze. *'Let me help you with that, Captain,'* The way she said those words, the exact phrasing, her tone...it was too similar to what she had said in his dream. His mind replayed the memory, her voice echoing in his head but with a sultry, teasing tone. A brief flash of her image from the dream crossed his mind, and he stiffened, straightening up as if trying to physically shake off the memory. His face grew more disturbed as the dream replayed itself in his mind.

Noticing his reaction, Y/N frowned, concern filling her voice. "Are you alright?" she asked, holding out a piece of laundry she had intended to hand him.

Levi ignored the question, his mind still reeling. Why couldn't he forget about that dream? Usually, dreams faded away within a few hours, but this one clung to him, haunting him with every glance at her.

Y/N tried again, this time with a lighthearted tone, hoping to ease the tension. "What's the matter, Captain? Cat got your tongue?" she joked, a small smile tugging at her lips.

Levi's breath caught in his throat. *'What's the matter, Captain? Cat got your tongue?'* She had said those exact words in his dream, with the same playful tone in her voice. The image of her teasing smile from the dream flashed in his mind again, and her voice echoed in his thoughts, pulling him back into the memory. He stiffened once more, the tension in his body palpable.

Unable to control the sudden surge of emotions, Levi snatched the piece of laundry from her hands with more force than necessary. "Give me that," he snapped, his voice rough and laced with anger. "I told you, I don't need any help."

Y/N's eyes widened in surprise at his harsh tone. She hadn't expected such a reaction. Frustrated, she let out a sigh, her expression hardening. "Alright, I'll leave you to it," she said, her voice cold, as she turned away.

Levi watched her walk away, feeling a pang of guilt and confusion. He clenched the piece of laundry tightly, struggling to clear his mind. *'Why does this have to be so complicated? Why can't I just get my shit together?'*

He knew he had overreacted, but the intensity of his feelings, confusion, and shame was all too much. He felt trapped in his own mind, unable to escape the lingering effects of the dream.

As Y/N approached Petra and Anna, both of them wore expressions of bewilderment. "Told you he didn't want my help," she said as she walked past them, her annoyance evident in her voice.

Y/N didn't stop and simply kept walking. "Wait! Where are you going?" Anna called after her, her concern evident.

Y/N didn't turn around, her voice carrying a note of finality as she replied, "I agreed to meet Hange and help with research today."

Anna and Petra exchanged confused glances, both of them struggling to understand what had just happened. Petra, still trying to process the situation, turned to Anna with a puzzled look. on “I guess...I...got it wrong?” she said, her voice filled with uncertainty.

Anna shook her head slowly, still trying to process everything. "Maybe... but then again, maybe not," she murmured, a hint of disappointment creeping into her voice as she glanced over at Levi. He was now furiously hanging up the laundry, his movements sharp and deliberate, with an intense focus that she had seen countless times before, only now, it felt different, almost frustrating to watch. His face was clouded with a mix of emotions that neither of them could fully decipher, and for a moment, Anna's attention lingered on him, something unspoken flickering in her eyes before she quickly looked away.

As Y/N continued walking, a nagging thought began to take hold. She started to wonder if she should keep her distance from him. It wasn't just his coldness that bothered her. It was the unsettling realization that she might care more than she thought. Each step felt heavier, making her question whether staying close to him was worth the risk of getting hurt.

Petra had planted a seed in her head, making her question emotions she hadn't even known existed. Y/N found herself replaying every moment that had made her feel special, and it confused her how those memories now stirred something deeper inside. But then she'd remember the times he'd made her feel horrible, and the confusion would twist into frustration, telling herself there was no way he could be interested in her.

Maybe Petra was wrong. Someone like Levi, humanity's strongest, wouldn't be interested in someone like her. She was still basically a trainee, barely managing to graduate due to an exception, while he was... him.

Y/N shook her head, trying to push the thoughts away, but they clung to her like a shadow. The idea that she might have feelings for Levi was confusing and uncomfortable, something she wasn't sure she was ready to face. Maybe it would be better if she just focused on her duties, and kept her distance. But every time she tried to ignore it, the confusion only grew stronger. She wasn't sure if she could handle the chaos of trying to understand Levi's feelings, let alone her own.

Chapter End Notes

this is the first time I've written anything even closely related to smut... it was definitely an experience... also English isn't my first language so please be patient with me 😊👻

anyways I hope you liked the chapter ❤️

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Anna is a bad sister.

Chapter Notes

It took me a bit longer to update because I had to organize the plot a bit but we are back!

Thank you so much for the 1000 Hits and all the Kudos. It means a lot to me 😭❤️

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The Special Operations Squad gathered for dinner. Y/N noticed her comrades enjoying themselves, but her mind kept returning to the empty seat at their table. Levi wasn't there.

“Where's Captain Levi?” Gunther asked, finally voicing the question that had been nagging at Y/N all evening. His brow furrowed as he looked around as if expecting Levi to show up at any moment.

Oluo leaned back in his chair, crossing his arms with a smirk that didn't quite reach his eyes. “He said he was busy with something,” he replied. “He's been acting weird all day. Even Eren noticed it.”

Eren, who had been quietly picking at his food, nodded in agreement. “Yeah, he seemed... distracted,” he added, his voice uncertain as if he was still trying to piece together what he had seen in Levi's behavior.

Y/N bit her lip, her mind racing. Levi wasn't the type to let his guard down, not even around them. For him to act out of character, something had to be bothering him, but what could it be?

Eld's voice cut through Y/N's thoughts, drawing her attention back to the conversation at their table. “We're going to be here for a few days,” he said, his tone casual but carrying an undercurrent of seriousness. “I heard rumors that a large-scale expedition beyond the walls is being planned soon. It seems they're planning to bring in new recruits for this expedition.”

The mention of a large-scale expedition caused a stir among the squad. Gunther looked up from his meal, a skeptical frown on his face. “Are you sure about that? That's risky. They're

too inexperienced to handle something like this. And after what happened in Trost, I don't think many will be eager to join."

Y/N's heart raced as she thought about what this meant for her. She was still figuring out her role and how to handle her responsibilities. The recent fights with Levi had made her doubt herself, but she was resolved to face any challenge. She pushed away her fear and tried to stay strong.

The door to the mess hall opened, and Levi walked in while holding a cup, his usual composed demeanor firmly in place. The chatter in the room fell into an uneasy silence as he took his seat at the table. The squad's eyes followed him, waiting for him to speak.

Levi sat down without acknowledging anyone, his eyes fixed on the table. After a moment, he finally spoke, "What you heard is true. We'll go on an expedition soon, and new recruits will be joining us for it."

The squad members shared worried looks as Levi's words settled in. Petra, looking both concerned and frustrated, asked, "Shouldn't we reconsider? This seems too risky for the mission."

Levi's attention flickered briefly to Petra before he turned his attention back to the cup he was holding. "It's not up to me to decide. We just have to follow whatever Commander Erwin says."

Y/N watched Levi closely, noticing how he was deliberately avoiding looking at her. The tension between them was palpable, and she could feel the distance growing.

"Well— luckily, with the new formation, our death rate has decreased," Gunther said, trying to sound reassuring but with a trace of grim humor. "Though the new recruits are mostly the ones most exposed to Titans, it might still be challenging."

Eren forced a chuckle, but it was clear he was just as nervous as Y/N. She echoed his laugh, her amusement feeling empty as the gravity of their situation set in.

Anna, maintaining her confident façade, said with a teasing tone, "Eren, you'll probably be in the formation with us, so you should be fine." She then turned to Y/N. "You will most likely be on the outer part of the formation, though..."

Y/N tried to smile, but it felt forced. Anna's comment only deepened her unease. An awkward silence settled over the table as everyone shifted uncomfortably. Petra, sensing the tension, quickly stepped in. "Don't worry, Y/N. You've got the skills to handle your first expedition," she said with a warm smile, offering genuine encouragement.

Y/N appreciated Petra's support, but the weight of Anna's earlier remark lingered. Levi listened to the conversation, his usual stoic expression softened by a hint of worry. His eyes lingered on Y/N, clearly troubled by the tension and uncertainty in the air.

...

After dinner, the squad dispersed, everyone heading off to their respective quarters. Y/N and Anna returned to their shared room, the silence between them thick with unspoken words. They moved through their nightly routines in near silence, the tension building with each passing moment.

As Y/N changed into her nightclothes, she couldn't help but steal glances at Anna, who seemed lost in thought, her usual confident demeanor replaced with something more subdued. It was unsettling to see her sister like this, and Y/N's worry only grew.

Finally, as they prepared for bed, Anna broke the silence. "So... about Levi," she began, her tone casual but laced with curiosity. "What's going on between you two?"

Y/N's heart skipped a beat, her mind racing as she tried to formulate a response. She had been dreading this question, and now that it was out in the open, she felt cornered. "I... I don't think Levi likes me in that way," she admitted, her voice barely above a whisper.

Anna let out a nervous laugh, her eyes flickering to Y/N before quickly looking away. "Yeah, I figured as much," she replied, her tone forced as she tried to play it off. But there was something in her voice that made Y/N pause, a hint of uncertainty that didn't quite match Anna's usual confidence. "But you were pretty close to him...being his assistant and all."

A pang of guilt shot through Y/N at the mention of the lie she had been living. Her heart ached as she sat down on the lower bunk bed, the weight of the truth pressing down on her. She couldn't keep this up any longer. Anna was her sister, the only family she had left that truly mattered to her. She couldn't keep lying to her, not when the truth was eating away at her like this.

Taking a deep breath, Y/N mustered the courage to speak. "Anna, there's something you need to know," she began, her voice trembling slightly as she met her sister's eyes.

Anna's expression shifted, her confusion evident as she furrowed her brow. "What is it?"

Y/N's heart pounded in her chest, her thoughts racing as she tried to find the right words. "After our parents kicked me out... I couldn't afford to live within the Inner City," she confessed. "I had to move out, and the only job I could get was as a maid. That's how I met Levi... I wasn't his assistant. I was just a maid working in his office."

The silence that followed was deafening. Anna stared at her, wide-eyed and speechless, as the weight of Y/N's words sunk in. Y/N couldn't bear to look at her, her eyes dropping to the floor as she continued. "I didn't want to tell you at first because... I felt ashamed. But I can't keep lying to you, Anna. You're the only family I have left, and I don't want there to be secrets between us."

For a moment, Anna said nothing, her expression unreadable. Y/N's heart sank, fearing the worst. But then, Anna knelt beside her, gently taking her hand in hers. Her grip was firm, and reassuring, and when Y/N finally looked up, she was met with a gentle smile.

"It's okay," Anna said softly. "I'm glad you told me. There's nothing to be ashamed of."

The relief that washed over Y/N was overwhelming. Tears welled up in her eyes, and she quickly wiped them away, feeling a weight lift off her shoulders. For the first time in a long while, she felt truly understood by her sister.

Anna stood up, moving towards the window and looking out at the moonlit sky. The tension that had been simmering between them seemed to dissipate, replaced by a sense of calm.

With a playful glint in her eye, Anna turned back to Y/N and teased, “I can’t imagine how exhausting it must have been to meet his cleaning standards. Did he make you scrub every corner until it sparkled?”

Y/N laughed, the sound feeling lighter and more genuine. “Oh, you have no idea. I think my arms are still sore.”

Both of them shared a laugh, the atmosphere between them warming as they enjoyed the brief respite from their worries.

Anna’s teasing smile softened into a more thoughtful look. “You know, it’s great that you’re feeling better. And don’t worry too much about the expedition itself, what matters most right now is getting familiar with the formation.”

Y/N nodded, still processing the emotional rollercoaster she had just been through.

“We only get it explained vaguely before the expedition, so it’s important to know what position and tasks you’ll probably take,” Anna said.

“I’ll probably be in Relay or Enemy Detection in the formation... somewhere in the outer rows, like rows 1-3, with the other new recruits.”

Anna raised an eyebrow, looking surprised. “Huh, you already know the names of those roles? Did you study up on this?”

Y/N’s expression remained calm, but a realization hit her. She had forgotten to mention her involvement in the formation’s development to anyone. “The Long-Distance Enemy Scouting Formation... it was my idea originally,” she admitted.

Anna’s face shifted, showing a blend of surprise and something less easily defined as she processed this new information. Y/N took a steady breath, accepting it was time to share the truth.

“I proposed it to Erwin, and we planned it together.” She glanced at Anna, still noticing the shift in her mood, before continuing, “That’s... the reason why he allowed me to rejoin the Training Corps... with the condition to join the Scouts after that...”

Anna’s reaction was immediate, her body language shifting as she turned back towards the window, her back facing Y/N. The room fell into a tense silence, and Y/N could feel the change in the air. Anna’s grip on the curtain tightened, her knuckles turning white. Something was wrong.

“Anna?” Y/N called out concerned.

Anna flinched at the sound of her name, her grip loosening slightly on the curtain. She took a deep breath, forcing a bright smile as she turned back to face Y/N. "I'm so proud of you," she said, but lacking the warmth it usually carried. She crossed the room and pulled Y/N into a tight hug that felt just a little too forced.

Y/N hugged her back, but there was a nagging feeling at the back of her mind. Anna's words didn't match the tension in her body. As they broke apart, Y/N caught a fleeting look in Anna's eyes that showed emotions she couldn't quite decipher.

Was it resentment? Envy? Or something else entirely? No..., there was no way someone like Anna could be envious of her. Anna had everything Y/N had always wished for. A prestigious position in the Scouts, admiration from their parents, and a life that seemed untouched by the struggles Y/N had faced. The thought was absurd. Anna was the perfect child, the golden example of success.

Anna pulled away from the embrace and quickly turned away, her voice cheerful, "Well, it's getting late. We should get some rest before tomorrow." She climbed up to the top bunk without waiting for a response, her movements hurried and stiff.

Y/N lay back on her bed, staring up at the wooden slats of the bunk above her. The room fell into an uneasy silence, only the soft sounds of their breathing filling the space. She couldn't shake the feeling that something had shifted between them, and it wasn't just the revelations they had shared.

Anna's reaction, that forced smile, the way she avoided eye contact, it all pointed to something deeper, something Y/N wasn't sure she was ready to face.

The night dragged on, the silence growing heavier with each passing minute. Y/N's mind raced, replaying their conversation over and over again, wondering what she might have said that had bothered Anna.

Unable to sleep, Y/N turned onto her side, staring out the small window. She tried to push the thoughts from her mind, to find some semblance of peace in the quiet night, but it was no use. Her emotions were too tangled.

Just as she was beginning to doze off, she heard a faint creak from above. Anna's breathing had changed, becoming shallow and uneven. Y/N's heart skipped a beat, her body tensing as she realized Anna was still awake.

"Anna?" she whispered.

There was no response, but Y/N could feel the tension in the air, the unspoken words hanging between them. She hesitated, unsure if she should press the issue, but the weight of the unresolved tension was too much to bear.

"Anna, if something's bothering you... you can tell me," Y/N urged.

For a long moment, the only sound was the rustling of blankets as Anna shifted in her bed. Y/N held her breath, waiting, hoping her sister would open up. But when Anna finally spoke.

“I’m fine, Y/N. Just go to sleep, alright?”

Y/N knew it was a lie, but she didn’t have the strength to push any further. “Okay,” she murmured, though the word felt hollow in her mouth. She rolled onto her back again, staring up at the ceiling. The night dragged on, and sleep remained elusive.

The next morning, Y/N awoke to find Anna already gone, her bed neatly made. A sense of unease settled in Y/N’s stomach as she dressed, her mind replaying the events of the previous night. She knew something was wrong, but without Anna there to confirm it, she could only speculate.

When she joined the others in the mess hall for breakfast, she found herself scanning the room for any sign of Levi. He was nowhere to be found, and neither was Anna. Their absence only added to the unease gnawing at her.

...

Anna walked with through the dimly lit hallway, her footsteps echoing against the stone walls. She wasn’t entirely sure why she was doing this, why she felt the need to approach Levi in this way, but something compelled her forward. It was as if she needed to prove something, though she couldn’t quite put her finger on what.

As she approached Levi’s office, she took a deep breath, steadying herself. It wasn’t like her to seek him out like this. But that didn’t stop her from knocking on the door, her knuckles tapping lightly against the wood.

"Come in," Levi’s voice sounded from within.

Anna pushed the door open, stepping into the office. Levi was seated at his desk, papers scattered around him in an organized chaos. His eyes barely flickered up to acknowledge her entrance, his attention focused on the task before him.

"Captain," she greeted, as she closed the door behind her. She hesitated, then took a few steps closer to his desk.

"Anna," he responded flatly, barely looking up as he continued his work. His brow furrowed slightly. "Do you need something?"

Anna smiled and took a step forward, her attention fixed on Levi, who remained engrossed in his work. She leaned against the side of his desk, her posture relaxed. “I figured I’d check in and see how things are going. It’s been a tough week for all of us.”

Levi frowned slightly as he reviewed the papers on his desk. “It has. But I wasn’t aware that checking in was part of your duties.”

Anna chuckled, a sound that seemed almost forced, her fingers fidgeting with the hem of her sleeve. “Maybe it’s not. But sometimes a bit of conversation helps break the tension, don’t you think? How about we just talk a bit, Captain?”

Levi glanced up briefly. He raised an eyebrow, his expression one of mild curiosity mixed with confusion. "And since when do you want to 'just talk' with me?"

Anna shifted slightly, her smile growing a bit more forced. "Well, it's not often we get to talk outside of missions and training. I thought it might be nice."

Levi finally looked up, his eyes narrowing slightly as he studied her. There was something off about this interaction, he could sense it. He raised an eyebrow, clearly puzzled by her sudden interest in small talk. "If you've got something to say, spit it out. Otherwise, leave"

Before Anna could respond, the door behind her creaked slightly as Petra stopped in her tracks. She caught sight of Anna standing near Levi's desk and, unable to resist, peeked through the crack in the door. As she watched, Petra felt a bit of guilt for eavesdropping but found herself unable to pull away. The sight of Anna, who never usually sought out Levi for casual conversation, sparked her curiosity. Something felt off, and Petra's heart raced as she wondered what was going on.

"You know, Captain," she continued, taking another small step closer, "we've been through a lot together. I've noticed your strength and your dedication. I've always admired that about you. It's... attractive." Her hand brushed against his arm lightly, a touch so faint it could have been accidental if it hadn't been for the way she looked at him.

Levi's eyes followed her hand as it moved, his expression darkening. He didn't like this, didn't like the way she was acting, the way she was looking at him. "What are you getting at?" he asked.

She took a step to the side and then sat down on the edge of his desk, her hand moved again, this time resting more firmly on his forearm, her thumb brushing over the fabric of his sleeve. "Just saying what's on my mind, Captain. I think we could get to know each other better, don't you?" she replied innocently, though her tone suggested otherwise.

Anna smiled, the kind of smile that was meant to disarm, to draw someone in. "Just thought we could get to know each other a little better. We're both soldiers, after all. We've both seen things, done things..."

Levi's posture tightened, irritation flickering in his eyes. He hadn't expected Anna to behave like this, so forward, so out of line. His patience was wearing thin. "Anna," he said, barely hiding his growing annoyance. "This isn't the time or place for this."

Anna, either oblivious to his warning or too caught up in her intentions, reached out and lightly touched his hand, her fingers brushing against his skin. "Why not?" We're both adults here, Levi. We can—"

She didn't get to finish. Levi's patience snapped. He grabbed her wrist, his grip firm but controlled, and yanked her hand away. His expression hardened, eyes glaring at her with a mix of confusion and disdain. "I don't know what you're trying to accomplish with all of this, but it's not gonna happen," he said. "Go back to your duties. Now."

Anna's face fell, her confidence shattered by the harshness in his voice. She stood there for a moment, stunned by his rejection. Her mouth opened to say something, but the words failed her. She quickly gathered herself, straightening up and forcing a tight smile. "Of course, Captain," she replied as she turned on her heel and quickly left the office.

Petra cautiously stepped away from the door, her pulse quickening as she distanced herself, hoping to avoid being caught.

When Anna finally emerged, her eyes briefly flickered with confusion as they landed on Petra, but the look quickly hardened into something sharper, more hostile.

Without a word, Anna turned on her heel and walked away, her tense shoulders and deliberate pace making it clear she knew Petra had likely overheard something. The silent acknowledgment hung in the air, leaving Petra rooted in place, feeling exposed. She felt guilty for eavesdropping but pushed it aside, focusing on her task.

"Captain Levi," Petra said, keeping her voice steady as she tried to maintain a sense of normalcy. "Eren is ready for today's training."

Levi glanced up at her, his expression not changing. "Thank you, Petra," he replied, his tone devoid of the irritation it held moments before. "I'll be there in a minute."

Petra nodded and quickly exited the room, her mind still reeling from what she had overheard. Something about the whole situation didn't sit right with her, but she knew better than to dwell on it now.

Levi, now alone, let out a quiet breath, feeling the weight of the interaction settle. It wasn't about Anna... or anyone for that matter. His thoughts wandered briefly to someone else, someone who had already taken up more space in his mind than he cared to admit. That's where his focus was, whether he liked it or not. There was no room for anyone else, even if there had been.

Chapter End Notes

Petra knows all the gossip 🦴

This chapter mainly focused on the relationship between Y/N and her sister. The next chapter includes the main couple again tho.

Next chapter will be up this Wednesday 🥰

Thanks for reading! I hope you like the story so far! ❤️

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Art of Anna by @01Alessandra ❤️❤️

Link: <https://pin.it/38QB96nLJ>

She looks very accurate to how I imagined her ☺️ Tysm love ya!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The day went on as usual, with the Scouts completing their duties. By nightfall, everyone had returned to headquarters. Y/N found herself in the research room with Hange and Moblit, reviewing old reports and cross-referencing data. The room was dimly lit by a few oil lamps, casting flickering shadows, giving the space a quiet atmosphere.

Hange hummed a tune to herself, taking notes and scribbling on a notebook, while Moblit sorted through stacks of papers. Y/N was deep in thought, her fingers absently tracing the edges of a page when the door creaked open. Levi stepped in, his ever-familiar posture, one hand holding his cup in that usual way, immediately drawing their attention.

"Ah, Levi! Didn't expect you here tonight," she said.

Levi barely acknowledged her enthusiasm, his eyes sweeping the room before landing directly on Y/N. He walked over to where she sat without so much as a greeting. She flicked her eyes up from the papers, meeting his stare for just a second before dropping her eyes back to her work. Her fingers tensed over the edge of the documents, but she couldn't resist another glance, he was still moving toward her. She felt a slight knot tighten in her stomach, slightly taken aback by his sudden presence.

"You busy?" Levi asked.

"Uh..." she said, her eyes flickering to Hange and Moblit, silently asking if she was needed for anything else. After a brief pause, she looked back at him, uncertainty lingering in her expression. "No— not really. I'm just finishing up for the day," she replied, sensing that Levi wanted to discuss something. "Is there something going on, Captain?"

Levi started to speak but stopped short, his words cutting off mid-sentence. His attention shifted, and with a slight turn of his head, he glanced over his shoulder. Y/N, sensing the change in his demeanor, followed his line of sight to see Hange and Moblit standing just behind him, watching with curious expressions. Levi didn't need to say anything. His silence and the sharp glare he sent their way spoke volumes. Levi didn't need to say anything, his silence said it all. His intense glare spoke volumes.

Hange, quick to notice, blinked before a slow, teasing grin spread across her face, "Oh! Right. Moblit and I just remembered we have something to do, don't we, Moblit?" she said as she giggled nervously.

Moblit nodded quickly, also catching the silent message. "Uh... yes, yes! Very important tasks elsewhere," Moblit stammered as he scrambled to gather his papers, clearly following Hange's lead.

As Hange walked out of the room with a glance over her shoulder, she giggled. "Have fun, you two." Levi's glare hardened, the annoyance in his eyes clear as he watched them leave, though the corner of Y/N's lips twitched at the awkward humor of the situation.

Levi's expression remained unchanged as he watched them until they were out of sight. Hange's laughter lingered as she walked through the corridor since the door was left slightly open. Levi exhaled sharply and shifted his attention back to Y/N, who was now sitting awkwardly at the table, trying to mask her nervousness now that they were alone.

There was a moment of silence, neither of them quite knowing how to start. Y/N struggled to hold his gaze, her fingers fidgeted with the edge of the paper in front of her, eyes briefly flicking to his before darting away.

"So..." Levi finally spoke, breaking the quiet. "How has Headquarters been for ya?" His tone was casual, almost too casual.

Y/N blinked, slightly thrown off by the unexpected question. "Uhm... it's been fine," she said, hesitating for a moment. "A bit overwhelming at times, but nothing I can't handle."

Levi nodded, his face remaining impassive. Another pause. They both glanced around, the awkwardness settling back in as they avoided looking directly at each other.

Levi's fingers tightened around the cup before he cleared his throat "About yesterday..." he started, pausing between phrases as if weighing each word. "When you tried to help with the laundry... I guess, um, I might have overreacted a bit."

Y/N raised an eyebrow. 'Was that...supposed to be an apology?' she thought, though she could see he was trying... in his own way.

"I was having a bad day. It wasn't your fault," he added, his words clipped and stiff, as though the apology pained him.

Y/N couldn't help the small smirk that tugged at the corner of her lips. His apology was... bad. She could tell he was struggling with it, and honestly, it was kind of endearing. She looked down to hide her reaction, biting the inside of her cheek to stop herself from laughing. Levi? Apologizing? That was a first.

"Well... thanks," she said softly, her voice laced with amusement as she glanced back up at him. "It's no big deal."

Levi hesitated for a moment before pulling out a chair and sitting down across from her, placing his cup on the table. Y/N followed his movement, feeling the tension between them shift slightly into something more relaxed. She couldn't help herself from making small talk, hoping to lighten the mood.

"How's training been today?" she asked with a smile, leaning forward slightly. "I saw Eren almost face-plant," she chuckled.

Levi's face remained impassive, though there was a flicker of amusement in his eyes. "Tch. Typical of the brat," he muttered, shaking his head slightly.

Y/N laughed, a genuine sound that broke the quiet in the room. "Easy for you to say," she teased, crossing her arms. "You were probably the best in your Training Corps, weren't you?"

Levi's face remained impassive, as he took a sip of his cup "I wasn't in the Training Corps."

Y/N's eyes widened slightly. "Wait, really? I thought everyone had to go through that."

Levi leaned back in his chair, crossing his arms. "No one taught me how to fight. I'm self-taught."

Y/N's mind flashed back to a conversation they'd had a long time ago when Levi had mentioned being self-taught. At the time, it had seemed so far removed from what everyone else had gone through in the Training Corps that she didn't quite believe him. And back then, she hadn't had the nerve to ask for details.

Her curiosity piqued, and she leaned forward again, eager to finally get more information. "You really taught yourself everything? How?"

For a moment, Levi seemed to debate whether to continue, but after a deep breath, he spoke. His voice was calm, but there was an edge to it. "I grew up in the Underground."

Y/N's eyes widened slightly. She had heard rumors about the Underground, the dangerous, dark place beneath the city, but she had never imagined that Levi, *The Captain Levi*, had come from such a place.

"The Underground?" Y/N repeated in disbelief.

Levi nodded, his eyes distant as he recalled the past. "Filthy place. You either learn fast, or you don't survive. Found some old ODM gear. Had to figure it out by myself."

Y/N tilted her head slightly, her voice softening. "It must have been tough, being down there alone with all of that. I can't imagine how hard it must have been to get through all of that by yourself."

Levi's expression flickered, something unreadable passing over his face. His jaw tightened as he hesitated, and for a moment, Y/N wasn't sure if he was going to continue. Then, with a deep breath, he spoke.

“I wasn’t alone... I had two friends, Isabel and Farlan,” he paused, eyes distant as if the names themselves carried a weight. “We were a team.”

Y/N watched him carefully, sensing how difficult this was for him to talk about.

“Farlan had a head for plans,” Levi continued after a beat, his words measured. “He was sharp. Knew how to move in that kind of world.” He paused again as if weighing his next words carefully. “Isabel... she had a heart. Too much of it sometimes, but she was loyal. Stubborn, too.”

He didn’t look at her as he spoke, his eyes fixed somewhere beyond the room. Y/N could tell he wasn’t just recalling facts. He was reliving memories.

“They stuck with me. We stuck with each other,” he said, quieter now. “I didn’t care much about anything outside surviving until they came along.”

Another pause, this one longer. Y/N wondered if he was struggling to find the right words, or if the memories themselves were difficult to face.

“We survived together,” Levi finally said. “Took whatever opportunities we could find to feed ourselves. Not the kind you’d brag about, but... down there, you did what you had to.”

Y/N stayed silent, sensing that Levi had more on his mind but didn’t want to push him. His words lingered in the air, heavy with everything left unsaid. “And then... you joined the Scouts?” she asked quietly.

Levi’s jaw tightened slightly as he nodded. “Erwin found us. Made us an offer...” He paused, clearly not wanting to delve deeper into the topic.

Y/N’s heart ached for him, hearing the weight of his past in every word. She hesitated before speaking again. “What... happened to your friends?”

Levi’s eyes darkened, and for a moment, his stoic mask slipped. “They’re dead. Titan ambush. They didn’t make it out.”

She listened carefully, feeling the weight of Levi’s words, the heaviness in the room. The normally composed captain, who never let anything faze him, now seemed so raw. She could see it, the shadows of his past haunting him as he spoke. The air felt thick, charged with emotions he never let anyone see, but somehow, here he was, opening a piece of himself to her.

Y/N hesitated for a moment, then, almost without thinking, reached across the table. Her hand found its way to his, resting gently on top of his. Levi froze at the touch. His eyes immediately dropped to where their hands connected, his fingers twitching slightly under hers, but he didn’t pull away.

Her heart raced, but she remained calm. She didn’t know exactly why she had reached out, only that at that moment, she wanted to offer him some small comfort.

Her heart ached for him, knowing what it meant for someone like Levi to open up, even a little. The weight of his past, the loss of his friends, the burdens he carried every day, it was all too much for one person to bear. She wasn't sure why it mattered so much, but it did.

Levi's breath hitched slightly, though his face remained impassive. Inside, however, it was a different story. He wasn't used to this kind of closeness, not in this way. He usually despised physical contact, it was unnecessary, an invasion of his space, but right now, with her, it felt different, though he'd never admit it. He couldn't afford attachments, they only brought pain, and weakness.

His heart beat a little faster as their eyes met, locking in a quiet, unspoken exchange. Y/N wasn't prying, wasn't asking him for more. She was just there, offering understanding, and acceptance. Levi's chest tightened as he realized how much that meant to him.

For Levi, the moment stretched on, the silence somehow comforting rather than stifling. He didn't know how to express what he was feeling, and he wasn't even sure he understood it himself. But he didn't want to break the moment.

His jaw tightened as the thoughts swirled in his mind. He knew better than to let himself get too close. Attachments only led to pain, he had learned that lesson the hard way...

After what felt like an eternity, Levi finally spoke, his voice quieter than usual. "You don't need to feel sorry for me."

His words were blunt, but there was no harshness in them. It was as if he was trying to protect her from his pain, from the weight he carried every day. Y/N smiled gently, her thumb brushing lightly over his hand, a small, almost imperceptible gesture.

"I don't," she replied softly. "But I do care."

Levi's heart thudded in his chest. He didn't know how to respond, didn't know what to say.

For a long moment, they simply sat there, the weight of their shared silence heavy with unspoken feelings. Y/N's hand remained on his.

...

Anna entered the headquarters, the familiar weight of the day's exhaustion pressing on her shoulders. She had spent the last few hours trying to focus on her tasks, but her mind had been elsewhere, clouded by an unsettled feeling she couldn't quite name. She had been avoiding Y/N, intentionally keeping her distance since their awkward exchange. Every time she thought of her, something inside her tightened, a sensation she didn't fully understand.

Now, the day was nearly over, and guilt started to gnaw at her. She sighed, rubbing her temples as she walked down the dimly lit hallway, deciding that it was time to find Y/N. She was probably done with work by now. Anna had no idea how to explain herself, but part of her knew she owed her sister at least a conversation, if nothing else. She couldn't shake the uneasy feeling that had settled in her chest. It was like something had shifted between them, something that had left her feeling wrong, though why, she still couldn't fully grasp.

She hadn't meant to be so cold. Y/N didn't deserve that. But every time she saw her lately, that same strange, uncomfortable sensation twisted inside her as if her sister's very presence stirred something deep, something she wished would stay buried. She hated it. She hated how it made her act.

She approached the research room, the faint glow of a lamp spilling through the slightly open door. Pausing, she tilted her head. Hange and Moblit had probably left already, so maybe Y/N was still in there, finishing up. As she got closer, Anna slowed her steps, an odd sense of caution washing over her. The faint murmur of voices drifted through the door. Curious, she peered inside through the narrow gap.

And then she froze.

There, on opposite sides of the table, sat Levi and Y/N. Levi, his usual rigid posture slightly more relaxed, was looking at Y/N with a level of attentiveness that Anna had never quite seen from him before. It sent a sharp, unfamiliar jolt through her chest.

Her breath hitched. A sudden tightness formed in her throat, making it hard to swallow. She couldn't look away, even though something inside her screamed that she should.

Her eyes dropped lower, and that's when she saw it. Y/N's hand, resting gently atop Levi's, their skin barely touching, yet enough to make the air between them feel charged with something heavy, something that left Anna rooted in place.

Her heart pounded. A hollow ache formed in her chest, twisting into something painful. Her fingers twitched at her sides. The sight of Y/N's hand on his felt like a punch to the gut, knocking the air right out of her lungs.

She clenched her jaw tightly as the scene unfolded before her. Y/N's touch was so gentle, so effortless, and Levi wasn't pulling away. He wasn't brushing it off, wasn't recoiling the way he had when she had dared to touch his hand once, back when she'd been foolish enough to try. The memory of that moment surged to the front of her mind, how cold and harsh Levi's reaction had been, how he had immediately withdrawn from her touch as if it burned.

But now, watching him sit there, not only tolerating but seemingly accepting Y/N's hand on his, a wave of something hot and bitter rose in her chest. She could feel it spread, like a fire that scorched her insides, leaving behind nothing but raw, unspoken fury.

Her fingers curled into fists at her sides, nails digging into her palms so hard it hurt. The tightness in her throat grew unbearable, and she clenched her jaw even harder, trying to keep herself together.

She couldn't stand it. Not from Levi. Not from Y/N.

The more Anna watched, the more the reality sank in. Y/N wasn't just any other soldier to Levi. To anyone else, Levi's expression would have seemed indifferent, just a typical glance in Y/N's direction. But Anna had known him long enough to see past the surface. His usual cold, detached look had softened into something almost affectionate, as his eyes stayed on her. It was as if, at that moment, nothing else mattered but her.

Anna recalled Petra's comments and realized now what she had meant. This was the look that hinted at something deeper, something she hadn't fully understood until now. A connection Anna couldn't ignore... or hope to compete with.

She needed to move, to get away from this, but her body wouldn't respond. It was as if she was frozen, forced to watch as Y/N, her *younger* sister, reached out and connected with someone in a way Anna never had. The frustration and jealousy gnawed at her, knowing Y/N had found someone before she ever could. *And not just anyone*, but someone in a high rank, someone with power and authority.

Without another word or sound, she took a step back, away from the warm light spilling through the door, and turned on her heel.

As she moved further from the room, her breath came out in ragged, shallow bursts. She wanted to scream, to yell, to release whatever it was that was boiling just beneath her skin, but she didn't. She just kept walking, her fists still clenched tight, her jaw locked, her mind replaying the image of Y/N's hand on Levi's over and over again.

It wasn't fair. It wasn't supposed to be like this. She was the one who had fought alongside him, trained under him, and endured everything the Scouts had thrown at them.

She was the one who had spent years earning Levi's trust, proving herself over and over. But it hadn't been enough. It was never enough. And now, her sister, who hadn't even been part of this world until recently, was sitting there with him, touching him, connecting with him in a way Anna never could.

It felt like a betrayal, even if she knew it wasn't fair to think that. It felt like everything she had ever wanted was being pulled further and further out of reach, slipping through her fingers no matter how hard she tried to hold on.

Back inside the room, oblivious to Anna's inner turmoil. Levi finally stood up, breaking the spell, but not harshly or abruptly. The moment had passed, but the connection remained, lingering in the air between them.

"You should go to the mess hall," Levi said, his voice back to its usual tone, though softer than usual. "Dinner's probably ready."

Y/N, still feeling the remnants of the moment, nodded. "Yeah... I guess I should."

Levi walked toward the door, but before he left, he paused, glancing back at her. His eyes softened for just a second, the briefest hint of something that almost looked like gratitude before he pushed it back down, returning to his stoic self.

As they left the room, a small part of Levi lingered on the way her hand had felt on his, the warmth of her touch staying with him longer than he cared to admit, knowing that something had changed between them, something neither of them dared to say out loud, at least, not yet.

...

As Levi walked through the quiet halls of Headquarters, with people already asleep, his thoughts drifted back to his conversation with Y/N. Even though he'd never admit it, sharing even a small part of himself left him feeling a bit uneasy. He shook the thought from his mind, focusing instead on the footsteps approaching from behind.

Hange leaned in closer to Levi with an exaggerated smirk. "Levi, Levi, Levi," she began, voice full of mock seriousness.

He sighed, already sensing trouble. "What now, four eyes?"

Hange smirked, practically gleaming with mischief. "I've been watching you," she began in a mock-serious tone. "And I have to say, I'm deeply concerned."

Levi blinked, completely confused. "What the hell are you talking about?"

Hange tilted her head, eyes gleaming with scandalous delight. "Oh, don't act innocent. It's only a matter of time before you slip up and do something... highly improper."

His frown deepened. "Highly improper?"

She nodded solemnly, lowering her voice. "You know, things like..." She glanced around dramatically as if ensuring no one else could hear. "*Sharing teacups.*"

Levi stared at her blankly for a moment, clearly not following. "What...?"

Hange's eyes widened with faux horror. "Your fingers... *touching* while you both grab the same cup. Steam rising between you, Levi. The unspoken tension. I mean, who could resist that level of *intimacy*?"

Levi's confusion dissolved into pure annoyance. "Oh. For Fuck's sake," he said, turning around and picking up his pace, Hange doing her best not to laugh as she followed him.

Hange was already ramping up. "And it doesn't stop there, you menace to innocence." She leaned in closer, voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper. "Maybe a little bit of..." She wiggled her fingers in the air as if casting a spell, "...hand-holding," she whispered dramatically, "and who knows what else? Probably intense eye contact that lasts more than five seconds! So scandalous!" she gasped, dramatically covering her mouth.

Levi gritted his teeth, trying to ignore her. "I'm not listening to this."

"Oh, and just wait," Hange interrupted again, eyes wide in glee. "When you two start making *prolonged eye contact* in public. You'd be the talk of the town, Levi! *Prolonged eye contact*. The ultimate intimacy!"

Levi threw her a look that could incinerate her on the spot. "I'll kill you."

"Right??" Hange threw her arms up in exaggerated agreement as if his threat was just more fuel to her fire. "Next thing I know, you'll be... oh, this is too much... *sharing a blanket* during a cold night."

Levi shot her an incredulous look. “Why the hell would I—”

“No, no!” Hange cut him off, raising her hand. “Not just any blanket. A small one, where your feet might accidentally *touch*.”

Levi's glare was now set in stone. “Hange, I swear—”

Hange cackled. “Of course, of course,” Hange replied, holding her hands up in mock surrender. I know most you would do is offer her a second cup of tea and politely ask her if she's feeling *adequately hydrated*.” She leaned in closer, eyes sparkling with mock seriousness. “Maybe if you were feeling especially bold, you'd... fix her collar? How utterly risqué!”

Levi blinked at her, deadpan. “You're an idiot.”

“And you're too much of a stick in the mud,” Hange shot back with a teasing wink. “But hey, no one said love had to be exciting, right? I'm sure your ‘flirtation by silence’ approach is just enough to sweep her off her feet.”

Levi kept walking, his pace quickening as he tried to ignore her.

Hange was far from done. “Come on, Levi! Admit it, the thought *must* have crossed your mind. I mean, how many times have you two had tea together now? Twice? Three times? That's basically a marriage proposal by your standards, right?” She snickered, clearly enjoying every second of his discomfort.

Levi glanced at her, his irritation barely contained. “And how would *you* know how many times I've offered her tea?”

“People talk,” Hange said with a mischievous grin.

Levi pinched the bridge of his nose. “Remind me why I tolerate you.”

Hange leaned back, the biggest grin plastered on her face. “Ah, so tender.” She placed her hands over her heart dramatically. “My poor heart can't take it. Captain Levi, humanity's strongest *lover boy*. Who knew?”

Levi simply kept walking, never glancing back as Hange stood there, her laughter fading behind him.

“You know,” Hange called after him, voice dripping with amusement, “I told you this would happen. You can deny it all you want, but you've got it bad for her. I *knew* you'd fall for someone eventually!”

Levi paused, throwing a sharp look over his shoulder. “You're fucking delusional. I'm not *falling* for anyone.”

“Sure, sure.” Hange grinned wider as if she knew exactly what was going on. “But when you two finally have your moment, just remember who called it first.”

Chapter End Notes

I had fun writing the end of this chapter ngl. I always find it funny when Hange teases Levi in fanfics.

Hope you liked it ❤️

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

We hit a 100 Kudos! I am so happy!! 😭😭
Thank you so much to everyone ❤️

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

After breakfast, the squad began to prepare for the day's tasks, chatting amongst themselves as they finished their meals. Y/N couldn't help but notice how Anna had been avoiding her, waking up earlier than usual to slip away before any chance of conversation. Even during breakfast, Anna had chosen a seat farther down the table, her eyes never meeting Y/N's. The tension between them was noticeable, tightening like a knot in Y/N's chest with every passing minute.

She pushed her food around her plate, stealing glances at Anna, hoping for even the slightest acknowledgment. But there was nothing. Just the cold shoulder and averted eyes. *'What happened between us?'* The question gnawed at her, but there was no room to ask, not with everyone else around.

Petra turned to Y/N with a warm smile as the squad began to rise and clear the mess hall. "Ready to clean up?" she asked, gathering her dishes.

Y/N paused, her attention drifting back to Anna, who was already out of her seat, still refusing to look her way. Her heart sank a little further. "Actually..." she hesitated, "I can handle the dishes by myself today."

Petra raised an eyebrow, confusion flickering across her face. "Are you sure? We usually do this together."

"Yeah," Y/N replied, her voice was a bit too quick, masking her unease. "It's fine. It's not like my tasks are as important as yours anyway. You all should get a head start." She offered to clean the dishes not only because she genuinely felt her tasks weren't as crucial, but also because she needed some time to herself.

Petra frowned slightly, sensing something off. "But—"

"I insist," Y/N interrupted, softer this time but with a hint of finality. "Really, it's no problem."

A brief pause stretched out between them before Petra sighed, nodding slowly. "Alright... if you're sure. Thanks, Y/N."

Hange and Moblit glanced over at Y/N, their expressions reflecting a mix of curiosity and concern. Hange gave Y/N a reassuring nod. "It's alright. Just join us once you're done," she said warmly, her tone suggesting that Y/N wasn't entirely alone in this.

The rest of the squad murmured their gratitude, a few offering pats on her shoulder as they left. Levi, as usual, kept his words brief, simply nodding to her in acknowledgment, his way of saying thank you. Anna was the first to exit, slipping out without a word, not even sparing a glance in Y/N's direction. That small gesture, or lack of it, stung more than Y/N wanted to admit.

As the mess hall emptied, she felt the weight of their absence on her, the silence amplifying the tension that had been building all morning. Y/N tied her headscarf on, tucking her hair underneath with more care than usual, then rolled up the sleeves of her dress and slipped on an apron. She stepped toward the basin, her hands moving as the sound of water splashing filled the empty room.

Her hands worked automatically, scrubbing dishes that didn't really need the attention she was giving them. Each dish she scrubbed felt like a poor attempt to wash away the tension, but no amount of soap or water seemed enough to clean the mess that was building inside her.

Her mind wandered back to Anna's recent behavior, the strange shift in their relationship that she couldn't quite understand. The night after she'd spoken to Levi replayed in her head, vivid and unsettling. She had returned to their shared room. Anna had been there, standing in front of the mirror, her back to the door. Y/N had barely stepped inside when she noticed Anna's eyes glaring at her through the reflection, sharp and accusing. The look had been so cold, almost hateful, it made Y/N flinch in surprise.

"Everything okay?" Y/N had asked. Concern wrapping around each word. Her stomach had twisted at the sight.

Anna had turned around quickly, too quickly. Her expression had shifted like a mask falling into place, suddenly bright and cheerful. "Of course!" she'd replied with a wide smile, stepping forward to give Y/N a side hug. The gesture had been familiar, but the warmth... something about it felt off. Forced, even. Y/N had wanted to believe it; *'Maybe I imagined it,'* but the unease gnawed at her.

Y/N hadn't pushed further that night, though the coldness of Anna's earlier look stayed with her. Since then, things hadn't gotten better. Anna's behavior had only grown stranger. Every attempt Y/N made to talk about it was met with those same overly bright smiles, the same quick hugs and gestures of affection that felt more like attempts to distract her.

'Why won't she just tell me what's wrong?' Y/N thought, her hands scrubbing harder at the dishes, even though they were already spotless.

While Y/N was lost in thought, Levi happened to pass by the mess hall. His eyes landed on Y/N, still diligently cleaning the dishes. He watched her for a moment, unnoticed, and something stirred inside him. She was wearing that simple dress again, with the headscarf wrapped around her head. It reminded him of when they first met, back when she worked as a

maid. There was something nostalgic about the way she looked now, almost like a snapshot from a memory.

He looked her over, noticing the difference from when they first met. She seemed healthier now, no longer malnourished. Her training had added muscle, giving her a stronger appearance, and he was quietly glad to see the change.

Anna walked by but stopped when she noticed Levi staring at something. Curiosity got the better of her, and she stepped closer to stand beside him. She followed his gaze, quickly catching on to where his attention was, and smirked mischievously.

"Staring at her again, huh?" Anna said. "You've got quite the soft spot for her. Don't you, Captain?"

Levi frowned, his expression hardening slightly, but he didn't respond.

Anna crossed her arms, eyes narrowing as she continued. "You know, she's better suited for scrubbing dishes than swinging swords. She's always been more of a maid than a soldier. Don't you agree?"

Levi's expression didn't change, but he glanced at her with a brief look of confusion, uncertain why she would say something so harsh about her own sister. The comment seemed out of place, even for her.

"Don't worry, I know everything," Anna said, her tone filled with mockery and satisfaction. The smirk on her face deepened as she continued, "She told me all about it. How she worked for you in your office as a hired cleaner."

Levi's brow furrowed, his expression hardening at her tone, though he didn't respond immediately. Anna, seeing his hesitation, took the opportunity to press further, her smirk turning sharper.

"I knew someone like you wouldn't have a personal assistant," she added with a sneer. "But lying to the entire squad about it for her sake? You must *really* like her."

Her words hung in the air, daring Levi to react, the accusation behind them sparking an uncomfortable tension.

Anna's smirk lingered as she continued. "Honestly, she's not cut out for this life. You've seen it yourself. She's too weak, always struggling with the basics. I can't help but wonder why you'd waste your time with her. She was never meant to be a scout, just a mediocre maid who got lucky."

Levi's jaw clenched, his patience wearing thin as he deliberately avoided looking at Anna. "Y/N is more than capable of being a Scout," he said sharply. "She's worked her ass off to get here. Unlike some people who sit on their high horse, stuck in their outdated, useless opinions, she's proven herself over and over."

He glanced at her then, eyes cold, and continued, his tone cutting. “Maybe if you weren’t so wrapped up in your own pathetic sense of superiority, you’d recognize what real dedication looks like. But I guess that’s asking too much of you, isn’t it?”

Anna let out a small, mocking chuckle, her eyes glinting with mischief. “You know,” she began, her voice filled with a hint of satisfaction, “did she ever tell you why exactly she failed the first time? It’s not just because she couldn’t get the basics down with the ODM gear, you know.”

Levi’s eyes widened in surprise, his brow furrowing as he processed her words. “Oh, I see. So she hasn’t told you,” Anna said with a teasing smirk as she watched his reaction.

Levi’s patience snapped. “Just fucking spit it out already,” he demanded.

Anna’s smirk deepened as she looked back at Levi, clearly savoring the moment. “You really have no idea, do you?” she began, her voice dripping with condescension. “Sure, she’s managed to hide it pretty well, but let me tell you something. Y/N’s always been terrified of heights. I’m not talking about some mild discomfort. I’m talking full-on paralyzing fear. Ever since we were kids, she couldn’t even climb a ladder without shaking like a leaf.”

Levi’s eyes narrowed as he absorbed this new information.

She crossed her arms, leaning in slightly as if to emphasize her point. “She used to freeze completely during training, and no amount of yelling or pushing could get her to move. Do you ever wonder why it took her so damn long to learn to use ODM gear compared to the others? That fear is still there, deep down, no matter how much she pretends otherwise. How can a Scout, someone meant to fly through the air, be scared of the very thing that’s supposed to keep her alive?”

As Anna’s words sank in, a wave of realization hit Levi. Everything suddenly fell into place. He remembered the first training sessions where Y/N had seemed unusually anxious, her movements hesitant and shaky. Initially, he had thought her behavior was due to a lack of skill. But now, with this new understanding of her fear of heights, he saw it in a different light.

He recalled the moment he had pushed her off the wall, her frozen expression as she looked down, paralyzed with fear. At the time, he had thought her fear was solely of the Titans below, not realizing the depth of her fear. The guilt that now twisted in his stomach was sharp and undeniable. He had unwittingly subjected her to a level of panic and distress that far exceeded what he had intended. The thought of causing her such unnecessary anguish stung, making him question the harshness of his actions and their impact on her.

“Of course, it’s gotten much better over time. Otherwise, she wouldn’t have been able to graduate,” Anna continued. “It’s pathetic, really. You’ve seen her, cleaning floors, windows... That’s where she belongs. Not out there fighting Titans. She’ll never be anything more than the scared little girl she’s always been. And deep down, you know that too.”

Levi’s jaw clenched as he listened to Anna’s venomous words. He could feel his frustration simmering beneath the surface, but he forced himself to maintain a facade of calm. His eyes

locked onto Anna, his expression growing colder by the second. “That’s enough,” he said.

Anna, unfazed by his tone, scoffed and lifted her hands in a mock gesture of innocence. “What? I’m just speaking the truth. You’re the one staring at her like she’s something special. But she’s just a scared little girl who should’ve stuck to the only thing she’s good at.”

Levi’s patience snapped, his anger clear as he glared at her. His voice was suddenly loud, breaking the quiet of their conversation. “I said enough!”

As Levi’s voice cut through the air with his sharp command, Y/N flinched slightly, her attention momentarily pulled away from her task. The authoritative tone of Levi startled her, causing her to quickly glance towards the door, trying to make sense of the sudden disruption. She wasn’t aware of the conversation, only that something tense and serious was happening.

Both Levi and Anna turned their attention towards Y/N. Levi’s eyes softened briefly as he noticed her reaction. He saw her standing there, caught off-guard and seemingly unaware of the harsh exchange that had just taken place.

Anna looked away from Y/N before shrugging carelessly as if her words had been nothing important. With a self-satisfied smirk, she turned on her heel and walked away, her head held high as if she had won some unspoken victory. The air seemed to crackle with the tension she left behind, leaving Levi standing there, his frustration visible.

As Anna’s footsteps faded, Levi turned his attention back to Y/N. She glanced up, her eyes meeting his for a brief moment. Levi held her stare for a heartbeat, then, without a word, he broke the eye contact by walking away.

Levi sighed softly, his thoughts shifting to the tasks awaiting him. He knew he needed to start Eren’s Titan shifting training soon, and the others were probably already waiting for him.

A troubling thought crept into his mind. Maybe Anna’s harsh words weren’t entirely unfounded. Y/N did still appear more like a maid than a Scout in that outfit.

...

Later that evening, Levi sat in his office alone, carefully wrapping multiple pieces of clothing in brown paper to keep them clean, before tying a simple string around it to keep everything together. He stared at the package, tapping his finger lightly against the desk, wondering how exactly he would give it to her. Should he just toss it to her casually? No, that felt too dismissive. Maybe just leave it on her desk and pretend it wasn’t a big deal? He sighed, irritated at himself for overthinking something so simple. It was just a uniform, after all, but the idea of giving it to her felt oddly personal, uncomfortable even.

‘Just give it to her and walk away. Simple,’ he thought, annoyed at himself for overthinking so much.

He shook his head as he stood up. No, even that felt too... awkward. Levi ran a hand through his hair, trying to dismiss the strange feeling that lingered. This whole thing shouldn’t matter

as much. *'It's a uniform. A fucking uniform,'* he thought.

As he left his office, the package under his arm, Levi kept thinking about how to handle it. The direct approach always worked best for him, but this time, something was making him hesitate.

Walking down the halls of the headquarters, his mind drifted. *'Why am I even making this such a big deal? She probably won't even care that much either way.'* He scoffed at himself, feeling ridiculous for even thinking this much. By the time he reached the door to Y/N and Anna's room, he found himself stopping, staring at the handle as if it was something that could bite him.

Levi raised his hand to knock but paused mid-motion, his brow furrowed. He wasn't sure if he wanted to face her right now. He could just leave it in front of the door and avoid all the awkwardness. That'd be easier, wouldn't it?

Without waiting for an answer he knew wasn't coming, Levi knocked once. Silence. He knocked again, but still, there was no response. He stood there for a second, contemplating if he should leave and come back later. It would probably be better that way, but... this was perfect. He didn't have to hand it to her directly. He could just leave it. *'No explanations, no strange looks, no uncomfortable silences...'*

Levi pushed open the door, stepping into the room. It was empty, with no sign of Y/N or Anna. Quiet and still. Perfect. He crossed over to the lower bunk bed, where he knew Y/N slept, and placed the package carefully on her mattress. He was just about to turn and leave when something caught his eye, a glimpse of paper peeking from under her pillow.

He froze. *'Don't.'* His mind told him to leave it alone, but his body moved before he could stop it. His hand hovered over the pillow, hesitating, guilt creeping up his spine. This was private, he knew that. But there was something about it, something he couldn't walk away from.

Against his better judgment, Levi pulled the paper out. A folded piece of paper, delicate and worn from being handled too many times. As he unfolded it, a picture slipped from between the folds, falling to the floor. Levi bent down, picked it up, and found himself staring at an old, sepia-toned photograph.

A family, dressed in finely tailored clothes. Clothes he had only ever seen the wealthiest of the inner district wear. The mother sat in a chair, formal and self-assured, while the father stood behind her with a hand resting on her shoulder. Beside them, two little girls stood. One tall, with her head held high, her expression proud. The other girl, smaller, stood to the side, next to her mother. Levi recognized them immediately. Anna and Y/N.

Anna looked strong, and confident, much like she always did. Y/N, though, there was something softer about her in the photograph, something sad. Her smile, faint as it was, didn't reach her eyes, but then again, no one in the photo seemed particularly happy.

There was also something else. While Anna had the same sharp, poised look as their mother, Y/N seemed... different. It was subtle, but the contrast was there, like she didn't quite fit into

the family picture as easily as the others.

Levi shifted his attention from the photograph and turned to the letter he still held. The writing was uneven, the strokes more erratic in places, as if it had been difficult for her to put the words on the page. And then he started to read. Some paragraphs that caught his attention more than others.

'I'm sorry. I never wanted to fail like this, to make you believe I'm unworthy of being part of the family. All I want is to come home, even if it's just to believe that I still belong somewhere.'

Levi felt a knot in his chest as he read on.

'Maybe I don't deserve to come back, but all I want is to feel like I still have a family waiting for me. Even if it's just once, I need to hear that I still matter to you. That I'm still someone you care about even if it's just a little.'

It was heartbreaking, almost too much to read. The desperation in her words cut through him in a way he hadn't expected.

Levi's eyes continued to move across the page, the words becoming more frantic as he read on, the ink strokes uneven. Y/N's letter was full of apologies, attempts to explain herself, why she had failed to meet their expectations, why she hadn't been able to graduate the first time, and why she thought joining the Scouts might make them see her differently. It was as if she was trying to piece herself back together in front of them, to prove that she was still worthy of being part of their family.

'I know I've disappointed you, and I understand why you were upset when I didn't graduate. I failed. But I didn't give up. I finished training, I joined the Scouts, I'm trying to prove I'm not a failure.'

The ink in the last few lines had started to blur, as though her hand had shaken, the paper crinkled at the edges where she had pressed too hard, as if the weight of her words was too much to bear.

Then came the part that made his heart clench.

'I know I'll never be your daughter the way Anna is. I've accepted that. But I'm still yours, aren't I? I'm still a part of this family... or am I not? Have I always just been the mistake you couldn't get rid of...'

He could barely make out the last words. The ink here was heavier, as if she had pressed the pen too hard, and there were faint smudges where the words blurred, evidence of tears that had mixed with the ink.

The word *mistake* was etched deep into the paper, almost gouging the page. Levi's eyes lingered on the word, his breath catching as he imagined her writing it, her hand trembling with the weight of the thought. Something was agonizing in the way it was phrased, as if she was not just questioning her place in the family, but her very right to ask for love at all.

The letter ended abruptly, as if she had run out of strength to finish. Levi flipped the page, puzzled if he had missed anything. It wasn't addressed to anyone in particular, yet it was clear who it was meant for, deepening the weight of her words in his chest. Y/N had mentioned her parents before, but he had never imagined it was like this. She had been begging, pleading, to be accepted by the very people who had abandoned her.

His eyes flicked to the photograph one last time, the image now haunting him in a way that unsettled him. He sighed, folding the letter back carefully with the picture in it, setting it down with the same care he'd use to handle something fragile, something that could break. He returned it beneath the pillow, placing it exactly as he had found it, his mind still caught on that final, heartbreaking line.

He glanced at the package he had left on her bed, feeling a strange sense of guilt, as if his gift now seemed meaningless in comparison to the pain he had just uncovered.

Levi lingered for a moment longer, his eyes sweeping over the room, feeling the emptiness that hung in the air. He let out a slow, quiet breath before turning toward the door. His hand hovered on the handle, hesitating as if leaving now meant walking away from something more than just a room.

With one final glance at the bed. The package sitting there, untouched. He stepped out, the door closing softly behind him.

...

Y/N walked alongside Hange and Moblit, the three of them exchanging casual conversation. The air was cooler now, and the halls were quieter as most people had already gone to their rooms. Hange had just finished excitedly explaining her latest experiment idea.

"You really think that'll work?" Moblit asked, half in disbelief, glancing at Hange with a skeptical brow raised.

Hange grinned, unbothered. "Of course it will! Well, maybe. It's a fifty-fifty chance, really. But if we can expose them to extreme cold, it might slow down their regenerative abilities. Imagine what we could learn! What do you think Y/N?"

Y/N smiled slightly as their banter tugged her out of her usual thoughts. It was moments like this where she didn't feel the weight of everything around her. Walking with them made it easier to forget, even if just for a little while.

"Honestly," Y/N said, "it makes sense that their regeneration could slow down in extreme cold. I mean, if their blood vessels were to freeze or the low temperatures affected their cellular activity, it might impair their healing abilities. So, I'd say it's worth a shot."

Hange's eyes lit up at Y/N's comment. "Exactly! I knew you'd get it. See, Moblit? I'm not the only one who thinks it's a brilliant idea."

Moblit rolled his eyes, but a small smile tugged at his lips as they continued down the hall. Hange's expression grew mischievous. "Oh, and wait until you hear about my next idea:

Testing whether Titans have allergies! Imagine us having them react to different pollen or dust and seeing if it affects their behavior.”

Hange seemed ready to dive deeper into her idea. However, as she continued her explanation, Anna appeared from around the corner, interrupting whatever Hange planned to say. Anna noticed them, standing a few feet away as she glanced in their direction. Y/N's smile faltered. Anna's eyes lingered on her for a brief second before she turned and walked away, her back stiff and her pace fast.

Hange and Moblit didn't seem to notice the shift in Y/N's mood, continuing their conversation, but Y/N felt it all too clearly. She turned her eyes back to the floor, trying to focus on the conversation again, but the weight in her chest had returned, heavier this time. Still, she forced herself to nod along to Hange's next outrageous theory, hoping that for just a little longer, she could pretend everything was fine.

Anna walked through the corridor that led to her room. She kept her attention ahead, her mind still weighed down by the distance between her and her sister. As she turned the corner leading to their shared room, she suddenly stopped in her tracks. Levi was there.

'What the hell is he doing?'

Anna's confusion deepened as she waited, staying hidden. She watched from the shadows as he quietly stepped out of the room, closing the door behind him. His expression was as unreadable as ever, but something about his posture seemed more tense than usual. Anna's brow furrowed. What was he doing in their room?

Levi didn't notice her. He simply turned and walked away, leaving her standing in silence. She waited until he was out of sight before stepping forward, her heart drumming in her chest.

Opening the door cautiously, Anna stepped into the room and quickly scanned her surroundings. Everything seemed in place, except... Her eyes landed on a neatly wrapped package on Y/N's bed.

'What the hell?'

She glanced over her shoulder, making sure no one was approaching before her eyes returned to the package. Her curiosity took over, and she moved to Y/N's bed, eyeing the soft brown paper tied with a string. It wasn't a box, there was no defined shape to it, more like a bundle of cloth. Her hands hovered above it for a moment, conflicted.

But then she untied the string.

Anna's eyes widened the moment she peeled back the wrapping. Inside was a new, perfectly folded Scout Regiment uniform, complete with a harness, cape, jacket, and everything else one might need. She lifted it slightly, the fabric feeling heavier in her hands than it should have. Levi had left this. It had to be because of what she'd said earlier. That comment about Y/N's outfit and how she didn't look like a scout. She felt her chest tighten, her grip hardening around the material, wrinkling the once-precisely wrapped paper.

So this was it, then. Y/N was officially part of the Scouts now.

Anna's stomach churned with a mix of anger and frustration. This... this uniform... felt like Levi's way of solidifying everything. This was no ordinary gift. This was his way of ensuring Y/N's official entrance into the Scouts, a reminder that she was now one of them. She bit her lip, her grip tightening as she fought the urge to rip the fabric in two. But just then, she heard footsteps approaching, steady and familiar.

Y/N.

"Dammit," she muttered under her breath, her hands trembling as she roughly wrapped the uniform again, wrinkling the paper in her rush.

Panic seized her. She frantically looked around the room before her eyes landed on the closet. The bottom was slightly lifted from the floor, creating a small, hidden space. Without wasting a second, she wrapped the string around the uniform again, her fingers trembling as she hurried to tuck it beneath the closet. It was hidden just in time as the door creaked open, and Y/N stepped inside.

Anna stood, forcing herself to act normal despite the rush of adrenaline coursing through her veins. She could feel Y/N's eyes on her.

"Anna?" Y/N's voice broke the silence.

Anna cleared her throat, turning to face her sister, but she couldn't shake the stiffness in her posture. "Yeah?"

"You alright?" Y/N asked, her brow furrowing. "You seem... I don't know, off."

Anna forced a shrug, hoping it looked casual enough. "I'm fine," she said, hoping she wouldn't ask more questions.

Y/N didn't press further, but the uneasy silence lingered between them. For a moment, it felt like Y/N might say something else, but she just sighed, walking further into the room and setting her things down.

Anna kept her eyes turned away, silently willing her sister to not look too closely, to not notice the way her pulse raced. She could still feel the weight of that uniform hidden beneath the closet, knowing it was only a matter of time before Y/N would find out about it. And when she did...

Chapter End Notes

All that work to wrap the uniform so it was clean and perfect, only for Anna to shove it under the closet lol

...

Just a quick note. I respect all kinds of jobs. Y/N's experiences and feelings about her job as a maid are just part of her own story and don't reflect any negative thoughts about the profession itself.

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

I panicked a bit because my phone randomly decided to delete this chapter file. Almost had a mental breakdown. Thankfully I had a backup on my laptop! :D Hope you enjoy <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The sun was sinking lower in the sky. The training session had just wrapped up, and the squad gathered around, catching their breath after another intense day with Eren.

Petra noticed Levi and Eren deep in conversation, their discussion serious but brief. Petra glanced over at Anna, she stood with her arms crossed, eyes set on the horizon.

The others were beginning to disperse, but Anna remained isolated, her thoughts elsewhere. Petra decided it was time to address what had been troubling her.

Petra took a breath and walked over to Anna, her boots crunching softly against the dirt. "Anna," she began. Anna turned to face Petra, waiting for what she had to say. "Can we talk?" Petra asked.

Anna raised an eyebrow, clearly unimpressed. "I'm busy," she muttered, barely glancing at Petra. She had avoided unnecessary conversations all day, and Petra was no exception.

Petra, however, wasn't discouraged. She stepped forward and gently grabbed Anna's arm. "No, we need to talk. Now." There was a firmness in her voice now that caught Anna off guard.

Anna turned her head slowly, skepticism written all over her face, but Petra's determined expression gave her pause. "Fine," she sighed, freeing her arm from Petra's grasp. "But make it quick."

The two of them walked away from the rest of the squad. Eren, Levi, and the others were nearby, their voices carrying in the distance, but neither woman paid them any mind. When they reached a tall tree, they both stopped and leaned against it.

Anna crossed her arms, tapping her fingers impatiently. "Well?" she asked, her tone edged with annoyance. "Are you gonna talk, or are we just gonna stand here?"

Petra didn't respond immediately. She kept looking down, her lips pressed into a thin line as if trying to gather her thoughts. Anna rolled her eyes. "Well...if you're not going to talk," she huffed, pushing herself off the tree, "I'll just leave—"

Before Anna could take a step, Petra's arm shot out in front of her, stopping her in her tracks. "Why are you doing this?" Petra asked quietly, her tone tinged with frustration but also a deep concern.

Anna blinked, momentarily thrown off. "What are you talking about?"

Petra sighed, finally turning to face her. "You and I... we've known each other for a long time. We trained together, we've fought together. I know you, Anna. Or at least I think I do."

Anna's posture stiffened, sensing where this was going. "What are you getting at?"

Petra swallowed, glancing away briefly. "I saw what happened earlier," she admitted, her voice barely above a whisper. "In Captain Levi's office."

Anna's expression shifted, her eyes narrowing as she glared at Petra. "So, you were eavesdropping?", her voice colder now.

Petra's face flushed slightly in guilt, but her resolve remained. "I didn't mean to overhear, but... yes, I saw enough," she admitted, her tone softening for a moment. "But... that doesn't change the fact that what you did was wrong."

Anna scoffed, pushing off the tree slightly. "I did nothing wrong, Petra. Whatever you think you saw—"

"Stop it," Petra cut her off, her voice firmer than before. "You know exactly what I'm talking about. Don't pretend this is all innocent. You crossed a line."

Anna's glare sharpened. "Since when is it any of your business?"

Petra's eyes narrowed, and for a moment, her usual warm demeanor was replaced with something steely. "Since you started acting like Captain Levi is something to compete for. How could you do that to your own sister? Knowing full well that Levi and Y/N might..." She paused, searching for the right words, her voice lowering. "that— they might... have feelings for each other."

Anna flinched inwardly at the mention of Y/N's name but kept her face composed. "I don't know what you think you know, but—"

"You know exactly what I'm talking about," Petra interrupted, her voice rising with frustration. "I was the one who told you about them. I thought you'd be happy for her, I never imagined you'd..." She shook her head, the disappointment clear in her voice. "Try to get with Levi behind Y/N's back."

Anna's silence stretched on, but her eyes flicked to the side for a brief moment, guilt beginning to creep into her expression. When Petra mentioned her sister, it struck a nerve, and Anna's glare sharpened. "Stay out of this, Petra," she muttered. "You don't know what you're talking about."

Petra didn't back down. "Then explain it to me. Tell me why you're doing this. Because I don't understand. Why are you trying to hurt her?"

Anna glanced somewhere off in the distance, her expression cold and uninterested, as if Petra's words were no more than background noise. Her eyes fixed on nothing in particular, a hardened mask of detachment that gave away nothing. Petra, however, wasn't gonna stop. She continued, her tone soft but resolute, hoping that even without Anna's attention, her words might still make a difference.

"Anna..." Petra stepped closer, her expression softening just a fraction, though the sternness in her voice remained. "I'm saying this because I care about you. You're my friend. Y/N's my friend. But this...what you're doing...isn't right. Don't you see that?"

Petra's voice softened again, filled with a kind of quiet understanding. "I don't understand why you're doing this. We've been in Levi's squad for a long time, and never once did you show any interest in him."

"Why now? Is it only because of Y/N?"

Anna flinched slightly at the words, her composure cracking just a bit. She didn't respond immediately, her eyes darting away as Petra's words sunk in. The truth was, that Anna had never shown any real interest in Levi before. In all the years they'd been in his squad, she'd never thought of him that way. But now, seeing Levi pay attention to Y/N, seeing her sister accomplish things she had once been proud of, it stirred something ugly inside her.

Anna looked away, her lips pressed tightly together, refusing to look at her. Petra noticed how Anna's grip tightened around her left uniform pocket, fingers digging in as her arms crossed over her chest. It was something she had been doing more regularly lately, a small, unconscious habit that betrayed her inner struggle. But Anna wasn't about to admit it. Not out loud.

Petra nodded slowly, her face softening even more. "Anna...you're lucky to have a family who's still alive, who cares about you. Most of us don't have that. So why are you pushing her away?"

Anna didn't respond. She couldn't. She felt a lump in her throat, the weight of Petra's words pressing down on her, but she refused to let it show.

Petra took a breath and finished. "You need to stop. Whatever this is, it's not worth losing your sister over. She needs you. You're the older one. You should be there for her, supporting her. Not... this." She gestured vaguely, not needing to explain further.

For a moment, neither of them said anything. The wind rustled through the trees, the sound of distant voices from the squad drifting through the air. Anna swallowed hard, her jaw tight, still refusing to look at her.

Petra waited for a response, hoping her words had reached her. But when Anna finally moved, it wasn't to speak. She simply pushed herself off the tree and started walking away.

Petra watched her go, a sinking feeling in her chest. She'd said what she needed to say, but whether it had made any difference, she didn't know. She could only hope that somewhere, deep down, Anna had listened.

...

Y/N was walking down the dimly lit path, as she thought about the day spent in the research room. The familiar sound of boots on stone approaching her interrupted her thoughts, but before she could react, she turned the corner and walked straight into someone.

She gasped as she stumbled back, her balance slipping for a second, only for a firm hand to catch her arm.

“Tch, watch where you’re going.” Levi’s unmistakable voice came from above her, his grip tight but steady as he pulled her upright. She was standing so close now that she could feel the brief pressure of his fingers through her sleeve before he let go.

Y/N blinked, her face flushing a bit with embarrassment. “Sorry, I wasn’t looking. Didn’t expect you to come around the corner.”

Levi narrowed his eyes. “Well, it’s not like I have a bell on me to announce my presence.”

She chuckled nervously, glancing up at him. “Yeah. Guess I should’ve been paying more attention.”

Levi, his usual stoic self, gave her a look, more annoyed than anything, but something about the way his grip had lingered just a second too long didn’t escape her notice. His eyes flickered over her for a moment before he stepped back, his posture casual again.

They began walking together, Levi falling into step beside her. “Are you done for the day?” His voice had returned to its usual dry tone, but at least he wasn’t reprimanding her anymore.

Y/N nodded. “Yeah, Hange let me off early. I was just finishing up with Moblit in the research room.”

Levi gave a slight nod. “Hange seems to be pretty happy with you. You’re doing good work.”

Y/N blinked, caught off guard by the comment. From anyone else, it would have sounded casual, but coming from Levi, she knew it wasn’t something he said lightly. She couldn’t help the small smile that tugged at her lips. “Thank you, I—”

“Don’t get cocky.” His sharp tone cut her off, though there was no real edge to it, just his usual bluntness. He didn’t want her turning out cocky like her sister. He had more than enough to deal with when it came to Anna.

Y/N chuckled under her breath and looked down, shaking her head. She wasn’t used to him being this... civil. “I won’t,” she promised, smiling softly.

He gave a small, barely-there nod, as if satisfied with her response. They walked for a few more steps before his attention shifted back to her once again, lingering for just a second longer this time. After a pause, his voice broke the quiet, though this time it had a different tone, more casual, but still sharp. “Why are you still wearing that?”

Y/N looked down at her outfit, puzzled. "Wearing what?" she asked, not understanding what he meant.

"That dress," Levi said, raising an eyebrow. He had thought she'd change into her uniform as soon as she got it. He wondered why she wasn't wearing it yet.

Y/N looked down at her dress. "Oh, this?" she said, her fingers slightly grabbing the collar, her tone laced with confusion. "I don't know. I guess it's... comfortable?"

Levi raised an eyebrow, still not understanding why she hadn't wanted to wear the uniform. He had been sure she'd be happy about it. Maybe it wasn't as big of a deal for her as he had thought. "Comfortable, huh?" He muttered a bit confused. "Well, you do know you'll eventually need to change out of it, right?" he added, knowing full well she couldn't use her ODM gear in a dress.

Y/N blinked, her confusion growing. Was Levi bothered that she wore the same dress too often? She hadn't brought many outfits with her, so repeating them was unavoidable, but maybe that was the issue. As her mind raced, she considered explaining, wondering if she should mention that she washed it between uses. Maybe that's what was bothering him. "I, um... I wash it, you know," she added hesitantly, glancing up at him, unsure if that would even make a difference.

Levi raised an eyebrow, clearly perplexed by her sudden explanation. "Huh?" he muttered, not quite following where her comment was coming from.

Y/N flushed, feeling ridiculous for saying that aloud. "The dress. I mean... I don't wear it every day without washing it. Just, you know, in case that's what you were getting at."

Levi looked at her with a confused expression, a moment of silence passing as he processed what she was talking about. Y/N glanced away uncomfortably, her eyes shifting to the side as he pieced it together. Finally, his eyes narrowed slightly. "Wait—what? No— I'm not worried about your hygiene, Y/N," he said, pinching the bridge of his nose as he shook his head slightly, realizing they were talking about two entirely different things.

Before Levi could clarify further, the distant crackle of a bonfire and the faint sound of voices drew their attention. Ahead, Y/N noticed the rest of the squad gathered around a warm fire just outside of Headquarters. Earlier that day Eld and Gunther had found a stash of alcohol in the basement. After a long day of work, the Squad decided to take advantage of their discovery by starting a bonfire nearby. The evening air was filled with the lively sounds of their gathering.

Anna and Gunther were clearly drunk, their voices raised in enthusiastic, off-key singing. As they swayed slightly, they side-hugged each other, clearly holding on to avoid tripping. Eld and Oluo sat on the edge of the firelight on wooden logs and casually sipped their drinks, while Petra, holding a beer glass, was trying her best to calm down the two drunk scouts. Eren sat apart, a smirk on his face as he watched the scene with clear amusement.

Y/N couldn't help but let out a soft chuckle as she took in the sight. It was a rare sight to see the squad this relaxed and carefree. The fire crackled, sending warm orange light flickering

over their faces, and the smell of burning wood mixed with the faint scent of alcohol in the air. Levi's sudden movement beside her caught her attention, and when she glanced over, she caught a small, subtle smirk on his lips. Her heart skipped a beat at the sight, it wasn't often that she saw him this way.

But just as quickly as the smirk appeared, it faded, and Levi turned to leave, his expression returning to its usual stoic mask.

"Wait—where are you going?" Y/N asked, taking a step forward. Her voice was softer, a little more hesitant than she intended, as she watched him move away.

Levi glanced back at her, his tone flat but not unkind. "I'm not here to interrupt their fun. Besides, I'm not in the mood for drinking."

Y/N opened her mouth to say something, unsure of what, but Levi had already turned, walking away down the path. She stood there for a moment, watching him go, feeling a slight pang of disappointment.

Before she could dwell on it any further, a voice called out from the bonfire.

"Y/N! Hey! Get over here!" Anna's voice rang through the air as she waved, her face flushed from the alcohol, and much louder than usual. Y/N blinked, slightly startled, as she saw Anna waving at her enthusiastically. She hadn't expected Anna to acknowledge her so quickly, especially after days of avoiding her.

Y/N hesitated for a second but then gave a small smile and started walking towards the group. Anna's sudden shift in attitude threw her off, but she wasn't about to question it. Maybe the alcohol had softened whatever tension had been hanging between them. For now, it seemed like Anna was back to her usual self...or at least, a much drunker, more carefree version of her.

As Y/N approached the group, Anna practically lunged at her, throwing both arms around her neck and pulling her into a hug. "There she is!" Anna slurred, her voice thick with the effects of too much alcohol. "You finally decided to join us, huh?"

Y/N smiled awkwardly, trying to keep her balance as Anna clung to her. "Yeah, I guess so. Looks like you guys are having fun," she said, glancing around at the rest of the squad. Gunther was still singing, or at least trying to. Loudly and terribly off-key, while Eld and Oluo shared amused looks from their seats on the logs. Petra was doing her best to keep things under control, but even she was laughing along with the chaos.

Anna giggled, tightening her grip on Y/N as she leaned in closer. "You missed it. Gunther tried to balance a bottle on his nose, but it ended up smacking him in the head. Funniest thing I've seen all week."

Y/N laughed, though it was more from the way Anna was acting than from the actual story. She wasn't used to seeing her sister like this lately. So open and carefree. The sudden change was both surprising and strangely nice. Y/N couldn't help but enjoy this side of her, even if it was fueled by alcohol.

Anna giggled, pulling Y/N even tighter as both arms squeezed around her neck, practically pressing her cheek against Y/N's. "I missed you," she slurred, her voice soft but insistent. "But, you know..." she said, her tone shifting to something more passive-aggressive, "you could've joined us earlier if you weren't so busy with your useless and boring research work."

Y/N blinked at the comment, taken aback. There was a lightness to Anna's voice, but the words held an edge that Y/N couldn't quite ignore. Before she could respond, Anna pulled away from the hug and gave her a playful punch on the shoulder, harder than it needed to be, before bursting into laughter. "I'm just kidding, Sissy. Just messing with you." Without missing a second, Anna wrapped her arms around Y/N again, squeezing her in an almost suffocatingly tight hug once again.

"You—haven't called me Sissy since I was a kid," Y/N muttered, confusion flickering across her face as she tried to make sense of the sudden familiarity. She reached up, grabbing Anna's arm in an attempt to loosen the tight hug around her neck, but Anna's grip was too strong. Anna's laughter echoed softly, but Y/N felt unsettled, unsure of what to make of the shift in tone.

"Look at you now, Y/N," she said, his words slurring slightly. "Remember when you thought you'd never join the Scouts? Well, look at you! Always so damn annoying, trying to copy everything I do!"

The rest of the group exchanged amused glances. Petra shot Y/N an apologetic smile while still trying to keep a very unsteady Gunther from falling over. Eren snickered from his spot by the fire, raising an eyebrow at Y/N, while Eld's and Oluo's attention remained fixed on the flickering flames.

Y/N's face flushed as she laughed nervously, not entirely sure how to respond to Anna's teasing. "Yeah, I remember..." she mumbled, trying to laugh it off. "But... I wasn't copying you."

Anna squeezed her tighter, her breath hot on Y/N's cheek as she leaned in. "Oh please, you totally were!" she teased, her words laced with drunken mischief.

"Always meeting up with me, asking about my day. Admit it, you were obsessed with being just like me!" Anna's words hung between playful and biting, her tone hard to read.

Y/N blinked, caught off guard by the mix of affection and passive-aggressive remarks. She glanced around at the others once again, noticing Petra's slightly concerned expression as she watched the interaction, while Oluo seemed to be holding back a smirk, clearly entertained by the scene unfolding.

Anna's laugh rang out, breaking the brief tension. "I'm kidding!" she exclaimed, waving her hand dismissively. "You always take things too seriously. Come on, lighten up."

Before Y/N could respond, Anna grabbed a jar of beer and shoved it into her hands. "Here, you're too stiff. Drink up!" Anna said, her voice filled with drunken enthusiasm.

Y/N hesitated, eyeing the jar cautiously. “I don’t really—”

“Oh, stop it. You’re drinking tonight!” Anna cut her off, her playful grin widening as she pushed the jar closer. Before Y/N could protest further, Anna, in her drunken determination, playfully tipped the jar toward Y/N’s lips, forcing her to take a few large gulps.

Y/N coughed, the bitter taste of beer burning her throat as she struggled to swallow. The others burst out laughing, and Anna clapped her hands in delight, clearly enjoying Y/N’s discomfort.

“There you go! That wasn’t so bad, was it?” Anna teased, still giggling.

Y/N wiped her mouth, coughing a bit more as she tried to catch her breath. “Yeah, well, I’m not used to... that.”

“Lightweight!” Oluo called out from his seat, grinning widely as he took a sip of his drink. “Come on, Y/N, don’t let your sister outshine you!”

Eld chuckled softly. “She’ll be fine, just give her some time.”

Petra, always the responsible one, leaned over and gave Y/N a gentle pat on the back. “Don’t let them push you too much,” she said with a wink.

As the night wore on, the bonfire crackled and the laughter grew louder, with Gunther and Anna clearly having had a bit too much to drink. Y/N had started to feel a bit tipsy herself but managed to keep her composure. She glanced over at Anna, who was still clinging to her and giggling uncontrollably.

“Hey— Anna. Maybe you should slow down a bit,” Y/N suggested, gently trying to take away the jar of beer from her sister’s grasp.

Anna waved her hand dismissively, taking another few gulps. “Ah, come on! We’re having fun! You should join in! Have another drink!”

Y/N shook her head, trying to keep her balance as Anna’s arm draped around her neck. “You’ve already had enough, Anna. And so has Gunther,” she added, noticing Gunther’s increasingly unsteady state.

Gunther, now slumped against a log, mumbled incoherently before passing out with his head resting on his arms. Eld and Oluo exchanged a knowing glance and, with a bit of effort, managed to lift him, each taking one of Gunther’s arms over their shoulders.

Petra approached Y/N with a concerned look. “We’ll take Gunther to his room. You should probably think about getting Anna to bed too.”

Y/N nodded, looking down at Anna, who was still clinging to her with a drunken grin. “Got it. I’ll take care of her.”

Anna, swaying slightly, shook her head as she looked at Petra. “No, no, I don’t need to go yet,” she slurred, her voice thick with alcohol. “I’m fine right here... with my Sissy.” She

tightened her grip on Y/N as if trying to hold on to her, not wanting anyone to take her away.

Petra sighed but didn't press the issue further, clearly ignoring Anna's insistence. "Alright, just make sure she gets to bed safely."

Y/N took Anna's arm and began walking slowly toward Headquarters, trying to support most of her sister's weight. Anna, her head resting on Y/N's shoulder, mumbled incoherently. "You... always trying to be like me..."

Y/N strained to hear over the drunk mumbling, but most of it came out as garbled nonsense. "What was that?"

Anna just mumbled incoherently, slurring out something about "I hate... that you joined the Scouts..." Y/N stopped in her tracks, trying her best to understand what she was saying, but not succeeding. "Why... why did you... have to copy me?" Y/N could barely make out the words through the drunken mumbling. She chose to ignore the disjointed remarks and focused instead on getting Anna to her room.

By the time they reached their quarters, Y/N was feeling the weight of Anna's drunken state even more. She guided Anna to the lower bunk bed, helping her sit down carefully.

She helped Anna out of her boots and guided her into her nightgown. "Just stay here, alright?" Y/N instructed softly. "I'll get you some water."

Anna, swaying slightly, nodded and plopped down on the lower bunk bed with a sleepy smile. As Y/N made her way to the small kitchenette to fetch some water, Anna's mind began to drift, her thoughts swirling with the effects of the alcohol and the remnants of her earlier conversation with Petra.

Petra's words echoed in her mind: *'You need to stop. Whatever this is, it's not worth losing your sister over. She needs you. You're the older one. You should be there for her, supporting her. Not... this.'*

Anna's eyes, though still a bit unfocused, drifted to the lower part of the closet, where she had hidden the package Levi had left for Y/N. The sight of it reminded her of the conversation and her own actions, which now seemed harsh and misguided. She felt a pang of guilt as she remembered her jealousy and the way she had let it affect her relationship with Y/N.

Y/N returned to the room with a glass of water in hand "Here, drink this, you—" Y/N started to say as she opened the door to their room, but she stopped as her eyes fell on the package in Anna's hands. "Anna...? What is that?"

Anna was still sitting on the edge of the lower bunk bed, but now she was holding something. The object was wrapped in messy, wrinkled brown paper, with a string tied around it in a mess. Y/N paused in the doorway, her brow furrowing in confusion.

"I'm s—sorry," Anna mumbled drunk. "I— I messed it up. It was perfect when I found it." She struggled to form her thoughts into coherent sentences.

Y/N tried to make sense of Anna's ramblings but found it difficult to understand her sister's drunk speech. "What? I don't get what you are saying," Y/N admitted.

Anna simply handed the package to Y/N with a half-hearted shrug. "Well, you can't be mad at me. I returned it in the end, didn't I?" she said, her voice trailing off as she stood up from the bunk bed. Despite her drunken state, she climbed the ladder to her own bed.

Y/N watched in mild astonishment as Anna clumsily managed to climb to the top bunk and let herself fall onto it, facing the wall.

As Anna lay on the top bunk, her thoughts swirled with a mix of surprise and self-reproach. She hadn't expected to be the one to return the package to Y/N, and the act seemed almost surreal in her drunken haze. The situation felt out of place, and she was annoyed with herself for the way things had unfolded. She sighed softly, thinking to herself, *'I guess this is how drunk people act.'* Despite her actions, a strong resentment towards Y/N still lingered, leaving Anna puzzled about why she had chosen to give it back.

Y/N, holding the wrinkled package in her hands, looked up at Anna, who was now curled up with her back facing her. "Anna... what is this?"

Anna mumbled something as she drifted off, her voice barely a whisper. "Levi..."

Y/N, puzzled, leaned closer. "Huh? What did you say?"

With a final, sleepy breath, Anna murmured more clearly, "Levi brought that for you." Her words were barely audible as she fell asleep, her body sinking into the top bunk.

Y/N's eyes widened as she stared down at the package she held in her hands. Her breath caught in her throat as she slowly set it down on the lower bunk bed, the crinkled brown paper rustling softly. Confusion and anticipation swirled within her.

Carefully, she began to unwrap the package, her fingers trembling slightly as she peeled away the messily wrapped paper. Each layer she removed felt like an eternity, heightening the sense of anticipation. As the last piece of paper fell away, Y/N's heart skipped a beat.

There, folded neatly and revealing itself in its full glory, was a brand new uniform. The jacket, with its perfect fabric and sharp lines, was adorned with the Wings of Freedom emblem, standing out proudly on the back. The harness, pants, cape, and all the components of the uniform were crisp and immaculate, untouched by wear.

Y/N's eyes were locked on the emblem, her breath coming in short, astonished gasps. Seeing the Wings of Freedom on the jacket that he had given her was more than just a symbol. It was Levi's way of recognizing her as part of the Scouts after being so harsh and refusing to let her join. The realization that he had done this for her left her feeling overwhelmed.

A rush of warmth spread across her cheeks, her emotions magnified by the alcohol she had consumed. Her heart swelled with a mix of joy and gratitude. She reached out, her hands almost reverently wrapping around the jacket, holding it close to her chest. The fabric was

soft and new, and the weight of it seemed to press down on her heart in the most exhilarating way.

Y/N's thoughts raced as she considered the significance of the gesture. Levi, who had always been so distant and demanding, had taken this step. It was his way of acknowledging her place in the Scouts, of showing that he saw her effort. The warmth of the jacket seemed to echo the warmth spreading through her chest, her heart beating a bit faster.

At that moment, her feelings for Levi became more apparent. The weight of the gift made everything feel more meaningful. She was filled with a deep sense of happiness and a subtle sense of something more. Her heart fluttered with each beat, touched by the gesture and the recognition it represented.

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter is going to be super cute! :3

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

AHHH! 2000+ hits! Thank you so much to everyone who read this! ^^ This chapter was so cute to write ngl. Enjoy

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Levi sat on the edge of the battlements, on one of the slightly sunken crenels. The stone ledge, part of a high path connecting two watchtowers from Headquarters, gave him a quiet spot away from the noise and movement below. The night air was cool, and the stars were clear and sharp against the dark sky, offering him a rare moment of peace. He often found solace in such places, far above the ground where the stillness of the night enveloped him.

His eyes traced the constellations, the distant lights familiar yet still fascinating. Only a few days left before they set out on their next expedition outside the walls. The thought of it made his mind drift. So many of the new recruits barely survived their first expedition. Most never returned at all. He didn't let himself get too attached to them. He couldn't.

But Y/N... he hated to admit it, but she occupied his thoughts more often than he liked. Her chances of survival worried him. Even if she'd be placed in a supposedly safer spot within the outer formation, there was no guarantee she would survive. The field was unpredictable. The thought gnawed at him, and he hoped she'd somehow be safe.

His thoughts were interrupted by the sound of footsteps echoing from the watchtower connected to Headquarters. His brow furrowed as he turned his head, slightly annoyed. He assumed the others were still gathered around the bonfire. He had come here specifically to avoid them. So why was someone intruding on his quiet?

A figure emerged from the doorway. Y/N.

She seemed to walk past at first, not noticing him in the shadows, but then she paused, her eyes catching his. After putting on the uniform, she had been looking for him everywhere. She had wandered through the hallways, up and down the stairs of Headquarters, her eyes scanning every room and corridor, hoping to catch even a glimpse of him. Seeing him now, brought a rush of excitement and comfort. She smiled, and Levi's breath caught for a moment, his annoyance fading as he took in her appearance.

Dressed in the uniform he had given her, she looked different, proud... confident. Y/N felt a surge of pride welling up inside her, the uniform making her feel stronger and capable. There was a brightness in her expression that he hadn't seen before.

His eyes softened without him realizing it, observing the way she nearly skipped toward him, her movements light and free. She seemed so genuinely happy in that moment, and it hit him

in a way he wasn't prepared for. His usual sharp eyes lingered on her, taking in every detail of her appearance, from the way her hair framed her face to how her eyes shone under the moonlight.

She stopped in front of him, beaming as she widened her arms playfully. "So? What do you think?" Y/N turned around, showing off the emblem on her cape proudly. Her heart pounded in her chest as she waited for his response, a mix of excitement and nervousness swirling inside her.

Levi blinked, feeling something strange in his chest. His eyes widened slightly as he tried to gather himself, masking the tenderness that had crept in. He gave her a dry look. "You're wearing that at this hour?" He arched a brow, adding with a hint of sarcasm, "Thought you said you preferred comfortable stuff."

Y/N giggled, clearly not bothered by his teasing. Her head felt light, and the giggle slipped out before she could stop it. She wasn't thinking about much, just that she was happy. "It's comfortable enough," she said with a bright smile, twirling slightly to show off the cape. "And it looks great! I just had to show you."

Why did she feel the need to show him? She wasn't sure, but it felt like the right thing to do at the time. Levi would appreciate it, she thought, or at least she hoped. Her heart swelled with pride, not caring that it was late or that her thoughts weren't fully making sense.

He glanced at her again, trying to suppress his feelings. "Just take better care of it," he said, his voice softer than before, though he quickly added, "And don't go getting yourself swallowed by another Titan."

Y/N laughed, "Don't remind me," she groaned. "It was disgusting."

Levi's expression remained neutral. "Yeah, I know. I was there when you poured out of its stomach, remember?"

Y/N's face flushed slightly, her cheeks already rosy from the alcohol she'd consumed earlier, the warmth spreading across her skin. She looked a bit distracted as she admitted, "Oh, that's right. I almost forgot about that," a bit embarrassed.

Levi shot her a sidelong glance, his expression as deadpan as ever. "Are you drunk?" he asked, the question laced with annoyance but also curiosity. Unlike with other drunk people, he found himself surprisingly unfazed by her tipsy state.

She shook her head, still smiling. "No, I only had a drink. Promise." She laughed softly, her tone a little loose, maybe a bit tipsy.

To Levi, she seemed overly happy, though he couldn't quite tell if it was because of the alcohol, the uniform, or both.

Y/N didn't care what it was. The usual weight that hung over her, her fears, her insecurities, felt so far away tonight. And Levi, for once, wasn't giving her that cold, distant look.

She stepped closer, a playful glint in her eyes, before settling down beside him on the crenel. Her legs dangled over the edge, swinging slightly in the cool night air, mirroring his relaxed posture. For once, she didn't think about how high up they were. Heights didn't matter tonight. Nothing serious did.

He watched her for a moment, captivated by the way her eyes gleamed under the moonlight, reflecting the stars above. She seemed so at peace, so genuinely joyful.

Levi was surprised to see Y/N so relaxed with her feet dangling over the steep drop. Despite her usual fear of heights, she seemed oddly at ease. He narrowed his eyes slightly, curiosity flickering in his expression. "Guess this height doesn't bother you so much," he remarked.

Y/N, still wrapped up in her own swirling thoughts, blinked at him, confusion evident in her expression. "Huh?" she managed to say, her brow slightly furrowed as she tried to grasp what he was saying. She let her feet swing more, almost as if testing his observation.

Levi's expression softened as he looked back at her, his tone gentler this time. "Why didn't you tell me you were afraid of heights?" he asked.

Her smile wavered, a flicker of vulnerability crossing her face as she let out a small sigh. "I see Anna told you about that," she replied, her tone tinged with embarrassment. She knew it had been Anna, she was the only one who knew.

Levi nodded. He didn't press her, just waited, letting the silence fill the space between them.

She looked away for a moment, gathering her thoughts before continuing. "I don't like people knowing. It's not exactly something I want to be remembered for," she admitted, her voice barely above a whisper. "I didn't want anyone to see me for my weaknesses."

Her heart pounded a little faster, but her head felt light, almost disconnected from the weight of her words. Why was she saying all of this? She wasn't sure, but it felt right to let it out here, with him. A slow breath escaped her, heavy with the weight of her insecurities, as she wrestled with the vulnerability that came with sharing such a personal fear.

Levi listened intently, absorbing her words with a quiet intensity. He understood more than he wanted to let on. Fear didn't simply vanish overnight. It lingered in the corners of your mind, gnawing at you when you least expected it. "I noticed you were tense at times," he said thoughtfully, "but I wouldn't have guessed you were afraid of heights." His tone held a hint of empathy.

Levi kept his eyes on her, his voice unusually soft as he added, "If I'd known, I might've taken it a bit easier on you."

Y/N let out a soft laugh, shaking her head in slight disbelief. "Yeah, that's exactly why I don't tell people," she confessed, turning to meet his eyes. She hadn't meant to sound so serious, but there was something about his soft tone that made her want to be honest. It was like the bit of alcohol she had consumed stripped away her filters, and all that was left was the raw truth. Her expression was earnest, her eyes reflecting determination and vulnerability. "I don't want special treatment because of it. If I did, I'd never push through it."

Levi's expression remained neutral as he responded, "Stubborn as ever."

Y/N chuckled softly. "My first attempt at the Training Corps was rough. I was younger and a lot more naive, still living under my parents' roof... I guess you could say I didn't understand what real-life problems were. I was terrible with ODM gear, and the heights only made it worse. Just the thought of being up high made my heart race and my palms sweat. I hated myself for letting it hold me back."

Her expression shifted as she continued, more reflective. She could feel her thoughts drifting, her mind going back to those days when she was so afraid. "When I was allowed to go back... it was different. I understood how hard life could be, and I knew I couldn't afford to fail again. I was determined to push through."

Levi raised an eyebrow, curious. "What changed for you?"

Y/N's eyes lit up as she recalled the memory. "I'm not completely sure but... I guess the air against my face, the speed... it reminded me of when I was a kid and Anna taught me to ride horses. Back then, everything felt so much easier." A genuine smile broke through her thoughtful demeanor, her eyes sparkling with the memory. "I guess that feeling made it all worth it."

Silence settled between them, thick with unspoken thoughts. Levi watched Y/N, sensing how much her memories of Anna meant to her. A twinge of regret flickered in his chest at the thought of what Anna had said about her, but he decided it wasn't his place to bring it up.

"Although..." Y/N began, breaking the stillness. Levi turned his attention back to her, attentive.

She trailed off, her eyes dropping as she gathered her thoughts, the weight of her words settling in. "I don't know how to explain it," she started slowly, her voice softening. "But when I trained with you..., I felt... safe. It was like, if anything happened, you'd be there to save me..."

She didn't know why she was saying all of this, but the words slipped out before she could stop them. Her heart thudded a little faster in her chest. Her expression grew more serious, a hint of vulnerability flickering in her eyes as she reflected on that sense of security.

Levi's eyes widened slightly in surprise. He hadn't expected her to say that. He turned to her, observing, a gentle smile playing on her lips.

She turned her head to look at him, her eyes shimmering with sincerity. "I guess I feel safe around you." The honesty in her words hung in the air, and for a moment, the world around them seemed to fade, leaving just the two of them and the unspoken bond forming between them.

A soft warmth spread through Y/N's chest, and she felt strangely bold, almost like the words slipped out before she could catch them.

Levi felt something stir inside him as her words sank in. Vulnerability that caught him off guard. The sincerity in her eyes and the softness of her voice were almost too much to bear. His heart pounded in his chest, acutely aware of the shift between them. He closed his eyes for a moment, taking a deep breath to steady himself, knowing he was getting too close to something he wasn't ready to face.

She giggled again, her joy infectious, and in a burst of spontaneity, Y/N stood up suddenly, balancing effortlessly on the edge of the wall. A mischievous glint sparkled in her eyes, lighting up her face with a playful challenge.

The sudden movement made her sway slightly, and for a second, her own boldness surprised her.

“Hey, Levi,” she called out teasingly. “Aren't you afraid I'll fall now that I don't have ODM gear?” The playful tone in her voice rang out against the quiet night, her confidence radiating as she swayed slightly, drawing his attention completely.

His expression hardened as he sat hunched forward, elbows resting firmly on his knees. “Sit back down,” he ordered flatly, his tone leaving no room for debate. He remained still, but the tension in his posture showed otherwise. The sight of her tipsy and precariously balancing on the edge set off an uneasy knot in his stomach, the protective instinct rising sharply within him.

But Y/N, ever playful, didn't listen to his warning. With a mischievous grin, she hopped from one merlon to the next, her movements light and graceful, almost like she was dancing along the narrow stone edges. “Come on, don't tell me you're not worried,” she teased, glancing back at him with a challenging sparkle in her eyes. “What would you do if I slipped? Think you could catch me in time?” The playful challenge lingered between them, but Levi couldn't shake the feeling of real worry mixed in with her lighthearted teasing.

Levi's jaw tightened, his eyes narrowing as he tracked her movements with growing concern. “You're going to regret this once you actually slip,” he warned, his tone low and sharp. The unease coiling in his stomach intensified as he watched her stand on the edge, every instinct screaming at him to intervene.

Y/N chuckled, though her smile faltered for a moment as she glanced down at the dizzying drop below. Her stomach tightened for a second, but she quickly stepped to another merlon, pushing the fear aside. She felt a strange mix of thrill and fear ripple through her. Why was she doing this? She wasn't sure, but something about it felt fun, like testing the edge of the unknown, maybe just to see if Levi really would save her. “Hmm, you're probably right. But lucky for me, I have humanity's strongest soldier watching my back. What could go wrong?”

Levi's eyes never left her, tension creeping into his shoulders as he stood up, his body stiff and alert. “Stop playing around,” he said. “Sit down before you actually fall.” His words hung in the air, filled with a mix of concern and frustration, each syllable laced with urgency as he readied himself to catch her if she lost her balance.

Y/N spun around on one foot, as she turned to face him, her eyes sparkling with mischief. “What, you don't trust me?” she teased, flashing him a quick grin that brightened her face.

But just as the words left her lips, her foot slipped on the stone, and she felt herself start to topple backward. Time seemed to slow as her heart raced, panic flooding her features as she realized she was falling.

Before she could even process what was happening, Levi was already reaching for her. His reaction was instant, his body moving before his mind could catch up. His hand shot out, gripping her waist and yanking her back toward him with an urgency that mirrored the danger of the edge they still stood on. His grip was firm and unwavering, pulling her close against his chest. Y/N's hands instinctively pressed against him, feeling the rapid rise and fall of his breath beneath her palms. They stood there, dangerously close to the drop, but the warmth of his body made everything else fade away.

Her heart pounded, but as she pressed against him, everything slowed down. The warmth, the security of his arms, it felt almost too good. Too safe. Her thoughts felt hazy, and she clung to him longer than necessary, not wanting to let go. Her head swam with relief, mixed with something else. A kind of closeness she hadn't expected.

She glanced up at Levi, her eyes wide with a surprise. She could feel the tension in his grip, the rapid thudding of his pulse beneath her hands where they rested on his chest. For a moment, neither of them spoke, the world falling silent around them.

She didn't want to pull away, didn't want to break the spell that had wrapped them together in this moment. Almost like she was falling in a different way.

Levi didn't let go immediately, his hands lingering at her waist, holding her securely as if to remind himself she was safe. The weight of the moment hung between them, his heart pounding in a way that unsettled him more than her fall had.

"Are you insane?!" Levi finally snapped. His breaths came in quick, uneven bursts, making his words choppy as he glared at her. "What the hell were you thinking?!"

Y/N, still a bit breathless, gave a sheepish smile, her cheeks flushing again. Her heart raced in her chest, a mix of exhilaration and embarrassment flooding her senses. "I told you," she said softly, her voice lighter now, almost teasing. "I wasn't scared. I knew you'd catch me."

Levi's jaw tightened slightly, a flicker of frustration crossing his face. "Don't be an idiot," he murmured, his tone softer but still firm. His grip remained, though he stepped back a bit to create some space, the moment still clinging to the air. "What if I hadn't caught you in time?" His eyes locked onto hers, the seriousness of his words cutting through the lingering playfulness.

Y/N's playful expression faltered as she sensed the depth of his concern. She was surprised by how much he cared. For a moment, she considered apologizing, but instead, her lips curved into a small, appreciative smile. "But you did," she said confidently. "And that's enough for me."

Levi's grip tightened for a moment, his face hovering close to hers as he looked down, eyes betraying an emotion he couldn't quite name. "You're reckless," he muttered.

Y/N tilted her head slightly. "I trust you, Levi." The words felt weighty between them, and she hoped he could see the truth in her eyes.

Levi's heart skipped a beat, caught off guard by the sincerity in her words. The way she looked at him made his chest tighten, forcing him to confront emotions he hadn't anticipated.

Before her words could fully settle, she cracked a small, playful smile and lightly tapped his shoulder playfully. "I mean, how could I be afraid of heights with my tiny, grumpy old bodyguard right here to save me?"

Levi narrowed his eyes, his face shifting into an annoyed, deadpan expression that barely concealed his surprise at her words. "Is that so?" he muttered, irritation and disbelief in his voice. Yet, despite his annoyance, he still held her close by the waist, his grip firm but steady, as if her playful confidence had somehow disarmed him.

Y/N smirked, a thrill of mischief dancing in her veins, eager to push his buttons. "Well... You're not afraid of heights, right? Even though with your height, you've got the biggest fall out of most people," she teased, her grin widening as she watched his reaction.

Levi sighed, his expression still deadpan and irritated. His eyes narrowed as he muttered, "You're really asking for me to kick you in the ass, aren't you?" He quickly let go of her waist, his annoyance clear. He sat back down, his posture tense but not fully closed off. Yet, despite everything, Y/N sensed a flicker of amusement beneath his facade.

Y/N plopped down beside him, a playful giggle bubbling up as she settled into a comfortable position. "I'm just saying," she teased, her eyes sparkling with mischief, "technically, you've got more distance to cover." Her laughter felt light and infectious, a delightful release in the tension that had built up between them, and she nudged him playfully with her shoulder, feeling a giddy rush.

Levi raised an eyebrow. "You're pushing your luck tonight." His tone was dry but laced with a hint of amusement, clearly entertained by her attitude.

She grinned, the warmth of his presence filling her with confidence as she leaned back slightly, tilting her head to look up at the sky. "Maybe," she replied playfully.

Levi shot her a sidelong glance, the corner of his mouth twitching. "You know, I could just push you off this wall, right? Wouldn't be the first time I've done something like that." His tone was teasing, but with just enough edge to keep her guessing.

Y/N's eyes widened slightly before she chuckled softly, shaking her head. "Yeah. But I'm sure you'd find a way to catch me before I hit the ground." She smiled a little, then added in a more lighthearted tone, "Besides, you'd probably miss me if I wasn't around." Her words were playful, not pushing too much, just enough to keep the mood light. She glanced over at him, watching for his reaction, her expression warm but curious.

Levi raised an eyebrow, his tone still dry but with a hint of amusement slipping through. "Ha! Miss the headaches, maybe."

He paused, then added, almost as if to himself, "You really think I'd let you fall?"

His words were casual, but there was a slight softness beneath the usual edge, enough to make Y/N wonder if there was more behind them. Her heart fluttered at the unexpected concern in his voice.

Y/N fell silent for a moment, her playful grin fading as she glanced at Levi. The softness in his voice caught her off guard, enough to make her heart skip. They sat there quietly, the cool breeze brushing past them, and for the first time that night, there was no teasing between them.

Finally, she broke the quiet, her voice softer now, carrying a more serious tone. "Well... I'd like to think you wouldn't," she said, pausing briefly before adding with a faint smile, "at least...not again." As she spoke, a flicker of vulnerability surfaced within her, wondering if Levi understood just how much she needed to trust him.

Levi's eyes lingered on her longer than usual. The weight of her words had struck something in him. A bit of uncomfortable tension hung in the air between them, making him shift slightly. He didn't have an answer for that, at least not one he was ready to admit in front of her. The silence stretched on before he averted his eyes back to the horizon. "How are you feeling about the upcoming expedition?" he asked, smoothly redirecting the conversation.

Though she didn't say it, a part of her was relieved that he shifted the topic. Y/N's expression became more thoughtful. "Nervous," she admitted. "But... ready, I think. I don't know. I'm trying not to think too much about it." She wanted to sound confident, but the truth was, the thought of facing Titans again sent a shiver down her spine.

Levi nodded, understanding her nervousness. For a moment, he hesitated, his mind drifting back to the unfinished letter he'd come across in her room. He knew the topic was sensitive, yet it lingered at the back of his mind ever since. "What about your family?" he asked carefully, keeping his tone casual. He didn't often ask about her personal life, but tonight felt different.

Y/N's expression dimmed, her eyes lowering as she looked down at her hands, fingers fidgeting slightly. She felt a heavy weight settled in her chest at the mention of her family. A flicker of sadness passed through her eyes, and she sighed softly. "Lately, I've been thinking about visiting them again," she admitted, her voice quieter now. "It's been a few years... maybe if they knew I managed to graduate, they might hear me out. But I'm not sure. They've refused to even open the door for me before." The memories of rejection felt like a cold shadow, tightening around her heart. Her shoulders seemed to sink a little. The weight of those memories pressed down on her.

Levi's eyes widened slightly, his surprise barely noticeable but still present. He glanced at her hands, still fidgeting, before shifting his eyes back to her face. "And you really think visiting them is a good idea?" he asked. He couldn't quite understand why she would subject herself to more pain.

She noticed the flicker of confusion in Levi's expression. It made her heart ache a little more, but she pressed on. "Even though they can be harsh, they're still my family. The only one I

have.” The realization of her solitude hung heavily in the air, amplifying her desire for acceptance. Her eyes fell to her hands, the weight of her longing evident in her posture. She gave a small, sad smile, one that didn’t quite reach her eyes. “I haven’t seen them in so long. I guess I’m still hoping that, somehow, it’ll be enough for them to accept me.”

Levi frowned, his expression softening as he studied her. “Why wouldn’t it be? You joined the Scouts and helped Erwin plan a successful formation.” He shook his head slightly, frustration creeping into his voice. “It doesn’t make sense to me why they wouldn’t be proud.”

His words hung in the air, and for a moment, he felt a swell of protective anger on her behalf. He couldn’t understand how a family could overlook the strength and determination it took to stand up to the horrors of the world they lived in.

Y/N smiled faintly, the corners of her lips lifting just enough to reveal a hint of amusement, but her eyes betrayed her uncertainty. A soft chuckle escaped her lips, barely breaking the weight of the conversation. “Yeah, I don’t know if that’s enough for them, though,” she said.

Levi’s brows furrowed, a frown tugging at the corners of his mouth. “Why not? Your sister is in the Scouts, too,” he replied, his tone edged with disbelief. “They can’t be that unreasonable.”

His expression shifted, revealing a flash of concern as he tried to comprehend why they wouldn’t see Y/N’s achievements as a reason for pride.

Y/N shrugged, her attention drifting to the horizon. “Yeah, but compared to Anna, I’m just... well...” She hesitated, a hint of frustration creeping into her voice. “She had the option to join the Military Police, which is all that matters to them.” Her brow furrowed as she continued, the weight of her words heavy. “They wanted her to join, but she chose the Scouts instead. They weren’t thrilled, but I guess they’ve accepted it by now.”

As she spoke, her heart ached with the weight of feeling overshadowed, her own worth seeming to pale in comparison to her sister’s choices. Her eyes flickered back to Levi, searching for understanding.

Levi sighed, absorbing the weight of her words. “Y/N,” he said quietly. Only then did he place a firm hand on her shoulder. The unexpected touch made her flinch slightly, surprised. She wasn’t used to this kind of gesture from him, and the sudden warmth made her heart race.

“Don’t let their bullshit get to you,” he continued, his grip on her shoulder tightening just a bit to reinforce the sincerity in his words. “You’ve achieved so much despite everything they’ve thrown at you. Their opinion doesn’t define you.”

Y/N’s eyes widened slightly at Levi’s sudden outburst, her heart skipping a beat at the unexpected intensity in his tone. His words carried more weight than she had anticipated, and for a moment, she felt disarmed, unsure how to respond. Her eyes dropped to his hand still resting on her shoulder for a split second, the warmth of his touch grounding her in a way that made the moment feel more meaningful than she could put into words.

“You’re stronger than you think,” he said. His tone held a quiet, almost unspoken reassurance. “And I notice it, even if no one else does.” The softness in his words caught Y/N off guard. Her chest tightened with a mix of gratitude and disbelief, her heart swelling at the acknowledgment. Her brows knitted slightly as her lips parted. She wanted to say something but couldn’t quite find the words.

“Levi...” she said softly. Her expression changed, the usual guardedness fading as her features relaxed into something more vulnerable and genuine. Her eyes softened, and a small, sincere smile tugged at her lips. “Thank you,” she whispered, her words holding more meaning than he expected.

The way she said his name felt different, more intimate. Each time she used his name, he felt a quiet comfort, though he wouldn’t admit it. It was as if, with every use of his name, an unspoken barrier had quietly fallen between them. The shift in how she addressed him made their connection feel more personal, more real, and he found himself oddly relieved she had dropped the formalities.

For a moment, they were caught in a long, intense stare. Levi’s usually sharp features softened, his eyes reflecting an unfamiliar gentleness as they remained locked on Y/N.

She held his gaze for a moment longer, her smile lingering before she looked away, turning her attention to the starry sky above. “The view’s beautiful tonight, don’t you think?” she murmured.

Levi, however, couldn’t tear his eyes away from her. “Yeah... it is,” he murmured, his voice too soft for her to catch the words clearly. His heart raced, the intensity of the moment drawing him in as if the stars paled in comparison to her presence. He didn’t even realize he had said it aloud.

Y/N, still gazing at the stars, paused, sensing the quiet that followed. She turned around, her brows furrowing slightly, unsure of what he had said. When her eyes met his again, she noticed his unwavering stare, the way he seemed to be studying her, as if seeing her for the first time.

Her face, illuminated by the soft glow of the moonlight, seemed peaceful, her cheeks flushed just enough to enhance the softness of her features. Her eyes sparkled with an innocent curiosity, drawing his focus completely. As he took in the sight of her, it felt as if the most beautiful thing in his world wasn’t the starry sky or the glowing moon above them anymore, but her. Her presence was all that mattered to him.

Levi’s heart pounded in his chest, the sound almost overwhelming in his ears. Everything around them seemed to fade into nothing, leaving only the two of them suspended in this fleeting, dangerous moment. His eyes lingered on the soft curve of her lips, slightly parted, and a surge of something uncontrollable coursed through him. His mind screamed at him to stop, to step back before it was too late, but his body betrayed him, moving closer on its own as if pulled by an invisible force.

Every inch closer to her felt like a betrayal of everything he stood for, yet he couldn’t stop himself. His breathing grew shallow as his eyes remained fixed on her lips, the air between

them charged with an intensity he couldn't escape. The weight of what he was about to do crashed down on him, but it only pushed him further, closer.

The space between them kept getting smaller. Y/N noticed the shift, her eyes catching the way Levi's posture seemed to lean in towards her, but she wasn't sure why. Oblivious to the storm raging inside him, she didn't sense the tension thickening the air, the way his eyes lingered on her lips, or the subtle shift in his posture as he leaned in. Still, the closer he got, the more her mind began to race. Was she imagining things?

Levi felt the internal battle raging within him, the temptation he had no right to feel pulling him dangerously close to crossing a line he had vowed never to approach. With each inch closer, his anxiety grew, and he felt the moment when everything could change between them getting closer.

"Captain!" a voice cut through the moment, causing Levi's eyes to widen in shock. The spell was broken in an instant. Levi pulled away, his breath hitching in his throat as he snapped back to reality.

At the sound, Y/N instinctively turned her head toward the source. Levi's entire body jerked back as he flinched and stood up in a hurry.

Eld appeared at the door from the tower where Y/N had come from, looking visibly frustrated. "Gunther's drunk and impossible. None of us can get him to calm down or go to sleep."

Levi glanced at him, unimpressed. "What does that have to do with me?"

Eld sighed, exasperated. "You're the only one stronger than him."

Levi exhaled sharply. "So damn annoying," he muttered, irritation tightening his jaw. "I'll be there in a minute."

Eld gave a quick nod before stepping away, leaving Levi standing there with a heavy sigh.

He turned back toward Y/N, who remained seated on the crenel. "It's late," he said quietly, his tone softer than before. "You should get back inside," he murmured, his eyes still fixed on her.

Y/N blinked, her eyes reflecting confusion as she tried to process everything. She couldn't shake the doubt that maybe, just maybe, she hadn't been imagining things. But then again, it seemed so unlikely, didn't it? "Alright," she murmured, her voice barely audible.

Levi's usual composure returned as he turned away from her. He walked away, his steps were faster than usual, a heaviness settling in his chest with each one. His mind raced, replaying the moment over and over. What almost happened pressing down on him. He had let himself get too close, dangerously close. That wasn't who he was. He wasn't someone who gave in to reckless impulses.

The guilt gnawed at him, not because he didn't care, but because he cared too much. Getting attached wasn't an option for him. He had lost too many people. Friends, comrades, those he'd sworn to protect. Each attachment felt like another weakness. Another way for the world to take something from him. Allowing himself to feel anything more meant inviting pain. A pain he'd learned to keep at a distance.

He wasn't supposed to feel this way, wasn't supposed to let his guard down with her. She was a soldier, a comrade, and he had a responsibility to her and to all of them. Allowing anything more meant risking everything. Their safety, their focus. And worse, if he let himself care too much, he knew how it would end: always in loss.

Despite the guilt, the temptation had been real, stronger than he'd ever admit, and that terrified him. He clenched his jaw, trying to shove the conflicting emotions back down where they belonged: buried deep, far away from her and from himself. It was safer that way, for both of them.

Y/N felt her cheeks warm as she replayed his actions in her mind, processing what had just happened. Could he really have been leaning in for... no, that couldn't be it. No, it had to be something else. Maybe she had just misunderstood his movement.

The silence thickened around her, and it felt like something had shifted between them. Fragile and unspoken. Her heart felt heavy with unasked questions, a longing to understand what had just happened.

But beneath the confusion, something warm settled in her chest, a quiet, unspoken feeling that lingered longer than she expected. His expression had been softer than she had ever seen it. It left her with a strange sense of comfort as if she had discovered something she hadn't realized she had been searching for.. She found herself holding onto it, reluctant to let it slip away. A soft smile tugged at her lips, barely there, as her thoughts circled back to him. Somehow, despite the uncertainty, it felt... right.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter will be up this weekend ❤️

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Y/N was startled awake by a loud groan from the upper bunk, her heart racing as panic briefly washed over her. She blinked rapidly, her mind struggling to catch up, alarmed that something was happening. But no. It was just Anna, groaning in agony. Y/N's pulse slowed, and she exhaled deeply, sitting up in her bed.

She rubbed her eyes and looked up. Anna was holding her head like she was trying to keep it from splitting open, her face scrunched in misery.

'I knew that was coming,' Y/N thought as she let out a sigh, the memory of Anna's heavy drinking from the previous night flashing in her mind. Y/N swung her legs over the bed, her bare feet hitting the cold floor as she moved. Her eyes landed on the untouched glass of water on the desk. The one she'd left for Anna the night before.

Shaking her head, Y/N grabbed the glass and walked over to the bunk. Anna's pained groans filled the room as she sat up, her movements slow, deliberate, and clearly accompanied by a throbbing headache.

"Here," Y/N said softly, offering the water.

Anna squinted at her through one eye, wincing as the sunlight poured through the windows. "Thanks... Can you close the damn curtains? The light is killing me," she muttered.

Y/N held back a smile as she walked over to close the curtains, leaving the room in a softer, dim light. The tension from the night before still lingered between them, but for now, it felt like they had a temporary peace. Anna might not be ready to make amends, but neither was she willing to shut Y/N out completely. At least not while her head felt like it was about to explode.

As Anna gulped down the water, Y/N sat on the edge of the desk, her eyes lingering on her sister. The unease between them simmered, unspoken but very much present.

'She still hasn't forgiven me,' Y/N thought. Although she wasn't entirely sure what had upset Anna, the tension made it clear that something was still off between them. Anna must have regretted handing over her uniform so easily the night before. She could sense it. But why had she hidden it from her in the first place? The question gnawed at her, but she forced herself to push it aside. For now, she was just grateful that Anna had returned the uniform.

By breakfast, Anna looked slightly more alive, though the deep shadows under her eyes and the way she moved screamed misery. Gunther didn't look much better. His face was pale, and his eyes were bloodshot from the night before. The rest of the squad found their misery wildly entertaining, laughing and teasing them mercilessly, while Y/N remained more reserved, lost in her own thoughts.

She barely touched her food, her mind elsewhere. Levi hadn't shown up for breakfast, and Y/N couldn't help but wonder where he was, what he was doing.

Her chest tightened as her mind drifted back to last night, replaying their conversation, their shared moment. They had connected, more deeply than she ever expected. Her cheeks flushed slightly at the memory, and her fingers nervously fidgeted with the collar of her sweater.

Once breakfast ended, Y/N slipped away. She had duties to attend to, and she needed her uniform jacket. Both hers and Anna's were hanging by the wardrobe, neatly placed as if nothing had happened. She grabbed the one she assumed was hers, not thinking twice as she slipped it on, the fabric familiar against her skin.

But something felt... off. The faint familiar scent reached her nose. She paused, frowning as she looked down at the jacket, suddenly noticing small scuffs and wear marks that hers didn't have.

'Anna's?' she thought.

Y/N took off Anna's jacket, but as she slid it off, she froze, feeling something small and hard in the left pocket. She paused, puzzled as she held the uniform jacket in one hand. With her other hand, she reached in, her fingers curling around a cold object. When she pulled it out, her heart raced a little.

A ring. Gold, simple, and gleaming faintly in the dim light of the room. Y/N stared at it, her thoughts scrambling to make sense of what she was seeing. She held the ring between two fingers, turning it slowly as her mind spun with questions. Why did Anna have this? Was it hers? Or... had it belonged to someone else? The answers eluded her, a growing sense of unease gnawing at her thoughts. 'What is she hiding?'

The door swung open behind her before she could put the ring back. Y/N froze, turning sharply just as Anna stepped into the room, her eyes instantly locking onto the ring in Y/N's hand. Shock rippled across her face for the briefest of moments before it was swiftly replaced with anger.

In an instant, Anna crossed the room in quick strides, yanking the ring from Y/N's hand with a sharp, furious motion. "What the hell do you think you're doing?" Anna spat. She grabbed the uniform jacket from Y/N's grip, her movements harsh and frantic.

"Anna, I—" Y/N stammered, the words tumbling out in a rush.

"Forget you saw that." Anna's voice was cold, her eyes blazing with a mixture of fury and something else. Something fragile and raw, hidden beneath the surface.

Y/N felt a chill crawl up her spine as she watched her sister shove the ring back into her pocket, her hands trembling ever so slightly despite the forceful control she tried to project.

"Anna, I didn't mean to—"

“Don’t. Ever. Mention it again.” Anna’s pushed past Y/N, slamming the door behind her as she stormed out.

Y/N stood there, frozen in place, her heart pounding in her chest. The silence that followed was suffocating, her mind spinning with the weight of what had just happened. ‘What was that?’ The question echoed in her head over and over again, but the answer seemed maddeningly out of reach. Anna was hiding something. Something big. Something that had clearly shaken her to the core.

The ring lingered in Y/N’s thoughts like a haunting mystery, a puzzle with no pieces to fit together. The weight of it pressed down on her chest, suffocating and insistent. Unable to shake the feeling, she slipped into her own uniform jacket and decided to follow her sister.

Anna stormed out of the headquarters, her footsteps heavy with frustration, heading straight for the courtyard outside. Once she was out of the building, she slowed down, feeling the cold morning air on her skin. But it didn’t do much to cool the simmering heat of her anger. She paused just past the stables, out of sight, and leaned against the wall, finding a bit of comfort in its solidness.

Her hand instinctively squeezed the outside of her left pocket, where the shape of the ring pressed against the fabric of her uniform jacket. It was a tangible reminder of everything she was trying to push away. Anna clenched her teeth, her fingers curling tighter around the object she had never managed to let go of.

‘I should’ve gotten rid of this a long time ago,’ she thought bitterly, her breath coming in short, sharp bursts. The memory of the ring always caused a flood of emotions she had buried deep, emotions she wasn’t ready to confront. There was no reason to keep it, no reason to hold onto something that had become a ghost of her past. Yet, night after night, she found herself staring at it, grappling with the question of why she hadn’t tossed it away. Something always held her back.

Perhaps it was the weight of what the ring represented. A connection to a life she had tried to forget but clearly hadn’t succeeded in doing. ‘Stupid,’ she thought, bitterness creeping in. It was just a piece of metal, a mere trinket. She hated it. She hated what had happened, the choices that had led her to this moment, and most of all, she hated herself for allowing it to linger in the shadows of her life.

Standing in the quiet courtyard, Anna’s fingers trembled slightly as she slowly pulled the ring from her pocket. She stared at it, her mind slipping into the past.

Her throat tightened, and the sting of tears welled in her eyes, unwanted and unwelcome. She despised that it still hurt after all this time, that the memories she had fought so hard to bury were surfacing once more, sharp and vivid as if no time had passed at all. Blinking rapidly, she tried to push the tears back down, but they refused to be silenced. Some tears escaped, tracing paths down her cheek.

Then she heard it. Y/N’s voice calling her name from behind.

Anna flinched, the sound jolting her back to the present. She quickly turned her head, stuffing the ring back into her pocket, and wiped her eyes hastily, as if that would erase the evidence of her vulnerability. When she looked up, she saw Y/N standing a few steps away, her face etched with concern.

Y/N's eyes softened at the sight of her sister's tear-streaked face, a wave of worry flooding her features. She opened her mouth to speak, but paused, unsure if she should press further. It was a rare sight to see Anna so unguarded, so exposed, and the weight of that moment hung heavily between them.

For a moment, Anna stood there, her back stiffening as she fought to regain her composure. She hated being seen like this, especially by Y/N. Flinching slightly under her sister's stare, she forced herself back into her usual demeanor, her expression hardening as she wiped the remaining tears from her face with the back of her hand. Without a word, she turned away abruptly, shoving the pain and memories deep down where they belonged.

Anna brushed past her coldly and walked away, leaving Y/N standing in stunned silence, her heart aching for her sister.

Y/N stood frozen for a moment, watching Anna's retreating figure, concern and frustration bubbling inside her. She wanted to run after her, to ask what was wrong, but something held her back. She knew it wasn't the right moment. Whatever Anna was struggling with, she clearly wasn't ready to share it with her.

With a soft sigh, Y/N's shoulders slumped as she turned and started walking back towards headquarters. She knew there was a reason Anna didn't want to talk about it, and she understood better than to force her sister to open up. Yet, a part of her wished Anna wouldn't shut her out completely. For now, though, she'd give her the space she needed.

She walked through the outside corridor of headquarters, her mind drifting to the tasks she had to tackle that day. *'I need to focus,'* she reminded herself, pressing a hand to her forehead.

As she turned the corner, she caught sight of a familiar figure ahead. Her heart skipping a beat. *'Levi.'* A flicker of warmth washed over her, and she hurried to catch up with him, her footsteps quick and light despite the heaviness in her chest. As she fell into step beside him, a smile brightened her face.

"Good morning, Levi!" she said cheerfully.

Levi glanced at her, but his expression was colder than usual, distant, almost dismissive. Y/N's smile faltered, the brief warmth inside her flickering like a candle in the wind. *'Did he not hear me?'* She waited, but his silence stretched on, heavy and suffocating.

Her throat tightened as she tried again, forcing a smile to her lips. "How did you sleep?"

Nothing. Not a word. Levi's expression remained stony, and the silence between them grew thicker, more oppressive.

Y/N felt a strange unease bloom in her chest, her heart beginning to pound. *'Why isn't he saying anything?'* She stole a glance at him, but his face remained unreadable, cold, distant. She bit her lip, her fingers fidgeting with the hem of her jacket as she felt the growing tension choke her.

"I've been thinking about what you said," she began. "Maybe it's time I face my parents, even if they don't approve—"

But before she could finish, Levi finally spoke, his cold expression fixed forward. "Stop wasting my time already," he said, his voice cutting through her like a blade.

Y/N's heart sank at his words, a mix of confusion and hurt flooding her senses. She hadn't expected such a harsh response. It felt like a punch to the gut. The warmth she had felt moments ago vanished, replaced by an icy knot of disappointment.

She opened her mouth to respond, but the words caught in her throat. Why was he being so cold? Did she really annoy him that much?

"I've got work to do, and so do you. Don't get in my way."

Y/N felt the words slam into her like a physical blow. She stumbled to a halt, her body going rigid. His words echoed in her ears, cruel and biting, ripping through her with merciless precision. She wanted to scream at him, to demand why he was treating her like this after everything they had shared the night before. But the words refused to come.

Y/N stared at him, waiting. Hoping for a sign that this was all some cruel joke, that the cold, detached Levi in front of her wasn't real. But he walked away without a second glance, walking off as if she were nothing more than an inconvenience to him.

Levi didn't pause or look back as he walked away, leaving Y/N standing alone. Her hands trembled as she watched his retreating figure.

With a shaky breath, Y/N turned and walked away, her steps slow and heavy, the pain of Levi's words sinking deeper with each step she took. But no matter how far she walked, his voice stayed with her, haunting her thoughts.

...

Y/N found herself in the research room, surrounded by stacks of books and papers, each one filled with information that seemed to blur together in her mind. She sat at a cluttered desk, her elbow propped up, resting her head on her hand as she stared blankly at the large tome open before her. The pages were filled with diagrams and annotations, but her expression remained unfocused, lost in thought as if the text were written in a foreign language.

Hange moved around the room, occasionally glancing at Y/N, noticing how she hadn't flipped the page for a while. "Y/N?" she called softly.

Y/N looked up from the book, caught off guard by the sudden attention.

Hange's expression softened as she leaned closer, concern evident beneath her usual enthusiasm. "You doing alright? You've been awfully quiet lately."

Y/N blinked, forcing a smile that felt brittle on her lips. "Yeah, just... trying to focus on this," she said, gesturing vaguely at the book.

But Hange wasn't convinced, her brows furrowing with concern. "You haven't turned a page in hours. What's going on?" Hange's eyes searched Y/N's, trying to peel back the layers of her facade.

For a moment, Y/N's heart raced. She wanted to confide in Hange, to share the chaos inside her, but the words clung to her throat. "It's nothing," she insisted.

Hange's smile faded, replaced by a look of worry. "You know you can talk to me, right?" she pressed, her tone gentle yet firm.

Y/N hesitated, the smile slipping from her face as the weight of her feelings threatened to spill over. She couldn't let Hange see how much Levi's words had affected her, how the depth of her feelings twisted into knots of confusion and hurt. "I'm fine, really," she replied, but the sincerity was lost as sadness crept back into her expression.

Hange glanced over at Moblit, busy organizing a pile of maps. His eyes darted between the two women, confusion clear on his face, before stepping out of the room. Hange could only shrug, unsure how to lift Y/N's mood.

Y/N's thoughts drifted back to Levi. She hated that he could evoke such strong emotions within her. *'I should just focus on my work,'* she thought, her hands gripping the edges of the desk tightly, willing herself to snap back to reality.

"Y/N?" Hange's voice cut through her thoughts, drawing her attention back. "You're really not fooling anyone, you know."

Y/N blinked, the corners of her mouth twitching as she tried to summon a smile, but it faded quickly. "I'm just... distracted," she admitted.

Hange raised an eyebrow, her tone becoming softer. "Distracted... by what?"

Y/N took a deep breath, feeling the familiar knot in her stomach tighten. "It's just... things are complicated in general. With Levi, especially." She tried to keep her voice steady, but the tremor betrayed her.

"Ah," Hange nodded, her expression shifting to one of understanding. "Yeah. Levi can be a bit of a hard nut to crack."

"I know," Y/N said, the frustration bubbling beneath the surface. "It's just... I hate the way he acts sometimes. I can't make sense of it."

Hange leaned against the desk, her expression earnest. "Have you talked to him about it?"

Y/N shook her head, the weight of her emotions feeling too heavy to share, even with Hange. “I don’t know how to start. I guess it’s easier to avoid it.”

Hange sighed, her voice firm yet kind, “You can’t keep burying your feelings, you know? It won’t end well. You have to face it head-on.”

Y/N sighed, glancing back down at the open book. The words danced mockingly before her eyes, her mind too clouded to absorb anything. “I should get back to work,” she said, attempting to shift the focus back to the task at hand.

“Right,” Hange replied, but her tone was tinged with concern. “Just don’t shut yourself off from the people who care about you, ok?”

As Hange returned to her work, Y/N felt the heaviness settle deeper inside her. She forced herself to look back at the book, the words blurring into an incomprehensible haze. She wished she could escape the mess of her emotions, but they clung to her like shadows, refusing to let go.

Levi had become a constant in her mind, and Y/N felt trapped by her own feelings. The knowledge of her growing affection for him gnawed at her insides, making her resentful of the hold he had on her heart.

Y/N bit her lip, trying to push those thoughts aside, but they lingered, a relentless reminder of the connection they shared and the mess it brought.

...

“I’m telling you, it was hilarious,” Eld said between fits of laughter. “Gunther and Anna were absolutely dying from that hangover. I thought they were going to pass out before Eren even transformed.”

Gunther, grinning sheepishly, nodded. “In our defense, it was a pretty heavy night.”

“Don’t make excuses, Gunther!” Eld teased. “Anna nearly fell off her horse because she was too busy holding her head.”

Everyone burst into laughter. Petra shook his head, grinning as he added, “I still remember Gunther’s face yesterday when she realized we had training with Eren the next day. I thought he was going to quit right then and there.”

The lightheartedness of the conversation spread around the table, even drawing a slight laugh from Y/N. Her smile faded quickly though, as her eyes flickered to Levi, who was sitting across from her. He was quiet and distant, his eyes never once meeting hers.

He had been avoiding her all day, barely acknowledging her presence, and it was gnawing at her. Yesterday, there had been something between them. But now... it was as if none of that had ever happened.

Levi suddenly stood up, his chair scraping the floor. “I’ve got something to take care of,” he muttered.

Without another glance, Levi turned and headed for the door, leaving Y/N staring after him in confusion. She didn't move, frozen in place, but Hange, sitting beside her, gently nudged her shoulder. Y/N looked at her, caught off guard.

Hange didn't say anything, but her attention shifted towards the door, her eyebrow slightly raised as if to question why Y/N was still sitting there. She then gave a slight, encouraging nod. She knew what Hange was silently urging her to do.

Y/N hesitated, glancing at the door before swallowing hard. After a moment, she nodded. "Excuse me," she said softly to the others as she slowly pushed her chair back and stood up. No one seemed to notice her departure, still caught up in their conversation.

She dashed out of the mess hall, urgency driving her footsteps faster as she rounded the hallway's corner. Scanning both directions, her eyes landed on Levi ahead, his figure moving with that familiar, purposeful stride. Y/N's mind raced with Hange's earlier words about confronting her feelings head-on. She couldn't endure another week of his indifference.

Her heart thundered in her chest as she called out.

"Levi!"

He flinched, shoulders tightening at the sound of her voice before he stopped walking. Slowly, he turned to face her, his expression unreadable in the dim light of the corridor. For a tense moment, they simply stared at one another, the silence pressing heavily between them.

Y/N inhaled deeply, grounding herself as she stepped forward. "Can I—can we talk?"

Levi's eyes flickered for a moment. A familiar tightness gripped his chest, a warning sign he had learned to suppress. "I have things to do," he replied coldly, turning to walk away, though the slightest hesitance lingered in his steps.

"No," Y/N interjected, her voice sharper than intended, surprising even herself. "This can't wait. I need to talk to you now."

For a fleeting moment, Levi's eyes widened in surprise at her boldness, but he quickly hardened his expression. A faint sigh escaped him. "Fine," he agreed, his tone clipped. "Come with me."

They walked in silence, the tension between them nearly unbearable. Y/N's mind whirled with questions and emotions. Why was he acting this way? What had shifted overnight?

He led her to his office and opened the door, stepping inside. Y/N followed, her nerves buzzing as she stepped into the room behind him. He closed the door quietly and turned to face her.

Levi's mind raced with conflicting thoughts. He had allowed himself to feel vulnerable, to open up to her, and now it felt like a mistake. The memory of their conversation from the night before replayed in his mind, and that only complicated things.

“So? What is it?” he asked, his tone as detached as ever, his arms crossed tightly over his chest.

Y/N’s heart raced, her palms damp with sweat. Confrontation wasn’t something she was used to, and speaking up for herself like this felt almost impossible. The weight of the situation pressed down on her, making her already hesitant words catch in her throat.

She hadn’t expected this conversation to be easy, but the coldness in his voice cut deeper than she anticipated. Y/N looked up at him, searching his face for any sign of the man who had opened up to her, the man she had shared something real with. But all she saw now was the hardened, emotionless captain.

She hesitated, unsure of how to start. But her frustration was stronger than her fear. “Why are you acting so cold?” Y/N asked.

Levi’s expression didn’t change, but inside, a part of him tensed. He knew he was acting cold, deliberately keeping a distance. It was easier that way. What he didn’t expect was for her to actually call him out on it, to push him into this conversation.

“I’m not,” he replied flatly. “Get to the point.”

Y/N shook her head, her frustration bubbling. “Yesterday... you were different. We talked about things, important things. You were... there with me. And now you’re avoiding me like none of it ever happened.”

Levi’s eyes flickered, but his tone remained cold. He knew deep down she was right, that something had shifted between them, but he refused to admit it.

“Because nothing special happened,” he said trying to sound steady, though there was a slight tightness in his jaw. “I was just being polite.”

“Polite?” Y/N repeated. “Is that all that was to you?” She hesitated for a moment, searching his face. “It just... it feels like things have changed between us. Even if you don’t want to admit it.”

Levi’s jaw tightened. The tension inside him was growing, each word she spoke poking at him. “You’re making something out of nothing.”

“I’m not!” Y/N shot back, her frustration rising. Her heart raced, pounding against her ribs. “Last night, I know what happened. You can’t just brush it off. You—” She hesitated, looking down as the memory washed over her. Her pulse quickened, the image of him leaning in flickering vividly in her mind. “You... you leaned in and—”

Levi’s eyes widened slightly, a brief flicker of panic crossing his features. He had so hoped she hadn’t noticed what he had almost done the night before. The memory clawed at him, a reminder of how close he had come to crossing an unspoken line.

He cut her off, his voice sharp, trying to mask his unease. “You were drunk.”

Y/N slowly lifted her head, her eyes locking onto his in disbelief, unable to process the words he had just thrown at her. “I wasn’t drunk!” Y/N’s voice trembled with a mixture of anger and disbelief. Her breath caught in her throat. “I know what I saw, what I felt. Don’t tell me I imagined it.”

“You probably had too much to drink last night,” Levi said. “Don’t let that mess with your head.” Even as he spoke, he hoped she’d believe that lie. But deep down, he knew the truth. She hadn’t been that drunk. She had seen, she had felt it, just as much as he had.

Y/N’s frustration boiled over, but a flicker of doubt crossed her mind. Had she really imagined it?

“I wasn’t imagining it!” She said, “Stop telling me that I am!” Her voice cracked slightly, the desperation seeping through, but she forced the thought aside. She couldn’t let it go. “Even if... even if it wasn’t exactly what I thought, I know something changed yesterday. You can’t take that away from me.”

Levi’s heart clenched at her words, but he kept his face impassive. He had to push her away, for her sake as much as his own. “This needs to stop,” he said, his voice firm. “I’m not your friend, Y/N. I’m your Captain.”

He turned away, unable to meet her eyes. “That’s all this is, and I expect you to behave as such.”

Y/N recoiled, his words hitting her like a physical blow. Her breath caught, her chest tightening painfully. “What?” It didn’t sound like him at all. For a moment, it felt like she didn’t recognize him.

Levi’s expression didn’t waver, his tone clipped and distant. Levi clenched his fists, his own heart pounding painfully in his chest. He could see the hurt in her eyes, and it stung more than he wanted to admit. “Don’t make this into something it’s not. We’ve got more important things to focus on.”

Her frustration surged. She had expected resistance, but it felt like he wasn’t even trying to talk to her. Like he was shutting the door before she could even get her foot in. “You’re not even listening to me...” She muttered, her voice tight with frustration.

Levi’s jaw tightened. He didn’t want this to turn into something more, didn’t want her to believe there was anything beyond their roles as soldiers. “I’m listening,” he replied. “But we don’t have time for this. Just focus on the upcoming mission. That’s all that matters right now.”

“But—”

Levi cut her off, his tone sharpening. The urge to soften his words gnawed at him, but he forced it down. “You can’t afford to get distracted by this nonsense, Y/N. You’re not strong enough. Get back on track.”

Her heart dropped at his words, and a heavy sadness washed over her. Disappointment overwhelmed her, contrasting the hope she had held onto just moments before.

It stung deeply to hear him label what she had felt as mere ‘nonsense.’ All those moments of closeness and understanding... He had made her question everything they had shared, and the connection she once cherished now felt like a lie. With each passing moment, it grew harder to reconcile her feelings with the hurt he had caused. The weight of his dismissal settled heavily in her chest, and she fought the urge to cry, desperately trying to mask the depth of her sorrow behind a facade of strength.

A heavy silence hung between them, amplifying the tension, as neither spoke, the air thick with unspoken words.

Levi caught her eyes for a fleeting moment, the intensity of her emotions clear, but he chose to look away.

She straightened her back, shoulders squared, and her tone turned coldly formal. “Understood, *Captain*,” she said, the title emphasized sharply. Her hands clasped tightly at her sides. As she turned toward the door, she took a slow, deliberate breath, determined to mask the storm within. “I won’t misunderstand again.” With a final, stiff nod, she stepped out, the door clicking shut behind her, leaving a heavy silence in the room.

As soon as Y/N closed the door behind her, Levi let out a sharp sigh, dragging his hands through his hair, the tension in his head building with every breath.

The office was silent, but his mind was chaos. Their confrontation echoed relentlessly in his thoughts, each moment playing out more painfully than the last. But it wasn’t just tonight haunting him. It was the memory of the night before. The warmth of her laughter, the secrets they’d shared, the closeness he hadn’t realized he’d allowed himself to feel.

Last night had felt effortless, like the walls he’d built around himself had been lowered without him noticing. Her smile, the way she looked at him, had stirred something deep inside him. He had felt almost content. But now, all that remained was the cold aftermath of his own words.

He stared at the closed door, frustration tightening his chest. The contrast between the two nights was suffocating. Now, everything felt fractured, broken by his own doing. He didn’t want to hurt her. He hated that he had.

Levi’s body felt like it was acting on its own as he walked toward the door, an instinctive urge driving him to reach out to her, to say something, anything, to bridge the distance that had grown between them.

His hand hovered near the doorknob, and his eyes widened as he heard the faint sound of Y/N sobbing on the other side. Each choked breath pierced through him, a reminder of the hurt he had caused. He hesitated, feeling the weight of his decision press down on him like a boulder. It was best if he didn’t say anything. For both of them.

A deeper, darker thought gnawed at Levi as he stood frozen by the door.

He knew, deep down, that he wasn't just pushing her away because of his pride or his sense of duty. It was more than that. It was fear, and it clung to him like a shadow. Every person he'd ever let get close had been taken away, ripped from his life by the cruelty of the world they lived in. And Y/N... she would be no different.

He had seen too much death, had buried too many comrades, too many friends. The idea of losing her, of watching her fall like the others, was a pain he didn't want to face.

The moment he returned after the incident at Trost was when it had hit him. The thought that she was dead had shaken him to the core. That wave of panic, the gnawing anxiety he'd felt when he thought she was gone, was a wake-up call. He realized then that he cared for her, more than he had allowed himself to admit. The relief of finding her alive, mingled with the fear that he could lose her again, was overwhelming. Reliving that terror, now with even deeper emotions, wasn't something he could handle.

Better for her to stay at arm's length, to remain just another soldier under his command, than risk caring more deeply and losing her too. He told himself it was for her own good, that if he kept their bond from growing, she'd be safer, more focused, less likely to make a fatal mistake in battle. Yet, deep inside, Levi knew it was a lie to protect himself. His world was too brutal for someone like her, and he couldn't afford to let his guard down again.

On the other side of the door, Y/N pressed her hands to her mouth, her eyes tightly shut as she fought back the sobs that threatened to escape. How could it hurt this much? She had argued with Levi before, but this time it felt different. It cut deeper, the pain more acute.

Y/N stood against the door, her breath shaky as her legs threatened to give way beneath her. Her body trembled with the weight of his rejection, heart pounding with confusion and disbelief. How had everything changed so quickly? Her mind raced, replaying every word he'd said, trying to make sense of it.

She wiped away the tears that blurred her vision, anger bubbling beneath the surface as she thought about his cold dismissal.

The sadness that had initially gripped her began to shift. Her hand, once resting over her chest, slowly curled into a fist, her body tense with frustration. His words echoed in her mind. *'You can't afford to get distracted by this nonsense, Y/N. You're not strong enough'*. The sting of his condescending tone cut deeper than she'd realized at first.

She wiped away another stray tear, but this time, instead of feeling the familiar ache, a new resolve sparked within her. Anger mixed with disappointment, hardening her heart. He had no right to dismiss her so easily, no right to belittle her like that.

Y/N took a deep breath, her chest rising as she straightened her posture. Maybe it was for the best. If Levi wanted distance, then fine. She would give it to him. She wouldn't keep chasing after something that clearly wasn't there. An expedition was coming up soon, and he was right. She had better things to focus on than his mixed signals and emotional walls. Her thoughts were bitter but clear. If he wanted space, she'd give him all the distance in the world.

Even through her frustration, something still lingered. No matter how much anger clouded her mind, she couldn't fully ignore the feelings she had for him. She wanted to be furious, to walk away without a second thought, but there was still a part of her that couldn't forget. Maybe, despite everything, he felt it too.

As Y/N's footsteps faded down the hall, Levi stood motionless, his hand hovering near the knob as if reaching out could pull her back. His hand fell to his side, and he stared blankly at the floor, his heart heavy with a conflict he couldn't bring himself to resolve.

He wanted to call her back, to take back every word he'd said. But it wasn't anger driving him. It was fear. He was terrified of the way she made him feel, how much he'd come to care for her without even realizing it. Every moment she got closer, it only reminded him of what he could lose. Yet, at the same time, pushing her away felt like the worst mistake he'd ever made.

Chapter End Notes

THEY WILL BE FINE I PROMISE 🕒 - Next chapter's going up on Wednesday ❤️

I originally planned to make this chapter more angsty, but I felt it would've been out of character for Levi. Especially now, I don't think he'd be able to be that mean toward her, especially since he's slowly coming to terms with his own feelings.

Hope you enjoyed ❤️

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

I finished writing this at the airport at 6am lol
Early af upload because I'll be on a plane till late at night.

This chapter starts with a flashback :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The market was its usual chaotic self, with noise and movement everywhere, but Levi's focus remained on the task at hand. His squad followed close by, their arms full of different items they had just purchased. He inspected the broom he had picked up from one of the vendors, testing its handle and bristles, making sure it was up to his standards.

Without a word, he handed the broom over to Petra, catching her curious glance as he did. "You guys can head back now. I'll grab the rest of what we need," he said, already turning his eyes to the next stall.

Petra and the others nodded, not questioning his decision, murmuring their goodbyes. As they disappeared into the crowd, Levi exhaled quietly, his body relaxing just slightly.

He wasn't exactly fond of markets, with their relentless noise and chaotic energy, but there was something soothing about the act of walking alone, weaving through the mess of people at his own pace. His eyes caught sight of a nearby stall, a display of cleaning supplies catching his attention, a strange sort of calm always washed over him when he saw things neatly organized.

"Sir!"

Levi tensed, slightly annoyed that his short moment of solitude was interrupted. He assumed it was one of his squad members coming back to bug him about something. He turned around, already prepared to tell them off, but paused when he saw who it was.

Y/N stood a few feet away, still dressed in her work uniform with her headscarf neatly in place, holding a wicker basket by its handle.

"What a coincidence," Y/N said with a soft smile, her tone light but slightly surprised as she walked towards him. There was an ease in her movement, like running into him in such a busy place wasn't as odd to her as it felt to him.

Levi, still a bit caught off guard by her casualness, found himself responding before he could think too much about it. "What are you doing here?" His words were simple, but the hint of

curiosity in his voice slipped through, more casual than he intended. He wasn't used to seeing people outside of their usual tasks, and definitely not in a place like this.

Y/N chuckled softly. "I don't live at work, you know," she teased lightly. "I need to eat too."

Her words were met with a glance from Levi, his eyes instinctively drawn to the basket she held. There was hardly anything in it. A small loaf of bread, a few potatoes, and some rice. Barely enough to scrape by for a few days. The sight of it stirred something in him, an unspoken concern tugging at the corners of his usually composed demeanor. His brow furrowed as he gestured towards the bag. "That's it? Is that even enough for you?"

Her smile faltered, the brightness in her expression dimming slightly as she hesitated, clearly caught off guard by his question. "I'm not sure," she admitted. "I have to make it last the whole week tho... until my next pay." She shifted her weight, trying to lighten the mood, but the discomfort in her voice lingered. Almost as an afterthought, she added, "It's all I can afford right now," her words revealing more than she intended.

Her words hung in the air, and despite her attempt to keep things light, Levi could feel the heaviness beneath them. The reality of her situation. The quiet struggle she was trying to mask struck him more deeply than he anticipated. It was one thing to see it from a distance, but hearing her acknowledge it made it all too real.

Levi studied her for a moment, taking in the subtle hollowness in her cheeks and how her uniform hung a bit too loosely on her thin frame. It reminded him of just a couple of days ago, when he had saved her from those men trying to kidnap her. Even then, he'd noticed how underweight she was, but now, standing in the daylight, the signs were more pronounced, making the reality of her situation worse. He knew that look all too well. It was the same one he had worn himself once.

Without saying anything further, he let out a quiet sigh, the weight of concern settling in his chest. "Stay here."

"What?" Y/N blinked, caught off guard by his unexpected command. "Why?"

"Just stay put." He looked her directly in the eyes, pointing firmly at the floor beneath her feet. The intensity in his eyes left no room for argument, and he didn't give her a chance to protest.

With that, he turned on his heel and melted into the bustling crowd, leaving her standing there, a mix of confusion and reluctant trust swirling within her.

As Levi navigated the crowded market, his thoughts drifted to the days when he barely scraped by, living on whatever he could find. He remembered the sting of hunger and the careful rationing of what little food he had. It wasn't a pleasant memory, but seeing Y/N like this, struggling with such a sparse supply, pulled at something deep inside him.

He paused at several stalls, scanning the offerings. He picked up items that would sustain her longer: dried beans, different types of grains, preserved meat, and some vegetables. He was sure these would fill her up and stretch farther than the meager scraps she had purchased.

After making his purchases, he gathered all the paper bags in his hands and turned, heading back through the crowd of shoppers. He walked his way towards the spot where he had left her, balancing the weight of the bags as he moved.

When Levi returned, he found Y/N's eyes widening, surprise and confusion washing over her face as she caught sight of the amount of filled bags he held.

"Here," he said, offering the paper bags without any extra words or explanation, his expression steady and unreadable.

Y/N's eyes flickered between him and the bags, her hands reaching out tentatively, pausing just short of taking them. "What... what is all this?" she asked in disbelief.

Levi still held the bags towards her, his expression deadpan. "What do you think? Food."

"Well, yes, but—" she started, only for him to cut her off with a sharpness that caught her off guard.

"If you don't take it, I'll make sure you regret it," he said. There was a flicker in his eyes that hinted at the weight behind his words, an unspoken seriousness that underscored his tough demeanor.

Y/N blinked, her mind racing to grasp the sudden kindness. The disbelief in her voice was noticeable. "But— why would you—"

"Just accept it, and shut up, will ya?" he interrupted, his tone as gruff as ever. He purposely avoided her eyes, focusing intently on the way the bags rested in her hands. The weight of his words settled heavily between them, an awkward tension hanging in the air.

Y/N struggled to balance all the bags, her arms straining under their weight while the basket she had brought hung awkwardly from her elbow. The handle dug into her arm, making it even harder to manage the load, and she shifted unsteadily, clearly overwhelmed by how much he had given her to carry.

Levi clicked his tongue in mild irritation at her struggle. "Give me those." Without waiting for her to protest, he grabbed the heavier bags from her hands, leaving Y/N momentarily taken aback by his sudden actions.

For a moment, they stood there, looking at each other, the meaning of his gesture clear between them. Y/N remained in disbelief over his unexpected kindness, feeling as if she were standing on the edge of a precipice. The bags felt heavy in her hands, but the weight of his kindness felt even heavier, pressing against her chest. She was caught between gratitude and confusion, trying to comprehend why he would go out of his way for her, especially since they barely knew each other.

Levi noticed her hesitation, his brow furrowing slightly as he shifted his stance, annoyance creeping into his posture. "Well, are you going to lead the way, or should I just stand here with these bags all day?" His eyebrow twitched, a subtle indication of his frustration.

Y/N flinched slightly at his tone, realization dawning on her. “Oh... right.” With that, she began to walk, and Levi fell into step beside her as they moved together through the bustling market, the crowd swirling around them like an unseen tide.

After a few moments of silence, Y/N hesitated, her eyes drifting to the ground before she spoke again. “I just want to let you know... my place isn’t exactly... nice.” Levi turned his head towards her, his expression shifting to one of disbelief.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Levi replied, cutting through her uncertainty. “I don’t care about that.” He met her eyes with a steady intensity, the truth of his words evident in the lines of his face. At that moment, it was clear that the state of her home didn’t matter to him. He was more concerned about her well-being than any superficial details.

As they walked side by side, the city's noise faded into a low background hum, wrapping them in a sense of closeness. Y/N finally broke the silence. “I have to admit, I didn’t expect to see you here,” she said, sneaking a glance at him. “Don’t higher-ups usually send someone else for these kinds of errands?”

Levi shrugged slightly, his eyes focused ahead as they navigated the bustling streets. “I needed to make sure they didn’t buy trash,” he replied, his tone steady. “They have a habit of picking the wrong stuff.”

Y/N chuckled lightly, pulling the paper bags closer to her chest to secure them in place. “I guess you do like things a certain way,” she teased, a playful glimmer in her eyes.

Levi scoffed, shaking his head. “It’s not a matter of liking. It’s a necessity,” he replied. “Most people don’t understand how crucial the details are.” His brow furrowed slightly as he recalled all the times he’d had to correct others’ careless mistakes.

She smiled softly, the warmth of her expression contrasting with his gruff demeanor. “Like keeping your office spotless,” she said in a teasing tone.

Levi glanced at her briefly, his tone still deadpan. “Exactly.”

They continued walking, the bustling sounds of the city fading into a background hum, allowing Y/N the space to gather her thoughts. After a moment, she spoke, her tone contemplative. “I used to think about that a lot, actually.”

Levi frowned slightly, curiosity piqued but still not quite grasping what she meant. “Think about what?”

Y/N’s eyes dropped to the ground. “The details. How they add up,” she replied quietly. “When I was a kid, I wanted to be someone important. Someone who made a real difference...”

She paused, a bittersweet smile flickering across her lips as memories washed over her. “But it’s funny how life shifts. Now, I focus on the small things. Just trying to get by.”

Levi's expression remained neutral, but inside, he felt a flicker of recognition at her words. "Doesn't mean it's nothing," he replied.

"Yeah, I guess not," she said, a light laugh escaping her lips, though it held a hint of sadness. "But sometimes I wonder... I used to dream big, like everyone else. Now, it's just about getting through the week."

Levi stayed silent for a moment, his expression hardening as he processed her confession. "You survive. That's more than a lot of people can say." He felt the truth of his words resonate deeply, a reminder of the struggles they both faced in their own ways. It wasn't much, but it was something.

Y/N nodded slowly, her eyes drifting somewhere far away. "Yeah... survive."

As they continued walking, Y/N stole glances at Levi, her expression a blend of eagerness and anxiety, her brows slightly furrowed as she seemed to search for the right words.

"Where do you stay?" Levi asked breaking the comfortable silence.

"Oh. Just above that bar there," she replied, pointing to a worn-down building that sagged under the weight of age.

As they approached the building, Y/N looked up at it. "Well, this is it," she said, a bittersweet smile crossing her lips.

Levi looked around the structure, noticing how loud it was with drunken people. They stepped inside, the musty smell of the bar creeping up to meet them, and she led the way upstairs, each step creaking under them as they ascended.

Y/N turned the key in the lock and pushed the door open to her small room above the bar. Levi followed her in, his eyes scanning the small space. They both set the grocery bags down by the table, a bit self-conscious about how small the room was. The faint sound of customers downstairs filtered through the floor, reminding them both of where they were. "Welcome to my home sweet home."

Levi's eyes lingered around the room. The space was tidy, but the lack of belongings was noticeable. Aside from the essentials, there wasn't much else. A couple of books were stacked on a corner table, a single chair, and a small bed next to the room's small window. Despite how neat the room was, it felt bare, as though she had just enough to get by but nothing extra. It was a space meant for living, but not quite a home.

"So, how'd you end up here?" He asked concerned.

Y/N glanced towards the floor, her fingers fidgeting nervously with the edge of her sleeve. "The owner of the bar rents rooms to customers who need a place to stay for the night," she explained. "She was kind enough to let me stay long-term, as long as I clean up after everyone leaves the bar and pay a little rent."

Levi's brows furrowed slightly, his concern deepening. "It's mostly drunks who stay here, right?"

She nodded, a faint smile on her lips, trying to make light of it. "Yeah, but it's not as bad as it sounds. It's cheaper than staying anywhere else."

As they spoke, muffled sounds filtered through the thin walls, a rhythmic thumping against the wall, accompanied by moans. They both averted their eyes, attempting to ignore the interruption. Y/N felt her cheeks flush with embarrassment as the sounds persisted. In truth, she was all too familiar with those sounds, having heard them almost every night during her stay at the bar.

Levi crossed his arms, leaning slightly against the wall. "Cleaning up a bar at night sounds rough." He knew she was also cleaning the offices during the day, and he couldn't help but wonder how she managed to get any sleep at all.

Y/N shrugged, a smile breaking through her embarrassment. "You get used to it. It's hard work, but it's better than sleeping on the streets."

Levi stayed silent, watching her closely. There was something in her voice, something she was trying to brush off, but he could tell it wasn't easy for her. His eyes narrowed slightly as he considered his next question. "Is that how you started working as a cleaner?"

Y/N nodded, looking down at her hands. "Yeah... it just kind of happened. I started here. After a while, I picked up other cleaning jobs too." She hesitated for a moment before continuing. "It's not like I had a lot of options."

Levi's expression softened ever so slightly. "You couldn't find something better? Somewhere safer?"

She shook her head, a small sigh escaping her lips. "No one wanted to hire me. They all said I was too young, had no real experience... and I didn't have any references." She offered a wry smile. "People don't trust you with much when you're just some girl with no past."

Levi let her words sink in. He knew better than most what it was like to have people judge you for your circumstances. "How long has it been like this?"

Y/N fell silent for a moment, her eyes drifting as she calculated how long it had been. The weight of her thoughts seemed to hang in the air, and when she finally spoke. "Not too long I guess. About a year and a half now."

Levi's face remained as stoic as ever, but inside, he understood. He had known she had been through a lot, more than she had let on, and likely more than she wanted to admit to anyone. It wasn't his place to push.

He gave her a brief nod, signaling that he understood. "I should go."

Y/N's eyes flickered with a hint of something, gratitude maybe, but she simply nodded in response. "Thanks again... for the groceries," she said softly.

Levi nodded and turned towards the door, his movements calm and steady. Y/N followed him downstairs, her footsteps light behind his, and they stopped at the entrance of the bar. The noise from the customers inside seemed distant, muffled, as if the world outside their conversation had faded.

Levi turned to face her. "Take care," he said, his voice still carrying that detached tone. "And eat enough."

Y/N stood by the door, watching him as he spoke. But there was something in the way she looked at him now, more thoughtful. Her eyes held his, and for a moment, Levi felt the weight of her attention. It was... intense.

Before he could say anything more, she smiled, a small, gentle smile that caught him off guard.

"You know," Y/N began. "you're not at all what I expected."

Levi blinked, confused. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Her smile deepened as she took a small step closer, her eyes never leaving his. "I've heard people say you're cold, distant... even heartless." She paused, her eyes searching his face, as if peeling away the layers he kept hidden from the world. "But now I know that is not true at all. This is the second time you've saved me."

Levi's jaw tightened slightly, but he didn't interrupt. He couldn't quite bring himself to move.

"I've noticed," Y/N continued. "You pay attention... you care. Even if you don't show it the way people expect."

Levi's breath caught in his chest for a brief second. He hadn't expected her to say that.

Y/N hesitated, glancing down at her hands for a moment before looking back up at him. "I don't know if anyone's ever told you this, but... I've never seen you smile."

Her words hung in the air between them.

"I think..." She paused, as if carefully choosing her next words, her eyes soft and sincere. "I think your smile looks gentle. Maybe even kind."

Levi's eyes widened, just a fraction, but enough that Y/N noticed. For the first time, she saw something flicker in his face, something unguarded and vulnerable. It was subtle, but it was there.

His throat felt tight, and he swallowed hard, trying to push down the sudden rush of emotion that surged up inside him. She didn't know what she was doing, what she was stirring in him. He didn't even know how to respond.

"I... hope I get to see it someday..."

Levi flinched slightly, his body stiffening as he processed her words. He couldn't understand why, but something inside him shifted at that moment, a spark of something unfamiliar. For the first time in a long while, he felt something shift. Subtle, but it was there.

Y/N's voice seemed to echo, becoming distant as if carried away by a fading wind. Levi blinked, feeling the world around him blur, her words slipping further from his grasp.

"I hope I get to see it someday..."

His heartbeat started to pound in his ears, slow at first, then faster, and the world around him dissolved, like the moments before waking from a deep sleep.

Suddenly, Levi woke up, his eyes snapping open.

He sat up sharply, still in his chair, fully clothed like he always slept. He wasn't disoriented, but for a second, his mind raced to catch up to the present. He let out a slow breath, rubbing a hand over his face before resting his elbows on his knees, trying to shake the lingering feeling from the dream.

It had been a memory from almost a year ago. The market, that day they had met just a few days before.

His hand moved to his head, massaging his temples as a realization settled uncomfortably in his chest. 'Maybe even then... I already felt something. Just too damn stubborn to notice,' he thought.

Levi clenched his jaw, holding his head for a second longer as he forced himself to swallow the thought. He leaned back in his chair and exhaled deeply, remembering how things were now, how they hadn't spoken in over a week. More than that. They hadn't even glanced at each other. Both pretending the other didn't exist.

The tension gnawed at him, though he kept it buried under his usual calm exterior. It wasn't his style to dwell on these things, but every now and then, the weight of it all hit him in moments like this.

With a sigh, Levi rose from the chair, his body stiff from sleeping in the same position for hours. He paced a few steps across the room, shaking off the remnants of sleep, trying to clear his mind. He told himself there were more important things to worry about. Things that required his attention.

The expedition.

Erwin had told him everything. The plan was more dangerous than usual. An operation to flush out a traitor. Levi's jaw tightened, already knowing what that meant. More deaths. There always were, but this time... there would be more than usual.

He stood for a moment, collecting his thoughts, mentally preparing for what lay ahead. Then, without another word, he stepped out of his quarters.

The sky outside was still a deep shade, barely touched by the first hints of dawn. The air was cool, crisp against his skin, as he walked towards the garden. His eyes drifted, scanning the area out of habit, when he noticed something.

Someone was already up.

In the dim light, he spotted a figure moving swiftly, effortlessly among the trees and through the open space, using ODM gear to dart and weave between obstacles. His eyes narrowed as he watched, recognizing her instantly.

Y/N was practicing, her movements faster, and more precise than before. She leaped from one tree to the next, her wires retracting and releasing in perfect sync. Levi couldn't help but notice how much more agile she had become, her reflexes sharper, her form cleaner. Every jump, every pivot in the air was purposeful.

For a while, Levi just stood there, watching her in silence as the early light of dawn started to creep across the horizon. He hadn't seen her train like this before, not at this hour, not alone.

Eventually, Y/N landed softly on the ground, breathing heavily, her chest rising and falling with the effort. Sweat glistened on her skin, strands of hair sticking to her forehead. It was clear she'd been at it for a while, pushing herself.

For a second, Levi's expression softened. He didn't shift his posture, didn't move, but there was something unspoken in the way he watched her. His eyes lingered on her for just a moment longer, his expression betraying nothing, but inside, he felt it.

That same tug. That pulled him towards her.

Just as Y/N was about to leave, something made her pause. She looked up, and her eyes locked with his.

Y/N's eyes widened briefly, a flicker of surprise passing over her face, but then it hardened. Her expression turned cold, distant, as she quickly looked away. She didn't say a word, didn't even acknowledge him beyond that one glance. Instead, she purposefully walked in the opposite direction, taking a different route to avoid passing by him.

Levi stayed rooted to the spot, watching her retreat. He could not blame her. '*Understandable*,' he thought to himself, his lips pressed into a thin line.

She was still angry. And after everything, she had every right to be.

Shaking the thought from his mind, Levi turned and headed back towards headquarters. His mind shifted back to more pressing matters. Today was their last day before the training with Eren would end, and there were still too many things he had to do.

...

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting the training grounds in an orange light, Eren stood in the stables, cleaning up with Y/N who had offered to help him. The Special

Operations Squad had just returned, and as they both worked on the given task, their conversation about the upcoming expedition flowed between them.

“They put us in the back center of the formation,” Eren said, almost like he was trying to reassure himself. “Gunther mentioned it’s the safest spot.”

Y/N paused, the sound of the shovel against the wall fading as her thoughts took over. While the Special Operations Squad would be guarded in that prime position, she would be further out. It hit her then how much more dangerous her role was.

She glanced at Eren but didn’t say anything for a moment. The silence between them was loaded, her mind swirling with thoughts of the real danger she faced.

"Something... about this entire expedition seems off..." she finally said, breaking the quiet.

The two of them finished cleaning and started walking out of the stables, passing Oluo, who stood by the entrance, his eyes scanning the area as if to make sure everything was under control. Eren, with a glance back at Y/N, spoke up again.

“Why do you think that?” he asked, genuinely curious.

But before Y/N could respond, their attention was drawn to a group of cadets walking by, still wearing their training uniforms. Among them were Mikasa and Armin. Eren’s eyes lit up as he spotted them.

“Sir, may I go talk to my friends?” he asked, turning to Oluo.

Oluo gave a brief nod. “Go ahead.”

Eren took off without hesitation, running towards Mikasa and Armin, leaving Y/N behind. She stood next to Oluo, watching Eren greet his friends, who were relieved to see him.

Oluo crossed his arms, glancing at the scene. “Better let him talk to them now,” he muttered. “We don’t know how many of them will make it back after this expedition.”

Y/N’s heart twisted at Oluo’s blunt words. She stayed silent, glancing at him, but there was nothing to say. He wasn’t wrong. She lowered her eyes to the ground, her mind swirling.

When she lifted her eyes again, she saw not just Mikasa and Armin, but Jean, Sasha, Connie, and so many others. More than she expected. The realization surprised her. So many had decided to join the Scouts this time. Her thoughts lingered on that until they were interrupted by a man walking by with a bundle of capes in his arms.

“Everyone. Your uniforms are here!” he shouted, and she watched as everyone began putting on their green Survey Corps cloaks, a look of pride in their eyes.

"Y/N!" Armin called, waving his hand at her.

Seeing him made her heart feel warm, and she smiled as she walked over, giving him a quick hug. Having a familiar face and a friend in such a grim atmosphere lifted her spirits for a

moment.

From a distance, Levi observed the scene unfolding before him. His sharp eyes locked on Y/N and Armin, who were now sitting together on one of the steps, slightly apart from the group of new recruits gathered outside. They were engrossed in their own conversation, laughter spilling from Y/N like a melody, her face glowing with joy. It was a sight he hadn't witnessed in what felt like weeks. Her carefree smile brightened the atmosphere around them.

At first, Levi tried to dismiss the sight, maintaining his usual neutral expression. But as their laughter echoed across the training grounds, a knot twisted in his stomach. He clenched his jaw, the muscles in his face tightening as a deepening irritation bubbled beneath the surface. His stance grew rigid, arms crossing over his chest as if to ward off the feeling that threatened to consume him.

Levi's eyes narrowed slightly, not just at the sound of her joy but at the thought of Armin sharing in it. The sight of her so happy, so carefree with someone else, ignited a fire he couldn't ignore. He couldn't look away, even as a frown tugged at the corners of his mouth.

He felt an unsettling tightness in his chest, as if her happiness with Armin was a challenge to his own emotions. Why did it bother him so much to see her enjoying herself with someone else? Each infectious laugh of hers was a reminder of what he had been denying, leaving him both restless and irritated.

“Did you hear what happened during lunch yesterday?” Armin snickered, trying to suppress his laughter. “Sasha bit Jean's hand because she thought he was trying to take her extra rations! She nearly took a chunk out of him!”

Y/N burst into laughter, the sound ringing bright in the air. But just as her joy reached its peak, a shadow loomed over them, cutting off her laughter abruptly.

Both of them looked up to see Levi standing there, his expression cold and annoyed. His eyes, usually sharp and alert, seemed distant, as if he were lost in thought.

“Y/N...” he began. “There's something important I need to discuss with you.”

Y/N felt a wave of confusion wash over her, her brow furrowing slightly. He wasn't meeting her eyes directly; his focus was distant. The flicker of uncertainty in his eyes made her hesitate. What could he possibly want after all this time? She shifted uncomfortably, glancing at Armin, who looked equally uneasy at the situation.

The others, now standing nearby, cast curious glances in their direction, their expressions ranging from concern to intrigue. Y/N pressed her lips together, a flicker of annoyance igniting within her. She hadn't wanted to talk to him this soon, not after a week of silence. But the weight of his presence was impossible to ignore.

With an exasperated sigh, she nodded curtly, her eyes narrowing slightly, a clear signal of her annoyance. Standing up, she followed Levi towards the headquarters, where they could talk away from prying eyes.

She felt irritated. What could he possibly want to say that couldn't wait?

As they walked down the outside corridor, the sun had already set, and the place was starting to get dark. Y/N followed a few steps behind Levi, her eyes on his back as he moved ahead. The silence between them felt heavier with each passing second, like an unspoken wall. He didn't look back or slow down, almost as if he was purposely keeping the space between them. The tension was thick, and with every step, Y/N could feel her patience slipping away. Why wasn't he saying anything? She clenched her jaw, wanting him to get to the point already.

"Captain," she finally called out, her voice cutting through the silence. "What did you want to discuss?"

He stopped abruptly, the suddenness of it surprising her. Still facing away, he stood like a statue, shoulders tense. "Listen," he started, then paused, as if he hadn't actually planned what to say next. After a brief, awkward moment, he improvised, "You need to go over the formation again. It's important you study it closely," he replied, his tone flat and devoid of warmth.

Y/N's annoyance spiked, and she clenched her fists in irritation. "Seriously?" she snapped. "You dragged me away from the group just to tell me that?"

For a moment, there was only silence. Levi remained turned away, knowing that it was a stupid reason to call her out. He wasn't even sure why he had felt the need to pull her aside in the first place, or why he had said what he did. His mind was tangled in a web of emotions, and he wasn't ready to untangle it all right now.

"Don't be ridiculous," he said finally.

Y/N huffed in frustration. "Oh, *I'm* being ridiculous?" She stepped closer, her heart pounding with irritation. "Of course I know how the formation works. You were there when Commander Erwin and I planned it! Or have you forgotten that already?"

Levi turned to face her, his expression unyielding. "That doesn't mean you grasp everything. We can't afford mistakes. I hope you understand that," he replied.

"Understand what?" Y/N shot back, her voice rising. "That you think I'm not capable of handling this? I know what I'm doing, *Captain*. Just because you want to put me down all the time doesn't mean I'm going to let you."

His hands balled into fists at his sides, muscles tensing with every word she threw at him. He didn't turn around, but she could sense the growing frustration emanating from him like a storm on the verge of breaking.

"That's not what this is about," he said.

"Oh really, *Captain*? Then enlighten me." Her tone was laced with sarcasm now, biting, as she purposely emphasized the word 'Captain.' "Please, tell me what it's about, *Captain*."

Levi stiffened at the mock formality, his brow furrowing in irritation. It wasn't the title itself that bothered him, but the fact that she had started calling him by his name before all this. He had gotten used to it, even preferred it. Not that he'd ever admit that. Now, hearing 'Captain' again, especially in her sharp, petty tone, felt like a step back.

"Stop the 'Captain' bullshit," Levi spat, turning around sharply. His eyes locked onto hers, his patience fraying. "We both know we're over those formalities."

Y/N raised an eyebrow, crossing her arms as she let out a humorless laugh. "Oh, are we now? It was you, *Captain*, who made it clear we weren't friends. I'm just doing what you told me." Her words dripped with bitterness as she leaned into the formality even harder, her eyes locked on him with a mixture of anger and defiance.

Levi's jaw clenched, his eyes narrowing in frustration. "You're being immature as hell, you know that?."

Y/N's anger flared even more at his words. "Really? Immature?" she said, her voice rising. "I'm not the one who drags someone away from the group to make up some lame excuse just because I can't handle having a normal conversation!"

Levi had no immediate comeback, his silence louder than any argument. He stood frozen in place, staring directly into her eyes, unable to deny the truth in her words. His mind scrambled for an answer, but none came.

Seeing him falter for the first time in this entire exchange, Y/N felt a brief surge of satisfaction, but it was hardly enough to quell her anger. The irritation simmered just below the surface, refusing to be brushed aside. But before she could push further, Levi cut her off, barely hiding the frustration behind it.

"Just focus on the expedition, alright?" he said, looking to the side.

Y/N stared at him, her heart still racing, but she couldn't shake the feeling that there was more Levi wasn't saying.

She paused, irritation bubbling beneath the surface as she bit her lower lip and glanced around, trying to reign in her temper. "Is that really your advice right now?"

Her tone cut through the air, sharper than the cold draft blowing through the corridor. Levi stood there, unmoving, his silence only making the tension between them worse.

"You haven't spoken to me in over a week," Y/N continued, her frustration building. "And you think reminding me to focus is going to magically fix everything?"

He turned slightly, his eyes finally glancing her way, though still not fully meeting hers. His face was hard, expression unreadable, and the distance between them felt like an abyss neither knew how to bridge.

"Don't act like a victim here," Levi replied coldly. "You've ignored me just as much as I've avoided you."

Y/N's heart pounded in her chest, a mix of disbelief and anger swirling inside her. "And why do you think that is?" she shot back. "You haven't exactly been the nicest person to me lately, have you?"

Levi's expression hardened further, jaw tightening as he finally turned to face her completely. "I don't owe you anything," he said flatly. "If you can't even handle a little pressure, then maybe you're not cut out for this."

The words hit Y/N like a slap, her breath catching for a second. She wanted to yell, to say something biting in return, but Levi's words sank in deeper than she expected.

He stood there, cold and distant, the wall between them seemingly impenetrable. Her chest was heavy with frustration, her fists clenched at her sides as she glared at him, feeling the heat of anger flood her cheeks.

Finally, the tension snapped. Y/N stepped forward, her eyes blazing like twin flames. "You think this is just about pressure?" Her voice shook with emotion. "You treat me nicely one moment and then act like I'm useless the next. You've been a complete jerk to me, and I'm tired of it!"

"Watch your tone," Levi said, his eyes narrowing as his voice turned low. Despite the threat in his tone, she stood her ground, refusing to back down.

Y/N took another step closer, invading his personal space, her glare unyielding. "Or what?" she challenged, leaning in slightly, her voice dropping to a daring whisper. "You'll push me off a wall again so Titans can feed on me?"

Levi's eyes narrowed, cold and piercing, locking onto hers with an intensity that sent a jolt through her. For a moment, the air crackled with tension, the world around them fading away. His heart thundered in his chest, each beat echoing in his ears like a war drum, urging him to confront the feelings swirling within him.

But he didn't respond; his eyes remained unwavering, a tempest of emotions roiling beneath the surface. He felt vulnerable standing there, torn between the walls he had built around himself and the undeniable connection pulling him towards her.

Y/N stared back at him, her breath hitching in her throat as she sensed the conflict beneath his stoic facade. When he didn't answer, the silence felt heavy, suffocating. Her frustration boiled over again, and she took a deep breath, deciding enough was enough.

"I'm over this," she murmured, turning on her heel, ready to walk away from the mess he had created. But just as she started to leave, Levi instinctively reached out, grabbing her by the upper arm with a grip that was both firm and harsh.

"We're not done here," he snapped.

Y/N's eyes widened in shock as she glanced down at his tight hold on her arm, the pressure slightly hurtful. It was as if he was trying to anchor her in place, but it only made her feel

more trapped. She looked up at him, a flicker of fear in her eyes as she took in the strength behind his grip. “What are you doing? Let go of me!”

Levi’s expression softened for a fraction of a second, the realization of what he was doing dawning on him. The flicker of whatever had stirred within him vanished as his attention snapped to his hand, suddenly conscious of how firm his hold had become. He loosened his hold, allowing her to yank her arm out of his grasp, the air between them charged with unspoken words and unresolved tension.

Y/N took a step back, still seething with anger as she turned away from him, her heart racing.

Levi sharply exhaled, the sound escaping his lips like a wounded sigh. He stood there, fists clenched at his sides, struggling to process the chaos of emotions swirling within him. He felt like he was losing control of everything once again. His feelings, his intentions, his composure... All because of her.

He watched her walk away, each step a painful reminder of the distance between them, and a sense of frustration settled deep in his chest. Why couldn’t he just say what he needed to say? He clenched his fists tighter, the nails digging into his palms.

“Damn it,” he muttered under his breath, feeling the weight of the unresolved tension settle heavily on his shoulders.

...

The mess hall was filled with laughter and chatter from the new Scouts. Y/N sat at a long table, attempting to blend into the lively atmosphere just like everyone else was. Yet, the weight of her recent confrontation with Levi pressed heavily on her shoulders, making it hard to join the chatter around her.

Armin, seated beside her, sensed the tension radiating from Y/N. His brow furrowed with concern as he leaned slightly closer. “Y/N...” He studied her intently, his voice softening. “Did something happen with the Captain? You seem... off.”

She hesitated, caught between the urge to confide in him and the instinct to guard her emotions. “No, it’s not that,” she replied, forcing a carefree smile that felt more like a mask. “He just wanted to make sure everything was ready for the expedition.” The smile flickered between genuine and strained.

“Oh, okay.” Armin nodded, but his eyes remained fixed on her. “You know, the expedition... it seems pretty short this time...”

Y/N finally lifted her eyes from the drink she held. “Yeah, I noticed that too,” she replied, her expression turning serious as her mind drifted back to the hushed conversations she had overheard. “But I can’t shake the feeling that this expedition is more than just preparing for Shiganshina. There’s something else going on.”

Armin tilted his head. “Yeah, I thought so too. What do you think it could be?”

Y/N took a sip of her drink, letting the warmth wash over her, if only for a moment. “I’m not sure,” she admitted, frustration bubbling beneath the surface as she grappled with the uncertainty. “It just feels like there’s a hidden goal behind all of this.”

Armin studied her thoughtfully, noting the tension in her posture and the way her eyes narrowed in thought. “What are you thinking of doing about it?”

She sighed, setting her drink down. “I can’t do anything about it. It’s just a speculation, after all.”

A pause hung in the air before she suddenly blurted out, “I’m going to visit my parents before the expedition.” The admission surprised even her, the weight of the decision pressing down on her chest like a heavy stone. Despite the anxiety it stirred, she felt a flicker of determination. Perhaps it was time to reconnect, to face the unresolved tension that lingered.

“Really?” Armin asked surprised. “That’s a big step. Are you sure it’s a good idea?” Armin added, his brow furrowing. “From what you’ve told me, they don’t sound like the nicest people.”

“I don’t know...” Y/N confessed, biting her lip as she wrestled with the mix of emotions swirling within her. “But I think it’s important. I need to see them before everything changes again. We don’t know how many of us will make it back.” The gravity of her words hung in the air, and she felt a shiver of vulnerability creep in, her heart racing at the thought of the uncertain future ahead.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think of this chapter :)

I hope you enjoyed it!



Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much for all the hits, kudos, and comments. They honestly make me so happy, I feel like kicking my feet in excitement when I read them! ❤️

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Rain poured down, the cold seeping through Y/N's clothes as she banged on the heavy, ornate door of the house that was supposed to be her home. Her fists, red from the constant pounding, trembled as she knocked again and again.

"Please! I'm so sorry!"

Her voice broke on the last word, her throat tightening as tears mixed with the rain. The sound of her cries echoed through the empty streets, but the door remained closed, a wall of silence between her and the family that had once been hers.

Taking a few steps back, Y/N slowly covered her mouth with her trembling hands as the realization hit. They weren't coming. They weren't going to open the door. Her chest heaved, a sob threatening to break free. With a hesitant glance upward, her eyes landed on someone watching her from the distance.

Her mother stood by the window, framed by the lace curtains. Her eyes, cold and unfeeling, met Y/N's. For a moment, Y/N's breath caught in her chest as she held her mother's eyes, hoping for any flicker of warmth, of love. Anything at all. But all she saw was disappointment. Disgust. And then, as if Y/N were no more than a stranger, her mother calmly reached for the curtain and pulled it shut, blocking her out completely.

Y/N crumpled to the ground, the rain mingling with her tears, her hands clutching at her chest as if trying to hold herself together, even as everything inside her shattered.

...

Y/N stood in front of the same door, her breath unsteady. The tall, elegant building towered over her. She swallowed hard, the memory of that rainy night lingering like a bitter taste in her mouth.

Her hand hovered over the large, polished door, an entrance that had been closed to her both physically and emotionally. Now, over two years later, she stood there with a tremor in her fingers, hoping that maybe, after finally graduating, they would accept her somehow.

She knew Anna visited their parents every time she went on an expedition, just in case anything happened. She even wondered if Anna was already with them.

With a steadying breath, Y/N knocked.

Y/N had promised herself she would confront them. And with the expedition coming up tomorrow and the uncertainty of survival, she needed closure, even if it came at a cost.

After a few long, agonizing seconds, the door creaked open, revealing an older man with kind eyes and graying hair. His brow furrowed as he recognized her. "Lady Y/N?" His voice was gentle but tinged with surprise, his grip tightening around the door handle nervously. This was Albert, the family's butler, a man who had been a constant in her childhood, always kind and patient with her and Anna.

"Albert. I'm so glad to see you" Y/N smiled softly. "Are my parents home?"

Albert hesitated, glancing over his shoulder before looking back at her, uncertainty written all over his features. "Well... I'm sorry Miss Y/N but I have clear orders from Mr. and Mrs. Kaiser not to let you in," he said apologetic.

Y/N's heart sank, but she wasn't ready to give up. Not this time. "Please, Albert. I need to speak to them. It's important," she pleaded, her eyes searching his, hoping to find some crack in the loyalty that had kept him bound to her parents for so many years.

He hesitated for another moment, glancing back again. "Alright," he finally said, stepping aside and opening the door wider for her. "But be careful."

She nodded, stepping into the familiar foyer. The moment she crossed the threshold, a wave of nostalgia and dread washed over her. The marble floors gleamed beneath her feet, the grand staircase curving up to the second floor, and the faint smell of perfume that had always clung to her mother's presence.

Albert led her down the hall, the sound of their footsteps muffled by the thick, ornate carpets. As they approached the living room, she heard a woman's voice. "Albert, who was that at the door?"

Y/N's stomach twisted into knots. Her mother.

A second later, Giselle Kaiser stepped out from the living room, her sharp, elegant features framed by her perfectly styled updo. She had ashy blonde hair, wore a dress of rich silk, embroidered with gold that shimmered in the light, a garment that seemed to scream wealth and status. Everything about her was polished.

Y/N looked at her, the admiration she had once held for her mother creeping up, despite everything. Anna had inherited their mother's beauty. Graceful, refined, and perfect in every way.

Giselle's eyes landed on Y/N, and for a fleeting second, they widened in surprise. But that was quickly replaced with anger. "What is she doing here?" She turned to Albert, fury blazing in her eyes. "I gave you clear instructions to never let her into this house again."

"Lady Y/N said there was something important she needed to speak to you about," Albert tried to explain, but Giselle was already marching toward Y/N, her hand grabbing her daughter's arm with a grip so tight it made Y/N wince. Albert bowed slightly before exiting the area.

"Mom, please," Y/N gasped, struggling to stay calm, "just let me talk—"

"I have nothing to talk to you about," Giselle spat, her fingers digging into Y/N's arm as she began to pull her toward the door. "You've embarrassed this family enough."

Y/N's heart pounded in her chest, her mind racing for something, anything, that would make her mother listen. "Mom, I graduated. From the Training Corps," she blurted, her voice trembling. "I joined the Scouts."

Giselle stopped, her hand still tight on Y/N's arm, but her expression was far from impressed. She looked at her daughter with cold eyes, her lips curling in disdain. "And what does that change?" she asked, her voice dripping with sarcasm. "You think graduating suddenly makes you part of this family again?"

Before Y/N could respond, another voice cut through the tension.

"Mother, stop."

Anna stepped out from the sitting room, her face impassive but her tone firm. "Let her speak."

Giselle turned to her with narrowed eyes. "This doesn't concern you, Annalise."

"It does if you're going to make another scene and have the neighbors talking," Anna said. "Better to let her say what she needs to say than risk more embarrassment for the family, don't you think?"

Y/N's chest tightened at her sister's words. There was no warmth in Anna's tone, no sense of sibling loyalty, just a calculated desire to avoid scandal. But it worked. After a long, tense moment, Giselle released her grip on Y/N's arm, her nails having left marks on her skin.

"Fine," Giselle said coldly, casting one last withering glance at her daughter before turning back toward the sitting room. "But don't waste my time."

Y/N steadied her breathing, her heart still racing as she followed her mother and sister into the living room.

The space was immaculate, as it always had been. Once, she had thought nothing of the expensive furniture and the glittering chandeliers, but after everything she had been through, it all felt like an illusion. The room was a lavish display of wealth, with velvet armchairs, crystal chandeliers, and fine porcelain set on the table where the father sat, silently sipping his tea.

Frank Kaiser was a tall man with dark blonde hair that was beginning to show signs of graying, along with a well-groomed beard that added to his distinguished appearance.

He barely glanced up as she entered, his focus solely on the cup in his hand. Y/N took a seat on the couch beside Anna, her hands trembling as she clasped them in her lap while her mother sat down next to her father.

Y/N looked at her father. "Dad... it's been a long time."

He didn't respond, didn't even look at her. His eyes remained fixed on the tea in his hand, his face a mask of indifference. A familiar sight, as her dad had never really been attentive toward her at all.

Her heart sank, but she tried to keep her voice steady, though nervousness made it come out louder than she intended. "I'm... I'm happy to be here. I thought it was important to come before—"

Her mother squinted, irritated, raising a hand to silence her. "Calm down. You're in the Inner District, not some... filthy place like Trost or wherever you've been wandering for the past years." She waved a hand dismissively, as though even mentioning those places dirtied the air.

Giselle's eyes softened as she looked up at Anna. "Oh, Annalise," she said, a warmth coating her words that felt foreign to Y/N. "Even though you're surrounded by those of lower classes, you still manage to remain as graceful and classy as ever."

Anna offered no response, her face a mask of indifference, but the subtle tension in her jaw betrayed her discomfort. Y/N's heart sank further as she observed the love and pride shining in their mother's eyes toward her sister. Their father looked at Anna with similar warmth, his eyes sparkling with affection. It was a huge contrast to the icy detachment directed at her.

"Isn't that right, Y/N?" Giselle's voice sliced through the silence with a mocking tone. "You've never quite managed to mirror your sister's elegance, have you?" She leaned back, a cold smile playing on her lips as she eyed Y/N with disdain.

Her father finally spoke, his voice cold. "It's unbelievable how quickly some people forget their manners and class when they mix with commoners," he said, his eyes narrowing slightly as he glanced at Y/N for the first time. "But I suppose it's to be expected, given your... circumstances."

Y/N felt a knot tighten in her throat.

"Y/N," Frank cut through her thoughts, "don't get used to any of this. As soon as we're done here, you'll leave." He leaned forward slightly, as if to make his point unmistakable, the tension in the air thickening. "And remember, don't mention our family name at all. Did I make myself clear?"

Y/N hesitated, swallowed hard, and managed to stutter, "Y-yes, sir."

"Good," Frank said, dismissing her as if she were nothing more than an inconvenience. He leaned back again, casually focusing on his drink. Then, without looking up, he continued,

“So you say you graduated, right? How did that happen? As far as I know, you’re not allowed to rejoin after failing.”

Y/N opened her mouth, searching for the right words to defend herself, but they slipped away, leaving her grasping for something solid in the doubt.

“Actually...” she started, “I didn’t just rejoin. I... I developed a plan for a new formation, and it caught Commander Erwin’s attention.” Desperation pushed her words out, and the pride she felt seemed weak under her parents' stares.

“Formation...” Giselle repeated, unimpressed. “And that was enough to earn you a place among the Scouts? Are you serious?” Her mother leaned forward, her eyes narrowing with disdain. “I can’t believe they’re letting anyone off the streets join them now,” her mother scoffed. “Back when your father and I were in the military, it was a lot stricter. Real standards.”

Y/N clung to the armrest of the couch, her fingers digging into the plush fabric, grounding herself against the wave of criticism. “No, Mom, it was a well-thought-out strategy. Me and the Commander spent an entire night perfecting it.”

Giselle’s laughter cut through the room like a serrated knife, cruel and mocking. “The Scouts must be desperate if they’re recruiting people like you now. How long do you think you’ll last before they realize you’re holding them back? Commander Erwin must be scraping the bottom of the barrel if he saw any potential in you.”

Frank raised an eyebrow, disappointment etched on his face as he pinched the bridge of his nose in stress. “Desperate indeed. I’d like to see you survive a single expedition. You will just be a liability for them.”

“I’m not a liability,” she managed to say, but it came out weak, barely a breath. “I fought hard to get where I am.”

“Oh, sweetheart,” Giselle said with fake sympathy. “They might have let you in, but that doesn’t mean you’re capable of contributing anything worthwhile.”

Y/N’s throat tightened, her resolve wavering as her mother’s words sank deeper.

“Were you at least in the top ten of your class?” her father asked, his tone tinged with disappointment. “I can already sense that you weren’t.”

Y/N opened her mouth, wanting to explain herself but hesitating, realizing it probably wouldn’t matter to them. “I— Um...No.”

Frank sighed heavily, leaning back in his chair and refusing to look at her directly, as if her presence bothered him.

“I’m not surprised,” her mother sighed, shaking her head. “Well, I guess that doesn’t really matter. A position in the Scouts is probably far too good for someone like you anyway. So I

suppose we should be proud of your mediocre accomplishment. Well done, I guess” The insult hung in the air. A backhanded compliment that stung more than any outright criticism.

Y/N felt a knot tighten in her stomach, her heart sinking further at her mother’s words. ‘*That’s it?*’ she thought.

She’d joined the Scouts partly to prove to herself that she could overcome the odds, but she would be lying if she said it wasn’t mostly to earn her parent’s recognition. Deep down, she held onto the foolish hope that her achievements could finally close the gap between them, that they might even see her with a hint of pride. But now she regretted coming. It was a mistake to think that her mere accomplishment would be enough to make them proud.

She looked down at her hands, feeling a wave of disappointment wash over her. She was still the same girl who had left home, still unworthy in their eyes. It seemed that no matter how hard she tried, she would never be enough.

Anna glanced towards her sister, a brief look of sympathy crossing her face before she quickly hid it. Although she didn’t say anything, the slight tightening of her lips showed she cared about her sister, even if she couldn’t bring herself to speak up.

“I suppose we should be grateful you’re doing something worthwhile, even if it wasn’t the path we had in mind. But I understand it wasn’t an option for you.”

The emphasis on *wasn’t an option* is light, but Y/N couldn’t help but feel the weight of it. She forced a tight smile, trying to keep her emotions in check. “I’m... doing the best I can.”

Her mother gives a small, dismissive nod. “I’m sure you are, dear. But let’s be honest, the Scouts? It’s only the top ten who get to join the Military Police who truly matter.”

Frank grunted irritated. “Don’t even mention those Military Police. They get the privilege to move to the inner districts and then act like they own the place. It’s infuriating how they think they belong here.”

His mother scoffed, sharing his disdain. “They don’t deserve it, really. But I guess not everyone is lucky enough to have been born in the inner district like our family.”

Y/N glanced at Anna, hoping she might say something. She knew her sister didn’t share the same views as their parents, but Anna remained quiet, her face troubled, focused on her cup.

“I’m still so disappointed that Annalise didn’t join the Military Police,” her mother said frustrated. “First in her class, and yet she chose to sign up for the Scouts behind our backs.”

Her mother sighed before continuing, “Honestly, you had way too much potential to join the Scouts. I mean, it’s nice to see you in the Special Operations Squad, so I guess we’re proud of you,” she said, her tone laced with condescension. “But with your skills, you should be doing so much better.”

Anna shifted slightly in her seat, but refused to look up from her cup. “We’ve talked about this many times already,” she said quietly, a hint of weariness in her voice. She clearly didn’t

want to revisit the topic again.

Her mother rolled her eyes but, after a moment, decided to drop it, shifting her attention back to Y/N.

An awkward silence lingered for a moment before her mother's eyes narrowed with a touch of curiosity. "Y/N, what about your personal life? Is there anyone special we should know about?"

"I *had*... someone in mind I guess but..." Y/N's said, her fingers tightening in her lap "...not anymore."

Anna shot a quick glance at Y/N, her brows furrowing slightly knowing exactly who Y/N was talking about.

Her mother sighed, a look of exasperation crossing her face. "Honestly, I'm not surprised. With how skinny you've gotten, it's no wonder no one's interested." She leaned back slightly, her tone shifting to one of condescension. "If you really want to find someone, you should put in a bit more effort. You know, pretend like you actually care. In your case, any man would do at this point, honestly."

Y/N forced a shaky breath. "I—I'm not really focused on that right now." She glanced at her mother, who wore a look of faint surprise mixed with disappointment, as if she had expected nothing less.

Y/N sat quietly as her father cleared his throat and shifted the conversation towards Anna. "So, Annalise," he began, "have you met anyone of interest lately?"

Anna blinked, her annoyance evident as she rolled her eyes, clearly weary of the topic. Before she could respond, their mother interjected. "Oh, that's another topic entirely," she said with a soft laugh. Her eyes fell on Anna, and the humor in her voice faded into something more serious. "You're getting older, dear. It's about time you started thinking about children, marriage, and continuing the family."

Y/N's heart skipped a beat at the implication. Anna? Married? Kids? She felt like it was *way* too soon for that, too early for her sister to even think about such things.

"You should marry someone who's at least in a high position. What about that Captain of yours?" Giselle said in a teasing tone.

Y/N flinched. Were they talking about Levi?

The tension in the air thickened as Anna visibly tensed. Their mother's voice took on an almost sweet tone, as if she had been giving the same advice for years. "I've told you many times, you should get with that man. With your looks, Annalise, you could get anyone you want. Why not try with Captain Levi? He's risen through the ranks so quickly. It would be a perfect match."

Y/N's heart raced as her mind whirled. Levi? Was this who Anna liked? Her eyes darted between her mother and Anna, confusion and curiosity bubbling up inside her. Why had Anna never mentioned this? Did she really like Levi?

Anna gently placed her cup down on the table. There was a shift in her expression, a seriousness that Y/N rarely saw. "Please, drop it already," Anna said firmly. "I've told you countless times, I'm not interested in him,"

Their parents exchanged a disappointed glance, and her father sighed. "Well then, find someone else. What about Commander Erwin? He's quite the man of status."

Anna narrowed her eyes and shook her head. "I seriously doubt he'd be interested in me."

The disappointment in their parents' expressions deepened, frustration now etched in the lines of their faces. "Then find someone yourself," their mother insisted, a look of disdain crossing her face. "But make sure it's someone at your level. Not like that—," she grimaced, clearly bothered by the thought, "that one boy you met during training."

At the mention of this mysterious boy, Y/N noticed Anna's body visibly tense, her shoulders stiffening as her eyes widened in shock. The reaction was immediate, a sign that this conversation had struck too close to something personal, something she wasn't ready for.

"Mom," Anna said, her voice low and tight with barely concealed tension. "Please, I don't want to talk about this right now."

Their mother raised an eyebrow. "About what...? Oh, you mean that boy... what was his name again?"

Anna's hand shook slightly as she clenched her cup. "Mom," she repeated. "I said, not now."

But her mother didn't relent. "Leo! Leo was his name, wasn't it?"

At the sound of the name, Anna froze completely. Her face drained of color as her eyes locked on the table in front of her, as though it had suddenly become the most important thing in the world.

Y/N's mind raced. Who was Leo? She had never heard of him before. She watched her sister closely, trying to piece together the puzzle.

"Who's Leo?" she finally asked.

Her mother chuckled. "Oh, he was just this one boy Anna was in love with during her cadet days. They were young and foolish—Thought they could conquer the world together," the mother said with a hint of sarcasm as she rolled her eyes.

Y/N's heart pounded in her chest. She leaned in, desperate to hear more, to understand the hidden history. "What happened?"

"Well, they fell in love, but Anna was always stronger, top of her class," their mother continued, her tone shifting to a dismissive edge. "Leo, however, didn't even make it to the

top ten. So joining the Military Police wasn't an option for him. So when the time came, and Anna realized she couldn't bear to be separated from him, she followed him and chose to join the Scouts behind our backs. Can you believe that? It sparked a huge argument!"

Y/N could see the tension radiating off Anna. She was trapped in her own memories.

'I love you, Anna. I want to spend the rest of our lives together.'

'I promise you, we'll get married once we come back from the expedition.'

That day was burned into Anna's memory, a secret they had kept hidden from everyone. No one knew about their engagement, their plan to marry in secret, away from their parents' disapproving eyes. She could still remember the way Leo had smiled at her, the excitement in his eyes when he slid the ring onto her finger. It was a moment filled with joy and hope. But now, it felt like a cruel reminder of everything she had lost.

As Anna stood frozen in that painful memory, the happiness of that day twisted into sorrow. But just as the weight of grief threatened to pull her under, their mother's voice cut through the haze.

"And then, of course, he died during their first expedition." The words dripped with a toxic satisfaction.

Y/N's attention shifted to Anna as she tightly grabbed her left jacket pocket, her fingers trembling slightly. At that moment, it hit her. It was the pocket where Anna had kept the ring. That ring wasn't just jewelry. It had represented a promise.

"Anna..." Y/N began, but the word hung heavy in the air, caught between their mother's harsh comments and Anna's suffocating silence.

The room felt small and stifling as Y/N tried to process everything. She wanted to reach out and comfort Anna, but the space between them felt too big.

"Honestly, I'm glad he's gone. I never wanted your sister with someone like him anyway. He was the only reason she chose the Scouts over the Military Police. Can you imagine the shame of that?" Giselle chuckled. It was clear she didn't care about her daughters' feelings as she spoke.

Y/N's stomach twisted at her mother's words. She felt a mix of anger and sadness bubbling up inside her, but she quickly swallowed it down. How could she say something so cruel?

Recognizing that Anna was in no position to stand up to their mother, Y/N decided to speak up. "Mom...please, stop," Y/N said, her voice shaking slightly but firm. "Can we please not talk about this right now?"

Their mother shrugged, a smirk playing on her lips. "Yeah, you're right. It's a waste of time remembering him anyway. He was just a source of conflict between your sister and us. Better to forget someone like him." She leaned back, her tone dripping with disdain. "He was nothing but trouble. That's all he ever was."

Anna's fingers trembled. Her face was pale, twisted in a mask of anguish that made her seem almost unrecognizable. Her eyes remained fixed on the table, avoiding the contemptuous stare of their parents.

She stood up slowly, her movements deliberate as if she were gathering the last remnants of her strength. "I need to go," she said, her voice surprisingly steady despite the turmoil inside her. "I have to prepare for the expedition tomorrow, and it's getting late." With that, she turned and walked out of the room.

Y/N watched Anna leave, her heart heavy with a mixture of concern and helplessness. She shifted her attention to her parents, who wore expressions of indifference, as if the tension in the air meant nothing to them. Stuttering slightly, she said, "I—I have to go too." Standing up, she quickly made her way out of the room, eager to escape the stifling atmosphere and the judgment of her parents.

As she stepped out of the room and made her way to the foyer, she spotted Anna putting on her cloak. Their parents followed closely behind, their footsteps echoing in the silence. Anna turned around to face them, and her parents stepped forward, their demeanor shifting to one of concern.

"Be careful on the expedition tomorrow," the mother said, leaning in to place a gentle kiss on Anna's forehead. There was a warmth in that gesture that Y/N found herself envying.

As Anna nodded and stepped out of the house, Y/N lingered, uncertain. She made her way toward the exit, fully expecting to be met with indifference. Her parents' judging stares confirmed her fears.

"Thank you for today..." she mumbled awkwardly, trying to make her exit as smooth as possible. But before she could step out the door, her mother reached out an arm to stop her.

"Hold on, young lady," she said. Y/N looked up, surprised, meeting the disapproving looks of both her parents. "You better not hold your sister back, you hear? She has a bright future ahead of her, and I won't have you dragging her down. Are we clear?"

Y/N swallowed hard, the words settling heavily in her stomach. "Yes... I understand," she said.

"Good," her mother called after her, her tone dismissive. "Now go."

With that, Y/N stepped out of the house, the door clicking shut behind her.

As she walked away from the house, disappointment settled heavily on her shoulders. This entire conversation had been nothing like what she had anticipated. But then again, she didn't know what she had expected. Warmth? Understanding? Support? Now that she thought about it, it all felt like a bad joke. She had been too naive to believe that her parents could offer her any of those things.

She had braced herself to feel overwhelmed like she usually did after such encounters, but if anything, all the disappointment she felt had been expected. The bitterness clung to her like a

second skin, making her heart feel heavy. Maybe it was easier to accept the harsh reality than to hope for something more, something she had longed for but never found in her parents' words.

Her thoughts spiraled until she lifted her head and saw Anna walking away, making Y/N quicken her pace.

"Anna, wait," Y/N called. Anna didn't slow down, but Y/N wasn't going to give up that easily. She finally caught up, walking beside her sister in silence for a few moments, trying to gather her thoughts.

"I— I know I'll never fully understand what you've been through," Y/N said softly, her eyes catching the tension in Anna's rigid stance, fists clenched tightly at her sides. "I've never lost someone the way you lost him... But I need you to know. Whatever you need, I'm here for you."

Anna scoffed, her expression unchanging as she kept her eyes fixed ahead. "I don't *need* you to be there for me, Y/N."

Y/N's heart sank, but she pressed on, knowing her sister well enough to sense that the walls she was putting up were paper-thin. "I get it if you don't want to talk right now," Y/N continued. "But I know what Mom said back there was awful. And I know... I know he meant a lot more to you than you let anyone see."

That made Anna flinch, the sudden tension in her shoulders betraying her.

Y/N swallowed hard and pressed on, her voice softer now. "I know you're strong enough to handle it. But... I saw the ring, and I figured... you were going to marry him, right?" She paused, choosing her words cautiously. "That's a lot to go through. But you don't have to go through all of this alone."

Anna stopped dead in her tracks. When she turned, her eyes were blazing with a fury Y/N hadn't seen before.

"You figured?" Anna's voice trembled, but not with sadness. "You *figured* I was going to marry him?" She glared at her. "What the hell do you know?"

"I just—" Y/N faltered, trying to keep calm. "I'm sorry. I wasn't trying to—"

"Trying to what? Pity me? Feel sorry for poor, sad Anna because she lost the man she loved? You don't know the last thing about me!" Anna's voice rose, each word sharper than the last.

Y/N took a step back, stunned by the sudden intensity of her sister's reaction. "That's not it at all," she said quickly, shaking her head. "I'm not pitying you, Anna. I care about you. A lot"

At that, Anna's expression darkened even more. She took a step closer. "You care? Oh, how noble of you. But let me tell you something. If anyone needs pity here, it's you," she said while painfully jabbing her finger into Y/N's chest as she pointed at her.

Y/N's breath caught in her throat, completely taken aback. "Why would you say something like that?"

Anna scoffed, her voice rising. "Oh, don't play dumb. You've always been nothing, Y/N. You really think you belong here?"

Y/N blinked, trying to find words, but nothing came out.

Anna's eyes narrowed, her tone turning even harsher. "You think I'm the disappointment? That they were mad at me because I joined the Scouts behind their backs? At least they *wanted* me."

Y/N's eyes widened in shock, her breath catching in her throat.

"Yeah, that's right. They never wanted you." Anna's laugh was cold, her words cutting deep. "They can't even stand to look at you."

Y/N's mind raced to make sense of Anna's words. She had always sensed the resentment from their parents, that nagging feeling lurking in the back of her mind. But hearing Anna voice it so plainly felt like a slap in the face.

"You're lying..." Y/N whispered, her voice barely audible as her heart sank. Deep down, though, she knew Anna wasn't lying. The fear of this truth had haunted her for years.

Anna scoffed, her eyes flashing with anger. "Lying? You really think I'm lying?" She took a step closer. "God, you're so stupid. Have you *seriously* never wondered why they've treated you like that? Like you're some unwanted guest in your own home?"

Anna let out a bitter laugh. "Are you really that blind? Or are you just pretending? You've always known, haven't you?" Her words were harsh, spit out like venom. "Why do you think they never cared about you? Never even tried? And you just sat there, taking it, hoping one day they'd act like you matter. But guess what? They don't."

"You're not part of this family, Y/N. You never were. Why do you think Mom's always looked at you like that? She's not your real mother."

Y/N's stomach churned with dread, but she couldn't respond. She couldn't even breathe. "What are you saying?"

"Our father. He got drunk, slept with some woman, and nine months later, there you were. Dumped on our doorstep like some unwanted stray."

Y/N's entire world stopped. She felt the blood drain from her face. "What?"

"And you know what's worse?" She said. "She didn't want you. That woman. She didn't give a damn about you. And neither did they. They only kept you because they didn't want people to talk. You've always been the mistake."

Y/N felt a wave of nausea hit her, her body going cold, and numb. "You're just saying all of this to hurt me," her voice shook, desperation creeping in as she tried to convince herself it

wasn't real.

Anna let out a harsh scoff, her eyes flashing with anger. "Oh, trust me, I couldn't make this up if I tried. You've been living in some fairytale, thinking you belonged here. But you were just some kid that woman wanted to get rid of."

"Anna... stop," Y/N whispered.

Anna's face twisted with frustration and bitterness. "You know what? I'm tired of pretending. I *hate* that you've always been there, chasing after me like a shadow. Always trying to prove you're better, trying to take my place."

Y/N felt her knees weak under the weight of Anna's words. "That's not true. I never wanted to replace you..."

Anna cut her off with a cold laugh. "Please... We both know you've spent your whole life trying to be just like me. And I can't stand it."

The final words hit Y/N like a punch to the gut. Anna's cruelty sliced through her defenses, each accusation like a fresh wound. She stood there, frozen in shock.

For a moment, a flicker of regret crossed Anna's face. She knew she had gone too far, that she'd said things she couldn't take back. But instead of backing down, she hardened herself, swallowing the guilt. Pride wouldn't let her admit she was wrong. Without another word, Anna turned away, leaving Y/N standing alone, raw and broken.

As Anna stormed off, Y/N felt like she'd lost more than just the argument. She'd lost a part of herself, a part of her family she thought would always be there. The hurt settled in, deep and unshakable, as the weight of Anna's words pressed down on her chest.

Y/N stood frozen, watching as Anna walked away, leaving her behind in cold, suffocating silence. Her body felt numb, and her mind raced, desperately trying to make sense of everything that had just been said.

She tried to smile, but it faltered, trembling on her lips as her breaths came quick and shallow. Everything was crashing down on her. Grabbing her head, she tangled her fingers in her hair, whispering to herself to calm down. The knot in her throat tightened painfully, but her eyes remained dry, refusing to shed a single tear.

Thoughts spiraled in her mind, each one sharper than the last. Everything about her childhood started to make so much sense now. She remembered the whispers from when she was little. The way people would comment on how she didn't look much like her parents or Anna.

There had always been something off in how her parents treated Anna and her. Y/N had seen the way they beamed with pride at Anna's accomplishments, while her own achievements were met with little more than indifference. The glances they exchanged over dinner, the hushed tones when they thought she wasn't listening. Those memories played on repeat in her mind. She had spent countless nights as a kid, lying in bed, staring at the ceiling, wondering why she felt like an outsider in her own home.

Now, with Anna's bitter words echoing in her ears, the truth became impossible to ignore. The knot in her throat grew tighter, a painful reminder of everything she'd spent her life trying to push away. She felt the eyes of strangers on her, their curious stares cutting through her.

Y/N took a deep breath, forcing herself to steady. She had to focus. She still needed to go back to headquarters and find her position for tomorrow's expedition. With one last shaky breath, she mustered a small, fragile smile and started walking. She had no choice but to keep moving forward, even though her heart felt unbearably heavy.

...

The next day, the sun had just risen as the Survey Corps gathered. Each member sat on their horse, waiting for the command that would signal the start of the 57th expedition. The air was thick with anticipation, and nerves buzzed among them. Some scouts shifted anxiously in their saddles, glancing at each other with determination and apprehension. Others stared straight ahead, their faces set in resolve, but the slight tremor in their hands betrayed their adrenaline-fueled anxiety.

Levi sat atop his horse, surrounded by his squad. For a brief moment, he turned back, scanning the faces of his comrades. His eyes somehow landed on Y/N, who sat on her horse, her eyes cast down. She looked more withdrawn than usual, the weight of something heavy clouding her expression. It tugged at something deep within him, but he quickly shook it off, reminding himself that this was no time to dwell on her troubles.

"Everyone, gather in front of the gate!" a voice rang out, cutting through the morning stillness. The scouts shifted, adjusting their positions to face the designated area.

"We've already driven all the Titans away from the area," another soldier informed them. "The gate will open in thirty seconds."

Y/N stared at the ground, her heart pounding in her chest, but not from fear or anxiety as she had expected. The fight with her sister the day before and Anna's harsh revelations had weighed heavily on her, leaving her restless through the night. Now, as the seconds ticked by, a strange indifference settled over her. It was as if a barrier had formed between her and the reality of the situation. The sounds of her comrades preparing for battle felt distant, muted. She didn't feel the surge of adrenaline she'd anticipated, nor the fear that should have gripped her heart.

"It's time."

Y/N's head snapped up, her attention drawn to the man standing at the front. "Humanity will take another step forward."

The gate began to open slowly, unveiling the vast world that lay beyond. Erwin's commanding voice broke through the noise. "Forward!"

With a sudden rush, everyone urged their horses forward, charging after their leader.

Chapter End Notes

I'm excited :D Ok. See ya next week

Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

Since I'm used to writing only romance scenes, having to write ODM scenes or any kind of "action" is always exhausting for me xD
I hope you like it.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The Survey Corps charged forward. Y/N tightened her grip on the reins, her horse matching the pace of the others. Up front, Erwin led with his usual focus, his eyes locked ahead.

Not even a minute later, Y/N caught movement out of the corner of her eye. The Titans were closing in fast. She glanced over and saw the support squads already in action, cutting them down before they could get too close.

Nanaba, her squad leader, called out. "Don't focus on them! Leave it to the support team."

Y/N didn't respond verbally. She shifted her focus back to the front, following her squad leader's orders as the others did.

They rode on, blocking out the chaos around them. As soon as they reached open ground, Erwin's voice cut through the tension, snapping everyone into action. "Switch to long-range scouting formation!"

She rode alongside Armin, Jean, and Reiner, all of whom had been positioned on the formation's right flank.

"Don't chicken out if you see a Titan!" Reiner called out, a smirk pulling at his lips.

Jean scoffed, "That goes for you too."

Armin gave them a worried smile, then looked at Y/N. "Take care, guys."

Y/N nodded in response, a very faint smile tugging at the corners of her lips as she pulled the hood of her cloak over her head. The group scattered, each squad taking their positions.

Y/N stood in line with Christa, following Nanaba's orders. Their squad consisted of six members: Y/N and Christa, who had the least experience, along with three other scouts, two men and one woman, who had much more field experience than them, with Nanaba as their squad leader.

They rode for a few minutes, keeping their formation. Suddenly, red flares shot up from the right side, meaning it was time to act.

“Christa, fire the red flare!” Nanaba called out.

“On it!” Christa replied, raising her weapon and firing the flare into the sky. The bright red smoke exploded above them, followed moments later by other scouts launching their own flares.

Only a few moments later, a green flare shot into the sky, signaling a new direction from Commander Erwin. The formation shifted, moving according to plan. For a while, everything seemed to be progressing smoothly.

This process continued for a bit. The flares kept coming, the formation redirecting as needed. But then, an unsettling quiet settled in. Y/N felt it. An unease creeping through. The silence dragged on longer than it should have, and her worry increased with each passing second.

Just as her worry deepened, a sudden burst of yellow flares appeared, erupting across the sky one after another.

The flares were coming from the right recon. Panic spread through their formation as they turned to see what was happening.

Nanaba hesitated, her eyes scanning the distant flares for a moment too long. She seemed to be weighing her options. Her grip tightened on the reins, her jaw clenched slightly, and for a brief second, Y/N could almost see the internal conflict in her eyes, whether to stick to the plan or act.

Finally, she spoke. "Stay in formation," she ordered, though there was a bit of doubt in her tone. Her attention shifted to one of the more experienced scouts beside her, as if silently seeking his confirmation. He gave a firm nod.

“We’ll go see what happened,” Nanaba continued. She lingered for a moment longer, her eyes narrowing as if considering every possible outcome. She gestured to the man, signaling him to follow her. Then, turning to the other two scouts, she added, “You two, stay behind and keep an eye out for anything unusual.”

They nodded, their faces serious as Nanaba and her companion rode toward the source of the flares.

Y/N felt the tension rising as they continued to ride. She stole another glance at the flares. Had recon suffered too many casualties? What was going on?

Minutes passed, and for a moment, she tried to convince herself everything would be fine, although Nanaba and the other Scout had not yet returned.

Suddenly, the earth beneath them started to tremble. Something seemed to be approaching them, and they all turned to see a Titan sprinting toward them. Was it an abnormal? It was moving fast, way too fast.

“Shit!” the man shouted, his usual calm shattered by the sight of the charging Titan.

The man and the woman exchanged a quick glance. “Christa, Y/N!” the woman called. “Ride ahead! Now! We’ll handle this!”

“You can’t—” Christa started, but Sven cut her off.

“Go!” he shouted, raising his blades as he focused on the approaching Titan. “Let the experienced ones handle this!”

Y/N’s heart raced. They were serious. Dead serious.

She forced herself to turn away, her horse galloping faster as she rode closely behind Christa. The sound of the Titans’ footsteps and the galloping of their teammates faded as the distance between them widened. But despite everything, Y/N stole a glance back.

The two scouts flung themselves into the air, wires from their ODM gear attaching to the Female Titan as they tried to maneuver around her. Their plan was clear: go for the legs, bring her down, and hope to cut her nape.

As the Female Titan continued sprinting, the woman darted around her, her eyes focused on the nape. But then, something unexpected happened. Y/N watched in shock as the Titan instinctively covered her nape with her hand, an action they had never seen from any Titan before.

The man attached himself to her ankle, determined to cut her Achilles tendon and cripple her. Just as he reeled himself toward it, the Titan’s movements changed. In an instant, she jumped into the air.

Y/N’s eyes widened in horror as the man, still attached to the Titan’s ankle, was yanked upward, helpless against the sudden shift in movement.

The Female Titan turned her eyes downward, her intent clear as she aimed directly at the man. With a ruthless stomp, she came down with no mercy, and Y/N felt her stomach drop as she watched him disappear beneath her foot.

“No!” The woman’s voice rang out, panic flooding her tone as she detached from the Female Titan and quickly reattached herself, aiming directly for the nape. Y/N gave in to her instincts and shouted at the woman to stop. It was useless to fight against that Titan, but it was too late.

The Female Titan, unfazed by her attempts, grabbed the wires attached to her body, yanking the woman effortlessly.

Y/N gasped as she watched the woman get flung through the air, slamming hard against the ground. The chaos continued as the Female Titan resumed her sprint, unfazed.

Y/N’s breath caught in her throat, her hands trembling on the reins as she forced her horse to keep running. The overwhelming urge to turn back flooded her mind, but deep down, she knew it was useless. Two experienced scouts had just been taken down by that Titan with ease, and if they could die so quickly, what chance did she have?

She pushed her horse faster, but the Titan was closing in with terrifying speed. There were no trees, no cover to escape to. In this open terrain, using her ODM gear effectively seemed impossible, and the thought of taking down a Titan of this size by herself felt hopeless.

Self-doubt flooded her mind as she struggled to maintain her composure. But she had no choice. The Titan was coming straight for her, and it was already too close. The world seemed to slow down as she felt a shadow loom overhead, her heart sinking as she realized the size of the threat above her.

She looked up, and for a brief, horrifying moment, her eyes met the Titan's massive foot lifting above her. Her hood flew back, and her hair whipped wildly in the wind as she stared in fear, her heart racing in her throat.

The Female Titan seemed to be looking back at her, narrowing her eyes as if assessing the threat. Then, with a terrifying indifference, she returned her eyes upward and purposely stepped beside Y/N's horse. The ground shook beneath the weight of her step, nearly knocking Y/N and her horse off balance.

She watched in stunned silence as the Titan continued running past her, not even bothering to kill her. Y/N's mind raced as she processed what had just happened.

That was not an ordinary Titan. It seemed to possess human intelligence, and that sent chills down her spine.

Her mind spun as she watched the female Titan run, and then it hit her. Y/N urged her horse forward at full speed, riding behind the Female Titan, but it wasn't the Titan she was trying to reach.

"Christa!" she shouted, her eyes locking onto her friend riding just ahead, but she didn't seem to hear her. The Titan was now bearing down on her. "Christa, look out!" Y/N's voice cracked as she screamed with desperation.

Christa turned just in time to see the massive figure approaching. Without a second thought, she shot her ODM hooks into the Titan's shoulder, reeling herself into the air in an attempt to circle around to its nape. Y/N's breath caught in her throat as she watched in disbelief.

"Christa, stop!" Y/N shouted. "It's not an ordinary Titan! It's intelligent!" For a moment, she felt paralyzed, unable to move.

Christa's focus narrowed as she shot her hooks into the Titan's back, swinging closer to the nape.

Out of the corner of her eye, she spotted Y/N, but the rushing wind muffled any shouts of caution. *'If I can just reach the nape,'* she thought.

But then her blood ran cold. The Titan's massive hand shot up to cover its nape again, and panic surged within her as its other hand swung towards her, far too quickly to evade. She braced herself for the crushing impact, her heart pounding in her ears.

Instead of the bone-shattering force she anticipated, something else slammed into her. A weight that knocked the breath from her lungs. Christa gasped in shock as the world flipped upside down, struggling to process what was happening.

She blinked, and suddenly, she was tumbling through the air. The Titan's hand had missed her by mere inches, but Y/N had crashed into her mid-air, throwing both of them out of danger. As they fell, she felt the familiar tug of ODM gear, Y/N had fired her hooks into the ground, managing to slow their fall as she held on to Christa. The wires strained under the pressure as they hit the ground hard, rolling a few times before finally coming to a stop, breathless and shaken.

Both girls groaned as they lay on the ground, their bodies aching from the harsh landing. Y/N turned to Christa, concerned. "Are you alright?" she asked, breathless.

Christa nodded, though both of their eyes widened in fear as they looked up. Y/N froze at the sight before them. The Female Titan loomed above, its eyes fixed on them both, and for a moment, it felt as if time had stopped.

Christa's voice came out as a shaky whisper, breaking the silence. "Y/N... what do we do?"

But Y/N couldn't answer. Her mind raced with questions. It's not attacking. Why isn't it killing us? She held her breath, her body tense, bracing for the inevitable strike.

To her shock, the Titan's attention suddenly shifted away from them, and without further attacks, it turned and continued running, heading towards the center of relay.

"What... what was that?" Christa stammered, still trying to catch her breath. "An abnormal?"

Y/N swallowed hard, her hands trembling as she struggled to process what had just happened. "No," she replied quietly. "That Titan had human intelligence. It wasn't an abnormal."

Christa stared at her in confusion. "What do you mean?"

Y/N's thoughts flashed to Eren, to the Titan form he could control. It's just like him. "It was most likely a human in a Titan's body," she stated, her voice more certain now despite the fear.

Christa's eyes widened in disbelief. "Like Eren?"

Y/N nodded, her eyes following the distant figure of the Titan.

As they lay on the ground, their breaths slowing, relief washed over Y/N and Christa when they spotted their horses returning. Y/N couldn't help but smile, grateful that her horse hadn't fled in fear. Just then, the sound of galloping hooves grew louder, drawing their attention. Y/N and Christa turned to see Nanaba approaching, her expression filled with concern.

"Are you two alright?" Nanaba called out. But before either could respond, her eyes darted past them, scanning the road behind. The absence of their comrades hit her like a blow.

“Where is the rest of the squad?”

Y/N and Christa exchanged troubled glances, their hearts sinking as they looked down. Nanaba’s eyes narrowed as she pieced the situation together, realization hitting her. “So that thing got them as well...”

Y/N looked up, “You saw it too?”

Nanaba nodded. “My comrades, just like the entire right recon, have been wiped out.”

Christa gasped, her eyes wide in fear. “But how? How did that Titan do all of that?”

Nanaba took a deep breath, her expression hardening. “I saw how that Titan acted. It seemed to know exactly what we were trying to do, almost anticipating our moves. It knew how to kill us, how to protect its nape... I barely managed to escape.”

Her words hung in the air, and the three of them stood in silence, letting the harsh reality of their situation sink in. Finally, breaking the silence, Nanaba urged them, “We have to keep moving.”

Y/N’s brow furrowed in confusion. “But how? If the entire right recon has been killed, we can’t continue with the formation properly.”

Nanaba’s face tightened. She knew Y/N was right. Still, she shook off the doubt, focusing on the orders they had to follow. “We can’t stop unless the commander instructs us to,” Nanaba said. “Now, get on your horses. We can’t stay here.”

Y/N and Christa nodded and mounted their horses once more. Just as they were about to set off, Y/N paused, suddenly remembering something important. “Ah, wait! I forgot to shoot up a flare.” With a swift motion, she drew her flare gun and fired into the sky, the smoke signaling the others.

Both girls rode closely behind Nanaba, the weight of the situation heavy on their shoulders.

Nanaba spoke without turning, “Y/N, you must pass the message that the right flank’s recon has been completely wiped out. This is critical.” She shot a glance over her shoulder, locking eyes with her. “Head to the center of the formation. Inform them about the casualties and make sure they understand the threat we’re facing. Be quick.”

Y/N nodded sharply, and without wasting another moment, she kicked her horse into a faster gallop. The image of the female titan burned in her mind. The way it had almost crushed her and Christa. But it wasn’t just a mindless monster. It seemed to be looking for something or someone. Maybe Eren? The thought gnawed at her as she pushed her horse forward.

Finally, after a few minutes, through the blur, she spotted a squad ahead. Narrowing her eyes, she recognized the familiar figures. It was Levi’s squad. She urged her horse forward and quickly rode alongside them. Levi spotted her right away, his expression unreadable.

“What are you doing here?” he asked he asked firmly yet concerned.

“Reporting,” Y/N said, “The entire right flank has been wiped out,” she continued. “The recon system is partially down. It was attacked by a Titan, but this one is different...” She paused, searching for the right words. “It seems like it has human intelligence.”

The squad stared at her, shocked by what she had just informed them.

Levi’s eyes narrowed, the severity of the situation settling in. He nodded sharply before turning to Petra. “Forward the message to the left,” he commanded. Petra didn’t waste a second, redirecting her horse toward the left flank to relay the news.

Y/N barely had time to catch her breath when she spotted her sister, Anna, among the squad. Though Anna didn’t speak, their eyes met, a silent exchange of relief passing between them.

Although she would not admit it out loud, Anna was glad that her sister was still alive.

As Y/N prepared to return to her assigned position, she spoke, “I’ll head back to—”

“No,” Levi’s voice cut her off, “You’re not going back to the right flank. Rejoin a squad from the left relay.”

The entire squad seemed taken aback, exchanging uncertain glances at Levi’s abrupt order.

Y/N blinked, taken aback. “But my squad leader—”

“It’s an order,” Levi said harshly, his tone leaving no room for debate.

He knew he was unfairly favoring her by telling her to reposition on the left, but he didn’t care. He didn’t want her returning to the right flank after the devastation that had unfolded there.

“Understood,” Y/N said quietly, giving a final nod before turning her horse towards the left.

...

After a few minutes of riding, Y/N finally caught sight of a squad from the left relay. Her eyes scanned the group as they rode in formation, and she quickly recognized a familiar face, Bertholdt.

Seizing the opportunity, she steered her horse towards them. As soon as she neared, she called out, informing the squad of what had just happened on the right flank.

The squad leader's eyes widened in shock as he took in the news, his jaw clenching. He turned to one of the men riding beside him. “Pass the message to the left recon. Quickly!”

The scout nodded and quickly turned to share the bad news, leaving Y/N to talk to the rest of the group. “Sir,” she said, “I was instructed to join the left flank.”

The squad leader, still processing what she’d just told them, gave her a brief look before nodding. “Very well,” he said, gesturing for her to join the formation. She fell in line, riding

close to the squad. She kept her eyes forward, her thoughts still whirling, when suddenly she noticed Bertholdt riding closer to her.

“You said it seemed to have human intelligence?” Bertholdt asked quietly, his voice barely audible over the sound of hooves against the ground.

Y/N turned her head to look at him. “Yeah,” she replied. “It knew exactly what it was doing... It covered its nape every time someone tried to attack it.”

Bertholdt’s eyes widened slightly, his expression uncertain. For a brief moment, Y/N couldn't tell what was going through his mind. Was it shock? Fear? Something else entirely?

He quickly composed himself before asking, “So... where was it heading?”

Y/N's brow furrowed at the question, trying to recall. “After it passed my squad, it started moving towards the center of the right relay.”

Bertholdt's head snapped toward her, his expression now one of surprise. “The right flank relay?” he repeated. “Isn't that where Eren is?”

Y/N’s heart skipped a beat. *‘Eren... at the right flank?’* She was taken aback, her mind racing. Eren was located at the rear of the center. But before she could voice her thoughts, another scout who had overheard their conversation joined in. “Eren?” the scout said, frowning. “He’s at the front of the left flank relay, isn’t he?”

Bertholdt's eyes widened again in confusion. “What? No... In the formation map I received, he was placed in the right flank.”

Y/N froze. The maps were all wrong. She almost revealed the truth, the words on the tip of her tongue, but she stopped herself mid-sentence, suddenly unsure of the situation.

‘Wait... why are all the maps different?’ She thought back to the moment before the expedition when Eren himself had told her they’d be positioned in the center. But the map she had received had listed him at the rear of the left flank relay.

Her heart pounded as a realization struck her. *‘Could the commander have done this on purpose?’* The inconsistency in Eren’s location. It was intentional. It meant to keep his real position hidden. But why? What was Erwin planning?

Y/N glanced up, noticing Bertholdt and the other scout staring at her, clearly waiting for her to finish what she had been about to say. She could feel the weight of their eyes on her, the pressure building as they waited for her to say something. She tried to sound as natural as possible. “He... was also listed at the front of the right flank relay in my map.”

Both Bertholdt and the other scout looked at her, taking in the information, confusion still written across their faces. “So... the map I received was wrong?” the scout asked, shaking his head in disbelief.

Y/N was relieved they hadn’t picked up on her suspicion, and she nodded slowly. “It seems so,” she said.

They continued to ride, tension hanging heavy in the air. Y/N's mind kept turning, her thoughts swirling with the implications of the map inconsistencies. But before she could dwell further, a green flare shot up into the sky ahead of them, signaling another redirection of the formation. She narrowed her eyes, confusion settling in once again. They kept heading east, despite their original goal being to head south towards the old city.

Something wasn't right. Y/N could feel it deep in her gut. Something was going on that only the commander knew. And whatever it was, she couldn't shake the feeling that it had something to do with Eren.

She suddenly looked up, realizing they were heading toward a forest of giant trees. She exchanged a glance with Bertholdt, both unsure of why they were moving in this direction.

...

Time dragged on as Y/N and the rest of the left flank stood on the thick branches of the giant trees. Their squad leader had laid out the plan. They were to circle the forest and take their positions among the branches, ready to kill any Titans that dared to enter.

'Stop them at all costs' is what he had commanded. Most of the Titans remained at the base, though clawing at the trunks and trying unsuccessfully to reach them, sparing them the need for direct confrontation.

Y/N forced herself not to look down, her heart pounding in her chest from the height. Instead, she focused her attention ahead, scanning the area for any signs of movement.

Beside her, Ymir broke the silence, glancing at Bertholdt. "Hey. Bertholdt guy. Do you know where Christa is?" she asked, concern tinging her tone.

Bertholdt shook his head, a frown crossing his features. "I don't."

Ymir rolled her eyes in frustration, then turned to Y/N. "How about you? Do you know where Christa is?"

Y/N took a breath, reassuring herself. "She's fine. She was with me on the right flank. She is probably with our squad leader."

Ymir nodded, seemingly satisfied with the answer, but Y/N started to worry. Nanaba would likely be furious upon discovering Y/N had changed positions without informing her. But that concern was just the tip of the iceberg compared to what lay ahead.

Something caught her eye. She squinted, her heart racing as a black flare shot into the distance, near the entrance of the forest.

The air grew thick with tension, the silence wrapping around them. Then everything happened all at once. First, an ear-piercing, high-pitched noise was heard, followed almost immediately by the distant rumble of multiple cannon fires erupting.

'What was happening in there?'

Before she could gather her thoughts, a terrifying, high-pitched scream clawed at her insides, filling her with dread. All around her, fellow scouts froze, wide-eyed, their breaths hitching in their throats as the horrifying sound echoed in the air.

The Titans below, once clawing helplessly at the tree trunks, suddenly shifted. In an instant, they turned and sprinted toward the forest at an unbelievable speed. Their massive bodies charged forward, driven by a primal instinct as if they'd been set free from a cage, entirely ignoring the scouts high above.

A few minutes later, a bright blue flare shot up into the sky. The sight made everyone look up. Y/N's squad leader, who had been standing nearby, quickly recognized the signal. "Get back on your horses! We're retreating!" he ordered.

"Finally," Ymir muttered.

Y/N stared at the flare, her face showing disbelief. "Wait... that's it? We can go now?"

...

The scouts gathered outside the forest, retrieving bodies, feeding their horses, and piling the corpses onto carts. Most of the bodies lay lined up on the ground, and a man with a clipboard moved among them, identifying each one and crossing names off the list.

Y/N glanced around, taking in the sorrowing faces of her fellow scouts. They were all affected by the loss, the weight of so much death hanging heavily in the air. She helped Armin and Jean stack bodies into the cart as they mourned, but her eyes were drawn to a nearby cart, and her heart sank. Eren was there, unconscious.

She stepped down from the cart, dread welling up inside her. What had happened? Where was the rest of the squad? Just then, she spotted a group of scouts riding toward them, their expressions grim. A chill ran down her spine as the sight became increasingly horrific. Levi's squad was among them, their bodies severely injured and lifeless.

Y/N's eyes widened as she recognized Petra's body being carried, freezing her thoughts and sending a shudder through her. How had this happened? She frantically scanned the crowd, her heartbeat quickening. Where was her sister? Had Anna been eaten? Was she dead? Anxiety clawed at her chest, tightening its grip as her thoughts spiraled.

In the distance, she spotted Levi standing next to Erwin. A flicker of relief washed over her, and without thinking, she sprinted toward him, urgency driving her forward.

"Where's Anna?" she demanded, her voice trembling with fear. She stood before him, searching his expression for answers. "Levi, please tell me she's okay!"

Levi's eyes widened as he took in her frantic state. "She's fine," he said softly, attempting to calm her.

"Where is she?"

Levi's eyes shifted to a nearby cart, and Y/N followed his eyes to see her sister sitting there. Anna's face was pale, her eyes slightly closed, with blood smeared at the corners of her mouth. She was still wearing her ODM gear as if she had just been retrieved from the forest.

Y/N felt her heart drop. She took off sprinting toward the cart, relief and concern warring within her.

"Anna!" Y/N rushed forward, kneeling beside her sister. "Are you okay? What happened?"

Anna struggled to respond, her voice faint. "I'm... fine," she managed to say, though the tremor in her words revealed her distress.

"You're alive," Y/N breathed, feeling the weight of her fear lift just slightly, even as her concern for her sister remained.

Anna took a deep breath, her tired eyes showing exhaustion and pain, but for a moment, the relief of being together pushed their troubles aside. She was surprised by how much Y/N still seemed to care for her, even after everything that had happened. Guilt twisted in her stomach. How could Y/N still care for her so much after everything she had said? That thought made the ache in her chest tighten, mixing with her physical injuries, and she felt tears stinging her eyes but refused to cry.

...

Y/N continued helping the other scouts load the deceased onto the carts, feeling a slight sense of relief now that she knew Anna was alive. However, the pain of loss lingered heavily in her chest, especially for Petra and the others who hadn't made it back.

Once they finished, the scouts mounted their horses, riding closely together as they began the journey back to the Karanes District. Y/N settled beside Anna in one of the carts, flanked by two other men tasked with retrieving the bodies.

Y/N's eyes scanned her sister's injuries, relieved that Anna was alive, yet the sadness still tugged at her from the things Anna had said the day before. She tried to suppress her thoughts, burying them beneath the concern she needed to focus on now.

"Don't try to move, okay?" she urged softly but firmly as Anna shifted slightly. "You've broken multiple ribs. If you move too much, you could puncture a lung or other vital organ. The less you move, the better. You need to avoid any further injury."

Anna looked at her in silence, taken aback by Y/N's unexpected care. She gave her a grim smile, avoiding to look at her directly. "You've always been the smarter one," she replied.

Y/N blinked, momentarily caught off guard by that comment. "Huh?"

Anna's smile widened a fraction as she turned to face her, a mixture of warmth and sadness in her expression. "Ever since we were kids, you always got the best grades. I secretly envied that about you."

Y/N's expression softened slightly in disappointment, but she didn't want to argue. Not with Anna in this state. "There's no reason for you to envy me," Y/N replied. "I've always admired you. You know that."

Anna shook her head, a touch of frustration flickering in her eyes. "Maybe. But academically, I never compared to you. My grades were awful next to what you could do."

Y/N didn't have the energy to debate that point either. As much as she wanted to provide comfort, the hurt from the day before still clung to her. She just didn't want to make things worse. Instead, she remained silent and reached for Anna's hand, squeezing it gently before looking away.

Their moment was abruptly interrupted by a sudden scream. "Titans!" a voice called out. The sound of heavy stomping followed, growing louder by the second.

The two men in the cart immediately stood, their eyes scanning the horizon for the source of the danger. Y/N's heart raced as she spotted them. Two Titans sprinted at full speed, closing the distance between them and two fleeing scouts.

One of the men cursed under his breath, recognition dawning on his face. "Is that... Dieter?" His voice was strained with disbelief.

Y/N eyes widened as soon as she saw it. One of the two scouts was carrying what appeared to be a corpse strapped to his back.

"That idiot," the man in the cart muttered, frustration clear in his tone before he quickly fired a red flare into the sky.

In an instant, the horses pulling the carts surged forward, their speed increasing as everyone rushed to put more distance between themselves and the Titans. The carts rattled violently over the uneven ground as the Titans gained speed, their heavy steps shaking the earth beneath them. Y/N gripped the side of the cart tightly, her mind racing with the terrifying thought that they might catch up to them.

Her breath hitched as she watched the limp body slip from the scout's back before hitting the ground. The scout who had carried the body was still running, but the one beside him wasn't so lucky. The sound of bones snapping filled the air as the titan's massive hand grabbed him and bit down on his body.

Her stomach twisted in horror, but she couldn't look away. Then she caught movement out of the corner of her eye. More titans, just as fast and relentless, were closing in from the side, heading directly towards them.

That's when she saw him. Levi had slowed his horse on purpose, positioning himself between their carts. His voice cut through the chaos as he spoke to the two scouts in the other cart, who were desperately formulating a last-second strategy to take down the Titans.

"No," Levi interrupted, his tone unwavering. "Just abandon the bodies."

Y/N's eyes widened in shock, freezing her in place as she processed his words.

Levi's voice remained steady as he continued. "In the past, many bodies didn't make it back. These guys aren't special."

For a moment, hesitation flickered in the scouts' eyes. They exchanged uncertain glances, weighing their options before one of them finally nodded, the reality of the situation sinking in.

Y/N flinched, her stomach twisting as they began to throw the bodies from the cart.

The lifeless bodies tumbled and rolled into the dust, each one a painful reminder of the lives lost, of comrades who would never return. Her cart did the same, bodies being tossed off into the dust as they sped away.

Y/N caught glimpses of the fallen bodies as they hit the ground. Beside her, Anna watched in silence, her face filled with sorrow. The weight of it all was almost too much to bear.

The horses surged forward again, and for a fleeting moment, there was a glimmer of hope. It seemed to be working. The Titans were falling behind, the gap between them widening. But it didn't last long. Soon enough, the Titans were closing in once more, getting even closer than before.

"What now?" one of the men at their cart asked, his voice trembling with fear.

Levi looked back, frustration etched on his face as he grappled with the uncertainty of their situation. There was nothing but an open field around them, making ODM gear nearly impossible to use effectively. If only he hadn't injured his foot, he thought as he grabbed his leg in discomfort.

Y/N remained on her knees in the cart, her mind spinning as she desperately searched for a solution, but she had nothing. Her thoughts were a whirlwind of panic and uncertainty. What could they possibly do? They were running out of time and running out of options.

Suddenly, she felt movement beside her. From the corner of her eye, she saw Anna struggling to stand with whatever strength she had left.

"Anna!" Y/N gasped, turning to her. "I told you not to move!" But the words died on her lips as soon as she saw the look on Anna's face.

A look so gentle, so calm, it silenced the noise around them, if only for a moment. A look that she hadn't given her in years.

Anna placed a trembling hand on Y/N's cheek, her touch soft, and Y/N's eyes widened in confusion. The chaos around them seemed to blur, just for a second, as if time had slowed.

Her sister smiled at her softly, her eyes gentle.

"Y/N... I'm so sorry..."

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading ^^

Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

blah, blah, blah, proper name, place name, backstory stuff...

No but like a lot of backstory stuff... and flashbacks. I hope you like it. Love ya <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The wind howled outside as Anna stood next to her mother, clutching her dress tightly with one hand and holding onto her doll with the other.

Before them rested a basket on the doorstep, a tiny baby swaddled in a blanket inside. The baby's face twisted in discomfort, letting out a small cry. A crumpled note lay beside the basket, and Anna's mother bent down to pick it up, her fingers tightening around the paper.

“What is this?” her mother muttered.

Anna's eyes filled with confusion as she watched her mother's expression shift from shock to anger.

“Why are you mad, Mommy?”

Her mother didn't respond. Instead, she kept rereading the letter, her eyes going over the words as if they might rearrange themselves into something less painful. She gripped the paper tightly, the edges crumpling beneath her fingers, and yet she couldn't look away.

Since her mother didn't answer, Anna looked at the baby again, letting go of her mom's skirt and taking a step closer to the basket. “Who is this?” Anna asked, tilting her head in curiosity, trying to look closer at the baby.

Her mother snapped, crumpling the note in her hand. “Annalise, get away from that!” she shouted, yanking Anna's arm, ready to shut the door. But when she noticed the curious locals staring, her eyes widened in fear. Whispers spread among them, questioning the baby at their doorstep.

Her face reddened with anger as she glanced down at the basket. With a sharp breath, she snatched it, yanking it inside and placing it on the diner table with such force that the baby cried out again.

Anna watched her mother storm into her father's office, slamming the door shut behind her. Almost immediately, she heard her parents arguing.

Clutching her doll tightly, Anna felt the familiar tension in her chest. This wasn't the first time she had witnessed them fight. They seemed to argue every other day, especially since her father was rarely home. He always claimed he was 'busy with work,' but as she grew older, the truth became clear. Her dad had a habit of meeting up with other women behind her mother's back.

Her mother had always been suspicious of her father, doubt lingering in her mind as she watched him leave day after day. Whenever she confronted him about her concerns, he would dismiss her, claiming she was imagining things and acting crazy. But now that she had living proof of his infidelity, he could no longer deny it.

Anna could hear some muffled phrases coming from the office door, but she struggled to understand their meaning. A heavy knot twisted in her stomach as she stood near the door. Their arguing seemed to be getting louder and louder, and she was starting to get scared by how loud and intense it was. She wanted to scream for them to stop, but their rage kept her frozen.

The baby's cries broke the tension, pulling Anna from her thoughts. She turned towards the table where the baby lay, the sound cutting through the chaos and reminding her that there was someone she could help.

She pulled a chair from the dining table and climbed onto it, peering over it. The baby was there, trembling, her tiny fists clenching and opening as tears streamed down her cheeks. "Don't cry," Anna whispered, her heart aching at the sight. "They'll stop fighting soon."

But the cries only grew louder, and something inside Anna stirred. She reached out, gently wrapping her fingers around the tiny hand. To her surprise, she slowly stopped crying. The baby looked up at her, her wide eyes shimmering, and for a brief moment, a tiny smile broke through the tears.

Seeing the baby smile made Anna feel a little better. At least one of them seemed happy now.

The moment shattered as her mother stormed out of her father's office, fury radiating from her. Tears streamed down her face, and her voice cracked as she shouted, "No! We can't just get rid of her! People saw her at the door!"

Anna's heart raced as she watched her mother's face show both anger and sadness. Behind her, her father stood in the doorway, looking stern and defensive. He stepped forward, trying to reach her. "Just let me explain, alright? You're overreacting again, Giselle," he said calmly.

"Overreacting?" her mother shot back, pointing at the basket on the table. "That is your child right there! What else do you want me to do? Pretend she doesn't exist?"

Anna's chest tightened as she held the tiny baby's hand, not fully understanding what was happening.

"Daddy's child?" she thought. "That means this baby is my sister, right?" A flicker of happiness crossed her mind.

She had always wanted a sister. A little buddy to play with, someone to dress up and take care of, like a living doll. The idea of having a little sister felt exciting, especially since she often felt lonely. The baby's small fingers wrapped more tightly around hers, making Anna smile with joy.

The mother's face showed her exhaustion as the argument dragged on. "You know what?" she snapped, cutting off whatever excuse her father was about to make. "I don't want to hear about this anymore," she said. "But people saw that baby at our door, and you better figure out what you're going to say because I refuse to have rumors about this spreading around the city."

She turned, running her hand through her hair in frustration, her eyes scanning the room until they fell on her daughter. Anna stood by the basket, an innocent smile on her face as she looked at the baby in front of her.

"Annalise, step away from her," her mother said. Anna's smile faded for a second, confused and unsure of what was happening, but it returned as soon as she looked back at the baby. "But Mommy, my little sister is happy with me. Look," she said softly, pointing to the baby's tiny fingers wrapped around her own.

Her mother's face twisted with anger as she stormed over, yanking Anna's hand away from the basket. "That is *not* your sister!" she snapped. She grabbed Anna's arm and pulled her back roughly. The baby's cries filled the room again.

"Frank, take that baby upstairs!" her mother shouted, frustrated as she pulled Anna up the stairs with her. "It's your child, isn't it?" she added angrily, her grip on Anna firm as they went up.

"Take her upstairs?" Frank muttered, frustrated as he ran a hand through his hair. "Fine," he snapped back, grabbing the basket and heading for the stairs. Once he reached the guest bedroom, he placed the basket down on the bed, barely glancing at the baby inside. Without a second thought, he turned and walked back downstairs, headed straight for the liquor cabinet to pour himself a drink.

Anna, meanwhile, was told to stay in her room. She sat on the floor, playing with her dolls, but the sound of the baby's cries could still be heard through the walls. Each cry pulled at her heart, making it hard for her to focus on her toys. She paused, her hands still, and felt a sadness creeping in. She couldn't ignore it anymore.

Slowly, Anna stood up, holding her doll tightly as she cracked open the door. The house was quiet except for the faint sobs coming from her mother's room. Anna stopped in her tracks, listening. It wasn't the first time she had heard her mom cry after a fight with her dad, but tonight, it felt different, more broken. Her tiny chest tightened with sadness.

She made her way across the hallway towards the guest room. Reaching up, she turned the doorknob and pushed the door open. Inside, the baby's cries filled the room, her tiny body squirming. The blanket had slipped halfway off, leaving the baby uncovered and exposed to the cool air.

Anna climbed up onto the bed and sat beside the baby. “Don’t cry, I’m here now,” Anna whispered, but the baby just kept crying, her little face scrunched up in distress.

Anna’s eyes landed on her doll, and an idea sparked in her mind. She carefully held the doll in front of the baby, hoping it would catch her attention.

To Anna’s delight, the cries began to fade as the baby noticed the colorful doll. With wide eyes, the baby stopped crying altogether.

“She’s pretty, right?” Anna said. “Her name is Y/N,” she added, referring to her doll.

Glancing between the doll and the baby, Anna suddenly saw the similarities: the same round eyes, a similar nose, and even the same hair and eye color. “You’re pretty, just like her,” Anna said, her excitement bubbling up.

“Y/N...I think that name fits you. What do you think?”

She held her doll closer to the baby’s face, and to her joy, the baby reached out, trying to grab at the doll’s hair with its tiny fingers. Anna’s smile widened, feeling a rush of warmth as she watched her sister. “You like your name? Y/N?” she asked, gently taking the baby’s little hand again.

For a moment, the room was quiet. The baby’s cries stopped, and Anna felt a rush of happiness. She couldn’t help but think how special this was. She had a sister now, someone to share her life with.

“I’ll take care of you, Y/N,” Anna promised as she cuddled closer to the baby.

...

Anna lay on the grass, staring blankly at the sky, but all she could feel was pain. The hit from the Female Titan had been brutal, sending her crashing to the ground. She could barely move without agony tearing through her body.

“Why?” Anna murmured to herself, the words barely escaping her lips. “Why am I remembering this right now?” The memories of her childhood with her sister clashed violently with the horror surrounding her.

Shouts came from far away, but all Anna could think about were her friends. They had fought bravely, but now they were gone. They had been killed in an instant by the Female Titan. The loss felt heavy in her chest, making it hard to breathe.

Anna coughed violently, and blood spilled from her mouth. The metallic taste made her stomach turn. Each cough reminded her of how bad things were. She was still alive, which felt more like a curse than a blessing. All she wanted was to close her eyes and escape the pain, but the memories wouldn’t leave her alone.

She suddenly heard the familiar sound of ODM gear cutting through the air. With great effort, she turned her head, her heart racing as she noticed Captain Levi soaring above her.

He moved through the chaos, checking on his squad, and Anna saw the sadness on his face as he reached each lifeless body. She could feel his grief as he took in the destruction around him.

Levi flew slightly over her and stopped, his eyes widening in shock when he saw she was still alive. He landed quickly beside her. “Anna. What the hell happened?” he asked, worrying.

As Anna struggled to speak, her throat tightened with emotion. “The Female Titan showed up...” she managed, tears filling her eyes. The reality hit her hard. “They’re all dead, Captain.”

Levi clenched his jaw, feeling the weight of her words. The silence hung between them, heavy with sadness. Anna looked up at him, desperate to know. “Where is Y/N?”

Levi hesitated, surprised by her sudden concern for her sister. “She’s safe,” he replied softly.

A small flicker of relief crossed Anna’s face, but it quickly faded. “I’m glad,” she said, her voice barely above a whisper. She turned her head away, trying to hide the tear that slipped down her cheek. “Please tell her that I’m sorry,” she pleaded. “I didn’t take care of her like I should have...”

“Oi, what are you doing?” Levi interrupted, frowning as he knelt beside her. He searched her eyes, which were brimming with tears. “Stop saying things like that. You sound like you’ve already given up.”

“Do you really think I can come back from this?” She asked, her voice breaking.

“You can’t think like that,” Levi insisted, his tone firm. “Your sister needs you. If you want to tell her you’re sorry, you need to do it yourself. Don’t be a coward.”

Anna looked up at him. He was right, deep down, she knew it. But after everything she had told Y/N and how much she had hurt her, she didn’t know how to fix what she had caused.

Levi looked at her for a moment, then said, “Now come on,” he said with an urgency. “We need to get you out of here.” Without waiting for a response, he carefully lifted her and began to move through the forest using his ODM gear.

When they reached the outside, he set her down on a cart. Anna sat there, feeling dizzy, as she watched him head back into the forest to find Eren.

As she sat on the cart, she held her head in her hands and looked around at the Scouts, gathering the bodies of the deceased. But she couldn’t focus on it. Her mind kept drifting back to memories of her childhood.

...

Even when Anna was just 10 years old, she already felt the pressure to be the perfect daughter her parents expected her to be. From a young age, she had excelled in almost every way they wanted: she was polite, well-behaved, and presentable in every social setting. She learned early on how to act, how to charm, and how to meet their high standards. But when it

came to school, it was different. No matter how hard she tried, the numbers never reflected the same success.

She could already feel the weight of her parents' expectations every time they asked about her grades. To them, her intelligence was just another aspect of perfection, one more box she had to tick. Anna felt suffocated by the constant comparisons to her peers, especially when it seemed so easy for others.

Now, as she stood outside the school with her report card in hand, her heart sank. The grades weren't good enough, again. She could hear the conversations replaying in her mind: her mother's comments, the disappointed looks, the subtle reminders that she wasn't measuring up...

With a frustrated sigh, she quickly folded the report card, shoving it deep into her bag, hoping that if she kept it hidden for just a bit longer, she could avoid their disappointed faces.

Just then, she spotted Y/N running out of the school building, her bright smile standing out in the crowd. "Anna! Look!" Y/N ran over, practically glowing with excitement. She held out her report card like it was the greatest treasure in the world.

Anna took the card, a little smile forming on her face as she opened it. Her eyes widened. Y/N's grades were perfect. She had aced every subject.

A flicker of jealousy hit her, but it quickly dissolved into pride. Y/N had worked so hard, and seeing her so happy made Anna's heart warm.

"You did an amazing job, Sissy," Anna said, her voice soft but genuine as she handed the report card back.

Y/N's eyes sparkled with joy, her smile even brighter as she hugged the card to her chest. "I can't wait to show Mom and Dad!"

A carriage was waiting for them near the school gates to drive them home. As they climbed in, Y/N was still chattering excitedly about her grades, her joy infectious. Anna listened, her worries easing just a bit as she sat next to her sister.

Anna glanced at her thoughtfully, realizing just how much responsibility she felt for her, even though the age gap between them wasn't that big. Even though they had servants who handled household chores, there were certain things only she seemed to do for her little sister.

She always was the one to put her to bed. Every night, she'd tuck her in, read her a story, and sit by her side until she fell asleep. She remembered the countless mornings when Y/N would come to her room instead of going to their mother or father, saying she was hungry. She was the one who made sure she had what she needed. Even when Y/N was sad or scared, it was her who comforted her. At school, it was the same. She would walk Y/N to her class before going to her own and stand up for her if any of the other kids gave her trouble.

It wasn't like their parents couldn't take care of her. They just didn't. They had the money, the servants, the ability to hire anyone to help, but somehow, it was always her who ended up

stepping in. It felt like she was being forced into a role that no one asked her if she wanted, and as much as she tried to be patient, there were moments she'd question why no one else was stepping in. Why it always had to be her. She was filling the gap their parents refused to take, whether she liked it or not. And while she never complained openly, the feeling of being the only one responsible for Y/N started to gnaw at her bit by bit.

Anna smiled, thinking, *'As long as she's happy, I'll be fine,'* as she watched her sister looking happily out the carriage window.

They soon arrived home, and Anna and Y/N stepped inside. Y/N held her report card tightly as she walked towards the living room. Their mother was sitting on the couch, calmly sipping her tea and reading a book. Y/N hesitated for a moment before saying, "Mommy, I got my grades."

Her mother didn't look up at first, still focused on her book. It seemed like she hadn't heard Y/N. After a moment, she sighed and finally raised her head, a hint of annoyance on her face. "Well, come on then," she said, putting the book down.

Y/N rushed forward and handed her the report card, her hands shaking a little. Her mother looked at the paper, pausing for a moment on the perfect scores. For a brief second, surprise appeared in her eyes, but it quickly faded, replaced by her usual indifference.

"Good," her mother said flatly, handing the report card back.

Y/N's heart sank as she looked at her mother, hoping to find some sign of pride. But there was nothing. "But... are you proud of me, Mommy?"

Her mother finally looked at her, the coldness in her eyes remaining. "Yes," she said, her tone flat. "Well done."

The lack of emotion behind the words made them feel hollow and meaningless, but Y/N clung to them like they were everything. A small smile crept across her face. "Thank you, Mommy!" she said relieved.

She hurried out of the living room, holding her report card like it was a badge of honor as she headed to her room.

Anna, standing in the doorway, had watched the exchange. Her palms were sweaty as she clutched her own report card.

"Annalise, darling," her mother said, her voice softening instantly. "Come here. Let's see how you did."

Anna's throat tightened as she stepped forward. She paused for a moment before handing over the report card, her head down, bracing herself for what might come next.

Her mother glanced at the grades, and Anna could feel the air grow heavy with tension. A silence filled the room before her mother's voice broke through. She had a tight, disappointed smile that showed her anger. "What is this?"

“I—I’m sorry, I tried my best—” Anna began, her voice breaking as panic rose in her chest.

“Tried?” her mother interrupted sharply. “We hired tutors for you. We spent *months* preparing you, and this is all you could get?” She flung the report card onto the table with disgust. “Do you think this is acceptable?”

“I’m sorry,” Anna stammered, her voice trembling. “I really tried, I did—”

“Enough with your excuses, Annalise!” her mother shouted with anger. “We are not a regular family. You have a reputation to maintain. Our reputation. And this? It’s pathetic.”

Anna’s breath caught as her mother’s words cut into her, each one hitting hard. Tears welled in her eyes, but she blinked them back, knowing better than to let them spill.

“Stop crying,” her mother snapped. “It only makes you look weak and pathetic.”

Anna quickly wiped her tears away, trying her hardest not to cry.

Her mother’s voice turned colder and harsher as she pressed on. “You know what makes this even worse? *Her*. ” She spat the word like poison, narrowing her eyes. “Y/N. That bastard child. She gets perfect scores. And yet *you*, my real daughter, can’t even manage that? Do you have any idea how humiliating that is for me?”

Anna flinched as the words hit her. Her voice was barely above a whisper. “Y/N’s part of this family too,” she muttered.

Her mother’s eyes flashed with fury. “Don’t you *dare* defend her, Annalise. I’ve put up with that girl long enough. But you—” she pointed a finger at her daughter, “—you are meant to represent this family with grace and dignity. You’re supposed to be better. And now I have to watch the child I never wanted outshine *my* daughter? I won’t allow her to be better than you, do you understand?”

Anna’s breath came in shaky gasps as she fought the urge to scream. Each word from her mother pressed down on her, suffocating her under the weight of impossible expectations.

With a quiet nod, Anna whispered, “Yes, Mother.”

But deep down, jealousy stirred inside her. She didn’t want to feel it, didn’t want to admit she wished she had Y/N’s grades. It was the one thing Anna needed to meet the impossible standards her parents set for her. And yet Y/N, who they didn’t want, was the one who did well where Anna struggled. It wasn’t fair.

Her mother stared at her for a moment longer, then turned back to her book, the conversation dismissed as if it had never happened. “Good. Now go.”

Anna left the room, her whole body shaking. She clenched her fists, making herself keep moving as her mother’s cruel words echoed in her mind. *The child I never wanted... outshine my daughter.*

No, she wasn't jealous of Y/N. She couldn't be. But the more she told herself that, the harder it was to ignore the sharp pain growing inside her.

When Anna was 12 years old, she signed up for the military. Standing outside the office, she felt proud of her decision. She was officially enrolled in the Training Corps, which would start next year, finally following in her parents' footsteps. If she worked hard enough, hopefully, she'd get into the Military Police, just like they had. Physical activities came easily to her, and she was relieved that the military focused more on strength than theory.

She walked all the way home with a smile as she imagined her future. But the moment she opened the front door, her stomach dropped. Screams came from upstairs. Her mother's angry voice rang through the house, followed by the unmistakable sound of Y/N crying.

Without a second thought, Anna threw her bag to the floor and ran upstairs, her legs moving before her mind caught up. The door to her mother's room was slightly open, and when she pushed it open, Anna's eyes widened as she saw what was happening inside.

Her mother was standing over Y/N, gripping her by the ear. Her nails dug in so deep that Y/N's skin had started to tear, blood trickling down the side of her head. Most of Y/N's weight was being held by her ear alone, her body trembling with pain as she sobbed uncontrollably.

"I know you took them, you little thief," her mother said, shaking Y/N by her ear as if she were a rag doll. "Where is the other earring? Where is it?"

"M-Mom, please," Y/N cried, her voice barely audible through her sobs. "I didn't mean to —"

Before she could finish, her mother yanked her ear harder, and Y/N let out a sharp cry of pain. Anna's breath caught in her throat as she saw the blood drip onto Y/N's collar, staining her dress.

"Mom!" Anna's voice came out louder than she expected, her body moving forward without hesitation. "Mom. Stop! You're hurting her!"

Her mother turned to Anna, her eyes filled with anger. "This little brat went into my room and took the earrings your father gave me on our first anniversary!" She said as she tightened her grip on Y/N. "And now she's lost one. She always ruins everything."

Anna glanced at Y/N, whose face was pale, her body trembling with fear and pain. She couldn't bear to see her like this. Even though Y/N's mere existence seemed to irritate their mother, Anna couldn't stand by and watch this any longer.

"It wasn't Y/N," Anna said, her voice steady despite the storm of emotions swirling inside her. "It was me."

Her mother froze, narrowing her eyes as she stared at Anna, her grip on Y/N loosening slightly. "What did you just say?"

“It was me,” Anna repeated, stepping forward, her heart hammering in her chest. She didn’t know where the lie was coming from, but it came out of her anyway. “I went into your room. I thought the earrings were pretty, and I just... I’m sorry, I accidentally lost one.”

For a moment, the room was deathly silent, except for Y/N’s quiet sobbing. Anna’s mother released Y/N with a harsh push, and Y/N stumbled forward, running towards Anna. She clung to her like a lifeline, burying her face in Anna’s chest, her whole body shaking with sobs. Anna held her tight, stroking her hair, trying to comfort her as tears soaked into her shirt.

Their mother’s attention flicked between them, still furious, though now directed at both of them. “You expect me to believe that?”

“It’s the truth,” Anna said. She continued to stroke Y/N’s head, her hand trembling slightly. “I’m really sorry, Mom. I didn’t mean to lose it.”

Her mother pressed her lips into a tight line and narrowed her eyes at the two girls. A long, tense silence hung in the air before she spoke again. “Y/N, get out.”

She hesitated, looking up at her sister, but Anna gave her a small nod, releasing her from the embrace. Y/N wiped her tears with her hand and hurried out of the room, taking one last scared look back before running down the hallway.

Anna faced her mother, her body tense, ready for the outburst she could feel coming. Her mother stepped closer, looming over her. “Don’t think I won’t hold you responsible for this, Annalise,” her mother said. “You’re covering for her again, aren’t you?”

“Mom, I just—”

“Stop!” Her mother interrupted. “You’re always the one making excuses for her. Always! It’s pathetic. And now you’re taking *her* mess onto your shoulders?”

“You can’t just blame her for everything. You always do,” Anna insisted, trying to remain calm.

Her mother stepped even closer, her presence suffocating. “Y/N’s been nothing but a disgrace since the day she was dropped off at our door, and you’re letting her drag you down with her!”

Anna clenched her fists at her sides, her heart pounding. “I didn’t want her to get hurt. She doesn’t deserve it!”

“The only person you need to worry about is yourself. You’ve got to maintain our image, Annalise. I need you to do better.”

“You want me to just stand by while you push her away? She’s family!”

“Family? She’s a mistake, Annalise. A constant reminder of your father’s mistake, and I won’t have you sacrificing your future for hers.”

Every word felt like a knife, and Anna's heart twisted with anger and despair. "Maybe if you treated her better, things would be different!" she shot back.

"Don't you dare talk back to me!" her mother snapped. "You're wasting your potential on her! If you don't do better, you'll end up just like her!"

Anna's heart raced as her mother's words hit her hard. She felt stuck between loyalty to her sister and the heavy expectations from their mother. There might be some truth to what her mother said. For the first time, a small doubt crept in. Maybe Y/N was part of the problem too. Was it wrong to feel like this?

...

Anna sat on the cart, her head in her hands, as fragments of her childhood flickered through her mind. She couldn't pinpoint exactly when she'd let everything slip between her and Y/N, when her own insecurities had started to twist into something ugly. A sharp ache formed in her chest as she tried to untangle years of her own resentment, all rooted in a longing to meet the impossible standards her parents had set for her. But the harder she tried to unravel it, the more hollow it left her feeling.

Suddenly, a voice called her name, pulling her back. "Anna!" Y/N's voice rang out. Anna looked up, her breath hitching as she saw Y/N, unharmed, running towards her.

Y/N knelt beside her on the cart, her eyes wide with worry. "Are you okay? What happened?"

For a moment, Anna's mind spun. She wanted to say so much, to apologize, to confess the guilt that was eating her away. "I'm... fine," she said.

Y/N sighed with relief. "You're alive."

Anna took a deep breath. Despite everything that had happened, she was surprised by Y/N's care for her, which filled her with even more guilt.

Anna watched as Y/N steadied herself. "Don't move. I'll help the others and be back," she said.

Anna sat alone, the weight of her thoughts pressing down on her. The reality of her shattered relationship with Y/N gnawed at her insides, and she couldn't escape the truth. This was all her fault.

She hated how her anger had turned ugly, bringing out the worst in her. Deep down, Anna felt inferior to her, even if she never showed it. Y/N was naturally smart, and that ate away at Anna's confidence. No matter how hard Anna studied, she could never keep up. Even without finishing her training, Y/N created a formation that got Commander Erwin's attention, which made Anna feel jealous.

Everyone seemed to like her without even trying. People seemed to be drawn to her, while Anna had to push herself to fit in. Y/N always saw the good in things, and her strength

showed during tough times, while Anna often let her emotions get the best of her. Anger and frustration would bubble up, causing her to lash out or shut down. She struggled to keep her feelings in check, often losing control and making situations worse.

When Y/N decided to join the Training Cadets, Anna felt a surge of worry, fearing that Y/N might outshine her. But when the news came that Y/N didn't make it, a part of her was secretly relieved, as horrible as that made her feel.

Now, looking back, she couldn't believe how everything had spiraled so far out of control. She never thought it would lead to her parents kicking Y/N out when she was still so young. The fight had been intense, and while she tried to defend her sister, she felt now that she hadn't tried hard enough. She should have pushed harder, should have done whatever it took to convince them to let her back, but she didn't.

As she thought about those moments, guilt hit her. She felt terrible for not protecting her sister the way she should have. She should have protected Y/N from their parents, standing up for her. Instead, she let her own insecurities take over, and now everything was broken. She was the one who had pushed Y/N away, and that realization felt heavy in her stomach.

...

The horses raced ahead, and for a moment, hope stirred as the Titans fell behind. But that feeling quickly faded when the Titans closed in again. Even after the bodies were thrown from the carts, it didn't seem to make a difference.

"What now?" one of the men in the cart asked, fear evident in his voice.

Anna saw Y/N still kneeling in the cart, her face pale and eyes wide with distress. It was clear she was in a panic, desperately searching for a solution that just wasn't there. Anna felt a knot tighten in her stomach. They were running out of time and options, and Y/N's fear only made it worse.

As Anna watched Y/N, a memory surfaced in her mind, pulling her away from the chaos around them.

...

The crackling of the fire filled the quiet living room. Anna, in her sleeping gown, sat cross-legged on the floor, brushing Y/N's long hair, who sat in front of her. Y/N's eyes fixed on the flames with a thoughtful expression.

After a long silence, Y/N finally broke it, her voice barely above a whisper. "Anna..."

"Yeah?" Anna replied, giving Y/N her full attention.

Y/N hesitated, her eyes fixed on the fire. She took a shaky breath before asking, "Why... why don't Mom and Dad like me?" Her voice trembled.

Anna's heart dropped. She widened her eyes, momentarily stopping the brushing. The question hung heavily between them, and she struggled to find the right words. "Of course

they do,” she lied, resuming her brushing of Y/N’s hair, trying to make her voice sound as confident as possible, though it trembled slightly. “Why would you think that?”

Y/N turned her head slightly, her brow furrowing as she looked at Anna, seeking reassurance. “I don’t know. I just... I’ve seen how they treat you. It’s different.”

Anna saw the band-aid on Y/N’s ear. Reminding her of how tightly their mother had held her. She sighed. “They... they can be hard to understand,” she said, searching for the right words. “Maybe they just don’t know how to show it... But... I love you, Y/N. I really do.”

Y/N looked at Anna in silence before speaking again. “But... why don’t *they* love me?” she asked, her voice trembling. “Did I do something wrong? Is it my fault they don’t love me?”

The air felt heavy, and Anna's heart shattered as she listened to Y/N. How could a kid this young feel so unloved? It broke her to see Y/N thinking there was something wrong with her as if she were at fault for their parents not loving her. Anna reached out, her fingers brushing against her sister’s shoulder. “It’s not your fault,” she said softly. “You haven’t done anything wrong.”

“Then why do they act like that...” Y/N whispered, her eyes brimming with tears as she looked back at the crackling fire. “It’s like I don’t matter at all...”

Anna’s heart broke a little more with each word. “You matter to me,” she said firmly. “You’re my sister, and that means everything.”

“But... why don’t they love me like you do?” she pleaded, her voice trembling.

“Because sometimes... adults don’t know how to love the way we need them to,” Anna replied. She bit her lip, fighting back her own tears. “But listen to me, no matter what happens, I will always love you. You’re special to me, more than you’ll ever know.”

Y/N remained quiet. Anna couldn’t see her face, but she could sense the hurt radiating from her.

“You are loved,” Anna said. “You’re beautiful, smart, and so incredibly special. You deserve all the love in the world.”

Y/N’s tears fell freely now, and she turned around completely, looking up at Anna.

“I don’t want to see you cry. You deserve to be happy,” Anna said, her voice warm as she reached out, gently placing a hand on Y/N’s cheek. “And I’ll do everything I can to make sure you are. I promise to protect you. No matter what, I’ll always be here for you.”

As Anna’s words sank in, Y/N finally let it out. She buried her face in her sister’s shoulder and cried, but this time it felt different. There was joy mixed with sadness.

Anna wrapped her arms tightly around Y/N, cradling her head as she sobbed. “It’s okay,” she murmured, gently brushing Y/N’s hair back. “I’ve got you. You’ll always have me. I’ll take care of you, no matter what.”

...

The present crashed back into Anna's mind, the chaos around her blurring with her thoughts. Her breaths came in sharp gasps, each one laced with the agony of her broken ribs. Doubt clawed at her mind. Would she survive this?

With every ounce of adrenaline surging through her veins, Anna pushed herself upright. Pain shot through her body, reminding her of her injuries, but she forced herself to move.

"Anna!" Y/N gasped, her voice rising in panic as she turned. "I told you not to move!" But the words fell away as she saw the look on Anna's face.

Anna forced a smile through the pain, trembling with the effort. Her hand reached up to touch Y/N's cheek, her fingers brushing against her skin. It was a quick moment, full of things left unsaid. Time seemed to slow, the world around them fading into a blur of noise and movement. Anna wanted to say everything. To apologize for everything, but she knew she'd run out of time.

"Y/N... I'm so sorry..." Her voice broke, and tears pooled in her eyes, falling freely down her cheeks.

Y/N's eyes widened in confusion. Disbelief and dread twisted in her gut, making it hard to breathe. "Anna...?" she said, her voice trembling with uncertainty.

Anna smiled one last time before she turned away. With determination, she stood at the edge of the cart, her body protesting with every movement. Ignoring the agony that shot through her, she activated her ODM gear. The sound cut through the air.

"Anna!" Y/N screamed, terror rising in her chest as she realized Anna's intent.

"Stop her!" Levi shouted, urgency in his voice as he saw Y/N's intention. But before she could go after her sister, a man from the cart grabbed her, holding her back tightly.

The carts surged ahead, picking up speed, and all the Titans that had been chasing them suddenly turned their attention towards Anna. Despite the pain coursing through her, she launched herself into the fight, her blades slicing through the first Titan's nape with a force that surprised even her. The rush of adrenaline dulled her suffering and drove her forward, but the danger was still there, looming over her.

"Anna!" Y/N screamed, her voice cracking as she fought against the man holding her. She struggled, pushing against him, desperation clawing at her throat. "Let go of me!" But the man held her firmly.

Y/N watched as Anna cut through multiple Titans. But as she fought on, more Titans began to close in around her. The world around Y/N blurred with fear, her sister's figure becoming a mere shadow in the chaos.

As the carts sped away, Anna's silhouette began to vanish. The pain in Y/N's chest tightened, squeezing her heart with despair.

When Anna disappeared from sight, a knot formed in Y/N's throat, making it hard to breathe. Her face went pale, her features rigid and strained, as if she were trying to hold back a flood of emotions. She stared ahead, eyes wide and unblinking, searching for any sign of her sister. The silence around her felt heavy and she could only grip the edge of the cart tightly, her knuckles turning white.

“Anna...” she whispered, the name echoing in the silence around her, filled with hopelessness.

Chapter End Notes

For anyone interested, I decided to draw the MC and Anna as I personally imagined them. Feel free to check it out if you want Have a nice week everyone.

MC: <https://pin.it/6IBGBV5Rj>

Anna: <https://pin.it/2zhND79xp>

In the next chapter, we'll finally get to see the main couple again :)

Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much for the kudos and comments everyone 🥹❤️ They feed my little heart.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The rain dripped down Y/N's face, mixing with the dirt streaked across her skin. She was kneeling in the mud, hands pressed against the wet earth, fingers trembling as her body shook uncontrollably. Her muscles ached, and her mind raced as if it were caught in a storm she couldn't escape. She looked at her hands, but her vision blurred as she stared blankly, feeling the weight of every decision that had brought her here pressing down on her like an anchor.

'Why did I come back?' The question lingered in her mind, but no answer seemed to ease her pain or make sense of everything that had happened so far. She'd told herself a thousand times that she was done with them, that she'd broken free, hadn't she? But now, here she was, on her knees, drenched and beaten down, because a part of her had still hoped that things could change.

'But why?' she asked herself again, her nails digging into the earth, tears rolling down her cheeks, mixing with the rain. Maybe it was the very rare good memories she had, long ago and few in number, but she clung to them like a lifeline, hoping that if she tried hard enough, they would act like that again. Each time they were ruthless, those memories twisted into an excuse to stay, a reason not to leave, as if they justified the pain she endured.

It was strange and frustrating, how even the most damaged parts of her heart still held onto the tiniest bit of hope for them. It was as if her mind knew better, yet her heart stayed stubbornly tied to them. She could tell herself over and over that she didn't need them and that their approval and love didn't matter, but still, a part of her kept searching for it, aching for something that had never been there.

Her breath came in ragged gasps as she squeezed her eyes shut, trying to block out the burning need for their acceptance that wouldn't leave her. How could it still be there after everything? She felt trapped, as if she was fighting a battle within herself, unable to break free from them.

Her shoulders shook as she realized just how deeply their hold had sunk into her. Even when she desperately wanted to hate them, some twisted part of her still clung to them, fully aware that they would only bring her pain. The very people who were supposed to make her feel loved, special, and supported, her parents, had been the first to make her feel unloved, and that thought dug deeper into her heart like a cruel reminder of how worthless they had made her feel her entire life.

A FEW HOURS EARLIER:

Levi moved through the silent hallways of headquarters. As he neared Erwin's office, he heard voices coming through the half-open door, drawing his attention. Inside, Nanaba and Miche were standing with Erwin, their heads bent over a piece of paper that Erwin held.

"We'll need to keep an eye on specific recruits from the 104th Training Corps," Erwin said quietly. "With the second attempt at capturing the Female Titan, there's a chance there might be allies still among us. Your task is to observe anyone who could be connected to her."

Erwin handed the list to Nanaba, who scanned it, glancing briefly at Miche. "Have either of you noticed anyone else that might need to be added?" Erwin asked.

Miche shook his head slightly, but Nanaba hesitated. She cleared her throat. "There was... one odd thing. I was responsible for to the squad Y/N was on during the last expedition. I sent her with a message to the left flank," she paused, choosing her words carefully. "She didn't report back. Instead, I saw her later on, talking closely with Bertholdt Hoover and Ymir. Both names are on this list."

Erwin's expression remained steady, though Levi caught the slight narrowing of his eyes, an indication he was taking in every word. Nanaba, noticing this, quickly added, "It could mean nothing. I don't think she's involved with the enemy... just the timing was strange."

Levi stepped fully into the doorway, arms crossed. "Anyone with questionable behavior should be accounted for. If we assume loyalty, we risk missing the obvious."

Erwin gave a nod, his decision made. "Agreed. Y/N will join the rest of the recruits from the 104th under your watch, Miche."

Levi knew Y/N had gone to the left flank on his orders. But Erwin's plan to send her with Miche didn't sound like a bad idea. If she stayed, she'd be drawn into the center of the Female Titan operation. A risk he didn't want her facing. Sending her south would, for now, keep her clear of that.

As the meeting wrapped up, Levi left Erwin's office, his thoughts already shifting to the barracks. He hadn't checked on Y/N since their return, and with Anna now presumed dead, he could only imagine how she might be coping.

He'd been too caught up in his own work, handling the post-expedition paperwork for those who had died and visiting families to pay his respects, especially those connected to his squad.

Levi knew Y/N had never lost anyone this close. He knew the way loss carved into you, left you feeling hollow.

...

Y/N's small hands gripped the horse's mane, her eyes glued to the ground moving beneath them. She was small again, maybe four or five, seated in front of Anna on the saddle.

“See? There’s no need to be afraid,” Anna said with a smile as she guided Y/N’s hands back to the reins. Y/N felt her own heartbeat slowing, her fear melting just a little as Anna’s arms gave her a light squeeze.

“Just keep looking ahead,” Anna said, her arms giving Y/N a comforting squeeze. “I’m right here, so there’s no way you’ll fall.”

Y/N blinked awake, the memory slipping away. She lay there in silence, her body weighed down as if the memories themselves pressed against her. She slowly turned her head to the window, surprised by the bright morning light. She hadn’t realized she’d slept in so late, yet she still felt restless, her eyes burning with the familiar ache of missing real sleep.

With a sigh, Y/N rolled onto her back, staring at the bunk above, feeling like a stranger to herself. Everything from the last few days swirled in her mind. It had been three days since the expedition. Three days since she had lost her sister. But her mind felt frozen, unable to process it, and her heart couldn’t let go. Her throat was sore, yet she hadn’t cried once, couldn’t cry. It was like a knot was stuck inside her, blocking everything.

The sharp creak of the door startled her, snapping her back. Levi stood in the doorway, his expression unreadable, catching her off guard.

“Get up,” he ordered.

She looked at him, disoriented. “What... what are you doing here?”

“What am I doing here?” He raised an eyebrow, unimpressed. “What are you doing here? Your comrades are worried. Said you haven’t left this room since we got back. Haven’t eaten a damn thing either.”

Y/N looked down, saying nothing. Without waiting, Levi stepped forward and yanked the blanket from her. “Get up,” he repeated, sharper this time.

Her body felt heavy and unresponsive. But she forced herself to stand, more because of his presence than anything else. She didn’t have the energy to argue, so she followed him down the hall.

In the mess hall, Levi sat across from her, his silence pressing down on her as she forced herself to eat. Her hand moved on autopilot, her mind drifting, barely aware of the food on her plate. Levi kept her eyes on her, making sure she ate everything.

When she’d finished, Levi crossed his arms and explained to her the upcoming task. “You’re being sent south with a squad under Miche. Erwin’s orders,” he said.

She nodded, barely hearing what he said. Levi watched her, noting the way she sat there, quiet and hollow in a way that wasn’t normal for her.

“You need to take better care of yourself. Skipping meals won’t bring anyone back.”

Levi stood, turning to leave, but her voice stopped him. “Did you... visit the families of the fallen?”

He paused, glancing back at her. “Yeah. I did.”

“Did you... have you gone to see my family yet?”

Levi stared at her in silence for a second. “Not yet. I’m planning to go today.”

“Can I... can I go with you?”

“You sure?” He asked surprised.

Y/N took a shaky breath. “I feel like... I think it’s my responsibility to be there when they find out.”

Levi waited, sensing she had more to say, but her words stayed locked inside. Finally, he nodded. “Alright. We’ll go.”

Deep inside, Y/N knew going back to her parents was a terrible idea, but she couldn’t shake the attachment she felt. Even after everything, some part of her stayed tied to them. Cutting ties felt impossible, like some part of her still hoped to belong there, even if she knew better.

The ride to the inner city was cold and silent, with rain beating on their cloaks and slipping through at the edges. Levi rode slightly ahead, looking back at Y/N now and then. Her eyes were fixed downward, hands gripping the reins with knuckles white, lips pressed tightly together. She hadn’t said a word since they left, and Levi hadn’t pushed her. She knew she needed space right now.

Y/N’s eyes finally lifted, her eyes narrowing slightly as her family’s house came into view.

They slid off their horses, securing them to a nearby post. They reached the door, and the rain seemed to fade into the background. “Are you sure about this?” Levi asked as he turned to her.

It took her a moment, but Y/N nodded, and he knocked on the door.

...

The rain poured harder outside. Levi and Y/N sat across from her parents in the living room, who had just learned about Anna’s death. No one spoke. The silence pressed down on them, broken only by the sound of the rain outside and her mother’s uncontrollable sobs.

Y/N’s heart raced as she watched her mother, who sat hunched over, a handkerchief pressed tightly to her mouth. Her shoulders shook violently, each sob escaping her as if it were tearing her apart from the inside.

Y/N’s own breath hitched as she struggled to process the sight of the woman she’d always thought of as her mother. Someone who had seemed so strong, now reduced to this fragile state. The recent truth that she wasn’t truly her mother made it even harder to bear, filling her with a sadness she hadn’t expected.

Her father sat beside her, his hand resting on her shoulder as he tried to comfort her. He was trying to hold himself together, but Y/N could see past that. His eyes were red as he tried to fight against his own tears.

“I’m very sorry for your loss,” Levi said, breaking the silence, his eyes moving between her parents, taking in their grief. “Anna was an exceptional cadet. She fought bravely until the end.”

But her parents stayed silent, her mother’s sobs the only sound. The room felt smaller, and Y/N’s heart sank. She wanted to reach out, to close the distance between them, but the words wouldn’t come.

Levi felt the tension in the room and cleared his throat. “I’ll give you some privacy,” he said. “Again, I’m very sorry for your loss. I’ll be right outside if you need anything.”

After Levi left, the tension only grew heavier, leaving Y/N alone with her parents, her mother’s cries still filling the room. Y/N glanced between them, each second that passed twisting her stomach tighter.

“Why did this happen?” her mother finally gasped, the handkerchief falling from her grasp as she buried her face in her hands. “Why did it have to be her? She was... she was everything to us.”

She stood abruptly, hands trembling as she moved towards Y/N. “If only you’d been the one to die,” she whispered. “Why couldn’t it have been you? Why did it have to be her?” Y/N stood up quickly, trying to put some space between herself and her mother, whose deep resentment made her swallow hard as she clenched her hands, struggling to steady herself against the weight of her mother’s words.

She glanced at her father, desperate for some sign of comfort, but he just looked at her with disgust. Her mother grabbed her shoulders tightly, shaking her violently. “Why did it have to be *my* daughter?”

Before Y/N could react, her mother’s fingers dug into her face, squishing her cheeks as she pulled her closer, nails biting into her skin. In a chaotic mix of anger and despair, her mother started shoving her away, pushing her hands against Y/N’s face, trying to force her back as if she could push the truth away.

“It should have been you!” she cried in grief and fury. She pushed against Y/N’s face, forcing her to look at her, her nails digging in deeper. “It should have been you!” With each repetition, her grip tightened, fingers twisting and pulling at Y/N’s skin as if she could rip away the reality of Anna’s death.

“Why couldn’t it have been you?” Each time Y/N felt a piece of herself fracture under the weight of her mother’s accusations, the despair making it hard to breathe.

“Stop it, please! Mom—” she managed to murmur.

“Don’t call me that,” her mother snapped, cutting her off. “I’m not your mother.”

Her mother released her suddenly, stepping back as if even touching Y/N was too much to bear. “Get out,” she ordered. “You’ve brought us nothing but shame and disappointment. And now, now you’ve taken her from us. If it wasn’t for you, she would still be alive. This is all your fault.”

“That’s not true...” Y/N’s voice broke, trembling as she heard those accusations. She felt small, like a child again, desperate for a shred of warmth or acceptance, but it was stripped away, leaving her raw and exposed.

“Don’t come back here, Y/N,” her mother spat. “We have nothing left for you.” The weight of those words hit her hard, cutting through what little hope she had left.

Y/N looked down and turned away, her heart heavy with the crushing weight of abandonment. But before she could step out of the room, something stopped her in her tracks. Years of bitterness and hurt pressed down on her, and everything she’d kept buried was finally rising up, too painful to hold back any longer.

“Everything I did,” she said, her voice shaking but growing stronger, “was to make you proud.” She slowly turned around and looked them straight in the eyes. “But you never cared, did you? Nothing I did was ever good enough for you.”

Her mother rolled her eyes and looked away, her lips pressed into a thin line.

“Stop it, Y/N,” her father muttered dismissively. “This isn’t about you.”

“No,” she interrupted, her voice sharp, louder. “No, you don’t get to tell me to shut up anymore. You’ve told me to be quiet my whole life and I’m tired of it.”

Her father’s frown deepened, but she didn’t care.

“You never acted like parents...not to me... You were neglectful, selfish, and so wrapped up in your own image you couldn’t see the damage you were doing.”

“Stop being so dramatic,” her mother said dismissively.

“Dramatic?” she repeated, feeling the knot in her throat tighten. “You kicked me out... when I was just a kid. Like I was nothing to you! And did you even once... did you ever even wonder if I was okay? If I was still alive?” She paused, her voice dropping to a whisper. “Did it ever cross your minds? Even for a second?”

Her mother opened her mouth, but Y/N shook her head and blurted out her words, unable to hold back. “I had days—days where I was so hungry I didn’t know if I’d wake up the next morning! Do you understand what that’s like?” Her voice cracked, her hands clenched into fists. “To be that young, with nowhere to go, wondering if you’d even make it to see another day?”

Her mother scoffed, crossing her arms across her chest. “Stop exaggerating. You made it, didn’t you? Otherwise, you wouldn’t be here complaining about all of this.”

Y/N let out a shaky laugh. “Oh, that’s a good one. Do you really think that’s what this is about? That I ‘made it’?”

Memories surged back, the ones she had fought so many years to keep buried.

“I was so hungry... so cold... I could barely feel my own body. There were nights I had to talk myself out of just... giving up, not knowing if I’d survive the night. And where were you?” She said, her voice rising with each word. “*Where* were you? Hiding behind your precious image, pretending we were the perfect family while I was starving and freezing to death? I needed you, but you were too busy caring about what others thought!”

“That’s enough, Y/N,” her father warned her as he glared at her.

“No, it’s not enough! You never acted like parents! You cared more about what people thought of you than you ever cared about me!” She took a deep, shaky breath, her voice quiet and filled with pain. “I know I wasn’t the child you wanted. I know that.” Her voice dropped almost to a whisper, trembling before it rose again. “But I’m still your daughter! And I deserved so much better than what you put me through!”

Her father’s expression turned even colder, but Y/N kept going, raising her voice.

“And not just me... but Anna,” she said. “You never saw Anna as a person... You only saw her as an achievement. Proof that you raised the ‘perfect daughter.’ But she was never yours to mold like that.” Her voice softened, trembling on the edge of breaking. “If only you’d let her be herself maybe she’d still be alive!”

Her father’s face twisted with rage, and in an instant, his hand struck across her face, sending her crashing to the floor. The sting burned like fire, and her cheek throbbed. She lay there for a moment, feeling everything crash down around her, her hand pressed against her face as if trying to hold back the pain. Finally, with a deep breath, she pushed herself up slowly, until she stood tall again, forcing herself to meet their icy stares.

There was nothing left for her to say.

“I’m done,” she murmured. “I’m done trying to earn your love when you never even bothered to give it. I have nothing left to offer you.”

Turning on her heel, she walked toward the door, the weight of years of rejection settling over her.

Her parents stood stiff, her mother’s face pinched with irritation, her father’s expression hardening. As Y/N turned to leave, her father’s voice cut through the silence. “Don’t you dare turn your back on me—”

But she didn’t let him finish.

“Goodbye,” she said, her voice heavy with the truth. This wasn’t just another goodbye. It was the end of her hope for them. She felt the weight of their hurtful words and cold stares, all the times she tried to connect but got nothing in return. This time, she really meant it.

She clutched her cloak tightly and slipped it over her shoulders before she looked back one last time with pain and disappointment.

“I hope... I hope one day, you’ll feel just a fraction of the emptiness you left me with.”

As she turned away, she knew she was closing the door on any chance of reconciliation, accepting that their relationship was broken beyond repair. There would be no more reaching out, no more trying to fit into a family that had never truly wanted her.

Standing just outside the door, Y/N's heart raced, filled with doubt and regret. She couldn't get her parents' words out of her head, their disappointment ringing in her ears. Was cutting them off the right choice? A part of her, a small, stubborn part, wanted to turn back, to knock and apologize. But she refused. She clenched her fists, digging her nails into her palms to remind herself of the choice she had made.

The rain hit her hair and ran down her face. She gasped for breath, overwhelmed by everything that had happened. Each inhalation felt heavy and suffocating as if the air around her was thickening. She shut her eyes for a moment, trying to find her balance, but all she could hear was the pounding of her own heartbeat in her ears.

Suddenly, she felt someone standing next to her. A gentle pressure atop her head made her jerk slightly, and she turned to see Levi standing there, his expression serious but not unkind. He was holding the hood of her cloak, his fingers gently pulling it over her head to shield her from the rain.

“Put it on correctly,” he said, cutting through the chaos in her mind. “You’ll catch a cold if you don’t.”

Y/N turned slowly to face Levi, her face showing the pain she felt. Her expression was more than just disturbed. It showed the chaos inside her, like a storm waiting to break.

Levi's eyes darted to her cheek, taking in the red mark left by her father's hand. His expression shifted to shock, and for a moment, he struggled to find his voice. “What happened?” he asked, concern threading through his tone. “Who the hell did this?”

He reached out instinctively towards her, but Y/N flinched and pushed his hand away, catching him off guard. The action came from a rush of feelings she couldn't explain. Anger, despair, and a strong need to be alone.

Without saying anything, she walked past him, keeping her eyes down to hide the chaos inside her. The weight of her decision to cut ties with her family still heavy on her shoulders.

“Y/N,” Levi called after her, but she didn't respond. She quickly climbed onto her horse and with a sharp tug of the reins, she urged the horse into a gallop, the world around her fading as she tried to get as far away from there as possible.

Levi watched her worried as she rode away. He quickly mounted his own horse and took off after her. “Y/N, slow down!”

With each gallop, she pushed her horse harder, desperate to escape the pain that clung to her. But no matter how fast she rode, the hurtful words of her parents echoed in her mind, refusing to let her go.

‘Don’t call me that. I’m not your mother.’

‘It should have been you.’

Their words replayed in her head on a loop as she raced forward. Yet, the more she tried to outrun them, the more they wrapped around her, making her feel like she couldn’t escape. The horse’s hooves pounded against the muddy ground, matching the speed of her heart. As she turned the corner, the mud slipped beneath the horse's hooves.

In an instant, the horse slipped, and she was thrown hard to the ground. Time slowed as she hit, pain exploding in her limbs. She rolled through the mud a few times before finally coming to a stop. The cold soaked into her skin, but the physical pain was nothing compared to the emotions raging in her mind.

Finally, she pushed herself up onto her hands and knees, staring down at her mud-streaked palms. The rain dripped down her face, mixing with the dirt streaked across her skin, fingers trembling as her body shook uncontrollably.

Her breaths came in shallow, rapid bursts, each one more ragged than the last. Her hand instinctively went to her throat, fingers pressing into her skin as if she could force air through the tightness closing around it. She couldn’t breathe. The world around her blurred, sounds muffled under the chaos swirling in her mind. Her heart pounded painfully, thudding against her ribs as if it wanted to break free.

Levi came to a sudden stop nearby, his heart racing as he saw her. “Y/N!” he shouted, panic in his voice. He got off his horse and rushed to her side, worry on his face as he stood beside her, but she barely registered his presence.

She felt trapped, sinking under her thoughts, drowning in the accusations that wouldn’t leave her alone.

‘If it wasn’t for you, Anna would still be alive. This is all your fault.’

The words played over and over, twisting in her chest like a knife. Her breaths grew shallower, her fingers digging harder into her neck as she tried to hold herself together. Tried to silence the voice that wouldn’t stop tearing her apart.

The pain she’d buried for so long broke free, hitting her all at once. The sting of her parent’s words, the fight with her sister that tore them apart, the truth about her past, that she was the child of an affair, an outsider in her own family. And Anna. Her sister was gone, buried under guilt and blame that crushed her. She felt stripped of everything she’d clung to, left with nothing but emptiness where her family used to be. She was alone, truly alone.

A low, broken sob escaped her, her voice rough and broken as she choked out a cry that filled the empty field. The tears came hard and fast, her entire body shaking as she finally let

herself break, everything inside her raging free. She bent over, her fingers clawing at the muddy ground as she screamed, the anguish tearing from her throat. It was everything she had held back, every piece of herself she had tried so hard to keep together, now crumbling in the rain.

Levi stood beside her, looking at her worried. He felt lost, unsure of how to help her in this moment. “Y/N,” he said softly, his voice struggling to reach her through the sound of her cries.

Her voice was strangled, drenched in sorrow as she cried out, “They never cared for me... no one did...” She let out another anguished cry, her body curling in on itself as if she could protect herself from the pain eating away at her insides. “I’m worthless. It should have been me that died! It should have been me, not Anna!”

Levi’s eyes widened at her words. He reached out, ignoring the uncertainty, and knelt down in the mud beside her. Without hesitation, he placed both hands on her shoulders, urging her to look up at him. “Y/N, look at me.”

She shook her head, still looking down as she kept crying.

“Look at me,” he said again, more forcefully this time.

Reluctantly, Y/N lifted her head, her tear-filled eyes meeting his. She looked utterly lost, broken in a way that pierced through him.

“You’re not worthless,” Levi said, his grip on her shoulders tightening as if he could hold her together. “Do you hear me? You’re not.” He leaned in closer, his eyes searching hers for understanding. “You matter more than you know, and Anna... Anna wouldn’t want you to feel this way. She wouldn’t.”

“But—” she started, but he cut her off.

“No,” he interrupted. “You don’t get to say that. You can’t blame yourself for what happened. Anna made her choices. None of this is on you.”

Y/N shook her head, a painful smile tugging at her lips as tears continued to run down her face. Her hands clenched into fists, and she let out a shuddering breath. Almost a laugh, though there was no humor in it.

“You never thought I belonged here anyway. You told me I wasn’t strong enough from the beginning!” Her words were harsh, cutting deep as she tried to push back against him. “I only got in because the Scouts needed more people. You made sure I knew that, didn’t you?”

Levi’s expression tightened, as he searched for the right words to say. “I said that because I didn’t want you here. Not because you weren’t good enough, but because... this life... it’s not for people like you.”

Y/N let out a bitter, shuddering laugh, her tear-streaked face twisting with anger and grief. “People like me? So, what, I wasn’t worth enough to be here?”

Levi's hands tightened slightly on her shoulders, and he looked her dead in the eye. "You don't get it, do you? I've lost more people than I can count. People who deserved to live a hell of a lot longer than they did. And every time I have to watch someone die, I know it could've been prevented if I'd just... if they'd just chosen a different path." He took a deep breath, his voice rough.

Her anger and grief faltered for a moment, confusion crossing her face. "Then why didn't you just say that?" she demanded, her voice breaking slightly. "Why did you have to make me feel like I was nothing?"

Levi's expression hardened, his jaw clenched as he wrestled with his words. "Because maybe if I made you feel like nothing, maybe you'd walk away. Choose something safer. But you're too damn stubborn to take a hint, aren't you?"

Y/N was too drained to keep fighting. The weight of everything. Her pain, her grief, Levi's words, left her exhausted, barely holding herself together. She looked down, focusing on the mud beneath them, as she struggled to catch her breath. She didn't have the energy to argue anymore.

Levi watched her closely, feeling the slight shudder of her shoulders in his grip before he loosened his hold, letting his hands drop as he strode up. He took a slow breath, as though choosing his words carefully.

"I don't know what happened in there while I was gone," Levi said. "But whatever they told you... don't let it sink in. They're not the ones out there, fighting beside you. They don't know what you're capable of, and they sure as hell don't get to decide your worth."

Y/N kept her head down, her fists unclenching slowly as his words settled over her. She didn't have the energy. Her parents' disappointment had burrowed deep, leaving scars she wasn't sure would ever fade.

For a moment, there was only silence between them, broken only by the sound of rain and Y/N's breathing, which had started to steady.

"Get up," Levi said at last, his voice softer than usual but still resolute. "I'm not leaving you here like this." He extended his hand to her, ready to help her up.

Y/N glanced from his hand to his face, her expression filled with pain, but he kept his hand extended. "You can hate me all you want. But stand up. I don't care what you think right now, but sitting here, drowning in grief—this isn't what Anna would've wanted. It's not what anyone would want for you."

She hesitated, then reached up to take his hand. Levi pulled her to her feet, their hands lingering for a moment. He looked into her eyes, still red and puffy from crying, and his expression softened. But just as the moment deepened, he glanced away, breaking the connection.

"Your cloak's ruined," he said, taking it off and putting his own over her shoulders. "You're soaked and covered in mud. You'll catch a cold if you stay like this."

Y/N blinked, surprised by the gesture. The weight of her grief still pressed down on her, but Levi's small act of kindness made her feel a bit lighter.

“Get moving,” he said. “We need to find somewhere for you to clean up.”

Chapter End Notes

I tried my best to capture the dependency that can develop in toxic relationships. Hope I did well.

Anyways next chapter takes place at a hotel soooooo get exited 🙄🙄

Thank you so much for reading 💖

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