An Unlikely Alliance

by Monsoon

Summary

When Scouting Legions main trading partner, Wall Maria, is experiencing economic strain from constant attacks by the neighboring kingdom Titan, the leaders of the two nations come to an agreement: Scouting Legion will provide military protection in exchange for land and financial aid for the still growing nation. Their new alliance will be sealed with the union of King Jaeger's son Eren to the Scouting legions strongest soldier, Lance Corporal Levi. But how will the cold, impassive soldier warm to his new husband, who is far from the weak, spoiled princess he was expecting?

Notes

This is set in an AU where Wall Maria, Scouting Legion and Titan are all separate kingdoms. Scouting Legion is a relatively new nation with a strong military and small economy, but its rapidly growing, whereas Wall Maria is a pretty old kingdom with a strong economy.

There are mentions of past erejean, which I removed from the tags because it otherwise appears among the erejean fics, but there is no jealousy or love triangles or any of that jazz. They are close friends now and on great terms.

EDIT: So this fic was my first attempt at writing and my oldest. It is riddled with spelling,
punctuation, and grammatical mistakes not to mention gratuitous use of the word 'brat' (I'm so sorry. so so sorry.) that I don't have the time to go back and edit so I just wanted to give you all a heads up in advance. Sorry for all the mistakes, God knows I've improved since.

Fanart by magickitt here, here, and here
A gorgeous comic from Chapter 6 by caprette here and here!!
A Treaty Between Kingdoms

Levi glowered out the limousine window, arms crossed over the buttons of his crisp suit and teeth grinding is barely contained fury.

“You better have finished sulking by the time we arrive.”
Levi turned his steel grey eyes towards the tall blond man seated across from him in the spacious limo. He didn’t need to speak, his eyes flashed dangerously.

“Silent treatment? Really now?” Erwin shook his head with the long suffering resignation Levi had grown accustomed to be reserved just for him, “Keep up your immaturity and the age gap won’t be as noticeable as you’re so adamant to believe it is.” Levi practically vibrated with barely suppressed anger. How was it that Erwin could talk him down into feeling like a child despite being the same age as him like not even his parents had been able to?

“I swear to fucking God Erwin if you think I need an open space to tear you limb from limb you’ve seriously underestimated me.” Levi’s voice was deceitfully level, but the look of murder he was sending Erwin had left many fearsome men cowering in fear. Erwin, however, had long grown accustomed to Levi’s less than pleasant bedside manner.

“Just get this out of your system now, once we arrive I expect you to be completely agreeable and diplomatic. Don’t ruin an opportunity that will benefit our nation just because you couldn’t muster some professionalism over what you perceive as a petty betrayal.”
Levi closed his eyes and took a deep breath. He wasn’t sure when it happened, but never before had he so deeply regretted whatever misstep he had taken somewhere in the past that had allowed Erwin to be able to say and do the things he did to Levi and get away with it. Any other person dared say the things he did to Levi, and they wouldn’t live long enough to regret their impudence. Well, anyone except that shitty-glasses too. Fuck, if he’d known associating with those two shithheads would land him in his current predicament, he’d have taken flipping burgers over the life of crime back when he’d had the option. Levi thought back to the conversation yesterday morning, when this had all begun…

The day before

“What’s this about, Eyebrows. I have shit to do; this had better be important.” Levi snapped, closing the large mahogany door of Erwin’s office behind him.
Erwin smiled genially, and motioned for the chair opposite him in an invitation to sit before steeping his fingers before his face in a gesture Levi thought was eerily reminiscent of scheming super villain.

“As you know I’ve been away the past few days in Wall Maria on business. The meeting was extended because of a… proposition put forward by King Jaeger regarding the relationship between Wall Maria and the Scouting Legion, with an interest in strengthening our ties. As you know, their kingdom is incredibly prosperous and our largest trading partner.” Levi’s eyes narrowed as he processed the words. Erwin was a strategist, a diplomat and a leader, and very good at all three. It was an indisputable fact that without his leadership, the Scouting Legion could never have risen to prominence with the speed and efficiency that it had, nor have reached its status as a strong military nation despite its size. However, he usually reserved the fancy elocution for his politician buddies, and what he was doing now Levi instantly recognised as one of the tactics Erwin often employed when trying to convince someone to see something a particular way. This
could not be good.

“Quit shitting around and spit it out. Whatever you’re getting at, I’m not going to like it and you fucking know better than to think you can convince me otherwise.” Levi deadpanned warily.

Erwin pursed his lips, blue eyes watchful, and Levi could practically hear the gears whirring in his head as he mentally considered alternative approaches. After a moment he sighed and leaned back in his fancy custom made and imported leather office chair, fingers tapping the armrests.

“Wall Maria has been experiencing ongoing conflict with Titan as you’re well aware. In their bid to expand their kingdom, Titan has set it’s sights on Wall Maria, for obvious reasons considering their agricultural and mining prosperity. Their attacks, while not exactly crippling, have been frequent enough to make a blow to Maria’s productivity and hence have taken quite the toll on its economy in the last few years.” Levi nodded along, none of this was surprising or new, all general knowledge. Titan wasn’t exactly an issue for the Scouting Legion, which despite being smaller, had a superior military so any conflict would undoubtedly end with a Scouting Legion victory. Wall Maria however had no such advantage, and Levi could see how this would also be an issue for the Scouting Legion in the long run. An economically drained Wall Maria would not be a strong trading partner which would have a detrimental effect on the Scouting Legion in turn. If Levi was understanding correctly, what Erwin was getting at was clearly some form of alliance or cooperation between the two nations to address this threat. What he couldn’t understand was why Erwin was walking on eggshells around Levi as if this should offend him on a personal level.

“So King Jaeger suggested an alliance of some form?” Levi prompted “on what grounds? I suppose from us it would be military support of some kind and protection, but what are we receiving, other than the assurance of their ongoing economic growth and future dealings with us?” Erwin hummed in confirmation of Levi’s query, but the heavy silence of the un-dropped bomb hanging between them remained, and Erwin’s obvious unease to broach the topic was starting to make Levi antsy, and when Levi got antsy…

Suddenly the office door slammed open, making Erwin blink in surprise and Levi instinctively reach for the handgun at his waist.

“The fuck-!”

“YOU DIDN’T TELL HIM YET DID YOU?!” Hanji froze in the doorway, panting heavily as if they had sprinted here. Levi supposed they probably did, judging by the frantic, urgent gleam in their eyes as they darted between the two men and the wild chaos that was their messy ponytail. Hanji’s eyes turned to assess Levi, who scowled darkly at them.

“The hell is wrong with you shitty glasses? Do you want to get shot?” Hanji simply sighed in relief, visibly sagging as they relaxed, apparently ignoring his words.

“Oh thank god, I thought I missed the show!” Hanji strode over to where Erwin sat, still apparently still recovering from their dramatic entrance, and swatted him on the shoulder “Erwiiin! I told you to make sure I was here before you told him! Why would you make me miss out on something like this?”

“Miss out on what?” Levi growled, he didn’t like not knowing things. He especially didn’t like not knowing something he was clearly involved in, especially if both Erwin and Hanji already knew, and the fact that it was clearly unnerving the never-fazed Erwin and exciting the lunatic Hanji was making all of Levi’s internal alarm bells go off.

“Hanji calm down. I figured this was something Levi wouldn’t appreciate an audience for, not to mention it would be most respectful to inform him privately” Erwin replied to Hanji exasperatedly.
“Don’t you think you’d need a little back-up? You think he’s going to take this without some form of violent outburst. I’ll help retrain him!”

“For fuck sake, will the both of you shitstains tell me what the fuck is going on or do I need to carve the truth out of you two?” Levi slammed both hands down on the desk with a bang and levelled his deadliest stare at the two in front of him. “Spit it the fuck out already!”

Hanji bit their lip and retreated behind Erwin, “See now you made him angry. And you didn’t even take his gun off him” They tutted “For a military strategist, you have next to no self-preservation!” Erwin eyed the gun at Levi’s waist warily, “Okay Levi, I apologise. Please sit back down and take a deep breathe” He sent Hanji a silencing glare “You see the alliance between Wall Maria and the Scouting Legion really wasn’t supposed to concern you on a personal level, but one of the conditions proposed by King Jaeger involves you.” Levi blinked uncomprehendingly. “You see, in exchange for our protection, King Jaeger has promised a significant annual payment, as well as handing over an eastern strip of their territory to us. This area is fertile and will aid us in developing our own agricultural endeavours.”

“Where am I involved in all this?” Levi asked, getting frustrated, “I don’t care about the technicalities, will you stop beating around the bush and just tell me what is directly related to me?”

Erwin nodded, “Hear me out, I’m getting there. You see, Hanji was with me for this meeting, and as our head advisor, they also agreed these conditions” Hanji nodded from her position behind Erwin, but there was something glinting in her eye, something that had Levi subconsciously scanning the room for every available escape route. “However, both parties ultimately agreed that although it was one thing to sign a treaty and make it legitimate on paper, there would be a need for some form of real-life display of our alliance to make it official in the eyes of the public.” Levi understood; that made sense. Something physical and visible that the people could feel emotional invested to earn their support. But again, how did this involve..?

“No!” His sharp tone even surprised him. Hanji and Erwin flinched and turned stared at him in confusion.

“Levi?”

“I’m not moving anywhere.” He said resolutely. Hanji stared, confused, until his words seemed to register. There was something in his eyes, something uncharacteristically vulnerable, and they understood immediately. Levi thought one of the conditions for the alliance was his relocation. Erwin might have been a brilliant commander and soldier, but it was no secret that Levi was their strongest. Levi had a dark past, and he had finally found a place where he was accepted in the Scouting Legion military. Hanji glanced at Erwin who looked back at them, and they saw he had come to the same realization as them. They both shared a smile, and when Erwin spoke again, his voice was warm, reassuring and had changed from the tone of Levi’s commander to that of his friend.

“You aren’t going anywhere Levi.” He chuckled gently, his sharp gaze not missing the way Levi’s shoulders immediately lost part of their tension.

“Honestly, do you think we’d trade you over that easily? Without Wall Maria, our economy might crumble, but without you, Titan will sweep in here and decimate us!” Hanji piped up jokingly, but the tenderness behind their voice was clear. Levi scowled at their shared tender smiles, as if he were a child to be reassured. God damn it they thought his fear of being sent away was sweet. He fashioned back his previous mask of angry detachment.

“No, fortunately you aren’t going anywhere.” Erwin sighed.
Although slightly reassured at the words, Levi knew the storm had yet to pass “But..?” he demanded.
Erwin opened his mouth to speak, those stupid eyebrows arched in worry, and an uncomfortable smile on his face, but before he could get the words out, Hanji jumped forward with arms wide, wiggling their fingers in what Levi assumed was supposed to be an attempt at celebratory spirit fingers and interrupted with a characteristic ear-splitting screech.

“YOU’RE GETTING MARRIED!”
Hanji's rationale surprisingly convincing when she's not cackling like a maniac. Levi decides no man or woman will ever tie him down. Erwin admits to fantasizing about Levi's love life in the dullest way possible, and Levi prepares himself for the coming ordeal in the only way he knows how.

Levi's glare flickered between Hanji and Erwin before finally settling on the sanest of the pair. He decided to give Erwin the opportunity to salvage the situation before he reacted properly.

"Consider your next words wisely, Eyebrows. I'm armed, you're not." he warned. Erwin nodded, as if appreciating Levi's generosity.

"It was agreed that a marriage alliance between our nations would be a wonderful way to formally seal the treaty." Erwin explained. Levi forced himself to calm his breathing, but didn't respond, arching his thin eyebrows to signal Erwin to continue. Seemingly satisfied that Levi was not going to make a move to reach for his gun yet, Erwin continued in his diplomat voice "Obviously I would have been the initial choice but.." Erwin raised his left hand and flashed his gold wedding band meaningfully "Now you on the other hand are well known throughout all the kingdoms. I don't exactly have brothers or sons, and you are second in command..."

Levi nodded thoughtfully, and Erwin blinked, caught off guard by his easy acceptance. Hanji looked on equally bemused as he uncrossed his legs and rose, smoothing down his dress pants and readjusting his cravat. "Well then" He began, clearing his throat "Now that you two have sufficiently wasted my time spewing your utter bullshit, I'm going to leave and return to abusing the recruits, and we're going to pretend this conversation never happened." Levi made a move to leave and Erwin rose.

"Levi wait, this was agreed on both sides, and it's a small price to pay for the prosperity and growth of scouting Legion. You understand how politics work; it's as much about appearances as it is about the underlying currents. We all have to play our part."

"Why the fuck should I be involved in this?" Levi snarled, whirling around, his cool facade instantly disappearing. "This politics of your should remain just that, who the fuck even does marriage alliances any more?! it's a fucking archaic! How the fuck does a marriage between two fucking strangers in anyway cement something like a military alliance between two fucking nations? And why should I have to shoulder the results of your shitty, illogical excuses for negotiations?" Erwin's look of calm acceptance pissed Levi off more than it should. of course he afford to be so accepting, he just got the deal of a lifetime! He could feel his anger bubbling up, and his hand instinctively twitched for his gun in a knee-jerk reaction, but he clenched his fist instead.

"Levi, I want you to understand that this doesn't have to affect your lifestyle." Erwin said. Levi shot him a look of disgusted disbelief.

"How the fuck will marriage not affect my lifestyle, Erwin?" He demanded. Hanji stepped forward, hands raised in a gesture Levi wasn't sure is was meant to look like surrender or an attempt to
placate an startled animal.

"Levi, no one expects you to drop everything and become a doting husband, you can still sleep around with whoever. Hell, you don't even have to sleep in the same room, or even talk to them for that matter. You guys just have to turn up to big formal events arm in arm, smile a little, fake it till you make it for appearances sake! A year or two down the line, people will get over you. It's a publicity stunt to garner public support; I realize you hate having to deal with the media attention and just people in general, and we are asking a lot of you, definitely more that we have any right to." Hanji approached slowly, eyeing him earnestly. Levi couldn't argue with what they'd said. Would it really be so difficult, comparing the short term costs with the long term benefits? it was a decision hardly worth consideration. A little extra spotlight for a while, attending the some boring functions with the same person instead of a different model or escort every time? It wasn't a great sacrifice, especially given it was for the good of a nation. Levi sighed, frowning down at his clenched fists. Like Hanji said, he didn't even have to talk to them. This was a princess, she'd probably grown up pampered and spoilt, and would be as open to the idea of an arranged marriage as he was. It was probably an unspoken agreement that they would never even speak to each other until it was time to attend some formal event.

Erwin had remained silent as Hanji had spoken, but ever the businessman, he could only give so long for Levi to come to terms with his internal struggle before he was launching back into politics. "Levi I will owe you a thousand times over for this, you've made many sacrifices for Scouting Legion, and the debt will never be repaid, but thank you, really. I hate to bring this up now, but we're expected in Wall Maria by tomorrow evening for a formal conference to finalize everything..." Erwin left the sentence hanging as if he'd asked Levi for another favour, his face apologetic. As if Levi had a choice.

"I fucking hate you, Eyebrows. You know that right?" His voice was exhausted, like he was reasserting the fact more out of obligation than any real resent.

Erwin nodded, his eyes crinkling and he smiled, "Go get some beauty sleep you look awful, you might not be seeing kid tomorrow, but you still need to leave a good impression on everyone else."

Levi's head snapped to face Erwin immediately "Kid."

"What?"

"You said kid." Levis voice was dangerously low, "How fucking old is this brat?"

Erwin shifted and chuckled awkwardly, scratching the back of his neck. he clearly hadn't meant to let that slip. "Erwin." Levi's voice was forceful.

"They might be nineteen." Levi closed his eyes.

"What does might be mean." he asked, voice dangerously quiet.

"No it's definitely nineteen. They're nineteen." Erwin smile was sheepish. Levi did that maths in his head. Thirteen. The brat was thirteen years his junior. A fucking child bride. When Levi was twenty-one, the kid would have been eight. Levi thought of the newest recruits he was in charge of overseeing, most of them were around that age, and they still stumbled around on baby deer feet, tearing up when Levi yelled abuse at them that older soldier had long since grown accustomed to. Fuck.

"I'm gonna rip off your fucking eyebrows and choke you with them." Levi seethed.
Hanji who had been sitting at the opposite end of the limousine furiously tapping away on her laptop in silence finally groaned and stretched their back, before shuffling down towards where the two men were seated. They closed their laptop and fixed Levi with an unnervingly wide grin.

"What?" He muttered reluctantly, almost entirely sure he would regret asking.

"I just never thought the day would come when I would get to see my sweet Levi getting married!" Hanji pretended to wipe away a tear and laughed loudly at Levi's expression of disgust.

"I had imagined under very different circumstances though." Erwin mused, and Levi fixed him with a look of disbelief.

"You imagined?" he asked sceptically, making Erwin laugh.

"Actually Hanji, Mike and I contemplated it once a while ago. Well, maybe not you getting married, but settling down." Levi shook his head.

"You guys been talking about me behind my back?" Levi pretended to look hurt and rolled his eyes.

"We were wondering what kind of person would finally make you consider stop sleeping around and devote yourself entirely to them." Levi barked a dry laugh.

"And what did you come up with?" Levi asked, curiosity peaked despite himself.

"I suggested playboy bunny but Mike very wisely pointed out you would sleep with all her friends at the first opportunity." Hanji supplied. Levi hummed and smiled at the fantasy that inspired.

"Oh Christ stop it, we're on our way to meet your future spouse have some decorum." Erwin chastised, and Hanji laughed.

"In the end we had no idea and decided you were destined to be an emotionally constipated recluse with commitment issues." Hanji said with an exaggerated look of sympathy aimed his way. Levi huffed. *Emotionally constipated*. He couldn't refute that. "But I have to admit, you're gonna have your hands full with this one." Hanji continued, wagging their eyebrows and tapping the surface of their laptop conspiratorially. Levi frowned. Hanji had convinced Erwin to not tell Levi anything about his betrothed, or even show him a picture, despite Levi's colourful protests and death threats.

In the end he'd resigned to the fact that it didn't really matter in the end. He didn't care, he certainly had no intention of forming any sort of attachment to them, or even getting close to them so looks and personality hardly mattered. Although Hanji's words did stir some apprehension and suspicion. Levi had learned to associate that particular gleam Hanji's eyes got as they spoke with foreboding, and was justifiably concerned. They'd be hideous, he decided. Besides, he'd seen the King on multiple occasions. Grisha Jaeger might have presented an imposing figure, but not necessarily an attractive one. Levi had never seen his late wife, who had died years ago, and although he'd heard she had been stunning, he could hardly expect a lookalike. He silently mourned the loss of attractive dates to all future formal engagements, which, aside from the free drinks, really had been the only thing to look forward to at all the boring balls, dinner parties and functions.

At least this would be quick. They'd flown over on a 7am flight, and would meet Grisha and his council for the signing of the treaty and to talk over any other issues. Levi would meet his father-
in-law, he couldn't help pulling a face at that, but not his fiancee, who probably wouldn't attend such important, dull, old people meetings. Probably still at school. Would they supply alcohol? He glanced at his watch. 12.23pm, that was acceptable right? He could always pretend it was in celebration of his approaching marriage rather than because he honestly believed the only way he could make it through today was if he was too shitfaced to process anything. Okay that was his game plan. Levi nodded to himself resolutely and fished a silver flask from the inside pocket of his coat. Better start now, give it time to kick in. He steadfastly ignored Erwin's look of disapproval as he sculled the contents of the flask. He'd even dressed up at Erwin's insistence in a crisp black suit and shiny dress shoes, and besides, he was pretty sure he'd fulfilled his favour quota for this lifetime and then next with this sham marriage. As far as he was concerned, Erwin could take his resigned disapproval and shove it up his ass, this was a coping mechanism.
Mission Infiltration

Chapter Summary

Grisha is a dick, and Eren refuses to go down quietly. He has one last opportunity to disobey his controlling father, and he has every intention of making a song and dance out of it. Or at the very least, just a song. Having been told he isn't allowed to attend the final meeting between King Jaeger and the Scouting Legion contingent, Eren has to get creative if he wants to catch a glimpse of the man he's forced to marry.

Chapter Notes

A wild Eren appears!!
Again, please comment if you see any points I can improve on, anything at all. I value all feedback! I'm a lonely person and your comments and kudos make me so happy:

“The Scouting Legion contingent just landed. The car journey here should take approximately an hour, after which they will join your father in the private balcony of the entertainment wing for the initial stages of the conference.” Annie’s impressive military past had made her the ideal personal bodyguard in Grisha’s eyes, but Eren would be lying if he said he didn’t have a soft spot for the monotonous, blank faced bodyguard. He liked to think she returned the affection.

“Alright!” Eren turned to face Armin, who was draped across the sofa wearing his usual expression of apprehensive acceptance “I guess it’s time to put mission infiltration into motion then.” Armin sighed and arched a brow as he watched Eren pace around the room rubbing his hands together. Of all the reactions he’d expected from his hot-headed friend on hearing the news of his betrothal, and then on top of that the fact that he wasn’t allowed to attend the finalizing conference even to meet his fiance, this was probably the healthiest and least destructive by far. Granted he’d smashed a prize vase or two, engaged in a heated shouting match with his father and threatened legal action, before finally locking himself in the private swimming pool for hours; but when he’d finally emerged dripping wet, green eyes glinting wickedly with determination, Armin knew Eren had progressed from his temper tantrum stage, which meant he had bigger problems than mere property damage. Eren had a plan, and for once Armin wasn’t completely averse to it.

“I’ve got to hand it to you, this is probably one of the least ridiculous plans you could have thought up. I’m impressed.” Armin fingered the collar of his dress shirt “Of course he’s still going to kill you, you are deliberately disobeying him, albeit in a very roundabout way.”

“Armin, my dad has sold me off to one of the most dangerous men in existence, I’ve accepted my fate. Besides, I just want to see the guy.” Eren grinned at his weary best friend, but Armin had known him long enough to recognise the resignation in his usually lively gaze. Armin had grown up with this boy, and he had long since known better than to take his joking and nonchalant attitude at face value. He was just trying to make light of a terrible situation, and knowing him, probably more to reassure Armin than himself.
They were currently bundled into the dressing room behind the stage of the luxurious entertainment wing of the palace. The ballroom was reserved for larger, grander, public occasions, while this section was usually for more intimate functions or to entertain foreign dignitaries and elite guests. There was a quiet knock at the door, and Annie let Mikasa into the room. She was already dressed in her sharp black uniform in preparation for the meeting.

“Eren.” Mikasa somehow managing to convey in the single word all her apprehension, anger, and resignation at the whole situation. Her dark eyes were sad but maintained their hard glint, and even Eren’s bright smile, however false, faltered briefly at the sight.

“What do you think?” He asked, turning in a full circle to show off his outfit. He wore tight black jeans that Armin had to admit accentuated his ass in the most flattering way, dress shoes and a barely sheer green dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows that brought out the vibrance of his viridian eyes. “Showy enough to piss off dad, but classy enough to get away with it.”

“You don’t have to keep up this act, Eren. You aren’t fooling anyone.” Her words were quiet, but she avoided his gaze. “I don’t even understand why Grisha won’t let you attend.” Eren sighed, closing his eyes as he braced for the inevitable argument.

“Yes you do. Because I’m his unreliable, wild problem child who he doesn’t even trust to attend the meeting discussing his marriage because he afraid I’ll be such a turn off that Scouting Legion would take their chances with economic ruin over me.” Eren had spent the better part of yesterday evening plotting a way to infiltrate the entertainment room. Although initially the sole aim was to catch a glimpse of the infamous Corporal Levi in the flesh, the plan had eventually evolved to also spite his father’s attempts to ban Eren from attending this conference.

“Eren, can you be more serious? Do you realise the situation you are in? The man you will be marrying?!” Mikasa’s voice was harsh and serious and something dangerous glinted in her eyes at her last words. Eren flinched, momentarily stunned into silence, but it wasn’t long before his familiar fire was back.

“What am I supposed to do Mikasa? We all knew this was going to happen eventually. Dad might as well have replaced me with Armin as his son. You’re expected to take over as head of security one day, and Armin is his personal prodigy and has a practically assured position as his head advisor. My only value to him is a bargaining chip to marry off. Yes I’m angry, I’ve been angry my whole life! Now that it’s actually happening, I’m just accepting that and trying not to think so hard about the fact that I’ll be even more alone now.” Eren’s voice faded to practically a whisper and Armin and Mikasa shared a look.

“Eren don’t say that! God knows if Mikasa and I could drop everything and follow you we would. I don’t even know how we’re going to survive without you. We grew up together and haven’t been apart for longer than a week since, you really think you moving four hours away would be too much for our friendship? Have a little faith in us Eren, I’ll fly to visit you as often as I can on my own dollar if I have to, and we both know Mikasa will drive to you if she has to.” Armin’s voice was measured but warm, offering what reassurance he could to his friend. “We’ll talk every day, and Skype every night, you won’t be alone. We’ll call you so often you’ll get sick of us.”

“You know about him, right?” Eren’s voice was uncharacteristically quiet. “About Corporal Levi? Mikasa was telling me….” Armin’s jaw clenched and he shot Mikasa a hard look.

“What did you tell him?” Mikasa returned his stare defiantly.

“The facts, Armin. The things no one else knows. I work in security, you think I haven’t heard the truth? He was raised in the underground and became a professional hit-man. He joined Erwin,
taking care of any dirty business that stood in the way of Erwin’s ascension that he couldn’t personally get involved with because of his political image. The only reason Scouting Legion has reached their point at the top of the military food chain is because of the Corporal’s underground connections. And why are you trying to hide that? Eren needs to be prepared! This man is violent, dangerous and clearly has nothing like a conscience!”

Armin sighed and dragged a hand down his face. Eren turned to look at him with a look so full of betrayal, it was heartbreaking.

“Of course she told me! Why wouldn’t she? Armin, what the hell?! Don’t tell me you’re hiding stuff from me. I have to marry this man, I have to leave everything behind and go to a foreign, militaristic country with him; how would you have had me learn about this psychopath’s secret murder sprees?” Eren was shocked and hurt. He understood why his dad left him in the dark. Didn’t agree with it, but he understood; his father was a grade-A dick, and viewed Eren more as a political pawn than a son. That was normal behaviour from him, but Armin was one of the few allies Eren had in this whole messed up scenario. He had known about the Corporal, and hadn’t mentioned that? If it wasn’t for Mikasa, Eren would have gone in blind.

“Eren, don’t look at me like that.” Armin’s voice was weary “He won’t hurt you, you are a prince. Anything he does to you would be practically a declaration of war. I didn’t want to worry you any more than you already were. He might not be a prince charming, but at the end of the day, you won’t be in harm’s way, so it made no sense to fill your head with unrealistic fears.”

“Don’t do that Armin. Maybe from your head advisors viewpoint, ‘worrying’ me would not have been strategically beneficial, but you are my friend. You have to tell me what no one else will.” Armin nodded, head bowed.

“I’m sorry, I just thought it was for the best. You’re right though, of course. I’m sorry.” Eren could never stand to see his cute little blond friend look so genuinely remorseful for long. The sombre mood in the room was stifling.

“I know. It’s okay, I know. Just be open with me, please. God knows I have enough people keeping things from me in my life. But anyway, you guys didn’t answer me. How do I look?” Eren had lined his eyes with dark brown and gold eyeliner to make his eyes stand out, and dusted his cheeks, collar bones and forearms with fine gold powder, making his skin almost glow. He looked amazing, like some kind of forest god. Eren had inherited his mother’s looks, with her tan skin, dark hair and infectious wide smile that lit up the room, but he’d gotten his father brilliant green eyes. Levi was a lucky, undeserving man.

Mikasa rolled her eyes and bit back a smile “You look good and you know it. Quit fishing for compliments.” She chastised good-naturedly, and Eren threw back his head and laughed.

“Okay, enough messing around” Armin said, adjusting to the role of ringleader, he turned to Annie “How much time do we have?”

Annie glanced at her watch, and back to Armin, her bored expression not waverin “The contingent is estimated to arrive within twenty three minutes. Greetings will take approximately three, the time to reach the entertainment room, taking into account small-talk, is five. Ultimately, they will be seated and prepared in approximately thirty four minutes.” Armin nodded as he absorbed the information.

“Okay Eren, you’re ready right? Head to stage in fifteen just so they have time to set up, and just in case anything goes wrong. Mikasa and I are expected to be there for the conference, but we’ll head off now so you can prepare.” Armin paused a heartbeat before cracking a smile. “I can’t believe
you’re doing this. Your dad is going to…” He shook his head, lost for words. Eren seized his shoulders and fixed him with a serious look which didn’t last long before his grin returned.

“Armin, this is going to be fantastic. Think of it as our last hurrah since married life will stifle my youth after this.” He turned to Mikasa “Both of you please tell me how dad reacts, consider it an early wedding present.” Mikasa wrapped him in a tight hug.

“Good luck Eren. You prove Grisha wrong for ever thinking they wouldn’t love you.” She murmured.

Armin grinned and gave Eren the thumbs up “Corporal Levi won’t stand a chance once he hears you. You’ll melt his heart of stone.”

Twenty-five minutes later…

The band was playing jazz while the stage was being prepared. Eren took several deep breath; he hadn’t felt this nervous about performing to a crowd since he was little. He’d been forced to take singing and dancing lessons since he was young, and had developed a love for performing. It was the only time he didn’t feel inadequate in the eyes of his dad and in comparison to the skilled Mikasa and the gifted Armin. For those few minutes, everyone’s eyes would be on him, and they wouldn’t see the disappointing prince, they’d see Eren Jaeger doing the only thing he was any good at.

Eren allowed himself a nervous chuckle, this would all end soon. There was no doubting the fact that the Corporal was a dangerous man. He might not directly hurt Eren like Armin assured, but it wasn’t Eren’s natural disposition to be submissive. He could play the devoted husband role only so long before his temper kicked in, and Levi sounded like a no-nonsense military man. Eren couldn’t forget that despite whatever Armin and Mikasa said, he would be essentially alone in Scouting Legion, and completely in the Corporals care.

Suddenly the sound of the announcer’s voice booming through the speakers snapped him out of his thoughts.

“Good evening folks, tonight you’re in for a pleasant surprise! There’s been a last minute reschedule of performance, but I promise you’re not going to be disappointed!” Eren bit back his smile. He could practically picture his dad’s eyes narrow dangerously as he turned to the stage. King Jaeger did not like surprises. He positioned himself behind the curtains and nodded his preparation to the stage hands. He heard the music begin and nervously tapped the microphone. Come on, Eren Jaeger, last hurrah. Just catch a glimpse of the Corporal give a performance even dad would be impressed by, and get the hell out. “Give a warm round of applause to our special guest tonight!”

The music swelled and the curtain began its ascent.

Eren took a deep breathe.
Pretty as a Prince(ss?)

Chapter Summary

Has Levi been drinking too much? It isn’t really an issue, since Erwin and Hanji are doing all the talking and he just has to sign wherever he’s asked to and shake a few hands. But this is his third glass of scotch, and he is slightly more mesmerised by the green-eyed youth on stage than a newly engaged man should have any right to be…

Levi isn’t a fan of Wall Maria customs. It’s all a little too proper and formal for his tastes, with all the social statuses, stiff upper-lips, and heavy emphasis on ‘etiquette’. It’s on occasions like these that he can truly appreciate the simplicity of the Scouting Legion lifestyle, where you earned your status through hard work rather than inheritance, and there was no added complexity of possibly offending someone because you held your cutlery wrong. He left the talking to Erwin and Hanji so far, only needing to talk when he was directly addressed and during introductions. The warm buzz of the whiskey had kicked in and made the whole greetings process and brief tour slightly more tolerable, but it didn’t completely conceal the fact that he just could not give a flying fuck that the marble birdbath was a family heirloom of the late Duke Montegrath who had it smuggled from his homeland during the civil war.

He needed more alcohol. Which was why he didn’t even regret the “fucking finally” he’d let slip when they’d finally reached the entertainment wing and he’d spotted the bar, despite the offended glance the king sent him and Erwin reproachful glare. Both parties were lead to a sunken area right before the stage that was sectioned off from the rest of the tables. The wing wasn’t too busy, with only a few other tables that were occupied by intimate groups. They hadn’t even been seated a few minutes before they were joined by a young man and woman. The boy, because really that’s what he was, had mushroom-like shoulder length blond hair, ridiculously large blue eyes and a heart-shaped face. The kid looked like a cherub in a suit, but there was something about the way his gaze swept over Levi, calculating and assessing, that warned Levi that there was more to him than met the eye. He had to keep an eye on that one.

His companion was a different story. A beautiful young woman of Asian descent that seemed to be in her early twenties and struck an imposing figure. Where the blond boy appeared outwardly harmless although his sharp gaze suggested otherwise, this woman was fierce and intimidating. Her dark gaze was openly hostile and full of suspicion as it swept the length of Levi’s figure, and only Levi’s, he realized, not any other members of the Scouting Legion party. His eyes narrowed in turn and he returned her glare in full force, admittedly miffed at the audacity of the kid.

“Gentlemen, may I introduce you to my lovely daughter, Mikasa. She’s well on her way to being something of Wall Maria’s own Corporal Levi!” King Jaeger’s voice was warm with pride as he twisted in his seat to better observe the quiet girl standing at attention behind him. His words were met by impressed murmurs of agreement from the men and women present, but Mikasa appeared not to have heard, her gaze remaining fixed resolutely on Levi.

“Well then.” He began, speaking up for the first time in a while, and immediately all the attention was on him “We should have a showdown sometime. The world’s not big enough for two of us.” He raised his half empty glass in a cheer, but was met with silence. The slight flex of Mikasa’s jaw however did not go unnoticed by him.
“Well Levi, I don’t think the world’s big enough for a showdown between two of humanities strongest either.” Erwin laughed in attempt at dissolving the tension, and the rest of the circle joined in hesitantly. Levi ignored the sharp look Erwin sent his way and turned to Hanji.

“I’m supposed to marry this bitch? She looks like she’ll take the first opportunity she can get to shank me in our wedding bed. Besides I thought you said she wouldn’t be here for the meeting” He hissed. Hanji looked confused for a moment and then suddenly burst into laughter, head thrown back and all.

“Oh gosh Levi, no! Not Mikasa! You’ll be marrying King Jaeger’s youngest.” They shook they’re head, tears glistening in their eyes “Wow imagine it was you two who were getting married! That’s a good one, really. That would start a civil war!” Levi ground his teeth and took a large swig of his scotch.

“Well damn it tell me this shit earlier, she’s been giving me the stink eye this whole time. And why the fuck don’t you just tell me about her sister already, what if I’d said something? I’d look like a complete fucking idiot, Four-eyes.” Levi’s harsh whisper was rewarded with a conciliatory pat on the shoulder.

“Her sister? Oh hun you crack me up. Why would I tell you anything when your cluelessness is this amusing!” Levi frowned and was about to angrily demand why they had said ‘sister’ the way they had, when he was interrupted by the sound of the announcer.

“Good evening folks, tonight you’re in for a pleasant surprise! There’s been a last minute reschedule of performance, but I promise you’re not going to be disappointed! Give a warm round of applause to our special guest tonight!” As everyone turned their attention to the stage, Levi settled back in his seat and grudgingly returned his attention to the empty glass in his hand. When did that happen? This was no good. This must be rectified immediately. Levi pushed himself out of the sofa with more difficulty than he’d initially expected. Erwin shot him a questioning look as he stood for a moment to gather his bearings, but Levi waved off his concern and displayed his empty glass meaningfully.


“Loosen up Erwin, this is my buck’s night. Get that stick out of your ass for fucks sake.” He wasn’t even that drunk. I mean, he had yet to start a fight, so he had no idea what Erwin was being so judgemental about

Levi manoeuvred his way out of the sectioned off area and made his way to the bar that seemed to beckon to him like an oasis. After giving it a critical once over to ensure cleanliness, he sank gratefully into the barstool, glad to finally be away from the constraining atmosphere of the conference. Soft violin music began to play from the stage behind him, but he focused his attention on wiping down the bar with his handkerchief before getting too comfortable.

Finally free of the stifling formalities, Levi raised his refilled glass in a grateful toast to the bartender, and turned his attention to the performance onstage. It didn’t appear to be anything too showy, probably intended more as a pleasant background music than something to be the sole focus of the audience. And pleasant it was, Levi realized. He’d never had a great interest in music, not even enough to have a preference for a specific genre, but when they boy onstage began to sing, Levi found himself abandoning his glass and unconsciously turning his body to face the stage. The stage lights were a mixture of green and blue hues, and there was artificial fog coating the stage floor in an ethereal blanket. The boy was stage centre, cradling the mike between both hands as if it might break under pressure. His voice rose with the violins, silvery but firm, and his eyes were closed, completely immersed in the moment. The song sent shivers up Levi’s spine, and
when the music swelled to a crescendo, the boy rose his head and finally opened his eyes. Emerald eyes stared out over the audience, sweeping the length of the room. He had boyish good looks, with tanned brown skin and messy chocolate brown hair that probably could only be tamed with a hot iron and hairspray. His dimpled smile was soft but genuine, but his eyes were his most striking feature; a startling deep blue-green against his brown skin. So unique, so why did they look so familiar..?

“You seem to be enjoying the show. I’m glad.”

Levi dragged his gaze from the stage and to the boy seated to his left. The devious mushroom. What was his name again? Was he ever even told?

“Armin Arlert.” The boy held out a hand as if reading Levi’s thoughts. He eyed the extended appendage distastefully before reluctantly shaking it.

“Levi.”

“Yes.” The Armin laughed “I’m sure everyone already knows.” Levi didn’t respond. He didn’t want company, and hoped the kid would take the hint and leave. “I had told him we were supposed to be seated in the private balcony. But he gets so caught up when he sings that he probably hasn’t even realized we’ve relocated.” The boy sighed, but seemed to be musing more to himself out loud than to Levi. He was watching the green eyed boy fondly.

“You know him?” Armin looked at him, surprised by the question or the fact Levi was even talking to him, he wasn’t sure.

“Oh yes! Sorry I forgot to mention, we’re childhood friends, and practically grew up together.” Why the hell should he have mentioned that? Levi arched an eye brow and gave him a sidelong look.

“Ah, finally. He’s looking for me.” Levi watching as the blond smiled widely and raised an arm to wave at the stage. The singer, whose gaze had been roving the audience, finally landed on them. He smiled at Armin, and then his gaze flickered to Levi.

Their eyes locked.

Levi wasn’t sure why he felt so ensnared by those eyes, but he couldn’t look away. The boy’s smile instantly vanished and his eyes flitted between Levi’s, and then along the length of his form, as if drinking in his appearance, before finally coming back up to meet his direct gaze. And he seemed to like what he saw too, because he smiled again, but this time it was a wicked smile that made Levi’s toes curl and a familiar heat grow in his belly. Then the boy winked, and Levi could barely help the responsive curl of his lips and he could just imagine the hungry look in his eyes.

The song ended and Levi realized that somewhere along the line he had stopped hearing the music. The boy graciously accepted the small applause, and gave a modest bow, before stepping back up to the mike.

“Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Also I’d like to take this opportunity to give the esteemed Corporal Levi my best on his engagement. Congratulations, Corporal!” And with a final lingering look at Levi, the boy walked off the stage.

Right. His engagement. Levi was engaged. In fact he’d been finalizing that very engagement not five minutes ago. And here he was eye-fucking a green-eyed brat he’d only just seen. Fuck.

“Um…” Levi was drawn back into reality by Armin’s awkward cough. “Well then…” Right, he
“We better head back to the others. They’ll be waiting.” He said as he stood up and Armin hurried to follow suit. “What’s a kid like you even doing at this conference?”

Armin smiled politely like he got asked this all too often “I’m actually one of King Grisha’s advisors as well as the close friend of both his children. I’m here to both advise the king as well as on behalf of Eren.” He answered. Eren. That must be the princess.

“That’s pretty impressive, kid.” Levi said, raising his brows appreciatively. This kid really was something else.

Everyone was standing when they got back, but he was quick to notice something off about their behaviour. Erwin and Hanji were exchanging barely suppressed amused glances, meanwhile the Wall Maria party members were looking shocked and uncomfortable. King Grisha had the most noticeably altered disposition, he was glaring daggers at the stage, his lips pressed into a furious thin line and his knuckles white the force of his balled fists. His eyes met Levi’s almost reluctantly, Levi noticed. He looked to Erwin and Hanji for an explanation, but none were forthcoming, with Erwin studiously avoiding his gaze and trying not to smile as he studied his cufflinks, and Hanji with a hand pressed to their lips, shoulders shaking with silent laughter and eyes glinting mischievously behind her glasses.

“Corporal Levi…” The king began, and there was unmistakeable hesitance in his tone “I must sincerely apologize on behalf of Wall Maria for what you just endured. You must understand I had no knowledge of such a…” The man shook his head, apparently speechless. What the fuck was going on?

“For what?” He demanded. His voice came out harsher than he intended, fuelled by his overall confusion and frustration over his ignorance of the whole situation. The king blinked.

“The unscheduled performance…? It was in very bad taste, I had no idea he had such an intention. And his behaviour, his audacity—”

“Was fine.” Levi interrupted. Really? That was what had the King’s panties in a twist? “It was all in good fun, and frankly I enjoyed it after such a dull day. The kid was damn decent too, you should cut him some slack.” Honestly, Levi had endured the atrocity of having under garments hurled at him in some sort of romantic gesture, and the King thought the singers little wink would cause Levi to break off the engagement? Levi’s gaze returned almost absent mindedly back to the stage, when he suddenly noticed Mikasa standing a little way off, observing him. He blinked in confusion, because for the first time since meeting her, her gaze was thoughtful instead of hostile.

Levi’s squad was waiting to escort Hanji, Erwin and Levi back to their limousine after the final meeting. Despite an invitation by the King to extend their stay and take the opportunity to relax and enjoy Wall Maria before returning to Scouting Legion, Erwin had politely refused the offer and asked for a raincheck.

“How did it go, Corporal?” Erd was the first to ask. Gunther would never dream of making small talk while on duty because he’d deem it unprofessional, and Auruo would never be the first to start a conversation because that’s not what Levi would do, and it was no secret who he was trying to imitate. Petra was on indefinite leave and it didn’t take a detective to deduce why. It had been about a year since she’d married Erwin, and since it had been clear for the first few months she had no reservations about being a married woman and continuing her work in Levi’s squad, her sudden
withdrawal could only mean one thing. Levi would be lying if he said he didn’t resent Eyebrows for stealing one of his favourite squad members.

“I’ve taken more entertaining shits.” Levi muttered, “Why the fuck couldn’t they just mail us the documents? What a complete waste of time.”

“Don’t say that, Levi!” Hanji beamed as Gunther opened the limo door for them “If they’d done that you would never have seen that exquisite fine ass on stage!” Erwin chuckled at her words.

“I’m pretty impressed. You actually complimented the kid too.”

“The hell are you shitting on about. If I hadn’t said anything, the king would’ve probably fired his ass.” Levi defended as he slid in last, and nodded his thank you to Erd. His very fine ass.

“That’s even more impressive. Since when did you care whether or not some ‘random’ person lost their job or not?”

“Tch.” Levi glowered at Erwin “What is this, the Spanish inquisition? Remind me to never do someone a favour again.”

“Isn’t it obvious, Erwin? Since that someone happened to have an adorable smile and gorgeous eyes! Why i think you could even say he was as pretty as a princess! Or should I say prince?” Levi didn't understand why Erwin could barely contain his annoyingly loud laughter at that, it wasn't even funny. Hanji turned to grin at Levi and patted his knee “it’s okay Levi, I understand”

“Don’t fucking touch me with your disgusting hands, Four-Eyes. Christ.” But Levi had to turn his head to face out the window so Hanji’s sharp gaze didn’t catch the tell-tale upward twitch of his lips.
High Hopes

Chapter Summary

Eren packs for his permanent sleepover at Levi’s. There is a heart-wrenching goodbye between father and son (not). And finally the long awaited meeting occurs, but maybe Eren really had over-romanticized this entire situation in his head, because that was not what he had expected.

“I winked at my fiancé, who may or may not be a psychotic mass-murderer. Then I congratulated him on his engagement. To me.”

“On stage.” Armin added unhelpfully as he helped Eren sift through his wardrobe.

“But he was so hot.” Eren dumped an armful of clothes on the bed for his maid to fold and pack. Armin picked out three items from the stack and returned the rest back to their previous position in the wardrobe. “God I’m such an idiot. He must think I’m so lame. I think I’m lame. I want to break off the engagement just to spare him the trouble.” Eren lamented.

“Eren, have you completely forgotten everything I told you about the guy? You already knew what he looked like, you’re stressed about the wrong part of this marriage.” Mikasa shot him disapproving look from her position cross-legged on his bed where she appeared to be assembling some sort of assault rifle. “Besides, he wasn’t even that hot. Did you see how short he was?”

“Mikasa, do you have to do that in my room?” Eren began, watching it warily. She picked it up and aimed it his way, and he instinctively yelped and ducked behind Annie who was scrolling lazily through her phone next to him, ignoring what was going on around her. She was wearing tan pants, combat boots and a light grey hoodie, dressed casually for the day, but there was still the tell-tale bump of the glock strapped to her waist beneath the hoodie.

“It isn’t even loaded, dumbass” Mikasa smiled.

“Well he did compliment your singing.” Armin murmured almost absent-mindedly as he helped the maid fold Eren’s clothes.

“What?” Armin looked surprised by Eren’s exclamation.

“Yeah, didn’t I tell you? What was it that he said Mikasa? That you were damn decent or something?”

Mikasa grunted noncommittally and returned her attention to the deadly weapon in her arms with renewed vigour. Armin smiled and continued, “In fact he’s the reason King Grisha didn’t even flay you alive. Kind of gave him a little dressing down, don’t you think?” He addressed Mikasa again with the last part but she pretended not to hear. Eren seemed lost in his own thoughts as he attempted to fold a sweatshirt, a slight frown pinching between his eyebrows. Armin pursed his lips to hide a smile before gently removing the garment from Eren’s hands and properly folding it himself.

“Don’t think too hard, Eren. You’ll pull something” He teased.
“Mikasa’s right, I am a dumbass.” He exhaled, slumping onto the edge of the bed and perching his chin on his hands petulantly. Mikasa arched a perfect brow and glanced at Armin. *Feelings are your territory,* the look said.

“I’m going to have to ask you to explain the reasoning that lead you to that conclusion before I can confidently agree.” Mikasa sniggered but Eren didn’t appear to hear. Well, this *was* serious. Eren appeared to really be putting thought into this one.

“I mean, all evidence points to the fact that he’s a psychotic jackass, even dad says he isn’t exactly ‘agreeable’ and in Marian that’s a very polite way of saying ‘total dickhead’, but here I am thinking that he complimented my singing and stuck up for me so maybe he can’t be that awful and I’m going to go there and he’ll turn out to be not so bad. I think he even smiled at me?” Eren pondered, remembering what he thought had been the tiny upward curl of the man’s mouth right after he had winked at him. Those steel grey eyes watching him intently. Or had that been a trick of the light? And had he been *glaring* intently? Or had that been a trick of the light? And had he been sitting quite far away…

“Eren, you can’t just judge him by what Mikasa has told you. You have to consider his circumstances; he *was* raised in the underground, there are certain things people have to do to survive down there, its every man for himself. He did work as a hit-man and some sort of black ops for Erwin, but this was when Scouting Legion was a developing nation still fighting for its independence. Everyone who was anyone during that time had some hand in the violence. He is a soldier, he is going to have some blood in his ledger.” Eren was drinking in his words like they were a life line, his green eyes so grateful for the reassurance that Armin felt good for putting it there. Eren had been protecting him since he was a child, too weak to defend himself from the boys that tore the pages from his books and called him cruel names, and for once Armin could protect him, even if it was just through words Eren needed to hear.

“…Or he really is just a psychotic dick.” Mikasa’s dry input shattered the moment and Armin threw her an exasperated look while Eren turned on her furiously.

“What is *with* you? Are you just jealous that he could kick your ass even though you’re bigger than him?”

“Why are you defending that pint-sized midget from me, when you haven’t even talked to the guy?! Chicks before dicks, Eren” Mikasa shot back.

“That applies between *girls.* Mika”

“It applies between sisters and their gay brothers too.” Mikasa insisted, prodding Eren’s chest with an index finger.

“Okay guys, that’s enough. Eren you need to pack.” Armin said, looking between the two squabbling siblings and waving his hands placating.

“Urgh!” Eren threw up his hands and stormed back over to the wardrobe. Armin and the maid looked at each other helplessly.

“Mikasa, Eren’s leaving tomorrow morning, can you two at least not try to fight in that time? You both know you’ll be stewing in guilt later.” Mikasa huffed, but peered remorsefully through her dark bangs at Eren as he haphazardly threw clothes over his shoulders and onto the bed.

“Yeah. Okay.”
The next morning…

Grisha Jaeger’s goodbye to his only son before he was sent away to another country to live with a stranger had been painfully in-character. “You’ll be representing Wall Maria, Eren, so don’t screw this up with your desperate bids for attention. Think of how Mikasa or Armin would act in your place, and do whatever needs to be done to meet your husband’s needs. Do not disappoint me.” A pat on the shoulder, not even a goodbye hug. Many in his place would have long since developed a resentment towards his sibling and best friend, but Eren had few allies in this world, and cherished his closest ones fiercely.

“Well, he killed two birds with one stone there. Got rid of his disappointing child and secured the perfect alliance in one shot. He’ll sleep soundly tonight.” Eren couldn’t help the biting sarcasm in his tone, and Armin was quiet beside him. The king’s attitude towards Eren sometimes even left the clever blond lost for words.

“Also Eren, in case you took any of that bullshit Grisha said to heart, do not do whatever you feel needs to be don’t to meet your husband’s needs. Levi has coped just fine on his own for the past fifty years or however long he’s been alive; if he needs anything he can get it himself, and not from you. You don’t owe that man anything, okay, and if you feel at any time even slightly threatened or uncomfortable, you call me and I will curb stomp his short ass so hard, there won’t be enough short jokes in the world that will do him justice.” Mikasa’s voice was firm, low and deadly, and Eren grinned gratefully and squeezed her hand.

“You know when you talk like that, Mika, I have no doubt in the world you probably could.”

“On that note, also do not do what Mikasa would in your place because killing Corporal Levi would start a civil war and that would be extremely inadvisable.” Armin added sagely.

Mikasa sucked her teeth “I disagree.” She muttered, but allowed herself a small smile when her two companions burst into laughter.

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Grisha had allowed Mikasa an Armin to accompany Eren to Scouting Legion, although he wanted Mikasa to return as soon as Eren reached the castle, because he “required her presence at the palace”. Armin, however, could stay the rest of the day until Eren was settled in, for which Eren was grateful. He felt a giant knot in his stomach at the prospect of being all alone in an unfamiliar place, and could barely consider life once Armin returned home. Annie would also be joining him permanently, which reassured him somewhat. Although she wasn’t exactly a warm person or one for comfort, her familiar presence alone would quell the homesickness to some extent. His father had also allowed two more bodyguards, Reiner and Berthold to join him later. Both were nice enough guys, who had known Annie since further back before she’d began working for Royal family, and if nothing else, Eren felt reassured that there would be more people as equally displaced as he was to keep him company.

The plane journey was painfully short, with Mikasa and Armin working overtime to distract Eren from their inevitable parting and Annie watching over them all with a keen eye but indifferent exterior.

“We’re here.” Armin breathed. They sat quietly in their respective seats as the private jet gradually ground to a halt on the tarmac, a stark contrast from minutes ago when the space had been filled with raucous laughter and merrymaking. No one wanted to leave this bubble. No one wanted to let the outside world and reality in, to ruin the illusion they had created.
In the end it was Annie who ushered them out, solemn and heads bowed, both Eren’s hands firmly clenched in his companions. There were three black sedans parked and waiting for them, with three familiar figures standing before them. Commander Erwin Smith; the tall, broad-shouldered blond; Leader of Scouting Legion; with his handsome, easy grin and warm blue eyes. Then there was Hanji Zoe; with they’re wild brown hair up in a messy ponytail and large rectangular glasses that gleamed as bright as their wide, almost manic smile. And lastly, there was Corporal Levi Ackerman; short, but well-built with lean, tight muscles tensed and ready to attack with deadly precision; his sleek black undercut falling across his forehead, and his sharp grey gaze piercing and watchful from an alabaster face wearing a mask of impassiveness that could rival Annie’s.

Eren’s gaze immediately flew to Levi’s, unsure but hopeful, and he saw the man’s narrow gaze widen fractionally as their eyes met. Grey eyes scanned his figure rapidly and flew back to his face. Eren couldn’t read the man’s poker face, but why was he feeling a sinking feeling as he tried to explain the Corporal’s indifference? Maybe he really had been imagining that smile the other night. His compliment had just been a polite, obligatory comment, and he had probably only inadvertently dissuaded Grisha from reprimanding Eren.

“Prince Eren Jaeger. It is our honour to finally make your acquaintance.” Commander Erwin’s deep voice pulled him out of his crisis, and he accepted his outstretched hand numbly and automatically. Nod, smile, respond “likewise,” he had to remind himself. “We have been eagerly awaiting your arrival, we’ve heard such great things about you.”

Eren blinked and arched a sceptical eyebrow “Um, I think you’ve got the wrong prince.”

Commander Erwin laughed politely, but Hanji burst into loud cackles and thumped him so firmly on the back that he stumbled forward a few steps. He saw Mikasa twitch protectively as her defensive instincts kicked in and he threw her a reassuring look.

“Oh my gosh he is adorable! Levi, can I have him?” Eren turned to look at Levi the same time Hanji did, blinking widely and awaiting his response. Levi watched him for a brief moment, as if seriously considering Hanji’s request, then he appeared to make his decision, turning away with an irritated sigh.

“Do whatever the hell you want, I have more important shit to be doing.” He threw callously over his shoulder.
Hatching a Plan

Chapter Summary

Eren did not sign up for this shit. After giving Levi a solid pep talk and getting to the root of his behaviour, Hanji hatches a scheme, and Levi is reluctantly and cluelessly dragged into it. Hanji really deserves wingman of the year award.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

What?
Wait, what?!

Eren felt his blood boil. The harsh sting of rejection and inadequacy were familiar feelings, but over time Eren had adapted to react with anger. Anger was comfortable and far more rewarding too, he had learned, than the many nights he had spent in the years shortly after his mother died, crying alone in his room after another day of disappointing his father. His anger was justified and destructive, and Eren did not owe his father anything less he had realized after years of silently taking his insidious abuse with his head bowed. But Eren was so done with being dismissed and treated like a burden. He was terrified of living in Scouting Legion; this was a ridiculous sacrifice for him to make, but he had accepted it and in fact had also been willing to put in effort with the Corporal. He had been willing to give him the benefit of the doubt, to leave his home behind and be open to learn their culture and assimilate, and he sure as hell would not be taking any crap for his efforts.

Eren stepped forward glowering, mouth opened to give the Corporal a piece of his mind, but Mikasa beat him to the punch.

“How dare you.” Mikasa’s voice was low and lethal. Eren didn’t have to see her face as she stepped protectively before him to know the expression she was wearing. It was the same one she wore the day he had been grabbed by two corrupt members of the Military Police who planned to hold him at ransom. The same expression she wore as she mowed them down, and then calmly holstered her weapon before checking over him for injuries like a mother hen. Eren watched her draw her handgun and hold it at her side.

There had been three men standing just a little further off, dressed in neat black suits, clearly security, but suddenly they had formed a semi-circle around Mikasa, guns drawn and aimed in warning. The air had suddenly grown very tense, and Eren wasn’t even sure anymore how a few dismissive words had evolved into an armed stand-off. He needed to say something, Mikasa would only listen to him now. Suddenly, The Corporal raised a hand, signalling his men to stand down, and slowly turned back to face Mikasa. He took two steps forward until they were standing barely two feet apart, and despite Mikasa towering ten centimetres over him, he still somehow managed to dwarf her.

“Holster your weapon, brat. You’re a thousand years too early to be challenging me.” He then turned and walked calmly back towards one of the waiting cars. “Let’s get going, we’ve wasted enough time here. Hanji, you’re with me.”
Hanji blinked beside Eren, hearing their name snapping them out of their stunned silence.
“Levi…?”

They turned back to look at Eren “Eren, please don’t be offended. Levi is a very standoffish and abrasive character, he’s past has that kind of effect. It’s going to take him a while to adjust to this new change, but I have no doubt that you are one of the few people he’d be able to adjust to. We hope to make you as comfortable as we can, I’ll see you back at the castle.” They winked at him, smiling apologetically, before scurrying off after the Corporals retreating form and diving into the back seat behind him.

“I’ll gut him.” Mikasa seethed, “Doesn’t he realize what you have to endure? How dare he treat you like that.”

“Did you bring your knife collection?” Eren asked.

“I still have the butter knife from the on flight meal.”

“Okay first of all, why do you still have the butter knife from the on flight meal, Mikasa?” Armin interrupted their plotting, alarmed “Secondly, let’s not do anything drastic, I mean, we already knew what the Corporal was like. Just give him a moment to adjust, like Hanji said; let’s not jump the gun just yet, guys.”

Erwin stepped forward behind him “Mr Arlert is right, and I deeply apologise on behalf of Corporal Levi, Eren. He really is his own character. I understand this is a very difficult transition for you to be making, and this whole situation is without a doubt far more taxing for you than it has been for anyone else, including Levi, what with you having to be uprooted from your home and sent to live in a foreign land surrounded by strangers. We will all be doing our utmost to make your new life here with us as comfortable and enjoyable as possible, but I’m afraid Levi isn’t a very trusting or sociable person by nature, and he will require some time to…adapt.” Commander Erwin was so handsome, with his chiselled jaw, blue eyes and godlike build, and when he spun his pretty words with his gaze so earnest and pleading, Eren couldn’t help but find himself nodding along absentmindedly. What was this? Hypnosis? Was this how he’d raised an entire nation almost single-handedly from the ground to where it was now, one of the most rapidly expanding new countries? Through the power of hypnotic eyebrows? Eren was willing to bet good money on it.

Mikasa glowered in the direction of Levi and Hanji’s shared car as it started up and began to roll out. She wouldn’t succumb so easily to Erwin’s Eyebrows, it seemed, so Eren gently tugged on her hand and gave her a small smile.

“Eren, I was thinking that you and Mikasa could share a car since she’ll have to head home as soon as we arrive, so you two can share what time you have left together.” Armin suggested “, I’ll ride with Commander Erwin behind you.”

Mikasa and Eren looked to each other and shrugged.

“Sounds good, Ar. We’ll meet you there.” Eren sighed, his voice heavy with fatigued.

Meanwhile, in Hanji and Levi’s car…

Hanji watched Levi from the corner of their eye as they waited for him to break the silence. They had anticipated this whole exchange to have gone very differently. The way Levi had watched Eren sing the other night; Hanji had never seen that expression on his face before, something more than
plain lust. Hanji wasn’t sure what they had been expecting when Levi realized his Cinderella from that night was actually his real-life Prince, but it certainly had not been this. When Levi appeared to not be about to make any attempts to say anything anytime soon, they decided to take the initiative.

“So… You going to talk about that, or was there a different reason you chose to ride with me instead of your hunky new beau?” Levi was quiet for a heartbeat, and Hanji was beginning to fidget at the prospect of an uncomfortably silent car journey. Silence made them nervous because it left things unsaid, and it was Hanji’s business to know things. It was their job, after all.

“I didn’t want to ride with Erwin and have him lording over me how crappy I am with social interactions. You know how he always fucking tries to tell me how to do things so I don’t appear so ‘hostile and jaded’.”

“Fair enough.” Hanji assented, “However, that doesn’t answer my question. Why did you say that to Eren, Levi?”

“Say what, Hanji? It wasn’t even that big a fucking deal, why is everyone so up in arms about it anyway?”

“I think you know why, Levi. It’s not necessarily what you said, so much as how you said it and the fact that it was literally the first thing you said to your husband after he had relocated all alone to the middle of nowhere to be with you. And you saw the way he was looking at you, Levi! Like you were his sun and stars; just waiting for approval or any small gesture of acceptance.”

“Tch.” Levi scowled darkly out the window, but Hanji saw the miniscule fall of his shoulders. That was guilt, which meant Hanji was hitting home. “Well, the brat knew what he was getting into. He’s heard of me, what did he expect? That I’d drop everything and coddle him?”

“Well no, not coddle, but certainly not outright dismiss!” Hanji rotated around in their seat so they were completely facing Levi, and he shuffled uncomfortably under the scrutiny. “You know, if this was some annoying, spoilt prince or princess that you were in no way interested in and had no chance of ever being, I would completely understand. You don’t ever put on airs and graces for people you don’t feel deserve it, but don’t you dare for one moment pretend you’re not interested in him. I saw the way you were watching him sing, and need I repeat, you complimented him and defended him against King Grisha, with no knowledge of who he even was at the time. So that was what, a sudden burst of uncharacteristic altruism?” Hanji sighed, and prodded Levi’s shoulder to try and provoke any form of response “I’m not Erwin, Levi. I’m not going to tell you off or tell you what to do now to fix this. You tell me why you did what you did, and I will understand and try and help you however I can. Talk to me.”

“Why the fuck did I agree to this? This whole fucking marriage idea was a mess! You should have made the marriage alliance between Eren and Mike or something. Fuck.” Levi’s frown depend and he carded long, slender fingers through his perfectly parted hair in frustration. Hanji was impressed despite themselves; that Eren could be evoking such an emotional reaction from the normally dispassionate Levi.

“Why? The only thing that’s changed between you signing the documents, and now is that you met Eren, which begs the question, what is it about Eren that is making you completely question this arrangement to this degree?”

“You said it yourself, Hanji. You saw the way he was looking at me. When I saw him sing, I admit, I was interested, but I knew nothing would come of it. I was getting married, I’d probably never see him again, and even if I did, we’d probably fuck, and then move on. You know the selling point of this whole marriage was just how uninvolved I would have to get. I thought I’d marry some princess who had grown up waited on hand and foot. I thought I’d hate her, and we
would only ever have spend extended periods of time together whenever we had to attend some event and keep up appearances.” Hanji frowned, uncomprehending.

“So instead, you ended up with Eren, who you admit you are interested in. Isn’t this good, Levi? You married someone you don’t hate, and you’d actually want to spend time with. What am I missing here?!” Hanji blinked when Levi exhaled loudly and thumped his fist on the leather armrest between them.

“The way he was looking at me.” Levi turned his head to meet Hanji’s gaze, and they backtracked at the helplessness they saw in them “I can’t give him whatever it is he’s hoping for. The kid is so fucking hopeful it’s ridiculous. I’m not husband material, hell, I’m not friend material, I don’t even fucking know what kept you hanging around. He doesn’t hate me, Hanji, like I expected him to. That would have made this so much easier. Instead he’s going to come in here all hopeful and starry eyed expecting some loving marriage, but I’m just gonna hurt him.”

“Oh hun…” Hanji’s heart was tearing apart for their friend. Their untouchable, self-assured, unfazed friend who was dreading his marriage because he was worried he’d hurt Eren. Levi’s backstory was no mystery to Hanji, they and Erwin were the only people who had known him long enough to know his past. How he’d lost all the people closest to him, and how he blamed himself for their deaths. Levi had a tendency to push away people who got too close, it was a defensive mechanism so that he never had to experience the pain of losing his loved ones again, and it was truly a wonder that Erwin and Hanji had managed to retain their place by his side at all. Hanji had watched Levi lash out at people, employing whatever means necessary to drive them away so they wouldn’t get hurt, because as far as Levi was concerned, they always got hurt. Pain was inevitable to anyone that got too close.

There was no point trying to convince him that people who got near him would get hurt, Hanji knew it was a futile battle. They would have to start off small, get Levi to stop pushing Eren away first, and hopefully, before he realized it, he wouldn’t want Eren to stay away.

“Levi, I understand, and I’m going to help you.” Hanji insisted. Levi turned to face them, eyebrows pinched in doubt. “I’ll be with you every step of the way, and so will Erwin, whatever you think. He might have a tendency to tell people what to do, and there will be times that he will tell you how to act because he thinks it will solve the problem, but you need to understand no matter what you do, he and I will be right here ready to help, no judgement. But you can’t take this out on Eren. I know you’re trying to keep him distant so he won’t get too entangled in your world and get hurt, but your situation is different now because you’re married. There’s only so far you can push him. He can’t go anywhere, Levi, and with you lashing out at him, he can only escape so far before he’s suffering because of you when you were trying to avoid that all along. You’re going to have to approach this a little differently if you want to keep Eren safe, and as uncomfortable as it makes you, it means you’ll have to get a little close.” Levi was watching intently now, drinking in her words. “Eren’s new to this world, and you’re going to have to protect him. He’s in Scouting Legion now, and you and I both know how very different Legion is from Maria. He’s going to have bigger problems than you for the moment, so while I understand your fears and I will help you keep them from coming true, we need to work together protect him from the more immediate threats, okay?” Hanji was relieved to see their advice seemed to be resonating strongly with Levi, because although he looked apprehensive and doubtful, he was nodding.

“How do I even do this though? My first words to him kind of fucked shit up already. I have no fucking clue how to even talk to the brat.” Hanji frowned, and took off their glasses and began to polish them while they considered this new issue.

“Well, as brilliant as I am, relationship advice is not my forte.” They confessed. Suddenly, they
turned back to Levi, and he instinctively flinched back at their close proximity. “Levi, my tiny friend, you may not like this but I have an idea, but it may or may not involve approaching a certain married man with particularly impressive eyebrows for advice.” Levi’s eyes widened, and he was glaring daggers before the words had even finished leaving Hanji’s mouth.

“I am not taking relationship advice from Mr happily married, regularly-laid, Captain America knock-off.” He snapped immediately.

“Levi, that sounds exactly like the kind of guy you need to take relationship advice from.”

“I’d be willing to bet he’s only got Petra because of the whole Rich-Captain-America thing he’s got going on. And maybe you didn’t notice, but...” Levi gestured at himself meaningfully.

“So? Let’s not be modest, you’re pretty well off, and you have a dark, mysterious charm about you. I mean, Erwin might be Steve Rogers, but you’re Bruce Wayne.”

“Batman is an asshole.”

“He’s a hot asshole, which, need I say, sounds particularly similar to a certain miniature friend of mine.” Hanji winked, nudging Levi in the ribs.

“Wow, another height comment, you’re sounding particularly suicidal today, Four-Eyes.” Levi growled.

“Oh Levi, just look at us.” Hanji beamed, ignoring Levi’s murderous glare as they draped an arm around his shoulder and pulled him into their side, “Talking about cute boys and crushes together, I like what marriage is doing to you!”

Chapter End Notes

Check these gorgeous comic strip of the airport scene by caprette [here](#) and [here](#)!
Armin’s Approach

Chapter Summary

Armin takes a more diplomatic approach to tackling his reservations about Eren’s situation, leaving the dark glares and death threats strictly to Mikasa.

Chapter Notes

So we had a LevixHanji dm-ing session, so here are two of our favourite conniving blonds! :)

“The cars have plenty of room for three passengers, so why do I get the impression there was a hidden agenda behind you wanting Eren and Mikasa to go ahead together?” Erwin’s eyes had a knowing look about them, and Armin knew he’d met a man with a similar thought process to him.

“I wanted to discuss Eren’s situation and future living conditions at Scouting Legion, and I thought it best if perhaps we spoke in private.” Armin replied.

“I see.” Erwin nodded, and gestured towards the last remaining car, “Well by all means, get comfortable. Time to get down to business.”

Mikasa wasn’t the only one with reservations about Eren’s future and well-being. Despite his reassurances to Eren, and defending the Corporal against Mikasa’s attacks, Armin was about as comfortable with this whole situation as she was; he just knew better than to let his trepidation outwardly manifest itself because all that would do was further worry Eren. Right now, Eren needed at least one person on his side to reassure him and allay any fears he had, and Mikasa was not the person for that. Armin wasn’t as straightforward as Mikasa, he didn’t have the physical strength and intimidation factor necessary to be able to face his problems head on, which he had discovered at a young age, and so had to resort to other more roundabout ways to tackle his problems. In this situation, Mikasa had made it clear that physical harm awaited anyone who hurt her brother in any way, but Armin had decided to handle things a little more diplomatically, as was his style.

He settled in comfortably to the spacious leather interior of the official vehicle, and waited patiently for Erwin to enter after him and the car door to close. Armin was suddenly all too aware how extremely underdressed he felt beside the other man, who somehow managed to slide into through car door and into his seat in his stiff, well-fitting suit with a grace that made Armin self-conscious. Armin was wearing a plain navy-blue polo with a grey cardigan and black jeans, something comfortable for the plane ride, but he sincerely wished now he’d worn something more befitting of a serious discussion with the leader of a nation. Well, never mind that now, better focus on the issue at hand.

“I’ve had my reservations about this whole affair, but recognized the necessity from a political viewpoint. Of course I appreciate the prosperity this alliance will bring both our nations and look forward to our improved future relations and the benefits we will both reap, however my
trepidation stems from more… personal grounds.”

Erwin’s appraisal of him fed his confidence, his thick brows were raised and his gaze impressed as he nodded along. He motioned for Armin to continue, and Armin eagerly took the encouragement.

“All formalities aside, I am worried for my friend. Maria and Legion are two very different nations in a number of ways, but one of my concerns is our cultural difference. Eren has been schooled from a young age about backgrounds and cultural practices of all of Maria’s politically and geographically closest nations, so although he is well enough aware of the very fundamentals of Legion lifestyle, it’s no question that this transition will still be very difficult for him to make. He will be confused, and although I have no doubt you will do your hardest to make him feel comfortable and welcome, he will also feel very alone. These are all inevitable, I understand, but my greatest concern at this stage is his husband. Corporal Levi should be his closest ally through all of this, and should be who Eren feels most comfortable with and reassured by, however I am well enough informed of his natural disposition, and that display we all just witnessed confirmed my initial fears.”

Erwin looked forward and nodded seriously, “I understand your concerns, of course. As a friend as well as a representative of Maria, your concern in prince Eren’s welfare is justified and expected, and I completely agree with you. We will all be trying our utmost to ease the discomfort of Eren’s adjustment, but it will be difficult despite our pains. Prince Eren will be the one who is most affected by this marriage alliance, and I appreciate your concerns, which brings me to your main one, Levi.” Armin nodded, good they were on the same page.

“I don’t mean to doubt his honourable character but—“Erwin’s sudden laughter interrupted him, and Armin blinked, bemused.

“I apologise for the interruption, but please don’t feel like you’re insulting anyone by calling out Levi on what he is, and that is an asshole. You’re worried about how he’ll treat the Prince, am I right?”

“Yes.” Armin breathed, blindsided by the sudden break in formality. It was a welcome surprise, he had been concerned about how to break his assessment of Levi without causing offense. “I just want to know he’ll be taken care of, and won’t be in harm’s way. Not physically necessarily!” he hastily corrected, “Emotionally as well.”

“Mr Arlert—”

“Armin, please.”

“Armin. While I understand your fears and would feel the same in your position, I want to reassure you that Levi, although can come across as somewhat caustic and acerbic, is not a bad person. He is a blunt man, and won’t give you the time of day if he feels you don’t deserve it, which is especially why I don’t bring him to any important meetings, but he would never allow harm to come to anyone innocent. I’ve watched him tear into some very important men with little consideration, but I will say that in all the years I have known him, and that is a very long time mind you, I have never seen him treat a good person wrongly. He will be harsh, he will use some sharp words and make some colourful threats, but he has nothing but the deepest respect for people who are of good, honest character. From what I’ve seen of the prince, he is one of these people. He may take a while to adjust to Levi’s vitriol, but he will realize before long that there is no malice behind his words, and that Levi is not as bad a person as you would think.”

Armin chewed on his lip as he considered the man’s words. They seemed to address his main fears, and Armin wasn’t all too surprised by the Commander’s admission of the Corporal’s character. He had gotten that same impression the night of the final conference in their short exchange. Although
he had appeared stand-offish and preferring solitude to company, he had not struck Armin as a bad person, and then there had been the way he had watched Eren perform…

“Why did he say that to Eren, then?” Armin didn’t realize he had voiced the question aloud until Erwin responded.

“I was wondering that myself actually.” Erwin frowned thoughtfully, “But I have little doubt Hanji is getting to the bottom of that as we speak. This might come as a surprise to you, but you’re not the only concerned friend here. Levi is a very solitary person, and Hanji and I are seriously hoping that this marriage might help remedy that. When King Grisha first proposed the marriage alliance, I almost laughed in his face at the idea of trying to force Levi to marry someone. I had met Eren before briefly, and I knew him to be a brilliant young man that just had a talent for drawing people in, and the more Hanji and I considered it, the more we thought that it would take a person like Eren to get to someone like Levi. As politically beneficial this union is, Armin, we want the marriage to work as well.”

And if that didn’t reassure Armin, he wasn’t sure what would. He could rest easy knowing there were people in Scouting Legion who were just as concerned as he and Mikasa were that the marriage was working out, and both Levi and Eren were okay.

“You’ll let me know if anything happens, won’t you? To Eren?” Armin asked, and Erwin nodded.

“Of course, in fact.” He fished a business card from his inner coat pocket and handed it over to Armin. It was printed on thick, expensive feeling card with gold lettering and the Scouting Legion crest of the blue and white overlaying wings at the top. Commander Erwin Smiths personal contact details. “Feel free to contact me personally anytime you like.”

“Oh no, I couldn’t.” Armin tried to return the card, wide eyed. He couldn’t possible contact the leader of a country just to inquire about the welfare of a friend.

“Nonsense, our best friends just married each other. It’s only normal to have each other’s details, and contact each other with any concerns.” Erwin smiled, “In fact I admire your tenacity and the way you conduct yourself as well. I have little doubt you’ll soon be someone very important in Wall Maria’s political scene, and when that happens, it wouldn’t hurt to have a few contacts. I look forward to any future dealings we might have.”

Armin positively glowed at the praise, and Erwin chuckled at his reaction. They lapsed into a comfortable silence for a few minutes, which was interrupted by the sound of Armin suddenly cursing under his breath.

“Is something the matter?” Erwin asked, concerned.

“Ah, it’s just that despite resolving all this, I didn’t have the foresight to see the possible setbacks of leaving the scorned lover and their vengeful sibling together unattended for the entire drive back…”
A Man of Many Surprises

Chapter Summary

Eren is shown around his soon-to-be home. He's not so surprised by the base as he is by the Corporals own quarters...

Chapter Notes

Ohmygosh, this hit 100 kudos, thank you guys!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Scouting Legion was nothing like home. Here, there were two seasons; Monsoon-Season, the four-month long period of torrential rains that flooded the roads and provided much needed relief to the sun-struck country in the most dramatic way possible; and Not-Monsoon-Season, which were the other 8 months of the year. During this time, the temperature rocketed to heights that would leave the men and women or Maria with their delicate constitutions swooning. But Eren found he quite liked Legion. The climate, although hot, was also humid unlike the summers of Wall Maria which were so blistering and hostile you could barely be exposed too long without getting sunburnt. The humidity suited him just fine, in fact it was perfect for swimming and the beach, the idea of which made Eren ridiculously happy.

Eren had been taught that athleticism was as emphasized in Legion schooling as academics, and the Legion culture highly valued strength and combat prowess given how large a role fighting had played in the small nation’s history. Despite having its own highly trained and renowned military, if the situation arose, Eren didn’t doubt that the entire populace of Scouting Legion could probably take up arms and form an impressive makeshift army of its own. It all seemed so foreigly Spartan to Eren in contrast to his homeland, but the people did seem friendlier. Maybe it was just because they didn’t know who he was just yet, so they had yet to adopt the stiff formalities and dull facades of the uppity politicians his father introduced him to back home, but as he peered out the window on the drive to the castle he would soon call home, he couldn’t keep the smile from his face as the people paused in their daily activities to congregate on the sides of the roads and smile and wave at the passing procession of their nations leaders. Children ran alongside the convoy, shouting for “Commander Smith!” and even, Eren was surprised to hear, “Corporal Levi!”

Eren had the utmost respect for children’s impressions of people. He found that they saw people more genuinely than adults, who so easily fell for cordial veneers; but this time, he frowned. How did this children cheer for the corporal with such enthusiasm, when Eren had just experienced himself how cold and indifferent he was? And Eren had been trying too. He had done nothing to personally deserve the Corporal’s hostility, which made him think it wasn’t personal, but just his natural disposition. Which brought him back to his initial question, why did these children love him so much, if he was such a cold person by nature?

Mikasa had to leave as soon as they arrived. She held him in a firm, motherly hug for several minutes that still felt too short when she let go. Eren tried to put on a brave front as the tugged her
red scarf up to cover her nose and mouth, a gesture Eren had learnt was telling of whenever she felt particularly emotional or vulnerable, but the way she pulled him down by the back of his neck to place a soft kiss his forehead, like his mother used to, reminded him he could never hide anything from her sharp gaze for long.

“I love you, Eren.” She whispered “And remember what I told you, you call me whenever you need someone to talk to. If you feel lonely, or scared, or bored, or anything. I will never not want to hear from you, okay?” He nodded mutely and Mikasa turned to Annie to have a hushed conversation, no doubt regarding supervising Eren like a hawk. She gave him another brief hug before returning to the waiting vehicle, and Eren watched it off miserably before returning his attention to his new ‘home’.

Eren knew that Legion was a small country, they didn’t have a monarchy and therefore a need for such ostentatious structures as palaces. The nation was an interesting blend between European influences in a tropic climate. Houses had a beige, hand textured finish to their walls, arched doorways and flat or domed roofs. Deep green foliage of tropical plants with thick, oily leaves invaded whatever land was not occupied by buildings or mowed down by roads. Vines snaked around the pillars supporting the dome ceilings of the buildings, bursting with vibrant flowers as large as Eren’s fist. Bugs buzzed lazily through the hot midday heat, the air was hot and slightly suffocating, feeling strange against Eren’s skin and making his expensive and flimsy shirt stick uncomfortably against his back. It felt unusual to breathe, the air was heavy with moisture and felt foreign in his lungs.

“Getting your bearings?” Eren turned to find that Armin had arrived and joined him surveying his surroundings in equal wonder. Erwin, who had been standing a little ways off on his phone, hung up and came to join them.

“My sincerest apologies but Petra’s demanding my presence back at home. She says I need to stop hanging around you and Levi like some overbearing father and to let you two have some time to yourselves.” He smiled at Eren’s doubtful look “In fact she’s very excited to meet you. I remember how well you two got along at my inauguration. I have no doubt she’ll be dropping by to visit you at some ungodly hour tomorrow after she’s lost her patience waiting for you and Levi to finish honeymooning, and wants a slice of the gossip.” Eren brightened at Erwin’s words, remembering the petite redhead he had met last year and had instantly clicked with. The dinner had been stifling with formalities before he’d found a similar restless soul in Legion’s First-Lady, after which they’d spent the better part of the evening arm-in-arm buzzed by the disgusting, expensive champagne and spotting the most eligible bachelors among the foreign dignitaries present for Eren to hook-up with. Oh how things had changed since then. “I’ll probably be seeing you again very soon too. I’m always popping in and out for business” The man turned to Armin and they shook hands. “It was an absolute delight to meet you, Armin. I look forward to our next meeting. Well then, I’ll leave you in Levi’s…capable hands.”

Armin stammered a polite goodbye in greeting, and Eren did not miss the pink dusting his cheeks that he doubted was caused by the heat.

“First name terms already?” He teased. Armin flushed a deeper red and looked down trying to hide his face.

“Shut up Eren, He’s a cool guy.” He defended. Eren arched an eyebrow at Annie, who pursed her lips and attempted to hide a smile.

“That you have a painful obvious hero-boner for.” Armin looked scandalized by the accusation actually glancing down as if double-checking, and Eren burst into laughter.
“Eren, don’t you have bigger concerns at the moment?” Armin scolded. The boy had a point. He hadn’t been expecting a palace, in fact Mikasa had dug around and informed him that Levi lived on the base of some kind of off-shoot of the military called the Wings of Freedom, which he commanded. Even Maria’s best investigators couldn’t find much more information other than that it was an elite branch of the militia made of some of the best soldiers handpicked by Levi. What these elite soldiers did, Eren was afraid to imagine. Their ‘base’, although retaining a similar architectural structure, dwarfed the surrounding buildings in size. It was also painted a slate grey, contrasting with the warm beiges of the others, with two towing spires at one end that gave the whole structure an almost gothic, intimidating air. It was beautiful, with its grandiose size and gorgeous painted glass, but still daunting. It wasn’t even the building that scared Eren the most, but the soldiers milling about outside, lazing in the entryway smoking and laughing boisterously, and shooting suspicious glares in his direction as they returned from some mission nursing a few cuts and bruises. They wore black training gear with assortments of weapons strapped to their backs and sides and had tattoos and scars criss-crossing over what skin was still visible. Eren gulped.

He finally noticed Hanji and the Corporal standing a little way off, Hanji was watching them grinning, while the Corporal was standing with his arms crossed and gaze fixed elsewhere as if tired of waiting. Eren hated the familiar feeling of being a burden that crept up on him at the sight.

“Oh shit Armin, they’re waiting for us. Come on.” Eren yanked at the arm of his still dazed friend and made their way over to their waiting guides. Hanji waved away his apology with an understanding nod.

“You’re going to take a while to adjust. You haven’t even visited Legion before, so you’ll be even more stunned than normal.” Hanji didn’t miss his nervous glance in the raven’s direction. “We have plenty of time, Eren. Take as long as you need.”

Annie took up her position behind them as Levi lead the way and Hanji hovered around the two boys to point out particular details and explaining the functions of the areas. Eren watched amazed at the way the soldiers, catching sight of their Corporal, instantly stamped out their cigarettes and straightened, saluting smartly with their fists over their chests in a gesture Eren didn’t recognize, while the shorter man and his group passed. It would almost be comical how the small man made such intimidating and terrifying men scramble to attention if it weren’t so admirable. The Corporal, despite his less than privileged upbringing in the underground, had made up for his stature with sheer skill and strength, and had climbed his way to the top. Eren didn’t know much about his past, no one did, and in fact he’d only seen the man for the first time that night in the entertainment room. Even before that he’d only heard stories of the legendary man’s strength, which he had dismissed as exaggerated truth. Now, he wasn’t so sure.

And he was married to the man.

Eren, who despite being born with a silver spoon in his mouth and all the opportunities in the world, couldn’t do shit unlike his sister and best friend. Eren who was a disappointment even to his own father, and had only succeeded to do something remotely useful with his life by allowing himself to be bargained off for an alliance. He didn’t realize how tightly he had balled his fists until his nails dug into his palms painfully enough to draw blood.

“Oh Eren?” Armin’s concerned voice pulled him back into reality as he tugged gently at his sleeve “You okay?” He nodded and returned his attention to their enthusiastic guide, realizing he had completely missed everything they had said so far, trying to ignore Armin’s disbelieving look. He had to pull himself together, at least for long enough to reassure Armin that he would be okay before he returned home.
“…So those are the men’s and women’s dorms respectively, that whole side house all the amenities like washroom, laundry, kitchens and mess hall.” Despite the overawing exterior of the castle, the inside was surprisingly well maintained and clean for a military base full of such terrifying soldiers. Even now he could see how the men and women treated the castle with a careful reverence, even wiping their boots on the mat at the entrance before entering. Hanji must have noticed his expression because they answered his unasked question with a grin, “Levi’s a complete clean-freak. First thing any new recruit learns as soon as they join up is to clean up after themselves, and well, anyone else if they get the opportunity.” Well, that was… unexpected.

“Shut the hell up, Shitty-glasses. You’re supposed to be telling them about the base.” It was the first thing he had said since the car ride, and Eren realized he was more excited to hear the man speak than he should be, even after his last dismissively harsh words to him.

There was a massive courtyard in the centre of the structure that was currently occupied by what appeared to be new recruits. They were significantly younger than the other soldiers, with fresh determination and less tattoos and scars visible. They appeared to be training with an intimidating older, bald man barking instructions and orders at them.

“That’s Instructor Keith Shadis; he’s in charge of training up the greenies. This courtyard is where everyone does general training.” Hanji helpfully explained as they passed. Eren noticed one of the recruits, a young girl with a messy brown pony-tail, had abandoned a set of sit-ups halfway in favour of eating what appeared to be a baked potato. A short boy with a buzz-cut who appeared to be her companion was looking around, alarmed as he tried to convince her to continue with the exercises.

“Sasha, put that away before Shadis sees! Where did you even get it?!” He hissed frantically, and Eren noticed with growing dread that the terrifying instructor was approaching down the line of recruits.

“Miss Braus. What do you think you’re doing?!?” Eren heard buzz-cut squeak, but before he could see how the rest of the scene played out, they entered the final section of the castle.

“And this, Eren dear, is where you’ll live! This whole area is reserved for the commanding officer, so it’s practically all Levi’s.” Eren was stunned.

Somehow, the moment they entered, the atmosphere of the questionable military base melted away. The place looked like something out of a Mediterranean holiday postcard with its stone floors and walls, marble pillars and arched entryways. Small but beautiful chandeliers hung from the domes ceilings that sparkled with delicate rainbow mosaics, and impressive renaissance artworks lined the walls depicting historical battles and Greek deities. The midday sun filtered through large windows that were spaced evenly down the entire hall, a soft breeze making the sheer curtains billow airily, and bathing the area in a warm, summer glow. There was no shortage of indoor plants either, in stone pots placed on pillars lining the walls, and hanging baskets overflowing with vines and flaming tropical orchids swinging lazily in the windows like some Venetian balcony. Eren drank it all in, awestruck.

“It’s beautiful.” He breathed. This was the Corporals home? He couldn't believe that the cold man standing behind him was responsible for the picturesque interior before him. Had he chosen the flowers? The paintings? Eren tried to picture the Corporal stretching on his tiptoes to water the hanging pot-plants and frowned. No, there would be people responsible for such maintenance. The Corporal wouldn't attend to such frivolous and delicate matters personally; he would be out protecting Legion, or defending Maria now; completing important paperwork in his study; or overseeing the training of his soldiers. Eren turned to look at the man in question, only to find that
the Corporal was already watching him. As their gazes met, Eren felt his face inexplicably flush and he swallowed, bemused by his behaviour. Why was he acting like some stupid middle schooler with a crush? Blushing like a school girl while the raven haired man regarded him with the same impassive eyes and unfazed exterior, hands clasped firmly behind his back. The Corporal cleared his throat lightly, and looked away from Eren, eyes fixed on something outside one of the windows.

“I’ll show you to your room, then. Follow me.” He began to walk down the hallway.

Hanji’s eyes glinted as they watched him leave, before turning back to Eren, Armin and Annie, “That’s my job done! I’ll leave the rest to Levi. If you need anything, don’t hesitate to ask anyone, or you can just ask them to point you to my office and I’ll be glad to help.”

“Excuse me, but could I ask you to show me around the security of this facility?” Annie spoke up, voice characteristically monotonous, “Just as a security precaution, of course.”

“Sure! I’m sorry, I don’t know your name? Just follow me. Eren and his little buddy are in safe hands for now...” Hanji chattered, leading Annie away, their excited voice receding down the hallway.

“You coming or should I just leave you to fend for yourself?” the Corporal’s voice snapped. Eren and Armin jumped, and hurried to catch up to the man waiting further down in the opposite direction of the hall, arms crossed and foot tapping impatiently.

“Sorry, Sir!” Armin huffed. Nope, Eren refused to believe this man was responsible for the interior design of his quarters. Maybe for the rest of the castle, but certainly not here.

Chapter End Notes

Okay so I don't know if my description did Levi's home any justice, but if you want better image, think this type of vibe.
Nipping it in the Bud

Chapter Summary

Nothing like an intimate conversation between two newly-weds on their wedding night, amirite?

A.K.A I wish Levi would get the dick out of his personality and into Eren already.

Levi wasn’t sure why he found himself watching the boy the moment they entered his quarters. He felt his skin crawl at the idea that anyone else would be sharing his home with him from now on, lest of all a stranger. He was looking for a reaction, maybe disappointment; anything that gave him a reason to hate the kid. He should be disappointed right? After all, he’d been raised in a palace in one of the most affluent nations in the world, Levi’s home would be like a cottage to him in comparison. But it was his pride and joy; the only place he felt he could completely relax in solitude and privacy, and the idea that there would be someone else here with him, and someone else who didn’t appreciate what this place meant to him, made him want to break something. Like Erwin’s face.

But fuck he hadn’t been expecting this. The way the unease melted away from the kids features, immediately replaced by awe and wonder as he took in his surroundings with the overwhelmed reverence of a child at a candy store. No, this wasn’t how he was supposed to react. The spoiled brat was supposed to be unimpressed, to scoff at Levi’s painstakingly maintained sanctuary, and make it that much easier to despise the him. But he couldn’t look away from the boy and his stunning green eyes. Why did he feel…relieved? Like he had won the boys approval, which he had been waiting with bated breath to receive? Levi found himself thinking how well the Eren fit in here. He could already picture him curled up over a book in a window seat, tan skin kissed by the evening sun, and brown locks tousled by a slight breeze. Levi would comb his fingers through his hair while he was still engrossed in his reading, and Eren would turn his face up to look at him in surprise, before breaking into that easy smile that lit up his face and made his green eyes crinkle warmly--

What?

Levi was blinking in confusion, trying to gather his thoughts, when the boy who had sent them into such disarray in the first place turned to look at him with those stupid green eyes. He quickly schooled his expression into his usual impassive mask and fought the urge to break eye contact after being caught staring. Then the boy blushed, like he had been the one caught staring while thinking strange thoughts, and Levi did not like that he found the pink shade and the way he blinked rapidly in his embarrassment endearing. Look away, Levi. Look away before this turns even more awkward. Levi turned to face out the window, frowning, trying to shake the image of the blushing boy from his thoughts. Well, if eye contact alone could make him blush like that, how he would react to other types of contact? Levi coughed awkwardly, startled by his train of thought, and then immediately attempted to conceal it by clearing his throat. Goddamnit Hanji was looking at him like they knew exactly what he had been thinking. How did they do that? Time to go.

“I’ll show you to your room then” Levi turned on his heel and strode away, to escape from Hanji’s knowing gaze, Eren’s presence or his own turbulent thoughts, he wasn’t sure. “Follow me.”
Levi wasn’t sure why Eren was even so impressed by his accommodations. The boy was a prince, he’d probably seen more luxurious hospital wards.

“It’s like a hotel room.” The boy marvelled, frowning.

“Of course. It was a guest room before you came along.” Was that a good thing? He seemed satisfied.

“Where did you sleep then?” Eren asked, confused. Oh. He was referring to the lack of personal items among the room’s furnishings, not the standard. He thought this was their shared bedroom.

“In my own room.” Levi made a point to fix him with a look that made it clear how stupid he thought the question was.

Green eyes blinked blankly before widening in realization. He looked down and away, and the blush was back shading the tops of his ears pink, except this time it was ashamed not embarrassed, and why did he have to look so disappointed? It was no secret the kid found him attractive. That had been cemented back when he winked at him from the stage, before Levi even knew who he was and he was just another stranger with gorgeous eyes Levi wanted to fuck. But Levi had to stay away from this one, far away. As much as he wanted to invite him into his bed, he knew he would regret it the next day and every day that followed, because the kid was stuck with him after that and attachment would be inevitable. And he would only get hurt, like they always did.

“Um, I just remembered I had to ask Hanji about something. I’ll just quickly go…” The little mushroom friend suddenly spoke up. Levi had forgotten he was here. He didn’t miss the wide eyed look of pleading Eren sent his friend’s way. Don’t you dare leave me now, it said. Well now that we’re both alone, we might as well sort this out.

Eren reluctantly turned back to face him.

“Let’s straighten something out right now.” Levi began, his voice stern, the boy seemed surprised to hear him speak first. Levi uncrossed his arms and pushed off the wall he had been leaning against, talking a few steps closer to Eren and tilting his head up slightly to fix him with a narrowed stare. Eren seemed to wilt under his stare. “It’s obvious you just thought we’d be sharing a bedroom like some other adorable newly-wed couple, so you clearly have some misconceptions about our relationship that need to be corrected. This marriage might be on paper, but that’s about as far as it goes. There is not, nor will there ever be any further form of familiarity between us than what you see right now, okay kid? You have free reign of the base, knock yourself out and do whatever the fuck you rich kids do, just don’t interfere with anybody’s work or training, and do not bother me.” Levi might be cold, but he wasn’t unobservant. He didn’t miss the crushed look on Eren’s face as he demolished any remaining possible notions the kid could have been harbouring that this was some fractured fairy tale love story that could be redeemed. He might be cold, but he wasn’t unfeeling. It wasn’t without a tinge of remorse that he turned away from the kid’s desolate expression, hating to have had to put it there, but not regretting it. “Dinner is served at the mess hall seven sharp.” He threw over his shoulder. He was almost out the door when Eren’s voice stopped him.

“What changed?” Levi turned and arched an eyebrow at him. “Between the night I first saw you and this afternoon when I got off the plane?” He clarified “I saw the way you looked at me back then, when I winked at you. But now you can barely stand to look at me”.

Levi regarded him quietly. Don’t do this kid, don’t make me have to say it. But Eren’s gaze was
resolute and firm.

“You know, I didn’t even know you were the one I was marrying until you got off the plane this morning.” Levi ignored Eren’s confused expression and continued “That shithead Hanji insisted it be a surprise or something and you know what, I didn’t care, because as far as I was concerned it didn’t matter who I was marrying; it would mean nothing to me.” Levi took a step towards Eren “I looked at you the way I did that night because you looked like a good fuck, nothing more.” Eren’s jaw clenched and his nose flared, but Levi wasn’t done yet. He needed to end this completely, and clearly what he’d said before hadn’t done the job thoroughly enough “I’m treating you the way I am now because now I actually know who you are, and I realize I’m stuck with you a lot longer than the few hours it would take to fuck you and leave, and I’m tired of you already.”

Levi didn’t stay long enough to see the effect his words had on the boy. He was hurting him already, and he hadn’t even been here a few hours. Was pushing Eren away really protecting him from Levi? It was Hanji’s voice in his head that answered the question.

Face it, Levi. You’re not keeping him from getting close to you to protect him; this is you trying to protect yourself from getting too close to him.

When Hanji asked him later that night why Eren hadn’t come down for dinner, Levi answered that he must have forgotten to tell him when it was.
Out and About

Chapter Summary

Eren finds an ally and Hanji finds an accomplice.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“You’re going to miss dinner.”

“I’m not hungry.”

“More than that, everyone will want to see you.”

“I don’t know anyone except Hanji and the Corporal. I’ll have to sit with them, and I don’t think I can do that right now.”

Armin lapsed into an understanding silence. They were both curled up in Eren’s bed, Eren’s face buried in Armin’s chest while the smaller male traced calming circles in his hair. After Armin had returned from aimlessly wandering the Corporals hallways under the pretence of talking to Hanji to find Eren alone, sprawled face down on the mattress of his bed, Armin knew things hadn’t gone that smoothly.

“Can I ask what Mikasa told you in the car?”

“What do you mean? She said bye.” Eren’s confused voice was muffled against Armin’s cardigan.

“No I mean during the ride. She didn’t tell you to…do anything…to Corporal Levi, did she? I understand she’d be pretty pissed about how he spoke to you.”

Eren’s laugh was bitter and humourless. “Man I forgot about that. How ironic.”

“What is?”

“She told me to seduce him.”

“What?” Armin pushed Eren away by the shoulders, ignoring his noise of complaint in favour of fixing his friend with an incredulous look. “Mikasa said that? Why?! I thought you two would plot to murder him together.” Eren sighed and rolled onto his back.

“She said she thought he liked me. She wasn’t sure why he spoke to me like he did, but there must be some other reason other than him hating me. She said that I’m easy to get along with and people naturally like me, I would adjust to life here fast, and she had not doubt that he would come around with a little push. Apparently he was checking me out the other night, and I quote ‘looked like he wanted to eat you alive’, ” Eren chuckled “She told me try and reign in my temper and act like I do when I go on stage, and he would be all over me.”

Armin giggled. It was true, when Eren performed, he exuded a completely different aura. Self-assured, smooth and seductive. He was surprised, however, to hear Mikasa encouraging the
relationship.

“She has a point though. Even Erwin told me he was certain Corporal Levi had taken a particular interest in you, and he wasn’t sure why he acted how he did.”

“Well now we know why. He realized he’d be living with me and apparently that was enough to kill any sexual attraction he felt.” he muttered drily and Armin frowned. They had messaged Mikasa to arrange a time to meet on Skype, but she had apologized saying Grisha had ordered her to accompany him to a conference. Although Armin’s comfort was nice; his soothing words and reassurances calming, what Eren needed right now was Mikasa’s strong presence and the security it brought to fire him up. It felt strange with one of the trio missing, and Armin hated to imagine what it would be like to return home without Eren. He couldn’t imagine what it would be like for Eren without either of them for company, and only a bipolar, cold husband instead.

“Armin, I’m trying hard here. Any other person and I would’ve beaten them up by now, or at least tried. Dad said to stay calm and not let Maria down, but I can’t go on like this. What do I do when you leave? I’ll be so alone, and there’s so much pressure on this marriage.” Armin didn’t like this. He pulled his friend back into his chest and crooned reassurances into his hair. Eren was the untouchable ball of energy and enthusiasm that fired everyone else up when they were miserable, but the Eren in his arms now was lonely, stressed and burnt out. It was true how much pressure there was on Eren. This wasn’t just a marriage between two people, this was a marriage between nations, and that was a very crowded marriage indeed. He just wished there was someone who could be the bridge between the two because once he had returned home, he knew he couldn’t rely on Erwin, amidst all his work, to get involved in something as petty as marriage counselling, and there was only so much he and Mikasa could do from thousands of kilometres and a whole different time zone away…

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Armin had left that night albeit reluctantly and with firm instructions to eat healthy, make friends, and call me.

Despite his troubled thoughts, he’s body could only resist the luxurious mattress and the soft embrace of jet-lag induced sleep for so long, and Eren drifted off almost immediately. He woke at the crack of dawn, his body yet to adjust to the time difference and slightly disorientated by the unfamiliar surroundings before recalling his predicament sullenly. After sending a quick good morning message to Mikasa and Armin, he dragged himself out of bed and threw open his bedroom window, which he found afforded his a good view of one of the training grounds where he could see some poor unfortunate recruits running laps already. It was strange to see the dense green of tropical foliage and hear the chatter and caw of exotic birds after growing so accustomed to the sound of traffic and people that was the norm back at the palace. Eren then took a long bath, appreciating at the very least the impressive ensuite, but had barely dried himself off and pulled on a fresh pair of boxers when the calm of the morning was interrupted by the sound of knocking on his bedroom door. He glanced at the clock in confusion. It was barely 6.30, was this a wake-up call? Sure it might be a military base so he could understand why the soldiers and recruits would be forced to wake up early for drills, but was he to be subjected to their ungodly hours too?

He pulled on a bathrobe and wrenched open his door, scowling and fully prepared to give whoever poor soul had been sent to wake him a piece of his mind, but he halted in his movements and stared wide eyed at his very unexpected visitor.

“Lady Petra!” Eren exclaimed, and couldn’t help the smile that spread across his face at the sight of a familiar face.
“Oh please.” The petite red head scrunched up his nose and flapped her hand dismissively “You’re in Legion now, there are no ladies or gentlemen here. Just Petra” Eren grinned wider and enthusiastically embraced the woman. “Are you going to invite me in, or are we trying to start rumours by having the Corporals young husband so affectionately greeting the First Lady in just his bathrobe this early in the morning?” Eren laughed as he moved aside to let the smaller woman enter.

“I don’t think inviting you in will make those rumours any better.” Petra was wearing an oversized white dress shirt that Eren was willing to bet she had snagged from Erwin’s wardrobe, plain blue leggings and brown ankle boots; surprisingly casual the wife of the nation’s leader. “Cute top. Did you even change out of your pyjamas this morning? And not that I’m not happy, but you are around quite early. Any particular reason?”

Petra made herself at home, toeing off her boots and settling cross-legged in the white settee.

“First of all, I’m pregnant, and in my defence I can’t think of a better reason to laze around in my husband’s old clothes. Secondly, I would be offended by that accusation if you weren’t spot on except for the fact that I bothered to throw on some pants before I left the house, and thirdly, I realize this is a ridiculous time and I’m so sorry for waking you, you must be exhausted, but as I’m sure my dear husband probably mentioned that my curiosity can be suppressed so long. I’ve missed you Eren, but to be painfully honest, I’m here for the gossip.”

Eren barely had time to congratulate her on her pregnancy before she had moved on to the next topic. She was barely showing, despite the shapeless shirt, so the press were yet to officially confirm the rumours, but Eren had been informed personally not soon after she had found out herself, as they had kept in contact after their first meeting. Petra’s eyes narrowed at his pained expression.

“Married life not treating you well? I don’t mean to pry, but I can’t help but notice you two aren’t sharing a room.” Eren pursed his lips and sank into the opposite edge of the settee.

“Levi doesn’t like me that much.”

“Erwin told me otherwise. So did Hanji for that matter.” Petra offered. “For what it’s worth, I’d like to say those two know the man better than he knows himself, but you’re going to have to give me the run down on everything so far. Erwin’s a sweetheart, but he’s a military man and a strategist, so he gives the straight facts, and unfortunately, that just doesn’t do it for me and I’m pretty sure he missed some vital details.”

So Eren took a deep breath and told his only friend everything; from their first unofficial meeting at the final conference, to Levi’s frigid behaviour the day before.

“Oh Christ that man can be so difficult sometimes.” Petra exhaled, rolling her eyes and shaking her head like an exasperated parent. There was another knock at the door, and before Eren could even stand up, Hanji had popped their head in and was looking around. They caught sight of the two and their eyes widened in excitement.

“A tea party! Why wasn’t I invited?”

“Good morning Hanji. “ Eren sighed wearily. Eren wasn’t a morning person and it was just too early for Hanji’s enthusiasm. Petra laughed.

“We were just settling down to bitch about our husbands.” She explained.
“Ooh! Can I join? It’ been so hard without you, Petra. The rest of Levi’s squad have sticks up their asses and every other soldier is too terrified to talk shit about Levi. I’ve been so lonely.”

Petra looked questioningly at Eren who was looking exceedingly more uncomfortable about the situation. It was strange enough to be talking to Petra about all this, but to Hanji too? “Hanji won’t tell anyone. What happens in this trust triangle stays in this trust triangle, isn’t that right?” Petra reassured and Hanji nodded enthusiastically.

“Actually Eren, I was just swinging by to see how you were. You didn’t come to dinner last night, and although Levi said he must have forgotten to mention it to you, we all know he’s a little too pedantic for that. I thought maybe you were a little sick?”

If Corporal Levi was about to lie about that, Eren sure as hell wasn’t about to call him out on the truth. “Ah yea, I think I’m still adjusting to the climate, I went straight to bed last night.”

“Bullshit.” Petra said immediately. She turned to Face Hanji with a fierce frown “Do you know what that moody old man said to Eren last night?” She recounted verbatim everything Eren had told her with added vigour and hand gestures as Hanji watched on engrossed, nodding, “That’s why Eren didn’t want to come down, and for good reason. Poor boy is completely alone here, and the person who’s supposed to be his greatest ally just tore straight into him, no wonder he didn’t want to meet everyone after that.” Petra patted Eren’s knee, and he smiled awkwardly. He felt a little stupid, telling all his worries to Petra and then having it all laid down bare on the table in front of Hanji, someone he barely knew. Not that he didn’t like or trust them, just that they was clearly very close to the Corporal so he felt a little out of line talking about him like that.

“That man is deplorable.” Hanji shook their head, expression comically grave for the situation before suddenly turning to face him “Eren, take off your robe.”

Eren balked “What?!”

“Or well, just the top bit if you’re that uncomfortable.” Hanji allowed. He looked frantically to Petra, but found that her gaze had lit up and she was smiling knowingly. “Do it Eren” Hanji encouraged “For science.”

What was happening? Was this some strange Scouting Legion hazing? Eren reluctantly loosened his bath robe, letting it drop around his shoulders and expose his torso. He felt himself blush under their scrutiny and nodded approvals.

“Oh bless, you’re blushing. If Levi could see you now he would take you where you sat.” Oh Christ, He did not need those pictures in his head this early. Why was he even still flustered by the idea of that asshole after everything he had said? Right, because he was hot and Eren hadn’t gotten laid in a while.

“Why are we doing this again?” Eren asked, shrugging back the robe self-consciously.

“Just to see what we’re working with.” Petra smiled, and then winked “And honey, you’ve got the goods.” Hanji cackled loudly.

“What?” Eren repeated eloquently.

“I see you’ve kept up your swimming.” Petra continued, ignoring his bewildered question.

“Uh, yea?”

“Well, you should try out Levi’s pool” Was that some sort of innuendo? He wasn’t sure how it
could be, but the knowing ways his two companions were looking at each other and their sly smiles made him wary. But he couldn’t ignore his excitement for long.

“The Corporal has a pool?” he asked eagerly.

“Okay, first of all, call him Levi. I think you two passed the first name basis when you took his name, and secondly yes he does. In fact it is conveniently located just outside his office.” Petra smiled. Eren frowned, how was that convenient? He wasn’t even sure where Levi’s office was.

“Will he mind?” he asked, unsure.

Hanji’s bark of laughter startled him “Oh buddy I doubt it, and he barely uses it anyway. It’s really only even there for the view.”

“And what a view it will be.” He heard Petra murmur, but before he could ask what she meant, she was standing up and smoothing the crinkles out of her shirt. “But first, we need to get some food inside you. You must be starving after last night, not to mention everyone will be dying to meet you. Especially the rest of Levi’s squad.” His question was immediately forgotten when his stomach groaned loudly as he was reminded of his skipped meal. Hanji smiled.

“Go put something on, we’ll wait outside.”

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Eren was all too conscious how ridiculous his designer brand clothes would look to everyone in his new home. It was bad enough that everyone would have a stereotype of what type of person he would be in their head, he didn’t need to fuel the misconceptions with over-priced clothes that were completely unsuitable to wear among the hardened soldiers in their black gear and this tropical climate. He decided to settle with a faded old band tee Mikasa had bought him for a birthday ages ago and black jeans, before trying unsuccessfully to tame his bed hair.

It was still early, but the grounds were bustling with soldiers as they made their way to the mess hall for breakfast. Eren didn’t miss the narrowed eyed stares that were sent his way, he was all too conscious of how he was an outsider. He’d dealt with prejudiced people before, it was normal for people to assume things about him because he was a prince. To think he thought himself superior to others or unable to understand their hardships, and he conceded that he couldn’t, to an extent. He was privileged, raised in a completely different environment without want for any material things, but he wished he could just blend in sometimes. To make normal friends who liked him for him and not his status or the perks that came with being friends with a prince.

“Where’s Annie?” He asked Hanji, momentarily interrupting the conversation between the two in front of him. He hadn’t seen her since she had gone with Hanji the previous day, and he would be lying if he said he wasn’t feeling a little lonely and abandoned. He had thought at the very least he’d have a constant companion in his silent bodyguard.

“Who? Oh Annie! Her two friends flew in earlier, you know the big bulky blond and his tall buddy? I saw them hanging around the courtyard before.”

Reiner and Berthold had arrived? Eren felt his heart sink. Sure, the trio were practically inseparable so he understood they would want to catch up, but he was pretty close with them as well, and he couldn’t but feel like he was being outcasted. But he wasn’t one of them, he had to remind himself; at the end of the day they were employed by his family, and their friendship only extended so far. Hanji misunderstood his dejected expression.
“Don’t worry! They might be your bodyguards, but it’s not necessary for them to constantly supervise you. You’re in probably the safest place in Legion, all these soldiers are essentially your body guards!” Hanji reassured cheerfully, and Eren forced a smile on his face.

“I never realized how immature he can be sometimes.” Petra chided, continuing the conversation he had interrupted “I mean, don’t you think this whole situation is a little like a boy sticking gum in the hair of the person he likes because he doesn’t know how to properly project his feelings?”

“Except he doesn’t like me, so it’s more like a boy sticking gum in the hair of the person they don’t like just because he doesn’t like them.” Eren offered. He didn’t like the way Petra raised her eyebrows at his comment and shared a glance with Hanji. The two did that thing where they could have entire unspoken conversations together, and it reminded him of the looks Mikasa and Annie would share whenever he was caught out fighting or doing something his dad wouldn’t disapprove of.

“Well anyway, here we are.” Hanji announced “Stay close Eren, these guys can act like rapid animals when they’re hungry.”

The mess hall was large and rectangular, with a high roof and three majestic chandeliers hanging from the exposed rafters. Four long tables ran down its length with filled with soldiers laughing and conversing loudly as they at their meals. There was a shorter table at the end of the hall on an elevated platform where the higher ranking and commanding officers would eat their meals while overlooking their subordinates. Eren hung close to Petra and Hanji, who were important enough for people to move aside to make way for them, and he noticed that no one treated Petra like an outsider or with special treatment despite her being married to Commander Erwin, smiling and greeting her brightly. He wondered what it had taken for everyone to accept her and treat her as an equal, and whether or not he could achieve the same. Even now he focused on walking close behind his guides with his head down, trying not to make eye contact with the seasoned soldiers who were shooting him dirty and judgemental looks. He just wanted to eat, then he could get out of here and maybe even go for a swim. With a clear goal in sight, Eren felt his confidence return slightly and he took the stairs up to the superiors table two at a time, eager to get to his meal.

“Okay then! Well, since our esteemed Commander Erwin isn’t with us, I think you can take his seat Eren. We’ll sort out a more permanent arrangement later” Hanji said, waving him towards an empty chair close to the centre of the table with a smile. He thanked her and made his way to the chair, but suddenly froze as he realized who he was sitting next to.

Levi looked up at him and scowled. “Are you going to sit or what?”

Chapter End Notes

Petra’s a little OOC here; I know she’s meant to be all gentle and soft-spoken but we need the sassy mama-bear figure, and frankly, someone who isn't afraid to tell Levi off.
The Proverbial Shit Hits the Fan

Chapter Summary

Y’all saw the title

Chapter Notes

Woah dudes, trigger warnings for violence

Eren’s temper flared and he didn’t have the energy to keep it completely in check. He wasn’t a morning person and that, coupled with the jetlag and weird climate, had him feeling especially irritable this morning. He ground his teeth and seated himself in the chair to Levi’s right, next to a tall hulking man with blond hair that shrouded his eyes and a thin moustache.

“Well, good morning to you too, husband dear.” He snapped, focusing his attention on the scrambled eggs, toast and bacon in front of him. The breakfast was surprisingly good for a military base, but perhaps he had been watching too many movies.

“Oh ho. Someone woke up on the wrong side of the bed this morning.” The raven retorted, eyebrow arched as he appraised Eren

“Levi, be nice. People are watching” Petra cautioned in a low but firm voice.

“You know what, I just came here to eat, okay? Just get off my back half an hour while I finish. I have tried to be nice and civil but apparently that makes you even angrier, and I am so done pretending now. You win, this is the real me! Whoop-di-fucking-do, now kindly shove off.”

Levi paused his eating and placed his cutlery down, leaning back slightly in his chair. “You aren’t suited for this place; you were raised in a fancy little castle surrounded by servants who gave you everything you wanted, and lovely doting parents. You don’t know what hardship is because you’ve been surrounded by love and affection all your life. I’m not trying to be the bad guy, I’m just being honest with you and showing you that you can’t expect the same now

“Look here kid” Levi began, voice low and threatening, but Eren was too furious to take the warning “You aren’t suited for this place; you were raised in a fancy little castle surrounded by servants who gave you everything you wanted, and lovely doting parents. You don’t know what hardship is because you’ve been surrounded by love and affection all your life. I’m not trying to be the bad guy, I’m just being honest with you and showing you that you can’t expect the same now
that you’re here, and you can’t expect some sort of special treatment because you’re some fucking prince. You can hate me all you want, but I’m just preparing you for the life you’ll be living here from now on.”

Eren shook his head in disbelief, momentarily speechless. The mess hall was hushed now, everyone’s eyes locked on the heated argument at the head of the room.

“You know what, I actually don’t hate you.” He said, voice quiet and level. Levi’s eyes widened fractionally in surprise, “I envy you. I don’t know what kind of hardship you’ve faced in your life, but you have this resentment towards anyone who seems remotely happy, and you presume they have it so fucking easy. Yea, I’m a prince. Sure, I’ve had it so much easier than you, I’m not even going to try and deny that. But just because you had to fight tooth and nail to get to where you are now from the slums, don’t for one fucking second think that I’ve been living the high life. I am fucking miserable. My mother died when I was a kid, and my father has resented me ever since, because in his eyes I am a constant, disappointing reminder of what he has lost, and he’s had to deal with me ever since. I can’t do anything right, and you would not believe how fucking thrilled he was when he learnt he could ship me off here and actually get something as valuable as an Alliance in return for my worthless ass. I left behind my only two friends to come here where I am constantly judged because of my background, out-casted and treated like a burden all over again.”

Eren felt the prick of angry tears in his eyes, but his voice was firm “I envy you, Corporal. Because you started with nothing, but you got to where you are now with talent and skill, and now you’re Humanities Strongest! Everyone knows your name and admires you. My mother used to tell me stories about you, and I grew up wanting to be like you; to be worth more than my title. I hoped to meet you one day, so you could tell me that my dad didn’t matter, I was important and I could do anything if I tried hard enough. But when I finally did, you turned your nose up at me and treated me like the worthless bag of shit I had always been told I was.” Eren turned his eyes back to his plate and picked up his fork, prodding at his unfinished meal half-heartedly and unwilling to meet Levi’s gaze. He suddenly felt bare and self-conscious, acutely aware that he had just blurted out his miserable little soliloquy for the entire base to hear. He must have just confirmed all their suspicions that he was a whiny, spoiled prince. “I’m not hungry anymore. I think I’ll just get some fresh air. Excuse me.” He felt like he was going to throw up, and he stood and made his way across the platform, still vibrating with the excess energy of the anger, passion and angst from his rant.

“Eren…” Petra’s soft voice called out to him, concerned.

“No, please don’t. I feel sick.” He pleaded still keeping his gaze fixed resolutely on the ground. She didn’t say anything more, and Eren quietly left the mortifying silence of the hall.

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Eren was perched on the stairs leading up to the large clock tower overlooking the courtyard where the new recruits were training. His knees were drawn up to his chest as he quietly observed the trainees practising knife fighting in pairs, trying to ignore the insistent grumbling of his stomach and the even more nauseous feeling in his gut. Breakfast had ended a few minutes after he had left, thankfully unfollowed, and he had been watching Instructor Shadis barking instructions and insults at the training recruits ever since. His attention was drawn to a commotion at one end of the field and he realized someone had been injured. He recognized the short boy with the buzz-cut who was kneeling over, firmly grasping his upper left arm trying to staunch the blood flow, while his potato-eating companion fussed over him, frantically digging through an open first aid kit but clearly having no idea what she was doing.

There didn’t appear to be a medic in sight, so Eren stood and made his way over to them.
“You look like you need a hand there.” He offered, kneeling down and gently prying the box from the brunette’s hands. She looked up at him wide eyed, and her friend openly gawked. Eren scratched the back of his neck awkwardly.

“Y-you’re the prince.” She said, pointing at him “Connie! It’s the prince, he spoke to me.”

“Uh, please, just call me Eren.” He insisted, wincing.

“I’m Connie, and this is Sasha.” Buzz-cut said, swatting away Sasha’s hand as she tried to shake him. “Sasha play it cool! And uh, sure? Do you know what you’re doing?”

Eren grinned at their interaction “Yea, I’ve had to patch myself up plenty of times after fights I shouldn’t have gotten in. I’ve got tonnes of practise, but why don’t you go to the infirmary?”

“It’s not serious enough, there are dudes in there that just got back from patrol with bullet wounds and missing limbs, they’d just send me back out.” Eren’s eyebrows rose in shock as he lifted Connie’s hand and rolled up the sleeve of his shirt to properly assess the injury.

“Yea, it’s not too bad. I’ll just clean it up first. Stitches aren’t necessary but I’ll have to glue it to keep anything from getting in and causing infection. Let’s go somewhere where we’re less likely to be hit by flying projectile.” Eren suggested as a dagger thudded into the ground dangerously close to where they sat.

“Good idea.” They gathered up the first aid kit and made their way to a secluded alcove around the side of the clock tower where they sat in a bench under the shade of some kind of fruit tree.

“You’re pretty good.” Connie admitted as he watching Eren get to work, wincing as he mopped up the blood and bits of dirt with an antiseptic wipe “I admit I thought you’d get queasy at the sight of blood or something. No offence.” Eren shrugged as he took the medical glue applicator out of its wrapping.

“I’m a normal person too. My dad might be a king, but I’ve been in fights, fallen out of trees, gotten dirty and been bullied. I just wish people could see that side of me instead.”

“What’s it like being married to Corporal Levi?” Sasha suddenly blurted. Eren could tell she’d been begging to ask; she’d been staring at him intently all this time, face red with the exertion of holding back.

“Ah well, if that little tantrum at breakfast didn’t answer your question, I’m sure you could imagine considering you’ve known him longer than I have.” he admitted.

“That bad huh?” Connie looked at him sympathetically. Eren’s stomach gurgled loudly and he blushed. “Oh man, you didn’t finish eating did you? Oi Sasha”

Sasha’s pleading look was met with a firm stare from Connie until she relented, sighing and reluctantly pulling a wrapped package from the small bag at her hip.

“Sandwich. I nabbed it at breakfast.” She explained to Eren’s confused expression

“Go on, take it.” Connie urged “She eats more than her fair share as is. Think of it as a thank you since Sasha probably would have probably wrapped the bandages so tight it would cut off the circulation if I’d left this to her.” Eren gratefully took the gift.

“Thanks guys, I really needed this.” Eren greedily dug into the sandwich and Sasha watched him, her mouth watering. They began exchanging light banter, questioning each other about their
completely different lifestyles. Eren was finally beginning to feel like things might be looking up, when their conversation was interrupted by an unfamiliar voice.

“We finally found you.”

The trio turned to face three large soldiers that had gathered, blocking the only exit from the alcove. It was clear they had been with the Wings of Freedom for a while, evidenced by the tattoos that sheathed their exposed arms that rippling with muscle, and the numerous scars criss-crossing their skin. Eren gulped at the way they stared him down, him, not his companions. Their eyes were full of scorn and their lips curled with contempt. “Lucky us, we caught you where no one could see us.”

Eren exchanged alarmed and frantic expressions with his new friends, whose looks mirrored his own. What they hell did these guys want?

“Uhh, can I help you guys?” Connie asked, voice wavering hesitantly.

“Shut up, baldy. You and your girlfriend can scram, we’re here for the princess.” Oh shit. Eren gulped. What did he do now?

“Sasha! Go get help.” Connie hissed to the brunette. She turned to him with wide, terrified eyes.

“I’m not leaving you with them!”

“Yea well, we’re all screwed if we don’t get back-up pronto. Go!” He urged under his breathe, and with a determined nod, she jumped to her feet and sprinted away, inching warily through the wall of muscle blocking the exit, but they let her pass.

“You too, short stuff.” One of the men said as they strode forward, Eren and Connie stood, fists clenched. Eren felt the adrenaline pump through him as his body responded immediately to the familiar prospect of a fight. Except of course this time he wasn’t just swinging drunk punches at the rich sons of elites he’d go clubbing with; these were trained, deadly soldiers hand-picked by Levi. Fuck.

“I’m sure we can talk this out, boys. What’s the problem?” Connie held up his hands in a conciliatory gesture. One of the men, with long brown dreadlocks, snarled and suddenly shot forward, shoving Connie out of the way, hard onto his injured shoulder.

“I warned you to leave, midget, but now you’re gonna get what’s coming to you. We just wanted to teach the little princess a lesson about smart mouthing the Corporal, and show him how things work around here.” A man with his head shaved and a stylized skull tattooed on his head said, leering at Eren. Eren eyed at the man as he prowled towards Connie, sprawled on the ground and nursing his arm, jaw clenched and eyes closed against the pain. He had to think fast, Connie had nothing to do with this, and he sure as hell was in no position to be defending himself.

“Okay ugly, I don’t even know who buzz-cut is. You came for me so come give it to me.” Three pairs of eyes turned to him “Look fuckers, I’m gonna talk to Levi however the hell I want. He’s just underworld scum, you all are, and we bought your poor asses to do a job. Don’t think for a second you can talk down to me, I could buy you all and your filthy whore mothers whenever I want.” Ah he hated insulting mothers; it was below the belt and trespassing on sacred territory, but he needed to get their attention away from Connie by any means necessary. He fixed the men stalking towards him with a determined glare and wicked smile; they didn’t call him Suicidal Bastard back home for nothing
“You fucking...” The first punch made him see stars and he was still trying to blink away the white spots that dotted his vision when the left hook caught him from the other side. Yea, this was nothing like the weak punches from the rich kids back home. *Fuck*. Mikasa, Armin, I love you. I want you to know I left the world the same way I came in; covered in blood and crying like a bitch.

He felt one of the men’s shovel-sized hands wrap around his throat and he was slammed onto the wall behind him, winding him and leaving him gasping for breath. His feet didn’t even reach the ground, and he clawed at the fingers wrapped around his throat desperately, kicking wildly forward. He felt his foot connect with something, and he heard a grunt of pain follow. His satisfaction was short-lived, however, because he was suddenly sucker-punched in the abdomen.

“You’re fucking weak, you little bitch.” The man taunted, shoving his face right in Eren’s so his disgusting hot breathe brushed his face and neck. “I’m gonna beat the insolence out of you. We’ll all take turns until you're beaten down to your level.” Eren felt his blood run cold and eyes widen in fear. Oh no, fuck no. He continued to try and fight free, but his attempts were tired and weak, and his captor laughed cruelly at his efforts, throwing him onto the ground carelessly.

“Hold him down.” He ordered his two lackeys. Eren's struggles were futile as he kicked and spat at the two met that approached him, the fear and dread creeping cold up his spine.

*Fuck, Sasha! Where are you?!*
“Oh good, you feel bad. There’s hope for the salvation of your soul yet.” Levi tried to tune out Petra’s scathing remarks as he continued his rounds of the training ground. He didn’t even want to rebut or insult her back since he knew he deserved this; to be followed around by Mama-Bear and Shitty-Glasses reminding him what a steaming pile of shit he was. Well, in Hanji’s defence they was just making ‘I-told-you-so’ comments, while a majority of the unladylike barbs came from Petra. Apparently she had formed some sort of maternal attachment to Eren and had taken personal offence at Levi’s behaviour. “He looked up to you, Levi. He thought of you as his hero and someone who would accept him when he had been rejected most of his life. How do you live with yourself?” The disappointment in Petra’s tone stabbed further than any of her previous sharp witticisms.

“Petra, please.” His voice was exhausted, and he ran a hand over his face as he paused by the entrance of the mess hall having completed a single round of the courtyard. He usually managed three rounds, including the time he took to offer instructions and shout criticisms at the training recruits, before it was time for break, but he thought maybe he might retire early today.

“No, no you don’t get to ask that of me Levi. You deserve to have everyone in this base tell you how cruel you’ve been. You’re getting off easy with me being the only one with the guts to call you out on your shit.” She cradled a hand over the bump of her belly, eyebrows pulled down in a frown.

“You should have gone after him” Hanji piped up, and Levi snorted.

“No Hanji’s right. You need to apologize to him and explain yourself. We know why you did, even if we don’t agree with it, but he’s the one who really needs to.”

Guilty. That’s what he felt. Guilty, remorseful and like shit. It had been a long time since he’d regretted any of his actions. If anything he did or said hurt someone, either he had intended it or they’d deserved it. But Eren didn’t. Levi had felt drawn to Eren’s energy since he’d first seen the boy, pulled in like a moth to a flame, and it had frightened him. Then suddenly he had been presented with the boy on a silver platter, and he just knew he would hurt him. He didn’t deserve such pure light, it was in his nature to smother it, and so he had reacted instinctively by pushing him away. Except he had hurt him too, and now he had gotten what he had wanted all along; for the boy to hate him and want nothing to do with him. So why did he feel so hollow?

“Ahhh...please...Hanji...Corporal Levi...please help” Levi turned to stare down at the recruit hunched over before him, hands grasping her knees as she panted and wheezed, trying to catch her breath.

“The hell are you doing here, recruit? You should be training.” He snapped, not in the mood for insubordination in the form of a fan-girling greenie.

“No Levi, wait” Hanji interrupted, stepping forward with a serious expression “What is it? What’s wrong?”

“The prince...Eren and Connie...they’re getting...a bunch of men...beating them up...behind the...behind the clock tower...please help...please!” What?!
Levi barely had to glance at Hanji and Petra before they were launching instinctively into action. “Lead the way recruit. How many men, and what’s the status of Eren and the other boy?” Levi interrogated, slipping into mission mode. He felt dread tensing up his muscles and was surprised despite himself; he was always objective when he was on a mission, so why was he suddenly feeling panic rising at the prospect of what he would find at the clock tower?

“Wait! Hold up, what did you say happened to Eren?” Levi didn’t break his stride as he turned his head to glance towards the voice. Three unfamiliar people, a bulky blond who had spoken, a tall raven man, and the small blonde girl who he recognized as Eren’s bodyguard, were jogging to catch up with them, expressions serious.

“Who the hell are you?” He demanded angrily. He did not have time to deal with curious onlookers.

“We’re…we’re Eren’s bodyguards” The blond answered, and he actually had the audacity to look sheepish. Levi scowled darkly and returned his attention to the brunette sprinting towards the clock tower in front of him.

“Well you’re doing a piss poor job of it.” The trio at least had the decency to accept the criticism wordlessly.

“There were…three men. Soldiers…like, old ones…I left before anything happened but…Connie’s hurt and…no one can see them…and…” The girl choked up, and Levi could tell by her sniffles that she was trying not to cry. Petra jumped in on cue.

“Honey, I need you to relax. Connie is a recruit, right? He’ll take care of Eren until we arrive. What’s your name, dear?” Her voice was smooth with years of experience, and only Levi and Hanji who had known her as long as they had could hear the underlying worry in her tone.

“Sasha…Sasha Braus.”

“Okay Sasha. Stay calm; they would barely have had time to do anything yet.” Levi appreciated Petra’s skills, knowing that despite their superior abilities, none of his remaining Squad had the calming presence and people skills like Petra.

“Hanji, call my squad.”

“Roger that.” They responded, relaying his instruction into their com. “They’re on their way” Levi overtook the girl as they rounded the side of the clock tower, drawing his handgun. “You hold back, leave this to us” he ordered her, and she nodded soundlessly, eyes brimming with tears.

His stomach bottomed out as he examined the scene before him. There was a recruit on the ground closer to him, curled up in a foetal position cradling his stomach and looking winded and in pain. That must be Connor or whatever. His gaze drifted to the congregation at the farthest end of the alcove; two men were pinning Eren to the ground by his arms while a third stood over him, sneering as he brandished his belt like a whip.

“You won’t be so smart-mouthed when I’m done with you, princess. I’ll turn you into a good little bitch for the Corporal break in.” Levi saw red. He silently re-holstered his weapon in favour of drawing his knife. The recruit on the ground whined and tried calling out to Eren.

“Hanji, Petra; take care of the boy.” He ordered.

“Corporal, wait for the others to come!” Petra pleaded, instinctively calling him by his rank, but
Levi ignored her and stalked towards his targets.

“We’ll help!” Eren’s bodyguard, the tall tanned one, volunteered, but Levi fixed him with dark glare “You’ll stay the fuck out of my way, that’s what you’ll do. I’d rather not mow down all six of you, but don’t think I can’t.” The short blonde girl glared with the single eye that wasn’t hidden by her fringe, but they held back.

His gaze drifted to Eren who was struggling furiously against the men’s hold, his green eyes were lit with an animalistic fury. His shirt had been torn off and used to gag him, and Levi could see the trickle of blood from a gash at his hairline and on his lip. Eren.

“You fucking dogs.” Levi didn’t shout when he was furious. Maybe when he was angry and reprimanding someone for a mistake or for being a shithead, but when he was incensed, his voice was low, level and deadly. If you’d known him long enough, you knew to run the other way when you heard that voice, preferably in zig-zag since he always tended to carry some form of firearm on him. He recognized these men, although he only knew the bald one with a skull tattoo by name Draven something. They were part of the people he sent out to intimidate; when he wanted debts collected or to remind someone who was in charge if they strayed. They had been part of the Freedom Wings for a while, he could tell by the way they looked at him, eyes wide in fear; they recognized the voice. Fucking good.

The two men released Eren and struggled up right, backtracking until they hit the far wall, eyes wide. Draven was paralysed in fear where he stood. Petra and the two blond bodyguards dashed forward to Eren’s side while the third hung back to reinforce Levi.

“Don’t even think about running.” Levi warned the three men “I’ll hunt you down like the pigs you are.” He turned to face the short, injured recruit being tended to by Hanji.

“You there, recruit. Tell me what happened.” The boy looked up at him, intimidated.

“I, uh, I got hurt during training and Eren offered to patch me up so we came back here to do it out of the way” He motioned weakly to a first aid kit scattered off to the side “Then these guys suddenly turned up and they were saying stuff, I don’t know, they told Sasha and I to leave because they had business with Eren. They said they wanted to teach him a lesson about disrespecting you or something, and I could tell they were going to do some crazy shit, so I told Sasha to fetch help and tried to talk them down. The dude with the hair went nuts and shoved me onto the ground on my shoulder, he would’ve probably done more too but Eren jumped in and started shouting all sorts of crazy at him, like insulting their mothers and shit, to distract them from me. Bald dude got hella pissed and started beating the shit out of him, and then told his buddies to strip Eren so he could, you know, do things to him. I started shouting, I don’t know, to call for help or to get them away from him, but one of the guys kicked me a couple times to shut me up and fuck man, I thought we were gonna die, then you guys showed up.” Levi turned to examine his bruised husband. The stupid brat jumped in to save a recruit and get assaulted in his place. To save a soldier in training who was accustomed to regular beatings and injuries in his line of work. Levi shook his head incredulously at the young man who was waving away Petra’s fussing hands and smiling reassuringly at his friends through pained winces. His bare chest was covered in pinkish red splotches as he began to bruise, and he cradled his abdomen tenderly. Levi’s attention was diverted by the arrival of his squad.

“Corporal! What’s the situation?” Gunther, Erd and Auruo appeared around the corner, staring wide eyed at the scene before them.

“You three keep an eye on those soldiers.” He ordered, suppressing the urge to check on Eren himself.
“We’ll take Eren to the infirmary.” The blond bodyguard said “Come on dude. Man, how do you always get yourself into these situations?” He asked Eren. The boy smiled self-consciously, but started protesting as he was hoisted bridal-style in his bodyguard’s arms.

“Reiner, fuck, I can walk!”

“You might have broken ribs, just shut up and hold on, you aren’t walking anywhere.” Levi watched their banter; they seemed quite close.

“No I don’t need the infirmary, it’s not that serious.” Eren protested despite his groans, but the small blonde woman rolled her eyes.

“Not the infirmary.” Levi interrupted “Take him to his room. Hanji, call Moblit from the infirmary and ask him to attend to Eren personally. You three” he nodded towards Eren’s bodyguards “Take care of the shitty brat, and actually do your jobs this time. Hanji and Petra look over the other two recruits and decide if they need any further care. Auruo, Erd and Gunther, you’re with me. We’ll take care of this lot” Levi nodded towards the three soldiers disdainfully. Well, they wouldn’t be soldiers for long. They wouldn’t be anything for long if Levi had anything to do with it.

“Yes sir!”

Petra stormed forward “Sir, please let me help! I can help you punish them!” Levi didn’t doubt it, if the fierce look in her eyes were anything to go by. Petra tended to be the most merciful of his squad, but when she was pushed, she was also the most ruthless and brutal.

“Petra, I’m not doubting your capabilities, but you’re caring for two now. If you get even slightly hurt or overexert yourself, it could have consequences.” His eyes flickered to her belly meaningfully and she pursed her lips but nodded understandingly.

Levi turned and frowned towards Eren when he heard him mumble something into Reiner’s shoulder.

“What was that, shitty brat?”

Eren kept his eyes averted, and Levi felt like shit as he watched the boy, broken, bloody and bruised, cradled against the larger man’s chest, refusing to meet his gaze. This happened under his watch, he had promised Hanji he would protect him.

“Not shitty brat.” Eren repeated quietly “Suicidal Bastard.” It seemed to be some sort of private joke because Reiner laughed, head thrown back, while the two other bodyguards smiled fondly.

“Suicidal Bastard is right.” Levi murmured as he regarded his reckless husband, but his voice lacked its usual bite. Had Eren looked up at that moment, he might have noticed the barely perceptible, relieved smile on the infallible Corporals face.
Levi ‘takes care’ of business. Eren decides he can be the princess as well as the knight in shining armour. Levi, your jealousy is showing, and Eren finally gets to enjoy an uninterrupted meal.

“Reiner, let go of me!” Eren kicked out violently feeling like a toddler throwing a tantrum until the tall blond was forced to place him down for fear of dropping him.

“Woah, calm down Bambi. You really shouldn’t be walking though.”

“My legs are fine.” He retorted, hunched over as he took a moment to adjust. “I look bad enough beaten up this bad, last thing I need is everyone seeing you carry me back. Annie, can I use you as a crutch?” Reiner feigned a hurt expression as the small blonde silently drifted to his side and positioned his arm around her shoulders.

“She’s the perfect height.” Eren explained, rolling his eyes.

“Hold on” She instructed “If you feel dizzy or like you are going to fall, let me know.”

The walk back to his room was painstakingly slow, but Eren steadfastly refused any further aid. Reiner whistled approvingly as he eyed Eren’s spacious room, and turned back to Eren. His gaze roving appreciatively over Eren’s bare chest.

“Well, everyone got a good view at least.” He joked, as Berthold helped Annie manoeuvre Eren into his bed.

“You think my bruising and possible rib fractures are hot? You’re a kinky guy, Reiner” Eren retorted sarcastically with a raised brow. He wasn’t blind, it was no secret Reiner had a thing for him. It had been that way for a while, their conversations always held some degree of flirtatious banter, but it was all in good fun. He liked Reiner, he was laid-back, easy-going and a great guy to have fun with, but he just didn’t feel romantically attracted to him, even though he did appreciate the high-school jock physique and them abs.

There was a knock at the door, and a man probably in his thirties with blond hair and in a lab coat cautiously poked his head in.

“Uh, Eren Jaeger? Hello, I’m Doctor Moblit and I’ll be looking after you.” He smiled nervously. Eren returned the greeting as the man made his way in and began looking over him and conducting several tests to assess the extent of damage and where it was most serious.

“So, where were you guys all this time?” Eren finally voiced the question that had been burning at the back of his throat. The trio exchanged a look, and it was Berthold who answered.

“Sorry Eren, we literally just arrived and Annie came to meet us. What bad timing for this to happen.” Lying. He was lying. Hanji had told him they had arrived before Eren had even woken up this morning, so why didn’t they say the truth? Did they feel bad for their absence, so they were trying to form some kind of defence? Berthold glistened with nervous sweat and shifted from foot
to foot, but then again he always looked like he was just waiting for a guilty verdict, so this wasn’t particularly telling behaviour. He eyed the three suspiciously before sighing defeat; he’d figure it out eventually.

“Can you pass me my laptop?” He asked Annie, motioning to where his MacBook sat charging on the study table. Annie looked at him questioningly, but retrieved it anyway.

“I wanted to call Mikasa and Armin and let them know what’s going on.” He explained as he clumsily opened it single-handedly.

“Um Eren, maybe you should wait.” Berthold began “This is kind of serious, so perhaps we should consult with Hanji, Commander Erwin and the Corporal before we inform anyone in Maria of this incident. I mean, it could be misconstrued and taken as a sort of hate crime and escalate.” Eren blinked up at him. They didn’t want him to tell his sister and best friend about his injuries in case it somehow got known to a wider audience and got misunderstood? His well-being was put second to the sanctity and preservation of the alliance. His father’s words echoed in the back of his mind; “Don’t screw this up…do whatever needs to be done…” He clenched his teeth and looked away from his caretakers so they didn’t see the flash of annoyance and resentment in his eyes. They were just doing their job, don’t shoot the messengers. Reluctantly, he shut the lid of his laptop.

“Right…”

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\textit{Levi’s POV, a little while later…}

Levi shouldered open the bedroom door as he continued drying off his hands, not bothering to knock as he was sure it would already be full of people. It had taken forever to scrub the remnants of dried blood from beneath his finger nails but he still felt like there was more left, and he couldn’t help but grimace at the thought.

“Is that how you should look visiting your injured husband?” Hanji’s voice called. Moblit was sitting on the edge of the bed, placing small, white band aids on the cut above Eren’s left eye. He seemed to just be finishing up, and Levi allowed himself to do a quick customary once-over of the bandaged boy who was propped up against the head of his bed. Green eyes watched him warily like a startled deer, waiting for a sign of danger, and Levi suddenly remembered the boys heated words to him back at the mess hall before this mess. He looked up to Levi and thought of him as his hero. Levi felt his chest grow warm at the thought, only to remember how much he’d hurt the boy with his actions. The boy broke eye contact first, looking down to fiddle with the loose thread of a bandage around his palm.

“What’s the diagnosis?” His gaze stayed locked on Eren and Moblit seemed confused, blinking between Levi and Eren as if wondering who was expected to answer. Levi didn’t care to enlighten him.

“No breaks or fractures, a few superficial lacerations that don’t require stitches, and a lot of bruising. The worst of the bruises should disappear in two weeks, but all in all, you’re very lucky. I constantly see far more serious injuries from sparring practise than you got with three soldiers beating you up with intent. You’ll be quite sore tomorrow when your body catches up with your brain, and you also got a mild concussion, so if you feel dizzy, nauseous or get headaches, let me know.” Moblit answered, leaning back in his chair and smiling exhaustedly. Eren smiled at him gratefully.

“Thank you, Doctor.”
Levi glanced up at the sound of Hanji not-so-subtly clearing their throat. They was gesturing towards their neck and the collar of their shirt and Levi frowned uncomprehendingly until he realized they meant his own. He looked down and scowled. There were pinkish droplets of blood scattered on the stark white of his cravat. He roughly untied it, looking around to see if anyone had caught the exchange, and his eyes met Eren’s wide, alarmed ones. Whoops. Levi winked at the disconcerted boy, stuffing the cravat into his trouser pocket, but Eren only frowned and looked pointedly away. Was he being given the cold shoulder?

Levi blinked, surprisingly perturbed by this realization, before making his way over the Hanji by the window.

“Well?” They asked, eyes glinting mischievously. Levi scowled at their enthusiasm.

“I might be doing the beating up, but the kicks you get out of hearing about it really questions who is the real sadist here.”

“I just want to know. For science.” Levi rolled his eyes at the weak argument. “Was it messy?” They asked, trying a different approach. Levi pulled a face and patted the pocket occupied by his soiled cravat.

“What do you think?” Hanji rose her eyebrows, appraising him.

“…You’re never messy.”

“I can be, sometimes. I just usually try not to be.”

“You must have been pretty angry to not care about actually making a mess.” Hanji observed, but Levi didn’t comment. “Are Erd, Gunther and Auruo finishing it off?”

“No, they’re cleaning up. I did it myself.”

“All three? …They were big guys.” Levi snorted.

“You should know better than to judge by size by now.” His eyes drifted back to Eren who was surrounded by his useless bodyguards, laughing at something the big, blond one he seemed close to was saying, clutching at his side and wincing through the mirth. He seemed to grow sombre though, as some thought occurred to him, and he turned to face the Annie girl.

“Where did you learn to fight?” He asked her.

“My father taught me.” She answered after a moment. “Why?”

“Can you teach me?” The girl considered him in silence, piecing blue eyes examining his hopeful green ones. They seemed to find what they were looking for, because she allowed him a small, rare smile.

“Sure. We can start as soon as you get better.” Christ that brats smile was going to pull a muscle one day.

“Aw come on Eren dude, you have me to look after you.” The jock joked, going to elbow him in the ribs, but then thinking better of it.

“Reiner, you are my knight in shining armour.” Eren said with mock earnest, placing a solemn hand on the blonds forearm “But I have to learn to fight my own battles.”
“Your knight in shining armour wouldn’t even have realized you needed saving if he hadn’t overheard Sasha through sheer luck.” Levi quipped, interrupting the playful banter. He didn’t like the familiarity of the two’s interactions, which he recognized on some level was a little ridiculous since they’d clearly known each other for a while, but blondie still seemed a little too handsy for his liking. “So by that analysis, I think I’m more befitting of that role.” Levi wasn’t sure why he was spouting the nonsense he was. Something he was sure would rile Eren up, but at this moment, he just wanted those eyes to look at him again, long enough to see the remorse he was sure would be reflected in his own. He wasn’t good at apologies, he wasn’t good at feelings full stop, but at this stage, he was willing to take Eren’s fiery temper as long as it came with his attention. And there it was.

Eren’s green eyes glowered at him, resent radiating off him in waves that were stifling, but Levi met his fiery gaze head on, unflinching.

“Knights are kind, charismatic and tall to my knowledge. Also, they don’t tend to be verbally and emotionally abusive assholes. I don’t know, I’m just going off every possible example anyone’s ever heard of.” Ouch. That was a low-blow, excuse the pun; but he acquiesced.

“I deserved that.” Levi nodded, hands up in surrender.

“Whew, okay!” Hanji jumped in, dusting off their hands and breaking the tense silence. “Wow, would you look at the time? It’s almost lunch! What a crazy morning, you lot should shuffle off if you want a bite to eat” They said to Annie, Reiner and Berthold “I better go check on Petra and those two munchkins. Eren obviously will have his food brought to him, and I’m sure these two have plenty to discuss” They ushered the protesting bodyguards out the door and also left, but not before fixing Levi with a stern, four-eyed look.

“…You deserve more. I don’t deserve this.” Eren continued heatedly seemingly ignoring the brief interruption, gesturing at himself. There was a choking silence as Levi struggled to find the right words to say.

“No, you don’t. I’m s—”

“Like fuck I don’t! You know why they did that? Because I disrespected you.” Eren burst, leaning forward intently as he continued his rampage “They probably didn’t even hear what I fucking said to you at breakfast but apparently I’m the one who disrespected you. After all the effort I’ve put into this, after all the shit I’ve been through, and you getting off treating me like crap; I’m the one who needs to have my place as your bitch fucked into me.” His voice cracked at the end, and Levi could see the angry tears in his eyes. He couldn’t stand this; Eren looked broken and terrified, for good reason. What he had undergone, what he had thought was going to happen to him, would petrify anyone. Levi instinctively made his way towards Eren, he wasn’t sure what to do, he was so out of his element right now, but he just wanted Eren to smile again. He wanted to tear his hair out, seeing the usually incandescent Eren hunched over, covered in bandages and blossoming bruises, his bright green eyes swimming with unshed tears. This was his fault, all of this was completely his fault, either directly or indirectly, but his fault nonetheless. Eren was hurt physically and emotionally because of Levi’s neglect and mistreatment, and Levi had no defence. He was his hero; he was meant to protect him. How was he supposed to explain himself? In hindsight, his reasons for pushing Eren away in the first place were so insignificant, in the end Eren got hurt anyway.

He looked down helplessly at Eren, head bowed as he struggled to control his feelings, fisting the bed sheets bunched up around him. Levi sat down on the bed so he was facing him, conscious of the way Eren stiffened immediately beside him. After a moment’s deliberation, he cautiously
placed his left hand over Eren’s. Eren flinched, at the unexpected contact or disgust over Levi’s proximity, he wasn’t sure.

“Please leave.” Eren’s voice was strained and tense, and Levi could just barely see the way his jaw flexed through the curtain of dark brown hair.

“I can’t,” Levi said firmly frowning determinedly, tightening his hold on the Eren’s hand “I need to apologise.” Eren didn’t speak and Levi took it as his cue to continue “For everything. Everything that you have had to deal with since you arrived has been my fault. I’ve been neglectful, cold and dismissive, even though you were the one who had it hardest. I was presumptuous and prejudiced against you and left you on your own when I should have been the one who stood with you. You made an effort to get along with me but I shot you down. I…” Levi closed his eyes self-consciously as he forged on, completely out of his depth “I’m a solitary man; I have been for most of my life. We are very different people, Eren. I recognized that and knew we would clash so I pushed you away because there was no point even pretending. You are young, reckless, callous, passionate and extroverted. This marriage that only exists because of bizarre circumstances; we are two people who would in never be in such a situation of our own accord, but from now on I will make an effort to make this…alliance function.” Levi opened his eyes and was surprised to find Eren watching him, viridian green eyes wide and ardent. A single tear from before clung to the edge of his long brown eyelash, quivering and ready to fall. “Just…don’t cry, Eren” He sighed exhaustedly. He almost made a move to brush away the tear, but suppressed it. That was far too intimate, he’d had enough of that already.

Eren shifted his hand and Levi almost removed his, taking it as a hint to let go, but the boy was only turning his hand upward to press their palms together, curling his fingers around Levi’s rough and calloused hand. His tan fingers stood out against Levi’s alabaster skin. Complete opposites. His touch was innocent, intimate and gentle. Levi hadn’t been touched like that in years.

“Did you kill them?” Eren’s voice came out slightly hoarse, and he cleared his throat softly “The men?”

Levi smirked at the question “No, that would be murder. I’m not sure what kind of barbaric institute you think I’m running here, but laws still apply in this backward country.” Eren scowled, but Levi could tell he was slightly embarrassed. Levi took pity on the foreigner.

“I took care of them.” He assured vaguely, looking away.

“And by ‘took care of’, you mean…?”

“The complete opposite of the literal meaning of the phrase.”

“Oh.”

The comfortable silence was interrupted by a polite knock on the door. Levi instinctively snatched his hand away and stood, just as a young recruit, a girl with dark skin and a long braid down her back, entered holding a covered tray of food for Eren. She looked startled by the Corporals presence, and made a sort of awkward bow in substitute of a salute, Levi nodded in acknowledgment and decided that this was probably his cue to excuse himself.

“I better go before those shitheads start a food fight or something.” Eren blinked up at him as the recruit occupied herself setting up his meal.

“Uhh, right.”
“Have you called Mikasa and the Mushroom?” Levi asked, eyeing the MacBook by Eren’s side.

“The mush…? Oh! Armin, no. I was told to not to mention it in case word gets out and makes bad publicity or stirs up shit.” Eren admitted with a frown.

“Screw that, you should tell them. Obviously ask them not to spread it, but they deserve to know and you should probably talk about it; therapeutic shit and all.” Levi turned to leave and suddenly scowled as a thought occurred to him “Fuck, your sisters going to kill me.” He muttered.
Strange Bedfellows

Chapter Summary

Eren’s in a critical state, and Levi has firm instructions from the doc as well as Scouting Legion's own Head Adviser to keep an eye on the ailing boy lest his condition take a turn for the worst. You can never be too cautious with such injuries.

Levi arrived to join everyone else eating lunch a little later, almost reluctant to leave Eren alone, although he sure as hell did not want to be present when he called his sister. The mess hall instantly hushed with his arrival; no doubt some rumours had spread about what had occurred earlier, and everyone’s eyes were locked on him as he strode up the length of the hall to the officers table at the head. He made a point of pausing in his journey to gingerly pull the blood-stained cravat from his pocket to thrust it into the chest of a bewildered recruit with a grimace and firm instructions to take it to be laundered. He glared around the room at the hushed whispers the act had ignited, satisfied by how quickly the conversation died again. It was good to let them gossip; word had already gotten out of what had happened and no doubt there was all sorts of speculation already about what sort of medieval punishment Levi had delivered to the offenders. He was disgusted by the act itself, almost as much as the motives. Clearly, the soldiers had some serious prejudices about the people of Maria and their apparent superiority complex, and the presence of Marian royalty had stirred up some serious resent. He needed to address that issue before it got out of hand and incited further violence towards Eren and possibly even his guards.

The conversation during lunch was relatively subdued, with Petra being the only one really talking, recounting with amusement how Connie and Sasha had animatedly told all the trainees that had come to visit them how Eren had heroically jumped in to save Connie. Levi was glad that news of Eren’s innocence would at least be spreading that way through the barracks. He was surprised, however, that neither Petra nor Hanji had tried to interrogate him about his conversation with Eren. Hanji then spoke up, and Levi realized they had just been biding their time all along.

“Moblit says that someone should stay with Eren tonight, just in case anything serious comes up.” They mumbled though a mouthful of mashed potatoes.

“Don’t talk with your mouth full, Four-eyes; that’s disgusting. Also, what could possibly happen?”

“Not sure, he’s the doctor. Maybe Eren hit his head hard and got brain haemorrhaging and might slip into a coma in his sleep?”

“What the fuck? Don’t say that kind of crap, Hanji.” Levi snapped, shooting them a look “But fine, you three can take turns keeping an eye on him.” He said, looking pointedly at Eren’s three bodyguards “And do it properly this time.” Annie met his gaze unflinchingly, she really reminded him of Eren’s sister, while the other two looked rightfully ashamed.

“Ahh, no. That’s not what Moblit meant. He said someone should *sleep* with him. You know, stay close.” Hanji interrupted.

Levi fixed Hanji with a sceptical look “Did he really say that?”

“He did.” Hanji said, giving firm nod, but their eyes shone with mischief.
“Let me rephrase, did you coerce Moblit into saying that?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about” they said with a completely unconvincing air of innocence while Petra giggled beside them. Levi sighed, and was about to call Hanji out when Reiner spoke up.

“I don’t mind sleeping with Eren if you’re too busy?”

Levi wasn’t sure how Hanji choked on mashed potato, the stuff was practically soup, but they hunched over the table, coughing and spluttering while Petra thumped their back with a fist. He watched them with little sympathy, Petra was surprisingly strong, before remembering the comment that had provoked such a disgusting reaction.

“Did you just volunteer to sleep with my husband in my place, you mindless wall of meat?” He said venomously, turning his glare on the blond boy who had spoken, “You realize you would probably roll over and crush him in your sleep? He needs someone to make sure he gets better, not worse.” Reiner looked mortified by the admonishment, while Annie snickered beside him. Hanji, having recovered, wasn’t one to let such an opportunity slip by.

“Well someone needs to do it, Levi, so I think you should be grateful tha—“

“Fuck off, Shitty Glasses.” He snapped.

“So you’ll do it?”

“Petra, next time they choke on their food, I forbid you from helping them.” He ordered, ignoring the question, but Hanji grinned anyway, recognizing the triumph.

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It was the hottest time of year, and the soldiers really felt it during their daily training. The shadow of the clock tower and Levi’s quarters across the courtyard provided some relief from the relentless heat, but the humidity was smothering, and the surrounding castle walls broke any cool breezes. Shirts stuck to backs that dripped with sweat, and soldiers greedily guzzled from their bottles, pouring water on their faces to provide some refreshment. After training, the soldiers were dismissed to the showers, followed by daily chores and yard duties. Levi supervised the recruits with hawk-eyes as they were still learning of his high standards, and soon, it was time for dinner.

This was a normal day at the Wings of Freedom base, this was how things always were; repetitive, predictable and structured, until Levi’s next mission came up.

Levi made himself a strong coffee despite the heat, before saying his goodnights and making his way to his quarters to do the daily paperwork that always accumulated. Erwin would be coming tomorrow for one of their regular meetings and he needed to prepare all the necessary documents. He had been informed of today’s incident, and no doubt there would be much to discuss. Levi sighed in exhaustion just thinking about Erwin launching into one of his inevitable bureaucratic spiels. Hopefully Petra could calm him down a little before sending him over; Levi didn’t have the energy to deal with one of his tirades after the events of today.

The halls were washed in the deep purple of the dusk light, the silhouettes of the large glass widow frames thrown haphazardly across the floor and walls. The lazy drone of cicadas could be heard even from inside, and Levi took an appreciative sip of his coffee as he loosened the top few buttons of his shirt in the privacy of his home. He frowned, noticing one window was open; sheer curtains billowing eerily in the blue light. He was sure he had made sure they were all closed so mosquitoes didn’t get in at night; had he not closed this one firmly and it blew open?
It was the sleeping figure of the boy curled up in the window seat that reminded him again, after the dull events of the afternoon, that he wasn’t living alone anymore. He wore reading glasses, Levi observed with surprise. Stupid, oversized and outdated reading glasses with a brown frame that was slipping down his nose as he snored quietly with his chin pressed into his chest. Couldn’t he afford some designer pair? He was a prince for God’s sake. Yet somehow, he managed still to make them look gawkily endearing just the same. Levi remembered the daydream he’d had yesterday when he was first showing Eren around, although he looked considerably less picturesque right now, slumped awkwardly against the window frame drooling as he was. But this looked more right; this less-than-glamorous Eren, dozing off in his home was real, and not just his imagination. Why did that thought make his lips quirk up in a half smile?

One hand cushioned the boys head against the glass, Levi couldn’t help the grimace that formed at the thought of the hand print that would leave, while the other loosely held onto a book that was opened and abandoned halfway, pressed to his chest. He pried the book gently from his grasp and inspected the cover. A Scouting Legion history book; brand new, its spine not even cracked. Levi frowned disapprovingly at some of the dog eared pages before realizing they were all marking pages where his name was mentioned. He returned his attention to the slumbering boy before him with an annoyed frown. He was trying to learn about Levi in his own roundabout and non-intrusive way, but it confused him why the boy was still trying so hard to learn about his new home and his husband after the less-than-hospitable welcome he had received from both. Any other person would have refused to make the effort after similar events, yet here was Eren, battered, bruised and bandaged, but just as determined as ever.

Levi was so startled by the sentimental shift in his train of thought that he whacked Eren across the head a little harder than he had intended.

“Ow! What the—?! Ow.” Eren jerked awake and cringed as the sudden movement jostled his sore limbs, before wincing up at Levi. Almost immediately he was wide awake, green eyes wide and blinking up at him through those ridiculous glasses. “Corporal!” he took a moment to gather his bearings, before apparently realizing where he was again “Oh crap, did I fall asleep? What time is it? Ow.” Levi tutted, despite his amusement at the hopeless creature flailing around in front of him. “Calm down or you’ll pull whatever intact muscles you have left.” He scolded, tossing the book into Eren’s lap “it’s a little past nine. Have you washed?” He eyed the thin grey shirt that clung to Eren’s sweaty frame. Never mind that, he was having a bath now whether he already had or not, especially if they were sharing a bed.

“No sir. Not yet, I was about to, but I fell asleep.”

“Whatsoever. Come on, you can walk by yourself can’t you? I’m surprised you made it this far, you were supposed to stay in bed. You’ll aggravate your injuries.” Levi said, walking in the direction of Eren’s room.

“I know. I couldn’t though, it was so boring. After I called Armin and Mikasa there was nothing left to do, so I started to rea—” a thought seemed to occur to Eren midsentence, and apparently he lacked the ability to finish one thought before vocalizing the other like some overexcited child “Did you see what I was reading, sir?” He asked, and Levi could hear the tentative embarrassment in his voice. It was clear he was worried Levi had seen the pages he had been marking. Levi decided to cut him some slack today and spare him the humiliation.

“Some shitty history book, I don’t know.” He answered dismissively. They arrived at Eren’s room and Levi opened the door for the hobbling boy who was still struggling to match his pace. “Get your ass washed and into bed, you need to rest for fuck’s sake. If it takes more than three grown-
ass men beating you to keep you in one spot I might have to get you a leash. I’ll join you when I’m done with my work.” Levi hoped to escape before the boy realized the meaning of his parting words, but clearly he was asking for too much.

“Join me?” Christ his face was so red Levi was almost concerned he had triggered some medical reaction. The boy clumsily pushed the glasses that were slipping down his nose back up, still staring stupefied at him.

“Did I fucking stutter?” Levi glowered at the boy like he was the strange one for questioning the arrangement “Just for tonight. Moblit’s worried you’ll die in your sleep, and apparently I’d notice if that happens. Don’t get too fucking excited, you’ll burst a blood vessel.”

“I wasn’t…I didn’t…” Eren denied, his brow pinched in a boyish scowl. His expression juxtaposed with those glasses did little to make Levi take him any more seriously.

“Don’t force yourself.” Levi smirked as the boy huffed irritably.

“I’ll be fine, I don’t need your help.” He threw over his shoulder as he limped into his room. Levi hummed, unconvinced.

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It was already 2 am by the time Levi had finished his work and showered again. In this heat, he could barely go a few hours without the sweat making him feel dirty and in need of another wash. It felt strange to make his way the unfamiliar bedroom, throwing aside years of night time routine. He supposed he would have to get used to some changes now that there was someone else living with him, although he found comfort in the knowledge that this particular action would never have to be repeated after tonight.

Eren was already asleep when he let himself in; sprawled on his belly across the left side of the bed in just a pair of worn basketball shorts. For a prince, he sure dressed like an average teen whose wardrobe consisted of hand-me-downs and thrift shop bargains. It was too hot for proper pyjamas though, he himself was wearing just a pair of pyjama bottoms that hung low on his hips and slightly bunched around his ankles. He hesitated by his side of the large bed, scowling at his predicament and his unwanted bedfellow. The moonlight provided adequate lighting for him to make out the contours of the sleeping boy’s back as it rose and fell gently with his breaths; tan, lean and unscarred. He could see the slightly purple and blue blemishes that marred the otherwise unmarked skin, and the sight of the darkening bruises on the innocently slumbering boy made his anger from before begin to resurface before he stamped it back down. He took several deep breathes, the act reminding him of the calming routine after having lain in wait for hours behind a sniper rifle biding his time for the right opportunity. Except of course this time he was just working up the courage to get into bed with his sleeping husband. Come on Levi, not one week ago you wouldn’t hesitate to climb into bed with a stranger for the night; what’s so different about now?

“Stay on your side of the bed.” Levi ordered firmly, pointing a stern finger at the boys slumbering figure, before finally crawling into bed and curling up as far from Eren as the bed would allow. It didn’t take long for the day’s exhaustion to catch up with him, and he was out not long after.
What An Ass

Chapter Summary

Eren makes an effort to join in and it may or may not involve giving shirtless soldiers oil rubs. It may be working. Or it may just be pissing Levi off.

Eren was a heavy sleeper, just ask Mikasa. Once, his laptop had caught fire after overheating on his bed, and neither the wailing fire alarm nor the bed being alight had woken him. It was Mikasa yanking him out of bed and slapping him awake screaming that finally did it. The Legion summer combined with his painful and uncomfortable injuries, however, made his sleep fitful and unpleasant. He woke up, a little past four according to the digital clock sitting on the nightstand, and awkwardly manoeuvred himself to his right side, automatically swinging his leg over Levi’s hip and burrowing into the older man’s chest. He was already dozing off again when his mind caught up with the situation, and he froze wide eyed, expecting the other man to shove him away and give him a beating to rival his current injuries, but it never came. He lay frozen several more moments, but there was still no sign of the older man being aware of his actions. Eren stared at the chest in front of his face, painfully aware of just how long it had been since the last time he’d shared a bed with someone other than Armin or Mikasa.

Levi was ripped, which of course made sense; you didn’t earn the title of Humanities Strongest in the real world by bumming around on the sofa playing video games, but still, damn. He might have been shorter than Eren, but he was broader; every square inch firmly packed with muscles and a motherfucking six pack. He could just imagine those powerful, sinewy arms holding him down firmly as— No, stop Eren. This man is an asshole. You are not allowed to admire his godly body and those badass tattoos. Despite himself, Eren shifted back to get a better view of the black and blue ink decorating the alabaster skin in front of him. He could just make out half of the Scouting Legion crest as big as his face inked on his left side just below his ribs. A paragraph of foreign words, Latin or maybe Sanskrit? Some kind of oath he supposed, disappeared beneath the hem of his pyjama bottoms, and Eren fought the urge to see just where it ended. He had a tattoo sleeve on his right arm from his shoulder to his wrist; twisting black patterns that Eren could barely make out in the darkness. He let out an appreciative hum as he traced the lines, before shuffling forward again. Who could blame him? He was a sexually frustrated teenager who woke up spooning a virtual, tattooed Adonis; he was very well going to take advantage of the situation for as long as he could.

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Eren woken up several hours later to the shrill of his phone’s ringtone. Groaning loudly, he blindly fumbled for the damned device on his nightstand.

“’Sup?”

“Eren? Were you still asleep? Isn’t it, like, ten in the morning over there?” Armin’s said disapprovingly. Eren turned and winced at the empty half of his bed, already perfectly made with the crinkles smoothed out of the sheets and the pillows straightened. “How are you feeling? Better now?”

“What an ass.”
“What?”
“I slept with Levi last night” Eren attempted to clarify.

“What? Oh my God Eren, wow. Um, I don’t know what to say. What was he like? Congratulations?”

“Oh fuck, no. Not like that he was told to keep an eye on me in case something happened overnight, we literally just slept in the same bed, nothing else. Unfortunately.” Eren added almost as an afterthought.

“Unfortunately?” Eren could practically hear Armin’s smug smile.

“It’s so hot over here, he was topless and so ripped and tattoos, man. Commander Handsome has nothing on him.” Eren sighed and covered his eyes with his forearm to shield them from the sunlight streaming in through the curtains he assumed Levi had opened “He left though, before I woke up.”

“Well, he is the Corporal. He has work to do so he can’t exactly afford to laze around until midday”

“He could have said good morning. That’s what good husbands do. He just snuck off like this was some lame ass one night stand, except without even the sex.” Armin hummed sympathetically, and Eren could hear him shuffling papers on his end.

“Well I called to check up on you and apparently wake you up. Also, Mikasa and I are going to try pop down in a couple weeks, so try not to get beat up in the meantime.”

“Seriously?!” Eren grinned, immediately uplifted “You guys have to meet Connie and Sasha, remember the recruits I told you about? You made me happy so I’m actually going to get up now.”

“Good on you.” Armin praised sarcastically.

“Okay I better get going, I’ll call you tonight. I’m considering volunteering as an on-field medic since I’m pretty handy with basic first aid.”

“That sounds great, Eren! It would suit you perfectly. I’m glad to hear you’re making friends and fitting in. Well, aside from getting beaten up…although in your case that sounds exactly like fitting in.”

“No but tell me seriously, that was a dick move, right? He’s a total ass.”

“Definitely an ass.”

“Hot ass.”

“Mhmm. Bye Eren.”

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Levi was practising hand-to-hand combat with the soldiers when he noticed Eren arrive and settle down at the edge of the field with a first aid kit. The boy stretched and yawned widely before suddenly wincing and clutching his ribs and painstakingly lowering himself to the ground. Levi snorted and shook his head; it was about time the brat had woken up, it was almost time for lunch. Levi had woken up tangled in the teens gangly limbs, the boy’s face tucked under his chin. It had
taken him a few moments of revelling in the comfortable domesticity of the situation before he had snapped to his senses and extracted himself hurriedly from the tangle of body parts, ignoring and slightly alarmed by the reluctance he felt to leave.

He returned his attention to instructing the soldiers, but found his gaze wandered more often than he’d like to admit in Eren’s direction. Eren was smiling as he conversed animatedly with a soldier, who Levi recognized as Erd, whose calf he was massaging. Both of them were laughing. Erd was topless. Levi was unreasonably irritated by the observation.

“Alright, everyone pair up and practise what we ran through.” He shouted “Lunch in a few.” He made his way to his towel and water bottle that was placed near Eren, and waited until Eren glanced his way before he began to peel off his shirt. Christ, if Hanji could see his flagrant exhibitionism now they’d never let him live it down. Levi smirked, aware of Eren’s shameless stare as he drank deeply from his water bottle; those green orbs locked on the movement of his Adam’s apple. He stopped short of actually pouring water over his face and chest though, which was a little too messy for his taste, and fixed his admirer with a bored stare.

“You can quit salivating, it’s almost time for lunch.”

“What? Oh, right yea.” Eren blinked several times, the tips of his ears tinged pink, as he returned his attention to Erd who smiled up at Levi.

“Good job out there, Corporal. I was just introducing myself to Eren. He’s doing pretty well considering yesterday; we’re impressed he could come out at all let alone help with the first aid. He’s made a good impression on a number of the soldiers already.” Levi snorted but didn’t respond. It was true though, who wouldn’t be impressed by the boys recovery considering his state yesterday? Eren had helped bandage up a few minor wounds and ice a few strains and bruises already just now, and every time he had smiled and talked with each individual soldier, easily drawing them into conversation despite most of them looking quite intimidating and probably not naturally being the most talkative or sociable. Levi realized that at this pace, any prejudice or resentment his soldiers felt towards the upper-class and nobility would be suspended from Eren at the very least. He had a particular charisma, so that no matter how out-of-place he looked surrounded by hardened soldiers and ex-thugs, he still somehow managed to draw them in.

“You’ll meet the rest of Levi’s squad at lunch, we’ve all been dying to meet you. In fact we’re a little offended the Corporal didn’t introduce us earlier.” Erd continued “You already met Petra though, but I suppose that’s to be expected.”

“Wait, Petra’s part of the Corporal’s squad?!” Eren exclaimed in disbelief.

“She was until that shitstain Captain Eyebrows knocked her up, although I don’t doubt she’ll be right back with us before long. She’s going stir-crazy cooped up in his mansion attending garden parties and art exhibitions.” Levi answered and Erd laughed.

“I’m surprised you didn’t know. The press had a field day when they learned the Commander was engaged to one of Legion’s strongest soldiers. There was all sorts of uproar when Petra refused to quit and become some sort of trophy wife. She came on missions with us up until she got pregnant, and even now she probably still wants to come.”

“Wow, I didn’t know that.” Eren’s voice was pensive and gloomy. Levi arched a narrow brow at the frowning boy.

“What’s with that face?” Eren blinked up at him, startled by the question. Didn’t he know he was practically an open book? Of course anyone could tell something was bothering him, don’t look at
me like I read your mind.

“I was just wondering what Petra did to make everyone like her even though she was upper class and stuff and hoped maybe I could do it too. I guess it’s because she’s one of you guys though.” He answered glumly. Levi scowled and threw his towel at the boys head, satisfied by the yelp he received.

“The fuck are you on about, brat? These guys were just suspicious of you because you aren’t a soldier, but you’re doing just fine. Ask any one you spoke today, I’m sure they liked you.” He turned to assess the progress of the sparring soldiers “Christ, you really are just a brat.” He muttered before calling out to his soldiers to pack up and get ready for lunch.
My Sun and Stars

Chapter Summary

Serious meeting for discussion of important, grown-up stuff. Definitely no spying on cute hubbies in their swimwear, and certainly no kinky fantasies inspired by eavesdropping on aforementioned hubbies conversations. Nope, not here. Not Levi. Poor Eren tries his hardest to fit in, but some pieces are still missing.

Erwin, Hanji and Levi had piled into the latter’s office after lunch when Erwin had arrived for the meeting. Erwin was currently sifting through the documents Levi had compiled last night, his gargantuan eyebrows pulled so far together they’d morphed into one, much to Hanji and Levi’s shared amusement. The blond couldn’t figure out why the two kept sharing secretive glances and snickering, and had given up guessing after a while, shaking their head exasperatedly.

“Eren seems to be doing well. I’m surprised by his attitude despite this incident.” He commented, not glancing up from the paperwork.

“Right? You’d think getting bashed up that bad would put a dampener on his day and make him more wary of the soldiers, but the kid’s out and about making friends left right and centre.” Hanji grinned and looked to Levi, only to find the man preoccupied staring absentmindedly out the open window. The sounds of Eren and his friends splashing and merrymaking in the pool below carried into the office. Eren was still a little too sore to do laps, so he had invited his bodyguards and the two recruits from yesterday to join him for a leisurely swim to escape the heat. “Must be because Levi took care of him so well last night.” Hanji winked at Erwin, taking advantage of the shorter man distraction.

“Shut up, Glasses. Why are you even here? This meeting is between Erwin and me.” Levi turned his head to shoot Hanji a warning look and they yelped, huddling further into the sofa they were seated on, smiling mischievously while continuing to scoop ice cream into their mouth. “Don’t you fucking dare spill a drop of that in my office, or you’re paying for a complete redecoration.”

“Someone’s moody today. Are you just jealous Eren’s having fun in the pool with that hunky Reiner guy while you’re cooped up in here doing boring paperwork?” Hanji teased. Erwin intervened before Levi could angrily retort.

“Stop trying to provoke him, Hanji. You’re a professional and the poor man is sexually frustrated, have some tact.” Hanji burst into obnoxious laughter and Erwin continued, ignoring Levi’s death glare “Also, I had a meeting with the Senate yesterday. You wouldn’t guess who kept vetoing my every suggestion.” Levi and Hanji simultaneously grimaced.

“Nile? Ugh, what a cretin. He reminds me of an oily rat” Hanji shuddered.

“His facial hair, though. It’s like one of those tiny, hairless rodent-dogs” Levi supplied, and Hanji pointed at him excitedly.

“Oh my God, that’s exactly it! Spot on, Levi!”

“Anyway” Erwin interrupted with an amused smile “lately, I feel as though he’s making an extra
effort to oppose me. I mean, more so than usual. I would’ve thought he’d tone it down after the last election, but it's like he's prepping himself for another showdown.”

“He would never stand a chance against you, you handsome son of a gun” Hanji reassured.

“Especially with those eyebrows. But seriously, that guys been bitter ever since you were Pixis’ obvious favourite back in the day. The guy needs to let go.” Levi smirked, but grew serious when Erwin threw him a look.

“If he’s a serious issue, I could always arrange…” He let the sentence hang and looked meaningfully at Erwin, but the blond pulled a face.

“No Levi. I’m not eliminating my opposition like some dictator. I’m honestly not afraid of the competition, it’s just that there’s something…off about him lately. Usually he doesn’t get to me since he sticks to slinking around the back benches at meetings throwing dirty glares and making snide comments, but recently he’s getting bolder and suspiciously smug.”

The room was silent as everyone contemplated Erwin’s words and he continued shuffling through the papers.

“A smug Nile, now that is a terrifying image.” Hanji mused “Next Christmas party, we should get Mike and the old gang together and knock him down a few pegs again.” Levi snorted, and turned to look back out the window and the antics below.

“Man, you have no idea how long we’ve been eyeing this pool, Eren. Everyone’s going to be so jealous of us” Levi heard Connie shout over the splashes and laughter.

“Are you exploiting my friendship, Connie? I’m hurt. Ahh Reiner! Careful, don’t get my bandages wet!”

“Maybe a little. But this is seriously amazing; you’re so lucky to be living with Corporal Levi. I heard his home was amazing,” Sasha answered “Is he as scary to you as he is to us?” Eren seemed to ponder the question.

“I’m like Daenerys from Game of Thrones, and he’s like Khal Drogo I guess. Actually wow, that’s a really accurate portrayal of my situation.”

“So what? You two also have crazy hot tribal sex on fur rugs by open fires?” Connie yelped as Eren splashed him with water.

“Dude that’s fucking hot.” Reiner injected, his voice appreciative.

“No don’t picture it! Oh my God; Annie help me!” Eren pleaded, but everyone just laughed. Levi frowned thoughtfully.

“Hanji, you watch Game of Thrones, right?” He asked them as they scrolled through their phone.

“Hm? Oh yea, you should really get into it. Gore and sex; right up your alley.”

“Who’s Carl Drogon and Denise?” Hanji stared at him blankly for a few moments before bursting into laughter.

“Khal Drogo and Daenerys, Levi.” They corrected, wiping tears of laughter from their eyes “Um well, Danny is basically like a princess who was married off by her brother to Drogo, who is this buff, terrifying, and bearded leader of a tribe of warriors, in exchange of a military alliance. Oh my
“God” their eyes widened as realization suddenly hit them “It’s you. You and Eren. Except Drogo is tall, like really big, and Danny is a girl…Wait, why do you ask?”

Levi absentmindedly played with his butterfly knife as he processed the information, ignoring Hanji’s questioning expression, his mind far away on matters certainly not business related. *Hot tribal sex, huh?*

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Eren had practically made a complete recovery after a week. As eager as he was for Annie to start teaching him to fight, he had to find other ways to occupy his time until Moblit deemed him sufficiently healed to begin training. He’d even managed to form some semblance of a daily routine, waking up too late to have breakfast in the mess hall, he’d grab some fruit from the kitchen before heading to the training grounds to work as the on-field medic, where he had grown quite popular among a number of the soldiers already with his refreshing smile and easy conversation. He would watch the older soldiers train, or more specifically watch Levi instruct them, and then while everyone headed off to the showers, he’d pop back into the kitchen to lend a hand and chat with the chefs and kitchen hands, perhaps even occasionally stealing a taste of the lunch they were preparing. He’d join everyone back in the mess hall for lunch, sometimes joined by Petra and Erwin on the days where Erwin came in to meet with Levi. After two weeks had passed, and Moblit had finally given him the all-clear to start training, he’d have time for a swim before he’d head out to the courtyard with Annie after lunch to do some of his own training, after which he’d have a quick shower and help around the castle with the chores until it was time for dinner. Occasionally, Annie, Reiner and Berthold would go away together on one of their little group dates, and so Eren would be stuck observing and trying to mimic the recruits training or doing some of his own exercises. He’d still call Mikasa and Armin every morning and night, but the loneliness wasn’t as affecting as it used to be; he had grown extremely close to both Sasha and Connie, as well as Reiner Berthold and Annie, and their combined antics helped drive the homesickness from his mind during the day.

As much as his jam-packed schedule kept him relatively distracted, there was still an infuriating distance between Levi and himself. They only exchanged brief words during mealtimes, and occasionally on the fields or during chores. Eren was certainly grateful that Levi wasn’t being a *complete* dick like he had been when Eren had first arrived, but he was so formal all the time, treating Eren like just another soldier. His apparent growing attraction to the man didn’t help either. Eren found himself watching the man incessantly, hyperaware of his proximity, and his gaze automatically drifting in his direction whenever he was within range. He observed his so closely that he picked up on his little idiosyncrasies; the strange way he held his cup, how he liked his coffee made, the way he preferred his laundry folded and his aversion to uninitiated physical contact. He found himself spacing out while cleaning windows, staring down at the man reprimanding the recruits for their shoddy work sweeping the courtyard, before giving up and demonstrating himself. Or after dinner, when it was free time for everyone, Eren often found himself in the common room curled up on the couch, pretending to be engrossed in some obscure novel or another he didn’t even recall the titles of, opposite the corporal as he went through various paperwork, just to share a few moments with the stony man even if they were spent in silence. He wondered why the man even came down here to the shitty fluorescent lighting and faded sofas with their questionable stains when he had a lavish study that was quiet and private back in his quarters. Eren had it bad.

Mikasa seemed pleased by the distance, telling Eren to go start an affair with someone if it was attention he was looking for. Armin was a little more sympathetic and told him to maybe ask Hanji or Erwin, someone who had known Levi a little longer, about Levi’s past which undoubtedly played a major role in his emotional distance. Eren thanked him for his advice, although he didn’t
take it; he wanted Levi to be the one to tell him about his past, without cutting corners. He wanted to be close and trusted enough to be the older man’s confidant, he just had no idea how.

The nights were especially lonely just before he fell asleep. It was early in the morning back home, so he couldn’t call Armin or Mikasa, and watching shows or surfing the internet could only occupy him for so long. He kept remembering the night Levi had slept beside him, and missed the feeling of another body pressed to his. The secure reassurance of strong arms wrapped around him, and the calming lull of relaxed breathing and a steady heartbeat. Thinking about Levi’s body next to his, and remembering the way he moved during training, slick with sweat and dust from the field, only gave rise to another problem, literally, and Eren would roll over onto his side as fantasies of a tattooed arm replacing his own worked him to a satisfying release.

After all this time, this bed still felt too big for just him.
“You’ve been quiet lately.” Petra commented. She had offered to take Eren sightseeing around Scouting Legion and then clothes shopping for some outfits more suited to Legions climate. It was a relaxing day out between mutually neglected spouses whose respective partners were busy with their dull politics and military obligations. They were currently at a small café located in a secluded corner of the botanical gardens; one of Legions most popular tourist attractions. Exotic flowers with overpowering perfumes hung from dark green vines artfully wrapped around the bannisters of the café patio as they perched in thatched chairs overlooking a large pond peppered with lotuses and lily pads. Peacocks strutted lazily downs the pathways, undeterred by the occasional human, and the sound of insect drones and peacock meows filled the air setting a relaxing mood.

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“Hm? Really? I didn’t notice.” Petra eyed the distracted boy from the corner of her gaze. His hands cradled a mug of hot chocolate balanced on his knees which were drawn up to his chin as he stared out over the pond daydreaming. His hair was starting to grow longer, and he had taken to pinning it back out of his face. He was also getting darker from all the time he spent out in the sun bandaging soldiers, swimming or doing his own training. He looked quite healthy, his limbs filling out with leaner muscle as excess fat was trimmed away by military diet and physical exercise. Even his face was looked slightly different; he still retained the same boyish features, but he’d lost a lot of the baby fat that had rounded out his cheeks previously. He was looking damn fine, if Petra said so herself. She made a mental note to casually point that out to Erwin later to see how he would react to her saying such things about her recently acquired best friend. Maybe he’d get jealous? If she was lucky, he might even insist Levi take his own husband out more. Oh Petra, you wily genius, you.

“Is something bothering you? You can talk to mama Petra” She encouraged, eating the mango slices sprinkled with chili powder she had insisted they buy from a street vendor, her cravings getting the better of her. Eren bit his lip and turned to face her, a question on his lips. About time, the boy had been distracted and uncharacteristically reserved all day. She was on the verge of seizing him by the shoulders and trying to shake a reaction out of him if he didn’t say something sooner or later.

“I didn’t know you were part of Levi’s Squad.” Petra blinked, momentarily thrown by the statement.

“Didn’t you? I’m sorry I never mentioned it, but I seriously never thought to; so many people heard about it after the maelstrom of press that covered Erwin and my marriage. I’m honestly surprised you didn’t know.”

Eren returned his contemplative gaze to the pond, taking a sip of his lukewarm beverage. “I know you were born and lived most of your life in Maria, why did you move to Legion and join the
Petra leaned bag and rested the paper bag of mango snacks on her swollen belly, preparing herself for story time with a sheepish smile “Well, that’s a funny one I’m deeply ashamed to admit. It was a couple years ago, and you’ll be surprised to hear I moved to Legion and joined the army to join Levi’s Squad.” Eren looked surprised, and Petra continued to answer his unasked question “Please don’t judge me Eren, I am so embarrassed to admit this. I was working as a newly recruited cop at the time, doing crowd control while Legions contingent were passing through on their way to some multi-national meeting at the palace, when I first caught a glimpse of Corporal Levi.” Petra resignedly closed her eyes, an embarrassed smile on her face “It was love at first sight.” Eren coughed and spluttered as the hot chocolate went down the wrong way, blinking wide-eyed at Petra.

“What?!”

“Well, for me at least. You know what he looks like, the guy was attractive. All brooding, mysterious and dark, not to mention all the stories that were circling about him at the time. The entire police force had a sort of collective hero worship of the man, and my poor, naïve heart confused my admiration and respect with love. I had a crush on him. I saw him working out at the military gym, and decided then and there that I would somehow join his elite squad that I’d heard so much about, because there was no other way such a great man would take notice of me otherwise. The rest is pretty predictable; I handed in my resignation, packed up and left for Legion where I joined the military. I worked hard enough and got admitted into the Wings of Freedom, and eventually, through perseverance, determination, and the sheer willpower of fangirl pig-headedness, I was selected to join Levi’s Squad.”

“You can’t stop there! What happened? Did you ever tell Levi, and how did you end up with Erwin?” Eren interrogated eagerly. Petra was pleased to see some life back in those green eyes, and silently allowed that her embarrassing backstory was worth sacrificing to uplift the boy’s spirit.

“I did, actually. After one particularly successful mission, the five of us had settled down for a celebratory drink and we got completely drunk. Oh my God, Eren, it was awful.” Petra pulled a face at the memory “Naturally, I decided that was the perfect romantic mood and atmosphere to confess my love to Levi. By the way, the other boys had passed out at this point, they really can’t hold their liquor, so at the very least I didn’t have an audience. Levi was very gracious and kind, though. He turned me down, obviously, and explained that a relationship between a commanding officer and their subordinate would be unwise, and as much as he respected and admired me, he didn’t see me in that way. Naturally I was heartbroken, I mean, I had left everything behind for this man. Then one day, Levi introduced me to his friend, a certain Commander Erwin Smith, who was running for the upcoming election. I was annoyed at first, I knew exactly what he was trying to do and I felt betrayed and offended, as if he was desperate to get my attentions away from him, but then I actually got to know Erwin…” Petra smiled, her gaze distant “He is such a doofus. Eren you don’t realize because you only ever see him being all smooth, charismatic and diplomatic, but oh my God, he is the dorkiest big oaf you will ever meet. The complete opposite of Levi in every conceivable sense, and yet I fell in love with him.” Eren smiled at her affectionate gushing, touched by the way she spoke so fondly or her husband; it was clear the two were absolutely smitten with one another, and it only made Eren’s heart ache as he wished he could one day experience the same.

“Don’t make that face, sweetie. Just give it time. Give him time” Eren looked up, startled by her insightful words as she patted his knee reassuringly. Her womanly intuition never failed to surprise him.
It was darkening outside when they finally began to make their way back. Petra’s chauffeur would drop him back at the base before carrying her on back to her house.

“What was your favourite part of today?” She asked as they lounged exhaustedly in the back seat.

“You mean aside from your inspiring love story?” Eren joked, dodging her fist. He knew from experience that no matter how jokingly intended, Petra’s punches still hurt like a bitch. “The beach.”

Petra hummed appreciatively “Why?”

“I like beaches. I always have.” He shrugged “I got my love of swimming from my mother. She’s from Turkey, and used to live by the beach and absolutely loved to swim. She was so homesick when she moved to Maria after marrying my dad because Maria is landlocked. After I was born, she would make sure we’d fly out at least once a year so I could see the beach that she missed so badly. She was amazing” His voice quietened wistfully, lost in the distant memories.

“I think you take after your mother.” The smile that the comment evoked from Eren was blinding. It was obvious how much it meant to him, and how high in regard he held his mother.

“My dad doesn’t think so.” He murmured.

“Well, I’ve met your father. Multiple times, and I can say you’re certainly nothing like him.” Petra said firmly “The only thing you seemed to have inherited from him are his eyes, thankfully enough.” Eren laughed.

“Can I tell you something kind of stupid about myself, since you told me about your past?” Petra arched her brow, intrigued “Go on.”

“I always wanted to have a beach wedding.” He admitted, ducking his head bashfully “It seems really stupid. Something little girls would do, planning their dream weddings and stuff, but I always pictured myself at the beach, just my closest family and friends and the ceremony would take place at dusk.”

“That’s not stupid at all, Eren. That’s beautiful.” Petra didn’t know what else to say. The boy was already married, and he hadn’t even gotten a wedding, beach or not; just a few documents to sign and voila, a husband. “We’ll go back to the beach again when Armin and Mikasa come to visit. How does that sound?”

Eren smiled widely, his dimples showing “That sounds perfect.”

Eren hugged Petra awkwardly as they parted, balancing all his shopping bags in his arms precariously. This wasn’t Maria anymore, where he would have several servants waiting to ferry his shopping, he was responsible for himself.

“Oooh, take this too.” Petra said, shoving another, unfamiliar bag into his already overstuffed arms.

“This isn’t mine.” He protested, confused.
“Yes it is, I nabbed it while you were changing. Consider it a late wedding gift. To both of you” Petra winked mischievously and closed the car door before he could question her further. He watched the car speed off dumbly, before shaking his head and making his way into base.

*****

The next day

Eren sat on one of the benches that lined the side of the courtyard, unabashedly perving on Levi as he demonstrated manoeuvres to the soldiers he was instructing. He was shirtless again, much to Eren’s unbridled joy; this should provide him with sufficient material to fuel his late night jerk-offs for a day or two. He was allowed to do that. They were married. Since the asshole refused to treat him like his actual husband let alone sleep with him, Eren was allowed to masturbate to him instead. It wasn’t even wrong because he wasn’t picturing some other guy either. Totally a-okay.

There weren’t many injuries today, so Eren had spent most of the time watching Levi instruct and taking sneaky photos of him while pretending to scroll through his phone. He had accumulated a myriad of impressive shots already, even sending a few to Armin, whose name in his contact list he’d changed after hearing Levi’s nickname for him.

[Mushroom]: Stop sending me sweaty half-nudes of your husband, Eren. I’m in a meeting.

[Eren]: srry. R u popping a boner?

[Mushroom]: Oh my god stop. Do not try to project your sexual frustration onto me.

[Eren]: I hav a bunch of sweaty half nude levi pics on my fone. does it sound liek id b sexualy frustrated 2 u?

[Mushroom]: Goodbye Eren.

Eren snickered and pocketed his phone, returning his attention to the field. They seemed to be done for the day; all the soldiers were thanking Levi and shaking his hand before making their way in the direction of the washroom. Eren seized the opportunity to grab Levi’s bottle and towel and jog over to the man, handing them to him helpfully after he had pulled on a shirt. Eren frowned slightly as the sight disappeared from view.

“You’re really good.” He complimented. Levi paused as he took the bottle and towel from Eren’s grasp, arching a brow at him, before Eren realized what he had just said. He wanted to smack himself on the forehead; who tells humanities strongest they’re “really good” at fighting?

“Oh, I mean, your form and stuff. I mean obviously you’re good, you’re Humanities Strongest and stuff, just, you know.” Eren scratched the back of his neck awkwardly “I just thought it looked amazing and I hope I can be half as decent as you someday.” Stop talking, Eren. Oh my God, you are making such a fool of yourself, you sound like a groupie. Stop while your ahead.

“You’re not half bad yourself.”

Eren stared at Levi. His lips had moved, and Eren had heard a voice that sounded suspiciously like Levi’s; but the words didn’t match the man they were coming from. He’d expected an impassive grunt, an eye roll, to have Levi’s sweaty towel thrown at his face again while the man walked off without him. Not a compliment. Not an opening to an actual conversation that didn’t centre on insulting Eren.
“You really need to break that habit of gawking. You look stupid.” Ah, the words that broke the spell. Eren clamped his mouth shut hurriedly, surprised that the Corporal had yet to make a move to leave.

“Oh, no. I just—thank you. Um thanks for that.” How would Corporal Levi even know? Eren trained with Annie on the far side of the courtyard while Levi would have been training with the more skilled soldiers. Had he seen Eren? Had he actually watched him long enough to determine for himself that he wasn’t ‘half bad’?

“That girl’s good; better than a lot of the soldiers here. You’re a fast learner too. From what I’ve seen, you seem to have already caught up to the recruits’ level.” Eren could have glowed. He could have vibrated with so much happiness that the atomic bonds holding his being together would break and he’d scatter like a firework. Was that how atoms worked? He didn’t know and he didn’t care. Levi didn’t compliment anyone. He either insulted, criticized, instructed or nodded with approval. But he had complimented him.

“If you smile any wider, your face will split open. Stop it, it’s creepy.” Eren tried to dial back the glee as he took the towel from Levi and began to follow him back to the house, an extra bounce in his step, while the raven shook his head.

“Was there something you wanted? You don’t usually talk to me after training.” No he didn’t. He didn’t because he thought he would be a bother. Why, did Levi want him to? He could talk to him if he wanted him to.

“The wedding!” Eren blurted. Levi fixed him with a strange look “I mean the wedding coming up, between Christa and Ymir. Just reminding you, in case, I don’t know.” Eren shrugged.

“I know, I saw the invite. How do you even know them anyway? I know Erwin’s going because politics but I don’t know either of them, so I assume the invite was for you.”

“A right.” Eren chuckled “I kind of used to date Christa. Technically, she’s my ex, I guess”

“The fuck? Who invites an ex to their wedding, isn’t that a shitty thing to do? Besides, I thought you were gay.” Levi frowned.

“I am. It’s kind of a funny story…” he didn’t want to launch into tale when Levi would probably just tell him to ‘shut up, I don’t care’ anyway, so he lapsed into silence.

“Well? What’s the funny story?”

“Huh?” Eren looked up at the prompt as he seated himself on one of the barstools by the kitchen bench “Oh! Well this was a while back, before either Christa or I had actually come out yet. She was dating Ymir, but had to keep it under wraps and meanwhile, I was getting tonnes of heat from my dad cause I was constantly going out and he said it reflected badly on him. Christa was like the countries Golden Girl, everyone loved her, so we decided to pretend to go out for the sake of appearances and we sort of became the countries poster-couple. Eventually though, Christa worked up the courage to come out so we ‘broke up’ and she made her relationship with Ymir public. The media went crazy and started hounding me, saying things like I was the poor, heartbroken prince whose sweetheart left him for her lesbian lover. I couldn’t even go out to get a Cinnebon in sweatpants and a tee without paparazzi taking photos of me and making it look like I was struggling to cope with the break-up. I decided enough was enough and arranged an ‘exclusive interview’ to talk about the whole thing live.” Eren chuckled to himself at the memory “And that’s how I came out of the closet.”
Levi, who was retrieving a carton of orange juice from the refrigerator, turned and looked at him, eyebrows arched and looking impressed “Your father knew before though, right?”

“Nope!” Eren grinned “It was fantastic. Maria had legalized gay marriage only a few years earlier, so he couldn’t say anything without looking like a hypocritical bigot, so he kind of had to suck it up.”

“Actually, I think I remember hearing something like that a while back. I’m not sure, never followed that kind of news, but that’s pretty damn impressive kid.” Levi smirked as he regarded Eren over the rim of his glass “I’ve gotta hand it to you, that’s the best coming-out story I’ve ever heard.”

Eren shrugged, feigning an unaffected air “With gay princehood comes great responsibility.” He grinned when Levi snorted.

“I’d imagine so. Okay I need to go shower; I feel fucking disgusting, covered in sweat and dirt” Levi said grimacing, ending the conversation and turning in the direction of the bathroom.

“Looks good though.” The older man froze at the doorway and looked over his shoulder at Eren who blinked back innocently. Did he really just say that out loud? Oh my God, the conversation was going so well. You and your goddamn mouth, Jaeger. Fuck. Eren stared back, willing himself not to buckle under the pressure of the sudden extended silence.

“That’s fucking gross, brat.” Levi finally said before disappearing down the corridor, but Eren thought he heard a smile in his voice.
Sparring with the Bae

Chapter Summary

Annie poses a new challenge for Eren with his training. Levi gets an eyeful. Eren wants an ass-full. Mikasa wants to slam her head into a wall. Just another normal day in the Ackerman household/military base.

Eren was getting good. Not to be cocky, but he was *really* getting good. He might not be smart like Armin or have the natural physical strength of Mikasa, but if there was one thing he knew how to do, it was move his body. It’s what made him a good dancer in the first place and even a good swimmer; he had complete command of his body. Annie had initially started by assessing his strengths and weaknesses. While his offence was considerably weak as he had little force behind his punches and wasn’t particularly strong, he had brilliant defence. More specifically, he could dodge, weave and move like, well, like a dancer. Nothing compared to Annie yet, of course, she was in a league of her own as far as he was concerned, but after a while even Annie grew tired of constantly winning and although she could tell he was improving with amazing speed, she needed a way to properly assess just how far he had come.

Which was how he found himself in the courtyard after dinner that night, shifting uncomfortably from foot to foot as he stood facing off Connie, who was practically oozing confidence.

Armin and Mikasa had arrived the previous day for their promised visit, and had been visibly surprised by the changes Eren had undergone; apparently, Skype didn’t do his appearance justice. Armin had wolf-whistled as soon as he’d stepped out of the car, taking a moment to look Eren over appreciatively, whereas Mikasa’s eyes had narrowed immediately and she had demanded darkly if he ‘had done all this for the midget’. After taking a moment to figure out what she was even talking about, he had hurriedly explained how his lifestyle was considerably different here. He couldn’t indulge in the same vices he had at home, and the diet provided by the base was all nutrients and health orientated. Eren spent most of his days running around, training, swimming, cleaning or volunteering in the kitchen or the infirmary; all in this ridiculous heat, so he assured Mikasa his altered appearance was certainly not a part of some ploy to catch Levi’s attention. In fact, he hadn’t even been that aware of how much he had changed until they had reacted the way they had.

“You can do it, Jaeger. Besides, it’s not like you have a choice; do you want to look like a shithole in front of Armin and your sister? Now’s your time to finally prove you don’t need Mikasa to
constantly save your ass in a fight.” Annie replied, piercing blue eyes glinting with amusement.

“You’re a sadist. Connie is a trained recruit, he’s been in the military for ages. Why would you do this? Fuck Annie, I literally just recovered from getting my ass kicked before.” He hissed back. Mikasa didn’t always save him. He’d won fights before, hadn’t he? Eren frowned petulantly.

“You’re trained too, by me. I did this because I know you can do it and you could use some dabbling in other techniques than mine. Suck it up, princess, and get your ass in there and show that monkey how the Marian’s do it.” She was ruthless like some kind of boxing coach, and it was clear she wasn’t going to let him weasel out of this one.

“Go easy on me, my man.” He asked Connie hopefully “We’ve gone through a lot together. We’re comrades, right?”

Connie laughed, bouncing on his heels and rolling his shoulders in anticipation “Dude, we’ve been watching you train all this time and have been taking bets for weeks how long it would take to knock you out. No fucking way; how many chances does a guy get to boast that he beat up the Prince of Maria?”

“Actually, back in Maria, quite often.” Armin threw in casually, shrugging apologetically at Eren’s affronted look.

“Get on with it!” Some yelled from the crowd.

“Knock him out, Connie. I bet 5 minutes!”

“Do it Springer!”

All the jeers and encouragement were suddenly silenced by a single, sharp glare from Mikasa that had the crowd visibly shrinking in fear. She strode regally into the centre of the makeshift fighting ring scraped crudely into the dirt by stick, and removed her red scarf with one fluid action.

“I’ll mark the start.” She declared, leaving no room for argument. She turned to fix Eren with a searching look. Give me a sign, it said, one sign you don’t really want to do this, and I’ll end it right now. Eren almost made to accept that offer, before it hit him; he might be putting on reluctant airs now, but my God did he want this. Already, he could feel the adrenaline pumping through him and his fists clenched and unclenched, his body already subconsciously preparing for the confrontation. He was in familiar territory now, too long had it been since the last time he had had a good scuffle; but most of all, he wanted to win this himself. To not have it end with Mikasa or someone’s bodyguards pulling him and his opponent apart, and to have his dad lecture him again about how much of a disappointment he was to the family and the nation. This was a good old-fashioned one-on-one; no repercussions, and damn was he feeling it. He stared back at Mikasa evenly and she sighed, shaking her head that she even bothered. With a three second countdown, she swung her scarf down in a crimson arch to signal the start of the fight, and backed out of the ring.

“Go get ‘em, Jaeger.” Eren murmured under his breath and slowly grinned with anticipation.

He didn’t move first, that wasn’t his strong point. He had learned early on he was a shitty strategist and was terrible at planning ahead; his strength lay in his quick reflexes and the ability to react quickly to his opponent’s attacks. Connie jumped in headfirst, seizing the opportunity and mistaking Eren’s inactiveness for hesitation. He was a worthy opponent, similar to Eren in that his strength appeared to be speed, however he relied too much on this strength. His small fists raining punches in Eren’s direction aiming to immobilize him in the sheer mass of the attack. His
technique relied on catching Eren off guard with speed, overwhelming him, and then not giving
him a window to launch his own offense. The flaw in his strategy was clear, even to Eren’s
amateur eyes; he would get tired at this pace, quickly too. All Eren had to do was dodge the blows
for a while, until Connie’s endurance wore down, and then launch his own counterattack. He
might not be skilled in offence, but with an exhausted opponent who lacked the energy to defend
himself properly, even Eren’s untrained attacks would be sufficiently effective. Eren noticed out of
the corner of his vision that more recruits and even some soldiers were tricking in to join the
audience, but willed himself to focus on the issue in front of him.

Eren dodged and weaved with grace, realizing that he actually enjoyed the motions; it felt like
dancing. He found himself laughing as he spun on his heel, ducked under Connie’s punch and side-
stepped a desperate kick. Connie scowled, his expression morphing from excitement to
concentration to frustration. Soon, his movements grew sluggish, and Eren found that he was
leaving more and more openings for attack. When the smaller boy threw a punch, Eren would
move around it and land his own blow, and slowly, his minor but frequent attacks took their toll.
Connie stumbled and Eren ducked and swept his feet out from beneath him, effectively tripping the
smaller boy face first into the dirt.

The courtyard was silent. Crickets chirping comically filled the air as the spectators stared, taking a
moment to fully process what they’d just witnessed.

“Holy fuck…” Someone in the audience murmured, and the spell broke. The crowd erupted in
cheers, looks of disbelief mixed with elation. People he didn’t know thumped him on the back in
congratulations, even Connie, helped up from the ground by Sasha, grinned good naturedly at him.

“Good game, man. Damn, you can move.” The smaller boy said shaking his head and punching
Eren in the shoulder playfully “Serves me right for underestimating you.”

Mikasa and Armin came up to him next. Armin whooped and hi-fived him while Mikasa tugged
up her scarf to hide a smile. Annie gave him a small smile and an approving nod from the sidelines
as he grinned widely at her. Holy crap, he’d just kicked Connie’s ass! He’d just beat up a recruit
with his bad-ass, kick-boxing, ninja moves! Almost as immediately as the celebrations had begun,
however, they were silenced. Eren blinked around him in confusion, trying to determine the causes
of the wide-eyed, silent looks of panic on the soldiers and recruits faces.

“Uhh, Eren?” Eren frowned at the blond’s tight-lipped smile, and turned to follow his stare fixed at
something behind him.

“No, don’t stop on my account.” Levi appraised the scene before him with cool, piercing eyes
that flicked around the semi-circle of spectators. Everyone averted their gaze, looking at their shoes
or staring straight ahead with military precision as if hoping it would somehow spare them from
the Corporals wrath. Eren gulped as the steel grey eyes finally landed on him. It felt like they were
piercing straight through him.

“What did he say? He wasn’t sure there was a rule against harmless sparring
between people on base, nonetheless, he still felt like he’d contravened a serious rule if the
surrounding people’s reactions were anything to go by. Any possible defence or excuse died on his
lips as the older man before him began to shrug out of his uniform jacket. He stared,
uncomprehendingly, as the Corporal loosened and removed his cravat, unbuttoned the top button
of his crisp white shirt, and handed his handgun to Hanji, who was standing beside him with a
knowing look in their eyes.

forward, cracking his neck from side to side, and fixed Eren with an intense look. Was that a smile
on his lips? “…I’d like to have a shot myself.”

Eren blinked.

He looked at Armin to his right, and then Mikasa to his left, hoping for some sort of explanation. None came, in fact Armin looked a little green, while Mikasa was glaring daggers at her the man before them.

“…A shot of what, Sir?” His voice came out quiet and uncertain, and Levi arched a narrow eyebrow.

“Come on, Jaeger. We’re going to fight.” Eren let out a weak chuckle that died on his lips as he realized the raven wasn’t smiling, and more importantly, that Levi never joked.

“Oh…you’re serious.” But Levi liked him now, right? Or at least tolerated him? They had talked in the kitchen, comfortably at that. Eren had told him his coming-out story, and Levi had listened with interest, and had actually smiled when Eren made that stupid, flirtatious comment, instead of shooting him down, literally or figuratively. The memory seemed to light a spark in Eren’s mind, and he felt his dread and apprehension melt away into…anticipation? Excitement? Eren glanced back at Mikasa, and her words came back to him; back from when he had first arrived at Legion, during the car journey to the Wings of Freedom base

“You should seduce him, Eren. You could.”

Eren remembered her narrow stare as she inspected his appearance as soon as she had alighted from the car yesterday. He looked different now than he did before, back at Maria. Better too, if Armin’s wolf-whistle was anything to go by. Eren grinned wickedly as the gears in his mind turned and met Levi’s stare. Slowly, he grasped his shirt by the back of the collar and peeled it off. He saw Levi’s eyes widened microscopically in surprise. Good. Eren ran a hand through his hair, pushing the messy bangs out of his face, and used his shirt to wipe the sweat from his face and the back of his neck, all the gestures exaggerated and seductive.

“Sorry, I’m just really hot.” He said in explanation, but his tone was playful. He return Levi’s intense stare with his own molten one. You know what I mean, Corporal. Grey eyes swept up his form, lingering on his chest, before returning to his eyes. His eyes narrowed; thinking, considering, and then thin lips twisted into a smirk. Two can play at that game.

“It has been pretty hot lately,” He conceded. Deft fingers unbuttoned the remaining buttons on his white dress shirt “and I’d hate to get a good shirt filthy.” He slipped the shirt from his broad shoulders, a little more erotically than practical Eren decided, revealing his toned and tattooed chest. Eren couldn’t help his gaze from roving greedily over the view. He’s playing along. Hooooly crap. I might have been able to stay in character before, but how the fuck do I do it now?

Hanji coughed politely from behind Levi, their lips pressed together as they obviously struggled to control their smile.

“Well then. I’ll count down, shall I?” Eren glanced up, having completely forgotten for a moment they even had an audience. The spectators stared back, torn between looking uncomfortable by the display before them or riveted by the power play. Whoops.

“Right. Yes.” Eren said, nodding to them. This wouldn’t last long. Levi was not Connie; that much was obvious. Eren would have little chance pitted up against a normal soldier, let alone Humanities Strongest, and for that reason he had one goal in mind: make the most of it. He estimated he had about one minute to take advantage of being able to actually touch the godly form before him
before Levi absolutely pummelled his weak ass into the ground, so tough he would.

“Three…two…one…go!”

They circled, staring each other down. The raven would dart forward, throw an experimental punch or a kick, and Eren would dodge. They weren’t difficult or meant to maim necessarily, they were experimental. Levi was sussing him out. He was like a jungle cat, the way he prowled around Eren, grey eyes watching for the slightest movement; a sign his prey was about to bolt. The way his muscles moved, rippling with coiled power, the black tattoos undulating and writhing on alabaster skin; Eren was entranced. Fuck this power play, he needed to get his hands on that asap.

Eren threw a punch, knowing full well it would get blocked but just wanting to put an end to this back-and-forth. Levi caught his fist in his hand easily, yanking him forward to jab him sharply in the ribs. Eren yelped and glowered as the older man smirked at the less-than manly sound. Annie had yet to teach him proper offence. She’d only really taught him what he needed to know first; how to dodge, how to escape a variety of holds, and to recognise when to run like mad in the other direction. One other thing she had taught him though, a simple manoeuvre for when he was up against a stronger and generally heavier adversary; to use gravity to his advantage. Eren did the only thing he could at that point; he repeated the last move he’d used on Connie, and kicked Levi’s legs out from beneath him. The raven swore as he toppled backwards, and Eren followed, making sure to shove the shorter man down with what force he could muster to make his landing as hard as possible and hopefully knock the wind out of him, providing Eren with precious moments. At the last moment, however, Levi twisted his body to the side, absorbing most of the impact. Eren scowled, well of course he should have expected that. Levi didn’t get to where he was now by falling for amateur tricks and not knowing the best countermeasures to take in a situation. Eren scrambled to straddle the older man, feeling a slight victory over having retained his position on top at the very least. Before he could even consider the best method to retrain the other man, or even appreciate the view of having Levi beneath him, Levi twisted his hips to the side. Eren stared up stunned at the man above him, panting in exhaustion, and decided he could very well get used to this view instead.

It was over. They stayed like that for a few moments, Eren breathing heavily and a little irritated to find that Levi had barely broken a sweat. His breathing wasn’t even slightly irregular. This was probably a walk in the park for him. They stared at each other, faces inches apart, Caribbean green clashing with steel grey.

“Well, fuck me…” Eren breathed. Grey eyes widened. Oh shit. He honestly hadn’t meant it like that. It was just an expression. But now that he considered, he wasn’t so against it being interpreted as an invitation either. He blinked up at Levi, awaiting a reaction. Levi’s eyes darted from his eyes, down to his lips, and back again. Well, if that wasn’t the universal signal to instigate a good bout of tonsil-hockey, Eren wasn’t sure what was. He swallowed thickly, hyper-aware of how close their bodies were, their positions, Levi’s hips so close to his own...

Levi suddenly rose, taking several steps back and dusting off his trousers. His mask was back; that stupid, impassive poker face.

“Got a long way to go yet, though.” He said, voice back returning to its normal bored tone, although pointedly avoiding Eren’s gaze. Eren watched him, his mind reeling and struggling to grasp the sudden change in Levi’s behaviour. Eren continued to lie there, stunned, long after Levi
had bid the observers goodnight and dismissed them to their bunks. He lay there while Levi retrieved his belongings from Hanji and made his way back to his house for the night without sparing another glance in Eren’s direction. He lay there until Armin, Mikasa, Connie and Sasha came and crouched beside him. Sasha petted his knee sympathetically and Connie whistled lowly.

“Well that was…anticlimactic.” Armin provided looking down at his pitiful best friend. Mikasa pursed her lips in agreement.

“Seriously, Eren, I’m going grey over here. How long do you expect me to keep up the protective-sibling act before you two just fuck already?”
Levi hesitated by the common room doorway. Would Eren be there tonight like usual? He hadn’t seen the boy since last night since he had been busy catching up with his visiting sister and the Conniving Mushroom all day. Levi may also have gone out of his way to avoid the boy, and he wouldn’t be surprised if he had noticed as well. Levi couldn’t help it though; he was uncomfortable. It wasn’t a bad uncomfortable, exactly. It wasn’t the kind of uncomfortable you felt when a stranger came and sat in the seat beside you on the bus despite there being several other empty rows. It was discomfort of the unfamiliar and the strange. The unexpected suddenness of what he felt when he had the boy beneath him, bare chest glistening with sweat as he panted breathlessly, green eyes with pupils blown staring up at him invitingly. He hadn’t known what to do in that moment. Actually, scratch that, he knew exactly what he had wanted to do, in fact the desire had been so primal and overwhelming that it had shocked him. Levi didn’t do thoughtlessness. He rarely regretted his actions because he never executed anything without careful thought before-hand; at least until this brat had come along. Ever since his arrival, Levi had been slipping up and acting out, saying and doing things before he had time to filter, and then backtracking in a weak attempt to cancel out his previous actions. No doubt he was confusing the boy with his mixed signals, he was confusing himself too. Even after last night, as Hanji had walked with him back to his house, they had shook their head and released a long-suffering sigh.

“I don’t know why you’re still trying so hard to resist. What are you waiting for?” Levi didn’t answer because he honestly didn’t know. What was he waiting for?

He glanced at his watch. 10.36pm, around the usual time he arrived at the common room to do his paper work. It wasn’t even a very good place to do his work; there wasn’t a proper study table, and the fluorescent lighting was harsh and uninspiring; there was really only one reason he kept coming back. He remembered when the habit had first begun, back not soon after Eren had first arrived, quiet accidentally too since he hadn’t meant for it to become regular. He had been walking back from Hanji’s room after retrieving some documents and was passing the common room on his way to his quarters when he’d noticed Eren curled up on one of the ratty armchairs having again fallen asleep while reading, those stupidly endearing glasses perched precariously on his nose as he lightly snored, head tipped back. He’d been so amused by the sight that he’d entered the room and sat down in the chair opposite, experiencing for the first time the pathetic quality of the room’s furniture as loose springs dug into his backside, and making a mental note to replace them. A few
other soldiers who had been in the room looked startled by his presence since he never came down here but didn’t comment, nodding politely and murmuring respectful greetings. Levi had barely sat down when the brat had woken with a start, eyes flashing open and blinking around in a confused, sleepy daze as he yawned widely. He looked cute, Levi had realized, alarmed. He had reflexively lifted the wad of papers in his hands to his face, partially so he could pretend to have been studying them so Eren didn’t notice he had been the object of his observation, but mainly to conceal the tell-tale blush he could feel rising in his cheeks as he registered the meaning of the thought that had just crossed his mind. Levi didn’t dare look up to meet the boys startled stare, which he could feel boring into him, but soon he returned to reading his book and for some reason, Levi decided to stay a little while longer. He had found himself wondering back to the common room the next night around the same time and couldn’t comprehend the warm feeling he felt when he saw Eren in his spot in the armchair before he resumed his own position opposite him almost automatically. Next thing he knew, it had turned into a habit he repeated every night and he now wondered how pathetic Eren would think he was if he were ever to find out that the only reason Levi kept returning to the room after dinner to do his paper work was because he knew he’d find Eren there. They never spoke, not really. Eren had taken to greeting him after a few nights, a timid ‘hi’ Levi would respond to with a noncommittal grunt, and then whispering a non-intrusive ‘goodnight, Corporal’ just before he left a few hours later. Levi found himself looking forward to these regular, quiet moments just to be able to appreciate the younger man’s presence without fear of fucking anything up for once. It was…nice.

He was here, Levi noted as he entered the room, releasing a breath he hadn’t realized he was holding. He had been worried that Eren might have justifiably taken offence after Levi’s unusual behaviour last night, especially if he had noticed he was being avoided all day, and would boycott his pre-sleep reading ritual to spite him. It might sound like a petty and insignificant action, but only Levi could really appreciate how much it would have affected him if he had. He wasn’t sure how to correct this latest misstep and hoped Eren’s confrontational and face-value personality would, once again, take the helm in addressing the issue. Levi cleared his throat quietly before taking his usual seat and straightening out his papers, ready to begin work. Eren glanced up at the sound, but didn’t greet him right away like he usually did. Levi actually felt his stomach knot, having not realized how much he had anticipated the small ‘hi’ to be some form of signal that Eren was willing to discuss this. He wanted Eren to bring it up, God knew he had no idea what he was doing, so if he didn’t, Levi didn’t exactly have a back-up plan. He was staring blankly at the page in front of him, pen poised millimetres from the sheet as his mind raced to determine who better to approach for advice; Hanji, Petra or Erwin, when Eren broke the dreaded silence.

“Have you been avoiding me?”

Levi didn’t answer right away. He wasn’t going to outright lie of course, but he hated to confess to such a childish action. After a moment’s deliberation, however, he decided diplomacy had no place in this conversation, and he sighed, lidded his pen, and looked up to meet Eren’s watchful gaze.

“Yes.”

“Why?” He shot back immediately.

“I don’t feel comfortable around you.” The boy flinched, blinking rapidly, and Levi realized belatedly how his response could be interpreted as hurtful. “I didn’t mean it like that” He hurried to correct. Fuck, there he went again; no brain to mouth filter, spewing gibberish around the boy, “I meant…”He took a deep breath and set his work aside. Eren watched his movements carefully over the top of his book, wide green eyes magnified almost comically through the lenses of those goddamn glasses. “I don’t act professionally around you, and I was trying to avoid that.”
“Why?” Eren looked genuinely bemused, his thick brows drawn together in confusion “I’m your husband, not your subordinate. I’m probably the only person on this base you don’t have to treat with some degree of formality.” That was a good point, but you see, Levi didn’t not do professionalism; it was the last defence between getting too close. Hanji and Erwin were his closest friends, but they were also his colleagues. He honestly had no final defence against Eren, and that daunted him. “Corporal, can you tell me about your past?”

Levi’s gaze snapped back to Eren’s before the sentence had even completely left his lips. He saw a flicker of apprehension in the boy’s eyes, before they hardened with determination. “…I know you’re originally from Titan’s underground, but I want to know more and I want to hear it from you.” He forged on “I just want to understand you better.”

When Levi had decided he wanted to patch things up with Eren by any means necessary, he hadn’t considered this. In hindsight, that was a grievous short sight on his part; it was inevitable. He couldn’t have expected to leave Eren in the dark forever, hoping the boy would understand and accept that his reluctance to forge close bonds was a result of his past, without asking further questions. “…What do you want to know?” he asked reluctantly. The boys eyes widened and he closed his book, giving Levi his undivided attention. His gaze flitted around the room and Levi could see all the questions waiting to burst from his tongue. Finally, he looked back to Levi with a resolute look.

“Everything you feel comfortable saying” He answered, tacking on a hurried ‘Sir’ at the end.

Levi frowned as he considered the request, trying to determine how he could surmise his past as briefly as possible.

“The civil war between Scouting Legion and Titan was nearing its final days when I was a brat.” He began “I didn’t have parents or a family. I had two friends, a boy my age named Farlan and a little girl named Isabel who was like a sister to me. We lived together in the underground, surviving by pick-pocketing and stealing. But as we grew up, we started to upgrade to more serious crimes to finance ourselves. We got in with some dodgy people, and I used to do hits for anyone who could afford me.” Eren watched him intently, captivated “We grew pretty notorious and soon, we started attracting bigger fish. One day I got a hit to take out a particular Squad Leader in the Scouting Legion’s army from some people pretty high up on Titan’s food chain. The money was good so I accepted without a second thought, and my friends and I infiltrated Legion’s army to get close to the guy. My target was Erwin. I hadn’t been too concerned with the war up until then. It didn’t affect those of us in the slums; we were pretty much fucked and starving already, so it couldn’t get worse, but the longer I spent in Legion and fought beside them, the more aware I grew of Titan’s corruption and injustice and the more invested I got with wanting Legion’s independence from Titan as well.” Levi swallowed and hesitated, knowing what was coming. He hadn’t spoken about it in so long, and time didn’t make it any easier now. Eren watched him patiently, and Levi continued, “Both Farlan and Isabel felt the same, and before we knew it, we completely forgot about our deal with Titan and joined Legion’s army properly. That didn’t sit well with Titan, though, and one night while us three were out on a guerrilla mission in Titan territory, we were hunted down and surrounded. When we refused to continue with the mission, things turned to shit.” Levi closed his eyes “We fought, but we were outnumbered. I was the only survivor, and even I was in pretty bad shape. When I made it back to Legion, I explained everything to Erwin, but my closest friends were dead and all I could think about for years after that was that I shouldn’t have survived. There must have been something I could have done to save them, otherwise there was no reason why I should live while they died.” Levi didn’t need to say anymore. The rest was predictable enough, and what he had said explained everything Eren wanted to know about the reasons for his behaviour.
They sat in silence together; Levi recovering from the painful memories, while Eren silently digested everything he had just been told.

“I’m sorry for making you remember everything again.” Eren said quietly after some time.

“I would have had to tell you eventually.” Levi shrugged “I apologise for my behaviour last night and avoiding you today.”

“It’s okay, as long as you don’t do it again.” Levi glanced up.

“Do what again?”

“Be professional with me. You know, that thing you do where you suddenly just shut-off. I understand now why you do it, but you need to stop.” Eren gave him a small smile “I don’t mean to lecture you, but you can’t keep blocking people out forever. It’s self-destructive and kind of selfish. You’re trying to preserve yourself but that’s pretty damaging behaviour in itself; you should have a little more faith in the people around you too.” He stood up, pushing his glasses back up his nose and stretched “I’m glad you told me though, Corporal. I really appreciate it.” He said earnestly. Levi nodded, feeling like a burden had been lifted from his shoulders knowing Eren now understood why he did what he did, and therefore it was less likely to shock and hurt him in the future.

“Eren” he called after a moment. The boy turned back to look at him questioningly. “Seriously, what the fuck is with your glasses?” Eren blinked, pulling the glasses off his nose and examining them as if having to remind himself which ones he was wearing. His eyes crinkled as he smiled disarmingly genuinely.

“They were my mothers.” He explained. Levi eyed the glasses, realizing how the wording of his question might have sounded a little insensitive given the sentimental meaning the glasses clearly held to the younger man.

“You…should tell me about her sometime.” He said hesitantly. The discomfort he felt forcing the words out was worth the brilliant smile that lit up Eren’s features.

“I’d like that” He bit his lip, still smiling as he turned to leave again, “Goodnight, Corporal.”

Levi rolled his eyes “Call me Levi, brat.”
Chapter Summary

Eren takes Armin and Mikasa to the beach for their last day at Legion. Erwin is a professional.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is really just a filler until I get to the next dot point on my plan, so it’s pretty short.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Well, it’s no big deal. We’ll see you again in a couple days at the wedding.” Armin reassured as he stumbled backwards to avoid the rush of sea foam that cascaded around his ankles. Eren had taken Armin and Mikasa down to the beach like Petra had suggested, after spending the whole day walking around Legion. They’d be leaving tomorrow and Eren was beginning to feel depressed just thinking about returning to life without them. Not that he wasn’t happy, in fact, his attitude had completely changed in the weeks since he’d first arrived at Legion. Homesickness and loneliness didn’t constantly plague him until he couldn’t even bring himself to get out of the bed in the morning. Aside from Mikasa and Armin not being with him constantly, Eren would go so far as to say he preferred Legion to Maria now. Initially, it had taken quite some time to adjust to not knowing anyone there aside from Petra and the entirely different life style and culture; his every whim and desire wasn’t catered to by servants, and he had to help out with the base work and chores just as much as everyone else. Admittedly he’d been a brat about it at first, only grudgingly joining in after much complaining, but eventually he realized he enjoyed helping out. It made him feel useful and appreciated; something he rarely felt back ‘home’. Even the soldier’s attitudes had changed when he began making an effort to help out and join in, they appreciated his determination to remove any preconceptions they might have of his background by insisting they drop all formalities and call him just by his name. He’d join in with the recruits drinking games on the weekends, played cards with the soldiers, and joined in with the training, taking advice and instructions to improve his form and skills from the others.

“…How’s dad?”

“Same as usual.” Mikasa answered quietly.

“He never even calls. He doesn’t even know I was beaten half to death, or how miserable I was when I first arrived. He doesn’t care, as long as his end of the bargain is being upheld.” He muttered bitterly, hands in his pockets as he violently kicked a piece of seaweed back into the surf.

“I’m not trying to defend him, not at all since I’m completely aware how insensitive and neglectful he is being, but small-scale attacks on Maria’s walls by Titan have increased since the alliance as they try to determine just how strong our military alliance with Legion is. He’s been pretty busy lately, and he probably gets updated on you when he sees Annie and the others.” Armin said.
looked up with a frown, his interest sparked.

“When he sees Annie? When does he ever get the chance to see them since they arrived? Do they have video conferences?”

“Annie, Reiner and Berthold come to Maria every now and then and then to meet with Grisha. I haven’t been told myself and I’ve never actually attended any of their meetings for some reason, but I’ve seen them around the palace occasionally. I thought you’d know?” Mikasa answered this time, frowning slightly.

“No.” Eren scowled indignantly “No they never mentioned that to me. I mean, I’d realize they’d go off for a while together, but I thought they just hung out or something. They always were really close knit, but back to Maria? To see dad? Why wouldn’t they tell me?” Was his father so reluctant to directly communicate with Eren that he’d prefer to get updates through a third party? “I’m so fucking tired of his bullshit, I’m glad I don’t have to deal with him anymore. I’ve never said it before, but this messed-up marriage is one of the best things that has happened to me since mum died.”

“Are you saying you don’t even miss us, Eren?” Armin asked teasingly as he attempted to steer the conversation into lighter territory.

“We mustn’t have meant a lot if all it takes is that midget’s pin-dick to replace us.” Mikasa joined in. Eren spluttered and blushed, swatting her on the arm as the raven and blond burst into laughter.

“Shut up.” He grumbled “We’re going home. I change my mind, I can’t wait until you guys leave.” He slung his arms around the other two’s shoulders and they awkwardly made their way back up the beach to the waiting car.

“…Besides, it’s not small anyway.” He added as an afterthought, grinning.

“Oh Christ, Eren!” Armin complained, making a face and Mikasa made a gagging noise beside him.

****

The next day…

“…but the Irish Ambassador is also expected to be arriving midway through his tour, and it’s no secret they don’t get along. Hanji suggested that we organize their schedules so that they don’t overlap until the final conference, to avoid any confrontations as…” Erwin glanced up to Levi and his voice petered off. The shorter man was staring out the window, his mind clearly elsewhere. Erwin didn’t need to apply much logic to know his eyes would be locked on the lithe, tan form slicing through the pool water below. This wasn’t the first time this had happened. Unfortunately, their meetings coincided with Eren’s afternoon swim, which lately seemed to monopolize Levi’s attention. Erwin was happy for his friend, really. He’d been waiting with bated breath for Levi to finally become completely smitten with his bright young husband, but did it really have to dominate the few hours they had together to run over important issues? Erwin decided it was time for a little pay back, and put all he’d learned from Petra’s erotic novels he’d found lying around to good use, “…his nails carved possessive lines down your back as you thrust with slow, languid movements into his tight, wet heat; chanting his name like a prayer into the abused skin of his neck ‘Eren…Eren—’

“What?” Levi’s head snapped towards him, blinking away the haze of his daydream.
“What?” Erwin returned his confused look, cornflower blue eyes wide and blinking innocently.

“Did you..? What did you…?”

“…Say that we should plan the Irish and UK Ambassador’s respective tour schedules so that they don’t coincide until the final conference?” Erwin suggested, his face perfectly composed despite the overwhelming urge to surrender to the laughter he was struggling to suppress. Levi blinked, his narrow eyebrows pinched in a frown. Was that pink dusting his cheeks?

“Right, yes. Of course.” He sounded slightly bewildered, still apparently struggling to separate reality from what he had perceived to be a daydream.

“Are you okay? Maybe you should…go take care of that…” Erwin gestured towards Levi’s lap.

“Hm?” Levi looked down and immediately flushed bright crimson “What…?!?”

Erwin waved away the man’s spluttering denials with his best rendition of an understanding smile. He deserved an Oscar “No, you don’t have to explain, Levi. I’ve been told my presence can have an aphrodisiac effect.”

“What the fuck, Eyebrows?! No, ew. Fuck no!”

Erwin couldn’t hold it back any more and he burst into laughter. Oh, he couldn’t wait to tell Petra about this.

Chapter End Notes

I have no fucking clue what I was thinking when I wrote the end of this chapter…
Levi glanced up over the top of his tablet at the boy curled up in the seat opposite to him, staring despondently out the plane window.

“Well aren’t you up there with your friends?” He finally asked, curiosity getting the better of him, nodding further up the private jet where Eren’s three bodyguards were seated. Eren looked up at him and shrugged.

“Just wanted to hang with you. Is that a problem?” Levi arched a sceptical brow. No it wasn’t a problem, in fact he’d go so far as to even say he’d felt pleased when the boy had plopped ungracefully into the seat opposite his when they’d first boarded, in favour of those near his comrades. “What are you reading?” He continued, eyes darting to the tablet in Levi’s hands. They were on the flight to Maria for Christa and Ymir’s wedding celebrations for which they needed to arrive a day early as Eren had been requested to help with preparations and meet up with his old friends.

“Our schedule. You want to see?” Eren visibly perked up at the offer and scrambled into the seat beside Levi’s, leaning awkwardly over the hand rail to get a better view. Levi rolled his eyes and elbowed Eren off the armrest so he could lift it up out of the way. “Better?” The boy looked slightly conflicted as his eyes darted between Levi and the space between them and he knew Eren was trying to decide just how close Levi was comfortable with him getting. Honestly, he was a-okay with Eren sitting on him if he wanted to, but he supposed that would be pushing his luck. The corner of Levi’s lips twitching slightly as he watched Eren’s mental struggle with himself displayed clearly on his face. The kid was such an open book. “We’ve wrestled shirtless in the dirt and you’re getting bashful about scooting a little closer to me now?”

Eren scowled at his words, taking them as a challenge and shuffling close enough to Levi that their sides pressed together and his breathe tickled Levi’s ear as he leaned over to see the tablet screen clearer. It was wholly a lot closer than necessary, Levi decided, and although he was usually extremely pedantic about his personal boundaries being infringed on, he couldn’t find himself to be irritated at Eren’s close proximity. Eren hummed thoughtfully as his green eyes darted across the screen. The trip would last three days; the first day, Levi didn’t have anything planned personally as it was Eren who was needed to help with preparations. The second day was the day of the actual wedding, with the ceremony held in the morning which would be attended by all the guests and held at the palace chapel. Later, the wedding reception would be held at the palace ballroom, which would be transformed to entertain closer family and friends in a less formal and more laid back environment at Christa and Ymir’s insistence. The final day of their trip was to be spent leisurely. The only solid plan they had was lunch with King Grisha, which was the first time they would be meeting face to face since the unorthodox marriage. Levi already knew Eren was less than eager for the meeting; his rocky relationship with his father was hardly the best kept secret in the country. The small frown that pinched between the boy’s eyebrows as his eyes scanned the end of the page only reinforced that.
“It’s only lunch.” Levi murmured reassuringly. Eren turned to blink at him in surprise, the movement only bringing their faces closer together, barely centimetres apart.

“Am I that obvious?” he asked wryly.

“You’re always that obvious. It’s a meal with your dad, your acting like you’re expecting bamboo splinters shoved under your nails.” Eren made a face and recoiled.

“You’re always so graphic. And trust me, you’ve never had to talk with my dad about anything other than politics before so I’m sure you’ll enjoy this as much as I will, in fact, I look forward to that.” Levi snorted. What an unusual first meet-the-parent; that’s technically what it would be. He might have seen Grisha at the marriage certificate signing and finalizations, but this would be the first time they’d meet in an informal environment; just him and Eren talking about everyday things like some normal family or something.

Levi frowned at the increased space between them since Eren had moved back onto his seat properly. The boy had a ridiculously high body temperature, like some kind of portable space heater, and Levi keenly felt the loss of contact in the artificial cool of the jets interior.

“It’s fucking cold.” He grumbled, not entirely sure what he was hoping to achieve with the words.

“True, you’re probably so used to Legions climate that anything under seventy-five degrees must be sweater weather to you.” Eren remarked brightly. Very fucking astute, Levi thought bitterly, never mind that I’ve lived in Titan most of my life, which was far colder than Maria on average. He crossed his arms, irritated with Eren for not getting the hint, and hunkered down to as comfortable a position as he could get in his seat to sleep the rest of the journey.

“Um…”

“What?” Levi snapped, opening his eyes to shoot an impatient look at the boy beside him. He really shouldn’t take it out on him, it wasn’t exactly an obvious hint. Eren scowled in return, angered by Levi’s tone.

“I was just going to offer you my shoulder to lean on if you wanted to sleep and were cold, but never mind now,” He shot back.

Oh.

“Oh.” Levi said eloquently, previous vexation draining away to be replaced by abashment. Eren pursed his lips and glared at Levi expectantly.

“Sorry.” Levi mumbled, lowering his gaze to focus intently on a loose thread in the younger man’s collar.

“It’s okay. If you want you can still…?” His voice had softened again, and now held a note of uncertainty and embarrassment. It was cute. Levi didn’t answer, but shuffled around in his seat so he was angled away from the boy, and leaned back into him. He felt Eren moving around behind him as he tried to get comfortable, before extracting his arm and gingerly placing it around Levi’s shoulders.

“Is this okay?” He asked cautiously. Levi nodded, relaxing into Eren’s warmth. He turned himself slightly more towards Eren, just enough to burrow under the taller boys arm and rest his head on his shoulder. Holy hell, was he snuggling? Levi Ackerman: Humanities Strongest and infamous ex-thug, cuddling. He wasn’t even big spoon either; he was pretty sure if their positions were the seated equivalent of spooning, Levi was most certainly the little spoon. But it was nice; intimate
but innocent physical contact with no ulterior motives or further expectations. He was getting soft in his old age. He made a mental note to scare the shit out of some recruits the moment they returned home.

“Thanks.” He mumbled belatedly.

“Mhm.” Levi glanced up and could just barely see from his angle Eren’s cheek move as he smiled to himself. Brat.
“Eren, just go already! We’ve got it from here!”

“Are you sure?” Eren hesitated and glanced around the room one final time before his gaze met Mikasa’s warning glare “Okay, okay!” He held up both hands in defeat, grabbing his coat from where it had previously been discarded on a chair. The ceremony would be starting soon and Eren had been working over-time behind the scenes, along with the rest of Christa’s family and friends, making sure everything was up to scratch for the big day. He’d barely squeezed in a four hour power nap last night on a sofa in the ballroom lobby before he was up again at the crack of dawn, sprinting around running errands. He and Levi were staying together in one of Maria’s grandest hotels where most of the guests of honour were booked. Despite their luxury, presidential suite which Eren had more than being looking forward to sharing with Levi, he had yet to even properly return to the room let alone spend any quality or intimate time in it. In fact, he had been picked up by Armin and Mikasa not hours since they’d arrived, and had hardly seen Levi since. He had finally used Levi’s number, which had been saved in his phone for a while although never utilized, to keep his husband updated on the on goings. Levi didn’t seem particularly concerned, replying with one or two words to Eren’s badly spelt, paragraph long texts much to his chagrin. But he did feel bad; he felt as though he’d abandoned the man to his own devices while he roamed the palace finalizing the wedding arrangements. He wondered if Levi resented him, but then decided he probably barely noticed his absence, which would undoubtedly have been a burden to the older man, and was probably reveling in the peace and quiet.

He shrugged on his dark grey tux as he sprinted down the church hallway, only slowing down to a sensible trot after receiving more than a few dirty glares from several other guests. Mikasa and Armin had stayed behind in one of the small church side rooms as they helped with the last minute arrangements, only shooing Eren off to meet up with Levi so the press could get a few shots of them for their first public appearance since their marriage. Paparazzi access to him had been restrained since he had been living at the military base and the tight security and protocols had limited any good photo opportunities, so the media would also be buzzing to get a few exclusive shots of the prince and his new husband. He snatched his phone out of his coat pocket as he felt it vibrate, answering it without glancing at the contact name.

“Whassup?” He panted. Almost there, he could already see guests milling about in a cordoned off area down on the lawn by the church entrance, which had been elegantly set up with servers weaving between guests as they waited for the ceremony to commence. Security pushed back camera men and reporters straining at the boundaries as they shouted questions at celebrities and high profile guests, trying to get exclusive interviews or scandalous photographs for their respective media outlets.

“Where are you, brat?”
“Levi?” Eren quickly check caller idea to reaffirm that yes, it actually was Levi calling him, before quickly pressing the phone back to his ear.

“Who the fuck else would it be, I’m kind of your date.” The older man’s voice snapped back impatiently. Eren grinned at the frustrated tone, it was clear the man was having a less than enjoyable time and he would be willing to bet it was most probably because either reporters or other uppity, high-profile guests were probably trying to engage him in conversation.

“Hold on, old man, I’m almost there. I’ll save you from the snotty rich folks.” He teased, eyes scanning the crowd as he descended the stairs onto the lawn “Where are you? Oh wait I see you.” He hung up before he could get a response, and made his way over to the shorter man who was standing a little way off nursing a glass of champagne and looking angrily down at his phone as an older gentleman dressed in military regalia droned on in front of him. Levi glanced up as he neared, but Eren barely registered his appreciative gaze as he himself shamelessly ogled his husband. Levi wasn’t wearing a plain suit like Eren and so many of the other male guests; instead he was decked out in his formal military uniform, which was the Scouting Legion militaries rich forest green. His hair had been brushed back with product, but a few strands had come artfully undone at his forehead and were swept lazily to the side giving him an effortlessly put together look. Medals hung from his breast, glittering in the morning sunlight, and his military hat was tucked neatly under his left arm as he stood at attention. He looked breathtakingly handsome, and Eren was suddenly very conscious of just how immature and messily put together he looked beside Levi’s immaculate neatness and military precision.

“Hi.” He said breathlessly, scratching the back of his neck “You…you look good.”

Levi smirked, completely turning his back to the older man who had been babbling on about how ‘military officers these days had it so much easier’, ignoring the gentleman’s affronted expression in favour of giving Eren his undivided attention. His grey eyes wandered down to Eren’s tie and he looked pleased. Last night after Eren had collapsed exhausted on a sofa, a servant had approached Eren with a wrapped box, saying it was a gift from Corporal Levi for tomorrow. Eren had opened it to find a silk tie and pocket square the same shade of forest green as Legion’s military, and couldn’t help the touched smile that had spread across his face despite Armin’s teasing.

“So do you. Suits your eyes.” Levi replied, flicking his eyes back up to meet Eren’s and reaching up with a gloved hand to smooth down Eren’s wind-swept hair. Eren ducked out of his reach, scowling at the patronizing action.

“People are watching!” He hissed, eyes darting self-consciously around at fellow guests who tittered between themselves at the gesture. Levi arched an eyebrow and Eren had a split second to catch the mischievous glint in his grey eyes before he suddenly grabbed him by the tie and yanked him down to his level.

“Well, we better put on a good show then.” Levi murmured, voice seductively low as his lips ghosted over the shell of his ear. Eren shuddered as his hot breath brushed along his neck intimately, making goose bumps rise across his skin. To any observer, the display would easily be interpreted as a private exchange between newlyweds, especially considering the red flush of Eren’s skin and the way his green eyes widened as he pulled away.

“R-right.” Eren stammered, mentally cursing his heart hammering in his chest. Be cool, he chanted to himself as Levi preoccupied himself re-adjusting his tie as if nothing had just happen. Someday he hoped to have the same flustering effect on the older man.

Soon the guests were ushered into the church a party at a time as the time for the ceremony drew close. Levi held out his right arm and hesitantly Eren took it by the elbow as they made their way
up the red carpet that lead into the church. Questions were shouted at them by reporters hoping to provoke a response for their gossip columns. Levi glared darkly whenever addressed while Eren smiled widely and deflected the questions with practised ease, already accustomed to the overwhelming spotlight and handling it with princely charm.

“Prince Eren! Do you have any reservations about attending your ex-lovers wedding?” One reporter called out from the side as they made their way down the carpet.

“She might be an ex-lover, but she’s still a close friend. I’m thrilled for her and can’t wait for her to experience for herself the happiness of marriage.” Eren answered diplomatically with an easy laugh.

“Happiness of marriage…” Levi mused under his breathe, arching his eyebrows at his young husband. Eren flushed under his amused stare.

“Yea, I mean look at us; we’re fucking adorable.” Eren mumbled back, avoiding his eyes self-consciously.

“Fucking adorable indeed.” Levi agreed, the corner of his lips turning up in a half-smile as he watched his own blushing bride.

They took their seats and soon organ music echoed through the high ceiling of the structure as the time for Christa to make her way down the aisle came. Eren beamed as he watched her taking measured steps beside her father, head bowed and clutching a simple bouquet of lilies. She looked like a princess in her strapless white wedding dress that flared out at her waist like a ball gown. Ymir was dressed in a simple white gown that hugged her tall, lean figure flatteringly and plunged at the neckline. She watched with eyes full of pure adoration as Christa made her way to her side and the two shared an intimate moment as they gazed into each other’s eyes. Eren had attended many wedding ceremonies before, accompanying his father to those of obscure high-profile people to whom he had no close connection, and usually spent them bored out of his mind because he never felt personally invested in the union. This time, however, he couldn’t help but smile through the whole ceremony which felt like something out of a fairy tale.

Drawing near the end of the ceremony, Eren grew aware of Levi’s gaze trained on him and looked at him questioningly.

“Did you ever want a wedding?” Eren blinked, eyes wide as he searched the ravens face for any indication of the reasoning behind the question, but his poker face gave nothing away. Had Petra said something? Shit. He felt his face grow warm with embarrassment.

“Why do you ask?” He asked instead, avoiding the question. Levi frowned at him thoughtfully and Eren wondered what was so telling about his deflect to prompt such consideration. Levi shook his head slightly and returned his gaze to the front, dropping the subject. “Did you?” Eren prompted, not so willing to let go. The older man didn’t reply immediately and Eren’s curiosity grew as he anticipated another elusive snippet of detail about his mysterious husband.

“No.” Levi replied curtly. Eren’s gaze lingered briefly on the older man’s profile, but his expression gave nothing away.

“Oh.” He said, the barest hints of disappointment seeping into his voice. He turned back to face the proceedings ahead, unsatisfied. Well, he couldn’t say he was surprised.

Chapter End Notes
I originally really wanted to put Levi in something like this, because hot dammn. But then I remembered, as a military officer, he’d probably be decked out in his military regalia :c Oh well
Levi’s has never been fond of weddings; the only perks are the open bar and free food, but his opinion may very well do a complete 180 in under 4 minutes…

Chapter Notes

Eren sings Amy Winehouse’s cover of Valerie. You can play it when you see the (X) if you want to get a feel of the atmosphere.

Fanart for this chapter is by magickitt here, and a redraw here!!

It was far from the orthodox wedding receptions Levi had been forced to attend in his time; especially any of those of wealthy, upper class people. The fact that it was held in a ballroom was probably the only traditional aspect of the occasion, although that’s where any similarities ended. A stage had been set up and a live band was performing more modern songs than any classic love songs you would expect at a wedding; no soft guitar music or crooning into the microphone here; it was all loud bass and strong beat. Bodies were packed on the dance floor before the stage where some kind of impromptu mosh pit had formed; people’s formal wear juxtaposed against the background of artificial fog and strobe lights as their bodies pulsed together in rhythm with the steady beat. Levi had to admit, it wasn’t exactly his scene, although it was significantly more tolerable than the stuffy formal reception he was anticipating; at least he wasn’t expected to communicate with the random people because of pre-planned seating.

Levi stood with Erwin, Petra and Eren a little ways off. People often came up to talk to them, although usually Erwin steered the conversation with the occasional input from either Petra or Eren while Levi stood aside, nodding curtly whenever he was introduced but rarely having to actually talk. Levi grew aware of how often Eren was invited by random people he assumed were the younger boys friends to dance, but each time Eren turned them down politely.

“You seem quite popular.” Erwin commented as he sipped from his wine. So he too had noticed then. Eren shrugged and ducked his head.

“Don’t you remember how he danced last year, Erwin? He was the main attraction!” Petra joined in “Eren, I thought you loved to dance. Is something wrong?” She asked, concern colouring her voice. Eren’s eyes widened and he scanned the room unsurely.

“No, I’m fine, I just…” He chewed his lip, looking torn as he remembered the message from his father Armin had relayed to him yesterday with an uncomfortable expression. His gaze darted to the far corner of the ballroom where his father’s royal contingency was seated. “My dad said not to leave Levi’s side to dance since he probably wouldn’t like it now that we’re married and all…”

Erwin and Petra blinked at the younger boy, and then turned to Levi with identical sly smiles.

“Did you hear that, Levi? Eren’s hanging back because of you.” What the fuck? Levi fixed the
brunet with a hard look.

“Are you saying it’s my fault, Jaeger?” He demanded.

“No! No sir-I mean Levi, um. I was just answering…” Eren responded quietly looking panicked. Levi sighed, looking over the boy slumped before him. Not to say that the boy wasn’t enjoying himself, but it had been pretty clear from the way his green eyes watched the crowd longingly how much he wanted to join in.

“Just go, brat. I’ve been attending these things alone since you were still in diapers, I think I can survive one night without you.” He responded after deciding he had let the younger man suffer long enough “You look like you’re about to piss yourself.”

Eren’s eyes sparkled as he processed Levi’s words. The stray lighting hit his face at just the right angle to make his green eyes appear more luminescent than ever, and the sight knocked the air right from his lungs.

“Thank you, Levi!” His smile was dazzling and Levi was certainly not prepared for its blinding brilliance. He was even less prepared for the thrilled kiss the boy planted on his cheek before dashing off to join his friends on the dance floor. He stood there, momentarily stunned, while his companions watched him with amusement.

“You really were right, Erwin. He’s in deep.” Petra murmured unsurreptitiously to her husband.

“He usually hides everything so well, so it’s truly a testament to how far gone he is when he’s reduced to a mute puddle by a kiss.” Erwin responded. The couple toasted their respective glasses in celebration of a job well done.

“Fuck off, you two. I just wasn’t expecting it.” Levi grumbled, turning away to watch the dancers.

“Oh! Did you hear that, dear? Humanities Strongest soldier just wasn’t expecting a kiss from his husband. That’s the reason why his blushing like a schoolgirl, don’t misunderstand.” Petra laughed, swatting her husband chastisingly on the shoulder “And don’t bother denying it; we can see how pink you are even in this crappy lighting, Levi.”

Thankfully, the conversation soon steered away from Levi and onto Eren.

“He’s very good with people.” Petra observed “You should have seen the way he handled the Double-chinned Duchess when Levi shut down her argument on the situation in the Middle East. She was giggling like a love-struck girl when he was done with her.” Petra shook her head, impressed.

“Why does Kind Grisha treat him so dismissively then?” Levi asked “Clearly the brat’s quite talented.”

“Eren told me his father took Carla’s death hard. There are rumours that he blames Eren for her death, since she died shielding Eren in the fatal car accident in Vancouver. Since Eren looked just like her too, and constantly reminded him of her absence, I assume he grew to resent him.” Petra answered sorrowfully “Like he was a cheap substitute for her loss. Or at least Grisha thinks so” She added hurriedly at Levi’s dirty glare.

“That’s fucking ridiculous.” Levi grumbled. The poor kid had to deal with his mother’s death, and then his father’s neglect and blame? No doubt he already blamed himself slightly already even though he had only been a child at the time of the accident, last thing he needed was to be burdened with his father’s issues. He watched the brunet dance, his moves were perfectly in tune to the
music and he looked like he was genuinely enjoying himself as his body surged and rolled rhythmically. He had drawn a crowd already, people pushing just to be near the aura he exuded. He was like a bright flame that the people were drawn to like moths, Levi thought wryly.

“It looks natural, but he’s worked hard to get where he is now.” Erwin spoke up. Levi looked at him questioningly and the blond gestured to Eren with the hand holding his wine glass “His sister, Mikasa, has the natural makings of a leader and has earned great respect. She is strong, sensible and calm and it won’t be long before she is more than capable of inheriting the Crown. Armin is a child prodigy and already a member of the King’s circle of advisors. He’s assured himself a practically permanent position on the King’s Council, and is virtually invaluable already. Eren’s had to grow up with two of his closest friends showing such promise while he himself is constantly scrutinized by his father both for his lack of overt talent as well as the added burden of his blame and resent. He was practically raised with the intention of being sold off sooner or later in a political alliance. Initially he rebelled and got into lots of trouble, drawing a lot of negative publicity, but he seemed to clear up his act recently.” Erwin explained.

Levi turned back to the crowd as he stewed over Erwin’s words. He remembered the day Eren had finally exploded during breakfast and vented all his frustration at Levi before he was beaten by those three soldiers. He had mentioned something similar; that his father had resented him ever since his mother’s death because he was a disappointing reminder of his mother who was now gone. How he had felt like a burden in Maria and had been looking forward to meeting Levi, his hero, and starting afresh in a new place. He was happier now, wasn’t he? Levi had to admit the boy had taken to Legion like a duck to water after he had finally started to put effort in, and everyone had been just as eager to accept him soon enough. He watched Eren fondly; yes he did looked happier. He and Levi spoke more openly now, even flirted at times; while they were still learning about each other, for the first time in years, Levi actually wanted to get to know someone better.

The trio lapsed into a comfortable silence which was interrupted by a small commotion on the dance floor. Levi frowned and focused on a crowd of people that had gathered around Eren, unconsciously stepping forward, had Eren gotten into a fight? Was something wrong?

“Go on, Eren! We haven’t see you perform in ages since you’ve left!” Someone encouraged

“Do it for me, Eren. For a wedding present!” Christa piped up, appearing beside the boy, Ymir’s arm wrapped tenderly around her waist.

“Well, you can’t turn down the bride” Armin laughed. Eren, who had been half-heartedly turning down the requests, pretending to mull over the decision before relenting.

“O-okay, since Christa asked so nicely.” He yielded, grinning too enthusiastically to make his previous reluctance seem convincing. A cheer went up around the crowd and everyone patted him on the back murmuring words of encouragement as though he actually needed it. He caught Levi’s eyes across the floor and hesitated.

“Don’t embarrass me, brat.” Levi said, and Eren’s smile widened at his version of encouragement.

“Well, I better put on a good show then,” He called back echoing Levi’s earlier words. Levi smirked and leaned back onto the bar to enjoy the show.

Eren weaved expertly through the crowd towards the stage and Levi watched, impressed, as he snatched two shots from the tray of a passing waiter, downing them consecutively before pulling a face.

“Well, this is going to be interesting…” Erwin mused.
Eren bounded up the stage steps two at a time and cheers erupted through the crowd. It was apparent everyone, if not most of the guests present, were well acquainted with Eren’s performances as they shouted out love confessions and encouragement like teenagers at a concert. Honestly, if this was the effect the boy had on a room full of dignitaries just by appearing on stage, Levi wondered how they would react once he started singing.

“Good evening, everyone!” Eren said, clutching the microphone in both hands. Levi glanced towards where King Grisha was seated with his royal party to see his reaction. The man was glaring at the stage, nose flared in anger, and Levi wondered briefly if this was how he had looked back when Eren had taken to the stage during the meeting to finalize the alliance. “First of all, I want to congratulate my beautiful friends Christa and Ymir on their marriage. You two are perfect together and I’m honoured to have known you as long as I have; I hope you guys had a magical day today and have a great time on your honeymoon and your future together.” Ymir and Christa looked at each other and shared a tender kiss, cheered on by those around them “I want to dedicate this song to my close friend, Christa; it’s her favourite, and for good reason.” Eren continued. He stepped back briefly to share a word with the band members, who nodded in turn. The drummer tapped her drumsticks together to set the pace, and the music began to play, a familiar tune echoing through the ballroom. (X)

Eren stepped back to the mic, holding it close to his mouth with one hand while the other held the stand further down, bopping to the beat as he peered over the cheering crowd with a playful glint in his green eyes. There was no trace of the bashful and embarrassed Eren that Levi was used to; his whole demeanour changed in this environment. He seemed to draw energy and thrive off the attention, a natural performer that entranced the crowd, and judging by his self-assured smirk, he knew the effect he had.

Well, sometimes I go out by myself
And I look across the water
And I think of all the things, what you're doing
And in my head I paint a picture

'Cause since I've come on home
Well, my body's been a mess
And I've missed your ginger hair
And the way you like to dress

He ran his hands over his chest, closing his eyes as if longing for the touch of a lover. A girl in the crowd squealed and Levi had never felt so in-tune with a teenage girl before in his life.

Won't you come on over
Stop makin a fool out of me
Why don't you come on over Valerie?
Valerie, Valerie, Valerie

Eren took off his tuxedo coat, slipping it off each shoulder one by one, putting on a show for the crowd before tossing it carelessly to the side.

Did you have to go to jail
Put your house on up for sale
Did you get a good lawyer?

I Hope you didn't catch a tan
Hope you find the right man
Who'll fix it for you
Are you shopping anywhere
Changed the colour of your hair
and Are you busy?

And did you have to pay that fine
That you were dodging all the time
Are you still dizzy?

He held the mic tenderly, letting his eyes flutter closed again as he felt the words that he sang.

Since I've come on home
Well, my body's been a mess
And I've missed your ginger hair
And the way you like to dress

Won't you come on over
Stop makin a fool out of me
Why don't you come on over Valerie?
Valerie, Valerie, Valerie

Eren’s sea-foam green eyes sought out and locked with Levi’s from across the room. The crowd seemed to hold their breath, anticipating something exciting judging by his intense gaze and the way the music dropped.

Well, sometimes I go out by myself
And I look across the water

Eren slowly began to unbutton his white dress shirt. He slipped it off seductively, not once breaking his captivating gaze with the older man, and tossed it into the crowd into the eager clutches of admirers.

And I think of all the things, what you're doing
And in my head I paint a picture

He was completely bare-chested now, save for his green tie that stood out against his tan skin and brought out his eyes. The crowd cheered, but Levi barely noticed; he couldn’t look away from those eyes.

Cause since I've come on home
Well, my body's been a mess
And I've missed your ginger hair
And the way you like to dress

Eren ran his hands all over his body, tipping his head back but still maintaining intoxicating eye contact with Levi. He was smirking, going all out, and damn did Levi feel it. He followed the paths of Eren’s long, slender fingers tracing along his defined abs, wishing his hands could replace them, wishing he could touch Eren instead.

Won't you come on over
Stop makin a fool out of me
Why don't you come on over Valerie?
I want you come in over!

Stop making a fool of me!
He snapped his head back, grinning widely at Levi. His gaze was animalistic, his smile feral, and
holy fuck: any more of this and Levi would get hard. Eren bit his lip coquettishly as he crooned out
the remaining words, and Levi certainly did not miss the way his hand ever so subtly moved up
and down the length of the mic stand suggestively, and he felt his pants tighten. He repeated the
remaining Valerie’s, his warm tone seemed to ravish each word with the intimate sensuality of a
lover, and the music petered off as the song came to an end.

“I think I have a boner” Petra’s whispered voice broke through Levi’s trance-like state.

“I think I’m pregnant.” Erwin murmured back, stunned.

“Fuck me sideways…” Levi breathed.

The crowd’s response was deafening. Eren had singlehandedly made almost everyone in the room,
regardless of sexuality, fall in love with him. Everyone cheered for their favourite prince, and Levi
thought he saw a couple of bras sent flying in the direction of the stage amidst the chaos.

“Thank you, everyone!” Eren laughed, green eyes sparkling as he drank in the positive feedback.

“Marry me, Jaeger!” Someone in the crowd cried, their voice somehow carrying over the din.

“Thanks, but I’m going to have to turn you down.” Eren said “I already have a gorgeous husband”
His gaze flickered back up to Levi’s and he winked. Levi swallowed thickly and decided then and
there that when this was over, he was going to drag Eren back to their hotel room by force if necessary, and pay him back for every unbearable aroused second he had just been forced to endure.
The End of the Night

Chapter Summary

Ymir spares Levi some words of advice. Levi’s impassive facade finally breaks.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Well damn, your boy’s got moves to turn on a pair of lesbians; that’s saying something.” Levi glanced to the person who had swaggered up beside them; a tall, tan girl with freckles peppered across her face and narrow, cunning eyes. Clinging to her arm was the smaller girl, an adorable blonde with cornflower blue eyes and a sweet smile. Ymir and Christa; the newlyweds. They had already been doing their rounds talking to all the guests briefly and accepting congratulations, and by now he could tell by their gentle swaying and flushed faces that both were significantly shit faced.

“Congratulations on your marriage.” Levi responded, sticking to the script despite their less-than traditional greeting. Christa giggled and tipped her head to lean on the taller girls shoulder, watching Levi with her unnervingly warm gaze. What the fuck was with that? She was like some merciful angel to not be put off by his piercing glare like people usually were at first instance.

“Thanks Corporal Levi. Congratulations on yours too! We never got round to meeting you properly and it was such a shame you didn’t have a wedding. I know how much Eren always wanted one” she said. Levi frowned slightly; he didn’t know that, but it kind of explained Eren’s behaviour that morning when he’d broached the subject briefly. Well done Levi, master of tact as always. He filed that piece of information away for later consideration.

“I’m kind of surprised you’re not all over him actually.” Ymir began, glancing towards the stage where Eren should be “Newlyweds tend to be grossly over-affectionate, yet you two are pretty toned down. But after that performance, how are you not up there right now fucking his brains out?” Christa gasped, scandalized by the crude wording, and elbowed Ymir gently in the ribs. Ymir frowned “No but seriously; I’d be more alert, especially knowing Jean is here somewhere.” She scanned the crowd briefly as if to emphasize her point.

“Jean?” That was an unfamiliar name. Was that meant to mean something to him? Ymir looked at him with disconcertingly impish grin while Christa covered her mouth with one hand and looked at him wide eyed like a taboo topic had been mentioned.

“Ymir!” she chastised, she turned back to face Levi “Sorry about that, it’s nothing. Really.” Like hell it wasn’t; especially not when Ymir was grinning like she’d uncovered the biggest scandal.

“Who is Jean?” Levi asked again, this time his voice had taken on the steely edge of warning he employed when giving someone a last chance to fess up. Christa grimaced.

“It’s just…if Eren hasn’t mentioned it… I don’t really think…”

“No way! The poor man has a right to know!” Ymir interrupted loudly, motioning for the bartender to bring over more drinks and settling down on the barstool beside Levi, pulling Christa into her
lap. Levi narrowed his eyes at her excitement; he got the impression she was the type of person who out a kick out of other peoples drama and her apparent excitement to spill all didn’t especially bode well for him. Who was this Jean and what was his connection to Eren? And why did she suggest he should be wary?

“Say, do you know about us?” She began as she took the beer handed to her by the bartender, Levi did likewise “I mean like the whole drama behind our relationship and where Eren got involved?” Levi assumed she was talking about Eren and Christa’s past ‘relationship’ and nodded “well, if he’s told you that, I’ll assume you know everything except about Jean, okay? Thing is, this whole shebang was a mess. Christa and I were secretly dating because Christa was yet to come out, and so Eren and she were dating as a cover up. Mind you, Eren wasn’t just a good Samaritan in all this; he was dating Horseface at the time in secret too, it was like a love-quadrangle.” She shook her head as if exhausted by the complexity of the situation “Now Jean, we-ell” She rolled her eyes and laughed “Jean Kirshtein is the son of the French Ambassador. He’s a fun guy, but a total hot mess, and when he and Eren first met, it ended in a bar fight and blood noses as you’d expect from two equally hot-headed boys. But half of that anger was sexual frustration, and before anyone knew it, their fist fights had devolved into heavy making-out. Those two were the incarnation of angry-sex” Christa interrupted her tirade with a delicate cough.

“Well anyway, after Ymir and I went public and I ‘broke up’ with Eren, he also made his relationship with Jean official.” Christa took over, apparently deciding the story could be handled with more finesse “But King Grisha…” She pulled a face and Levi realized just how often that expression generally coincided with the mention of the name “…well, he wasn’t too happy. Jean didn’t exactly have a clean record and apparently he decided Jean was an inappropriate suitor for the prince, so he made them break up.” Levi’s eyebrows rose. That was...harsh. He already knew how controlling Eren’s father could be; but to forcibly separate Eren and his boyfriend?

“How long ago was all this?” He asked.

“Like five months?” Ymir shrugged. Five months. Eren had been forced to break up with his boyfriend, and then, almost immediately had his marriage to a stranger arranged without his consent or knowledge. That would be hard to swallow for anyone. But why hadn’t Eren mentioned any of this to him while he’d explained this to Levi? It might have been an irrelevant detail considering he had only been explaining his connection to Christa at the time, or perhaps he had been trying to be thoughtful by leaving out details of his ex when talking to his current partner? Whatever the reason, Levi found himself scanning the crowd for his young husband almost expecting to see him in the company of an unfamiliar man.

“Their break up was so abrupt and unresolved, it’s hard to imagine he’s completely gotten over Horseface just yet. So word of warning; keep your eyes on your prize, Corporal.” Ymir winked “Oh, speaking of which; here comes the bride!”

Levi turned to see where Eren was currently working his way towards them through a crowd of groping admirers, although none of them stood out as particularly close to him and they were mostly young women. Levi shot the infatuated congregation a single, sharp glare with the clear command: hands off, and they immediately dissipated. Eren chuckled to himself obliviously, buzzed by the alcohol and on a slight high from the thrill of performing.

“Levi! You’re making friends!” He laughed as he slipped ungracefully into the seat beside him. Levi rolled his eyes at the giddy brunet.

“Where’s your shirt?” He scolded, eyeing the younger man’s bare chest. He was only wearing his coat and the green tie Levi had gifted him.
“I dunno, I think someone stole it.” Eren answered, frowning down at his exposed torso with a disgruntled pout.

“Well, what the fuck did you expect would happen when you threw your clothes into a rabid crowd?”

“But I’m too hot for clothes.” Eren whined, carding his fingers through his straggly locks and tugging impatiently at his tie. Levi’s gaze inadvertently swept his lean frame, hungrily scouring every inch of tan skin glistening with slight perspiration. Yes, he certainly fucking was.

“We’re leaving.” Levi announced suddenly, standing and dragging his gaze away with much difficulty. Ymir and Christa, who had been watching the exchange with expressions of amusement and endearment respectively, nodded.

“Thank you both for coming, it’s been so nice to see you again Eren. Please come visit again soon, we’ve both missed you even if Ymir won’t admit it.” Christa smiled warmly as she embraced the younger man.

“Why are we going so soon?” Eren asked, confused “Levi?” But Levi ignored him in favour of saying his goodbye to Erwin and Petra; he didn’t think he could sit here much longer while Eren was so close by without snapping and jumping the boy where he sat. Erwin would not be very happy with the headlines that would create, and no doubt King Grisha would not be able to handle much more public nudity from his son.

He practically dragged the green-eyed boy out of the ballroom and across the lobby, ignoring the strange looks they drew. They must be quite a sight; Levi in his full military regalia pulling a protesting shirtless boy out of a wedding reception, but he honestly couldn’t care less. All he could focus on was getting Eren back to their hotel room as soon as possible.

Chapter End Notes

THE BEST IDEA FOR NEXT CHAPTERS TITLE JUST CAME TO ME. HOLY SHIT. I DONT KNOW IF IM MORE EXCITED TO WRITE THE PUNNY TITLE OR THE SMUT...
Levi was angry. The older man hadn’t even spared him a glance as he wordlessly stormed out of the reception with Eren stumbling along behind him obediently, protests dying on his lips. He struggled through the fog of alcohol as he racked his mind to figure out what he had done wrong, and then it hit him: his performance. He had thought Levi would enjoy it, considering his reaction to the last time he had seen him on stage, but clearly he had overdone it this time. Fuck. Of course Levi would be mad; last time there had been barely anyone present and he hadn’t even known who Eren was. This time was a completely different story: they were married now, and Eren had practically strip-teased for a two-hundred plus audience. Not to mention how the hordes of people had packed around him afterwards; he had been shirtless and laughing as he gratefully accepted their compliments and returned embraces. How must that have looked? He didn’t need to be completely sober to realize that it would have looked bad. Eren felt the cold dread creep up his spine as he warily watched Levi stalking ahead of him, but his face gave nothing away, retaining its signature look of bored apathy.

Fuck. Fucking fuck. He was so fucked.

Levi wrenched open the door of the black sedan and stood aside for Eren to enter before the driver even had time get out. Eren hesitated briefly before climbing in, knowing better than to keep the man waiting. He must be incensed. He didn’t even look at Eren as he slid in next and nodded to the chauffeur to set off.

“Levi...?” His voice was quiet with apprehension as he warily eyed the older man sitting beside him. Levi was staring resolutely out the window, the street lights flashing across his face so Eren could only make out brief glimpses in the darkness of the car. He noticed now that his expression was not completely devoid of emotion; he could barely make out in the dim lighting that his jaw was clenched tensely and he sat more rigidly than usual, as if trying to restrain his emotions and overcompensating. Eren wiped his sweaty palms uneasily on his trousers; Levi just being his normal impassive self he could deal with because that only entailed a normal level of anger, but right now he could barely compose himself: Levi, the God of Apathy. He swallowed nervously and worried at his bottom lip before deciding that he should get Levi talking while they were still in the
car; at least that way he had the driver as a witness so maybe Levi might have unwound a bit by the
time they made it to somewhere more private. “You’re mad at me, aren’t you?”

Eren noted the other man’s slight frown as he seemed to seriously ponder Eren’s question.
Hallelujah, finally a reaction. Wait, was that a good thing? The older man turned to regard Eren
with a look of complete disbelief.

“You’ve got to be fucking kidding me,” He said incredulously. Gunmetal grey eyes continued to
stare at Eren until it clicked that he appeared to be waiting for a response.

“I’m sorry! I honestly thought you might like it. I shouldn’t have done that, Levi.” Eren blurted
desperately, but he was cut off by a raised hand.

“No stop it, Christ. Just…” Levi massaged his temples, shaking his head, and then…he chuckled.
Eren blinked in perplexity. Holy fuck, did Levi just laugh? Was he imagining things? Shit, he
hadn’t even mixed his drinks; maybe one had been spiked with a hallucinogen, because this
seriously could not be happening. Maybe it was a bitter laugh? He didn’t exactly have a frame of
reference to compare it with. Levi sighed and turned back to look at Eren, and he could see the
faintest signs of a smile tugging at his lips.

“I-I don’t understand…?”

The car pulled up outside their hotel, and again, Levi was barrelling out before the driver even had
the chance to open the door for them, Eren following close behind. He took the grand marble steps
leading up to the hotel entrance two at a time and Eren had to jog lightly to keep up with the
smaller man’s surprisingly fast progress. He barely had time to appreciate his surroundings; the
ancient, grand chandelier that greeted them at the entrance, the golden plated bannisters, white
marble tiles and vast Persian rugs that gave the hotel its breathtaking imperial look, as they swept
through. Bellboys and receptionists in maroon uniforms gave them strange looks as the duo bee-
lined straight to the elevator. There was a couple already occupying it when the doors opened; an
older businessman in a smart suit with a beautiful young escort hanging off his arm giggling as he
crooned sweet nothings in her ear.

“Out.” Levi ordered impatiently, glowering at the pair. The man looked about to protest, but
something he saw in Levi’s expression seemed to make him reconsider, and he and his companion
hastily evacuated the plush interior. Eren followed Levi in, grimacing apologetically at the pair,
and waited skittishly as the raven fished in his pockets for the penthouse floor key. The elevator
doors closed with a ‘ding!’ Eren found entirely too cheerful considering his personal crisis.

Was he angry? Well, he hadn’t denied it, in fact, he asking if Eren was kidding could mean that he couldn’t
even believe Eren had to ask in the first place. But then again, he had laughed, though that could
also have just been him laughing at Eren for being too much of a dumb shit to read the atmosphere.
Any further attempts to analyse the situation were immediately dashed from Eren’s mind as he was
pushed against the elevator wall and Levi’s face was suddenly mere centimetres from his own.

“You think I’m mad?” Eren realized that he had dropped all pretence of composure in the privacy
of the elevator. Levi’s voice was low and teasing, his grey eyes regarding Eren with a mixture of
amusement and animalistic hunger. Despite being several inches shorter than him, he still
somehow made Eren feel completely dwarfed with his gaze and the way he rested both forearms on
either side of Eren, caging him in. Eren’s breath came in erratic huffs as his mind reeled trying to
process the situation.

“Yes?” His voice came out a nervous squeak and he flushed with embarrassment. Why the fuck
wouldn’t his body cooperate? Levi was standing there with perfectly composed smouldering
hotness, and Eren was a squeaking, nervous school girl before him. Levi seized Eren’s hand and
pressed it against his crotch and Eren’s eyes widened when he realized that Levi was already half hard.

Levi leant in so their chests were flush against each other “You think if I was mad I’d be like this?” He asked, voice husky and low. Eren shivered with pleasure as his hot breath ghosted over his neck; no he certainly would not. He experimentally rubbed the heel of his hand into Levi’s crotch and the older man’s breath caught in his throat with surprise and he placed his hand over Eren’s to encourage the motion. He latched onto the skin at Eren’s throat, biting down hard enough to elicit a moan.

“Fuck” Eren hissed, massaging Levi’s erection through his pants. He could feel his own dick twitching at the raven’s reactions and his proximity. His alcohol hazed mind could barely comprehend how quickly the situation had changed. The elevator doors dinged and opened, signalling their arrival on their floor, and suddenly Levi was gone.

“Come on brat, I’m not fucking you in the lift.” Levi said, eyes glinting mischievously as they roved appreciatively over Eren leaning heavily against the opposite elevator wall before turning away. He must look a sight; face flushed with drunken arousal, shirtless and panting as he watched Levi with hungry eyes. Eren had barely enough awareness to follow him out, heart thundering in his chest.

He’s going to fuck me. We’re going to fuck.

The elevator door had barely closed behind him before Levi had him slammed against them again, hungrily placing open-mouthed kisses up his bare chest. Eren arched into him as Levi licked and bit at his nipples, not even bothering to hold back his moans as he fist ed his hands in Levi’s uniform. Some small fraction of his mind chided him for the action, knowing it was bound to leave wrinkles on the otherwise pristine suit but he figured when they were finished tonight, wrinkles would probably be the least permanent damage to the outfit. Levi pushed his knee between Eren’s legs and Eren desperately rutted against him, seeking any form of friction for his neglected cock.

“Look at you, humping my leg like a horny dog.” Levi chuckled, but Eren was far too preoccupied to rise to the bait. Levi’s lips eventually make it up to his own and Eren immediately seized them in a passionate kiss, opening his lips to deepen the kiss. Levi’s tongue explored his mouth and Eren bit his bottom lip, eliciting a growl from the raven that went straight to his dick. Levi’s fingers kneaded Eren’s ass, lips twisting into a smirk at his shameless moans, and Eren swung his legs up to hook around Levi’s hips so that the older man was completely supporting his weight against the elevator doors. The new position aligned their hips and provided the perfect slant to grind his hips into Levi’s.

Eren busied himself unfastening Levi’s coat, surfacing from the deep kiss long enough to swear colourfully at the complicated assortment of buckles and buttons.

“Why the fuck would you need so many belts on top of the buttons? Why can’t you just have a fucking zipper?” He vented, scowling.

“What’s the rush?” Levi chuckled, bat ting his hands away and taking over with more practised ease, somehow managing to support Eren’s weight against the door with just his hips. The rush? Well this kind of came out of nowhere and I’m worried if I don’t get you naked and on top of me right now, you’ll have another mood swing and back out. Eren took the opportunity to shrug off his own coat and pulled off his tie, before carding his fingers through Levi’s ticklish soft undercut and seizing fistfuls of his silky black hair to angle Levi’s head back and deepen their kiss.

One of Levi’s hands returned to Eren’s ass, the other one gripping his neck firmly as he pulled
them away from the door and began to carry him to the bedroom effortlessly, never once breaking the kiss. Eren was a mess when Levi dropped him on his back on the bed, panting as he stared lustfully up at the older man kneeling on the edge of the bed above him. Levi had finally managed to undo his coat and was shrugging it off painstakingly slowly, his dark gaze clouded with ardour as he regarded the boy before him with a salacious smile that made Eren’s toes curl. Eren palmed his erection through his trousers since Levi was out of reach, but the grey-eyed man swatted his hand away reprovingly.

“Not until I say so.” He reprimanded in a low, commanding baritone, and although part of Eren instinctively wanted to rebel against the order, Levi’s commanding tone sent a thrill up his spine and he liked it. Instead, Eren fisted handfuls of the sheets beside him for lack of anything else with which to occupy his hands, imploaring Levi with his eyes to fucking do something already. It seemed to work, because the older man finally lowered himself over him, muscles rippling enticingly as he prowled up to cage Eren between his arms and pinned him to the spot with eyes that had an almost predatory gleam to them. Eren shifted his legs so Levi was positioned between them and wrapped his arms around Levi’s neck to pull him back into a kiss. This was happening, this was actually happening.

Levi supported his weight on one forearm resting beside Eren’s head, while the other hand drifted lower and began exploring Eren’s bare chest, pinching and flicking his nipples before moving down to palm him through his pants. Eren broke the kiss to toss back his head and moan; Levi’s hands were rough and calloused but surprisingly gentle as they worked to unbutton his pants. He wasn’t sure what he had been expecting from the man, and he wasn’t going to lie and say he hadn’t already imagined sex with him, but he certainly hadn’t expected such gentleness as he doted on Eren and practically worshipped his body with the consideration of a gentle lover.

Eren lifted his hips to allow Levi to yank both his trousers and his boxers down at once and he threw them off to the side, leaving him completely naked beneath the older man. Levi sat back on his haunches, hands on both of Eren’s knees keeping his legs spread while he surveyed the boy beneath him. The sight of Levi, bare chested and with his hair in disarray sitting between his legs and staring hungrily down at him made his cock twitch, and he mentally cursed the older man’s painstaking pace. Eren had sobered up enough by now that his alcohol fueled confidence had significantly waned and he squirmed self-consciously beneath Levi’s admiring gaze, trying to tug his legs back together in some vain attempt to protect his modesty, but the older man tutted disapprovingly, leaning back over him to kiss his temple, his cheek and behind his ear.

“Beautiful” he breathed into Eren’s neck, running his scarred hands languorously up the inside of Eren’s thighs, painfully close to his weeping erection but providing no relief. Eren’s heart skipped a beat at the barely discernable word, and he felt himself relax almost immediately. He’d had enough of lying here though, starved for contact while Levi tortured him with gentle caresses. He sat up suddenly, manoeuvring himself onto Levi’s lap and wrapping his legs around his waist. The older man huffed in surprised but steadied his movements with two sure hands at his waist. Eren licked a line up his neck and nibbled at his earlobe, grinding down on Levi’s burgeoning erection and grinning triumphantly when the action eased a low moan from the soldier.

“I want to suck you off” he whispered into the man’s temple as they set a rhythm, moving together in slow thrusts. The rough fabric of Levi’s pants felt amazing against his naked arousal and he knew they had to do something else soon; he didn’t want to cum from just this. Besides, he could feel Levi beneath him, and fuck he felt big.

“Hm? Is that how you request something from your commanding officer?” Levi replied teasingly. Eren wanted to snap back that he wasn’t his commanding officer and he was well within his rights as a sex-starved spouse to demand to suck-off his husband, but he could play this game as well.
“Please Corporal…” He whined, scraping his nails across Levi’s scalp to punctuate his pleas. “Please let me suck your cock… please.” if Levi wanted him to play a needy subordinate then he would play the needy subordinate, just until he got what he wanted of course. The Corporal seemed pleased with his request this time round, and Eren slid off him reluctantly and waited for him to position himself leaning against the headboard. Eren crawled over him, not missing the way his eyes, pupils blown with arousal, followed his every movement with ravenous anticipation. He could put on a show for his Corporal, if that was what he wanted. Levi still looked significantly composed, his dilated eyes and lips, pink and swollen from their heated kissing, the only visible signs of how affected he was. Eren fully intended to change that.

He captured the raven’s lips in a hungry kiss; sucking his tongue and biting his lip hard enough to almost draw blood. He kissed a path down his neck and chest, sucking and biting sure to leave marks that would darken tomorrow and tracing his tattoos with his tongue. Levi dug his fingers into Eren’s thigh for purchase, before pushing his head down to his crotch in a silent order that Eren was all too happy to comply with. Fingers deft with eagerness made short work of the buttons and zipper, and Eren yanked his pants down to his thighs, exposing the dark grey briefs he wore beneath them. So, he wasn’t a boxer’s type of guy, he noted.

The briefs suited him well, moulding around his sculpted thighs thick with muscle and stretching around his hard cock straining against the material. Eren could see the darkened patch where pre-come had seeped through the fabric, and he greedily mouthed at the bulge, breathing hot air over the dampened patch and watching the way Levi shuddered at the sensation. He pulled the elastic of the briefs down slowly and teasingly, inwardly smirking at the frustrated sounds Levi made. Served him right, teasing’s not so fun when you’re not the one doing it, is it? Levi’s cock sprung free of its constraints, curving proudly over his toned abdomen completely hard. Although Eren himself was pretty well endowed, Levi was certainly larger and Eren couldn’t wait to wrap his lips around him. Eren licked a stripe up along the underside and planted a delicate kiss on the head, massaging Levi’s balls with one hand while he held the base of his cock with the other and tongued at the slit, tasting the bitter pre-come. Levi sucked in a sharp breath and threw back his head, lost in ecstasy.

Eren took his whole length in his mouth and Levi actually gasped as he was enveloped in hot heat, fingers tightening their hold in Eren’s soft brown hair as he struggled to keep from automatically bucking into the younger boy’s mouth. Eren didn’t seem to mind the almost painful grip in his hair, moaning around Levi’s cock as he slowly lowered further, slackening his jaw and letting his throat relax to take Levi in further.

“Fuck” Levi sighed, eyes rolling back into his head as Eren began to bob, sucking around his length and humming contently. Levi looked down at him in surprise when he felt the head of his cock hit the back of Eren’s throat, and Eren returned his heated look smugly through his long lashes, his eyes hypnotic.

Levi gave an experimental thrust and Eren groaned encouragingly, fingers digging into Levi’s thighs and eyes closing automatically as he allowed Levi to slowly fuck into his mouth. His thrusts soon turned rough and erratic, and Eren swallowed around his impressive girth, blinking back the tears pricking at the corners of his eyes as he looked back up at Levi. He almost came then and there; Levi looked absolutely wrecked, his mouth was slightly agape as he panted in time with his thrusts, his hair was pasted across his forehead, slick with sweat and his eyes were a silver ring around his dilated pupils as he watched Eren deep-throating him like a pro. Eren rutted awkwardly against the sheets to relieve his own neglected erection, keeping his gaze fixed on the man before him.

Levi’s grasp tightening almost painfully in his hair, and the shudder that rippled along his body
was the only warning Eren had before Levi threw back his head and came, eyes closed and mouth open in a silent scream. Eren swallowed without complaint despite the bitter taste, milking his orgasm to the last drop and licking his lips when he was done.

Levi pulled him back to him for a deep kiss, tasting himself on Eren’s tongue as he seized a fistful of Eren’s hair and pulled the boy flush against his chest. Levi’s muscled arms wrap around him as Eren drew his legs up to straddle the older man. Levi’s lips were surprisingly firm but gentle, the kiss soft, slow and indulgent unlike their previous kisses which were hungry with unbridled lust.

“How do you want to do this?” Levi asked against his lips, voice gentle as his hands ran down Eren’s sides tenderly. The atmosphere had changed to something more intimate and Eren peered down into Levi’s eyes, their foreheads touching.

“Like this.” He whispered back, placing a chaste kiss against the older man’s lips and Levi hummed, closing his eyes.

“Lube and condoms in the nightstand” Levi instructed, nodding to his left. Eren reluctantly stretched to retrieve the items, Levi’s thumb stroking circles into his hips.

Levi rolled the condom onto himself and smeared a generous amount of lube between his fingers, Eren jolted despite himself when he felt his fingers circle his entrance.

“I expected you to be rougher, being a soldier and all” he confessed with a light laugh, gasping lightly as he felt a single finger enter him. Levi peppered his neck and jaw with distracting kisses, smirking at his words.

“Maybe later. Right now, I want to take my time.” He murmured into his neck. Eren bit his lip to hold back a moan as a second finger entered him; Christ it had really been too long since he’d done this. He grimaced at the uncomfortable feeling of Levi scissoring his fingers and stretching him out further. The grey-eyed man made soothing noises and took both their erections in his free hand. Eren gasped, thrusting into his hand and moaning at the sensation of skin on skin and the delicious friction between their aligned cocks and Levi’s hand.

He barely registered the third finger entering him until Levi crooked his fingers at just the right angle to hit that particular bundle of nerves that had Eren keening and the thrusting frantically into the older man’s fist.

“Fuck!” He exclaimed “Corporal, please!” The older man didn’t respond, continuing to finger fuck Eren until the brunet had returned to his senses enough to rut back into Levi’s thrusts. The raven growled and removed his digits from inside him and Eren whimpered at the loss.

“Impatient brat,” Levi scolded without any bite “Look at you, begging for my cock. What do you want, princess? Tell me what you want me to do.” Eren shot him an angry glare at the pet name, but it didn’t last long; his need for further contact trumped his pride at this moment and he caved to Levi’s smouldering gaze with little resistance.

“I want you to fuck me.” He breathed the words in his sultriest drawl, quickly tacking ‘Corporal’ at the end, pleased to see the way Levi’s jaw clenched as he peered at him through his eyelashes, fully aware of the effect he had. “Please Levi, fill me up with your cock” He punctuated his words by grinding down on Levi’s erection so it slid between his cheeks, gleefully noting the shudder that ran through Levi’s body at the ravishing friction.

“Keep saying that” Levi ordered, digging his fingers into his ass cheeks and lining his entrance with the head of Levi’s cock “Say my name.”
Eren reached behind him to grasp the base of Levi’s shaft as he slowly lowered himself onto it, guided by Levi’s hands on his hips.

“Levi” He mewed as he felt himself being entered, closing his eyes against the pain. Fuck, he was big. Levi groaned and Eren could feel the effort it took not to thrust up into him. Eren rested his forehead on Levi’s shoulder once he was completely inside as he waited to adjust to his girth, taking deep breaths and trying to relax.

Levi carded his fingers soothingly through his hair and massaged his hip with his other hand. “How are you doing?” He asked gently, but the heated glare Eren sent him gave him enough of an answer and he bit back a chuckle. “You feel amazing.” He purred, brushing away the bangs that had fallen around his face.

“So do you; filling my up all the way. Fuck.”

Eren rolled his hips experimentally, giving Levi permission to move beneath him. Eren gasped at the exquisite feelings that shot up his spine, and Levi muffled a groan by biting into the tender skin of Eren’s clavicle, licking the broken skin apologetically as Eren cried out the mixture of pleasure and pain.

“Move.” Eren demanded breathlessly as he lifted himself up on quivering legs, feeling Levi slide almost completely out of him before slamming back down immediately. The older man didn’t hesitate at the invitation and thrust up to meet him. It wasn’t long before he angled his thrusts to hit Eren’s prostate, maintaining the slant until Eren felt himself nearing his release. “Levi, ngh…Levi I’m g-going to come” He stammered, his nails clawing down Levi’s back.

“Come for me, Eren” Levi urged, kissing his chin and digging his fingers into Eren’s hips, feeling his walls tighten deliciously around him as the brunet threw back his head and came across both their stomachs. It didn’t take Levi long after that, he thrust up into Eren several more times and Eren rode out his orgasm as Levi buried his face in his neck to muffle his moans.

Eren collapsed boneless on top of him and Levi let him rest for a few moments as they both caught their breath. He grimaced as he felt the sticky mess sandwiched between their sweat-slick bodies. “Off,” He ordered, gently slapping Eren’s ass. Eren groaned in complaint but rolled off him and onto his back, already drifting off. Levi sighed and shook his head, removing the condom and tying it up before throwing it in the trashcan by the bed. He retrieved a damp towel from the bathroom and gave Eren a quick but thorough clean before having a short shower himself; he couldn’t stand a half-assed clean no matter how exhausted he felt. Eren was already fast asleep when Levi joined him back in bed, curled up on his side and snoring lightly. Last time Levi had been in this position, he had loathed the idea of sharing a bed with the boy; how things had changed since then. Levi pulled the slumbering boy into his arms and placed a gentle kiss on his forehead, comforted in the knowledge no one would ever know he had instigated such a sweet gesture. It wasn't long before he drifted off as well, a content smile on his face.
Meeting the In-Law

Chapter Summary

Eren learns not to expect anything romantic from Levi. An awkward brunch with the father-in-law that seems less to do with checking up on his newly married son so much as trying to find as many ways to make underhanded comments at Eren’s expense. Embarrassingly ill-timed boners.

Chapter Notes

“Smut is hard work! Never doing that again,” I lie as I settle down to get on with more plot-related fic. Seriously though, that shit was hard. I have the greatest respect for good smut writers now.

The pillow hit him square in the face and Eren blinked awake, glaring blearily around the bedroom flooded with blinding sunlight.

“Get up, Sunshine. It’s almost ten and we have to meet your dad for brunch.”

Eren rolled over and groaned into his pillow, trying to ignore Levi’s insistent shakes “Christ Levi, not a romantic bone in your body. Can’t we just cuddle in post-coital bliss like normal newlyweds?”

“Not when we have an appointment with the King of Wall Maria we can’t,” Levi retorted. Eren could hear him shuffling around the room probably getting dressed. Honestly, the man had no tact; there were far sweeter ways to wake up your husband in the morning than a pillow to the face. Not to mention the fact that Levi had been cuddlier on the plane ride here than the morning after sex. What a party pooper.

“Wouldn’t be the first time I’ve stood him up.” Eren grumbled petulantly.

“Yea? Well maybe if it was my shitty dad I wouldn’t be so averse to the idea; but since I am a delegate of Scouting Legion and he’s fucking royalty, I’m afraid some degree of formality will be still required, father-in-law or not.”

Father-in-law. Eren smiled goofily into his pillow, unreasonably happy to hear such words from his usually unaffected husband. Last night had clearly been a turning point in their relationship. They’d been dancing around each other for over a month, getting close only to have something pull them apart again and usually that something tended to be Levi and his inability to come to terms with their relationship. It was small things; things others wouldn’t notice; things that showed Levi was finally coming around to the idea that they were married, regardless of how that came about, that lifted a weight off Eren’s shoulders and made him think that perhaps their unorthodox marriage had some hope yet to turn out well despite the odds.

Eren attempted to sit up, but almost immediately collapsed, swearing colourfully.
“I can’t fucking walk, Levi!” He snapped, clutching his lower back in pain. The older man chuckled and Eren felt the bed dip under his weight as Levi alighted and crawled over to him.

“I see I did a good job then” Eren scowled as the man leant over him, but it soon dissolved in surprise as the older man peppered his face with kisses. Now this was romantic. He lifted his head up to kiss the raven back, but he was shoved unceremoniously into the pillows with a quiet ‘Oof!’

Levi pulled a face as Eren squirmed in the mass of pillows and tangled sheets “No fucking way, brat; not with your morning breathe. Now get your ass in the shower and dress nicely.” Levi ordered firmly before leaving the bedroom.

“But I can’t walk,” Eren whimpered feebly into the pillows.

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“Are you sure that’s okay to wear?” Levi asked, eyeing Eren’s outfit doubtfully. He was dressed in a smart suit with his ever-present cravat, looking as pristine as ever in stark contrast to Eren’s casual shirt and jeans.

“He’s my dad, Levi. Besides, he watched me perform a strip-tease live last night, dressing up fancy now won’t fool anyone.” Eren huffed and collapsed back into the ivory settee of the tea room, glaring impatiently at the clock “Where the fuck is he? I don’t want to be here any longer than I have to be.”

“I see your mannerisms haven’t improved since you’ve been gone.” Eren turned to look over his shoulder as his father entered the room, as stiffly formal as ever though it was just the three of them. Levi stood respectfully at his entrance but Eren continued to slouch, arms crossed stubbornly as he watched his father approach. “I would have hoped Lance Corporal Levi could drill some military respect into you at the very least.” His father said disdainfully, lowering himself into the opposite chair and motioning for Levi to take a seat.

“I guess he was just too preoccupied protecting his country as well as your own, given that apparently you can’t do that yourself, to babysit your failure of fatherhood.” Eren retorted bitterly. He noted Levi arch an eyebrow and glance down to look over his immaculate nails, and mentally apologised to the man inadvertently caught up in their filial feud. Well, hadn’t this started off well?

A waiter rolled over a trolley to the mahogany table between them and began to set up their brunch while a young maid brought over a fresh vase of flowers. Eren and his father engaged in a silent but heated stare down across the table as the two quietly set up their meals, professionally trying to ignore the dark cloud that hung over the table.

“How have you been, your Majesty?” Levi asked, interrupting their glaring “I hear Titan’s small-scale attacks are escalating in size as they try to determine the extent of our military involvement in Maria’s defence. I’ve dispatched several of my best covert squads to observe and report back, and will be heading over myself in a few days to assess first hand.”

Eren looked at Levi in surprise “You’re going to the frontline?” He asked, concern colouring his voice. Why hadn’t he told him that earlier? Levi glanced at Eren.

“Don’t look so fucking stunned, brat. I didn’t become Lance Corporal by sitting behind a desk giving orders.”

“Well no, but now that you are, I assumed you’d be sitting behind a desk more often.” Eren rebutted, frowning.
“Eren, do not interfere with the Corporals work. His duty to protect and serve trump your selfish desires to be spoilt.” His father interrupted their banter, pouring himself a cup of tea. Eren fisted the table cloth in his hands, his knuckles going white with the force of restraining himself from lashing out. He had to be mature and calm so he could prove his father wrong. Maybe he had a point; Levi might see his indignation of him heading to the frontlines as smothering and unreasonable. The man was Humanities Strongest soldier; he had attended far more dangerous battlefields and survived far greater odds than when doing a customary assessment of Maria’s defences; this was hardly something to get worried about. Nonetheless, Eren could help feeling hurt he hadn’t been informed of such a plan, and the nagging fear something would happen to Levi regardless of how routine and ‘risk-free’ the expedition would be.

“I still hadn’t gotten around to telling him about the expedition myself, so his response is justified.” Levi answered Grisha in Eren’s defence, but the younger man continued to scowl into his organic granola, poking the yoghurt and artfully placed assortment of wild berries with disgruntled vexation. They were dismissing him again, like he was a naïve little kid. His father did it often, and that wasn’t even a surprise anymore, but Levi not telling Eren these things? And then feeling the need to defend him as if Eren’s behaviour needed to be justified? Well, that was plain irritating and slightly patronizing.

“If you say so,” Grisha said, smiling graciously at the Levi. “Well, it’s good to see you two aren’t at each other’s throats. I confess I anticipated Eren being a lot more troublesome and held quite a few fears about how his brash personality might ruin your relationship.” Well golly gee, thanks for the vote of confidence, dad! I always had missed our little talks about what a disappointment I was; constantly ruining everything with my shitty personality and short temper. Eren could feel Levi’s eyes on him from the periphery of his vision, but refused to meet his gaze. Last thing he needed was Levi’s pity or for Levi to interpret his look as another request to defend him. He was fine with this. He was used to this. He could handle his father like a mature adult.

“I personally like his ‘brash’ personality.” Eren’s spoon completely missed his mouth and plonked into his bowl loudly. He turned to look at Levi in surprise and the man met his astounded gaze, grey eyes glinting with amusement. “It’s refreshing,” he continued “I’m so used to everyone shitting their pants trying to impress me, but this brat treats me like an equal.” Well, that was a lie. Eren held Levi in a sex-god status because that’s what he was. Not to mention he had Petra, Hanji and Erwin who also spoke to him on equal terms.

Grisha appraised Levi with interest and smiled politely “Well, that is lovely to hear. Nothing makes a father happier than to see his child growing up and settling down with an appreciating spouse.” Yea, after arranging that child to be married to a virtual stranger in the first place in a move that practically had all the odds stacked against it for turning out happily at all. What a considerate father; putting his sons happiness before all else. Eren viciously scooped a spoonful of granola into his mouth and fixed his father with an exaggeratedly sweet smile. What a fucking dickhead.

They continued to eat in a polite silence for a few minutes, Levi and his father delicately cutting into their gourmet pancakes with their silver cutlery while Eren threw all table etiquette out the window, slouching in his chair and sculling an entire glass of orange juice with the sole intention of getting under his father’s skin.

Okay, so maybe he wasn’t being a mature adult, but in his defence: his father had started it.

“I’ve been meaning to ask…” His dad began, setting down his cutlery and leaning back into his chair. Oh no “About last night” well, he’d be lying if he said he hadn’t seen it coming. Honestly, Eren was surprised it had taken him so long to bring up the elephant in the room. He was at least 90% his dad had waited so long for the sole purpose of making Eren uncomfortable. Oh well,
laughs on him; his little strip-tease got him laid, so there were no regrets here.

“Hm? An interesting reception, wasn’t it? Good beer.” Levi responded. Eren looked at him dubiously. Was he genuinely ignorant as to where his dad was heading with his line of enquiry, or was his apparent obliviousness just an act? Levi gave him a subtle wink and Eren realized he had every intention of make his father explicitly state his concern, but couldn’t help but feel such an act would only encourage a bigger spiel from his father. More importantly, had winking always been this much of a turn on, or was this an exclusively Levi thing?

Eren’s father cleared his throat awkwardly. “Yes, it was. Quite unusual. But, well, I wanted to broach the subject of Eren’s behaviour…” Aaand there it was. Eren threw down his cutlery and leant back, slamming his hands down on his armrests and raising his eyebrows defiantly in preparation for the inevitable ‘Eren-has-disappointed-us-all-again’ tirade.

“What about it?” Levi asked, looking as innocently clueless as a five-foot-three-inch killing machine with a resting bitch face could possibly look. Are you kidding me?! Eren stared at his husband in disbelief, why are you dragging this out?

Grisha pursed his lips and adjusted his glasses, clearly uncomfortable with having to put his concern into words. How the hell did he even meant to describe what Eren did without the words ‘strip-tease’ anyway? That was hardly a kingly or formal term, especially when talking about your own son. “His…provocative performance last night is bound to garner much scrutiny in the public eye, and now that you two are married, I can understand why you might be…affronted by such an indecent display” Eren threw back his head and groaned loudly, ignoring the stern look his father sent him “I want to formally apologize. It seems he has a tendency to make a public spectacle of himself and I understand you are a private man, Corporal Levi, with strict values, and I feel obliged to apologize on his behalf since I am almost certain he hasn’t already, and he that acted with little or no consideration of how you may fe—“

“Dad, stop it.” Eren interrupted loudly, having finally had enough “I’m not a fucking kid anymore, you don’t have to apologize on my behalf. Can you get off my back, already? I thought after moving away you’d give me some space and stop riding my ass about everything I did, but apparently not.”

“No! What the fuck, he is my husband. I don’t have to impress anyone, dad. This isn’t a fucking conference. Can you stop harping on about formalities for long enough to recognize that I am old enough to make my decisions and take responsibility for them, and that this is my marriage. If Levi has an issue, he can take it up with me; we are adults, we can resolve our own fucking problems without a parental guardian. You are not helping, you never have!”

Grisha looked positively thunderous, and Eren wondered briefly how he would react had this been a private conversation between the two of them with no witnesses. He did want to think about that.

“Eren—“

“I think it’s about time I made an input, given that this primarily concerns what, apparently, I may have been offended by,” Levi interjected coolly. He had remained quiet thus far, silently observing the argument, but finally decided to intervene. Both sets of green eyes turned to him and it suddenly clicked in his mind the reason he’d found Eren’s emerald eyes so strikingly familiar the first time he’d laid eyes on him was because he had been speaking to his father not moments before. He silently face palmed at the obvious hint that could have spared him so much confusion and surprise later. “First of all, Grisha, I want to clear something up. I was not offended by Eren’s
performance last night, and I had no right to be. He loves to perform, and I would not be fulfilling my role as a supporting partner if I didn’t encourage and support him all the way, regardless of my own tastes. Furthermore, I can guarantee no one in the crowd enjoyed the show more than I did.”

Eren felt his face grow hot at the words “Who one earth wouldn’t enjoy their attractive young spouse putting on a show for them?” Grisha blinked rapidly, blindsided by the admission, mouth opening and closing in speechless surprise “Lastly, I want you to know that I stand by everything Eren just said, although his choice of wording was somewhat questionable.” Levi hesitated a moment before placing a hand over Eren’s which was firmly clutching the armrest of his chair “We are both adults, and while I acknowledge your actions were a well-intentioned albeit misguided attempt to apparently remedy our relationship, I can assure you we are more than capable of resolving our differences ourselves.” Eren gaped unabashedly at his husband, eyes darting between where their hands met and his face which was resolutely turned to face his father, almost as if pointedly refusing to meet Eren’s gaze. He had never heard the man speak so formally and elegantly before, as if for once caring about someones opinion of him. He wanted to make a good impression on his dad, Eren realized. He felt a warm glow in his chest and as if electric sparks were dancing through his nerves.

“I understand.” Grisha nodded, “That is very good to hear. I’m sorry for assuming I needed to intervene; I am used to taking responsibility for Eren’s actions I never stopped to consider perhaps he didn’t need me to anymore.” Levi nodded his assent, fingers tightening almost imperceptibly around Eren’s.

They had already more or less finished their meals, and it didn’t take much longer for the older men to finish their tea. They chatted idly about the frontline issues and other political affairs that went over Eren’s head, all the while, Levi’s hand remaining markedly fixed on Eren’s. His father excused himself first to attend to some meeting, leaving Eren and Levi alone in the tea room.

“I’m mad at you.” Eren spoke up after a few moments of silence, staring ahead and out the large bay windows overlooking the palace gardens. Levi made a motion to retract his hand, but Eren immediately twisted his own upwards to firmly weave their fingers together. “Why wouldn’t you tell me you were leaving?” He finally tuned to look at the raven, his eyes reflecting his hurt, “Don’t you think I deserved to know first?”

Levi watched him, face his usual impassive mask. “I wasn’t sure when and how to bring it up. I’ve never had to tell someone when I left of an expedition. Not someone who wasn’t already used to my military schedule.”

“Do you think I’m too weak and incapable of handling that sort of information?” Eren looked down to their intertwined hands, ashamed to meet the older man’s gaze “I’m not used to this, and the idea of you being out there; it kind of scares me. Even though I know it’s all routine stuff.”

The older man pulled his hand away, but before Eren could protest, he suddenly had his arms around him and had pulled him into his chest. It took a moment for Eren’s mind to catch up with the sudden and uncharacteristically tender gesture, but he soon relaxed into Levi’s embrace, wrapping his arms around the older man’s waist and burrowing his face into his chest.

“Worrying about me is stupid, but I don’t think you’re weak for it,” Levi’s low tone rumbled reassuringly through his chest “In fact, it’s... nice to have someone to worry about me. My soldiers do, and Erwin and Hanji do, but you’re the first person to worry about Levi and not just Humanities Strongest.” Levi’s fingers gently stroked his hair, and Eren tilted his head back far enough to kiss Levi’s jaw.

“Don’t hide things from me. I want to be the first to know and I shouldn’t have to find out second
hand.” Levi hummed apologetically and pressed a chaste kiss to his forehead.

They spent several minutes laying there together, relaxing in each other’s presence in a comfortable silence. Eren had learnt by now to appreciate these rare moments because Levi could never be fully relied upon to be affectionate at any particular time. A maid came to quietly clear away the remains of their meal.

“Wait…are you hard?”

“…”

“Wow, way to kill the mood.”

“It’s a natural bodily reaction!” Eren protested, mortified. The maid looked scandalized and hastily evacuated the room, red-faced. “Oh my God… why would you say that out loud while she was here?!”

“Why would you get a boner while we were innocently spooning on the sofa in a completely non-sexual way?”

“Because I’m nineteen and you’re hot, so nothings non-sexual with you!”

Hickeys and Mocktails

Chapter Summary

Some more touching dialogue exchange between father and son. Eren, Armin and Mikasa catch up poolside for one last hurrah before Eren flies back.

Eren arched his back experimentally and winced at the pain. Yep, he’d have bruises tomorrow; Levi had really gone all out.

After brunch, Levi had mentioned going down to Maria’s military training grounds to get some exercise, since he hadn’t had time at all the day before. Eren had jumped at the opportunity to tag along and had gingerly asked Levi to maybe help him train since Annie had been AWOL recently, although admittedly half of his motive had been to drool over Levi. Not that he’d had the chance.

He’d barely bandaged up his knuckles and stretched before Levi had assaulted him with a barrage of lightning-fast blows, and Eren was left splayed and dazed on the sparring mat, blinking through his astonishment. Observing Marian soldiers had cringed and murmured sympathetic noises, quickly scattering after the glare Levi had sent their way.

“You’re fucking hopeless.” Levi had commented, looking down at his stunned husband.

“I’m new to this! You’ve fought me before, why did you go all kung-fu on my ass knowing how basic I am?” Eren had demanded angrily, more than a little humiliated. He rolled over, groaning, and attempted to stand. “I just want to get good enough to last longer than five minutes with you, ow!”

“You lasted longer than five minutes last night.” Levi smirked. Eren looked at him in confusion before the meaning of his words hit him, and he blushed furiously, spluttering about ‘trying again and be nicer this time.’

Eren hobbled down the hallway on his way to meet up with Mikasa and Armin at the private pool. Servants paused in their duties to nod politely or curtsy to him as he passed and he smiled back awkwardly, just wishing they’d ignore him rather than make such a formal fuss. He’d forgotten how stiff and rigid life in Maria could be, growing so accustomed to the equality of life back in Legion where the soldiers would greet him loudly and colloquially. Only high ranking officers received respectful salutes in greetings, and frankly, the casualness was a breath of fresh air to him. A breath of fresh air he was currently missing as he wilted beneath the stifling lifestyle of Maria. How had he even survived to long here before? He was expected to keep a respectful distance from the servants with exchanges limited to polite ‘thank yous’ and instructions, and constantly dress and behave well. No wonder he got in brawls so frequently; anyone would need to vent all that pent up frustration somehow.

He was just passing the large black double doors of one of the many conference rooms that dotted this hallway when it opened and a man slipped out. They held each other’s gaze a moment, and Eren would have completely ignored the exchange hadn’t he noticed the way the man’s eyes widened a fraction as they appraised him. He was dressed in business suit with a moustache and slight goatee that looked closer to an unshaven-homeless-man than the hot-dad-stubble aesthetic he’d probably been trying to achieve, and Eren couldn’t quite place his face. Not that that
particularly meant anything; he forgot the names and faces to a majority of the ‘important’ people is father introduced him to moments after he learnt them, however this man quickly ducked his head in a rushed greeting and strode away almost as if he was eager to escape. Eren was staring after him, dumbfounded, when the door opened again and his father emerged, followed by two of his advisors. The King blinked in surprise at the sight of him, but quickly schooled his expression back into his diplomatic poker face.

“Eren, what are you doing here?”

“Just got back from training and was about to hit the pool with Mika and Armin.” Eren responded absent-mindedly, still frowning after the retreating form of the Mysterious Moustached Man “Who was he?” He asked, jerking his thumb in his direction.

“Just some business associate, no one to concern yourself with.” His father replied, a touch too casually.

Eren narrowed his eyes “Says the guy who was always so insistent on me getting involved in his politics. Now that I’m actually asking, you tell me to forget it?”

His father eyes him over the rim of his spectacles, expression unreadable “Well, I suppose there’s no need to push that anymore since you’ve moved to Legion and there’s no possibility of your involvement in Marian politics.”

Eren folded his arms, disgruntled “Oh that’s great, that is. So there was no actual paternal interest in educating me, you were just grooming me to follow in your footsteps, huh?” Eren scoffed, and leaned to the side slightly to peer around his father’s tall frame “Where’s Armin? Isn’t he with you? He usually comes with you to your meetings.”

Grisha, who had released a long-suffering sigh at Eren’s indignant words, shrugged “I assume he had an appointment with you. Well, I have work to attend to. I’ll see you later, Eren” He said, turning to leave before Eren to even respond with a noncommittal grunt.

“Right.” Eren frowned. It was unlike Armin to blow off professional obligations to meet up with friends. Neither Eren nor Mikasa were ever offended by it; they understood his work was considerably more important than any casual meet-up that could always be rescheduled, whereas his work tended to have an immediate deadline and could never be delayed or put off. But then, they hadn’t properly relaxed together at all since Eren’s arrival since they’d been so caught up with the wedding arrangements. He hoped Armin wasn’t going out of his way to meet up with Eren since their time together was more limited now than in the past; he wouldn’t put it past Armin to make such a sacrifice, even if it was slightly out-of-character. If only he could just gather up Mikasa and Armin in his arms and take them back home with him.

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“This is nice.”

Mikasa hummed in agreement. The three of them were reclining in the poolside chairs, drying off in the midday warmth while nursing an assortment of ridiculously brightly coloured mock tails, unable to bear anything more alcoholic after the events of the night before.

“I was so hung-over this morning” Armin lamented, covering his face with his hands “Didn’t think I could move at all. I barely crawled out of bed to meet you guys here.” Oh, so that’s why he hadn’t been able to attend the meeting. “You guys are so lucky you don’t get hang-overs.”

“Well, Eren usually feels a little queasy in the morning if he goes to bed drunk, but I guess he must
have sweated it all out last night after he left.” Mikasa said, tone teasing.

“What do you mean? I went to bed as soon as we left last night” Eren defended.

“Right, but you didn’t go to sleep. Don’t try and deny it, Eren, you’re covered in hickeys.” Armin continued when Eren opened his mouth to protest, giggling.

True, maybe swimming wasn’t the smartest course of action if he’d hoped to conceal that particular part of his private life. He hadn’t thought this through. Eren shyly rubbed at the side of his neck near where the red bite marks branded his skin. Not that he wanted them gone; he’d enjoyed surveying them proudly in the shower this morning, glowing at the signs of where Levi’s lips had marked him the night before.

“About time too, Eren. I can’t believe you had to get drunk to finally do something about it.” Mikasa chided

“No, Mikasa, I am not talking about my sex life with you!”

“I’m not thrilled either. How would you feel if I rocked up to a meet up covered in hickeys?” Eren pulled a face and shook his head vigorously, as if to dispel the imagery that conjured up.

“Okay, okay moving on”

“Not moving on. Give details!” Armin pushed gleefully as Mikasa make a gagging sound.

“Armin, since when were you such a perv?!?” Eren asked, looking incredulously at the smaller blond blinking up at him with deceitfully innocent wide eyes.

“You’re being selfish” He pouted “Have some sympathy for a single, gay friend.”

“If we’re talking about boys, can we talk about one’s my brother is not currently fucking?” Mikasa interrupted.

“Jean?” Armin suggested hopefully, and Eren winced.

“…Or has fucked previously” Mikasa amended sternly as Armin visibly deflated.

“How about Commander Eyebrows?” Eren said, grinning and winking at the blond. Armin blushed.

“Ooh, why haven’t I heard anything about this?” Mikasa sat up, interest piqued. Eren sighed a breath of relief, glad to have the attention diverted from him.

“Why would you bring that up?” Armin shot him an accusatory glare which Eren laughed off.

“Karma, Armin. How do you like being grilled?” The conversation lapsed into lewd jokes and suggestive eyebrow waggles. It was hard to believe in a few hours he’d be boarding the jet again to fly off back to Legion and leave all this behind. It was so easy to fall back into old habits when around Armin and Mikasa. Eren watched his two best friends laughing together and felt glad that, despite the physical distance between them, they were still as close as ever. It was all too easy for slight changes in someone’s lifestyle to make relationships slowly fizzle and die out, and it was reassuring to be reminded that what they had could last the obstacles they’d faced so far.
A Flower Crown for the Prince

Chapter Summary

Levi and Eren make short stop on their drive home to the base.

Chapter Notes

600 kudos!!! ( креди )
Flower crowns are kind of sort of super necessary??? So are babies and little children and fluff???
Totally vital plot development???
Very serious!!!!

It was just like he remembered the last time they drove down this same road on his way to the Wings of Freedom base, fresh from Wall Maria, although under very different conditions. The people of Legion congregated on the roadside, their brightly coloured clothes and wide, white smiles contrasting with their sun-kissed skin as they cheered and waved to their Lance Corporal.

“Welcome home Corporal Levi!”

“Where is your bride? Show us your bride!”

Wait, what? Eren turn to look at Levi who had been reclining back in his seat staring out his own window with the usual bored expression.

“Bride?” He asked, surprised “Do they think you married a girl?” Shit, that was awkward. He thought everyone knew by now although he’d never particularly been introduced straight out. Often he’d run into people on the streets while he was out who recognized him as Levi’s husband, so he had assumed it was common knowledge at least. Eren fell back into his seat with a concerned frown. Would they be disappointed? Would they prefer a girl? What even was Legion’s attitude towards same-sex couples? Wait a second, why hadn’t Levi introduced him? He turned his contemplating frown to his husband; in Maria, this was the equivalent of a celebrity marriage. It was unquestionable that, soon after the marriage, the couple would be expected to make a public appearance; the masses liked to know about these things. He wasn’t sure how things worked in Legion, maybe that ‘gossip’ aspect wasn’t so big a deal, but he hadn’t assumed it would be that different. Was there a particular reason Levi hadn’t pressed for a public appearance?

“They know.”

Eren blinked, brought back into reality by Levi finally breaking his silence. Eren arched a questioning eyebrow at the raven man staring out the window, arms crossed over his impeccable black suit.

“That you’re you.” Levi explained, turning to face Eren “And before you have to ask, no one cares.” Eren flinched at the harsh words and looked down at his hands clasped in his lap. No one
cared; okay, so no big deal. He wasn’t an attention-hungry brat, he didn’t want to be lavished with attention or anything; he’d just hoped that maybe people would want to meet him. Maybe be a little curious to meet their beloved Corporals husband?

Levi sighed loudly, drawing Eren’s morose eyes back to him “No, not like that, fuck.” He massaged his temples with one hand in frustration. Why did he always get his words mixed up when talking to the boy? Since when did he have such weak command of the English language? “I meant about you being male. They don’t care, it’s no big deal over here. They just say bride for a joke.” Oh! Eren smiled widely, relief surging through his chest and turning around to look out the window again. “You care too much, kid.” Levi observed “They’re just people; they’re opinion shouldn’t matter so much to you. You can’t impress everyone.”

Eren shrugged, nonplussed “It’s nice to impress someone every once in a while.” If not his own dad.

Levi lapsed back into a thoughtful silence after that. Eren was getting used to their dynamic; it was strange and unpredictable, but he learnt it was best to not try to gauge Levi’s mood and to go with the flow when it came to his taciturn husband. After the night they’d finally let go and slept together, Levi had seemed to be making a visible effort to adjust to the fact that they weren’t just fuck buddies and that Eren would be hanging around for a while. His affections came in waves; most of the time he’d be his normal self, comfortable in the normality of usual routine and speaking to Eren as an equal, but maintaining a professional air to their interactions. This was usually in public or when at least one other person was present. Eren understood for the most part that the older man was still uncomfortable with the intimacy of marriage and a relationship, so accepted his behaviour wordlessly and patiently. Sometimes when it was just the two of them, Levi seemed slightly more at ease with their interactions and they would trade playful or flirtatious banter. Eren enjoyed these moments especially; to see Levi’s shields lowered around him long enough to relax. It encouraged him to see the older, impassioned man slowly but surely growing accustomed, if not opening up, to their relationship.

Eren was not a patient person by nature; he had a short temper, a short attention span and limited tolerance, and frankly, he was pretty damn impressed with how forbearing he had been so far with Levi. He wasn’t the type to usually go along with another’s whims, and in hindsight it was remarkably uncharacteristic of him to play along with Levi’s mood swings in regards to their relationship. Almost two months ago he would have blown a fuse over Levi’s inconstant and erratic attentions, but he’d learnt that this was progress. Levi was not one to change easily, so when he did, it was bound to be turbulent at best, so he had better buckle in.

It was almost endearing, actually. Levi’s struggle with himself trying to ascertain and accept the new addition to his life that was Eren; not that he’d ever mention that to the older man; let him continue to believe he held the upper hand with his poker face and apathetic attitude until he sorted himself out.

“You want to get out?” Eren looked up, surprised by how much he’d zoned out. Had they arrived already? That was faster than he remembered, although last time he supposed dread may have lengthened the journey. He looked around in confusion, they were still a few minutes from the base, stopped by the side of the road near to where people had gathered and were watching expectantly.

“What? Why?” Levi snorted at his bemused tone, opening his door to get out.

“So I can show off my bride and you can impress some strangers.” Eren stared wide-eyed after the older man before his mind caught up with the words, and he scrambled to open his own door and
follow behind Levi.

The people cheered and surged forward at the sight of their Corporal. Eren was nervous, he’d done this plenty of times before back in Maria; stopping to talk to the public, smile, take a few photos and kiss a few babies; it was all routine, but this time felt different. This was a different crowd, Levi’s crowd, and as he anxiously followed close behind the older man, he couldn’t help but feel like this was his first time meeting the in-laws. He felt pressured to make a good impression on the Legioner’s who, for whatever reason, adored their cold and impassive Corporal. He wanted to be accepted as deserving of their greatest warrior, but what type of person would that even be?

Eren watched, amazed, as a young mother thrust a bundle of coloured fabric into Levi’s arms. A bundle that squirmed and gurgled and reached up with tiny, pudgy fingers to weakly grasp at Levi’s face.

A baby. Levi was holding a baby. Somebody take a photo; Levi, the cyborg, was cradling a human infant.

Eren fumbled with his phone, clumsily opening the camera, and held it up grinning triumphantly to snap a few shots.

“Don’t you dare,” Levi warned, levelling him with cautionary glare, but Eren wasn’t to be so easily dissuaded; especially not when he held in his hands the blackmail material of the century. It was weird. The stoic man Eren was used to watching pulverize men twice his height on the training ground was now cradling a small child with a delicacy that looked alien and unnatural on him. Or was it? Eren remembered the way Levi had caressed him that night, the kisses he’d peppered across his face, the sudden embrace he’d pulled him into at brunch; was it really so strange?

Eren was entranced, watching the older man stare down into the face of the cooing infant, his tender gaze the only indication of emotion, when the group of children approached. He felt a tentative tug on his shirt and looked down to see three children; two boys and a girl, perhaps seven or eight years old, looking up at him wide-eyed.

He crouched down to their level, and the boy who had tugged at his shirt was the first to approach; he appeared to be the ringleader of the trio; the other boy hung back shyly while the girl stayed close to the first boy, protectively hovering beside him holding the edge of his brown coat.

“This is for you.” The first boy said, looking down and presenting Eren with handmade flower crown he rather forcefully thrust into his waiting hands as if embarrassed to be seen in possession of such a frivolous item. It was a rope of native, exotic blossoms clumsily but carefully woven together with amateur hands. He laughed as he inspected the gift and the boy looked up at him expectantly, eyes steeled as he awaited a verdict.

“It’s beautiful! Thank you,” Eren beamed, genuinely touched “Did you make this just for me?” The boy nodded, lips set in a determined line, but Eren saw the faint blush on his cheeks “What’s your name?”

“Jack, sir. This is my sister, Lily, and my little brother Nico,” Jack introduced, and Eren greeted each of them in turn.

“Can you put it on for me, Jack? I don’t want to break it.” Eren requested, handing the crown back to the boy and ducking his head lower. He lifted his head afterwards, adjusting the headpiece slightly and raising his chin in a fanciful pose “How do I look?” Jack blushed harder and averted his eyes, mumbling something under his breathe. “Sorry, what was that?” Eren asked, holding back a grin.
“I said you look pretty, sir.”

“Pretty as a prince,” Eren and his gaggle of admirers turned as Levi approached, having returned the baby to its mother and finished exchanging customary greetings with most of the crowd. Levi looked down at him where he squatted, grey eyes glinting with amusement as they flicked over his ornamental crown.

“Lily made you one too” Jack said, nudging his sister forward. The girl kept her eyes fixed resolutely on Levi, but edged towards Eren and pushed her own crown into his hands.

“Don’t you want to put it on yourself?” Eren asked, surprised, but the little girl shook her head and ducked back behind her brother. This crown was better made than Jack’s, but Eren couldn’t help but feel the boy’s obvious efforts and determination despite lack of skill was somehow more endearing even though the end result wasn’t as pretty. He approached Levi, whose eyes narrowed at the offensive object in his hands.

“No arguments” Eren said sternly, “She made it just for you, and look! The little blue flowers sort of match your eyes!” Levi clenched his jaw and folded his arms, but otherwise didn’t object as Eren placed the delicate accessory on his head, grinning. “It suits you! Well done, Lily. It looks lovely.” Eren said, standing back with the trio of children to admire his grumpy husband and nodding approvingly. He was aware of a number of spectators pulling out their phones and snapping some shots of their Corporal in a flower crown, but didn’t draw Levi’s attention to it.

“We need to head back.” Levi said “Come on, brat.”

Eren pulled a face but ducked down to pull the three kids into a group hug “Thank you for the crowns. You did a great job putting them together. Levi loves his too, even though he won’t admit it. I hope to see you guys again soon!” He turned to address Jack “And call me Eren, not sir” He instructed with a friendly wink. The boy nodded vigorously and grinned, wide eyes glistening.

Levi had taken off his crown and was inspecting it when Eren finally joined him in the car, waving goodbye to the crowd.

“Too bad I didn’t get a shot,” He pouted, frowning down at his phone as though the inanimate object was responsible for the lack of photographic evidence “Don’t suppose you’d put it back on and take a selfie with me now?” He asked hopefully.

“Not a chance, brat. And you better delete that photo you did take, too.”

It was Eren’s turn to smirk now, waggling his phone tauntingly out of Levi’s reach.

“Not a chance, old man.”
The Opposition Leader

Chapter Summary

Eren attends a military awards ceremony and notices a familiar face in the crowd. Things are getting fishy and Eren decides to investigate further, right after he somehow foils Hanji and Petra's scheming of course.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Eren fidgeted with the tie of his suit and stifled a yawn. He supposed he should be used to boring, drawn-out ceremonies by now after almost two decades of attending such events, but he had an unfortunate inability to sit still for over half an hour.

It was an awards ceremony for members of the Scouting Legion Military who were receiving awards or commendation for their service. Levi and Erwin were up on the stage presenting the awards while Eren, Petra and Hanji, along with the other guests of honour, were seated in the balcony overlooking the ceremony. He tried to pay attention, really he did, but before he knew it, his gaze was wondering lazily over the guests seated below and in adjoining balconies. His eyes paused over a familiar looking man, probably no older than Erwin, seated in the balcony directly opposite to his and frowned. Why did he look so familiar? He must be some crusty politician his father had introduced him to at some stage, but he usually barely registered the names and faces of the multiple, middle-aged men he was forced to shake hands and exchange superficial pleasantries with. Why did this guy stick out to him so much, nagging at a memory that felt just barely out of reach…

Oh wait! Eren leant forward slightly in his seat and squinted at the man. Yes, he remembered now; the man he’d seen exiting the meeting with his father in Maria!

“Eren? What are you looking at?” Hanji’s curious voice interrupted as they leaned forward with intrigue at his triumphant expression.

“Hanji! Who’s that guy over there?” Eren whispered, nodded in the direction of the raven haired gentleman staring apathetically at the proceedings below. Hanji followed his lined of sight and squinted through their glasses at the man in question.

“Who? Mr McSlimy?” They grinned at his bemused expression “Guy with the scraggily stache and evil eyes?” Eren’s eyes brightened in excitement.

“Yea, him!”

“That would be the esteemed Nile Dawk, my dear.” Hanji answered.

“Oh Christ, did I just hear someone mention that gross man?” Petra asked, leaning into Eren and Hanji’s discussion with a grimace. Eren, sandwiched between the two, looked between them, bewildered.

“Why is he gross? Who is he?” He asked, lowering his voice as someone behind them shushed
them angrily.

“Opposition leader; AKA the guy who lost to Erwin in the last elections.”

“And in every other aspect of life.” Petra added with a firm nod. Eren chuckled at the red heads obvious distaste.

“What does an Opposition Leader do?” He wasn’t particularly familiar with politics, to his great shame as the son of a nation’s leader, and although the term rang a bell, he wasn’t sure what it entailed. Hanji shrugged, pursing their lips.

“Why the sudden interest in politics? Never mind, I suppose it’s to be encouraged. They discuss policies and proposed laws, present alternative policies to the government and are the chief opposition spokesperson in parliament. Stuff like that” Hanji explained, waving a hand dismissively. Eren frowned as he digested this information.

“Does he go on meetings with other nation leaders?” Hanji looked at him strangely.

“What an oddly specific question, but no; that’s not a part of his duties. I suppose that would go under the role of the Foreign Minister or Legion’s Ambassador. Why?” Eren shook his head and shrugged, brow furrowed as he looked back over at the older man who was now looking down at something on his phone. Well then, that was enlightening. Not.

They could be friends? Nile Dawk, old acquaintance of his father’s, popping by for a quick chat and a coffee, was that so unreasonable? Except his dad wasn’t the type to be old friends with people like Nile; he kept friendships with other politicians on a strictly professional level, which was necessary. You never mix business with pleasure, and the running of a nation was surprisingly business-like. Not to mention, as the opposition leader, any over-familiarity with Nile could very well be interpreted wrongly by Erwin as a show of support to the opposition. Eren wasn’t to dismiss something like that despite how insignificant it may seem; he’d seen relations between powerful people break down over a lot less.

Then what could it have been? His father was never the most forthcoming with him and tended to dismiss him quite often, so he’d interpreted his father’s aloofness to his questioning after Nile as him brushing him off like he always did, but in hindsight, hadn’t his father seemed more like he was intentionally avoiding answering him? Maybe he was reading into this too much, seeing things that weren’t even there. What could his dad even gain from a man like Nile Dawk who, essentially, wielded not real power or authority aside from the capacity to shout arguments against Erwin in parliament? Well, if that were case, Petra had more power than him; she practically owned Erwin, so the fate of the country was probably more in her hands than anyone else’s.

Eren chewed his bottom lip as he mulled over this new conundrum; his mind eager to grasp the new puzzle that presented itself under such dull conditions.

“Don’t tell me you think he’s cute?” Petra asked, eyes wide with horror.

“What?”

“Oh God. Levi would have an aneurism! I don’t think anyone hates Nile more than he does.” Hanji joined in, grinning wickedly despite their words.

“Wait, no—“

“Better not tell him Eren. That would break is stone cold heart.” Petra advised, ignoring his protests as she patted his arm, nodding sagely.
“Maybe we should? I mean, if we’re lucky, he’ll snap and beat Nile up?” Petra straightened up at Hanji’s suggestion, eyes sparkling with a devious light.

“My word, Hanji; you are diabolical.” She breathed in awe.

“Guys, stop. I’m not attracted to him! Please don’t say that to Levi,” Eren’s desperate pleas went unheard; the duo were on a role and nothing would stop them now, not when they had a plan to get under Levi’s skin with the added benefit of eliminating a common enemy in the form of Nile Dawk.

How had this happened? How had an innocent inquiry snowballed into this disaster? Eren sat back, defeated, as Petra and Hanji huddled together over him, the ceremony completely forgotten in favour of scheming the perfect crime. He just hoped to God the day would never come when he was pitted against the two of them; they were an unstoppable force of nature. Levi might be Humanities Strongest Soldier and Erwin the leader of one of the most militaristically elite nations in the world, but they had nothing on a pregnant ex-soldier with a vendetta and a possibly unhinged head advisor.

Chapter End Notes

Dudes; I can’t politics. Don’t know how shit works in your respective nations, but I’ve loosely based Legion’s Government on my interpretation of Australia’s Government structure (when I say loosely, I mean *loosely*, like flapping around precariously in the wind, moments from complete collapse loosely). Seriously, I apologize to anyone out there who is offended and appalled by my butchering of our political system. I’ve taken a lot of liberties with this, but hopefully you can follow? It’s not like you need an in-depth and thorough knowledge of politics for this, but if y’all have any questions, please ask in the comments because I very well may have royally fucked something up.
Who's the Cutest Couple?

Chapter Summary

Eren might have missed the perfect opportunity for a flower crown selfie, but now the entire population of Legion can appreciate the moment.

“Okay, that was decent. You’re picking this up fast.”

Eren, doubled over with his hands resting on his knees as he caught his breath, beamed at Levi at the praise. Although he still trained with Annie, he’d gotten in the habit of catching up with Levi after he’d finished his own exercises with his soldiers for a quick lesson. It was vigorous and tiresome, but it’s not like Annie had been a lenient instructor, so he was used to the harsh tactics and appreciated that Levi treated him just like any other soldier. It also offered him an opportunity to learn manoeuvres he would otherwise have not known under exclusively Annie’s instruction. Not to mention sweaty, half-naked grappling with Levi in the dirt. Damn.

Eren flicked his hair out of his face and raised his hand in time to catch the towel Levi threw at him. They’d been going over pressure points; since Eren’s strength was speed and agility and his weakness strength, Levi had determined a comprehensive knowledge of an opponent’s weak spots would be invaluable since they could be used against anyone, especially a physically larger and stronger combatant. It was amazing to think how now he could take on any one of the guys back in Maria he used to constantly brawl with, and easily emerge the victor. And Mikasa; sure, she would probably still hand his ass back to him on a platter, but at least he could put up a halfway decent fight beforehand.

“That’s enough for today. I need shower.” Eren nodded in agreement, mopping up the sweat trickling down his neck. Levi drank deeply from the water bottle before handing it over to him. Always the same, Levi first then Eren, since the idea of taking a drink from the same bottle someone had used before him seemed completely abhorrent to the older man, even though they’d kissed and shared plenty of saliva, among other bodily liquids, before. Anyone else might have been offended by the gesture but Eren appreciated the fact that they even shared a water bottle in the first place was, in itself, a big deal. Small details.

“No so fast, buddy.” Eren and Levi turned to face where Petra was storming up to them scowling while Erwin trailed behind her, his expression a curious combination between amusement and apologetic.

“Hey Petra!” Eren greeted brightly, but backtracked at the look she sent his way.

“Hey yourself, what do you call this?” She thrust a newspaper into his face, and Eren stumbled back, surprised by the forceful gesture.

“The hell are you going on about, Petra? What did Eren do?” Levi asked, coming up behind him and taking the paper from her hand. Petra folded her arms over her swollen abdomen and sniffed petulantly at the raven man. Eren leaned over Levi’s shoulder to read the headline that had gotten Petra into such a state in the first place.

“Actually, I blame you more than Eren for this. Who do you two think you are, snatching away our
title while I’m down for the count on maternity leave?”

“Oh my God…” Eren breathed in disbelief as he read the paper.

Legion’s Cutest Couple? Corporal Levi and His New Husband Greet Adoring Fans

The headline blazoned the front cover of the Legion Times, and displayed beneath it was a blown-up photo of Eren laughing while placing a flower crown over Levi’s bowed head. The photo was taken at the perfect angle to capture Levi’s profile, and although he was frowning and had his arms crossed defiantly, you could just barely make out the ghost of a smile on his pursed lips.

“Who the fuck—?!” Levi swore colourfully as he scowled down at the paper clutched tightly in his hands. Eren gently pried it out from his hands when it began to crumple under the force of his grip.

“Levi, this is going to take quite a toll on your intimidation factor.” Erwin warned, although his tone was full of mirth. He wrapped his hands around his pouting wife, but Petra was also beginning to struggle to continue concealing the amusement in her light brown eyes.

“Levi, I didn’t know you had it in you to be so sweet” She teased, smirking. Levi tried to snatch the paper back from Eren, no doubt to try and destroy it, but Eren dodged his grasp, laughing as he continued to read the article.

“You shut up,” Levi ordered, pointing a stern finger at Petra who shrugged and giggled, undeterred, “Oi, Eren, give that back here.”

“No way! I’m going to make a collage. I got a photo of you holding that baby too,” Eren grinned mischievously.

“I’m pretty fucking sure this counts as defamation.” Levi dragged a weary hand over his face. “Why would you bring that here, Petra? God damn it, once the other soldiers see this…”
FINALLY, SOME LEVI POV. I’m not sure why, but I had this image in my head of Eren dancing to *Mysterious Girl* by Pete Andre, and you guys needed it too. Trust me. You *needed* it. The clip is so embarrassingly 90’s.
FYI, Darius Zackly is the leader of Titan.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“How’s the status in Maria? Anything I should know about?”

Levi leaned back in his office chair as he considered Erwin’s question, “Quiet. Too quiet if you ask me. A bunch of minor attacks close together and then…silence? I can’t figure it out. An optimist might even venture to assume Titan had given up.” They’d finished their meeting and had settled down for casual chat, a glass of whiskey in each hand. A cursory glance out the window had informed Levi that Eren wasn’t out swimming like he usually was around this time, and for a brief moment he let himself mourn the lack of eye candy.

“But you’re not an optimist.” Erwin stated more than asked, arching an eyebrow at Levi who was frowning down at the butterfly knife he was distractedly flicking between his fingers.

“Exactly. All I can think is that they’re preparing for an all-out assault, but Darius Zackly isn’t a fuckhead; that would be a declaration of war and Titan wouldn’t stand a chance against us let alone a combination of Marian and Legion forces.”

Erwin hummed in understanding as he also puzzled over the conundrum, sipping from his glass. They lapsed into a comfortable silence, military mind and strategist mind combined in a joint effort to solve the mystery. Levi suddenly perked his head up and frowned in the direction of the closed door.

“How you hear that?”

“Hear what?” Erwin followed his gaze to the doorway in confusion, “I don’t hear anything?”

“Music… I can hear music” Erwin looked at him like he’d grown a second head.

“You sound like someone having a near death experience. Where are you going?” He asked as Levi stood and walked towards the door.

“Your hearing must be going with your old age, Erwin, cause I can hear fucking music.” With a resigned sigh, Erwin picked up his glass and reluctantly followed the shorter man out of the room. So much for a relaxed chat after work.

They were walking down the hallway when Erwin snorted in surprise “So you *weren’t* hearing things, that is music”

“Fucking told you. You can’t even trust your senses anymore; you’d be shit in battle now.” Levi retorted
“You aren’t much younger than me” Erwin reminded him, wounded. He almost ran into the shorter man when Levi stopped suddenly in front of him.

“What…the fuck?”

Both men froze the moment they stepped out of the front door of Levi’s house. The courtyard before them was flooded with soldiers laughing and dancing to music pumping out of speakers set up by the doorway.

“Oh, I know this song. Mysterious Girl,” Erwin smiled widely as he surveyed the strange scene before him, unconsciously bopping his head along to the beat. Levi looked at him blankly “Peter Andre? Come on, Levi. The great nineties hit?”

“I was living in the slums of Titan struggling to survive for most of the nineties.” Levi said dully. The older man shook his head with disappointment as if Levi himself were to blame for that fact.

Erwin turned back to face the crowd and his gaze brightened “Oh, there’s Petra,” He blinked and raised his eyebrows appraisingly “And…Eren” Levi’s head snapped in the direction of the makeshift dance floor. Of course Eren would be here; who else would have the audacity to transform Levi’s courtyard into a dance floor? No wonder he hadn’t been swimming; he was too busy planning a party while Levi was preoccupied. No doubt Hanji was in on it too. Levi’s train of thought was derailed as he caught sight of Eren through gaps in the masses of bodies packed together. The boy was naturally right in the centre of the fray; twirling the laughing Petra around in a circle, mouthing along to the unfamiliar lyrics and moving with practised ease to the Caribbean tune. He’d even unbuttoned his shirt and wet his hair, parting it at the centre in what Levi assumed was an imitation of the nineties look to match the song.

He was laughing freely and it was infectious; all the soldiers closest to him, regardless of gender, seemed enthralled by his mood, pushing and shoving at each other, vying for Eren’s attentions. The boy barely seemed to notice the ongoing struggle however, dancing with whoever was closest but mainly with Petra, pointing at her as he mouthed the words ‘mysterious girl’ and beckoning to her with both hands. Levi didn’t realize he had been glaring at the crowd, or more specifically at all the soldiers getting a little closer to Eren than the spacious dance floor necessitated, until a few soldiers closer to where he and Erwin stood finally noticed his glare and, mistaking it to be aimed at them, immediately halted in their movements to stare fearfully at him. It didn’t take long after that for everyone else to grow aware of Levi and Erwin’s presence; more people turned to look to where everyone was staring with mortified fear and stopped dancing themselves. Soon the entire dance floor had stilled although the cheerful music carried on an awkward and out of place background music to what all the soldiers undoubtedly saw as their untimely demise at the hands of their Corporal. Finally, Eren and Petra also noticed their presence and both of them smiled widely, completely oblivious to the terror of everyone else around them.

“Erwin, Levi! Come and join us!” Eren invited, beaming. He was immediately hushed by Auruo who had appeared beside him.

“No, not Corporal Levi!” The older man hissed hurriedly as Eren stared at him with confusion.

“Why not?”

“The Corporal doesn’t do this sort of thing, just don’t.” Auruo answered. Levi felt himself frown at the words. Everyone had been enjoying themselves before he’d turned up; it hadn’t even been Erwin’s presence that had ceased the festivities. Even now as he scanned the faces of his subordinates before him, they were all pointedly avoiding his gaze. Here was Eren, having fun, and then he’d rocked up and crashed the party with his presence alone. He wasn’t wanted here, he
realized with disappointment and another feeling he couldn’t name. Even Eren was probably hoping he’d leave so they could continue.

“Don’t mind my interruption.” He said, the barest hints of bitterness seeping into his tone, “Please, carry on.” He turned to leave, ignoring Erwin’s questioning look. He had work to do. There was a stack of backlog paperwork he still needed to catch up on after returning from Maria; he didn’t have time for impromptu dance parties anyway.

“Levi, wait!” Levi turned to face Eren jogging to catch up with him. He looked a little out of breath, his face flushed with exertion from all the dancing and the Legion heat. He arched an impatient eyebrow at the boy, undoubtedly here to apologize for the unsolicited social, and was surprised when the boy seized him by the elbow and began to drag him back instead.

Everyone had slowly started to dance again, confused by the lack of punishment but not prepared to question it. They threw startled looks in his direction when they noticed Eren reappear dragging Levi behind him, but Eren waved away their concerned looks dismissively.

“Eren, what the hell—“

“Shut up, Auruo” Eren interrupted the older man, stalking past him.

“How dare you talk to me like that, brat—”

“Shut up, Auruo” Levi interjected this time, leaving Auruo blinked after them, mouth open.

Levi turned his attention back to the brunet dragging him into the middle of the ‘dance floor’

“Eren, what are you doing?” He asked, struggling to keep his voice level.

“We’re going to dance.” Eren answered flippantly, throwing a smile at Levi over his shoulder. Oh fuck no.

“I had a picture of myself in a flower crown published in the lead newspaper yesterday,” He began as Eren pulled him around to stand in front of him. Why was he being so cooperative despite his words? It would be more than easy for him to shove the brunet off and stalk away “Last thing my image needs is to be seen by the entirety of my subordinates dancing.” It was clear by the way Levi stood awkwardly in front of him that he had no clue how to go about dancing, so Eren took his hands and placed them on his hips before loping his own arms over Levi’s shoulders and drawing them closer together. Levi blinked around him, confounded as to how he ever found himself in such a position.

“Well then, I’ll let you punish me later and I’ll show off the bruises tomorrow to remind everyone just how rough you can be,” Eren shrugged, his viridian eyes glinting mischievously. Levi stared dumbly at the boy, not entirely sure he’d just heard what he thought he had. Eren’s cocky façade quickly dropped with the lack of feedback and an embarrassed blush spread across his features “Was that too corny? I was trying not to be, but there’s really no other way of saying that without it sounding like a cheesy porno line…” He rushed to explain.

Levi looked at the boy bashfully avoiding his gaze with surprise as a thought suddenly occurred to him, “Wait, were you planning this? Did you…rehearse your lines?”

Eren looked at him with an embarrassed grimace “This may or may not have been an elaborate ploy to seduce you. You seem to get turned on whenever I dance…” He admitted with a small shrug. Levi wanted to laugh. Here was Eren: the confident, smooth, smouldering performer, currently blushing crimson as he attempted to seduce his much older beau, when really it was Levi
who was feeling awkward and out of place.

Levi shook his head, a small smile fighting its way onto his lips despite himself “You really are something, brat” He huffed. For once, the height difference didn’t irritate him as he stared up into the younger man’s face. Eren’s embarrassment receded into a relieved smile and he stared down fondly into Levi’s eyes.

“So…did my plan work?” He asked tentatively as they rocked gently back and forth, completely out of tune to the fast nineties beat pumping through the speakers. Levi shrugged indifferently, trying to disguise the warmth flooding through his chest at the sight of the boy smiling down at him, his arms draped over his shoulders.

“We’ll see.” Levi blinked around when he noticed the flash of a light. “Was that a camera flash?”

“No?” Eren responded, smiling unconvincingly.

“You asked Erwin to take a photo, didn’t you?”

“No?”

“For that goddamn collage.”

“Err…no?” Levi sighed, defeated. He was irredeemable. How could he show his face with any self-respect at a military event after this?

Chapter End Notes

**URGH** I have a new fic idea in my head and it’s killing me but I would never abandon this since it’s drawing to an end but my mind is overflowing with ideas

Holy hell, this is so mushy, when did this turn mushy? No worries, I'll remedy that soon enough... *cackles ominously*
Levi stood by the door of the common room and frowned at the emptiness of Eren’s usual perch. A quick glance at his watch informed him it was 10:43 pm, later than usual; so unless Eren was uncharacteristically late, then something had come up and he wasn’t coming. But why wouldn’t he come? It’s not like the boy had work to attend to, unlike Levi. He returned to glowering at Eren’s unoccupied armchair, feeling personally slighted. Levi noted from the corner of his vision the uneasy glances the other soldiers occupying the room were throwing his way. He turned on them and strode over, ignoring the way their eyes widened and backs immediately straightened at his approach.

“Sorry to interrupt, but do you know where Eren is?” The soldiers visibly relaxed when it became clear they weren’t about to be reprimanded.

“No sir. He usually arrives a few minutes before you, but he hasn’t shown up yet tonight.” One man answered after a beat of hesitated silence. Levi rolled his eyes; no fucking shit, Sherlock.

“I saw him head back to your quarters after supper, sir?” a young, red-headed man spoke up eagerly, enthused by the prospect of helping a superior officer. Levi nodded his gratitude before turning to leave. After supper, Eren generally headed straight to the common room and Levi would join him after overseeing the cleaning of the mess hall, why would Eren have headed to bed already? It wasn’t important, maybe he was just tired after a day of dancing around with the soldiers in the hot sun and had decided to turn in early? In any case, now was the time Levi designated to finishing the days paperwork, so tonight he could even return to his study to finish his work in a comfortable setting since Eren wasn’t here. He should have seized the opportunity with relief, and yet he found himself walking past his study door and in the direction of Eren’s bedroom before he even realised where he was headed. He’d just check up on him quickly. Stick his head in to confirm the boy had really just turned in early, before heading back to the study to do his work.

Levi hesitated just outside the door which was slightly ajar when he heard the sound of voices. Well actually, just a voice. Eren seemed to be on the phone, his voice a strained with the frustration of keeping his voice down as seemed to argue with whoever was on the other end of the line. Levi couldn’t help but lean in to catch the exchange, trying to push the feelings of guilt over eavesdropping out of his mind as his curiosity got the better of him.
“What the hell were you thinking? Normal people give shit like tea sets or fancy cutlery as a wedding present!” There was pause as the other person responded “How did you even know what size to get? Why lace?!“ Eren’s voice actually squeaked and Levi heard the unmistakeable sound of his palm slapping against his forehead. Okay, enough was enough, he needed to see what was going on for himself. And who was Eren even talking to in the first place?

Levi knocked quietly to announce his arrival and pushed open the door. “Eren?” He called, peering around the edge of the door. He just managed to catch sight of the brunet as he let out a surprised shriek and dove under the covers of his bed. Levi stood bewildered in the doorway, blinking at the lump shuffling under the sheets that was his husband.

“No! No, Petra, don’t you fucking dare hang up on me! Petra?!” Eren swore loudly and a moment later Levi saw his hand dart out from under the blankets to fling his phone angrily across the room before retreating back into the safety of his mound. Well, that answered his question of who he had been talking to, if not the million others he currently had buzzing around in his head.

“Eren? Is something wrong?” He asked, carefully approaching the bed.

“No! Nothing, I’m just…I’m just going to sleep now, okay? Goodnight!” Eren called back unconvincingly.

“Why are you hiding?”

“I’m naked.” Levi snorted with disbelief and edged around the foot of the bed with practised stealth, closer to the side Eren was curled up in.

“I’ve seen you naked before, why are you hiding?” Levi tried again.

“Are you coming closer? I can hear you coming closer, Levi! Go away, I’m trying to sleep!” Levi couldn’t help but chuckle at the desperation edge in his voice. No way was he leaving now, not without finding out where Eren’s sudden self-consciousness had stemmed from, if it really was nudity he was concerned about. He placed his coffee and paperwork on the nightstand, kicking off his slippers before crawling onto the bed and straddling the struggling lump that was Eren attempting to squirm out of his grasp.

“Why were you swearing at Petra? What did she give you for a wedding present?” Levi leant over Eren’s form until his face was close to where he estimated Eren’s would be, and he dropped his voice into a hushed whisper “What’s made of lace?” He felt the boy stiffen immediately and smirked.

“You were eavesdropping?”


“I thought you’d be doing paperwork in the common room?”

“I wondered what happened to you.”

“You came to find me?” Levi leant back to sit up on his feet and give Eren enough space to shuffle around onto his back and move the sheets down enough to peer up at him over the edge. His voice was quiet and his green eyes wide as he looked up at Levi.

“You didn’t answer my questions.” Levi evaded, arching an eyebrow at the boy beneath him. It suddenly struck him that, if Eren indeed had been telling the truth, then he was currently naked beneath him. Eren seemed to have a similar train of thought as his gaze roved over him before
returning to meet his unwavering stare.

“I lied. I’m not naked.” Eren admitted. No problem; that could be rectified easily enough. “I’m… wearing Petra’s wedding present.” Levi’s eyes narrowed with confusion. Wait, hadn’t Eren said something about lace? Levi seized the sheets and attempted to peel them back almost too fast for the brunet to catch onto his train of thought. Almost. Eren shouted in protest and clutched his fabric barrier tighter around him.

“She gifted it to us, Eren. I have a right to it too. Don’t be selfish.” Levi chided, laughing at their ridiculous tug-of-war.

“It’s embarrassing!”

“I’ll be the judge of that” Levi responded without missing a beat. Eren whined, but Levi could tell he was beginning to chip away at his defences, “I promise I won’t laugh.” Eren stopped struggling and Levi followed suit, not wanting to force the boy’s hand when he finally seemed convinced. He shuffled back to give room for Eren to sit up and waited patiently.

Eren looked up to meet his eyes hesitantly and Levi nodded in a gesture of encouragement. With a deep breathe, the green-eyed youth let the sheet drop away from his shoulders and around his waist. He was wearing one of Levi’s white dress shirts, the front unbuttoned to expose his delicious tan skin, toned by months of exercise. Levi’s shoulders were broader than his, so the shirt hung adorably oversized off his lean frame. It was hot. Levi would be lying if he said his cock didn’t twitch at the sight, but where was the lace?

Eren answered his unasked question by pointedly looking down towards where his lower half was still covered by the sheets, blushing furiously. Levi grabbed a fistful of bed sheets and dragged them off the red-faced boy, and he felt his breath catch in his throat.

Black thigh-highs with lace trimming and booty shorts. Levi swallowed thickly and took a deep, shuddering breath and Eren immediately drew his legs up to his chest, trying to cover himself up.

What had Levi even gotten Petra for her wedding? He couldn’t remember anymore, but he made a mental note to buy her something expensive in gratitude.

Eren made a self-conscious noise from the back of his throat and Levi dragged his gaze back up to meet his with great difficulty.

“Am I laughing?” He asked. Eren shook his head, but Levi notices his vice-like grip around his legs loosen slightly.

“You look like you’re about to jump me” Eren admitted, eyes narrowed accusingly. Well that’s because he was. “I’m kind of judging you right now, you perverted old man.”

“Says the guy in thigh highs and panties,” Levi rebutted and Eren scowled. He was relieved to see the familiar fire return to the boy’s eyes as he seemed to grow more comfortable with the situation. Eren’s scowl morphed into a smirk soon enough though, and he bit his lower lip coquettishly, sending Levi a smouldering look through his eyelashes

“Well? Are you just going to sit there or are you going to help me take these off?” He challenged, kicking up a leg to rest his socked foot on Levi’s shoulder and arching an eyebrow.

“They’re staying on,” Levi said firmly, crawling forward to seize the younger man’s lips in a hungry kiss. Eren moaned into his mouth, digging his fingers into Levi’s scalp as the raven pushed him back down into the pillows, “The rest can come off, though.”
Their kisses were long and slow and their touches gentle and appreciative. Unlike their fevered kisses and desperate groping back in the hotel in Maria, Eren knew now that Levi wasn’t about to change his mind. Their last tryst had been in the midst of an alcohol hazed, sexually frustrated frenzy; this time though, they took their time.

Eren’s heels dug into Levi’s lower back as he arched off the bed in white hot bliss. He pulled the older man back down for a kiss, dragging short nails down his back hard enough to leave angry red marks. Not that Levi cared. The pain mixed well with pleasure. Eren was a vocal lover; his pleased moans filled the room, intermingling with the soft huffs of their breaths as Levi pounded into the boy beneath him. Levi found he appreciated the positive feedback and did what he could to encourage his wanton cries. Both of their bodies were slick with sweat; the open window providing little relief from the combination of Legion’s humid heat with their love-making. Levi’s hands gripped Eren’s thighs with bruising force, occasionally running along his legs to caress the tan limbs that had somehow managed to retain the thigh highs despite their activities.

Eren cried out his name, tossing back his head as his orgasm hit; hot come painting his dark skin in white. Levi didn’t last long after that, moaning the brunets name into his neck as he came inside the younger man. He rolled over onto his side to avoid collapsing on top of the exhausted Eren, and they shared some more lingering, breathless kisses. Eren’s emerald eyes blinking tiredly up at him, the brightest things in the moonlit room, took his breath away. His lazy, fucked out grin, dopey with satisfaction but still boyishly endearing, pulled a smile from Levi he was too exhausted and content to fight.

Pale fingers drew lazy patterns along the lace trimmings of Eren’s thigh highs and the boy hummed, smiling, as his eyes drifted closed and he cuddled closer to Levi despite the contrary temperature. He could get used to this: a dangerous thought he wouldn’t have dreamt of entertaining not two months ago.

“Stay here.” Eren mumbled sleepily. Levi frowned down at the head of messy brown hair resting on his chest; as if he could be bothered going back to his own room after all that.

“I’m too exhausted to move, brat. I’m not leaving until after a solid sleep.”

“I meant that you should come sleep with me tomorrow too. And maybe the night after as well?” Eren shrugged slightly, but Levi could hear the unsureness in his tone.

“Nah.” Levi felt the boy still in his arms and smirked, letting him stew in his discomfort for a few seconds longer before continuing “My rooms better than this shit hole. You’re moving in with me.”

Levi scowled irritably as Eren jostled in his arms before finally managing to lift his head up enough to stare incredulously down at him, eyes bright with barely concealed excitement.

“Are you inviting me to live with you?” He frowned playfully, grinning.

“I’m inviting you into my bed permanently since that’s apparently the only thing left for me to offer,” Levi corrected, refusing to soften his gaze despite Eren’s blindingly wide smile that was far too lively for this ungodly hour. He pushed Eren’s head back down to rest on his chest just so those eyes would be off his face long enough for him to secret a smile. Eren took the opportunity to press a chaste kiss to his chest before finally settling down and closing his eyes.

“Goodnight, Levi” he murmured through a yawn.

“Night, brat.”
The alarms were fitted in his bedroom and study, but he still heard their familiar shrill from Eren’s room. He’d recognize their dreadful wail in a coma. His eyes flew open, instantly roused from his deep sleep, and moved on autopilot. After years of service, he had been conditioned to react accordingly to the sound even in his most exhausted state. It was Eren’s confused murmurs as he was woken by Levi’s movements that shook Levi from his automated mindset.

“Levi? What’s going on? What’s that sound?” The boy blinked up at him, still half aslee as he pushed himself into a sitting position and ran a hand through his mess of bed hair that did little to calm the tangles.

“Go back to sleep, Eren; It’s just the service alarm. Something’s come up and I have to head out.” Levi assured, although it had the opposite from desired effect. Eren’s eyes were instantly wide and alert and he was shuffling out of bed, picking up the first items of clothing he could get his hands on and pulling them on with awkward, jerky movements.

“A mission? You have to go right now?” Levi glanced at the alarm clock on the night stand. The glaring red digits read 3:07 am; he had barely caught two hours of sleep.

“Yeah, sorry kid. You should sleep, it’s still early.” Levi ran a weary hand over his face, but he was used to functioning on less sleep by now. Of course Levi should have known better than to expect Eren to comply. The boy shuffled zombie-like behind him, his mind clearly still trying to catch up with the sudden emergency, as Levi rushed to his room and geared up in uniform. Levi’s squad along with Hanji met him by the entrance of his house and they made their way to where a large military grade helicopter had alighted in the centre of the courtyard, Hanji debriefing the squad on the mission. Eren managed to catch enough of their words through the loud hum of the helicopters engines and the chopping of its large blades to deduce that Titan seemed to have launched some sort of major attack on Maria. Although Legion had enough troops stationed on the walls to provide adequate defence for now, Levi’s expertise and his specialized squad would be necessary on the front lines to lead the defence.

Eren’s mind was reeling; not a few hours ago they had been spooning in his bed after a bout of mind-blowing sex. Now he was standing dazed in the courtyard at three in the morning in boxers and Levi’s shirt, watching Levi all geared up in uniform, guns strapped to his back and hips, nodding along seriously with Hanji’s words and about to board the type of big-ass, monster helicopter Eren had only glimpsed in movies. Hanji patted Levi encouragingly on the shoulder and back away to give his squad room to board the copter, apparently finished with the debriefing. Eren rushed forward, bracing against the buffeting winds of the helicopters spinning blades as he approached Levi, who turned to face him. Eren caught hold of Levi, hands on either side of his face, as he pulled the older man into a desperate kiss that conveyed all his apprehension, concern and fear at the situation.

“Be fucking careful.” He pleaded firmly over the choppers noise, staring imploringly into Levi’s steel grey eyes. Levi nodded and gave him a small, tender smile before pulling him back down into a shorter, softer kiss and resting their foreheads together.

“I’ll be right back,” He promised with a wink, attempting in vain to alleviate some of the younger man’s obvious anxiety “You be good while I’m gone.”

Hanji came up to stand beside him and rub his shoulder reassuringly as Levi turned to leave with a final wave. They stumbled back, shielding their gaze from the forceful blows of the choppers wing beats as it rose ominously into the air slowly but steadily.
“Good luck and be safe!” Eren yelled up. He caught Levi’s smirk and the thumbs up from the other members of his squad before the helicopter rose too far for him to see them anymore, and angled away as it was steered over the wall of the compound. He stood forlornly in the courtyard, staring up at the night sky long after the chopper had disappeared from sight, Hanji patiently waiting beside him and a cold, sickening lump of dread in his stomach.
Distractions

Chapter Summary

Eren throws himself into training in a last-ditch effort to take his mind off worrying about Levi and his squad. Thankfully, a visitor might be just the distraction he needs.

“Eren! Head in the game, dude,” Connie chastised for probably the millionth time that morning. Eren scowled, irritated at his own distractedness that was preventing him from concentrating on his training, as he pulled his mind back to refocus on the shorter boy standing in front of him. Connie watched him with a disapproving frown, hands strapped with boxing gloves planted firmly on his hips in a ‘Disappointed Mother’ look that was weirdly out of place on the boy that was usually on the receiving end of it. “Nah, I think that’s enough,” he said with a sigh, waving down Eren as he put up his fists in preparation for another round “Go beat up the punching bag. Since you can’t focus on a proper fight, at least get some exercise doing something that doesn’t require thinking. Plus you need to vent, bro. You didn’t hit me often, but when you did, damn you hit hard.”

Eren grimaced apologetically but recognised the wisdom in his substitute coach’s words. Eren hadn’t been able to fall back asleep after Levi had left. He’d tried to remind himself that it wasn’t a big deal, the first wave of attack had passed so with the surprise element having gone, it should all be routine from there; nothing Levi couldn’t handle. Nonetheless, he was out of depth in such a scenario. He had no experience coping with this kind of situation; he had no frame of reference to reassure him that there was nothing to stress too hard about, despite Hanji’s attempted assurances and those of the other trainees who’s often enough seen Levi rush away on a mission and return unscathed.

He’d been awake in time for breakfast for once, joining the trainees at their table like he sometimes did, although today more out of seeking a distraction than kinship. He’d followed them out to the training grounds and joined in, having caught up with their progress a while ago. It did little to distract him though; despite being more skilled than any of the other recruits by now, he had found himself on the receiving end of most of the blows, his mind clearly elsewhere. He couldn’t even focus on training, something he took very seriously these days, and that frustrated him to no end. He channelled his anger into the punching bag, pummelling mercilessly in his exasperation. Petra would be here for lunch. Hanji had told him she was coming to visit, and he’d realized they had probably suggested so in the first place, thinking he might appreciate Petra’s first-hand experience. He wanted to be irritated for being transparent enough to make them feel they needed to help him; he wasn’t in trouble, he wasn’t the one on the frontlines; yet he couldn’t help but feel relieved at the idea of seeing the bubbly redhead.

The sun was high in the sky when he finally stopped for a break. His tank top stuck to his sweat-slick skin and his hair was plastered across his face as he leaned on the punching bag to catch his breath. Someone approached him from behind, but he was too exhausted to turn around; it was probably another soldier here to work out anyway.

“Petra will be here soon, you want to head to the mess hall?” Hanji asked, their voice measured and light. It was obvious they were forcing themselves to act normal even though the weight of worry over the situation on the frontlines was heavy on everyone’s mind.
“Have you been updated over what’s going on at the wall?” Eren asked instead, turning around and pushing his hair out of his face. He took the water bottle they held out to him and guzzled the contents greedily, trying to ignore their sharp gaze searching his face.

“Under control,” Hanji responded “There were two bomb blasts along the East Wall, but it withstood both attacks. There were two casualties from the attack, both from the Marian army who were on lookout on that area of the wall during the blast, but all other injuries were minor. Marian and Legion forces are still fighting back the Titan’s who didn’t manage to breach the wall. I estimate that the situation should be stabilized within the next day or two, but the priority is guarding the ongoing construction efforts on the damaged wall since that is the only weakness in our defence.” Hanji paused, watching the way Eren nodded along numbly, before dropping the militaristic approach “That means everything is fine, Eren; you can untwist your panties now. It should be all smooth sailing from here.” They continued, voice warm with reassurance “This was Titan’s last hurrah, they were clearly riding everything on the belief their attack would crumble the wall so they could launch a full blown attack on Maria, but they miscalculated and you can be damn sure we’ll give them hell for it. They’ll leave Maria alone for a while after this, I should imagine.”

“Right,” He should be relieved, this was what had been nagging at him all day. Levi and his squad were probably the safest people there; after all, they were a combination of Legion’s finest lead by Humanities Strongest. And yet he couldn’t shake the feeling of dread at the back of his mind. He refused to celebrate until their chopper landed in the courtyard and everyone piled out with familiar grins and celebratory cheers.

“I understand your worry, it’s totally normal. Not knowing what they’re facing just makes the whole idea more daunting, but Petra will help you relax.”

“Have you spoken to Levi?” He asked, crushing the empty plastic bottle in his grip as he let Hanji lead him in the direction of the mess hall. He’d sent a tentative text to Levi asking him how things were going but was yet to receive a response, not that he was surprised. The man undoubtedly had more pressing concerns than to entertain frivolous messages with him in the midst of all the fighting.

“Not directly, but don’t stress. Once things cool down a little, which they will probably even by later today, he’ll get back to us. And you.”

“Hanji, how would…” Eren cleared his throat and tried a different approach, not that his intentions would be any less obvious through different wording, “What would someone need to do to be eligible to join Levi’s squad?” The question had been on his mind since he'd watched Levi's chopper disappear over the compound wall that morning. He'd never felt more helpless and pathetic, stranded in the courtyard as Levi went off to fight. He wanted to be there beside him, as stupid as the idea seemed. He had only just managed to surpass the other trainees in his combat skills, and he had next to no experience, so he'd be nothing more than a burden on the older man and his team at this stage. Nonetheless, despite whatever Levi might say, he felt he couldn't consider himself quite equal to Levi until he had proven to the older man that he could hold his own in a fight. He didn't want to be the damsel in distress in this relationship; he didn't want to be 'the prince' and Levi 'the soldier'. Levi going off to fight while he’d been left to stare after him had only drilled into his mind further the huge disparity between them. He'd had enough of being the useless spare who sat around looking pretty while people like Mikasa, Armin and now Levi went off and did all the work, he wanted to be as capable of protecting and supporting Levi as Levi could to him. Only then would he be satisfied.

Hanji side-eyed him knowingly but thankfully maintained his poorly concealed hypothetical
question “I’m not too knowledgeable on the finer details since I don’t personally get involved with all the military training stuff, but it has something to do with the top ten graduating recruits. They get the option of just joining the Wings of Freedom forces like all the other graduates, or they can choose to go into more specialized fields. Levi hand-picked all the members of his squad from top ten graduates; only people who especially stuck out to him, of course. He doesn’t recruit frequently, obviously, since he already has the main squad.” Eren, whose hopes had been lifted by the mention of top ten graduates, immediately plummeted. He could easily make it into the top ten, but Hanji was right; Levi didn’t need to recruit squad members now, so any efforts would be futile, no matter how exceptional a soldier he proved himself. Hanji seemed to read his mind.

“You should ask Petra though, since she’ll know first-hand all the necessities. Actually, since Petra left, he is down a member so chances are he’ll be looking to recruit…” They pondered the thought out loud, but Eren could tell there was more to their words than innocent conjecture and it was Hanji’s own round-about way of encouragement. Maybe he did have a chance after all? He could make it into the top ten easily enough at this rate, so if he tried harder and made it as number one, he’d have to be first preference as a recruit, right? Of course this was all based on the assumption Levi would be picking from this batch of graduates in the first place rather than an experienced soldier, which was pretty unlikely in hindsight; but hey, anything was possible. Between Eren’s bull-headed determination and a combination of Annie and Levi’s personal training, he might actually have a chance.

“Uhh, Eren?”

Eren turned to face the boy who had addressed him. He recognised Thomas Wagner, one of the trainees, and gave him a wide smile, “Hey Thomas! What’s up?”

“Hey, sorry to interrupt,” The blond boy began, glancing nervously at Hanji and nodding politely in acknowledgement “But I was sent to tell you that you have a guest. They’re waiting for you in the common room.” Eren frowned and shared a confused look with Hanji, but then shrugged. Petra might have preferred a more intimate setting for their lunch, which made perfect sense in hindsight; but hey, anything was possible. Between Eren’s bull-headed determination and a combination of Annie and Levi’s personal training, he might actually have a chance.

“You trained straight through break and didn’t have time to wash up. Petra’s going to complain that you smell like sweat and hormones.” Hanji laughed, scrunching their nose pointedly at his apparent stench.

“Can’t be worse than anything Levi’s said to me,” Eren replied, earning a hummed agreement from the other. Still, he combed back his hair into some semblance of neatness and used his grimy shirt to mop away the excess sweat on his neck and face. Petra should at the very least appreciate that he tried.

Eren sighed with relief the instant the cool air-conditioning of the common room hit him; he really should have taken a break; the sudden temperature change made his head swim a little.

“Where is she?” He asked as he looked around the room, puzzled. Hanji shrugged beside him and pulled out their phone, checking for any missed calls or messages.

“Oh, she just sent me a text to say she was running a little late after a routine check-up. She’ll be here a little after lunch.” They said, reading aloud from their phone. Eren frowned with confusion; then who had Thomas been talking about? He had barely opened his mouth when another voice interrupted him to answered the question that had just been on the tip of his tongue.
“Eren? Is that you?” Eren whirled around, wide-eyed, to face the person who had just spoken.

“Holy fuck… Jean?”
Chapter Summary

an (awkward?) reunion between ex lovers. Nothing escapes Hanji's keen eyes. Eren's fans don't like Jean

“You look… different,” Jean’s eyes roved over his figure and Eren scratched the back of his neck awkwardly, overly self-conscious of how sweaty and gross he must look. He really should have taken that break. “It’s not bad!” Jean hurriedly corrected, mistaking Eren’s reaction for offence “I mean, it’s just kind of…wow? Like where was all this back then, you know?” He laughed, gesturing along Eren’s frame. That was all it took to break the awkwardly formal stand-off between them.

“Okay, wow. Tone it down, Horseface.” Eren scowled, straightening and fixing the dirty blond with an affronted glare “This was always here, thank you very much; you just never fully appreciated it.” Hanji’s polite cough drew both the boy’s attention to their forgotten audience and Eren blushed and stammered an introduction. “Oh shit, sorry Hanji. Um, this is Jean, he’s… an old friend and the son of the French Ambassador. Jean, this is Legion’s head advisor, Hanji Zoe.”

“Ah, an old friend. Nice to meet you, Jean; your mother is a close acquaintance.” Hanji nodded and extended an arm for Jean to sake, although they shot Eren a knowing wink that made him feel like he’d been caught out. He shook his head of the thought and returned his attention to his surprise visitor.

“So what brings you here?” He asked, levelling a hard stare at Jean who met his gaze unflinchingly with that same, infuriatingly cocky devil-may-care smirk that had made him throw that punch all those years ago when they’d first met. Their friendship really was special.

“What do you mean? I haven’t seen you in months and you just got hitched,” He turned to pluck a large bouquet of flowers that Eren hadn’t noticed resting on a table behind him, and extended it awkwardly towards the brunet. They gorgeous gift looked comically out-of-place in the French boys arms as he held it out with an almost disgusted expression as though the sight of the blossoms personally repelled him. Eren figured his mother had suggested the gift; he knew better than to assume Jean had had the forethought to bring a wedding gift himself. Eren rolled his eyes and accepted the flowers with an obligatory thank you. They certainly weren’t Scouting Legion flowers; the colours were subdued and an insipid palette of nauseous pinks and dull purples. When had he begun comparing everything to their Legion counterparts?

Jean shrugged, eyeing the bouquet as he avoided Eren’s gaze, embarrassed by the sappiness of the words leaving his mouth “Just a congratulatory present for you. And..uh..what’s-his-face” He added, almost as an afterthought. Hanji snorted into their hand and attempted to disguise the noise as a cough. Honestly, Jean was two steps away from drawing circles in the ground with the toe of his shoe and wringing his hands; it was so painfully obvious this whole situation was completely alien to him.

“Levi,” Eren emphasized, surprised to find himself a little peeved by Jean’s attitude. Jean shot him a puzzled look and Eren elaborated, “My husband, his name is Levi.”
“Right.”

“Yeah…”

More awkward nodding and humming. Hanji stared between the two boys with something akin to amused disbelief. “Christ Eren, since when have you been lost for words?” They asked, laughing to break up the tense atmosphere “Come on, Jean, you can join us for lunch in the mess hall unless you’d prefer to eat separately? You might find the functions of the base pretty interesting.”

Jean shook his head “Mess hall’s fine, thank you.”

“Jean’s used to the army layout,” Eren explained to Hanji as the trio made their way to their destination “He served in the French Army.”

“Really? So you have a thing for men in uniform, do you Eren?” Hanji asked, grinning wickedly. Eren blinked and opened his mouth, although no words came out, and Jean made a strange choking noise behind them.

“I—what?” He looked at Jean and tried to think of a witty response although none came. Levi and Jean were such polar opposites that he had no other similarity to draw up on to make a joke out of How had Hanji even picked up on that? Was one of the requirements to being Head Advisor to know everything about everyone? It very well could be, considering Armin’s apparently inexhaustible supply of blackmail material on anyone Eren could think of. “No, I just…no.” Hanji snickered at his weak denial but thankfully left it at that.

Eren sat at the officers table for lunch, not wanting to inflict the rowdy trainees on Jean just yet knowing his bellicose nature coupled with their jibes would never end well. He couldn’t help but notice the glances many of the soldiers sent Jean’s way as they ate together; suspicious and even vaguely hostile. When Eren had first arrived, they had looked at him with similar caution, but certainly hadn’t looked this threatening. He might have dismissed their glances as just the normal level of wariness of outsiders, but even he couldn’t miss that there was certainly a more underlying malice to their glares than the usual.

“Is it just me, or do they not seem to like me very much?” Jean asked, leaning slightly towards him and speaking out of the corner of his mouth as he regarded his audience warily. So he noticed too, although admittedly it would be difficult to ignore their stifling scrutiny. Eren did not miss the way multiple pairs of narrowed eyes instantly zeroed in on the lessened space between them, and realization finally dawned on him. At first he’d thought they just hadn’t liked Jeans appearance; he could certainly empathize with that. His obnoxious, two-toned hair and arrogant countenance had been what had instantly pissed him off when they’d first met as well, and he had to admit he had been a little relieved he wasn’t the only one to be irked by such features. But maybe that hadn’t been it.

Eren glanced at Hanji out of the corner of his eye and noticed how they appeared to be struggling to smother a grin as they watched the spectacle unfold. “Is it just me, or are they being protective of Levi?” He asked. That had to be it; they had been giving Jean the stink eye since Eren had first lead him into the mess hall and allowed him to take Levi’s usual seat beside him at the table. Hanji’s thick glasses flashed and they grinned at him manically while waggling their eyebrows.

“Close, but no dice,” They sang, stuffing a spoon heaped with peas into their mouth and munching gleefully. They watched him expectantly before Eren realized he was supposed to guess again.

He shook his head, bewildered, “I don’t know? They just don’t like his horseface?” Jean scowled and swatted him on the arm, mumbling a barely decipherable “fuck you,” through a mouthful of
food. A few soldiers eyed the action and muttered darkly between themselves, shooting Jean glares. Eren was certain they usually reserved for the battlefield. Hanji threw back their head and cackled, probably more to keep the food from falling from their mouth than for theatrical purposes.

“No no no,” Hanji said, waving a hand in his face “Although they’re certainly irked by how close you two are, it’s not because they think him being so handsy with you is disrespecting the Corporal.” Jean, oblivious to the subject of the conversation, looked up at hearing his name.

“Then what?” Eren urged, frowning.

“They think he’s disrespecting you,” Hanji said, rolling their eyes as though it was the most obvious thing in the world “You’ve earned a certain level of respect here, Eren, believe it or not. Sure, some of it comes automatically with being married to the commanding officer, but I can guarantee that most of it is earned. They all see Jean, some unfamiliar bureaucrat in a fancy suit, smacking your arm like that, swearing at you, and just being all round too familiar, and they get defensive thinking he’s treating you as inferior.” Hanji leaned over the table to grin at Jean “You be careful how you tread, Jean-Boy; don’t you mess with Legion’s golden boy” they warned jovially. He couldn’t help but feel a surge of pride at their words; to hear that he’d been accepted by the soldiers of Wings of Freedom to the point that they were looking out for him as one of their own. He beamed at Jean’s unnerved expression.

“You hear that, Horseface? Bet you can’t outdo that,” He goaded, elbowing Jean playfully. The ash blond scowled and shoved him away and Eren resumed his lunch with uplifted spirits, grinning widely. He wondered how Levi would react to Hanji’s assessment; he’d probably roll his eyes at Eren’s high-spirits and ask him why he cared so much anyway. He’d probably call him brat for being so affected by the soldiers acceptance of him, and tell him “of course they’re protective of you, they’re protective of every one of their own,” as if those words wouldn’t mean everything to him. He’d probably dismiss it all as no big deal and make it seem like Eren was overreacting with his happiness, but then try and hide his small smile behind his hand the way Eren had noticed he always did whenever he thought no one was watching.

He wondered what Levi and his squad were doing now. Hopefully the fighting would be lessening like Hanji had said and they might be able to call back to update directly. Hopefully, everything would be okay.
Dial Tone

Chapter Summary

Things are going smoothly in Maria; nothing quells the tugs of homesickness quite like badly spelled texts from a loved one. A long distance lovers spat. Levi should be returning soon...

Levi surveyed the scenery below and the breathtaking sight of Maria sprawled out below him like a painting. Most of the houses nearer to this section of the wall had been evacuated after the attack, just in case of a breach or if the fighting escalated in a way that could affect some of those living closer to the barrier, but slowly families were being allowed to return. Most of the threat had been addressed, Maria’s stationary guard had put up an adequate resistance until Legion reinforcements had arrived, and then they’d made short work of the Titan aggressors. They’d retreated a few hours ago and now Levi was overseeing the guarding of the repair work, just in case of further attacks, although at this stage that seemed unlikely. He fought a shiver at the harsh, cold wind and irritably pinned his cravat down with one hand as it flew into his face again. Marian weather reminded him too much of Titan’s, especially up on the wall with no barriers against the strong gales where he was buffeted by the relentless winds and biting cold.

He couldn’t wait until this was over; he hadn’t slept properly for two days and was exhausted, running on nothing but fumes and excess adrenaline for the past few hours. Not that he didn’t enjoy a good mission every now and again to break routine and provide some well needed excitement, but he was tired and cold and who wouldn’t yearn for Legion’s tropical warmth and soft beds after a sleepless night of fighting off Titan’s and guarding the wall? The thought that this would be over soon and he could collapse in his bed, preferably next to Eren, and sleep for a whole day was what kept him going. Speaking of the brat, he remembered getting a message from him earlier but being unable to read it properly in all the rush.

Gunter alighted beside him after a round of inspecting the progress of reconstruction with his manoeuvre gear “Everything’s looking good, Corporal. They’re working fast and should be done by nightfall.” Levi glanced westward to where the sun crept closer to the horizon; it was around five or six in the afternoon. That was good, it would be twice as difficult to guard the wall in the cover of darkness. He pulled out his phone and unlocked it, opening up his unopened messages as Gunter did the same, undoubtedly to his own full inbox of worried messages from his wife.

Levi remembered the routine after many missions, generally on the ride back home while nursing their injuries, when his squad would pull out their phones to sift through the multitude of concerned messages they’d accumulated from loved ones, chuckling with fondness despite threats to return home unharmed ‘or else.’ Levi would spend this time cleaning his gear or checking over his weapons, since the only messages he ever received were updates from Hanji or professional praise on a successful mission from Erwin. He’d admit to loneliness in that time; sure, there were people who were worried about him and would want him to be safe, but they all entailed a level of professional detachment and the understanding that there was a very real possibility he might not return. He yearned for the unhindered concern and relief of someone back home who waited with bated breath for his call after a successful mission. He’d yearned to have someone waiting for him at all; someone to call after a mission just to hear their relieved gushing on the other end.
Levi read the message that practically radiated Eren’s raw, undoctored persona in his own endearingly inarticulate way, and smiled at the anxious, obnoxiously miss-spelt words. He had that person now, and it felt every bit as good as he’d imagined.

[Brat]: Hi Levi! ur probly busy rn so I dnt expect a reply liek asap but still b careful ok. idk if u can or how this works but maybe call me wen u hav time? Obvs after u finish all ur stuff, not that ud call if u had stuff 2 do but still. Um good luck (is that something ppl say in this sitaution? Idk) b careful!!1

Christ, that was a chore to read. Levi massaged his temple with one hand while pulling up Eren’s name in his contacts.

“Eren worried about you, sir?” Gunter asked, smiling knowingly.

“In his own way. He’s not used to this, I suppose,” Levi answered with a tired smile. Gunter laughed and shook his head in understanding.

“They can be sort of overbearing, but it’s nice.” He shrugged “It’s something to look forward to after a mission. Just you wait til you get home, you get treated like a king.” Levi smiled at the thought; yes, that was indeed something to look forward to.

He put his phone to his ear and walked a little distance off for privacy, listening to the sound of the rings as he waited for Eren to pick up. It would be a little after noon in Legion and Eren would probably be getting ready for his swim around this time. Eren picked up on the second ring.

“Levi?! Oh my God, Levi! How are you? Are you okay? How is everything going over there? When will you be back?” Levi rolled his eyes at the barrage of questions that assaulted his ear, and struggled to keep the smile from his voice when he answered.

“Shut up and let me answer on question before you ask the next. I’m fine and everything’s under control,” Levi looked over at Eren’s old home spread before him as far as his eye could see and decided that it didn’t remind him of the boy at all. It was too cold, neat and barren with its stark white houses lined up in neat, orderly rows. Now when he thought of Legion, it was Eren who came to mind “We should be done here by tomorrow morning if everything goes as planned. Repair work will be done soon, but we’ll probably hang back for a little longer to keep an eye out just in case.” He answered. Eren made a disappointed sound at the other end and it made a warmth blossom in his chest “Do you miss me, brat?” He teased, although he was only half-joking. Eren began to answer before he was cut off by an unfamiliar voice.

“Oi Eren, what’s taking so long? I want to swim!” Levi frowned, the only people Eren ever invited to swim were some of the trainees, but they’d be training right now and Eren knew better than to interfere with that. It wasn’t a voice Levi recognised and he tried to imagine who else it could possibly be.

“Shut up, Horseface! I’m talking to Levi, you go ahead,” Levi heard Eren shout back irritably. Horseface: why did that sound so familiar? It suddenly hit him; the unusual nickname Ymir had used to refer to Eren’s ex-boyfriend Jean. Wait…

“Eren, who was that?” He asked, trying to keep his tone light and nonchalant.

“Uhh Horseface? His name’s Jean and he’s an old friend from Maria who came to visit today.” He was right.

“An old friend?” Was he lying by purpose? No, of course Eren couldn’t call him an ex-boyfriend
straight out. How did he handle this? “Why is he there?”

Eren sounded genuinely puzzled by the question “He came to visit. I haven’t seen him in months and he wanted to congratulate us on our marriage.”

“And he came the one day I wasn’t there?”

“What?” Levi heard the confused frustration seeping into Eren’s tone and wondered if he wasn’t being as subtle as he was trying to be “Well obviously he didn’t know that in advance. He only arrived like nine hours after you left so it was seriously just a coincidence. Why are you asking that like he planned it?”

“No reason. I mean he’s just a friend,” He was being petty, he could tell but he couldn’t help it. If Eren said they were just friends, why didn’t he just accept that? It wasn’t unheard of to remain friends with your ex, especially if you broke up on amicable grounds. Especially if you never wanted to break up in the first place and still had residual feelings for each other. What.

“Okay Levi, what are you getting at?” He was angry now, that was certain “Yes he’s just a friend, but why are you making it sound like there’s more to it?” Now Levi was irritated; why wouldn’t he think that, knowing their history? Of course Eren thought he didn’t know so he was being defensive, but this counted as hiding something, right?

“So you’re saying you guys don’t have any history?” Fuck it with subtlety, that had never been Levi’s forte anyway. There was a moment of hesitation on Eren’s end and that was all the final confirmation Levi needed. “You’re acting like I’m the unreasonable one for getting wary when your ex comes to visit while I’m gone, but why wouldn’t I? Especially after how much you just tried to cover it up. I mean, that’s pretty suspicious, Jaeger.” Levi never used his surname; he was clearly pissed.

“How the fuck do you know about that?”

“Does it matter?”

“Yes, it matters. How do you know about Jean and me?” Levi felt something twisting in his gut at the words ‘Jean and me’. He’d known it had been a thing, but the words still stung; they seemed to allude to some continued dalliance.

“Ymir told me, at the reception.”

“Fuck. Levi whatever she told you, you should take it with a grain of salt.”

“What more is there to it? You two dated and were forced to break up by your dad, and then you were made to marry me right after. It makes sense that you wouldn’t have completely gotten over each other, and it makes sense for me to be suspicious.”

“Woah, hold up Levi. How fucking dare you? I am your husband and even though our marriage wasn’t necessarily consensual in the most orthodox sense, I have never given you a reason to doubt me. Ymir told the truth; Jean and I did go out, and she was right when she said my dad told us to break up, but everything else is wrong. Do you honestly think that’s all it would take to make me dump someone? Of course I didn’t listen to him! Jean and I broke up of our own accord after we decided ourselves that it wasn’t working out. We began as friends and we decided that we were better off as just friends too, so no, we fucking don’t ‘still have feelings for each other’ or whatever bullshit you seem to think, okay?”

There was silence on the other end of the line as Eren seemed to catch his breath and tried to calm
himself. Shit. Levi had fucked up. Levi pinched the bridge of his nose and screwed his eyes shut as he thought of what to say. He really shouldn’t have jumped the gun; since when did he leap to conclusions without gathering all the facts? But there Eren went again, messing with his head and making him act out all sorts. That boy really fucked with him.

“Eren…”

“You know what? Just don’t. I was really looking forward to hearing from you, Levi, I couldn’t focus on anything else all day. Jean came for lunch and I haven’t seen him in forever, but all I could think about was what you’d think of him and how you’d both probably instantly clash.” He let out a weak, humourless laugh “But when you finally did call you straight up accuse me of, what, trying to cheat on you? Which is fucking hilarious because all I’ve been thinking about all day is you and how you are and hoping you’re okay.” Levi felt the guilt twist in his belly cold and nauseating and hated himself for being the reason Eren had gone from over-joyed at the start of the phone call, to miserable and hurt. Eren continued before Levi had the opportunity to speak up “I don’t want to talk to you right now. I’m going to go swim with Jean, you can order on of your soldiers to chaperone us if you really don’t trust me that much. Take care, Levi.”

Levi stood with his phone to his hear even after the dial tone sounded. He dragged a weary hand down his face and cursed; he didn’t have the energy for this.

“Corporal, you’re wanted in the control room,” Auruo called to him. He shot off a quick message to Eren before tucking his phone away and turning to follow Auruo to the control room. He might as well focus on the job at hand and do that right, at least.

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Levi’s contact name in Eren’s phone had a tendency to change with his moods. Eren lay on his stomach in the middle of their shared king-sized bed as he frowned down on his latest masterpiece, contemplating message that followed.

[Corporal Dingus]: Please call me, Eren. Sorry.

Eren let out a heavy sigh and seized a fistful of hair in frustration. Jean had noticed his foul mood and wisely avoided bringing up the phone call, although he was obviously angry that Levi had clearly said something to upset him. Eren had cooled off considerably after his swim, and could finally think straight about what had happened; which brought him to his current dilemma; to call or not to call?

He was a little pissed at the older man for leaving it to him. Levi should be grovelling for an apology, not giving him space like a rational person. On one hand, he didn’t want to call, just to spite the older man and drill in just how wronged he felt. Give him a nice dose of the cold shoulder and see how he took it. On the other hand, though, Eren wanted to talk to him again. He missed him, and clearly Levi had recognised his mistake and wanted to fix it. He should be the mature adult and talk things through, right?

Eren hit ‘call’ before he lost his nerve and took a deep, steadying breathe. Stay calm; be an adult.

“Eren.” Levi sounded relieved; he clearly hadn’t expected Eren to be the bigger man and call, and Eren allowed himself a little pride over his unexpected show of maturity. But he was still pissed. Play it cool, Jaeger.
“Levi.” Hesitation. Levi was never the best with words; he was clearly a man who believed in action, so doing all this over a phone call was probably difficult, and Eren appreciated that “Whenever you’re ready.”

“Look… I shouldn’t have said that. No wait, I shouldn’t have even thought that in the first place,” Levi began. The exhaustion in his voice was palpable ever over the phone and Eren couldn’t help but feel sorry for the older man. He could hear the murmuring of conversation in the background but not the sound of the wind, which he knew to be especially harsh up on the wall, and deduced he must be indoors or in one of the watch towers. Levi had had a busy day; he was tired, stressed and strung-out; was it so strange for him to lash out at Eren under such circumstances? “I’m not going to make excuses and say I’ve been tired and took it out on you,” Oh, okay. Maybe not “I’m going to be completely honest… ever since Ymir told me about Jean, I was kind of… jealous of him, I suppose, since you two had a thing that you clearly both wanted from the start. I never thought about him again because it didn’t matter, until of course you told me he came to visit. Naturally, I felt protective, and hearing the way you called him an old friend, almost as though you were trying to cover up your history, made me a little suspicious. Which was wrong because you were completely right when you said I had no reason to doubt you. I’m sorry for making it seem like I don’t trust you, you don’t deserve that.”

Eren took his time pondering the words, aware of Levi’s tense silence as he waited for the verdict on his apology. He allowed himself a moment to enjoy the power he held over the other man, before deciding to put him out of his misery.

“I understand. I should have mentioned my past with Jean because you have a right to know; I’d be insecure too if I found out that you were spending time with an ex while I was away. Plus you’re tired, so more irritable than usual as well. I know how grumpy old men get when they don’t get enough sleep.” Eren said lightly, smiling. Levi huffed a laugh on the other end, but it was also relieved, like he’d been holding his breath the whole time Eren had been talking.

“We head off tomorrow morning. Everything’s practically done.”

“Good. Get some sleep, you won’t be getting much when you get back.” Levi laughed again.

“I’ll hold you to that. Is Horseface gone?” Eren celebrated the small victory in converting yet another person into using his nickname.

“He went back to his hotel. His mother’s visiting Erwin for some meeting and he just accompanied her. They’re leaving in a day or two, I’m not sure.”

“Tch.” Eren laughed at Levi’s irritation. He had to admit he liked the idea of a jealous Levi and couldn’t wait to introduce the two when Levi finally returned. They continued the conversation, talking about anything that came to mind. Levi told him about the construction progress and the fighting, which Eren listened to eagerly, and how Titan was more or less suppressed now. This wasn’t so bad. The first few hours of Levi’s absence, cut off from communication, had been barely tolerable, but now it wasn’t as daunting as it had initially seemed. Levi made the whole ordeal sound so run-of-the-mill and bordering on repetitive.

Levi was in the middle of complaining about the Marian weather when he suddenly stopped short.

“Levi? What is it?”

“I smell smoke,” He answered, distracted. Eren frowned; what did that mean? “Hang on Eren—”

Suddenly, there was a loud bang on the other end that made Eren almost drop the phone in shock.
It was muted over the phone line, but the unmistakeable sound of wood splintering, panicked shouts, and cries of pain made Eren sit bolt upright in bed.

“Levi?! Levi what’s going on?” Eren shouted into the phone.

“Who the fuck—?!” Levi’s voice was suddenly cut off by the sound of a rapid succession of pops like firecrackers going off. Eren’s blood ran cold as the sound of Levi’s phone clattering to the floor reached his ear. There was the sound of static and the echo of shrieks and gunfire, then the line went eerily quiet. It took Petra bursting into the room and seizing him by the shoulders shaking him and asking what was wrong before he realized he was screaming Levi’s name.
Frustrating meetings are frustrating. A drunk old bald man makes an appearance. Things really are smelling fishy. Jean comforts Eren. Eren throws up. Not because of Jean, for once.

“We’re still sifting through conflicting reports. Everyone’s so confused over there and the only people who can give a useful recount of what happened are either dead or injured. What we’ve gathered so far is that two gunmen with specialized skills infiltrated the break room that a number of Scouting Legion soldiers were occupying, and gunned down as many as they could before escaping—“

“They escaped?!” Eren interrupted Hanji’s debriefing, standing up so fast his chair toppled back. Petra made soothing sounds and tugged vainly at the sleeve of his shirt, but Eren was too busy glowering at the bespectacled advisor as though they were somehow responsible for the disaster. An emergency meeting had been convened at the Wing of Freedom base after Hanji and Petra had managed to calm him down enough to get him to tell them what he’d heard over the phone. The squad leaders of Legion’s military branches, along with Erwin Smith and his advisors, had arrived as soon as they could after a message went out, and everyone instantly busied themselves trying to clarify exactly what had happened in Maria. Eren’s real-time witnessing allowed for them to begin damage control and investigations early on while Eren had sat numbly in his room trying to come to terms with what he’d heard as everyone rushed around him in a frenzy. They’d almost excluded him from the meeting as well, but he’d thrown enough of a hissy fit for everyone to decide it wasn’t worth the drama and let him in albeit reluctantly.

“Eren… maybe you want to take a moment to yourself…” Hanji began.

“No! I’m staying right here, but how the fuck did they get away?! Overlooking the pressing issue of how they got into a heavily secure military facility the first place, what on earth was everyone doing after the attack that allowed them to escape? How incompetent can Marian defence possibly be?!” He could feel the tears of frustration and anger prick at his eyes as he shouted at no one and everyone at the same time. Some of the older men and women who still hadn’t accepted Eren’s presence in the meeting grumbled disagreeably at his display, but Eren was too busy fuming to notice them.

“No one’s telling me what’s going on,” he continued, voice quieter and broken. He pressed the heels of his palms into his eyes as if hoping to push the tears threatening to spill out back in “How did this happen? Is everyone okay? Is Levi okay?” Eren noticed Petra dab her eyes discreetly with a well-used tissue and remembered he wasn’t the only one in the room who was worried sick. It was just so hard to keep calm when all the men and women in suits were asking the same questions over and over again and talking about the paperwork and media statements but never seemed to discuss what was actually important. He pulled his chair back up and sat down, drained. Petra put a comforting hand on his knee and he wove their fingers together tightly, grateful for the small gesture of support.

“We are investigating, Eren. It’s tedious and difficult, especially considering the geographical
distance, but we’ve sent relief and we’re getting constant updates as we speak. What we’ve realized, though, is that it was a precision attack. The break room was far from easy access from the outer wall where the Titan terrorists undoubtedly came, and not exactly strategic when it would make more sense to target a control tower or a more densely populated section of the wall if they were aiming for casualties or to cripple our defences. They seemed to have aimed for that particular location, which, mind you, was almost exclusively occupied by Legion soldiers including Levi’s Special Squad.” Hanji looked up from their notes, expression uncharacteristically grim “All these factors considered, we can deduce that they most certainly weren’t targeting Maria this time.”

“A warning?” a woman with short blond hair asked, frowning.

“It doesn’t make sense though. Titan is in no position to be sending us warnings,” An old, bald man who was sitting by the head of the table pondered aloud, frowning into a small flask he held in his hand contemplatively. Eren had noticed this particular man the moment he had entered; he was very unlike all the other, serious looking, middle-aged men and women around him. He lounged back in his chair and barely seemed to pay attention to the goings on around him, preferring to swig from his suspicious looking flask and stare lazily around the room with sharp brown eyes. He must be important though; no one, except maybe Levi, might have been able to get away with such behaviour. “As the young man over there also mentioned,” he continued, gesturing vaguely in Eren’s direction “we are overlooking the very important detail of how these terrorists breached our defences in the first place.” Eren nodded firmly, deciding he liked this old drunkard.

“We received a report that the terrorists were disguised in Marian Military uniforms,” A man Eren recognized as Dita Ness supplied, and Eren couldn’t help but scoff, drawing dirty looks from many around the table and arched eyebrows from Erwin and Hanji. The bald man considered him thoughtfully.

“What are you thinking, Eren?” Eren was startled at being addressed directly given so far he’d only been told to sit quietly, drawing angered glares when he’d broken that single rule. He stared wide-eyed at the older man before realizing he was genuinely interested in his train of thought.

“That’s ridiculous, though,” He shook his head, frowning down at his phone clasped firmly in his hands “You’d be lucky to fool even the most negligent security checks with something as stupid as the whole ‘stolen uniforms’ trick. That shit wouldn’t fly on shopping mall grade security, let alone a high security, military frontline.”

“Exactly,” Baldy snapped his fingers and pointed at him with a wink. Eren blinked at the older man, bemused, feeling like he’d just been praised in class by the teacher for correctly answering a particularly difficult question none of his classmates could answer, despite having no clue what the question was to begin with. It didn’t feel like he’d said anything particularly ground-breaking or ingenious? “It was an inside job!” The man declared, throwing his arms into the air and grinning toothily.

Everyone in the room looked around uneasily. “That’s a hell of a thing to accuse, Pixis,” Erwin voiced gravely from his place by Petra on this end of the table “What makes you think so?”

“I’m well aware, Smithy. Trust me I don’t throw around accusations of treachery lightly. First of all, Titan has no motive,” the man named Pixis began, counting off his arguments on his fingers, “Maria might be one thing, but Zackly knows better than to declare war on us because that’s exactly what this would be if Titan were behind this. Secondly, given the whole issue of infiltration, there is no way anyone, let alone two armed individuals, could have penetrated our defences and escaped without being accounted for or seen. These soldiers are close knit after months of serving together, even Marian and Legion soldiers would spot an unfamiliar face
amongst each other’s numbers and that would not go unreported.” Pixis’ conjectures sparked uneasy conversations between the members of the exclusive conference.

“You say inside job, but inside who?” the Opposition Leader, Nile Dawk, spoke up for the first time, eyeing Pixis sceptically “Maria, or Legion?”

“That is the question.” Pixis nodded solemnly.

“Do you have any ideas?” Erwin asked, leaning forward and resting his chin on steepled fingers. Everyone held their breaths in tensed silence as they awaited Pixis conspiracy theory.

“Nope!” Pixis said brightly, popping the ‘p’ and shrugging nonchalantly “Honestly, this whole situation is a cesspool of more questions and fewer answers. I’m just certain that Titan isn’t behind it and there’s more to this than meets the eye. It’s quite smart though, objectively speaking, to take advantage of an external confrontation with an old adversary to carry out one’s own agenda.”

“Well isn’t that the last thing we need? A second front,” Hanji scowled, pushing their thick glasses up their nose with a forefinger.

“Well, Pixis’ theory should be confirmed or denied soon enough. Titan will be sure to release a statement soon claiming responsibility for or denouncing the attack,” Erwin sighed “I thinks that’s enough for now. If any new developments arise we’ll convene again but it’s been quite a day already.”

Everyone stood and began trickling out of the conference room, some pausing to give Eren and Petra their sympathy and best wishes for the safety of their friends and loved ones. Eren checked his phone again for the millionth time in the last hour, but still no message or update from Levi. His phone might have broken or been lost in the attack, he attempted to reassure himself, he’s probably not allowed to use the phone while he’s in hospital; nurses can be so unreasonable. Or he’s busy, yes that’s it. He’s probably gone into damage control mode and is so focused on addressing the issue at hand and seeing to his injured subordinates that he hasn’t even thought of checking in.

“Hanji, have you received information on the soldiers?” Petra asked when her, Eren, Hanji and Erwin were the only ones remaining. Her tone conveyed the unasked question; have they identified the deceased? Hanji shrugged and shook their head sadly “I’m still waiting on them to confirm all identities. The head coroner and doctor should get back to me with the full list of involved parties and their respective status’ in an hour or two, hopefully.” Eren wondered absently if their clinically professional approach was a coping mechanism. He knew how close they were with Levi, they must be falling apart with worry beneath their composed veneer.

Erwin wrapped a comforting arm around Petra’s shoulders and pressed a gentle kiss to her forehead, she looked so small in his arms. Eren couldn’t imagine how hard this was for her; her entire squad had been involved, and although Eren was also good friends with them all, his bond wasn’t nearly as strong as hers. They trained together for years, going through multiple life-threatening situations together and forging bonds of unconditional trust in one another. Eren tried to imagine what it would be like if his closest friends had been the ones involved; Mikasa, Armin, Christa, Jean and Ymir, and shook his head of the dreadful thought.

Petra shifted out of Erwin’s arms enough to pull Eren into a tender hug he didn’t realise he’d needed until now. He clenched his hands into fists hard enough that his nails pierced skin, not trusting himself to return the embrace with all the pent up frustration, anger and worry he had bottled up inside. A few stray tears escaped his eyes screwed firmly shut and he burrowed into Petra’s shoulder to muffle the strangled sobs.
“You should sleep, sweetie,” She soothed, her voice surprisingly calm. Then again, she was trained for these sorts of situations; to be prepared for the worst case scenario. Eren was not. “We’ll wake you as soon as we hear anything new. I know how frustrating it is waiting around for news, you need to do something or you’ll drive yourself insane.” Eren nodded mutely although he doubted he could sleep in his state. He pulled out of her arms and forced a smile he was sure more resembled a grimace.

“Sorry for yelling at you before, Hanji,” He apologised, turning to face the head advisor who simply bopped him on the forehead with their tablet and smiled.

“Don’t worry about it, pumpkin. I understand. Now off you go,” They said, shooing him out the door “And don’t worry! Levi’s like a cockroach; if it were this easy to get rid of him, I’d have done it ages ago!”

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Armin and Mikasa couldn’t shed any new light on the situation from Maria either. Eren was curled up on his bed with his laptop placed before him as he listened to Armin pulling favours from his many, undoubtedly shady, contacts and Mikasa making thinly veiled threats in exchange for information. Armin was seated in front of his laptop webcam in his office, scowling down at the multitude of papers scattered in front of him as he struggled to keep his tone level as he bargained with his contact on the phone. Mikasa paces restlessly behind him, fingering the tattered lining of her scarf and she hissed into her own phone, both desperately trying to glean what information they could about the survivors.

There was a tentative knock at the door and Eren grunted in answer, expecting a recruit with a tray of food, not the familiar equine-shaped head that peeked around the door instead.

“Hey buddy,” Jean said, voice quiet as he carefully made his way to the side of the bed closest to Eren as if expecting any sudden movements to startle him “I heard what happened…that’s fucked.”

“Eloquent as always,” Armin’s tinny voice supplied through Skype dryly. Jean threw him a dirty look, before returning his attention to Eren who was staring up at him unresponsively.

“Quite staring at me like that, Eren. Throw a punch or yell at me, don’t just lay there,” He scowled, prodding Eren’s shoulder. Eren sighed and shifted his gaze back to the shapes of Armin and Mikasa on the screen wordlessly “…You want to cuddle?” Jean asked tentatively, and Eren didn’t have to look up at him to know he’d be wincing and braced for a punch. Jean had never been good with words, even when they dated, their courtship that been a physical one with all their emotions expressed through some form of contact. However, despite the macho façade he worked so hard to maintain, Jean was a hopeless softie with an unexpected predilection for cuddling which Eren often made a show of begrudgingly humouring. Only he had to know he liked it just as much, and that Jean was a very good cuddle buddy, Horseface or not.

Eren shuffled back slightly and Jean took the wordless invitation, toeing off his sneakers and crawling in behind the brunet, pulling the duvet up around them despite the warmth of the room.

“He’s gonna be fine. This stuff happens all the time; all the bureaucratic red tape and protocols in the military make for a hell of a time for information to get around. You need the right clearances to get access to anything, not matter how much of a personal interest you have in the matter, but with Armin, Mikasa and that glasses chick on your side, you’ll get the information soon enough.”

“He could be…” Eren couldn’t manage to get the word out, it would make it all a little too real “I heard gunshots and he dropped his phone.”
“Doesn’t mean he was hit. Give the guy some credit, Eren; of course he dropped his phone, that doesn’t mean shit, though. Did you think he’d say goodnight and tuck his phone away first? I heard all sorts of stories about him while I was in army. The French Army, Eren. You don’t get an international reputation like his by being plain good. The dudes a ninja, and if anyone could survive that, it would be him. Honestly, the thing I’m most shocked by is that he didn’t capture those two dickheads too.” Jean hooked an arm around Eren’s waist “Besides, as if he’d die knowing he’d left you alone with me…”

Eren couldn’t help a small smile at that, and aimed a good kick at Jen’s shin, eliciting a satisfying yelp.

“Platonic cuddling, Jean.” He emphasized firmly.

“Yeah, yeah. As if I’d want anything more from you, Suicidal Bastard.”

“Eren! I got something!” Armin interrupted suddenly, voice hopeful. Eren sprang up, dragging his Mac closer, and Jean shuffled in too. Mikasa also abruptly ended her call in favour of crowding in behind Armin, eyes narrowed intently.

“What is it?”

“Hang on, he’s going through the medical file right now…Yes I’m still here. Male, Levi Ackerman. Wait hang on, let me put you on speaker.” Armin fiddled with his phone and held it closer to the laptop mic as everyone leaned closer, listening with bated breath.

“…was shot twice, according to the medical records…” Eren felt the blood drain from his face and his stomach flip. He closed his eyes and buried his face in his hands. He was going to throw up. Nonono this could not be happening. He had been in Levi’s arms this morning; why did it feel like that was weeks ago?

“…uhhh, oh! Moved from intensive care to recovery…”

What?

“Yep, looking good. Well not good, of course. Dude was shot twice and got a pretty bad concussion, but yea I mean, he—“

“Okay, thank you Eric! That will be all, bye,” Armin hung up the phone call, and both he and Mikasa looked up to meet Eren’s gaze. Slowly, as the news sunk in, their mouths spread into a wide grins.

“Eren, don’t cry; he survived!”

He survived. Levi was okay.

Eren roughly pushed Jean out of the way and clumsily crawled off the bed, making a beeline for the ensuite.

“I think he stopped crying.”
The long awaited arrival. Squad Levi are confirmed to be actual 8 year olds in the bodies of 30 year olds. Levi is a proud ass, and Petra must be rubbing off on him, because like hell is Eren going to let that fly. Enter angry, concerned waifu: Eren.

(Mama-Bear Tea Parties: hosted by Petra and Eren every Thursday afternoon in the courtyard to gossip about workaholic hubby's over scones and French Earl Grey)

“Monsoon season is coming…” Eren glanced up at the sky at the hushed words of the soldier standing behind him. He was no expert on the tells of Legion weather and hadn’t been around long enough to recognise the signs of the changing seasons, but even he could see there was a certain way the grey clouds hung low in the sky, pregnant and foreboding, that foreshadowed of the tempestuous rains to come. Though it was still humid, it wasn’t as unbearably hot; instead the atmosphere was heavy, moist and stifling under the clouds that rolled overhead, and the air seemed to fizzle with the anticipation of the oncoming torrential downpour. Eren swallowed and returned his gaze to the front, trying to ignore the roiling storm clouds that seemed to imitate the anxious churning of his stomach. The worst had passed. The chopper would be arriving soon.

As soon as Eren had recovered from his bout of nausea after hearing about Levi, he’d asked Armin to get his contact – Eric? –to message him the list of survivors and their status’. He’d then rushed to Hanji with the details, who had been thoroughly impressed by Armin’s resourcefulness and a little disappointed in themselves for not getting it first. Hanji had then wasted no time in having Erwin make an announcement to the Wing of Freedom soldiers gathered in the courtyard, expressing just the right amount of sadness to be appropriately mournful of their fallen comrades, but just enough happiness to be relieved for those who had survived.

Eren had taken pains to return to some semblance of normalcy for the rest of the day. He’d sparred with some recruits, helped out in the infirmary, and helped prepare tea. He’d sent Jean back as well, knowing he had work to attend to of his own. His presence had been reassuring and familiar in all the drama, and although Jean had expressed reluctance to leave and distrust at Eren’s forced reassurances that he’d ‘be just fine’, even he couldn’t forestall his work obligations for long. Exactly three hours after he’d confirmed Levi’s survival, Hanji had received word that Levi and his squad would be flying in from Maria.

“Why just them? For good?” Eren had asked in disbelief. After all that had happened, it sounded too good to be true. Well, aside from the mass shooting of course.

“They were the main targets of the attack and are returning for continued treatment in Legion since Marian doctors were sure they’d recover faster in familiar surroundings. If the other injured soldiers also wish to return afterwards, they’ll be coming as well since I’m sure no one expects them to get straight back to work after all that,” Hanji responded, scrolling through their phone and pausing every now and then to furiously tap away at something “It should be for good, well, in terms of this particular mission. Despite this attack, the Marian and Titan situation seems to have calmed down completely. Unless any of them want to, I doubt they’d be sent back any time soon or
even after they’ve completely recovered.”

“Thank God, until I see them all in one piece laughing and joking like the idiots they are with my own eyes, I don’t think I’ll be satisfied,” Petra murmured. She had come down from the giddy happiness of the initial relief at hearing her ex-squad was safe, just in time for Levi and his squad to arrive to be subject to the angry-relieved stage. Eren had eyed the way she wrung her hands and chewed her lip, buzzing with impatient anticipation to unleash her furious berating and bone-crushing hugs of maternal relief on the unsuspecting squad. He had to admit, he understood how she had felt.

He stood in the courtyard now, by Hanji, Erwin and Petra, the hordes of soldiers lined up with military precision behind them as they waited with squinted eyes turned skyward for the tell-tale dark silhouette of the army chopper in the sky.

“I see it!” He heard someone whisper behind him and he returned to grimacing at the clouds with renewed vigour. Hanji elbowed him gently in the ribs, and nodded towards the Western wall.

“Eleven o’clock,” Thy whispered helpfully, and Eren shot them a grateful smile before turning his gaze to where he could now definitely make out the growing shadow on the horizon. He let out a breath he didn’t realize he had been holding. Almost there.

It took so long, he was almost certain that for every metre they neared, they went one metre backwards again. Why was the shadow shrinking again? Had they turned back?! No, his eyes were just playing tricks on him. Hanji took his hand in theirs and gave it a reassuring squeeze, sensing his anxiety. He couldn’t help but imagine every possible scenario that could go wrong when they were so close but so far. Engine problems. Shot out of the sky. Perhaps the pilots were actually the terrorists in disguise, and the chopper would suddenly go careening kamikaze-style into the ground any moment? No, stop it Jaeger; this wasn’t some crazy action movie. The storm had passed. Deep breaths. Keep it together. See? They were here now, no problems. The fuck were you getting all worked up for? Eren watched the choppers painstaking descent into the centre of the training field, kicking up dust and dirt and buffeting everyone with powerful gusts of wind. He didn’t want to close his eyes even for the short time it would take for the blades to slow, wind to die down and dust to settle; afraid that if he averted his eyes even for that brief moment, the helicopter might disappear completely.

But it didn’t. Everything was fine. A textbook-perfect helicopter landing that would have received a round of applause in any other situation.

They rolled out in wheelchairs, whooping and skidding through the dirt to the cheers of their gathered comrades. Petra was right: they were idiots; childish, immature, hilarious idiots that actually shoved at each other as they raced down the ramp of the hulking black aircraft. Eren frowned after Erd, Gunther and Auruo had safely alighted, before he noticed that Levi was still making his way out —wheelchair-less—from the doorway, one arm grasping the railing for support while the other tightly clutched at his right side. Eren felt his smile slowly morph into a thunderous scowl. That son of a bitch.

That proud son of a bitch that wouldn’t use a wheelchair, despite obviously needing one, in some desperate attempt to maintain his stoic persona in front of his subordinates. He pulled free of Hanji’s grasp and began to stalk forward, overtaking Petra who was fussing over and reprimanding the other three with motherly affection as he made a beeline for his husband still making his descent. Hanji must have seen his expression because he heard them whistle lowly behind him and murmur something to Erwin that sounded a lot like “somebody’s in for a serious ass-whooping, and not the kinky kind” as they followed a few steps behind him.
Levi looked up at his approach, and the way his gaze immediately softened and the corners of his lips quirked upwards almost had Eren smiling back. Levi soon realized something was up though, because his brows furrowed in confusion at Eren’s expression.

“Didn’t you get a wheelchair?” He already knew the answer. Levi frowned at him, caught off guard by his abruptness.

“Yeah?” He turned to glance behind him at where he’d undoubtedly abandoned the contraption, before returning his puzzled gaze to Eren. Eren stormed past him and grabbed the discarded wheelchair, pushing it up to Levi and fixing him with a stern look. “I don’t really—”

“Get your ass in the wheelchair, Levi.” Eren interrupted with a no-nonsense tone. Levi arched a surprised eyebrow before he seemed to register something in Eren’s voice that made him realize that it wasn’t up for debate. It was an order. Eren took a deep, steadying breath when Levi still hadn’t made a move to sit in the wheelchair.

“How about your shove aside your forced machismo just this once and take the help that you obviously need. Look at you, you can barely walk; you’re meant to take it easy, if you keep hobbling around like that you’ll strain something irreparable.” Levi raised his eyebrows as he appraised the fuming young man before him. Eren could see he was slightly impressed, but at the same time, there was still that stubborn glint in his eye. Eren ground his teeth and stepped forward until he was right in front of Levi “You. Are. Injured.” He emphasized, seething “How many motherfucking bullet wounds will it take for you to fucking realize you aren’t bulletproof? Get on the goddamn chair or so help me I will put you in it myself, and don’t think for one fucking nanosecond I wouldn’t be capable of it right now,” Eren was aware that they had an audience. He could see from his peripheral vision how quite a few people were watching their hushed exchange curiously, and it probably didn’t take much to figure out what was going on.

Levi’s steady glare was a familiar one. One he’d seen levelled at several insubordinate soldiers before him. It was his I’m-going-to-give-you-this-last-chance-to-back-the-fuck-up-and-correct-your-mistake-before-I-kick-your-ass look, but Eren returned his gaze unflinching. He hadn’t made a mistake to correct, and he wasn’t letting Levi leave the chopper unless in was with his ass firmly planted in a wheelchair. But after what seemed like an age, it was Levi who was first to break eye contact, releasing an exhausted breath and combing a hand through his mussed hair. Eren allowed a relieved smile, knowing he’d won this round, and waited patiently as the older man lowered himself painstakingly into the chair, knowing better that to offer him help; his pride could only take one blow at a time.

Levi looked up at him once he was properly seated and shrugged, “You happy now?” Eren took this moment to finally look over Levi properly and take in every inch of his appearance, his stress, anger and anxiety draining away as he could finally see for himself that Levi was okay. He could make out the bulk of bandages around Levi’s middle, undoubtedly where he was shot in his right side. His upper left arm was also heavily bandaged as well, and his face was covered in small pink cuts and grazes. He was wearing his army pants tucked into his boots, and a tight white undershirt. He looked tired though, for once, he looked his age; eyes ringed by dark circles and shoulders almost unperceptively hunched with exhaustion.

Eren let out a shuddering breath and took Levi’s face in his hands, pressing their foreheads together and staring into the older man’s steel grey eyes. “I’m happy,” he smiled. Levi carded his fingers through the hair at the back of his neck, pulling him down for a kiss that was long overdue. It was slow, innocent and cherishing, and probably would have evolved into something less so if it wasn’t interrupted by a combination of cheers and jeers from the audience they had briefly forgotten existed. Eren straightened abruptly, face pink with embarrassment, and groaned as his back cracked
with the movement

“And I thought you couldn’t get any shorter,” He complained jokingly. Levi sent him a dark glare.

“Don’t push it brat,” He warned. Eren laughed, too happy to take Levi’s implied threat personally, and took his place behind the wheelchair.

“I’ll push you instead then.”
Humanities Strongest: Handle With Care

Chapter Summary

It's going to take Levi some time to get used to feeling like a delicate China doll, but like hell is he going to let bullet wounds get in the way of some well deserved time with his husband. Fuck Moblit and his 'medical advice'.

Chapter Notes

~warning: smutty stuff ensues~
I didn’t plan this. They were meant to cuddle and reaffirm their undying love for each other in a gross display of coupley-ness, but hey, to each their own. Some people snuggle and whisper sweet nothings in their lover’s ears, others… do it differently…

“Fuck, watch it!” Eren burst into giggles, which he unsuccessfully attempted to smother behind a hand as Levi shot him a death glare.

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t be laughing; you’ve been shot,” He apologised, trying to school his expression into one of seriousness. Levi sighed as he sat on the edge of his bed, having just painstakingly been transferred from the wheelchair to the bed through a joint effort by both of them. He wanted to collapse backwards, curl up, and sleep for days, but such a careless action would only rip out his stitches and reopen wounds. He wasn’t used to being so immobile and delicate; it was frustrating, tedious and infuriating. He levelled a stare at Eren that seemed to say ‘fix-this’, and Eren pursed his lips, gaze apologetic but tender.

“It might be wrong of me to think this, but I’m kind of glad you got hurt if it means you won’t be going anywhere again soon. I was starting to go stir-crazy.”

“I was shot, you shitstain,” Levi said incredulously, smiling slightly despite his words, “You know other wives just ask their husbands to take a break from work if they get lonely; not pray for them to get caught in a crossfire.”

Eren scowled and made to swat Levi’s injured shoulder, but had the presence of mind to stop himself before connecting. He grimaced sadly, carding a hand through Levi’s hair, which Levi slapped away irritably.

“Christ, stop petting me. And don’t look at me so pityingly like I’m a fucking kicked puppy.”

“I’m not pitying you, I’m pitying me. Here I was looking forward to crazy, hot sex when you got home, but I guess I’ll have to take care of myself manually for a while,” Eren lamented melodramatically. Levi narrowed his eyes at his young husband and made to reach out to him, but Eren nimbly dodged his grasp to pick up a first aid kit he’d brought in earlier.

“Hold it, you old pervert. I have strict instructions from Moblit to make sure you don’t strain yourself. Last thing we need is a dislocated hip to add to your multitude of injuries” Eren motioned
for Levi to remove his shirt while he sifted through the kit contents for fresh bandages. In the end he had to help Levi undress as he couldn’t lift either arm particularly high as a result of his injuries. “What inconvenient placement for both shots.” He complained when they finally managed to remove the offending garment. Levi huffed.

“Bullet wounds tend to be pretty inconvenient where ever they are.” Eren rolled his eyes but shrugged his assent.

Levi realized not long into the session Eren was being considerably handsy for a nurse. He only hoped Eren wasn’t this sensual with all the others soldiers he attended to on field and in the infirmary. He straightened to attention as the boy positioned himself on his knees on the ground between Levi’s legs after re-bandaging his shoulder in order to attend to his side wound. Eren leaned in close so his hot breath ghosted over Levi’s abdomen as he soaked the old bandages in alcohol and began to remove them, his fingers traced unnecessary soothing patterns on his skin whenever Levi hissed in pain where the bandages had stuck to the wound. He pressed a trail of kisses up Levi’s chest and along the underside of his jaw when he’d finished bandaging him up again. His nails digging possessively into Levi’s good shoulder when his lips finally met Levi’s and his kisses turned fervent and desperate. Despite his blasé act Eren had been worried and that came out now when all his guards dropped.

“Steady there,” Levi murmured against his lips. “I’m not going anywhere now.”

Eren huffed, crushing their lips back together. It was all he could do; he was well aware how rash he could get during sex, and last thing he wanted was to get so caught up that he accidently hurt Levi. Well damn, he never thought he’d be the one who had to step on eggshells around the other. He would strictly stick to making out, not letting his hands wander any lower than Levi’s shoulders. Levi had no such limitations, however. His hands roamed boldly over Eren, squeezing his ass and palming his growing erection roughly through his pants, smirking into their kiss at the sinful sounds the boy in his arms emitted. Damn, he could feel himself growing hard. If there was one good thing to come out of getting shot, it was that he got sent home earlier. He’d been looking forward to their reunion, and Gunther had been right; Eren hadn’t been able to keep his hands to himself since Levi had arrived. Usually his touches had been gentle and innocent; as though more to reassure himself Levi was actually there, but of course there were those times he hadn’t been so subtle…

Eren broke the kiss suddenly, shoving Levi’s hand away from where it had begun to creep down the hem of his jeans, and sitting back out of Levi reach. His hair was dishevelled and his lips swollen and pink from their fevered kisses as he watched Levi hungrily, pupils blown wide with arousal and breathing heavily. Levi glared at him, irritated by the interruption, but more so by the fact that he dared to look so damn tempting while being so damn out of reach.

“Enough,” Eren panted “Moblit said to take it easy. No over-exerting yourself for a while. You need rest and calm to heal.” His words sounded recited, and he frowned like he was saying it more as a reminder for himself than Levi. Levi groaned and rolled his eyes.

“Fuck that, Eren. Get your damn ass back here; you don’t get to tease me like that and not pull through.”

Eren shook his head, his lips set in a determined line although his eyes gave away just how tempted he was to take Levi up on his offer “No sex.” He said firmly.

Fine. No sex.

Levi began to undo his fly and shimmy awkwardly out of his pants, Eren watching him warily.
“What are you doing?”

“Not sexing,” Levi shrugged, shooting him a wink. Eren swallowed, gaze darting between his heated look and the hands working at his trousers. Once he was free of his pants, Levi slowly manoeuvred himself back on the bed until he was sitting with his back pressed against the headboard in just a pair of black briefs and bandages. He tilted his head back against the headboard and began to lazily palm himself through his briefs, eyes fluttering half –closed, but gaze remaining fixed on Eren.

“Levi…” Eren sounded torn as he watched the lewd display in front of him. His hand drifted unconsciously to massage his own erection through his pants. Levi paused his ministrations to frown down at him.

“Should I stop?” He asked. Teased. He didn’t mean it; that was pretty fucking clear from the obvious hard-on he was sporting. He wouldn’t stop now despite whatever Eren might say.

“Fuck no,” Eren said breathily anyway. Levi smirked, and slowly, his hand dipped under the elastic of his briefs. Eren groaned and got up; his pants felt too restraining. He didn’t realize how turned on he could get just watching Levi touch himself. He made short work of his shirt and jeans, yanking them off and throwing them off to the side without a second thought. He’d worn briefs too tonight. They were admittedly hotter than boxers and he knew their stark white looked great against his skin tan. Levi could apparently appreciate that small touch as well; his grey gaze roved greedily over Eren’s frame as he crawled onto the bed too and positioned himself before Levi on his knees, leaning back and supporting himself on his left hand placed on the bed behind him. He tugged down his briefs around his thighs and wrapped his palm around his straining erection, the flesh-on-flesh contact a welcome relief.

Levi looked wrecked. Eren was torn on where to look. His gaze darted hungrily between Levis face and where his hand worked over his cock, which he’d pulled free of the restraint of his own briefs. Levi’s expression was contorted with arousal and eyed darkened with lust, his mouth hung open as he panted lightly; he never had been very loud. Levi wasn’t particularly expressive in general, except in bed, when his stupid poker face disappeared completely and Eren could finally see the raw Levi in the throes of pleasure. He got a satisfaction out of being the only person who ever saw Humanities Strongest like this; completely stripped bare in every sense of the word.

Levi’s abs flexed and rippled as the pleasure rolled through him and a shudder rippled through his body as he twisted his wrist and thumbed the slit at the head of his cock. God, he was so hot. Better than any porn he’d ever jacked off to in his life. Levi, right here in front of him, a literal sex God coming apart because of him. He was close now, and so was Levi, if the way he was biting his lip to muffle the noise and fisting the bed sheets in his free hand was any indicator. Eren came first, Levi’s name on his tongue as his orgasm ripped through him, and Levi followed shortly after, the sight of Eren shuddering in pleasure while moaning his name more than enough to throw him over the edge.

Levi pulled a face at the mess on his hand “Gross.” Eren laughed breathily and rolled off the bed with a groan, trotting off the bathroom to retrieve a wet towel. Levi watched the sway of his hips appreciatively, his mind still hazy with the post-orgasm glow. Fuck, that was amazing. Who knew watching the boy come undone by his own hand could be so hot? There was something about the way that he couldn’t touch Eren despite how much he wanted to the whole time that made the entire experience that must more electrifying, but God was he exhausted.

Levi cleaned himself with the towel Eren brought back before throwing it over the side of the bed to join the pile of discarded clothes on the floor. He was too tired to care about tidiness. Their next
dilemma came in the form of finding a position to settle down in that wouldn’t be too painful for Levi or aggravate his injuries.

“Did you have to get shot on both sides?” Eren muttered as they finally settled on Eren curling up around Levi’s left side, tucked under his injured arm. Levi snorted.

“I’ll try to position my bullet wounds more strategically in the future.”

“You do that. It’s such a pain for me otherwise,” Eren quipped back. Levi was just beginning to drift off when Eren spoke up again.

“Moblit would be impressed.”

“What?” Levi craned his neck to look down at Eren strangely. What the fuck did Moblit have to do with anything? More importantly, why bring him up now?

“Well, we showed some pretty good self-control withholding from having sex.” Levi huffed a laugh.

“Yea, look at us; pinnacles of self-control.”

Levi squeezed Eren around his shoulders and felt his hum all through his body.

“Goodnight, love.”

"Goodnight."
Catching Up with Annie

Chapter Summary

Eren and Annie spar together after ages, and Eren decides to use the opportunity to oh-so-subtly question Annie about her, Reiner and Bertholt’s cryptic, secret meetings with his father. But Annie’s a tough nut to crack, and Eren’s not fooling anybody.

“It’s been a while.” Annie looked up from re-tying her shoelaces at Eren’s words, eyebrow arched questioningly but otherwise her expression giving nothing away.

They had just finished sparring again. Since Levi was on ‘medical leave’ and had trouble moving from A to B without being in pain, Eren had defaulted back to Annie for his training. Since she was around again. For once. It was late in the afternoon and everyone else had packed up and drifted to the showers, leaving the two of them alone in the courtyard. Eren shrugged and feigned nonchalance, trying to keep any hint of accusation or suspicion from seeping into his voice.

“You know I don’t really see you around much these days. Don’t even know what you’re up to; not that I expect you to keep me constantly updated, just, you know, if you’re not guarding me, what are you doing?” Apparently he was more transparent than he thought because Annie straightened up, and when she spoke, it sounded like she was reciting a textbook-diplomatic answer.

“We are keeping an eye on you; just because you aren’t seeing us, doesn’t mean we aren’t watching you” Well, didn’t that sound creepy “We appreciate that you’re a lot safer here than what it was like in Maria so we don’t need to be constantly close by. Doesn’t mean we aren’t doing our job though.” Except when you three are off gallivanting in Maria without telling me, although I suppose you expect me to think you’re still hanging around, just out of sight.

“No, I didn’t mean to say you weren’t,” Eren hurried to amend. He wasn’t sure if Annie had taken offence; it was hard to tell anything with her. He decided to take a different approach “You been back to Maria to update dad on whatever it is you update him on recently?” Ah, there it was; the barest stiffening of the shoulders that would have gone unnoticed if you hadn’t been looking for it. Annie glanced at him briefly, her expression blank as always, although this time Eren had the feeling she actually had to put effort into maintaining her apathetic exterior.

“Reiner told you about that?” She asked casually. Too casually, as she mopped the sweat off her brow.

“Nah, someone else,” Eren responded flippantly, keeping his eyes steadily trained on the blonde. If she was going to keep secrets, two could play at that game. Annie’s eyes narrowed fractionally as their gazes met, but she turned away and began heading to the water fountains. He wasn’t meant to know that, he realized when she’d been more focused on finding out how he’d found out rather than answering the question. If she had nothing to hide, Eren’s question would be just another part of the idle chit chat. Her vain attempt to pinpoint his source of the knowledge had been shot-down too, and not exactly discretely. She knew he knew she was hiding something.

Eren wasn’t very good at these mind games; his approach tended to be direct confrontation, so he hardly expected to be able to stay one foot ahead of Annie and somehow trick her into letting something slip like he knew Armin would be capable of. “Well?” He prompted, as he refilled his
bottle and Annie drank from the fountain. It seemed like she was content to let the question slide by unanswered, but like hell would he let that happen. “You’ve been around more recently, though, so I assume it’s been a while.” Would she fall for it? He was hardly mastermind extraordinaire, and if she didn’t answer like he expected, he didn’t have a next line of attack prepared.

“No we haven’t.” She answered. Success! Eren fought the urge to punch the air with triumph “Your father mainly wanted updates on your safety, but as you’ve been settling down, the frequency for such meetings are becoming less and less necessary.” A tight-lipped smile. Conversation ended, but he wasn’t done yet. He wanted to laugh in her face at the pathetic cover story – as if his father would fly all three of them over so regularly to be updated on _him_- as well as the fact that he’d just caught her out on a lie hook, line and sinker.

“If you guys haven’t been back to Maria recently, why did Levi tell me he saw you at the wall right after the Titan attack?” He wanted to do a little victory dance at executing his final attack, but instead he bottle it up with great difficulty and attempted to maintain the air of indifference to the conversation they both knew was completely put on. She paused. He wasn’t meant to know that either, he assumed.

She turned to him and shrugged “No, I said we hadn’t been back to Maria to update King Grisha recently. We returned then because we were called to reinforce the wall defence forces, of course.” Eren’s smile faltered at her response. God damn it; that made sense. His mind raced to find another point to latch onto, but none came. He was dying to find out what their meetings were about; although the cover story might have made sense for anyone else –a father concerned for the welfare of his son- Eren knew better.

“Why doesn’t dad just call me to check up if his worried?” He asked, throwing all pretence of a casual conversation out the window in his desperate bid to catch Annie out.

“From a security perspective. He wants to be informed by the bodyguards as they are the most informed of the protective measures surrounding you, and if we consider there to be any risk posed towards you,” Annie levelled him with a cool stare, daring him to question her rationale “He doesn’t call us because he doesn’t trust we have a secure line. Not that he doesn’t trust Legion, but we are discussing sensitive and in-depth security protocol, and if that reaches the wrong ears, that would pose a threat to a lot more people than just you.” Except his dad wouldn’t go to such lengths just to check that Eren was safe. If he was so concerned about Eren’s safety, he wouldn’t have married him off to a practical stranger who was known for his criminal past, antisocial disposition and status as the strongest soldier in a military nation. Eren knew it was a sham excuse, Annie probably knew it too, but if he dared call her out on it, she could just as easily act appalled he had such little faith in his father, and that was that.

God damn it. _Think_, Eren!

“How’s the hubby holding up anyway?” Annie asked, interrupting his inner turmoil.

“Huh? Oh Levi! Yeah, he’s doing good. Cranky that he can’t do anything on his own, though,” Eren laughed, remembering how he’d had to cut up the older man’s steak for him at last night’s dinner since his capacity to properly handle cutlery was severely limited by his injuries. Levi had glowered at him the whole time, but hadn’t said a word, recognising that it was necessary but resenting the fact just the same. He could be such a child sometimes. Eren shook his head, smiling fondly “But hey, he’s alive.”

Annie, who had been watching him closely, turned to face the setting sun with a hum, “Yeah, that’s what matters.” She pushed off the edge of the water fountain and raised her hand in a half wave as she moved away in the direction of the communal showers “Well I’m off, Jaeger. It was
nice sparring with you again. Levi’s taught you well; you can actually hold your own a bit now.”

“Yeah, thanks. We should do it more often,” Eren called after her, frowning at her retreating back. Was he imagining all this? Seeing something that wasn’t even there? All he’d gotten out of today’s ‘interrogation’ was severe doubts in his own suspicions. Annie had some kind of response to every one of his accusations, and the one lie he knew she was telling was one he couldn’t even confront her about because to an outsider, it made perfect sense. Besides, why was he even suspecting Annie? She’d been nothing but a good friend and bodyguard for the few years he’d known her. He felt awful for even doubting her motives and actions, even for a moment; whatever she was doing, shouldn’t he trust her? He felt guilty at his own lack of trust.

Eren scratched the back of his neck and scowled up at the grey sky. He wanted to get to the bottom of this; no one else would believe his suspicions on the shaky foundation he’d based them on, not that he had a solid theory in the first place, just the suspicion that something was going on. It probably wasn’t even anything major; what could his dad possibly have to discuss with his bodyguards which would be that important? Nonetheless, he’d had enough of his dad’s secrets and wanted to figure this out once and for all; it could be like his own show of independence to not allow himself to be lied to and dismissed anymore. Even if it turned out to be nothing important, he wanted to show his dad he was capable of figuring things out for himself, and hopefully, his dad would be more open and honest with him after recognising he wasn’t just a clueless kid anymore. He just needed a different approach.
Definitely Kinky

Chapter Summary

Um, not sure why this chapter exists. It wasn't on my story plan, but just happened? I'm not even sure what to think of it, but I haven't updated recently so yea, have it. I honestly can't even summarize it. Why.

Chapter Notes

OH MY JESUS 1000 KUDOS??!!
I can’t believe this. Honestly, I never imagined such an amazing response to this fic that literally began as an experimental first try at fic writing. You guys have been so encouraging and fantastic! Your comments, subscriptions and kudos really helped build my confidence as a first time writer, and God only knows this wouldn’t have lasted as long as it did if it weren’t for you. Thanks especially to those of you who’ve stuck around since the beginning; I remember each of you specifically and am so appreciative of your ongoing support.
Gahhh, for a writer, I am so lost on how to sufficiently articulate how overwhelmed and happy I am right now! Thank you so much!!! :)))

Dot Pixis was his name. The old bald man from the meeting with the disarmingly sharp gaze (disarming considering the silver flask permanently glued to his lips). Eren hadn’t known at first who he was and his status, assuming he was some boring minister or something, although the predilection for alcohol didn’t quite fit with that image. It was when his name slipped past Levi’s lips as he was telling Eren about the upcoming reunion gala for Erwin’s graduating class that Eren learnt he had been his old instructor.

Eren had sauntered into his office that afternoon after his swim, hair artfully ruffled and grinning seductively. He’d heard Levi was overwhelmed with more paperwork than usual today, and figured he knew exactly how to help the older man relax and unwind. He had been congratulating himself on being such an amazing, doting husband; here he was, making sure Levi didn’t stress out too hard and was taking it nice and easy, what with his injuries and all. No sex, of course, but he had plenty other ideas in mind. That was until Levi had raised his head and taken one look at his expression before shoving a wad of paperwork into his face.

“If you have time for that, then you have time to help me with this work.” He’d said simply, which was how Eren found himself sitting cross-legged on Levi’s sofa, stapling through the large pile of reports in just his swimming trunks and a sour look on his face.

“He taught you and Erwin?” Eren asked. What kind of name was ‘Dot’ anyway? He didn’t ask; he supposed eccentric men deserved eccentric names.
“Not me.” Right, Levi had probably been running around in Titan slums at the time. He had never had official military training; the idea of which never failed to impress Eren. Levi was completely self-taught, learning in a few hard years in the underworld what soldiers took years of military schooling to master.

“Why are we going then?” Eren asked, pausing in his work. If it was a reunion dinner, shouldn’t the guest list be exclusive to Erwin’s graduating class? Levi glanced at his stilled hands and Eren resumed stapling with an exaggerated sigh and roll of his eyes. My God he could be such a hard ass. And a toned ass. He wanted that ass. That’s all he had wanted; how did it end up like this? Eren cursed at the stupid silver stapler, thumping it down on the report in his hand with unnecessary ferocity. Levi continued to pointedly ignore his attitude.

“Because the drunk bastard has a weird soft spot for me, apparently,” Levi said, shooting Eren a sardonic smile “And because I’m the exception to every rule.” No, don’t you wink at me. Don’t you give me that sexy half smile, you loveless bastard.

“Will there be a lot of people?” A lot of military men, in crisp uniform and serious scowls. Eren wasn’t particularly keen on the idea of this gala. Pixis might seem like an interesting enough man, but he doubted anyone else would be like that. He’d stick out like a sore thumb for sure, awkwardly shuffling around on his feet while everyone discussed military manoeuvres and exchanged tales of old training days with nostalgic fondness around him.

“Yea, but there will also be a lot of alcohol, so they’ll cancel each other out,” Eren might not be too keen of the idea of a military reunion, but he could always count on Levi to be a lot less keen of the idea of large gatherings of people. “Bless that man, if there’s one thing you can rely on him for, it’s to provide free alcohol.” Levi shook his head with revered respect.

“Your over-reliance of alcohol to get you through every social event can’t possibly be healthy.”

“That’s why I try to avoid all social events where possible; for my health.” Eren couldn’t help laughing, silently cursing his lack of self-control. He’d been doing the cold-shoulder pretty well so far too.

“At least Petra will be there,” He consoled himself.

“She won’t be, actually. She told Erwin she wasn’t feeling very well, so Erwin’s bringing Shitty-Glasses instead. I am ninety-nine per cent sure that she’s faking it though; no one hates these gatherings more than her.” Eren’s face fell at Levi’s words. If Petra didn’t even enjoy it, then there was no way he would, and now Petra wouldn’t even be there for them to complain about it together.

“Aren’t I enough?” Levi asked, eye brow arched as he feigned hurt.

“I can’t check people out with you there. Petra is an ace wing-woman.” Eren couldn’t help but peek up from his work to catch the older man’s reaction. Levi put down the page he was holding to fix Eren with a scandalized expression.

“I’ll be right there. Why would you be looking anywhere else?” It took all his self-control to stifle his smile; Levi sounded genuinely wounded. Eren put down the pages he was holding to shoot Levi with a challenging stare.

“I’m horny, fresh out of the shower and practically naked on your office couch, but you have me stapling your bullshit work for you,” the brunet returned to stapling, nose turned up snobbishly “I’m going to go find me a man who is more accommodating of my sexual appetite. I don’t think
you’re capable of keeping up with my youthful vitality anymore.”

Grey eyes narrowed fractionally “Come here.” Ah, there it was. That commanding tone that never failed to send shivers down his spine. Eren, you kinky little shit.

“No Levi, I still haven’t picked up your Viagra prescription from Moblit,” He chided gently. Levi had two kinds of anger. One left you frozen in fear in a puddle of your own urine at a glance, while the other was a possessive, primal anger that only Eren got to see after he managed to rile Levi up just the right way. It was an anger that was thrilling in a totally difference sense; the way Levi would pin him to the bed to teach him a lesson for his ‘insubordination’. Eren liked that anger.

Levi stood slowly, recapping his fountain pen and placing it gently on the desk. He took his time strolling over to the sofa, tugging off his cravat and folding it neatly before tossing it on the coffee table before Eren. Eren stubbornly continued his stapling without looking up despite his heart hammering in his chest with anticipation. He could see from his peripheral vision Levi slowly unbuttoning and removing his shirt, folding it and placing it on top of his cravat. Off came his undershirt, his belt, and the fucking handgun strapped to his waist. Still, he made no sign of acknowledging Levi’s presence, discreetly placing a sheet of paper over his lap to hide the only growing sign of his attention. Levi reached down and plucked the stapler from his fingers despite Eren’s protests, and then the page from his lap. Whoop, there it is.

Eren finally turned his face up and smiled with faux-politeness at the grey-eyed man towering over him, studiously ignoring the tell-tale tent in his swimming shorts that severely detracted from his attempt at unaffectedness.

“Yes?”

“You’re a fucking brat.”

Eren pretended to take moment to consider the statement, before nodding in agreement “You could be fucking this brat.”

Eren certainly didn’t expect the way Levi suddenly descended on him, hands fisting in his damp hair and kissing him hungrily. He had just enough forethought to sweep the stack of reports beside him off the couch before he had been shoved down and Levi saddled him from above. They might have splayed messily over the floor, but he figured Levi would prefer that to crinkled pages stained with an assortment of bodily fluids any day. He’d have to re-do them all. Eren would have to re-staple them all.

No stop it Eren; think sexy thoughts. Who the fuck thinks about mess and paperwork in a situation like this? Levi, that’s who. Good God, he’s actually rubbing off on you.

Levi pulled away from the kiss, pausing to look down at him with a frown.

“What the fuck could you possibly be thinking about that is so important?” He snapped irritably. Oops, Eren rolled his eyes and seized the smaller man by his shoulders to pull him back down. Big mistake.

Levi swearing loudly and jolting back was the first indicator he’d fucked up big time. His mind caught up with his actions a few seconds too late; Levi’s bullet wound. Only thing was, the sudden action of recoiling only aggravated his side injury, and Eren watched with wide, disbelieving eyes as Levi rolled off him with almost slow-motion grace, clutching at his side with a pained grimace. Rolled off him straight over the side of the couch and onto the floor with a gentle “oof!”
Eren blinked up at the empty space above him which had been occupied by Levi only seconds ago. He rolled over and peered over the edge of the couch down at where Levi lay in equal stunned disbelief on his back.

“Did you just… fall off the couch?” Eren’s words seemed to break the moment. Grey eyes snapped over to glare at dark green with seething intensity and Eren felt himself shrinking back at the attention. This was the anger he didn’t like.

“I’m going to fuck you up.” Eren gulped.

“And not in the good way, I take it?”

It was times like these Eren was thankful for Levi’s injuries, as terrible as that thought was. Granted he wouldn’t be caught in this situation had Levi not been injured in the first place, but nonetheless, as he catapulted himself off the couch and bolted out the office door, he knew that there was no way he’d have made it even this far if not for Levi’s handicap.

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Gunther watched the tan figure zip across the courtyard from his place seated under the shade of the clock tower, closely followed by the unmistakeable, short form of the Corporal.

“I wonder what they’re playing?” He mused. Erd snorted into his beer mug.


“He’s good for him, I think,” Erd arched an eyebrow at him questioningly “Keeps him young, you know?” Both soldiers returned their attention to the two shapes now disappearing from sight in the direction of Hanji’s quarters. “Maybe it’s just some kind of rehabilitation exercise for the Corporal?” Their gazes slid over to glance at each other out of the corners of their eyes.

“Nahh,” both said in unison, lifting their drinks up to their lips to take a deep swig. “Definitely kinky.”
Super-Spy Eren Jaeger

Chapter Summary

Pixis’ reunion Gala is as dull as Eren expected, until someone catches his eye. Levi’s jealousy makes another appearance. Hanji is shit-stirring as usual, although Petra definitely shares the blame too. Poor Erwin just came out to have a good time...

It was exactly as he had feared, which was to say: it was shit. Eren glanced down at the glass of wine in his hand and swirled the red liquid around in the large glass half-heartedly, wishing for some miracle to turn into something stronger. That would be a bad idea too, though. Getting shit-faced at some uppity gala for snobby military men was bound to end badly and Levi would probably skin him alive, after thanking him for the entertaining distraction first. Eren glared at the back of the aforementioned man’s head, as if hoping by some miracle Levi would feel his gaze boring into him and finally give him some attention. It wasn’t his fault though, Eren was certain Levi was enjoying this just about as much as he was.

Erwin and Hanji had been dragged into conversation the moment they had entered the room, which was to be expected. Everyone wanted a piece of Legion’s Commander and his Head Advisor, trying to strike up any conversation they could with Erwin, dredging up all sorts of obscure tales from back in their training days in an attempt at familiarity. Erwin and Hanji took it all with practised diplomacy, humouring the crowd and carrying on any conversation with ease. Levi and Eren had been right behind them, and suddenly, Levi had been dragged into the fray by default. Everyone had heard of the recent attack in Maria, and naturally were intrigued by all the technicalities and any exclusive details they could get from the man who had witnessed it all first-hand.

Eren wove his fingers between Levi’s when he noticed the way the older man’s hands were clenched tightly in a fist; the only indication of his growing exasperation. He traced soothing circles on his knuckles with his thumb; at least he was doing something important by being here. Preventing Levi from completely snapping and massacring all the guests counted as important, right?

He let his gaze wander idly around the room. It was a grand, high ceilinged hall that had been hired out especially for the event. Tables along one side of the wall were laden with an array of exotic, mouth-watering cuisines, and there was even a champagne fountain. Round tables with maroon tablecloths and eye-catching centre pieces were spread around the room, but most people were standing as they congregated in small groups, catching up with old friends. Eren glanced despondently down at the glass in his hand and frowned in surprise when he found it empty. When had that happened?

He looked up and his eyes immediately zeroed-in on the bar in the corner. More specifically at the bottles of dark liquid lined up on the shelves. Fuck this wine shit; he needed something with kick. Levi seemed significantly calmer now after Eren’s subtle intervention. He was responding to enthusiastic questions posed to him by two men in full military regalia with disinterested, curt replies that usually went something along the lines of “that’s fucking classified; I can’t say shit,” Eren smiled. Typical. Anyway, Erwin and Hanji were right beside him, so they could probably keep an eye on him while Eren ducked over to fetch himself another drink. He highly doubted Levi
would start a fist fight in the short time he'd be gone; he'd hate to miss something like that.

He pried his fingers out of Levi’s grasp, raising his empty glass in answer to the questioning look the raven sent his way.

There was no one around his age here either that he could strike up conversation with. They were all men and women Levi’s age or older and seemed only capable of carrying conversations about military manoeuvres, various conflicts and wars around the worlds, and stories from ‘back in the day’. He almost ordered himself two shots of vodka before it struck him that perhaps he should maintain some level of put-togetherness. It probably wouldn’t be a very good look for people to see him brooding by the bar, downing shots consecutively.

Old man drink, think of an old man drink, Eren. “Uhh…whiskey. Neat, thanks.” He nodded to himself, pleased with his decision. There, he could play it classy when he needed to. Eren propped his elbows up on the counter as he waited for the bartender to prepare his drink. He had been absentmindedly scanning the room when a familiar face caught his eye.

Nile Dawk? What was he doing here? Had he been in the same crop as Erwin? Eren watched the man through narrowed eyes and noticed he appeared to be watching someone else similarly. He followed his gaze to where Erwin stood, smiling genially while conversing with a group of men. Well, well. What have we here? Nile stood alone a little ways off from everyone else, looking more like an observer than a participant, definitely not enjoying himself by the looks of things. Suddenly, he glanced down at his coat. A brief rummage in his pocket produced a phone that he glanced at to read the ID of the caller before bringing it to his ear. With one last glance in Erwin’s direction, he slinked backwards before turning and slipping through a side door.

What a fucking creep. He was practically the physical manifestation of shady behaviour, and like hell if he thought he was getting away with it.

Eren snatched up his drink, chirping a thank you to the bartender before sliding off his stool and making his way to the same door Nile had disappeared through. Play it cool, Jaeger. He kept his gait casual as he strolled over to the door, glancing around him to make sure no one was watching before slipping through as well. He felt like a super spy; sneaking after shady characters all dressed up in a fancy suit, whiskey in hand. All he needed now was some neat code names.

The evening had just gotten infinitely more interesting.

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“Where the fuck did that little shit go? He was out of my sight for five minutes.” Levi and Hanji had finally managed to extract themselves from the conversation, making a swift getaway in search of Eren and more alcoholic beverages, leaving Erwin to fend for himself. Psh, Captain America was probably thriving under all the attention, knowing him.

“Goodness gracious, Levi. Having withdrawal symptoms already? He’s barely been gone!” Hanji snickered, unaffected by the dark look Levi shot their way. “Remember when you thought the only times you’d have to put up with Eren’s presence was when you attended fancy occasions together? Remember when even that sounded like too much?” Levi rolled his eyes at Hanji’s wistful tone. Picking apart Levi’s growing attachment to the bright-eyed boy was Hanji’s favourite subject nowadays, and it would be irritating enough if it wasn’t also embarrassingly accurate.

He was suddenly jolted back when Hanji came to a sudden standstill, seizing Levi’s arm to pull him to a stop beside them. They gasped melodramatically, clutching at their chest as they stared wide-eyed at something on the far side of the room.
“What the ever loving fuck is wrong with you, Christ,” Levi swore, glaring at the hand crinkling his neatly pressed suit before turning his eyes on the person the hand was attached to. Hanji didn’t seem to notice his displeasure, gaze still firmly fixed on whatever had caught their attention. Levi shook off their hand and turned to look for whatever had caught their eye. If it had the shock-factor necessary to shut Hanji up, then he was definitely interested.

“Oh Lordy, Petra was right.” Levi frowned when his eyes landed on Eren sitting at the bar. What the fuck was Hanji going on about? The boy seemed to be watching something or someone intently, his thick eyebrows pulled down in a frown of concentration that looked adorable on his face. Fuck, did he really just use the word adorable?

“What are you talking about, Shitty Glasses?” Levi began to make his way in Eren’s direction, but was tugged back again by Hanji.

“No, no, look at him, Levi! Look at who he’s looking at,” Hanji insisted, forcibly grabbing him by the cheeks to turn his face in Eren’s direction. Levi frowned in confusion, but his frown turned into one of disgust when he realized who Eren appeared to be watching.

“Dawk? What’s he got to—“

“I’m so sorry, Levi,” Hanji interrupted, turning his face back to face them and placing both their hands firmly on his shoulders and looking at him with eyes full of pity “It appears Petra’s hypothesis was indeed correct. Eren…. They looked back to where Eren and Nile was and Levi followed their gaze. Nile was now on the phone and turned around to exit the main hall via a side door. Levi watched with confusion as Eren stood from his perch by the bar, looking around furtively before walking a little too casually over to where Nile had been and following him out.

Hanji took a deep breath, as if preparing to deliver some difficult news “Eren has a crush on Nile.” Levi looked at Hanji as if they had grown a second head, his mind slowly working through the sentence they had rushed through.

_Eren has a crush on—_

“What?!”

“I’m so sorry Levi, I know this must be hard for you.”

Levi stared at them for a long moment, his face looked calm but Hanji didn’t miss the slight twitch in his jaw. Suddenly he pushed his half-finished drink into Hanji’s hand and turned on his heel, stalking off in the direction of the door Eren and Nile had disappeared through, leaving Hanji staring after him in surprise for a grand total of 0.0125 seconds. If there was anything that made Hanji an invaluable Head Advisor, it was their efficiency. They thought fast and worked fast when it mattered, despite how absent-minded and disorganized they appeared on the outside.

Hanji shoved both their drink and Levi’s into the hands of an unsuspecting gentleman standing nearby, waving away his surprised protests as they whipped out their phone and hit speed-dial.

“Petra, it happened! Yes, just like I said; Levi is definitely on his way to kick Nile’s ass. No, of course I didn’t tell him anything; he figured it out all on his own! I gotta go now or I’ll miss it. Yeah, I’ll call you back. Okay, yep, bye!” Hanji giggled manically, drawing more than a few concerned glances from nearby patrons. Finally the night was getting interesting.
This secret-agent gig is a lot tougher than Eren anticipated. Luckily, he discovers a hidden talent for improv theatre. Levi doesn't seem to appreciate his new-found skill, although Hanji certainly seems to find it entertaining.

Crap, he’d lost track of him. How had he even done that? It wasn’t like this was a labyrinth; there were only so many places Nile could have gone and yet here he was, wondering around the back utility rooms and through darkened corridors in search of his elusive target. So much for smoothness; James Bond never got lost in a broom closet while following a suspect.

Eren heaved a frustrated sigh and turned around. How could he even hope to join Levi’s if he couldn’t even do something as banal as tailing someone else? Might as well head back since he’d fucked up that golden opportunity; if only he could remember which way ‘back’ even was. The lack of proper lighting really wasn’t helping either. Eren stumbled past a fire escape he was sure he’d past not five minutes earlier. Maybe he should use it? At least that way he’d be outside and no longer lost in the serpentine corridors. The entrance shouldn’t be so hard to pinpoint from the outside either; he could always get back through there.

He’d just pushed down on the latch when the door was swung open from the outside, exposing the very man he’d just spent an age trying to track down. Uh oh, think fast! He didn’t know what prompted him to do what he did, but he had to admit it was pretty ingenious.

As if caught by surprise by the suddenly opened door, Eren toppled straight into the chest of the opposition leader, spilling his half-finished drink all over the other man’s shirt.

“Oh my God, I’m so sorry! I’m such a fucking idiot. Shit, it’s all over your shirt; hey, that’s a really nice shirt! Oh crap, it must have been expensive.”

The man now doused in whiskey looked right back down at him with a combination of shock, irritation and disgust, “Uhh…”

*Seize the opportunity, Eren. This is fate; don’t let him get away.*

So seize he did. Literally. Eren grabbed the older man by the sleeve of his coat and began to retrace his steps to a men’s room he remembered walking past just a little earlier, dragging the older man behind him.
“Hold on a moment, sir. I’ll help you clean that up right away!” Eren babbled cheerfully, interrupting Nile’s bemused protests. “It’s the least I could do; running into you like that.”

“What? No, don’t worry abou—“

“Gosh, I’m such a little klutz! What would Levi think; his little husband being such a hopeless mess?” Eren rather forcefully shoved the sodden man backwards into the small bathroom, cornering him by the sinks and presenting him with his widest commercial grin he knew the tabloids adored. Nile eyes were darting around the small room like he was looking for an escape route.

“Whoops, I completely forgot to introduce myself!” Eren thrust his hand out for Nile to shake “I’m Eren Jaeger, Prince of Maria,” He withdrew his hand before it had even registered for Nile to shake it, leaving him hanging with his hand half extended while Eren turned to grab a handful of handtowels and dampening them under the running tap. He figured he should act naively chipper; someone Nile would never suspect of having an ulterior motive, let alone be trying to weasel information out of him. He got on his knees and attacked the front on Nile’s shirt with enthusiastic vigour, scrubbing at the dark stain intrusively in order to keep Niles mind distracted enough to fire off a few questions in between.

“I’m… Nile Dawk, Opposition Leader?” The older man said, still sounding slightly bewildered by the whole situation “Look, you really don’t have to do all this.” He tried to push Eren insistent hands away but the brunet persevered with stubborn determination.

“No, no, this was all my fault,” Eren said cheerfully.

“I can do it myself. It’s not even that mu—“

“We should take your shirt off.” Eren interrupted, fixing the older man with a serious look “I’m sure you’re very uncomfortable right now.” Nile wasn’t actually that bad looking; despite Petra and Hanji’s clear aversion. He looked scruffy, with his stubble and moustache, but it gave him a sort of raffish charm. Shit, was he really thinking that? Hanji had made it explicitly clear how much Levi hated the man; imagine if he ever found out what he’d thought. Eren cringed internally.

Nile blinked at him, eyes wide and looking even more uncomfortable by Eren’s suggestion than being in a shirt damp with alcohol. Eren had to admit he was pretty impressed with how he’d executed the suggestion without his expression wavering in the slightest. Levi might have a killer poker-face, but damn could Eren act.

“Okay, that is entirely unnecessary.” Eren waved away his protests and began to unbutton his shirt. Nile was looking increasingly uncomfortable and skittish, which was exactly what Eren had been aiming for. With him blindsided by the absurdity of the situation he’d found himself in, Eren could probably slip in some key questions.

“It’s okay, we’re all friends here!” Eren shot him a dazzling smile “I mean, you and my dad are close acquaintances too…”

Damn, he was toned. Eren was so surprised at the unexpected set of abs before him that it took him a moment to realize the older man had stiffened with surprise at Eren’s last words. Eren looked up at him, keeping his expression casual while he gauged Nile's reaction to his apparently offhand comment. The raven looked perturbed and suspicious; clearly Eren could eliminate the possibility that his dad and Nile were just ‘casual acquaintances’ if Nile's reaction was anything to go by. He needed to cover his slip up, last thing he wanted to do was tip off Nile he knew anything he shouldn’t.
Eren pretended to be confused by Nile’s startled expression “You know, when you guys play chess together?” Nile’s ‘deer-caught-in-headlights’ expression morphed into something more like a ‘wtf-is-this-kid-on-about?’ Phew.

Eren pouted and put on his best rendition of a child-like thinking face “Aren’t you the guy who comes over every month to play chess with my dad? The Polish guy who loves fishing and vodka?”

Nile looked at him like he was an idiot, which was fine with him because that was exactly what he’d been going for. At least he looked more relaxed now; clearly Eren’s little act had been convincing.

“No… that’s not me.” Nile shook his head “You’ve mistaken me with someone else.”

“Oh, sorry. All you old men look the same, you know?” Eren said, throwing in a moronic giggle for effect and pretending not to see Nile’s offended look. Crisis averted; Nile thought he was an idiot and his cover hadn’t been blown. Maybe his true calling was in theatre?

Eren was just about to stand up when he heard the bathroom door open behind him and turned around to meet Levi’s stunned expression.

“Oh, hey!” Eren’s smile faded when he noticed the way Levi’s eyes darkened as they darted between Eren and Nile, and it suddenly hit him just how bad this whole situation might look to a casual observer. It was like the opening of a bad porno. “O-okay,” He began, holding up his hands placatingly as he slowly got to his feet and Levi began to stalk forward, grey eyes narrowed “I think I should probably clear things up before—” His attempt at mediating was interrupted when Levi’s fist slammed into Niles jaw.

“Holy fuck! Levi?!” Eren was momentarily stunned as he watched the opposition leader’s head snap back; Levi’s punches had to hurt more than the usual, after all.

“Oooh! Good one, Levi!” Eren turned to see Hanji leaning casually in the doorframe, phone up and recording the drama unfold with excitement. His first instinct was to ask them to help him break up the confrontation before realizing it would probably be a futile effort; they were clearly having far too much fun spectating.

“Are you serious, Hanji?!” He gawked. They smiled at him sheepishly but didn’t stop recording. Eren shook his head in disbelief and returned his attention to the more pressing matter of the grown men engaged in a punch-up behind him. He could deal with Hanji later.

Thankfully Levi wasn’t in peak condition; his right hook might have done some damage to Nile, but it had also caused his side injury to flame up again. Eren gently but firmly seized him by the shoulder, holding him back as he made to go after Nile again.

“What the fuck are you thinking? I spilled my drink on him and was helping him clean it up!” Eren intervened, manoeuvring him around. Levi glared at him and tried to shrug him off, but Eren was stubborn and Levi was injured and older man eventually had to surrender. Eren took a step back to level Hanji and Levi with a stern look. He felt like a teacher reprimanding two misbehaving pre-schoolers; how the tables had turned.

“Why are you back here in the first place?” Levi demanded. Eren’s gaze darted from Nile, currently sitting on the bathroom floor groaning and nursing his bruised jaw, to Hanji, who pulled a ‘uh oh’ face and slunk backwards out of the bathroom, thankfully recognizing the unspoken request for privacy. Or maybe they were just taking the opportunity to send the video they took to
Petra because Petra was undoubtedly their accomplice. Eren seriously needed to have a firm word with those two.

“Jaeger.” Levi’s voice drew back his attention, and Eren gulped at the way Levi was glowering at him. How was he supposed to respond? If he tried to explain why he thought Nile was suspicious, it would undoubtedly sound inadequate and flimsy out loud, not to mention Levi was clearly intoxicated. So he was said the truth. Sort of.

“He was looking shady slinking around in the shadows. I saw him leave, he looked suspicious and I was bored, so I followed him!” Eren hissed at Levi, keeping his voice low enough so that Nile couldn’t overhear “Except I got lost and accidently ended up running into him and spilled my drink on him,” Eren swept his arms out widely as if in display “And here we are.”

Levi scowled and looked away, his arms crossed defensively. Eren realized that he looked exactly like a scolded child. So this was drunk Levi; pugnacious, possessive and, dare he say it, a little petulant.

“What did you think I was doing back here?” Eren demanded. Levi shrugged evasively and continued to avoid eye contact, which was frankly more telling than an actual response. Eren sighed, “I thought we covered this back with the whole Jean-Fiasco, except that time I admit you had some fair grounds. I admit this jealousy thing is kind of sweet in your own misguided way of showing attachment, but you also sort of just punched the Opposition Leader’s face in the men’s room at a fancy Gala, so we’ll revisit that later. Right now, you should probably go. I’ll take care of Nile and hopefully we can get on with this shit-show while avoiding any further punch-ups, deal?” Levi looked like he strongly disagreed with Eren’s decision to nurse his arch-enemy, but Eren silenced any potential protests with his teacher-look. “I’ll come check on your side right after, okay?” Eren added in a gentler tone, but Levi huffed and left the room, glaring at Eren’s like he had betrayed him. Eren winced; although Levi was surprisingly compliant when intoxicated, he dreaded having to deal with that sooner rather than later. Drunk Levi apparently had an attitude and seemed like the grudge-bearing kind too; Eren would have to get creative.

He turned to face the fallen politician, hands on his hips, and heaved an exhausted sigh. “Gotta say, I kinda feel bad for you,” Nile groaned again and experimentally moved his jaw “It can’t be easy having Humanities Strongest Soldier hate your guts.”
That Wasn't Funny

Chapter Summary

We all found out how petty drunk Levi could be, but apparently Eren needs a fresh reminder.

Short chapter because I'm shit and this is more a snippet than a proper update anyway.

Eren sidled up to Erwin, having finally caught him in a rare moment where he wasn’t surrounded by admirers.

“I think Levi’s mad at me,” He whispered into his glass of juice. Erwin shot him an amused look and raised a thick eyebrow.

“Hmm, I got that impression too,” He said. Eren waited, hoping for some advice to follow up, but none came.

“Did he say anything to you?” Eren probed desperately “Did you see where he went?”

Erwin rumbled a deep laugh and Eren scowled; he was clearly enjoying his position of power.

“Help a brother out, Erwin. I didn’t do anything wrong! He just misunderstood a very… compromising situation.” Eren winced as he said the words. Better not go into detail with Erwin.

“So I heard. Look, don’t stress out; you clearly haven’t had to deal with an intoxicated Levi before so I understand why you’re a little concerned. Drunk Levi is…” Erwin stared across the room and frowned slightly “Well, he’s petty. Don’t take anything he does or says too seriously, he’s a vengeful little bastard.” Erwin was still frowning across the room, but his expression had gone from thoughtful to disapproving. Curious, Eren turned to see what had caught his attention. And almost dropped his juice.

He finally found Levi. Except the shorter man currently looked rather entertained surrounded by a gaggle of young women, probably the dates and escorts of all the other guests. He leant casually against the bar counter, nodding along to whatever nonsense the women were spouting and somehow managing to pull off an irritatingly attractive combination of bored detachment coupled with arrogant charisma. Was that even possible? Well, it was now.

“Before you overreact, remember what I told you; don’t take it too seriously—Eren?” But Eren had stopped listening halfway. Shoving his unfinished drink into the older man’s hand, Eren set off across the floor with determined strides, making a bee-line for his husband. Petty was an understatement. Honestly, and Levi called him the brat; who was really the immature one? So Levi walked in on him in a compromising, albeit easily explainable, situation and this was how he retaliated?

Levi glanced up at his approach and had the audacity to smirk. “All finished with Nile, then?” Eren fumed silently, glowering around at Levi’s twittering flock of admirers. Some had the decency to recoil under his glare, but unfortunately this also meant they pressed closer to Levi seeking some form of comfort or protection.
Be mature, Eren; one of you has to be. Eren took a deep, calming breath before speaking “Levi, I’m sorry about that, but I swear it wasn’t!” He fluttered his hand in an ambiguous gesture “whatever you seemed to think it was.”

Levi shrugged and turned away from him to nurse his drink. Eren frowned at the older man’s back, affronted. “Okay then. This isn’t whatever you seem to think it is either.”

“Then what the hell is it, Levi?” Eren exploded.

“We’re just hanging out.” One of the women shrugged nonchalantly. She was a gorgeous, tall, redhead woman in a tight black cocktail dress and red pumps. Eren caved slightly under the painful reminder of Levi’s bisexuality and his own insecurity. Her legs were amazing.

“Look Miss, I wasn’t asking you. I’m just trying to have a conversation with my husband, if you don’t mind.” Don’t snap at them, Eren tried to remind himself. They hadn’t done anything wrong.

“He doesn’t seem to want to talk to you, though, mister.” Another girl with a sleek black bob and a gorgeous navy dress piped up. Eren’s eyes narrowed and he ground his teeth.

Nah fuck it. Fuck this chivalry business. He was the prince; chivalry was the knight’s forte anyway.

“Okay, listen up ladies. You need to back the fuck off. I don’t care who started this or what you’re doing; I’m here now and I’m crashing the party.” Oh God, he sounded like a parent who walked in on their child and a group of their friends smoking pot in the basement. Next thing he’d be grounding them individually.

Eren heard the unmistakeable sound of Levi’s low laughter and felt himself falter. He was being laughed at. In front of all these girls, too. He felt his face burn with humiliation.

“Okay, okay, that’s enough.” Levi said, turning toward him again and still smiling.

“No, fuck you,” Eren spat, turning away. Hell if he was going to stand around getting laughed at. Levi could sleep on the couch tonight. Did he even have the power to enforce that? Let’s see Levi try and stop him.

He heard Levi call after him but refused to respond, making his way back to Erwin. He had enough of tonight, he just wanted to go home now. Go home and make stupid drunk Levi sleep on the stupid sofa.

“Oi brat,” Eren felt Levi’s fingers curl around his wrist and jerk him around to face him. Eren pointedly looked straight ahead, a good several centimetres above Levi’s eyes. At least he got a sense of satisfaction from that. “Hey, look at me.” Eren could hear the exasperation in Levi’s voice but refused to oblige “I was joking, Eren.” The older man said, shaking his hand insistently “Oi, look at me. Come on, Eren.”

“It wasn’t funny.” Eren finally met Levi’s gaze and continued frowning “You know what happened between Nile and I. I told you I was sorry, even though I really didn’t do anything. Honestly, have some faith in me, Levi. You kinda make me feel like shit when you act like I’d be the type to just go off with someone. And what the fuck was that?” Eren jerked his head angrily in the direction of the bar they had just left, glowering when Levi huffed another laugh. He was trying to be serious here.

“It was just a little payback, I’m sorry,” Eren looked down and away, unsatisfied with Levi’s response. He knew he was throwing a tantrum but he deserved to. “Eren, were you jealous?” He
could hear the smile in Levi’s voice as the older and stooped slightly to look up at Eren’s face, grey eyes glinting with mirth.

“If I wasn’t here, you’d be with women like that tonight. You’d probably take one of them home,” Eren said quietly.

Levi let out a long sigh and stepped back, Eren looked up in confusion at the sudden increased space between them. Levi was standing back, arms crossed over his chest as he seemed to consider Eren, his lips pressed in a firm line. He was acting surprisingly sober now, his behaviour was composed and put together, unlike moments ago when he’d literally pouted at Eren before storming out of the bathroom. Eren frowned questioningly at Levi’s thoughtful expression.

“I didn’t get it when you said it at first, but I see it now; jealousy is cute.” Eren blinked, stunned by the sudden change in topic. Levi shrugged and shook his head, looking more like a resigned adult reprimanding a problem child than someone telling another their jealousy was endearing. “No seriously, I’m going to have to ask you to stop looking like such a kicked puppy or I’m going to jump you right here right now.” Oh wow. Okay, here was drunk Levi again. Except Eren didn’t mind this drunk Levi.

“Wow,” Eren breathed, nodding slowly. Levi imitated the motion, his face retaining its serious expression that completely mismatched his words. “That’s…um. Okay, I don’t know how to respond to that, sorry.”

Levi stepped closer to him until they were chest to chest, and then he stretched up so his lips brushed the lobe of Eren’s ear. Eren tried to repress the shudder at the sensation, but couldn’t help it. His eyes fluttered closed as Levi’s warm breath ghosted over the skin below his ear.

“I like jealous Eren. I think I’m going to have to flirt with other people more often.”

“Nooo...” Eren’s eyes snapped open and he stepped back, shaking his head “That-that’s a terrible idea, no don’t do that.” Levi’s soft chuckling made him realize he’d been played again. Eren scowled “I don’t like your jokes, Levi. They’re not funny.”

“I think they are.”

“So… we’re good now?” Eren asked hesitantly. They seemed good. Erwin was right; drunk Levi was petty. Apparently he just needed to have a little payback and he’d be fine again.

“Yeah, we’re good. What do you say we get out of here? I’ve had enough drinks and honestly, that’s the only reason I came.”

Eren smiled widely “Sounds good” he glanced over Levi’s shoulder towards the bar “What about your admirers? Won’t they miss you?” Levi shrugged nonchalantly and began to walk towards Erwin, presumably to say his goodbyes.

“Sometimes it’s good to leave them hanging. Keeps them interested for next time.”

“That’s not funny, Levi,” Eren called as he jogged after the older man, Levi only laughed in response. Okay, once they got home, Levi was definitely sleeping on the sofa. Maybe after they’d gone at it a couple times first, though. Then Eren would banish him to the couch in punishment.
Copy That, Seabiscuit

Chapter Summary

When Eren called to arrange a meet up with him, Jean had expected a normal catch-up before he returned to France. In hindsight, he should have known better than to expect something so mundane from the suicidal bastard. Jean is reminded all over again just why Eren acquired that particular nickname.

Alternatively titled 'The Proverbial Shit Hits The Fan: Part II'

Chapter Notes

I was so excited to start writing this! It’s the start of the final arc and shit finally speeds up. Queue some good-old Jean/Eren shenanigans. I loved writing this chapter; their interactions and Petra and Hanji’s interactions are so fun to write. They have a natural, dumb chemistry.

“I cannot fucking believe you, Eren Jaeger. How did I get dragged into this?”

“Because you have military training and I need someone with your expertise.” To do what? Hell if Jean knew, yet here he was, trailing after Eren like always. Couldn’t he get one of his newfound soldier buddies to help him get arrested?

Jean peered around apprehensively, chewing his lip and fidgeting anxiously as Eren struggled to swing his leg over the tall garden wall. “You’ll turn me into a fugitive. I’ll get kicked out of Legion and stripped of my medals. My mother was right about you.”

“Would you quit neighing and give me a boost for fuck’s sake? And please, your mother loves me.” Jean grumbled something under his breath and awkwardly helped Eren manoeuvre the rest of his body inelegantly over the wall, receiving a kick to the face for his efforts. Why was he here again?

“Come on, Jean! Security will be back around soon!” Jean heard Eren hiss from over the wall. The half blond shook his head and heaved a long-suffering sigh. Honestly, why did he even bother resisting anymore? In the end, he always got dragged along with whatever hair-brained scheme Eren had come up with.

“I should just leave your ass in there and bail,” Jean snapped half-heartedly, swinging himself up despite his words, using the trellis fixed to the wall as a makeshift ladder. “Does the Midget know what you’re doing and who you’re with?”

“I’m going to tell him you said that.” Jean snorted, the evasion being all the answer he needed. He felt a little too pleased with the knowledge Eren had trusted him with this little mission that his own beloved husband didn’t know about. Or alternatively, Eren had just decided he’d be more willing to leave Jean behind than Levi if that’s what it came to in an emergency. Wouldn’t be the
“Right, and then have to explain why you were with me in the first place; sure, Eren.” Jean jumped down from atop the wall and rolled to break his fall, grinning triumphantly up at Eren at his perfect landing. Eren just rolled his eyes in exasperation, unimpressed.

“How’s married life anyway?” Jean asked, brushing off his trousers. Eren had insisted they wear all black, even though it was still dusk and there was still a reasonable amount of light out. What a fucking loser.

“Jesus Christ, don’t you start. I’ve had it up to here with people asking me “how’s married life treating you?”,” Eren imitated a nasally voice and pulled a face, making Jean snicker. His expression turned thoughtful “It’s nice, though. I’m really enjoying my life now; I feel like I’m actually doing something useful, you know?”

"Man, don't talk like that. Everyone's up and getting married. First you, then Ymir and Christa. Soon you'll be popping babies, and here I am still single. I'll be like the cool, gay uncle."

"First of all, you shouldn't be too concerned abut me 'popping a baby' or whatever," Eren grinned at him "And hey, if you're really that depressed about being single, I have this cousin-actually, he's more like a fifth cousin twice removed- who's pretty cute and single?"

"Okay no. You are not setting me up with anyone. And definitely not your cousin. That's fucking weird, dude." Jean protested, stepping back and raising both hands as if to ward of any more bad suggestions.

"Whatever, it was just a suggestion. Die alone, see if I care." Okay, that was slightly over the top. He wasn't going to die alone; it wasn't that he couldn't find anyone, just that everyone else was finding some one else prematurely. Here they were settling down still in their prime and missing out on so many great opportunities. Jean didn't envy them, he pitied them... Right?

Eren pulled two balaclavas out from his back pocket and threw one at Jean, who managed to intercept it before it hit his face.

"God, where did you even find these?” He asked, inspecting the item incredulously “You are way too enthusiastic about this whole ‘breaking and entering’ thing, man.” He had really gone all out with this whole 'incognito' thing.

Eren shrugged like balaclavas were a totally normal item of clothing to own in the tropics “Hey, guess what? I made him sleep on the couch the other night” He grinned at Jean triumphantly before rolling on his balaclava. Jean arched his eyebrows, impressed.

“You made the Corporal sleep on the couch?” He shook his head in disbelief “I thought that shit only happened in the movies.”

“Well actually I told him to, but at first he refused so I threw a tantrum and went to sleep on it myself. I ignored him until he eventually physically moved me to the bed and slept on it himself,” Jean could tell by the way Eren’s eyes crinkled around the edges that he was grinning proudly under his balaclava. Jean stared at him flatly through his own stifling mask, it was too fucking hot to be wearing all black and covering his entire head.

“That doesn’t count. That’s charity.” Eren deflated with a scowl but apparently had no rebuttals because he returned his focus to the task at hand.

“Shut up and keep down, we have work to do.” Eren swatted Jean’s balaclava-clad head
chastisingly. They must look ridiculous; the world’s most incompetent spies. Jean really needed to take a moment to re-evaluate his life choices when he got out of this mess. If he didn’t manage to get arrested first, that was.

“Yeah, about that. Want to tell me again why I just helped you infiltrate a Legion politician’s home? You were somewhat vague on the phone; I wasn’t aware I’d be committing several crimes today.”

“You didn’t care about the law when you streaked across Maria’s city square last year,” Eren said, creeping ahead of him and squatting behind a topiary neatly pruned in the shape of a swan. What a pretentious dick; who actually kept topiaries in this day and age?

“Fuck off, I was drunk and you called the bet.” They both quietened as a security guard strolled past, hands clasped behind his back and whistling absently. Once he was out of earshot, Jean spoke up again. “Eren, you didn’t answer my question.”

“Okay, okay. This is Nile Dawk’s house; he is the Opposition Leader, so the head of the opposing political party to Erwin’s.”

Jean raised his eyebrows and looked down at where Eren was crouched below him “Wait… did Erwin send you to spy on the opposition?” Holy shit, when Jean had first seen Eren after his wedding, he’d been shocked. The guy had changed a lot in a few months; he’d lost the baby fat around his cheeks and gotten leaner and tanner. Eren honestly looked like one of the soldiers, and Jean had wondered in passing if he actually had joined the Wing of Freedom too. He’d dismissed the thought right after, but now he wasn’t so sure. Aside from the all-black clothing and balaclavas, Eren had been surprisingly professional the entire time, sneaking around the premises of Nile’s property with practised ease. He’d even pin-pointed on his own the patch of wall surrounding the property which was in the blind spot of security cameras. Jean wondered why he’d even been dragged along; Eren didn’t seem to need his ‘expertise’ at all so far.

Eren shot him a look like he’d just said the dumbest thing, which Jean thought was slightly uncalled for because that’s exactly what this looked like. “Erwin wouldn’t do that. And if he did, he’d get a professional, not his best friend’s husband and his horse-faced ex.”

“Watch it Jaeger; you fucked this horse-face. Besides, I’m risking jail-time to help you with your stupid plan so be grateful,” Jean growled “So why are we here, then?”

“Because he’s up to something,” Eren answered cryptically.

“…Up to what?”

Eren sighed “Yeah you see, I’m not too sure about that yet.” Jean blinked.

“You’re fucking kidding me—Eren?!” Jean didn’t have time to confront the green-eyed boy before he’d darted out from behind the ridiculous shrubbery and sprinted up to the main building, crouching low. Jean swore under his breathe but followed close behind him. They took a moment to evaluate their next move, backs plastered to the wall of the house, before Eren began to edge towards a side door.

“Tell me you were joking. You’ve got to have something to go on?” Jean pleaded in a hushed whisper as Eren crouched in front of the door. Jean watched in amazement as the brunet pulled out a lock-picking kit from the inner pocket off his jacket. He was no expert on what newly married couples got up to, but he’d been under the impression it involved a lot of sex and cuddling. It appeared he was mistaken in Eren’s case; apparently the Corporal had spent the last few months
training his young husband to be a ninja. Unless of course they got up to some pretty kinky shit that had made lock-picking knowledge necessary in the first place. Jean shook the thoughts out of his head; now was not a good time.

“He’s been meeting up with my dad in secret. And before you say it, no it’s definitely not business. It’s probably nothing, but my dad’s going out of his way to hide it so now I’m—” Eren grunted and Jean heard a faint ‘click’ as the door was unlocked. This guy really needed to work on his security, “…curious.”

“That’s it? Are you sure your dad’s not just being his usual level of keeping you out of the loop?”

“Nah, this time it’s different. Not to mention the way Nile looked at me when I even hinted that I knew they were meeting up.”

“Maybe they’re secretly lovers?” Jean suggested wryly, shrugging at the disgusted look Eren shot him, “Hey, same love man.” Eren made a gagging noise and opened the door slightly, peering in to make sure the coast was clear, before beckoning Jean to follow and slipping in. Jean almost stuck his tongue out at Eren’s back before he remembered he was wearing the infernal balaclava and would probably only get a mouthful of cheap wool for his efforts. He thought it was funny.

They found themselves in what was apparently the laundry. Except it was a fucking huge laundry. Jean should have been used to fancy houses by now; his ex was after all a prince. Still, he stared around the room in wonder, lost as to why anyone needed a laundry as big as his garage when all it was used for was washing clothes. There was even a fancy-ass light fitting that he personally considered could very well be categorized as a mini-chandelier. Why the fuck did a laundry need such a fancy light-fitting? Who would admire it? The house-keeper? Jean shook his head; his mother might be the Ambassador of France, but their own house was still only sensibly well-off. This was ridiculous. Rich people were ridiculous. Fucking Legioner’s were ridiculous.

“What are we doing here exactly? Are we looking for something in particular?” Eren, who had opened the laundry door to peer out into the hallway, rolled up his balaclava and turned back to grimace at him sheepishly. Jean did the same; they no longer had security cameras to worry about anyway.

“Honestly? I hadn’t thought that far ahead.” Jean went bug-eyed at his words. He could just tell his face must have gone slightly purple by the way Eren was looking at him with a mixture of concern and wariness.

“You know I never plan ahead! I’m actually surprised we made it this far…” Jean groaned and leant his head back against the laundry wall. He was going to get arrested and thrown in jail and he’d have nothing to show for it. Eren probably had diplomatic immunity or some shit, but he was definitely screwed.

“Tell me why I dated you again?”

“I think it was the thrill.”

“Right.” Well, he’d gotten what he’d asked for. Although apparently they didn’t need to be dating for that particular perk.

“Hey, come on. I think his office is this way…” Well, go hard or go home, right? He might as well try steal a crystal ash-tray while he was here. He didn’t doubt for one second this ‘Nile’ guy (what type of name was Nile anyway?) would be pretentious enough to own one. “Maybe we should confront him and ask him straight out what he’s up to? Our faces are covered, right?”
“Eren, that is a terrible idea.”

“Don’t use my name! There could be bugs. We need code names; I’ll be Rogue Titan and you can be Seabiscuit.”

“Suck a dick, you suicidal bastard.”

“Copy that, Seabiscuit.” Jean opened his mouth to snap a retort, but was cut off by Eren waving his hand in his face in what was apparently a signal to be silent “Shh! I hear him. I think he’s on the phone…” Jean edged closer behind the shorter boy who had an eye pressed to the crack of the office door. He could just barely make out one side of a muffled conversation from his position.

Nile, presumably the only audible speaker, sounded oddly excited and nervous. He spoke rapidly, his voice wavering with barely contained thrill, as he gushed to the unknown person at the other end of the phone line. Jean and Eren exchanged a puzzled glance before returning their attention to the conversation.

“…tonight, yes… still in recovery…” Jean frowned and leaned closer, ignoring Eren’s elbow jabbing his ribcage at the uncomfortable proximity.

“Of course… ensure the attacks are in co-ordination… No, Levi and his squad were the main issue… should be fine… ideally they would have been eliminated… your people screwed that up… no use telling me that now; what’s done is done.”

Jean felt Eren stiffen from where their bodies where pressed together. Holy shit, were they actually hearing this?! If what they were hearing was correct, then Nile had planned the attack on Levi and his Squad at Wall Maria, along with someone else’s help. This was an inside job. Jean gripped Eren’s arm firmly, half in reassurement and half in restraint; he didn’t trust Eren not to barge in there after what they’d just heard. More importantly, he’d heard something about a co-ordinated attack too.

“Erwin should be home tonight… perfect timing… in position… of Freedom base too… Annie take out Levi… Okay, sure… Thank you, Grisha.” Jean heard a beep as the call was ended and the squeak of leather as a body reclined back on the office chair. Neither boy made a move. A single word echoed in Jean’s mind.

Grisha.

What. The. Fuck.

Jean felt his stomach drop and reeled back in shock as his body finally caught up with his thoughts. Shit, shit, shit. He twisted his hands in the fabric of the balaclava still bunched up around his forehead, then bit down on the back of his hand to muffle any possible sounds he might make. They needed to get out. They needed to get out now. He finally turned back to face the green-eyed boy still standing motionlessly by the door. God, he didn’t even want to imagine what was going through his head after all that. Nonetheless, they couldn’t waste any more time; Nile had mentioned tonight. Hell, it was already tonight!

“Eren, we have to go!” Jean hissed at the brunet boy. Eren remained frozen to the spot and Jean roughly jerked him around to face him. Viridian eyes stared back wide and unseeing. For fucks sake, don’t freak out now! Jean gripped the shell-shocked boy firmly by both sides of his face and stared intently into unseeing green eyes. “Eren. Listen to me. Snap out of it! We need to get out of here. We need to call help. We need to save Levi.”
As if things couldn’t get any worse, Jean heard the unmistakeable *click, clack* of footsteps approaching from the other end of the corridor. *Oh hell no.*

Well, at least they’d confirmed Eren’s suspicions. Mission accomplished?
Jean figured he could take them on. He had the element of surprise on his side, right? One last
backwards glance at the catatonic brunet behind him confirmed he’d be of little use in the fray. He
at least had the presence of mind to roll down both their balaclavas before he began to bounce on
the balls of his feet, rolling his shoulders and neck in anticipation of the coming fight. The fate of a
nation rested on his shoulders; important people’s lives were at stake. Jean could do this.

The security guard finally rounded the corner, bringing them face to face. Thick, practically non-
existent neck, arms built like tree trunks and a scowl that rivalled Eren’s angry-face; the dusty-
blond soldier barely had enough time to admire the abomination of a human being before him
before the realization hit him with approximately the same speed and force of the boulder-like fist
that collided with his jaw. Jean could not do this.

How had he moved so fast? It defied all laws of physics for that pseudo-Hulk to move with such
speed. Anyway, wasn’t he supposed to have the advantage of surprise on his side? Well, he was
definitely surprised now. Jean’s head snapped back and stars exploded in his vision. It seemed
funny that his previous fear had been jail time, because he was certainly going to die here today in
these ridiculously ostentatious hallways, dressed in black like some petty cat-burglar. Jean had still
been blinking away his dizziness, reading himself for the next blow and resenting the fact that he
would die a single man without a cute boyfriend back at home to mourn his disappearance when
he noticed the blur at the corner of his vision. He almost dismissed it as a symptom of concussion
until he realized said blur was actually a mini tornado of flying fists with distinctly green eyes. A
mini tornado which had launched himself at the security guard with astounding vigour, and by the
looks of it, was making short work of him too.

Eren moved like a ninja. Jean watched stunned, partly from the blow to his head and partly from
sheer awe as Eren move fast and fluidly, ducking and weaving around the Hulks fists with agility
that made the security guard look like he was fighting through water. He practically danced around
the larger man, completely silent and completely focused, and it was over before it had begun. He
didn’t even land a single punch or kick; he’d simply drawn in close enough until he was within
reaching distance and then, fast as a striking snake, his hands had darted out to jab his opponent
once in the shoulder and twice in the neck.

The larger man immediately froze mid-swing and collapsed, immobilised. Eren intercepted his
slumped frame before it could hit the ground and alert anyone else of their presence, grunting under
the weight.

“One are you just going to stand there and stare all day, or are you going to fucking help?!” The green-
eyed boy demanded gruffly. Jean snapped out of his trance and ducked under the slumped figure,
gingerly draping one arm over his shoulder so the weight of the body was shared between them.

“Did you… Did you kill him?” Jean asked. He wasn’t sure what to make of the idea; it might have
been justified given the direness of the situation, he just couldn’t process that it was Eren who
would have done it. Eren, his pugnacious ex who always bit off more than he could chew and
charged headfirst into any fight even though it almost always ended with him getting his ass
handed to him on a platter, was capable of taking down a trained professional that even Jean with
his military training couldn’t handle.

They began dragging the limp body back the way they came to the laundry. Jean was still
struggling to process the situation. One second they were eavesdropping on a stranger to satisfy
some hair-brained theory that Eren had conjured up, the next they were racing to save a nation
from a political coup while dragging a corpse along the way. Jean had thought he’d spend the day bickering with Eren over coffee.

Eren stared at him as though he was rendered speechless by the sheer stupidity of the question. Jean was frankly insulted.

“Do you have any idea how the human body works? Of course I didn’t kill him, I just knocked him out!”

“Well I don’t know! Not all of us were trained by ninja-assassins!” Jean hissed back. They’d finally made it back to the laundry. Eren awkwardly opened up one of the tall, double-doored linen cupboards and motioned for Jean to help him manoeuvre the body in. “Excuse my mediocre military training. I just saw you do some shit to his neck and assumed you broke it… or something.”

“Pressure points, dumbass,” Eren shot back as though it were kindergarten level knowledge “Come on, we have to get the fuck out of here now. This guy will be awake in under ten minutes.” Jean wasn’t about to argue with that.

It was pouring when they had finished stuffing the guard into the cupboard and emerged outside. The deluge couldn’t have been more poorly timed. The rain wasn’t like in Maria; cold droplets that stung as they pelted you from the side. Legion’s rain came down in buckets. It couldn’t have been raining more than fifteen minutes, but the garden pathways were already streaming with over an inch of water and it didn’t look like it would let up anytime soon.

The two black clad figures darted out from the alcove by the laundry entrance and towards the section of wall they had entered over. One minute in the rain and they were drenched to the skin. It wasn’t that uncomfortable though; the air was still warm and humid and the rainwater was lukewarm against Jean’s skin. It just made climbing over the wall that much more difficult, his muddy Nike’s struggling for purchase against the rain-damp bricks.

“Give me your phone,” Eren demanded, holding his hand out expectantly once he had climbed over after him. Frowning, Jean did as he was told. Eren handed him his own in turn. “We’re splitting up. You head to Commander Smiths and I’m going back to Wings of Freedom. Try and get in touch with anyone you can; since you don’t have anyone’s numbers, use my phone. I already remember most of my contacts off by heart anyway.”

“What?! Eren, what the fuck am I supposed to do once I get there?” This was too much. Jean’s mind was buzzing with the intensity of the situation as he tried to figure out the best course of action, yet here was Eren standing before him perfectly calm and composed giving him directions like he hadn’t been frozen to the spot mere minutes ago. What had even had even happened to the shell-shocked boy that had stood stunned outside Nile’s office door? Jean was a combination of impressed and mildly terrified of the serious Eren standing before him right now.

Serious Eren in question was currently glowering at him impatiently, rainwater streaming over the edge of the hoodie he had pulled up over his head and dripping onto his face.

“Are you seriously going to freak out now?” Eren asked. Jean spluttered indignantly; of all people to be asking that particular question.

“Jean, I need you to be calm. I’ve given you directions, they’re pretty simple; if you can follow them we have a chance of fixing this before it all goes to hell. Just try call anyone to warn them, and once you get there, tell anyone you can what’s going on. We really don’t have time to waste; can you do that?”
“Yeah...” He sighed, hanging his head “Yeah, I can do it.” How was he so calm? Jean was seriously starting to wonder which one of them was the soldier trained for crisis situations and which one was the rich, sheltered city boy.

Eren seemed to hesitate for a moment before seizing Jean by the front of his drenched sweater and pulling him forward into a crushing wet hug. Jean’s arms automatically locked around the brunet in turn; it had been months since they had last held each other like this but it felt so normal even now. They stood like that in the rain for barely a few seconds, but it was enough. It was sobering, those few seconds. Eren, who always made such a fuss of unnecessary shows of affection and teased him endlessly whenever he instigated any cuddling back when they dated, was suddenly the one hugging him. His body was warm, reassuring and familiar against Jean’s, his scent nostalgic. Jean briefly wondered why they had broken up in the first place. All too soon, Eren was pulling away. He kept his gaze down as he shifted from foot to foot, shoving his fists into the pockets of his hoodie.

“No care, okay? These guys don’t fuck around; they shot up a room full of soldiers just to get a stab at Levi.” Jean nodded mutely as he watched the shifty, restless boy before him. He felt numb, like this wasn’t actually happening. This whole situation was so surreal; standing in the warm torrential of Legion’s heavy rain as they wished each other good luck before plunging headfirst into a potentially deadly situation.

“You too.” He managed. Tight-lipped smiles were exchanged, an awkward, obligatory fist bump, and then they were turning away. Jean could hear the splashes of Eren’s footfalls fading as he sprinted away, but he didn’t look back. He had a job to do. He had to focus. He wasn’t about to let Eren down, and he sure as hell wasn’t about to let Eren best him. Think of it as a competition; first one to safe their respective damsels in distress wins.

Well this was turning out to be an interesting holiday. Jean’s heartbeat raced as the adrenaline pumped through him. Lives at stake or not, Jean wasn't one to allow himself to be upstaged by anyone, least of all Eren.
"Bring it, Jaeger," He breathed. He could do this.
Jean hitches a ride with an unlikely accomplice and Mikasa and Armin finally catch wind of their King's scheming.

Amidst all his righteous bravado, Jean had overlooked one very important detail; he had no idea where Commander Erwin lived and no means to get there even if he did. He was currently splashing through puddles down a main road with no particular idea if he was even heading in the right direction. Shoulders hunched against the rain and strong gales, he blinked rainwater out of his eyes as he desperately Google searched for an address on Eren’s phone. Thankfully the boy hadn’t changed his password in three years. Was there a special title for his accommodations like the White House or something? He had no clue.

So absorbed in muttering colourful swears under his breath as he furiously tapped away on the water slicked phone, he almost completely missed the tell-tale flash of headlights illuminating the path ahead as a car approached from behind him. Without thinking, he practically threw himself onto the road right in the pathway of the oncoming vehicle, a beat up blue ute, which skidded to a halt mere inches from his knees. His brain realized a little too late that that could have been handled better; it was practically nightfall and he was clad in all-black thanks to Eren’s great idea. That was probably the dumbest move he could have pulled, especially in this god-forsaken downpour, and could very well have ended badly but he had no time to think of that now. He sprinted around to the driver’s window, apology on his lips.

“Goodness gracious, dear. I could have hit you! You’re lucky I still have the reflexes of a young lady!” Great, an old coot. The perfect getaway driver, just what he needed. She was a sweet looking thing with a halo of curls that have been dyed a strange, washed-out lavender shade, magenta eyeliner and a lichen-green sweater that made him want to gag. It was a hideously obnoxious combination in all and did very little to brighten his mood.

“Yeah, sorry miss but I’m in a bit of a hurry,” She blushed at the flattering title. He still had it, whatever Eren might say “Could I trouble you for a lift? This is an emergency.”

The old woman’s asymmetrically drawn-on eyebrows rose with intrigue “Why of course, sweet-cheeks. Hop on!” Jean cringed at the pet name but swallowed his pride before making his way around to the passenger’s side without slipping in the mud and face-planting. He didn’t doubt for a moment it could happen. Today was turning out to get progressively worse with every passing second. The outlook for how this night would end was looking pretty grim.

“You have a cute little accent there. Not from around here? Well, where are we off to?” The car’s interior was thankfully warm, dry and homely. It smelled like old people; mothballs, musty old books and gingerbread. The car seat had a rainbow cover that appeared to be hand knitted. This woman was straight out of a caricature; it was insane.

“French, no, and to Commander Smith’s house, please.” He tried to make it sound as nondescript as possible. Just casually dropping by to the leader of the nation’s home, as you do. She was a Legioner, no doubt everyone here knew where he lived. Try as he might to keep his tone even, the woman’s eyes still widened and her hand jerked in surprise, sending the car veering dangerously
on the road before she managed to right it again. Jean’s stomach lurched and he fisted his hands in the knitted cloth of the seat covers, knuckles going white with force. He was going to die. He wouldn’t make it and Erwin would die and the country would go to shit and Eren would hate him, all because he’d had the misfortune of electing a batty old coot as his getaway driver of choice.

“Why on earth are you going there?!” She woman turned to regard him with startled eyes. Please just keep your eyes on the road, please. Her gaze flickered over his shoddy appearance suspiciously. Jean didn’t blame her; he looked a mess. He needed a cover story, no one in their right mind would drive a suspicious foreigner to the house of the most powerful man in the country. This woman might be senile, but he didn’t doubt even she knew better than that. He couldn’t exactly tell her straight out what was going on either; either she wouldn’t believe him or she’d panic and actually send the car careening into the ravines.

“I’m so sorry, I should introduce myself. I’m—” name, think of a name “Seabiscuit” *F*uck. Fucking fuck you, Jaeger, and your dumb fucking code-names. The woman was looking increasingly alarmed and not at all reassured by his words. “Uhh, Doctor John Seabiscuit. I’m… a midwife.” That… wasn’t so bad actually. Granted he was pretty sure midwives didn’t have the title of ‘doctor’, but that was a minor detail he was sure she could overlook. The First Lady was pregnant, wasn’t she?

“A midwife?” Phew, she bought it. “Why are you headed there then?” Her eyes seemed to widen with realization “Lady Petra is going into labour?! My word, but it’s too early! This is terrible news, terrible!” She began to blink rapidly, frowning with concern and practically hunched over the ancient steering wheel of the car. Jean was certain she’d worry herself into a heart attack.

“No, nothing like that, miss! Just a general check-up I’m sure. My car just got bogged in the rain and I’m running a little late so I’m in a bit of a hurry,” He placated her, awkwardly patting her frail shoulder. He didn’t have time for this, to conjure up ludicrous cover stories and reassure old women. He had a country to save, god damn it!

“Oh, well that’s alright then,” She sighed in relief and actually eased up on the accelerator. Jean ground his teeth with frustration. He was this close to throwing her out of the car and driving there himself, wherever there even was. He’d probably find it himself faster than if he waited for the woman to meander there herself, chugging along at her own painstaking pace. “I’m Ethel Berrywell; professional knitter and grandmother of seven,” She introduced. As if Jean fucking cared. He smiled demurely at her anyway and even forced an impressed chuckle.

Screw this, he needed to start calling ahead ASAP. He’d barely extracted the damp phone with shivering, numb fingers before the phone screen lit up and the device began to vibrate in his hands. He almost dropped it out of shock before he realized someone was just calling him. He squinted at the contact name and felt his stomach flip nauseatingly in a combination of panic and dread.

Oh God. Oh God oh God oh God. He couldn’t do this. He wanted to wrench open the passenger door and fling himself into the night. He didn’t sign up for this shit. This is what you got for getting involved with Eren Fucking Jaeger.

With shaking fingers, he swiped across the screen to answer the call and raised the phone to his ear. “I’m sorry, Eren can’t come to the phone right now. If you’d like to leave a mess—“

“Jean?! Why do you have Eren’s phone? Where’s Eren? Is he okay, what’s going on?!?” Okay, so his tactic hadn’t worked but brownie points for trying. The panicked barrage of questions that assaulted his ear, however, made him realize either something else pretty major involving the Suicidal Bastard was going on back in Maria, or Mikasa knew what was going on.
“He’s gone to the Wings of Freedom base. Mikasa, do you know what’s going on?”

“Why?! Why did he go back there? He’s going to get himself killed! Yes I know what’s going on. Jean, you have to go get him right now. And why do you have his phone?”

Jesus Christ, this woman. Eren always had been the only thing capable of working the ice queen herself into a frenzy but right now Jean just really did not want to deal with that. He wasn’t equipped for this. He wasn’t equipped for women; he knew there was a logical reason he was gay.

“Look lady, you need to calm down and explain to me why the fuck you knew—” he risked a glance at Ethel who had turned on the radio and was bopping along to some country music, completely oblivious to his hushed argument “—that there was a political coup happening and didn’t do anything about it? Did you help?! Mikasa this is wrong, holy fuck. Eren is going to kill you! He went back there to stop this mess, and no I won’t go stop him because I agree. Not to mention I’m on my way to the Commander’s to save him from being assassinated.” Jean dragged a weary hand down his face. What he would give to actually be a midwife. He would gladly put aside his bewilderment of the female population if it could mean washing his hands of this madness. “And I have his phone so I could call people and warn them, he has mine and before you hang up” which she had undoubtedly been about to do once he’d told her how to get in contact with Eren “you need to tell me what the fuck is going on and why I’m about to put my cute French ass on the line to foil an international conspiracy.” Deep breaths, Jean. Last thing you need now is to have an asthma attack. He’d forgotten to bring his puffer.

There was a moment of silence on the other end and Jean actually had to check the phone to see if Mikasa had hung up on him anyway. But no, she was still there.

“I don’t know.” She finally spoke up. She sounded tired, concerned and stressed. Jean almost felt bad for her “honestly I only just found out myself and called right away. Armin figured it out; Grisha had been acting strange for a while and asking him advice on how Legion’s political system worked. A little digging, phone tapping and espionage later, he figured out what he and Nile were up to and told me, but by then it was almost too late. Eren was meant to be out today, with you. Grisha at least had enough consideration to plan this for when he wouldn’t be caught in the cross-hairs, but apparently now that doesn’t apply.”

“I don’t get it though, why?” He heard Mikasa take a deep breath on the other end as though exasperated by his interrogation. Well fuck you if I’m not up to date on why anyone would plan a coup and their motives to do so. He heard the sound of hushed conversation and recognized Armin’s voice. Apparently he managed to wrestle the phone out of Mikasa’s grasp because he spoke next. Jean appreciated his calm, collected tone after Mikasa’s abrasive forcefulness.

“Hey Jean, let me explain quickly. Basically, if something happens to Legion’s Commander, the Governor General will consult the ruling party until they elect a new leader. Erwin has a lot of support because he helped steer Scouting Legion into independence and an era of prosperity; it’s going to be a while before he’d ever be voted out. Nile, the Opposition Leader—” Ha, he knew that “—has coveted Erwin’s power for a while now but didn’t really have a hope against him in an election. Unless of course Erwin was out of the picture. The elections are in a few months and from what I’ve uncovered, the agreement is that Grisha will fund Nile’s campaign to help him be elected as the next Commander. Once Erwin, Hanji, Levi and any other prominent allies of Erwin are out of the picture, the people will undoubtedly look to Nile because next to them, he is the next most experienced and viable candidate.”

“Okay, but what does Grisha get out of this? Maria just signed the best alliance with Legion!”

“Sort of, yes. Thing is, Grisha has gotten nervous of Legion recently. They’ve rapidly developed in
such a short time and being so geographically close to Maria, there is an ongoing fear they’ll seek
to expand their territory soon to help accommodate their growing needs. Grisha fears Scouting
Legion will be the next big threat after Titan. After he helps Nile win the election, Nile seems to
have agreed to allow Grisha to have significant control over Legion as well. He wants to get to
Legion before Legion gets to Maria.” Well that wasn’t basic at all.

“So…you guys are on our side?” Jean asked tentatively.

“Yes of course we are. In fact we’re already on our way. We’ve been trying to get in contact with
Erwin or anyone on Wings of Freedom base but communications seem to be down” Well, fuck “and
naturally Mikasa refuses to not get involved. We’re scheduled to arrive in Legion in under an
hour.”

“How do we stop this?”

“First of all, we need to protect Grisha’s targets. You said Eren went to the base, and you’re on
your way to Erwin’s? How long until you arrive?”

Jean turned to Ethel, still cheerfully jiggling in her seat to the static-infused banjo tunes “Yo miss
Berrywell, how long do you think until we get there? I’m gonna need you to step on the gas. I’m
on the phone with Erwin right now and it looks like Petra had indeed gone into labour and she’s
getting her first contractions.” Ethel straightened in her seat and shot off a surprisingly smart salute,
face grim.

“Aye aye, cap’n! You can count on me to get you there in under twenty, Captain Seabiscuit Sir!”

Jean nodded back solemnly and raised the phone back to his ear “Did you hear that, Armin? Under
twenty.”

“Yes I did hear that,” Armin’s dubious voice crackled back “And I’m not going to ask…” Fair
enough, Jean didn’t think he could explain even if he did.

“Will you meet me there?”

“Yes. I might have to drag Mikasa but as much as we both want to go to Eren, we understand
Erwin’s security is the priority.” Armin sounded hesitant despite his words “We sent a squad to the
base as back up anyway.”

“Can you trust them? I mean, Grisha planned this.” Was sending Marian soldier’s to thwart the
Marian King’s plan the wisest move?

“Yeah, they’re all loyal to Mikasa in the end. It’s safe.”

“Look, don’t worry about Eren. He might have been hopeless, reckless and impulsive before but he
has changed a lot in the last few months. If there’s anyone who can end this, it’s him. He’ll be fine.
Trust me, I want him to be as safe as you do.” Jean assured him. It was true, Eren might have
seized up for a moment back at Nile’s, but when the moment mattered, he had moved without
hesitation. Even if he was still reckless and impulsive, he now had the combat skills to back him
up, and that combined with his bull-headed determination made him a force to be reckoned with
indeed.

“I sure hope so…” Armin sighed back despondently “Well, we’ll see you in a few. Keep trying to
get through to the house though; we only have official communication details but Eren might have
some personal numbers that haven’t been blocked. Take care Jean.”
“You too, Armin.”
Chapter Summary

Eren can't reach Levi nor Hanji by cellphone and he's starting to run out of options. Cold, wet, desperate and a sitting duck to leeches, Eren has to think of a plan of attack and fast. A question he'd never thought to consider though; how does one infiltrate a military base?

Eren frantically punched in the number for Hanji’s cellphone for the umpteenth time. He had long since given up on reaching Levi, the call wouldn't even connect let alone ring. Levi had never been very good at answering his phone in the first place; the only people who had ever needed to call him in the past were either Hanji or Erwin, and since he was almost always around either one or both of them, he’d developed an unfortunate habit of either turning his phone off or leaving it behind in his room altogether. It hadn’t posed that big of an issue to Eren before since Levi was usually around the base somewhere or he could just call up Hanji who’d pass the phone to the older man, but now even Hanji wasn’t answering.

He was crouched behind a large philodendron plant before the base entrance trying to take shelter from the heavy rain while hiding from the two sentries by the entrance. The plant wasn’t doing much to keep him dry, though. Water rolled of the large, oily green leaves and streamed down his back, pooling into a muddy puddle around his feet. He needed to keep an eye out for leeches too; Connie had described to him with grotesquely vivid detail how large the Legion leeches could get. He’d never encountered a leech before, and certainly had no intention of running into any of the monstrosities Connie had told him about any time soon. He eyed the puddle at his feet warily; God help any leeches who thought they could mess with him right now.

Eren swore down at Jean’s phone as he hunched over it awkwardly to protect it from the heavy downpour. He’d almost rushed straight to the sentries guarding the base entrance as soon as he’d arrived, but then he’d realized something was off. It was too quiet. Sure it was night, but it was still before curfew and it wasn’t uncommon to see a few tipsy soldiers sharing a smoke as they lounged around the steps leading out of the base. You could usually also hear the indistinct laughter and chatter of soldiers gathered in the mess hall or games room after dinner until it was time for lights out. Now there was nothing.

He’d attempted to call all the main lines into Legion, but none of them were working and neither were Levi or Hanji’s personal cells. Their phones must have been blocked. Almost on whim, Eren dialed in one last number. He didn’t really expect anything to come of it and wasn’t even sure he remembered the number correctly, so when he heard the musical sound of the call being connected, he almost wept with joy.

“Yo yo, Springer speaking; who’s this?”

“Connie? Oh my God it’s you, thank God. It’s me, Eren!”

“Oh, hey buddy! Did you get a new phone?” He sounded relaxed enough. A little too relaxed for someone who should be smack bam in the centre of an assassination conspiracy.

“No, I’m borrowing Jean’s. Never mind that, where are you right now?” Maybe he wasn’t even in
the base? There’d be no other reason for him to not sound sufficiently concerned, especially since Eren could very clearly tell something was going on, even from the outside.

“Dorms bro. You would not believe our luck; there’s been a drill lockdown so we’ve all been ordered back to our rooms until it’s over. Super bad timing because Sash and I were planning on hitting the tavern tonight too. You’re lucky you got out early. Be free, my friend. We’ll live vicariously through you.” A lockdown! Why hadn’t Eren thought of that? It would be the perfect way to get all the soldiers out of the way to avoid interference. Now Annie, Reiner and Bertholt would have free reign of the base without worrying about being interrupted.

“Connie, Connie listen to me, okay? This is very important. Are you listening?”

“Yeah, yeah. What’s the matter, man?” Eren heard the seriousness in Connie’s tone and thanked God he could be counted on to recognize a dire situation.

“This is not a drill, Connie. There are people in there who are trying to target Levi and Hanji. They probably set off the drill so that everyone would get out of their way. You need to get out of their right now and warn as many soldiers as you can. Be careful, only tell people you recognize because I’m pretty certain there are going to be other people in there who aren’t on your side. And do not approach my bodyguards, do you hear me? They’re leading this whole thing and they’re very dangerous; avoid them at all costs.”

“Eren, Eren, slow down. What are you saying man, are you serious?”

“Yes I’m fucking serious! Why the fuck would I joke about this?!” Eren struggled to keep his voice down, glancing cautiously at the sentries guarding the entrance. They hadn’t moved.

“What’s going on? Why are your guards doing this?”

“Look, I don’t know. All I know is that Nile is behind it; it’s some kind of scheme to get rid of Erwin and everyone close to him.” Eren decided not to mention his father’s involvement; he didn’t know enough to explain why he might do such a thing and didn’t need Connie to suspect his involvement too. There wasn’t time to plea his innocence.

“Shit,” Eren could hear him moving around “Hey Sash, Sasha! Listen up, there’s some real shit going down outside and Eren needs our help—Jesus woman, put the bread down and listen to me!” Eren decided it wasn’t worth the effort to ask why Sasha was in the men’s dormitories.

“Hey Connie, I’m coming in now. First and foremost I need you to tell as many people as you can and get them to take down any imposters; If you run into Gunther, Erd or Auruo, tell them what I’ve told you. And I repeat: do not engage my bodyguards, okay?” Eren began to creep around the oversize plant and scanned the hulking barracks for an entrance point.

“Copy that, your princeliness. Sasha just checked outside and apparently there are armed dudes monitoring the halls,” Connie’s hushed voice came in through the phone. He must have been standing close to the door now.

Eren could have rolled his eyes “Connie, for the love of God in a few weeks you’d be a Wings of Freedom graduate and fully fledged soldier—think of something! Take him out or find another escape route. They won’t be expecting you to be trying to leave since it’s just a drill and everyone tends to take those pretty seriously.”

“Right. Okay, yeah okay. We’ve got this, we’ll think of something. Leave it to us, Eren,” Connie responded. He sounded like he was psyching himself up for a big confrontation. Sasha and Connie
might be a pair of clowns, but together they were a pretty formidable force. Escaping the dorms without detection would require creativity which the two of them had bucket loads, not to mention Sasha’s sharp instincts and Connie’s speed and initiative. All in all, the base was in pretty good hands. “Hey, you be careful out there, okay? Last thing we need is something happening to you and your old man declaring war on us.” Connie’s laugh sounded forced and uneasy, but at least he could manage that. Eren just felt a fresh bout of nausea at his words.

It might be a little late for that.

“Yeah, you too. Tell Sasha I said the same,” thankfully his voice didn’t give away his inner turmoil. Eren ended the call and slipped the phone into his hoodie pocket. He’d somehow avoided thinking about that all this time having been so focused on getting to the base and saving Levi, Hanji and the others, but now that it had occurred to him, he couldn’t help but dread what this could mean for the future. Best case scenario was that no one died, but that would leave the issue of Maria having broken the alliance, and furthermore, having helped plot a coup. This was worse than treason; this was the stuff that sparked wars. Relations would break down, tensions would rise. The alliance would certainly be in shambles; Legion would never trust Maria again. *Levi* would never… Eren swallowed dryly and took deep, calming breaths. It didn’t help to know that that was the best case scenario for if they managed to successfully thwart the coup.

No, stop it, Eren. No use thinking about that now; it was time to focus on the issue at hand.

Eren squinted at the two uniformed soldiers- a man and a woman- guarding the entrance. There was no point searching for other points of entry, this was a military base so it wasn’t exactly a matter of scaling a wall or jumping a rickety fence. There was only one entrance.

Eren briefly entertained the idea of throwing a rock and hoping one guard would go to investigate the disturbance, allowing him to creep up behind the other and conk him over the head. He scrapped that plan almost as soon as it occurred to him. Wait-- maybe they were Legion guards? Maybe they were just ordinary Wings of Freedom soldiers doing what they assumed was a normal shift? Maybe he didn’t have to concoct a plan and could simply stroll up to them, explain the situation and they’d let him in and probably even offer themselves as back up?

As if.

He couldn’t take them out himself that was for sure. Maybe if he could land a sneak attack he could take out *one*, but certainly not both. He had to think of a plan. Something so out of the box and brilliantly thought out that neither of them would have anticipated it. He had to think of *something*, and soon at that.

Or… maybe he didn’t?

With his lips set in a grim, determined line and his gaze fixed resolutely ahead, Eren straightened up from his hiding spot and began striding towards the two sentry’s. He’d like to say his confident and purposeful stride was the result of the added assurance of a fool-proof plan, but it wasn’t. Even as he neared the entrance, heart hammering against his rib cage with every stride, he began to doubt himself. Thinking ahead had never been his forte—that was Armin’s gig. His plan of attack was a little less orthodox and a lot more risky, but he honestly had nothing else to go on. He didn’t have many skills and talents that were useful on-field, but he had his one strength that he could always rely on; his ability to put on a good show.

It was time to put those improve skills back into some good use.
Eren watched the two guards visibly straighten up at his approach and scan him suspiciously through narrowed eyes. He couldn’t imagine that he looked particularly threatening glowering miserably in his sodden clothes and hunched against the rain, but he eyed the semiautomatics slung across their chests warily anyway. He confirmed on closer inspection that they indeed were not Wing of Freedom soldiers; he already recognized all the guards on sentry duty and had even memorized their rotations and neither of these soldiers looked familiar. Since Wings of Freedom was a pretty exclusive military branch it didn’t have very many members to begin with so he had at least seen, if not already befriended, all the soldiers, not to mention neither of them had any tattoos or visible scars that practically went hand-in-hand with the Wings of Freedom uniform. These two were unfamiliar and it took longer than usual for their gazes to light up with recognition once he drew closer, even then they didn’t instantly smile or greet him like any other soldier would. He noted the way they glanced at each other, an unspoken message passing between them, before looking towards him again.

The female soldier flashed him a belated smile that didn’t quite reach her hazel eyes and slightly lowered her weapon. Her finger remained hovering by the trigger, a detail that did not escape Eren’s notice. “Prince Eren! We weren’t expecting you until later,” she said in what was undoubtedly a south Marian accent. Her male companion nodded along with his own artificial smile as though Eren’s appearance was a pleasant surprise and nothing more, while his hand inched slowly towards the radio clipped to his chest. Well Eren couldn’t let that happen.

“Of course you weren’t expecting me, I’m here to check on you,” Eren schooled his face into his most impatient, irritated expression; something that wasn’t particularly hard to achieve in his current cold and drenched state. He glared pointedly at the male soldier’s hand that was almost at his radio and the man immediately froze. The only way he’d ever get into the base was if these two let him, and the only way these two would let him was if he was meant to be in. Or at least they thought so.

“Don’t bother alerting them, they’re not supposed to know I’m here that’s the whole point,” he said. Eren briefly enjoyed the confused looked shared between the two soldiers.

“I… don’t quite follow?” The woman asked, her polite smile faltering.

“You can drop the act, soldier, I know what’s going on. I just came back from a meeting with Nile and I’m under direct orders from my father to check on the progress on base. This operation is taking longer than planned and suspicions are rising, I need to smooth it over before your cover is completely blown.” Was he over doing it? Was that even realistic? Eren had no idea and he hoped to God he hadn’t severely overestimated his acting ability. “What are your names?”

“Ryans, Sir!” The male soldier’s hand twitched as though he’d barely had the presence of mind to repress a salute. That was a good sign, Eren decided; he was still understandably suspicious but Eren apparently had enough authority in his tone to provoke some semblance of deference from the soldier.

“With all due respect, Your Royal Highness, we were told you didn’t know anything?” The female soldier was clearly going to be a tougher nut to crack. Eren regarded her down the length of his nose, pleased to see the way she blinked rapidly under his scrutiny and slightly ducked her head.

“That’s because no one except Nile and my father know of my involvement. I was never supposed to get directly involved in all this but now I have no other choice but to step in for damage control.”
He made a point of slipping some resent into the last few words to make his performance that much more convincing. The woman glanced at her partner for support but apparently the idea of upsetting his superiors had completely won Ryans over because he glared at her with the pointed message to “just shut up and let him in already!” She wasn’t about to be easily swayed though because she turned back to Eren, expression sceptical.

“The operation is proceeding smoothly, we were told to wrap it up by nine and so far we are right on schedule.” Eren clenched his jaw in frustration. Why was she being so difficult?! For the first time in his life, he actually wanted someone to treat him like the prince he was and follow his directions without question.

“I just received a call from one of the soldiers inside,” Eren enunciated each word slowly, his tone barely civil to attempt to convey his fraying patience. He had to admit, he was definitely taking a page out of Levi’s book with this particular tactic. Often the soldiers were significantly more intimidated when Levi spoke quietly with underlying malice than when he raised his voice. “He told me that a lot of his friend’s phones were not working and that the drill was taking longer than usual. Now, unless you are presumptuous enough to think you are capable of handling a base full of suspicious, highly skilled military personnel, I suggest you stand down right now, soldier, and let me do my job. I will ask you again, what is your name?” It worked, the woman visibly swallowed and looked at him with wide eyes

“Emerson, Your Royal Highness,” she answered quietly.

“There you, Emerson. Your diligence is commendable, however your insubordination is not. Do not let it happen again.” He barely heard her whispered ‘yes sir’ as he swept passed, too intent on maintaining his composure for several more crucial seconds, he knew if he stopped now he’d break out in a ridiculously large smile that would give everything away. Eren waited until he had made it past them and was standing just before the training grounds before he allowed himself to close his eyes and heave a relieved sigh. That was fucking nerve-wracking. He barely remembered anything he’d even said because he had been so consumed with panic and wondering how much of a head start in running he’d need to get away and if the sentries were likely to abandon their post to pursue him. Well anyway, time to get to business; his work was far from over.

Eren glanced at his watch; it was 8.33pm and by what Emerson had told him, this should be over before nine. He began to make his way along the outside of the courtyard towards his house. Levi should be there, as was standard drill protocol, however there was the slightest chance he might be with Hanji. Maybe Levi would question the unscheduled drill and go to investigate, it was very likely, but that would mean he could be anywhere on base. That might be a good thing, though. It meant Annie, Reiner and Bert would have a harder time hunting him down. Eren wasn’t sure which he preferred. Whatever option ensured Levi’s survival.

The courtyard was lit up by the stark white floodlights that emphasized how unnaturally bare and abandoned the base was. The only other time Eren had seen the base this deserted was the morning he’d seen Levi off to Wall Maria. The comparison didn’t help the nervous shifting in his belly. Eren could just make out the figures pacing along outside the dormitories across the courtyard which faced parallel to the walkway he was currently on leading to his and Levi’s quarters. That again was another reminder that something was not right; guards were never stationed outside the dormitories because everyone already knew better than to stay up late. Eren ducked further into the shadows of the walkway where the floodlights didn’t quite reach; hopefully any observer would mistake him for another sentry. Although he was confident that he could pull it off, he’d rather avoid any more improve skits tonight. He had just reached for his phone intending to call Connie and check on his progress when the phone began to vibrate in his hand. Panicking, he accepted the call before the ringtone could sound and give away his position.
“Eren?!” Mikasa tinny voice sounded through the receiver and he could barely make out the anxious edge to her tone. He put two and two together; if she had known to contact him on Jean’s phone, chances were she’d already called his phone beforehand only to go through to Jean. If her barely composed voice was anything to go by, she at least had some inkling of an idea to what was going on so he could skip the introductions.

“Mikasa, what the fuck is going on? No scratch that, I know what’s going on, but why?! Did you know about this?!”

“No! Armin only just figured it out and we’re on our way to help right now. I’ve send some of my men to back you up, where are you?”

“You’re coming here?!” Eren had to admit it was a relief to know Mikasa hadn’t actively or knowingly participated in the coup “I’m at the base, I’m on my way to Levi right now.”

“No, I’m going to the Commander’s with Jean. I’m so sorry Eren, I wish I could come to you but Armin said Smith was the priority. Please be careful and know when to get out. I know you can be stubborn but please pick your battles!”

“Eren?” Shit! Eren barely had the presence of mind to turn off the phone and shove it in his pocket before whipping around to face Reiner. The tall blond was clearly surprised to see him, but he had pasted on a smile nonetheless. Eren’s eyes flicked to the handgun in his hand but he forced himself to look away.

“Oh, hey Reiner,” keep it casual, Eren. Remember you’re meant to be here “How’s it going?” okay, too casual. Reiner seemed caught off guard by his question. He took a few seconds to apparently get his thoughts in order, glancing around as if expecting someone else to come forward with an explanation. Unsurprisingly, Reiner hadn’t expected to make small talk in the middle of a political takeover “Um, yeah I’m… good, thanks. What are you…? We weren’t expecting you back so soon?” He phrased it like a question, laughing awkwardly. Eren saw the way he shifted the handgun slightly behind himself as if hoping to hide it from view.

“You can relax, Reiner. I’m in on it.”

“In on what?” he asked. Reiner’s expression of confused innocence looked ridiculously out-of-place on his intimidating, six-foot-eight-inch, combat gear clad frame.

“You think you, Annie and Berthold were single-handedly responsible for all the intel gathered for this op?” Eren rolled his eyes “This might come as a bit of a shock to you but all this time you thought you were posted to watch me and gather information, I was actually posted to watch you and gather my own.” Reiner’s eyes widened fractionally and his jaw actually dropped in disbelief.

“You knew? About all of this?” He swept his arm to gesture towards the courtyard and the clandestine operation unfolding around them.

“Yes Reiner, I knew. You wouldn’t believe the number of times I had to cover your asses. Going to Maria without explanation? All those supposedly ‘discrete’ security related questions” Eren shook his head as if appalled by their conduct. He remembered the day he first arrived in Legion and how Annie had asked for a personal tour of the security of the base. It had seemed like a normal enough question for a bodyguard to ask, but in hindsight it had probably been less about protecting Eren and more about infiltrating later on. The thought was a fresh blow to the feelings of betrayal he already felt.

“Wow,” Reiner looked him up and down, clearly impressed and having bought his entire story “I
never even knew! You’re pretty good. Are you saying His Majesty had you watch us the entire
time?” Eren waved off his question, he couldn’t afford to dawdle much longer, not to mention he
was running out of lies

“Don’t take it personally, I was just a final defence and another avenue for information gathering.
Look, can you tell me where Annie and Berthold are?”

“Um, Berthold went after Smith… Didn’t you know that?” Reiner was squinting at him
suspiciously. Eren’s mind raced for a cover story for his fumble.

“You’re saying Annie went after Levi alone? I specifically told Nile not to underestimate him even
if he was injured. I thought he’d change the plan at least. Where’s Annie now?” Reiner seemed to
accept his response, thankfully enough.

“It’s okay, she took another guy with her. They should be in Levi’s quarters,” Reiner responded,
nodding behind Eren towards his house.

“Right, that won’t do at all,” his eyes fell back to the gun in Reiner’s hand “Give me your
handgun.” He ordered, holding out his hand expectantly. Reiner looked ready to protest but Eren
was having none of that; he could kill two birds with one stone by disarming Reiner and arming
himself in one action.

“Annie’s going to need more back-up than some random soldier. Levi could take out a small
battalion even with two bullet holes in him, but he won’t expect anything from me though so I’m
going to check up on them.” He shook his extended hand meaningfully “Come on Reiner, you’re
wasting my time!” With a final pause, the taller man surrendered his weapon reluctantly and Eren
mentally congratulated himself on the victory. Eren heard Jean’s phone beep as he received a
message.

[unlisted number]: Hey, Sasha took out the dude outside our door. We’ll be out soon, you doin
okay?

Eren’s eyes flickered to the dormitories to his right. Now that he checked, there was indeed one
less sentry pacing the second floor where Connie’s room was located. As he watched, Connie’s
door opened and a single figure slipped out in the Wing of Freedom uniform, adjusting the
bulletproof vest and glancing around surreptitiously. He recognised Sasha’s gait instantly.

Eren turned back to Reiner who was watching him expectantly “I just got a message from the
sentries by the entrance. They saw headlights approaching, you should probably go check that
out.” Reiner nodded and actually snapped him a salute to which Eren just nodded awkwardly, at
loss as to how to respond.

“Yes sir!” The blond said, before turning and walking away. That was far too close for comfort; he
had better move fast, it wouldn’t take long for Reiner to arrive by the entrance and be told by the
sentries that they had sent no such message. He hit redial and waited for Connie to accept his call.

“Connie, I just sent Reiner off so you should get out before he comes back. Also, there’s been a
change of plan; tell some other recruit to pass around the information, I need you and Sasha to head
to Hanji’s since they’re the other target. I’ll take care of Levi but you need to make sure nothing
happens to them. Remember, don’t talk to anyone you don’t recognise from before I came and if
you run into any member of Levi’s Squad, tell them what’s going on. Hurry up, okay?” He hung up
as soon as Connie confirmed the plan and took a deep, calming breath before turning back to face
the direction of his quarters with renewed determination. Now with the comforting weight of the
hand gun tucked into the back of his jeans and the reassurance that Mikasa’s back-up was on the
way, he felt like maybe this wasn’t so impossible after all.

Levi was counting on him, he had no time to waste.
The Inevitable End (Part I)

The hallway was eerily quiet, but that wasn't unusual. Everything looked so normal, so deceptively regular that he could almost pretend that there was nothing wrong. He'd staggered down this very corridor in an exhausted stupor last night, blindly feeling his way to the bedroom to curl up by Levi’s side. He’d sat in that window just seat this morning, quietly enjoying the scene below while Levi had been in a meeting. This night didn’t look different; the hallway was as quiet and still as always, only illuminated by the pale blue hue of the moon that threw the silhouette of the large arched window frames across stark marble floor. It was all exactly the same but his mind seemed prepared for the worst. He knew this wasn’t like other normal nights; he wasn’t on his way to Levi’s office to hand him a cup of black tea and nag him to come to bed. He wasn’t sure what he’d find once he arrived at his destination. The cold weight of the gun tucked into the back of his jeans was the only tangible reminder that this was not some hyper-realistic nightmare.

There was a man guarding the study door; a tall hulking figure that obscured most of the doorway. It should have been a daunting sight but Eren was too busy feeling relieved by the knowledge that he wouldn’t be guarding the door if Levi weren’t still alive to be guarded.

Of course he was alive.

The figure didn’t move as Eren approached but he could feel his gaze boring into him with every step that brought him closer.

“No one is supposed to be in here. Especially not you, Your Royal Highness.” He had an accent. Spanish? It wasn’t hot Spanish either, It was ‘I’m going to chop off your fingers one by one while describing in a deceptively smooth tenor all the pain I’m going to inflict on you afterwards' Spanish. He was terrified and anxious and reluctant, but there was no time to address all that now. Eren relinquished control to his instincts once again, trusting his subconscious to play his cards right for the situation.

“No, no you don't understand; I have to see Annie!” Eren widened his eyes and let his voice waver with panic. The brutishly large man paused, interest piqued by his tone. “Something bad has happened. The news got out. I don’t know, I don’t know!” He had greasy long hair pulled back into a low pony-tail, a heavy-set brow and dark eyes that watched Eren keenly, tracking his movements like a hunter. Where had they even found this guy? He was like a text-book henchman.

“What are you talking about?”

“There are people coming! Back-up or something, I don’t know!” Eren gestured erratically back down the hallway the way he’d come "Reiner told me the news and sent me to warn Annie. We have to get out now.” Eren tangled his fingers in his hair, hissing the words between his teeth as he glanced furtively around the hallway as though he expected figures to materialise out of the shadows any moment. The mercenary seemed to sense his urgency, frowning at him as he seemed to consider the best course of action. His main concern was no longer why Eren was here, but how to respond to the information he brought. His eyes darted towards the door he was guarding. No doubt he was told not to interrupt under any conditions. Eren could practically hear his train of thought; should he heed the words of an unauthorized person? Well, he couldn’t be completely unauthorized if he was here now. There was no way he snuck into base; someone had to have seen him and approved his presence.

“How long do we have?” Eren’s fingers twitched anxiously and he shoved them into the pockets of his hoodie. Last thing he needed was the guy to notice his nervous tick although he supposed it
could be excused under the circumstances. Eren shrugged, gritting his teeth impatiently. The longer he waited out here, the more time Annie had with Levi. Annie was no greenie, and although she might not stand much of a chance against Levi in peak condition, the fact remained that Levi was still recovering from multiple bullet wounds. Eren wasn’t naïve enough to think Levi could hold his own in his current condition against anyone with even the slightest combat training let alone Annie.

“I don’t know! Like fifteen minutes?! The sentries saw choppers! You’re wasting time.” The man was afraid of Annie, Eren could see it in his eyes and his trepidation as he once again glanced at the closed door. This huge, hulking, titan of a man was afraid of Annie, and that did very little to calm Eren’s nerves. He’d never imagined what it would be like to have Annie on the opposition. She’d always been an ally; a silent but constant presence that assured security and quiet companionship. She’d pulled him out of fights, covered for him against his dad and listened to him without judgment as he’d vent about whatever was on his mind. She’d even been the one to accompany him to Legion. Sure, Reiner and Bert had also been here, but Eren had never regarded them with the same level of trust. Eren was still struggling to process what he’d come face to face with on the other side of that door. Some small fraction of him still hoped to see someone else – anyone else – on the other side, not Annie, not the girl he’d grown to trust after all these years. Eren’s heart ached. He didn’t want to be here, he didn’t want to do this. In all likelihood, at least one person in that room was not going to leave here alive; Annie or Levi. He wanted to leave this all behind. To crawl back into bed and pull the covers over his head. To feel Levi’s warmth beside him and be reassured in the knowledge that he’d see Annie the next morning. She’d respond to his sleepy greeting with a cool but fond nod of her head and everything would be fine and normal and they’d eat breakfast with Reiner and Bert before heading down to the field.

But that would never happen again.

“Wait here.” The guard motioned for Eren to remain where he was and with a final decisive nod, turned towards Levi’s office door, one hand drawing out his handgun. Eren steeled his resolve, pushing the onslaught of thoughts to the back of his mind. He was a professional on a mission. He had a job to do and lives to save; his personal qualms had no place on the field.

His nervous act dropped the moment the guards back was turned and he moved on instinct. The motions came to him easily; practised so many times they were like second nature. Annie’s moves. The man was significantly larger than him but Annie had taught him with the expectation that he’d be facing larger, stronger adversaries. Stealth tactics intended to evade, disarm and end a confrontation quickly. His left arm snaked out, fastening around his opponent’s chin and pushing it sharply away while he seized the hand holding the gun around the wrist with his right hand and pulled it backwards over his right shoulder. The movement was awkward and twisted the man’s arm the wrong way, causing him to instantly release the gun in favour of trying to escape the painful hold. Eren seized the weapon immediately while he continued to push at the taller man’s head, now also pushing him back. Disorientated, in pain and caught by surprise, the giant staggered backwards and right over Eren’s left land which was extended out with the entire purpose of tripping his intended target. It was fast and had to be executed just right to be effective, but Eren was a good student and he’d been taught by the best. He made sure to kick his left leg forward to properly sweep the other man’s legs out from underneath him, and the giant fell like a tree straight onto his back, cracking his head hard against the marble tile. Eren knew what it was like to be on the receiving end of that particular attack. He knew what it felt like to hit the ground hard enough to see stars and be winded, but they’d only ever practised such moves on the soft training mats so he’d never experienced the brunt force of the manoeuvre. He knew this man had no such luck and Annie had warned him that people had been killed by the move, hitting their heads at awkward angles, breaking necks and causing fatal head injuries.
It had taken all of three seconds to take him down and he’d done so with only the sound of head hitting tile to alert anyone who might have been listening. The man beneath him was as still as a corpse. The sudden realization of what he had done made Eren’s stomach heave with nausea. Had he just killed a man? Taken him out with the cold, calculated skill of a professional? He hadn’t even hesitated, just moved on instinct. Eren’s palms were clammy with sweat and shaking when he crouched down next to the body and slowly, hesitantly extended his hand towards the man’s neck. Please let there be a pulse, please.

The faint stuttering against his fingers, as delicate as a butterflies wing beats, almost brought tears of relief to his eyes.

“I’m so sorry,” Eren whispered, closing his eyes as he took a moment to collect himself. Was there any point apologizing when there was no one to hear it? It didn’t matter, this man was just doing his job and Eren had almost killed him. He’d been prepared to; he’d acted with full knowledge of what his actions could result in. He’d been braced for death. These were the prices he was willing to pay.

There were cable ties tucked into the fallen soldiers belt, undoubtedly for the purpose of restraining anyone if the need came about. Eren used two to bind the unconscious man’s hands and feet. He wouldn’t come around for a while yet. Eren considered the extra hand gun in his hand. A Glock; Annie’s weapon of choice. He didn’t need it, he wasn’t trained to use two fire arms and he didn’t have a holster to keep it in. If it came to blows, it would only prove an inconvenience and deadweight.

Eren opened the slide and removed the remaining ammunition before systematically dismantling the Glock and removing the barrel. Now rendered useless, he scattered the components before finally standing and facing Levi’s door. Eren’s heart hammered in his chest as he contemplated the dark wood. One trembling hand gripped the gun tucked into his waistband and the other reached for the cold door handle. He couldn’t hear a sound but that could mean anything. Levi’s office was soundproofed since otherwise noise from the neighbouring training grounds would disrupt any work he’d try to get done. He could be walking into a gun fight or a bloodbath, there was literally no way to tell.

With a silent prayer to whatever God’s were listening, Eren took a final deep breath and pushed open the door.
He wasn’t going to risk charging into the room unannounced, not when Annie had made it clear no one was allowed to enter. She wasn’t the type to take chances and would probably shoot through the door rather than risk anything. Even if Levi was the one with the upper hand, he’d probably assume anyone entering was part of the infiltrators and shoot first and ask questions later. Keeping that in mind, Eren tentatively pushed open the door a crack, fingers tight around his handgun.

“Annie?” He voice wavered with unease. He couldn’t hear any pained screaming, laboured breathing or the gurgling of lungs filling with blood. That was good. Unless anyone was already dead.

“Eren?” Eren’s heart skipped a beat at Annie’s voice. She sounded alright, which just left Levi’s status unconfirmed. Eren struggled to control his breathing. He hadn’t even looked into the room yet, why was he letting his mind run away with itself? Cautiously, he pushed the door open the rest of the way, holding the handgun behind his back and out of view.

The first thing that caught his eye was the blood. It started just a few feet away, a trail of crimson splatters on the varnished timber floorboards, smeared across the shiny finish as though something had been painstakingly dragged across it. Or someone had dragged themselves.

The grisly trail meandered across the usually pristine floor leading to their source. Levi was still wearing the white button up from this morning, although the lower front of it was now completely drenched in blood. Eren remembered how Levi had been complaining about a stain by the left wrist just a few hours ago before Eren had left to meet Jean. He’d laughed it off then, suggesting Levi roll up the sleeves to his elbows to hide it. For an absurd moment Eren thought that at least now that coffee stain would be the least of his worries.

Levi’s head was tipped forward onto his chest and his dark hair had fallen forward to obscure most of his face from view. His skin was the same shade as his shirt; an unhealthy sallow white rather than the stunning alabaster that it should be. It looked deathly, pale and wrong. As if all the colour had been drained from his features and concentrated into the ugly, scarlet stain that blossomed against his abdomen. There was just so much blood. It had congealed so thickly in some places that is almost looked black, Eren couldn’t even make out any wounds.

He couldn’t look away from the motionless frame slumped against the side of the office desk. He couldn’t process what he was seeing. Last time he’d walked into this room, Levi had been sitting at the same table in the same clothes, frowning at a stack of paper while twirling a fountain pen absent-mindedly around his fingers. Everything had been so normal, so right. This… this wasn’t right. This was too messy. There was paper and blood everywhere; Levi wouldn’t tolerate this.

“What are you doing here, Eren? You shouldn’t be here.” Eren was startled out of his numb assessment by Annie’s voice. He’d forgotten for a moment where he was. He’d forgotten what he was meant to be doing.
Annie watched him with hooded blue eyes from across the room. She had her signature Glock levelled at Levi’s still frame while she assessed him impassively.

“What...?” Eren’s eyes darted back to the crumpled figure “Is he... is he dead?” His voice cracked at the last word and he coughed to try and rid the lump in his throat. It was suffocating him, blocking his windpipe and making it hard to breath. There was another one in his chest that was slowly expanding, crushing his lungs and pushing at his ribcage. It hurt but at the same time it didn’t. He couldn’t look away from Levi. There was so much blood.

“Why are you here, Eren?” Annie repeated, but her tone was gentler now. She was worried about him. Eren tore his eyes away from Levi to look at Annie. Her face was as impassive as always but her eyes were soft and concerned. She hadn’t moved from her position but as Eren felt a wave of dizziness pass over him causing him to sway precariously, she saw her shift slightly towards him as if braced to catch him should he fall. She was worried about him. He hadn’t been supposed to see this, and as Eren searched her face desperately trying to convince himself that she was indeed responsible despite the overwhelming urge to deny the blatant evidence, he could see the traces of sympathy and apology in her eyes.

“I – I came to check on you.” The lie caught in his throat as it came out. Why was he still doing this? Was there even any point?

The sound of a feeble cough immediately drew both of their attention back to Levi. The man’s whole body shook as he painfully tried to clear his throat and dark eyelashes fluttered against pale cheeks. Eren felt his heart stop altogether in his chest.

He was still alive.

Annie clicked her tongue irritably as she regarded Levi for a moment before returning her attention back to Eren. She lowered her weapon, apparently having decided Levi wasn’t enough of a threat to necessitate constant vigilance, and tipped her head to the side as she looked at Eren curiously.

“Check on me? For what?” Eren blinked blankly, torn between dashing across the room to check on Levi and focusing on whatever Annie was saying. No wait, he couldn’t do that. Levi was alive, the plan was still in motion. He had to focus.

“I—” What was he saying again? He couldn’t focus on anything except the fact that Levi was right there and obviously in a lot of pain. His instincts were screaming at him to tend to him. He knew where the closest first aid kit was, and considering he didn’t know how long Levi had been laying there already and the extent of his injuries, he needed to administer medical attention immediately.

“Yeah I was never meant to be involved in the actual—” Eren gestured around vaguely “-finale. Not directly. I was more a failsafe than anything else.”

Annie frowned in confusion “How did you…? Wait, you knew about all this?” Eren shrugged and nodded, feigning nonchalance “Why wasn’t I told? His Majesty made it explicitly clear you were not to be involved.” Do not look at Levi. Focus on the mission: you are on their side, Levi means nothing to you.

“Eren?” Eren’s heart clenched painfully at the sound of Levi’s voice, weak and raspy. Oh God. Oh God Oh God.

“Shut up a moment, Levi. We’re talking.” He wanted nothing more than to run to Levi’s side at that moment. Hearing him call his name wore away at what little composure Eren had managed to compile. He couldn’t stand the idea of leaving Levi alone to lay there in a pool of his own blood
any longer, but he understood this was necessary. He was doing this to save Levi. He didn’t even
look Levi’s way; he had to play his role perfectly; Levi meant nothing to him “Anyway, where were
we? Oh right yeah, my dad told me everything long before I even flew here. I was just the… decoy,
yeah that’s it. I mean, I relayed information back too, stuff even you guys couldn’t get a hold of,
but really all I did was keep Levi preoccupied and cover for you guys whenever too many questions
were asked.” Eren swallowed drily under Annie’s suspicious gaze. He didn’t doubt for a moment
that if she looked too close she’d see his cracking façade. He was struggling. Struggling to
remember his role, to ignore Levi and to hold back tears as he watched one of the people he trusted
most betray him. Why would Annie do this?

Annie’s ice-blue eyes shifted between Eren and Levi and she arched a sceptical eyebrow. “You’re
telling me all that was an act, then?” She didn’t believe him, not yet, and that was justified. She’d
watched him go from despising the man to falling in love with him over the span of two months,
and now he was claiming that he’d been faking it the whole time. For two months he’d have had to
maintain character flawlessly while realistically developing their relationship; that wouldn’t be
easy for even the most skilled actors. Annie had known him for a long time, could he make her
believe he was capable of such an intricate deception?

“You’re telling me you thought it was real?” Eren actually managed a bark of dry laughter as
though he considered the very idea completely absurd. “Have you met this guy?” Eren jerked a
thumb in Levi’s direction “You think it would be easy to live with him let alone enjoyable?” He
scoffed and turned to look at the man in question and his sardonic smile almost slipped. Levi was
completely awake now. He’d managed to shift himself into a more upright position and was
watching their exchange with wide eyes. He looked exhausted and pained, but all that paled in
comparison to the way he was watching Eren now. His grey eyes, sunken and ringed by dark
circles, were wide with shock. It was clear that he’d heard every word and believed them too.

Levi had never been the most expressive about his feelings. Eren had learned over time to pick up
on little cues that gave away how the older man really felt; the faint twitch of lips, the flex of his
jaw, an almost imperceptible arch if his eyebrow – small things anyone else might have
overlooked. This was nothing like that. This was raw, unbridled and unchecked. Every word Eren
said to put that anguished expression on Levi’s face felt like being stabbed by a red hot poker. He
couldn’t imagine what it must feel like for Levi who thought it was all true.

“Do you know how much effort it took to convince him to let me in?” Eren forged on, unable to
look away from Levi’s distraught eyes “The things I had to do? Every night I’d let him crawl on
top of me, panting and slobbering all over me like a dog in heat, and I would lay there while he
fucked me to exhaustion.” Eren felt sick as he spat out the words, lips curling with revulsion at his
own lies. They felt metallic and poisonous on his tongue and they cut him up inside like barbed
wire being dragged through his innards. Apparently it made for a convincing effect because Levi
flinched with every cutting remark. Eren wanted to cry, seeing Levi like that. His infallible
husband, broken and bloody, watching him with such a tortured expression he’d put there. It killed
him

“He’ll never touch you again, Eren.” Annie watched him with hard, determined eyes before turning
her icy glare on Levi. The older man didn’t even seem to register her presence anymore, his sole
focus lay on the boy before him. The worst part was that, through all the hurt and agony in his
eyes, Eren could also see contrite. Levi believed his every word, and rather than resent him for
them, he felt remorse. He thought he’d forced himself on Eren, he thought he genuinely disgusted
him. Eren felt hot tears spill down his face and Levi’s eyes darted between his, panicked,
apologetic and agonized.

“I’m sorry, Eren,” Levi’s voice broke and he choked out a cough that rattled his entire frame. “I’m
so sorry. Please don’t cry, Eren. Please.” Eren looked away. He couldn’t watch Levi like that, pleading for Eren not to cry after everything he’d said. The man was apologizing and he’d done nothing wrong. Hanji had told Eren when he’d first arrived in Legion that Levi never let anyone get close to him. He’d developed a caustic, abrasive exterior designed to drive people away and he’d built walls around him so thick and tall that few ever saw what lay on the other side. Eren had, though. Eren had seen Levi unguarded and open. After they’d finally put their differences aside, Levi had been nothing but gentle, honest and good to him. After so many years alone, Eren suspected Levi doubted himself around others. He’d never admit it, and his acerbic exterior fooled others, but Levi craved intimacy and proximity. Eren had thought it was sweet, but now, watching Levi look so self-loathing thinking he had put Eren through weeks of torture just by loving him, he hated it. He hated his lack of self-assurance. He wanted Levi to be angry, to yell at him and make this easier, but Levi never made anything easy for him.

Annie raised her handgun and aimed it at Levi’s head. “You done, Eren?” Yes he was. He’d played all his cards and Annie had accepted them without question. He had played his role perfectly, a stellar performance deserving of an Oscar, but that was pointless because Annie still had her gun levelled at Levi’s head and Eren had just put on an A+ act that had done nothing more than rile Annie up and make her even more intent on taking out Levi. What now? Eren eyed Annie’s Glock with panic. He’d been so focused on finding Annie and Levi that he’d never considered what he’d do after he had. He needed to get that gun off Annie. He could yank out his own, which was still tucked into the back of his jeans, but Eren doubted holding the blonde soldier at gunpoint would achieve much. Annie was the type to put a job before everything else and she’s probably be willing to bet on Eren’s inability to follow through with a threat.

“Can I?” He blurted out the words without thinking and Annie looked as surprised by them as he felt. She looked at him doubtfully.

“You want to shoot him?” She asked disbelievingly. He didn’t blame her, he’d frozen up at the sight of a bloodied Levi as soon as he entered; as if he’d be capable of executing him.

“Yeah… I think-” He took a deep, shuddering breath “I think it would bring closure.” As-fucking-if. All it was likely to bring was trauma. Annie seemed to have a similar train of thought because she quietly considered him with unreadable eyes as though waiting for him to back out.

“Oh kay.” Eren blinked at Annie in surprise as she held out her handgun. She pursed her lips and nodded encouragingly. “I can understand that you’d need that after everything he’s done to you. Go on, take it. If you can’t do it I will, but I won’t deprive you the opportunity if you think it will help.” Eren looked between Annie and the gun with uncertainty. She couldn’t be serious. This was too good to be true. He’d been trying to figure out how to disarm her and here she was willingly handing him her weapon. After a moment’s hesitation, he gingerly reached for the gun. His fingers had barely brushed the warm polymer when suddenly Annie yanked it back out of reach and seizing his outstretched wrist, jerking him forward. It all seemed to happen in slow motion. He knew what was happening as the events unfolded, yet he felt powerless to stop them or take any evasive action.

Eren fell forward towards Annie who easy dodged out of the way and ducked behind him. He felt her finger’s close around the handle of the handgun tucked into his pants and tug it free. He felt the dread at knowing his plan, which up until 3 seconds ago had been flowing flawlessly, had completely fallen apart.
“Why you sneaky little bitch,” He could hear the smirk in Annie’s voice by his ear. Somewhere along the line, Annie had seen through him. He felt stupid for thinking for one moment that he might have fooled her, for thinking he ever had a chance against her and for thinking that he, a hopeless, talentless, useless brat, ever had a snowballs chance in hell of saving anyone, let alone Levi. He could almost hear his father’s voice in his head, scornful and condescending as he scoffed at Eren’s pathetic attempt at heroism.

But he’d gotten this far already, hadn’t he? He’d uncovered a top-secret political coup, infiltrated a heavily guarded military base, conned his way through security and taken out a mercenary the size of a small pick-up truck bare-handed. His father would never think he was capable of that. Grisha had used him as a Trojan horse to spearhead his crazy campaign, and hadn’t even considered him important enough to factor into his plans after that. Eren had already proven his father wrong once by uncovering the coup himself although he’d clearly been expected to remain oblivious. If this were a sparring match, giving up now would be the equivalent of forfeiting because his opponent expected him to. Levi would never let him hear the end of it if he just gave up. He’d gotten this far already, why leave a job unfinished?

Eren twisted around mid-fall, lashing out with his fist towards Annie’s hand. He felt his hand connect with something hard and saw the Glock sail out of her hold and hit the floor, skidding off somewhere out of reach. He didn’t have time to check; Annie was still armed with his handgun. He twisted his body to the side as he landed, absorbing the impact off the fall the way Levi had taught him to. Immediately, he kicked out at Annie’s feet and heard her grunt with a combination of surprise and pain as she too toppled down after him. She was in a league of her own, though. She didn’t even need to take a second to gather her bearings before she’d rolled over and was swinging at him.

“Pretty good, Jaeger, but do you really think you’re a match for me?” Eren managed to block the elbow she swung at his face, but not the punch to his abdomen she followed it up with. This was hopeless; he knew he didn’t stand a chance and that wasn’t just him being pessimistic. Annie outmatched him in every conceivable combat skill but he wasn’t going down without a fight. She wouldn’t kill him; of that he was certain. His father might be far from Dad of the Year, but even he couldn’t overlook his son’s murder for whatever his motive was for this Goddamn coup. He just needed to get that fucking gun.

Annie was small but powerful. She was everywhere at once. Every time he thought he’d caught her out and swung in her direction, she’d have vanished a moment later and counter with a blow that actually met its mark.

“Annie please,” He’d have to try another tactic since clearly force wasn’t working for him. Appealing to her emotionally might be possible; they had history. He wasn’t sure at which moment Annie had seen through his act but he was almost certain her reaction to his allegations against Levi had been genuine. Clearly she still had some residual sentiments towards him, the least he could do was try appeal to her ethically “You don’t have to do this, Annie. You still have time to leave. I swear I won’t tell them anything about you; just please don’t hurt anyone else. Whatever they’re paying you, I’ll pay you double. Same with Reiner and Bert. Please Annie!” Her elbow connected with his head and he saw stars. Disorientated and stunned, he could do little aside from trying to blink away the dark spots swimming in his vision while blindly groping for Annie. Eren felt the blonde's small hands close around his wrists, one still awkwardly clutching the gun, and pin them above his head.

“No you listen to me, Jaeger,” she hissed into his face “I have a job to do and you’re getting in the way. I have my reasons and if you think money was the solution, you’re a fool. How about you just stop struggling and let me finish? I’m not going to draw this out, it will be quick and painless
for him I promise. Just over two months ago you didn’t even know this man, when I’m done you’ll just go back to your like before all this. Why can’t you understand that?!” She was the one who didn’t understand. She was threatening to take away one of the best things that had ever happened to him; over two months ago his life had been aimless and he was being constantly rebuked by his father. He didn’t want to imagine going back to that; back to life without Levi.

The thought brought forward a fresh wave of resolve. He jerked his knee upwards and felt it connect hard with Annie’s stomach. Her grip on his wrists faltered and she collapsed to the side, cursing as she instinctively cradled her abused middle. Eren was on her instantly, rolling on top of her to pin her down with his weight while he seized the gun in her hand. She wasn’t about to relinquish hold that easily though. It was an awkward struggle, their hands and the handgun crushed between their bodies. There was no way it would have ended well. Not when both parties were so determined to succeed. Not with the feral determination with which they struggled, teeth bared and snarling like starving wolves fighting over a carcass.

Eren heard the gun go off before he felt it, in fact he was pretty sure his body jerked more out of startled reaction to the unexpected noise than pain. He and Annie both stilled immediately, eyes wide with shock. The pain registered a moment later, like thunder after lightning, and it shot through him with similar, jarring effect of electrocution, blossoming through his abdomen like searing heat.

His body froze in reaction to the agony and Annie had no difficulty rolling him off her. She leaned over him, her stony expression having finally cracked as she looked down at him with worry, discarding the handgun in favour of applying pressure to the bullet wound in his side. Her eyes were swimming with tears and she bit her trembling lip in a futile attempt at trying to maintain her composure. “Oh God no,” she breathed in horror. “Oh please no.” A hot tear splashed across his cheek and he frowned, some part of him mind understanding that Annie crying was a big No-no, whatever the situation. He lifted a hand to brush away at the wet streaks on her cheek but only succeeded in adding to the mess when instead he smeared her pale skin with his blood as well.

“Shit, sorry,” he apologized, grimacing at the scarlet mess. Annie’s shoulders started to shake and Eren realized with dismay that she was crying properly now, sobs wracking her small frame and face crumpled and shining with a combination of tears and blood.

“Jesus Eren, I just shot you! Can you shut up please?” She choked out between sobs. He wanted to laugh. This while situation was insane. He expected to wake up any second now and continue with life as normal. He was contemplating pinching himself when the room was suddenly flooded with a blinding white light. Eren closed his eyes and turned his face from the window where the light seemed to be originating from. Was he dying? Was this the ‘Light’ people who’d experience near-death experiences spoke of? If so, it was considerably less-welcoming than he’d expected. Not to mention that infernal blaring noise. He’d hoped for harps and a choir of angels, not sirens.

Wait, sirens?

Annie turned towards the office window, arm shielding her vision and squinting as she tried to discern what was causing it.

“Back up,” Eren croaked as realization dawned on him. Annie turned to him, confused “Mikasa sent back up. You need to leave.” It felt like hours since his call with his sister, but it couldn’t have been more than twenty minutes. Mikasa never disappointed.

Before Eren could get in another word, Annie immediately dove for her gun and twisted around to aim it at Levi. And froze.
Levi had managed to drag himself across the floor to where Annie’s Glock had landed and lay stretched out on his side, the weapon aimed steadily at the blonde. There was a moment of silence as both soldiers eyed each other warily, only broken by the continuous wail of sirens in the background. Eren’s heart skipped a beat as he watched the silent stand-off. Annie’s gun was still at her side; if she made any move to raise it, Levi would shoot without hesitation. She was stuck.

“Levi don’t shoot, please!” Eren pleaded. The older man’s eyes flicked over briefly to meet his before returning to his target. Eren saw his jaw flex and nostrils flare; he was clearly torn with indecision, eyes scanning the figure frozen before him as he struggled to make a call. All his training was telling him to eliminate the threat. “Levi, I don’t know why she’s doing this but I swear there has to be a good reason behind it.” The older man narrowed his eyes but seemed to heed Eren’s words, heaving an exhausted sigh before speaking up.

“Although I want nothing more than to put a bullet between your eyes right now, I’m not going to because Eren seems to think you’re a good person and that’s good enough for me. I don’t know what kind of crap you’ve gotten yourself into that landed you in this shitty situation and I don’t care to find out, but I can give you this advice; go to Shiganshina District in Titan and find a bar named Trost. Ask for Kenny Ackerman and tell him Levi sent you; I guarantee he can get you out of whatever mess you’re in. I’m offering you a way out; all I ask in return is that you don’t come back and you never bother us again.” Eren couldn’t see Annie’s expression from where he lay, but she seemed to be watching Levi intently, weighing his words.

“Annie, just go!” Eren prompted desperately, eyes darting to the window and back to the motionless blonde. It wouldn’t be long before the whole base was swarming with Marian Special Ops and there would be no chance of Annie escaping then. Slowly, the girl crouched down and placed the gun on the floor, raising both hands in a gesture of surrender, not once looking away from the grey-eyed man. Levi jerked his head in the direction of the door in a silent order and with cautious movements, Annie complied. Both men watched her retreat, Levi with his gun trained on her the entire time. Just before she slipped through the door, Annie turned back to face Eren.

“I hope you understand I was doing what I had to do and I never meant to hurt you.” Eren nodded mutely and with a last, thin-lipped smile, Annie disappeared through the door. The tension that had suffocated room since Eren had walked in seemed to snap and finally it was just the two of them with no immediate threats to anyone’s life to worry about. Levi was far from relaxed though, he turned to Eren with a concerned from, eyes scanning his entire frame even though he was clearly in worse shape.

“You okay, Eren? Hang on, just keep applying pressure.” Eren watched the older man drag himself over to where Eren lay in a daze, laying down beside the younger man with a grunt of pain.

“Levi I was shot.” The older man paused as he settled down beside him, watching Eren expression carefully.

“Yes, I’m sorry kid. It’s not too crash hot, is it?”

“No you don’t understand. Do you realize what this means?” The brunet turned to face Levi with a serious look. “Moblit won’t let us have sex for weeks.” Levi shot him a look of disbelief before tipping back his head and letting out a bark of laughter. Eren couldn’t help his own smile as he watched the older man. He felt himself relax just by feeling his husband’s familiar warmth by his side. “I didn’t mean anything I said, Levi,” He whispered. He needed to say it, even if Levi might have figured out that it was all an act. He needed to make it clear. Levi turned his head back to face him. They were laying shoulder to shoulder on the office floor, pressed up as close as possible in their positions. Eren took the opportunity to appreciate every detail of the older man’s face up
close. The faint lines between his eyebrows and around his eyes that were the only indication of Levi’s age and past on his otherwise youthful features. The smear of blood under his left eye, startling and bright against his fair skin and the long, dark lashes that framed his narrow eyes. Eyes that were watching Eren with the open adoration that he was sure was reflected in his own. He was so beautiful. Even covered in blood, sweat and grime, laying on the floor of his wasted office with his ink black hair splayed messily across his features. It hurt Eren’s heart to imagine how close he’d been to losing him. With the hand he wasn’t using to cover his wound, Eren gingerly groped for Levi’s, intertwining their fingers and hold Levi’s hand with a vice-like grip. He had no intention of ever letting go again.

“I know, Eren.” Levi looked down at the locked hands, rubbing soothing circles on Eren’s knuckle with his thumb. Eren could hear the sound of shouts, thundering footsteps and helicopter blades outside, but in this room together, the outside world seemed to fade into nothing more than a background hum.

“I don’t think you do though. I feel like you’re always going to be second guessing yourself in this relationship like you still can’t believe it’s happening.” Levi shrugged, not meeting Eren’s eyes.

“I can’t sometimes. You aren’t here because you want to be but because of this alliance. I guess some part of me always thought that it was more out of obligation.” Eren frowned.

“Fuck you, Levi. Yeah you have a point I mean I would never be with you otherwise but you wouldn’t be with me either.” Suddenly a thought occurred to Eren and he turned towards Levi with fearful eyes “Wait - the alliance!”

“What about it?” Levi frowned, puzzled.

“What’s going to happen now? After everything that’s happened, there’s no way this alliance will last!” Eren stared up at the ceiling as his mind ran through the possible consequences “Everything’s fucking insane now. This will probably cause a war between Legion and Maria once the news gets out. The alliance will break, our nations will hate each other.” Eren turned back to Levi as something else occurred to him “Levi, once the alliance is nullified, our marriage—”

“Eren stop.” Levi commanded, his grip tightening around Eren’s reassuringly. The younger man closed his mouth immediately. “I don’t know what’s going to happen from here but there’s really no point in speculating and panicking about it now. Logically, you’re right: this alliance won’t last, but that doesn’t have to affect everything.” Eren watched the wordlessly as Levi stroked his knuckles, pausing over Eren’s bare ring finger thoughtfully “Look at that. Over two months of marriage and you still don’t have a wedding ring.” Eren huffed a small laugh. He’d assumed Levi considered something like the exchange of wedding rings another pointless, sentimental practise like his apparent attitude towards weddings. It had bothered him at first; he liked that sort of thing and considering it was an arranged marriage, he’d thought a wedding and a ring were the least he could have in exchange, but he’d eventually accepted it wasn’t happening.

“Well, we didn’t have the most conventional of marriages. It was a sort of shotgun affair.” He shrugged.

“No ring, no wedding, no honeymoon. I didn’t even propose to you.” Levi’s eyes met his and the older man smiled ruefully “What a shitty husband I’ve been.” Eren didn’t agree at all. Those things were fine and dandy in theory, but in practise, it didn’t really mean all that much. Any other man could have wooed him traditionally. Brought him flowers, taken him out on dates and proposed to him on a romantic yachting trip, but they wouldn’t have been Levi so it wouldn’t have mattered.

“I have an idea,” Eren proposed, wincing as she shifted slightly towards Levi in his excitement and
aggravated his wound “How about we make a fresh start? Once this alliance is broken and our marriage nullified, we can start from scratch. Do everything all over the way we should have.” Levi snorted, watching him with amused grey eyes and Eren’s smile faltered self-consciously.

“Ahh, I don’t know. It was just a suggestion. Never mind.” Eren looked away, embarrassed.

“You cheesy brat,” Levi chuckled. He ignored Eren’s confused expression as he continued “Fine. Okay, we’ll do that. Hang on a second.” Levi looked away, feeling around the floor around him before he seemed to finally find what he was looking for “But we’re still going to do this a little differently because I think it wouldn’t be right if we didn’t. Hold out your hand, come on.”

Hesitantly, Eren did as he was told, holding up his left hand between them and watching suspiciously as Levi reached up with his own and placed whatever it was he’d been searching for over Eren’s ring finger.

“I don’t have a ring or anything but this will just have to do for now,” he explained and Eren couldn’t help a surprised laugh when he saw the spent bullet shell balanced precariously on the tip of his ring finger “Eren Jaeger,” he began, taking a deep breathe “I’ve never thought I’d have to do this so I don’t know what to say in this situation at all. That being the case, I’m going to be straight with you. Well, as straight as a man proposing to his husband can be.” Eren felt the tell-tale prick in his eyes warning of tears to come but he couldn’t bring himself to care. Levi looked so uncomfortable and awkward but determined and it was the sweetest combination he’d ever seen on the man. He nodded encouragingly at the older man, a wobbly smile on his lips “Eren,” Levi repeated, holding his gaze firmly “Will you marry me? Again?”

He couldn’t bring himself to speak. He knew if he opening his mouth he’d only let out a gross, blubbery sobbing noise that would ruin the moment so instead he settled for a frantic nod, warm tears spilling down his face.

“Yes!” he gushed after he’d finally composed himself enough to speak coherently. He shifted his head forward and Levi mirrored the movement so their foreheads touched, the older man bringing up a hand to brush the damp tear-tracks from his cheek “I love you, Levi” he whispered.

“Yeah. I love you too.”

They were laying like that when the reinforcement squad found them; shoulder to shoulder in their blood stained clothes, one hand pressed to their wounds while the others were interlocked between them. The peaceful image clashed with the chaos of the room around them but neither seemed to notice the new arrivals, too absorbed in each others presence as they lay with their foreheads pressed together, tranquil smiles on their faces.

People seemed to think they were being so original whenever they came up to him and asked him how he was enjoying being married like he was some newly-wed. Ever since he and Eren had renewed their vows in a small beach wedding in Oludeniz, it had been a running gag among the Wings of Freedom soldiers.

Levi reloaded his hand gun, not even bothering to dignify the question with a response. They were holed up in a shady motel room in Nedlay, a small town in Titan, while on a job to hunt down a human trafficker rumoured to be in the area. Eren, the most recent addition to Levi’s Squad, wasn’t able to make it since he had been tied up helping Mikasa with her Coronation the coming week. Their group of four shouldn’t feel so quiet since they’d had plenty of time to grow accustomed to working with just each other since Petra had left, but for some reason they had quickly adjusted to having Eren around, and now it felt weird to not. Levi had been initially reluctant at the idea of Eren joining up, even though he was the obvious choice out of all the graduates. He could only make so many excuses against it, though, before Eren figured out the real issue and convinced him not to worry. It didn’t turn out to be such a bad thing, though. Now Eren came with him on his missions instead of being left behind in Legion. Levi looked down at the ring on his finger, rubbing the silver thoughtfully with his thumb. It had been Eren’s idea to have the spent bullet shells welded into wedding bands.

The sound of Erd pointedly clearing his throat had Levi glancing up, snapped out from his reverie. The blond was watching him smugly, his eyes shining with amusement.

“Thinking about your bride again?” Well yeah, but he wouldn’t admit to that.

“Fuck off. Since when were you this snarky, anyway? You lot have been hanging around the brat too much.” Auruo scoffed, looking highly offended by the insinuation Eren would ever rub off on him.

“You’re lucky, though. At least Eren can come with you on missions,” Gunther sighed wistfully.

“Would you like having Josie with you while diving headfirst into gang wars and fleeing from gunfire?” Gunther frowned as he considered Levi’s point.

“Huh.” Levi nodded, his point proven. Not that he didn’t like having Eren with them, but he still wasn’t able to shake his protective instincts no matter how capable he knew Eren to be. At the end of the day, the image of Eren shot and bleeding on his office floor still haunted his nightmares even months later.

“I never would have taken you for the lovey-dovey type you know, Captain,” Erd said thoughtfully. “Oh don’t look at me like that, just ask these two; your eyes go all gooey whenever you’re looking at Eren.”

“They do not.” Levi turned to Gunther and Auruo to back him up, but the Auruo was suddenly engrossed in scraping the mud from his boot soles while Gunther looked at him apologetically with
a shrug. Shit, really?

“I think it’s sweet. You guys are living the honeymoon stage all over again!”

“Since when were you such a softie, Gunther?” Auruo jibed. Gunther looked down, the tips of his ears pink.

“Careful Auruo, your jealousy is showing.” Levi warned and Auruo spluttered indignantly. They settled back into a comfortable silence, Levi polishing and checking his weapons, Erd going over the town maps in preparation for the coming day, Auruo counting the remaining ammunition and Gunther tapping away on his phone probably messaging his wife. After a few moments, he put it down and turned to Levi with a frown. Levi knew that expression and braced himself for the inevitable question. Last time Gunther looked at him like that, Levi had been tasked with explaining to his squad the intricacy of sex between two men. Petra had been surprisingly knowledgeable on the matter and Levi had never seen grown men turn such a startling shade of red. Now whenever they saw claw marks on his back or the bruises and bite marks peppering his neck and shoulders, he got the pleasure of watching them all splutter and blush all over again like scandalized virgins.

“It’s been a while now that you’ve been together, isn’t Eren hinting for… you know…?” Gunther watched him intently, as if hoping he could telepathically convey the rest of his question through sheer willpower. Levi looked from to Erd and Auruo in confusion by they only shrugged back.

“It’s just that Josie had been sort of… talking about it recently. About how her friends were trying and stuff, and so we finally decided we should as well.” Levi blinked in alarm; oh God if Gunther thought being the only married two here meant they could bond over some weird married-people kink discussion, then he was sorely mistaken. Gunther seemed to misunderstand his expression, though. “I mean obviously you can’t try cause you’re both, well, men. But I mean, you have other options and it just seems like it’s the right time and I don’t really know if it’s all that different for you, but yeah, I mean now is usually when couples start considering it—“

“What the ever-loving fuck are you talking about?” Levi interrupted, setting down his gun before he was tempted to shoot himself to escape the situation.

“Kids!” Gunther finally blurted. All four men froze. You could have heard a pin drop in the stifling silence. Oh wait, that was just Auruo dropping one of the bullets.

“Hasn’t Eren mentioned anything about it? Josie and I had been married roughly the same time you two have been before she brought it up.”

“Children? No way.” Levi wanted to laugh at the very idea. Eren still laughed at his toilet humour like they were the funniest shit on the planet – no pun intended – he wasn’t ready for kids.

“Okay, well maybe not outright. It starts off with hints and stuff first. Josie was always fussing around her sisters kids, offering to babysit and stuff.” Levi sneer slowly faded as he actually thought about it, though. He couldn’t help but picture how delighted Eren would get whenever Petra and Erwin brought Rose, their baby girl, around to visit. He’d take her into his arms and off they’d go to explore the base, Eren cooing in that ridiculous baby voice or singing softly as he bounced her in his arms. And the baby-sitting! When Eren had first found out Petra had being actually paying someone to come watch Rose whenever she and Erwin had to go to some fancy official meeting or a charity gala, he’d been nothing short of offended, offering to watch over her himself.

Apparently some of his thought process must have translated through his expression, because
Gunther was nodding knowingly.

“Mhmm, that’s how it starts,” he said sagely.

“Eren doesn’t want kids.” He didn’t sound all that convincing though. Erd coughed awkwardly into his hand and Auruo looked uncomfortably out of his depth. “…Does he?”

Gunther shrugged. “Good luck, Sir.” Fuck. Levi felt a chill set over him at the thought. Were they ready for that? Was he ready for that? Eren had a natural way with children; he worked magic with Rose as well as the village kids he’d stop to greet on the roadside. Levi was a different story, though. He didn’t know how to handle kids, and where would they even keep them? The base was hardly child-safe.

“You should get him a puppy.” Levi and Gunther turned to face Erd, who was reclining comfortably on the couch, feet kicked up on the coffee table. He quickly put them down once he caught Levi’s glare, though. “I’m serious; that’s, like, a thing.”

“The hell would you know? The longest relationship you’ve had was an affair,” Levi asked. Erd held up a finger.

“Ahh, but it was a happy one. And if we’re bringing up questionable relationships, can I take this moment to point out that your longest relationship was – is – an arranged marriage to a kid thirteen years your junior?” Erd smiled. “I thought so. Anyway, haven’t you guys watched Marley and Me?”

“The dog dies, Erd,” Auruo whined.

“Irrelevant.” Erd leaned forward and fixed Levi with a level stare over steepled fingers. “You should get Eren a puppy.”

“Stop doing that, you look like Erwin.” Erd wriggled his eyebrows and Levi sighed, defeated. “Alright, that’s enough. It’s late; Gunther, you take first watch. We have a big day tomorrow.”

Auruo headed off to the bathroom while Levi put away his equipment and prepared to sleep. The lights flickered off and he draped his jacket over himself and got ready for a powernap.

A puppy, huh?

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Levi ducked into a doorway, back pressed against the peeling wooden panels as he waited for the footsteps at the mouth of the alley to pass. Sweat rolled down the side of his face and his undershirt stuck to his skin, the bullet-proof jacket providing added insulation he really could have done without. Auruo had radioed him a while ago to tell him the target had been eliminated, and that Nanaba would have the chopper in place over the abandoned chapel closest to Nedlay’s West Wall in twenty. His squad were all in the clear and on their way to the rendezvous point, but Levi wasn’t so lucky. He had three of the targets men at his back and he was still a while away from the meeting point. He’d memorized most of the alleys in this area, but there were still unmapped niches that threw him off, and he was currently in one that just so happened to be a dead end. He prayed that his pursuers would pass the alley mouth without stopping to investigate. He could fight them, sure, but given his exhaustion and the fact that it was him against three, there was a high possibility it could end up a Pyrrhic victory. He couldn’t risk that; Eren would kill him. ‘I let you
Levi couldn't practically hear his voice in his head.

His head jerked up at the sound of rustling coming from the trash heap across the alley from him. Levi leveled his handgun at the noise, waiting with bated breath and heart pounding against his chest. He could feel a headache throbbing at the back of his skull. Titan’s climate was the worst combination of unbearable, dry heat and blistering sunlight. When he got home, he would keep the curtains in the house drawn for a week.

Levi narrowed his eyes, gaze zeroing in on a single trembling bag and finger inching towards the trigger. Whatever was there was way too big to be a rat. Suddenly, a shape hurtled out of the mound and skidded down the side, rolling several times before coming to a halt at the base of the trash heap. An ugly brown mug lifted up and turned in his direction, sniffing the air curiously. Levi let out the breath he didn’t realise he had been holding, lowering his gun and rolling his eyes.

“Well hello there.” A pink tongue lolled goofily out of the stray’s mouth and its stumpy tail wagged, thumping noisily against a plastic bin bag. One of the dog’s eyes was a milky white, obviously blind, and it had several pink, knotted scars marring its rump. Levi frowned as he inspected the sorry creature. Those looked like knife slashes. “Aren’t you an ugly little beastie?” Its tail only wagged faster at his voice, and the dog barked in happily.

Levi shrank back into the shadow of the doorway when he heard the sound of footsteps nearing his alley again, gripping his gun tightly and listening out for any sign of them slowing down. He felt his stomach grow cold with dread when they did, the sound of conversation growing more distinct as they closed in. The drawn out and distorted shadows of three figures stretched into the alley as his pursuers paused by the entrance, hushed words being exchanged. Levi’s gaze turned to the mongrel that was watching him now, head cocked to the side and eyes alert as it took in his body language. Levi was no dog whisperer, but it looked poised to bark and he couldn’t have that; not when it was staring at him blatantly enough to draw unwanted attention. Slowly, he lifted a single finger to his lips. The dog licked its chops and blinked, single good eye watching him carefully.

Levi swore under his breath when it started to move, but was surprised when it turned to face the three men rather than him and began to bark viciously, teeth bared and spittle flying as it snarled. Levi heard the men exchange a few short words and suddenly the shadows receded again, three pairs of footsteps fading into the distance once more. Levi sagged against the door with relief and grinned when the dog turned to him again, barking stopped.

“What you staring at, doofus?” Its tail wagged again. God, it looked so stupidly cheerful, like a certain other brat Levi knew. He laughed, watching the dog bounce energetically before him. “I think you just saved my ass.” Doofus yapped happily at the praise, leaping playfully from side to side and Levi considered the mutt thoughtfully.

Gunther helped him into the chopper, hoisting him up by his arm. Levi’s mobility was severely reduced by the added load wriggling excitably in his other arm.

“Captain, what the hell is that?” Auruo eyed the mongrel warily, leaning away fearfully when she snarled at him from where Levi had positioned her between his knees for the return flight home. Levi smirked, scratching behind her ears fondly.

“This is Doofus, the newest member of our squad.” Erd was watching her with a mixture of curiosity and repulsion.

“You have not watched Marley & Me, have you, Sir? I said puppy, not hob-goblin.”
“I think Eren will love her, Sir. He has a type, after all.” Nanaba turned her head to shoot him a mischievous wink over her shoulder that had the rest of his squad laughing. Doofus barked enthusiastically, eager to join in, and Levi couldn’t hold back a smile after that. He pulled his phone out of his pocket and shot off a quick message.

[You]: We’re on our way home now. Everyone is safe and the mission was a success. Be there in about 4 hours. How’s Coronation planning?

After a few minutes, his phone chimed in his hand, alerting him of a new message.

[Eren]: Oh thank god. Cant wait 2 see u!! ugh it’s so hard. Dad needs to b there or the press will pik up but we dnt want 2 see him at all D: Talk 2 u prply soon, k? Hav a safe trip! love u <3 XxX

Levi smiled and tipped back his head, closing his eyes and letting the whirr of the chopper blades and hum of its engine lull him into a light sleep for the journey home.

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“What are you thinking for music? Is music an important thing?” Eren was stretched out on his back across his bed as he Skyped with Mikasa, his laptop balanced precariously on a tower of cushions and books by his head. Rose was fast asleep across his chest, spread-eagle on her stomach, and he didn’t dare move. It had taken him an hour of strolling around the base singing softly to finally send her to sleep. Petra and Erwin had gone on their first date in a long time and he had been all too happy to watch their daughter for them since Levi was away and he was starting to feel restless in his absence.

“I don’t know. I guess traditionally an orchestra would be classy, but at the same time I don’t want it to be boring.” They were planning the last details for Mikasa’s Coronation, which had been the reason why Eren hadn’t been able to join his husband on the latest mission. The damage control following the coup had demanded full time attention, and Armin had suggested making a fanfare of the Coronation as both an opportunity to strengthen the relationship with Legion as well as distracting the public.

The council was still amidst negotiations with Scouting Legion about the coup. While tensions had been high as soon as the plot was uncovered, it was a lot more complex than Wall Maria attacking Scouting Legion; after all, it had been a joint effort between Grisha and Nile so it was half Legion too. Plus, it appeared only few of Grisha’s advisors had been privy to the plan in the first palace, not to mention it was Mikasa’s military intervention that had ultimately put an end to it. In the end, Maria couldn’t entirely be held accountable and punished for the behaviour of the few corrupted at the top of its chain of command. While it was agreed to keep the incident on the down low – it would not do to make a huge deal of the incident; relations between the nations were tense enough without the public crying for vengeance as well – there was a wide agreement that Grisha would have to be deposed for obvious reasons and he was to be placed under ‘house’ arrest until his sentence agreed upon. The explanation made public for the King of Maria’s sudden retirement was health reasons, and so Mikasa was to take her place on the throne with Armin by her side as head Advisor.

At the end of the day, despite the rift of trust that had developed between the two nations, it was clear that the relationship would have to be mended. Both nations heavily relied on each other, as was the basis for the Alliance in the first place, and so estrangement was out of the question. The
Alliance was not broken, there was no civil war, and from the outside at least, everything seemed to go on as normal. Well, that’s what every was working to achieve and they were getting there, slowly but surely.

“I could dance?” Mikasa fixed him with a flat stare.

“You are *not* stripping at my Coronation, Eren.”

“You know I have an eight pack since I joined Levi’s squad…?” he pitched.

“Eren, *no.*” He shrugged. Bo-ring. He glanced at the time as their conversation drifted into silence. Oh shit!

“Hey, I gotta go. Levi will be here soon, okay? I’ll call you tonight.” His sister snorted and waved her hand dismissively.

“No you won’t. You won’t call me until tomorrow after you’ve *recovered* from tonight.” Eren pursed his lips in embarrassment. “Well go on. Go greet your husband like the sweet little married couple you are. You two make me sick.” She was smiling fondly despite her words though, and Eren rolled his eyes before closing his laptop.

“Come on, Rosie. Let’s go find your uncle, hm?”

It had been a long time since Eren had been in this position, standing in the training grounds watching Levi’s helicopter descend as his squad returned from a mission. It was nice to take a break like this, but he had to admit, the nerve-wracking wait to hear from Levi was definitely not worth it. He couldn’t wait to return to work with them again.

The chopper blades gradually slowed and the squad disembarked. Eren congratulated them warmly, hugging each of them and welcoming them home as they jumped out whooping to the applause and cheers of the rest of the soldiers that had gathered.

“The Captain has a surprise for you,” Erd said ominously as Eren released him from his hug.

“He isn’t hurt, is he?” He couldn’t help the spark of fear that shot down his spine. The blond soldier laughed heartily.

“Oh no. But I have a feeling he soon will be once you see… *it.*” Eren handed Rose over to him before he went to greet his husband, feeling a mixture of intrigue and unease.

“Levi?” For some reason he felt like he should announce his approach, maybe give Levi time to prepare himself.

Levi jumped out last, looking suspiciously pleased with himself. Eren hung back warily, eyeing him over for any clues. No bandages or bloodstains were visible from here. All limbs were accounted for, too; just how nasty could this surprise be?

“I got you something.” Levi was wearing that almost-smile that was the equivalent of a full blown grin on a normal person. Oh dear…

“From *Nedlay*?” Eren asked dubiously. "What is it, crack cocaine? Oh darling, you shouldn’t have.” Levi pursed his lips, eyes sparkling. Eren felt his chest grow warm with fondness as he approached. Oh God, it had only been a three day trip but he had missed him so much. He cocked
his head in confusion as Levi put his fingers to his mouth and whistled a sharp, high note. Eren stepped back in surprise when a brown shape came shooting out of the the grounded helicopter and bounded towards him. The dog collided excitably with his shins and Eren flailed for balance as it continued to bounce around him, stubby tail wagging and pink tongue lolling happily out of its mouth. Eren’s look of alarm morphed into a delighted grin.

“A puppy!” He cried. The ‘puppy’ barked happily as Levi watched on from the side proudly. Eren’s face was a mask of joy as he crouched down to pet and coo at the mongrel.

“Told you.” Nanaba said, climbing out of the cockpit and joining the rest of Levi’s squad as they watched the scene unfold from the sidelines. Erd snorted as he bounced Rose on his hip, head shaking in disbelief.

“That brat has no taste,” Auruo sniffed.

“Careful there; that brat is married to your Captain,” Gunther warned reproachfully. Erd arched an eyebrow, unimpressed.

“Exactly.”

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“I hope you showered after washing that filthy mutt.” Eren sighed as he crawled onto the bed and positioned himself behind Levi, perching his chin over his husband’s shoulder and watching him polish his knife with experienced, callused hands.

“Yes, Sir. I left her in the yard for now, but we’re gonna need to find her a proper place to sleep. What should we name her?”

“Her name is Doofus.” Eren blinked, looking at Levi’s face incredulously over his shoulder. His expression didn’t even change, eyes fixed seriously on his hands as he worked. Eren snorted.

“Of course it is.” Levi could act as dismissive as he wanted, sneering at Doofus’ filthy coat and calling her every variation of ugly he could imagine, but Eren could tell he was incredibly fond of the dog already.

He spoke the words against the sensitive skin of Levi’s neck, fingers tracing lines up Levi’s sides. He felt his husband shiver.

“Are you hurt anywhere?” Levi shook his head, finally putting his equipment away and leaning back into Eren’s embrace.

“It went exactly according to plan. Well, except for Doofus.” Eren peppered kisses against the older man’s temple and Levi arched his neck to give him better access, melting under the attention.

“You’ll have to tell me that story later. Right now, I have something else in mind…” He let the sentence hang, sneaking his hand into the front folds of Levi bathrobe. Levi huffed a quiet laugh, turning his face to look up at him, his grey eyes warm as they scanned his face as if memorizing every freckle. Eren pressed his lips against his husband in a soft, chaste kiss. One hand intertwined his fingers with Levi’s, their matching wedding bands clinking against each other’s while his other hand continued its tentative exploration of Levi’s chest.
“Welcome back, love,” he murmured into the kiss. He felt Levi’s lips tug up in a smile against his.

“I’m home,” Levi whispered back.

Chapter End Notes

This was my first ever fic, as many of you already know, and I just want to thank you so much for your ongoing support. I honestly didn't know what to expect when I uploaded a messy and slightly cringe-worthy Chapter One several months ago, but I certainly didn't expect to receive so much love, make so many new friends, and to become as attached as I did.

Thank you so much all of you again for sticking with me through this story. Thank you for encouraging a beginner writer; I hope your patience paid off and you thought this was all worth it. I want you all to know that if it weren't for your encouragement, especially those of you that were with me from the very beginning, I would not be writing now and trust me that means a lot to me.

I hope I get more wonderful comments from you in my other works, or if you want, I'd love if anyone wanted to drop by my tumblr.

Thank you!! <3

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!