The Consort

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Summary

When Levi, a stable boy to the Duke of Rose, gets traded in for the Duke's freedom to the King of Sina himself, he has no idea that what awaits him is the life of a Prince Consort – a life of intrigue, betrayal, romance, and political schemes.

When King Erwin takes a dark-haired beauty as his fourth Consort, he has no idea that Levi is all he needs.

Eventual Eruri, JeanMarco and possible Eremin.

Notes

Well, a new story looms on the horizon. Here it is, folks: the AU that I have been dreaming of writing for a month or so now. It's finally out there. Yay me?

This is un-betaed, so forgive any mistakes, pretty please.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Levi’s cheek stung. Panting, he chanced a glare at his offender who proceeded to jam his foot right between Levi’s ribs, causing him to cough and sputter. He was surprised that he wasn’t exhaling blood at this point. He felt the other man grab onto his matted hair and pull upward, forcing Levi to look him in the eye.

“You little whore.”

But I didn’t do anything. What did I do? Frantic thoughts sped through his mind as he tried to make sense of why he had been pulled unceremoniously from his station in the mansion stables by his master’s personal guard and dragged all the way here, to the main ballroom, only to be made to kneel and grovel at the feet of the man who had decided to turn Levi into some sort of scapegoat.

“You seduced him, didn’t you?”

Levi’s eyes widened as he looked at the Duke. He shook his head. I swear, I never meant to… I didn’t try to make him like me! Nobody is supposed to like me! The Duke’s foot made contact with his side again and he finally let out a scream of pain, feeling the fragile bones give in to the blow.

“Do you have anything to say for yourself, you little slut?”

It’s not my fault. Levi said nothing, naturally; he knew that if he tried to talk back, the beating would just be prolonged until he was no longer able to do his job. No job, no food. That was the deal between the Duke and him; that had been the deal since the very first morning that Levi had started his work as a stable hand at the mansion. The Duke always claimed that he had taken Levi in out of pity, that Levi had looked so pathetic, that his poor old heart had been unable to refuse the vagabond who had staggered to his gate at the crack of dawn. Levi, of course, knew otherwise, as did the other servants in the Duke’s mansion. The man had no heart to speak of. He was merciless with his punishments and scarce with his praise. He was a madman, a violent maniac who got off on making his workers suffer. Still, this job was the best thing Levi could have ever hoped for, so he had stuck with it despite all the drawbacks. Now, though, it looked like even quitting was no longer an option.

“You’re lucky, you bitch,” the Duke growled into his ear, pulling him up by his hair yet again, making the roots of his scalp ache. “The King’s taken a liking to you. You just might solve all my problems.”

Levi’s chin connected with the tiled floor painfully as the Duke threw him down with disgust painted all over his wrinkled old face.

“Get up, you scum.”

Levi tried to raise himself off the ground but all he was able to muster up was feeble, crooked kneeling at the Duke’s feet.

“You’re going to the capital.”

“Yes, Sire.”

That was how Levi’s entire world ended up swaying on its axis to turn into something he no longer recognized as his own life. Two days later, he was standing at the entrance to the Royal Palace with the reigns of his sickly old horse clutched in his right hand. The guards had been warned, it would
seem, that a little street rat would be appearing there, for they said nothing as he passed by them. Every step he took toward the door felt like a step further away from what he had come to think of as home, dysfunctional as it had been, and another step closer to a new unknown – and Levi detested the unknown.

Fate is an ironic lady. Just a couple of hours before, the Duke himself had been the one made to kneel on his own ballroom floor. The King had personally come to visit him, and at first, the man had put on airs, greeting the ruler as an old friend despite having never met him face-to-face, and tried to please him as well as he could by setting out his best foods and showing off the most extravagant works of art. However, as soon as the reason for the King’s visit had become known, everything changed.

“Tax evasion.”

“Your Majesty, I assure you, I–,”

“The Treasury is sixty thousand pieces of gold short. The sixty thousand that should have come from your estate, Duke Kenneth of Rose.”

Said Duke cowered on the floor, glancing up at the King whose blue eyes were boring into him with the force of a thousand knives. The King was ridiculously young; much more so than Kenneth would have ever expected him to be. He was tall, broad in the shoulders – the sings of a true King who had earned his rule through military conquest, and not a feeble heir of dying dynasty. Many a rumor traveled across the land about King Erwin, though none of them were ever denied or confirmed directly. In a place as remote as Kenneth’s Dukedom, people could only guess about the King’s true appearance and the nature of his character.

For all Kenneth knew now, King Erwin was not a gentle man. The blade of the sword pressed up against his jugular vein was testament enough to that. The fact that the King dirtied his hands on such matters only served to confirm that the man meant business.

“Your Majesty, I shall pay it all in full, I shall–,”

“It is too late to try and rectify old mistakes, Kenneth,” the King said gravely. “Your offer needs to counter the misdemeanor you have committed against the Crown and the Law of Sina.”

“Anything, Your Majesty, anything at all. Request whatever you want of me, and I shall give it to you.”

King Erwin’s lip curled in distaste. He lowered he sword and turned his back to the man cowering on the floor. His blue eyes skimmed over an ostentatious painting of a lion bearing a crown disinterestedly.

“You might have heard certain things about my personal preferences, Kenneth.”

“Sire?”

Erwin turned back to Kenneth. “Now come on, no need to be modest about these thing. I personally know you have oftentimes helped spread word among your people about my proclivities.”

Kenny’s pulse sped up.

“Relax. I shan’t punish you for it, as punishing for the truth is the matter of a tyrant. I have no
interest in cutting off honest word."

“Sire, I d-don’t understand–,"

“Word is that I hold a harem of consorts back in the capital. Pretty young things, easy on the eyes and quite capable in bed. I am an aggressive man, Kenneth. I need many outlets for my anger, otherwise the Kingdom would fall into trouble,” Erwin continued thoughtfully. “Word is, too, that all of my Consorts are male.”

“Your Majesty?”

“Stop playing the fool, Kenny. What I want from you is a contribution to my little family.” Erwin said quietly. Murmurs broke out among the people he had brought with him – the knights, the servants.

“I… I have nothing to offer in that regard,” Kenny said hurriedly. “In my life, I have never sired children–,”

“I don’t care for your spawn, Kenneth,” Erwin replied harshly. “For I know that such a boy would have no worth as a human being. Coming from your loins, he could only be half-snake.”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

“A certain young man caught my eye as I was arriving. Very beautiful. Small, too. With eyes of steel grey, of the most unusual shape I have yet to encounter,” the King said quietly. The murmurs intensified as the King’s people attempted to remember someone of the sort on the estate. Surely, they would have noticed a boy like this, who seemed to have captured the King’s heart in such a short time?

“Your Majesty, I assure you that there is not one single man that fits your description living beneath my roof,” Kenneth said, wracking his brain frantically. His eyes widened as a thought so absurd it almost made him laugh despite the gravity of his position entered his mind. “Surely, Sire, you cannot mean the stable hand, Levi?”

“Levi,” the King repeated, as if he were tasting the name, to see how it danced on his tongue. “His name is Levi, then.”

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“Sire, he is a mere stable boy–,”

“Yet he possesses a beauty that no other man on earth does,” the King said in a voice that left absolutely no room for argument. His sword pressed up against Kenneth’s neck once more and the Duke gulped nervously, his eyes dancing over the sharp iron.

“Make sure that Levi is at the Royal Palace by nightfall in two days’ time, together with the money you owe to the state,” Erwin said shortly, putting the sword away. Kenny exhaled in relief. Could it really be this simple? A mere stable boy to get me off the gallows?

“Of course, Your Majesty,” he agreed in a hushed voice. Erwin nodded and swept out of the room without another word.

Erwin rode back to the Royal Capital surrounded by his men, all silent. He knew that this move was going to be seen as a political faux pas, but being a universal, absolute monarch did have its perks from time to time. He knew that Mike, his right-hand man and advisor, would admonish him later, as soon as they were alone in his quarters. He would tell Erwin that he should have executed the Duke or at least arrested him and thrown him in prison for his crime. Taxes were an important
part of Erwin’s political course, after all. When he had first taken the throne from the previous, inept ruler without using much force at all, he had made it a point to alter the taxation system. He put more pressure on the rich while releasing the poorest from paying any taxes at all. To him, it seemed only fair that people paid in relation to how much income they had. Many of the nobility, like Duke Kenneth, had balked at first, only to be met with a firm fist and a sword. How this discrepancy in Kenneth’s taxes had gone unnoticed for so long, Erwin didn’t know, but he was very keen to find out. If there was a traitor among his government, he was going to fish them out and eradicate them.

Yet his mind began to stray from the Treasury’s plight, focusing instead on the rare beauty he had taken for his own just mere hours before.

He supposed it was sentiment of him to claim infatuation at first sight. It was not love, that much he knew, but pure lust. Erwin was a man appreciative of true art, and the stable hand had turned out to be just that – a diamond in the rough, a natural quality to him that many of the belles in the Capital lacked. Even Erwin’s own boys, his beloved family, had become slightly artificial beneath the light of the palace candelabras. They were still beautiful to him, and they shared his passions equally; they were intelligent conversation and had engaging personalities. Yet they had all been brought up in this world of glamor. They were pretty young men raised to be just that. It was only Erwin’s permissiveness and encouragement of their studies that had allowed them to come out of the shells that their parents had imposed on them.

This… this Levi, though, was a completely different matter. When Erwin had arrived, unexpectedly, at Duke Kenneth’s estate, he had been the first to spot the incoming party. He had run toward them and not stalled for a moment when he had come to realize who had stood before him.

Blue eyes met steely grey and the boy glared back at him for just a moment before bowing his head and going down on one knee. He didn’t say anything and Erwin knew that he should have; but it was all right, because at that moment, all Erwin could do was reach out and lift the boy’s chin up with his two fingers.

“Tell me,” he began, wetting his lips with his tongue when his mouth suddenly went dry. “Is this the estate of Duke Kenneth of Rose?”

The boy hesitated for just a moment, clearly mulling over the idea of getting his master in trouble, before nodding tentatively. Erwin didn’t want to let go of the boy’s face, the skin ridiculously soft against his own rough fingers, seasoned by the shield and sword, but this… whatever it was that was happening between them two, it had to stop. So Erwin let go of the young man with reluctance.

“Put my horse up, won’t you? And then do the same for my men,” Erwin said, his voice cracking on the last word. He didn’t clear his throat because he didn’t want to appear utterly foolish. The boy nodded and mouthing something, perhaps a ‘yes, Your Majesty,’ Erwin wasn’t sure as he was too busy watching those lips move without paying much attention to the rest.

He broke out of his frozen state as soon as the boy got off his knees and reached for Gloria’s reigns. Erwin let the horse go, and with it, the beautiful boy who had captured his attention at first glance.

It was then that he realized he did not want to part from this lowly stable hand.
And here we go, a new chapter written while flying over the Atlantic! I will be in the Dominican Republic scuba diving until almost the end of the month, but I will try to write on my days off :)

Levi couldn’t believe it. These sorts of things didn't happen to people like him. His entire life, he had been taught to keep his head down, do an honest day's work for the pay he was due and never talk back. Those sorts of instructions had gotten a rise out of him always, due to his unfortunate upbringing and nasty disposition, according to some – but he had always kept his feelings hidden away in the face of someone who outranked him socially. Which happened almost all the time, considering his complete lack of social position. Someone like him didn't matter, and his opinions would just be shoved back down his throat like the garbage they were. He was not a slave, no, he was something... undefinable. Technically, he had always been a free man, owning both his own body and mind, a master of his own ideas, able to choose what he wanted to do or thing. In reality, though, his dependence on material things, like food and shelter, had made him dependent, in turn, on those who had been able to provide them. He had always been a hostage of money.

He supposed it was about the same for everyone else in the kingdom who was not a slave or nobility. He had thought nothing of it. Life was life; it wasn't going to be pleasant up until the very end. He had always fantasized about seeing that final moment of rapture just before the light went out in him for the last time. He had been living out his existence just for the sake of seeing that final moment.

Standing in the middle of the King's throne room, though, he was no longer sure of his conviction. It seemed as though rapture had come early for him. He wasn't quite sure that he liked it, either. Did that mean that he had nothing else to work for? For a lowly servant to be standing face-to-face with the King himself, that was... the peak of all things imaginable.

They were alone, the King and him, which was surprising by itself. He had imagined that someone as important as Erwin would be surrounded by people all the time: guards, knights, court ladies, merchants. But either King Erwin was more patronizing or less complicated than Levi had imagined him to be. He supposed it was also a matter of pride. Levi was a person very detached from politics, mostly because the Duke hadn't wanted any of his staff to get ideas, and also because he had not been very interested in palace intrigues in the first place. However, from the little that he had heard about King Erwin, he had deduced that the man was different from the previous rulers of Sina, if only for the reason that he was not afraid of getting his hands dirty. He had come to see Kenneth personally, after all; whoever heard of a King doing something like that for a mere issue of taxation? It was clear that engaging with Kenneth had been a matter of personal pride, more of a symbolic gesture for the sake of an ideal rather than a singular mission to correct the crime of one man.

Yes, the persona Erwin presented to his subjects was that of an independent man, a man of action, more than a mere politician like his predecessors had been. His hands-on approach working with the population had yielded tremendous results in reducing poverty, at least among the lower middle
class, or so Levi had heard. He didn't really know what that meant since he had always been dirt-
poor. Even now, having been invited to the Royal Palace for reasons unknown, he donned a jacket
he had borrowed from the son of the local preacher man in the vicinity of Kenneth's estate, and one
of his boots had a hole the size of the Big Lake in the sole.

"Do you know why you are here?"

Levi jumped. He had forgotten how imposing Erwin's voice was. It was not a booming,
commandeering type of voice one would necessarily expect from a military leader of the King's
caliber; yet it was deep and had a quality to it that demanded immediate attention. Levi found
himself unable to speak yet again as the King turned to look at him with those blue eyes. The same
blue eyes that had reflected a strange sort of curiosity the first time they had met in Kenneth's
stables. Back then, as humbled as he had been by being in the presence of royalty, Levi had
thought nothing of that strange look. Now, though, as it was replicated in Erwin's eyes, he wasn't as
sure about brushing it aside as a simple peculiarity.

The dark-haired man shook his head in response, looking down at his feet and wondering whether
he would make it back to Kenneth's estate on time for dinner.

"Look at me."

It was very difficult to obey the King's command. Levi didn't like being intimidated, and Erwin's
eyes were his most intimidating feature, he had found back upon their first meeting. He looked up
reluctantly, and Erwin's expression seemed to soften as he reached out to touch Levi's cheek. The
young man waited with baited breath until the surprisingly warm fingertips made contact with his
face. He had expected Erwin to have cold and clammy hands, for some reason, and yet again, the
man had proven his assumptions wrong. Erwin emanated warmth.

"You are afraid of me, aren't you?" Erwin asked quietly, searching Levi's face with his eyes. Levi
opened his mouth to protest but he wasn't sure whether he was supposed to, so once more, he said
nothing, simply focusing his gaze on a tiny mole to the left side of the King's nose. He didn't
understand why he had been made to come here; Kenneth had said almost nothing, choosing
instead to beat the invitation into Levi's scull.

"Can you speak, boy?"

Levi's gaze snapped back to Erwin's eyes and he found his back going rigid as his body tensed in
Erwin's hold. Boy. The term that Levi despised the most for its diminutive power sounded even
more wrong coming from someone as warm as Erwin. The King noticed the tension in the young
man's body and lowered the hand that had been touching his cheek, not stepping away just yet.

"Say something, for Sina's sake. I feel like I am talking to myself here. That makes for a very
awkward exchange, don't you think?" He let out a slightly uneasy chuckle.

Was the King joking with Levi? Or was he being awkward? Levi really couldn't tell for sure.

"I..." Levi started before his words died in his throat and he was forced to restart. "I don't
understand why you summoned me here, Your Majesty."

Erwin chuckled, his eyes lighting up with mirth. "You have a very nice voice. It's good to know
that it matches your appearance. I tried to imagine what it sounded like but this exceeds my
expectations. It is lovely."

Levi's eyes widened and Erwin shook his head hurriedly. "No, no. You've done nothing wrong. It
Dear Levi? The stable hand licked his chapped lips with a dry, cottony tongue. "Thank you, Your Majesty."

Erwin held his gaze for a moment before stepping back and making a grand gesture with his arms, seemingly pointing out the entire throne room to Levi all in one grandiose swoop. "Well then, let us cut to the chase, Levi. Now, I was sure that Kenneth had told you why you were being summoned here, but once again, your former master has yielded nothing but disappointment."

*Former master?* Levi didn't like the sound of that. Had Kenneth sold him to the palace as a slave? Had he handed Levi over for some sort of made-up crime? The man's voice echoed in Levi's head, telling him that the King had taken a liking to him – but that could have easily been a trick. Kenneth was known for pulling such cheap tactics on his subordinates for amusement's sake. He had once promised not to punish a maid for having fallen pregnant with a bastard child only to personally kill the babe the moment it had been born without even allowing its mother to hold it. No, Levi wouldn't trust the Duke as far as he could spit.

"I have summoned you to the palace because I want to take you as a consort."

Laughter bubbled up in Levi's throat before he could stop it. He struggled against the giggles that were threatening to escape him but succumbed, unable to prevent himself from looking like a complete fool in front of the King of the entire land.

"Have I said something amusing, dear Levi?" Erwin asked, furrowing his eyebrows at the stable hand who stood in front of him with his arms bent over his stomach as he tried to contain himself and keep up at least some pretense of decorum.

"Please, forgive me, Your Majesty," Levi said quietly as he sobered up slightly, looking up at the King. His eyes widened when he realized that Erwin wasn't laughing with him or even at him. The man's face was dead serious, his jaw completely set as if it had been carved out of marble. Silence hung between the two of them and Levi suddenly felt very uncomfortable. Surely, this could not be anything other than a joke at his expense? "I must have misheard you. I thought you just said that you wanted to take me–,"

"–as my consort, yes," Erwin finished for him. He cocked his head to the side, watching Levi carefully as if measuring out every possible reaction to his words Levi could manifest. "Do you find the idea that repugnant?"

"I find it impossible, Your Majesty," Levi replied honestly, no longer laughing. He bowed his head apologetically. "Forgive me for pointing out the obvious, but I am a mere stable hand, and you, Sire, are the King of Sina. I don't think–,"

"It is because I am the King of Sina that I am capable of offering you such a thing," Erwin interrupted again. Levi looked at him blankly, his mind still caught in a loop, unable to process exactly what it was that the King was saying to him. It made very little sense.

He was spacing out so much that he didn't see Erwin approach. He only came to when he found his hand trapped between the King's two much larger palms, blue flooding his vision once more. The lack of distance between them was definitely not comfortable, but Levi couldn't say anything. Erwin was right, he was the King, and Levi had no say in how this meeting would go. He decided to humor the man, just to satisfy his seeming curiosity in joking about with a commoner.

"Levi, the moment I saw you on Kenneth's estate, I... something changed inside of me," Erwin said,
slightly awkwardly compared to the speeches he had given Levi previously. The dark-haired man sensed his hesitation but said nothing. He looked down at his feet again, finding it much easier. Erwin didn't let him do that, though, stopping Levi with one deft finger beneath his chin. "I know it is very forward of me to make such assumptions, but... you don't happen to be attached to anyone? A woman, a man?"

Levi wanted to shake his head but he found that he couldn't move at all with Erwin's gaze weighing so heavily on him. So he just mouthed a no instead, wondering whether he would wake up if he pinched himself.

"Then tell me, Levi, what do you have to lose by accepting my offer?" Erwin questioned. "I realize that you... might consider this insane, but you are the first commoner to catch my eye in such a way in a very, very long time. There is something about you that I have yet to explore, and I would like to explore it, if you would let me."

"And... for that, you would want to marry me?" Levi asked incredulously, finally finding his voice. Erwin's mouth slipped into a small smile.

"You are beautiful, Levi. I like to surround myself with beauty. I believe that you would be a suitable addition to my life."

"Your life?" Levi repeated, feeling like he was going to either throw up or pass out.

"I will give you everything you ever wanted. The things that you could never have despite working so hard for them, I can give you those at a moment's notice," Erwin told the younger man, his eyes fixed on Levi's face. "All I ask of you is to keep me company."

Levi opened his mouth to say something but found that he had not a single word left in him. What the hell was he supposed to say to this? They had never covered situations like these in the village school, probably because even the possibility of someone of his social standing getting a private audience with anyone higher than the deputy village prefect was as slim as Tilde the bar wench's waist.

"I still don't understand why you would want someone like me to... I mean, I don't wish to offend you by questioning your judgement or anything but--,"

"Then don't."

Levi found himself staring into King Erwin's eyes in disbelief.

Was he supposed to just accept this and stay here, just like that? To the layman, the offer would be tempting, but Levi prided himself in having slightly denser brain mass than the regular lot. He was sure that there was some sort of downside to the King's proposal, and he wasn't going to walk into it blindly. He was barely literate, yes. But he was far from stupid. The years he had spent as an orphan out in the streets of Rose proved to have been formative in a very destructive way. But they also put him ahead of many naive servants who jumped at any opportunity to benefit from a wealthy master.

"And what if I say no?" He asked quietly. Erwin's expression didn't change, and neither did his voice. He had clearly anticipated this response.

"I won't force you. You should know, however, that your being here is part of a deal I made with Duke Kenneth over a minor... taxation issue. I imagine that if you left, you would be forced to return to him. What would he say if he were to find out that part of his end of the deal had just
walked out on me? He would have to come up with proper retribution and his ire would fall on your shoulders. Now, I may have conquered other lands and killed people to get where I am, my dear Levi... But I do consider myself a gentler man than the Duke of Rose."

*And that was you not forcing me?*

"I see your point. You want a pretty face around the castle and for some reason you chose mine. And now you tell me I have the illusion of a choice."

"You have a choice," Erwin reiterated.

"You saw me limp when I walked in. You deduced that I have bruises. The Duke used them to convince me to come here," Levi said quietly, drawing up his sleeve and showing the King just how convincing Kenneth had been. "I doubt that he would condone my return."

Erwin's face contorted into a grimace. "It is barbaric of him... Damaging such beauty."

*He keeps calling me that. Beautiful.* Levi had never felt beautiful, and he had never been beautiful to anyone else, that much was sure. Even the men who had solicited his services before he had staggered into Kenneth's estate had never called him anything other than what he deserved to be called. Those were not pretty names.

Levi looked at Erwin with a deadpan expression. "Your Majesty, with all due respect... I must know what... I am to expect from this. What would my duties be, for example?"

Erwin laughed. "You are much smarter than the average stable boy."

"Something tells me you wouldn't go for the average stable boy."

"That's true," Erwin agreed jovially, now clearly entertained by Levi's responses. The younger man was feeling more and more like the court jester. "My current consorts are all young men of blue blood."

Levi's heart jolted in his chest. *Other consorts?* Sure, he had heard the vicious rumors that travelled across the land, dealing blows to King Erwin's reputation as a morally integral man, but he had never once believed them to be anything other than speculation. Then again, their religion and law did not prohibit polygamy, so technically the King was in the right.

"Your other consorts, Sire?" Levi asked, his own voice sounding subdued to him. He didn't really understand why, but he felt very reluctant about being just one of the others. Perhaps the King's previous compliments had gotten to his head.

Erwin's eyebrows shot up in surprise.

"Surely, you've heard--,"

"I have heard the gossip, Your Majesty," Levi said politely even though he was shaking on the inside. "I have never even considered that there was any truth to them."

"Three."

"Pardon?"

"I have three Prince Consorts to this date. I would like you to be the fourth."

*You are a greedy man, King Erwin,* Levi thought to himself. He now saw why it was that Erwin
had so easily seized the throne back in the time of the coup. The man's ambitions knew no bounds. "I suppose this whole talk of beauty worked on them before me?"

Erwin laughed. "Actually, you are the first that I have had to woo. The other ones I've married due to political and economic reasons. You will find that marriage is the best glue to hold an alliance together."

Levi hummed. "And not one of them thinks it strange, being one of the many?"

"You mean one of the few? The very select few."

"So they are special," Levi harrumphed.

"Of course they are, Levi," Erwin said, looking almost offended at Levi's presumption of the case being otherwise. "I may have married them because of certain political motives for the sake of development and power, but do not think for one moment that I do not prize their existence in my life. They are all fine young men, and they are all incredibly devoted to me, as I am to them."

Levi shook his head. "That's... I don't understand that. I have never loved a single person, I cannot imagine loving several at the same time."

"You don't have to. You can only love me, that should be enough for our marriage to work."

"I do not hold political merit for you."

"No. In fact, I'd rather we kept your background a secret. Most nobles find the lower classes to be..."

"Dirty?"

"Untrustworthy."

"Ah." Levi paused, looking up at the King. His Majesty was definitely something else entirely. "Then why me?"

"I told you." Erwin's hand made contact with his face again and Levi found himself leaning into the touch instead of recoiling from it. "I think you are beautiful, Levi. But now I can also see that you are intelligent. You know this country from the perspective of a commoner, which is something I lost the moment I ascended to the throne. A lot of good may come from our union."

Levi nodded silently. He took a moment to consider it. Just a moment was enough. He had nothing to lose, after all.

"All right then."

Erwin's eyes widened and a smile threatened to pull on the corners of his mouth.

"Meaning?"

"As much as I would love to wear the laurels of someone who refused a King's hand in marriage, I am a selfish human being. And you do seem to be much better company than the Duke."

Erwin's laughter echoed across the hall.

"Splendid."
Chapter End Notes

Drop me a line?
Levi had no idea what he had gotten himself into. All he knew was that within several hours, the King had managed to do something no other man had ever been able to – change his entire life. Quite literally, too: Erwin had come up with a believable story of how Levi was the son of an Ambassador from some obscure state of Pars (the history of which he had been told to study impeccably within the week), how he had been given to Erwin as a peace offering of sorts (well, that much was certainly true), and how he was not very well-educated in the ways of Sina, which would be a marvelous excuse for any indiscretion on his part. Levi had never studied etiquette, of course; stable boys had no need for that. He knew how to keep his head bowed and his mouth shut, and that had been enough to ensure his survival. Apparently, though, this wasn't the way one lived as an Ambassador's son. He was expected to speak, to present himself, to be Erwin's arm candy whenever some grandiose event rolled around, which was almost daily. Luckily, though, the King had three other Consorts to choose from – they were rarely seen out all at once. Levi supposed it was both smart and slightly... wrong of the King to have such numerous convenient marriages.

Before he got to meet the other Consorts, he was taken to the Royal Tailor, a kindly woman named Nanaba, with gentle eyes and even gentler hands. She was dressed quite fancily for someone of her standing and when she saw Levi's inquisitive glance, she only smiled, telling him that the King preferred to see those who surrounded him well dressed. Levi only shrugged in response and submitted to what felt like hours of measuring, stitching, sewing and trying. Nanaba's assistants were quiet ladies, yet also very skilled – and they had Levi's first robes done within no time. Levi felt awkward standing in front of the mirror with such expensive fabric brushing his skin. He had never worn anything this soft. Before he could have it on properly, though, Nanaba sent him off to the baths, where he was left to his own devices on Erwin's orders. Though he had no idea what most of the things in the tiny glass vials lining the edge of the enormous tub were, he used them according to smell, and managed to get the major part of grime off his skin and out of his hair. If anyone questioned the so-called Ambassador’s son and his peculiar dirtiness, he would just tell them he fell off his horse on his way to the palace. The idea didn't sit well with him, since he had been an accomplished rider since he had been a mere child, but Erwin didn't want him to be discovered and he wasn't very keen on facing the guillotine any time soon either. He wondered briefly why he was going to such lengths for the man, someone he had just met, someone who had ripped him away from the life he had known and thrown him into this strange world of soirees and fancy clothes and fucking bath salts. After a while it came to him that perhaps he had always known that the life he had been living before had been too small. Perhaps he had just been passively seeking for a way to get out. Perhaps it was that.
After he was bathed and dressed in the fresh robes Nanaba had made for him, Levi stood in front of the mirror, looking at his own reflection skeptically. The person reflected looked much better than the scrawny little man that had arrived at the palace gate. His thinness was hidden beneath turquoise silk and silvery velvet. His feet felt surprisingly light in the new shoes that had been provided to him – he had trouble imagining where they could have gotten such small shoes at such short notice, but then again, Erwin was the King.

Levi’s face was clean, almost criminally so. He had never seen himself completely clean, no matter how hard he had tried to maintain some level of personal hygiene. Some servants at Kenneth’s estate never even bothered bathing in the rainwater barrel they collected regularly. Levi had always insisted on at least washing his face and hands. But this... his fingers had pruned for the first time in his life after a bath and he looked at them in wonder. The bath had been warm, so much warmer than that barrel, so he had indulged for a longer time than usual.

"Are you ready?"

He whipped around to see the King standing in the middle of his makeshift boudoir. King Erwin, of course, looked as perfect as always, dressed in royal blue and gold. His smile reached his eyes when he saw Levi turn away from the mirror and look at him instead.

"You are stunning," he said quietly, and Levi was at a loss for words again. The King reached out to touch Levi’s pale cheek and the younger man found himself closing his eyes and leaning into the soft fingers that slid over his skin in just the right way. He was becoming a pet, and he found that he didn’t mind that much. It felt nice to be taken care of for a change.

"Anyone looks good in rich clothes," Levi replied tersely and Erwin let out a laugh.

"Believe me, you will see just how wrong that statement is at your first ball."

"Ball?" Levi opened his eyes in surprise.

"Of course. Your will accompany me to state functions from time to time. Not always, of course. I know that these sorts of things are challenging for you until you learn how to handle them properly," Erwin said delicately and for a moment, Levi wanted nothing more than to punch him in the face.

"Thanks for calling me uncultured in such a nice way.

"Good thing you have four of us, then," Levi said stubbornly and Erwin only smiled in response to the jibe. There was no way that Levi was jealous, of course, but he still found the whole concept very, very strange.

"Yes, exactly, my Levi," was all the King said as he pulled away from the younger man. "Speaking of which, I think it is time for you to come meet your... colleagues."

Levi raised an eyebrow at the term. Don’t you mean sister wives?

He didn’t say anything, though, and instead took the hand Erwin offered him. The two of them walked out of the room and made their way down the long corridor that was surprisingly void of paintings or any other works of ostentatious art Levi had expected. Erwin followed his inquisitive glance and smiled softly.

"These are the interior quarters, darling. There is no need for overt decoration in here. You will find that my Consorts and I enjoy living modestly.

Yeah, I bet, Levi thought to himself, eyeing the tall ceilings and bronze chandeliers. Absolutely simple. Almost poverty-ridden, even.
Yet again, he said nothing. It wasn't his place. Until Erwin and him were officially married, he was simply a well-taken care of guest in the palace. He had to admit that he was very curious about what the ceremony would entail. Surely, it couldn't be a traditional wedding, considering that despite the fact that the religion of the land did not prohibit polygamy, few actually took advantage of their freedom to marry more than one person at a time. Although now that Levi thought about it, that had to do more with economizing and not having additional mouths to feed than love and attachments – plenty of rich noblemen took lovers and even hired whores, of which everyone knew but seldom spoke. He supposed that the King did not have a shortage of money to take care of his Consorts.

"Your Majesty, when's the wedding?" He asked tentatively, not knowing whether he was allowed to ask questions about it. The King looked down at him and smiled gently, as if he had been expecting Levi to inquire.

"Tomorrow, if you are prepared. I trust you do not have people you would want to invite?" Erwin asked. Levi nearly huffed. That self-assured bastard just assumed Levi didn't have any family or friends, now, did he? Not that it wasn't true, of course, but the assumption hurt nonetheless. Was Levi that pathetic?

"No," he responded quietly, not wanting to elaborate on the matter much further. He was sure that Erwin would start prying but the man surprised him by not saying a thing. Perhaps Levi had made it clear enough that he didn't care to elaborate on the issue much.

"Then tomorrow it is. It will be small, mind you. Just the court and the other Consorts, I believe. There is no need to make a big spectacle out of it," the King said conversationally and Levi's lip curled.

"Yes, I suppose it gets a bit tedious after the third time," he said before he could stop himself. To his astonishment, the King tossed his head back and laughed soundly.

"Absolutely not. It is supposed to be the happiest day for the bride, isn't it?" He said as Levi bristled at the term bride. "I try to make my new Consorts comfortable by providing what they need. I don't see you as the type of person who would enjoy a big fancy wedding."

Levi supposed that was true, so he just nodded, slightly appeased by Erwin's response. He still didn't understand how the King could be so calm when talking about the fact that he had been married three times – and still was, actually – to the man who was going to be his fourth spouse. It wasn't every day that such things happened, and definitely not on Kenneth's estate, where the most exciting thing was when the merchants came to trade silk for the workers' hard-earned wages.

"Don't worry about the others, they all understand that I am a man with a heart capable of loving all of you," Erwin continued lightly. Levi stared at him with incredulity in his eyes but did not respond. "In time, you will come to see how our relationship works, and you will find that it is pleasing to everyone involved."

The former stable hand severely doubted that, but he didn't argue. Maybe Erwin was right – after all, he was the King, and kings were supposed to be wise. So Levi would just go with the flow, considering he really had nowhere to run anymore. He was sure that Kenneth would not want to see his face after having practically sold him to Erwin in exchange for a reprieve, and he wouldn't be able to get a decent job anywhere around Sina with the way he looked and the lack of formal citizenship. As far as the world was concerned, Levi did not exist at all, and before all this had happened, Levi had quite liked that. He had been able to disappear upon short notice if push came to shove; and now he was stuck within the palace walls with a King for a husband. He didn't know whether he had been liberated or caught in an even tighter net. All he knew was that the cloak felt
divine on his shoulders and that the palace was much warmer than the tiny room in the attic of the stables that had been his home. He was sure that the palace roof didn't leak, at least.

"You will be staying in the Consorts' wing," Erwin said. "I had another room prepared for you, but I find that they prefer to socialize in the sitting room most of the time."

They actually spend time together? Levi thought to himself. He couldn't even begin to imagine how awkward it was.

"No doubt they discuss you in there," he said quietly, and Erwin chuckled warmly at his words, clearly not taking it as a jibe but a compliment instead. Levi couldn't believe how full of himself this man was.

"I sure hope so, my Levi," he said, smiling as he pushed the door open.

Light. There was a lot of light in the spacious room. That was the first thing Levi noticed upon entering as he followed Erwin inside. The second thing was the abundance of silk and velvet and expensive mahogany. He didn't think he had ever even touched woodwork this intricate. Tapestries and draperies hung over every wall of the circular room, surrounding a small sitting area with very comfortable-looking divans that circumvented a short-legged table that had glass for a tabletop and silver roses for corners. At the farthest end of the room sat three wooden bookcases laden with tomes of varying volume and price. Right next to them was an easel, an unfinished landscape propped lazily against it. The paint was still wet on it, so Levi assumed that it had been one of the Consorts who had taken up the task – and they were doing a good job, too. Of course, he didn't know shit about art, but at least the landscape looked realistic.

The centerpiece of the room was a huge stained glass window off to the right from the entrance. Underneath it was a pile of extremely fluffy cushions and pillows, which served as a perch for two figures, hidden in the shadows.

"Your Majesty!" One of them glanced away from a thick book, smiling at Erwin as if he had hung the moon up in the sky. He put the book away and sprung up, surprising Levi with how short he was: a tiny, frail-looking blond with longish hair and eyes as blue as the sea. Levi had to admit that he was beautiful, decidedly more beautiful than Levi could ever hope to be. The boy – because he couldn't be more than just a boy – threw his arms around the King's middle and for a moment, Levi was appalled by the familiarity of the gesture, but then he saw Erwin smile warmly and hug the kid back. When the blond retreated, the King bent down and placed a kiss on his lips – the kind of kiss that was definitely less chaste than the court would allow. As they parted, Erwin nudged the kid toward Levi and smiled down at the top of his head.

"Levi, this is Armin. My first Consort," he said, and the blond's eyes lit up as he enveloped Levi in a very uncomfortable, very intimate – too intimate for Levi's tastes – embrace.

"Hello, Levi," he said, and Levi found that his voice hadn't even broken properly yet. He resisted the urge to look up at Erwin with loathing. You cradle-robber.

"He's the favorite," someone drawled from the pile of pillows, and as Armin drew back, Levi found himself looking at a tall teenager with two-toned hair and sharp features. His face was long, not too long to void his features of handsomeness, but Levi was quite sure that it had earned him some unfavorable nicknames back in the day. If princes ever had unfavorable nicknames.

"Oh please, His Majesty loves us all the same, and you know it," Armin said with a smile on his face. Levi was beginning to hate this kid for how nothing seemed to ruffle his feathers.
"I'm Jean," the tall teen tossed at Levi, standing in the light properly to show off his gold-threaded cloak and the small dagger that hung on his waist. He saw Levi's eyes slip to glance at it, and smirked. “Artisanal. His Majesty gifted to me for our wedding"

"Nice," Levi breathed, not able to resist the urge to tease the cocky kid. "Do you know how to use it?"

Jean's eyes narrowed and he was about to retaliate before another voice joined in the conversation.

"That's the first thing I said to him when he tried to appear all high and mighty."

Levi turned around to see a pair of the most ridiculously green eyes he had ever seen approach him, framed by an angelic face that was complimented by wild chestnut-colored hair. The newcomer was also young, much younger than Levi was himself, but he held an air of strength that Jean, despite all his tail-bristling and showing off, could never hope to possess so effortlessly. The third boy was also taller than Levi, but his face was still round, holding all the soft features of youth.

You sure like them young, Your Majesty, Levi thought to himself as he stood awkwardly in front of the three Consorts and their beaming husband.

"This is Eren, he's my latest Consort," Erwin said with a smile, reaching out to ruffle Eren's hair playfully. The boy leaned into his touch as if he were a cat. Levi couldn't believe how comfortable the three of them were around each other – it was clear that even the banter Eren and Jean had exchanged had been in jest only with no real venom to back it up.

"Until now," Eren said, glancing at Levi's cloak with understanding. "Do we three no longer satisfy you, Your Majesty?"

Erwin scoffed playfully. "You three are plenty. But look at him, isn't he exquisite?"

"He is," Armin said, reaching out to touch Levi's cheek, and the dark-haired man fought an urge to smack it away. He was not used to such contact. "Welcome to the harem, Levi. We'll be sure to grill you for details later. I want to know where such pretty people come from."

The harem?

"Armin doesn't have a way with words," Eren said comfortingly, staying away from Levi, which was a wise choice. "We're just one big, happy family."

"Which means that I can bully you, little brother," Jean said and suddenly captured Eren in a headlock, ruffling his hair roughly and making the younger boy squeal in a very unmanly way.

These people are crazy, Levi thought to himself as he watched the scene unfold. He glanced at the King who had a serene smile on his face as he observed the young men’s horseplay.

Definitely crazy. What the hell have I gotten myself into?

Chapter End Notes

As always, please don't hesitate to message me on Tumblr or leave a comment :)
And here it is, ladies and gentlemen! A new installment, sorry for the wait! Still scuba diving in the Dominican, that's why I'm so on and off about being online :)

Questioning glances turned toward him as soon as the door closed behind Erwin. The King left having bestowed sweet kisses on their lips, all four of them, as if it were perfectly normal to kiss four people goodbye in succession like this. Levi wanted to stare incredulously after him but he found himself surrounded by three pairs of curious eyes. He fought the urge to stare back childishly.

"You're old." Levi whipped to the side to look at Jean who smirked down at him with a smug expression on his face.

"Meaning?" Levi asked, his voice even. He knew that Erwin probably thought that he was around the same age as the rest of the boys; he did look much younger than he actually was, and it surprised him that Jean was able to see through the deception.

"Meaning you're not as young as the King likes them," Eren said, his voice matter-of-fact. He circled Levi with interest, as of inspecting him for imperfections. Kid, you won't even know where to start, Levi thought to himself as he tried to keep his breathing steady and pretend like this sort of scrutiny didn't make him feel uncomfortable. He quickly realized that his point to appear at ease was moot; that happened when Armin, clearly the most tactile of the three, took Levi's chin between his fingers and looked at his face closely, as if he were searching him for ticks or lice. The dark-haired young man attempted to keep his cool and not jerk away immediately.

"You're pretty, though. Really pretty," Armin said, his blue eyes glancing over Levi's admittedly soft features. Never in his life would he have thought that being pretty was a good thing, not until coming to the palace, at least. Back at Kenny's estate he had always been ridiculed for his looks – he was simply too small and his stature was too girly to be taken seriously, even despite the fact that he was in top shape, with a muscled back and broad shoulders cultivated by hours of hard work daily. His face had always been a curse; nobody had cared that he could carry five sacks of flour on his back or stop a galloping horse in its tracks. Instead, he had gotten teased about his pink lips and button nose. Before he had come to work at the estate, he had tried to use his looks to earn money – but even a pretty face couldn't make up for the lack of experience. He had gotten a few pieces of copper for his trouble, along with a torn mouth and a slight limp that had lasted for days. It was then that Kenneth had take him in.

One of the men at the local pub had once attempted to smack him on the buttocks as one would a bar wench to the encouraging hoots of his friends, and Levi had finally snapped, shoving their faces in their food and making them choke on their own stomach juices. Since then, they had stayed away from the crazy bitch that had worked for Duke Kenneth. Levi had preferred it that way – horses in general were much better company than people, he had found.

"So where are you from, Levi?" Eren asked, sitting down into one of the plush armchairs surrounding the small coffee table. "I don't remember seeing you at any of the recent gatherings, and that must have been where you caught the King's eye."
Levi gulped. "Er, no, actually... I was, uh, collateral for some sort of deal that His Majesty struck with my father."

"And whereabouts were you born, then?" Jean followed up, plopping down into the cushions gracelessly. "I'm pretty sure your father would have shown you off at any occasion he had. Since you have quite the face."

Color flooded Levi's cheeks as he struggled to find an explanation. Damn the King for putting him in this position. "I was a very sickly child, so I didn't get to see much of the outside world."

Jean arched his eyebrows mockingly. "I never would have thought. What with your gigantic height."

Levi really wanted to punch him right now. Thankfully, Armin seemed to have a way of knowing when the conversation was entering dangerous territory. It was clear why he was the King's favorite; or, perhaps, he was simply wiser because he had been around His Majesty longer. Either way, it was Armin who saved Jean's nose from permanently caving inward and Levi from getting executed for assaulting a Consort.

"Jean, stop being mean to Levi. We're meant to get along, right? I'm sure this is very different from what you're used to, Levi," he said to the dark-haired man with understanding. Armin strode over to the window and perched himself on the edge, looking down at the palace grounds. "When I first came here, I had no idea there was going to be so many of us. I mean, I was the first, so I was alone in the beginning and I had this... vision, I guess, of being the King's only one. The King never hid his intentions from me, though. It took a while to get used to the thought of... you know, sharing him. But you needn't worry, Levi."

Armin glanced back up at him with, his blue eyes clear as the sky. "The King has enough love for all of us. He will treat you with the respect you deserve."

Levi suppressed a sigh. If only you knew just how much respect I really do deserve, he thought to himself. Technically, he was a nobody, not even a name in the civil registry. He did not exist on paper, he was not a citizen of this country, and even if the King did abuse him, it was his word against His Majesty's. Which meant that he was quite literally, royally screwed.

"I don't mind sharing," he said quietly, eyes downcast. Armin's laughter rang out like a bell and Levi found that as much as he wanted to, he just couldn't bring himself to dislike the little blond. He was also an important ally to have, Levi supposed; considering Armin had been here the longest and probably knew the most about the King's ins and outs. Armin probably knew Erwin's secrets, his likes and dislikes, and if Levi was going to stay here, he would have to wheedle the information out of the First Consort as thoroughly as he could. He briefly wondered whether Eren and Jean had followed the same strategy upon their arrival at the palace.

"Then it should be all right with you that you're sharing the quarters with us," Jean said, gesturing around the room. "It's pretty sweet around here, a little cramped but hey, we got our own bedrooms and library. Which is practically Armin's anyway."

Armin rolled his eyes. "You're always welcome to come read with me. There's plenty of books that-,

"Please, Princess," Jean cut the blond off, shaking his head with a smirk. "The practice grounds are weeping for my presence."

"Boys and their pointy things," Armin sighed dramatically, slipping back down into the cushions to
pick up his book again. Eren watched his two fellow Consorts with a smile on his face before turning toward Levi. "You nervous about the wedding tomorrow?"

Scared shitless, more like. "It's no big deal, right? His Majesty told me it was just going to be the court and you three."

"Do you have any idea how many people comprise the court?" Eren asked sympathetically and Levi bit his lip. "I'm not saying this to psych you out or anything but... if you were raised as a loner, I'm pretty sure it'd be quite shocking."

Levi shook his head. "It'll be fine. I trust the King's judgement."

Eren gave him an impressed look. "You really do have no problem with authority."

I've been under other people's authority my whole life. This is the most freedom I'd ever had, Levi wanted to say, but kept his mouth shut.

"Long as His Majesty knows who's in charge in the bedroom, am I right?" Jean called with a smirk and Levi found himself blushing, eyes wide. Armin looked up from his book sharply and threw the two-toned boy a harsh glare.

"Jean, you really have no finesse whatsoever."

"No, but I suck cock like nobody's business," the prince said and Levi fought the urge to burst out crying. The one time he'd ventured to do that for money had been very unpleasant both for himself and the customer. He was inexperienced as they came, which was quite shameful considering his age and the fact that he had a harem of three to compete with. It was then that Levi decided that he was going to become the best at sex in the palace. He had nothing to offer to Erwin in the ways of politics or money, and the man had explicitly told him that he had taken him in just for his looks. So Levi would pay him back for his kindness with his body. It was the least he could do. The King had torn him away from a life of horse-grooming and getting recreational beatings from Kenneth.

So Levi was going to show him the time of his life. He was going to become so good that the King would forget all about his other Consorts. Not because Levi was jealous or vindictive but because he wanted the King to know just how much he appreciated the gesture. Funny, now that he thought about it, he had never been the most grateful of people. But now that this had happened, he felt like repaying King Erwin for the favor.

"Oh, I bet they didn't teach that to you, did they?" Jean said with a mockery of pity in his voice and Levi felt like praying to the goddess to get struck down by lightning where he stood. Instead, the young man only shook his head, looking down to the floor.

"Relax, it's not like we came here with a full set of bedroom skills," the two-toned boy said, smirking. "You learn on the job."

"The job? Honestly, Jean, where do you pick up these expressions?" Armin rolled his eyes. "Don't make being a Consort sound like stable duty."

The three young men wrinkled their noses at each other and laughed merrily at what must have been a hilarious joke for someone who'd never even held a fucking shovel in their life. Levi forced a chuckle to bubble out of his throat uneasily. This was going to be hell.

"Seriously, though, everyone is a virgin before the King is through with them," Eren said, wiping the corners of his eyes. "There's some... literature in the library, if you want research material or something."
If only I could read properly, Levi thought bitterly. He had gone through weekend school as part of his service at Duke Kenneth's but it was not nearly enough for him to feign princely literacy. He would have to study harder and in a way that went unnoticed by the others. Which was an unfortunate position to be in, considering the trio was clearly bored and sought to entertain themselves at other people's expense. Maybe he could ask the King for a study room or something. Or maybe His Majesty didn't want a fourth literate Consort. Maybe he'd grown tired of well-educated young men from noble families who made unreasonable demands and had the gall to want things and instead opted for something simpler this time: an unfortunate soul who was happy with scraps of food off the table and just a smidgen of kindness every other day. Perhaps Levi really was the King's attempt at gaining an exotic addition to his collection.

Perhaps the thought of being with someone as lowly and dirty as Levi excited him in ways being with the other Consorts could not.

"Just remember that the King loves kisses. And doing things to you," Armin offered kindly. Levi blushed violently.

"What kind of things?"

"Oh, you know. Things. With his mouth and his hands. He loves playing with us," Eren said emphatically. Levi tried to combat the vague pictures that made an appearance in his mind. He had heard of things and had even attempted to put some of the into practice but he was still woefully ignorant. What if the King is a pervert? Of course he's a pervert. He has three Consorts and he wants a fourth. How normal is that?

"Er, I suppose I'll just have to wait and see, right?" Levi asked, stumbling over the words. Armin chuckled.

"You're adorable, you know that? Just use that to your advantage. It's refreshing, having someone so innocent around these quarters. I guess the rest of us have already been spoiled and your blushing virgin act is... pretty arousing, when you think about it."

Armin was definitely not an idiot. Levi would have to be weary of the little blond. He looked like he could barely lift a quill let alone suck a dick, but it was obvious now that the King didn't just marry him for his fragile looks. That made Levi wonder whether Eren and Jean had any hidden talents that had merited the King's marriage to them. He would have to keep an eye out.

"Can I ask you a question?" He said quietly, drawing the other boys' attention.

"You already did but go ahead," Jean said in a nonchalant way that made Levi want to punch him even more.

"What, um... why does the King want so many of us?"

Silence hung in the room as the trio glanced at each other, looking uncomfortable for the first time since Levi's arrival in the Consorts' quarters.

"We've actually... never spoken about it," Armin said finally. Levi lifted an eyebrow, urging him to continue. For someone as curious as Armin, it was definitely unusual not to pry. "I asked him once and... he didn't answer. So I didn't press the issue because it made him look sad."

"Look, don't go there. If you don't want to upset the King, then just... don't. Be happy with what you have and appreciate it," said Eren, shrugging. "I'm sure you'll hear all sort of rumors around the castle, but I think it's all just bull-, er, nonsense. Every monarch has whims they can afford."
"Yes, but-,"

"Drop it," Jean said harshly. "And don't ask the King if you know what's good for you."

Levi nodded, knowing that he would let the issue rest. Because he wasn't that kind of person.

The three Consorts looked decidedly more at ease when they showed Levi to the bedroom he would be using. For some reason, Levi had thought that he would have to share his quarters with someone, as if this were a dormitory or military barracks. Then again, he should have known that the King would spare no expense on his beloved spouses. Though the baths were shared, they were big enough for the four of them to be in there at the same time and not experience any discomfort at all. The room itself was smaller than the main sitting area but just as lavish in terms of decoration, with a humongous four-poster bed and a closet that looked like a score of men could love inside of it handsomely. Candelabras and torch-holders lined the walls, keeping the room nice and illuminated even after sundown, and the multitude of pillows on the huge bed would make for a very nice perch. The only window in the room offered a stunning view of the palace grounds. Levi wondered whether he was allowed to explore that far.

"If there's anything you want, just ask one of us," Armin aid by ways of good night as the three of them left Levi to his own devices. "We'll be here tomorrow to get you ready for the wedding anyway."

Get me ready?

"Er... Thank you. I appreciate the kindness," Levi said awkwardly as he sat down onto the edge of his new bed, feeling himself bounce up a little as he did.

Armin only smiled in response. "We need to help each other out. We're family, after all."

As the door closed behind him, Levi flopped back onto the bed, staring up at the canopy with unseeing eyes. *Family, huh?* For as long as he could remember, he'd never had a family. Not even a hint of one. The servants at the Duke's estate had been nothing more than colleagues and any friends Levi might have made in town had been fleeting acquaintances that had left him behind as soon as they had gotten a chance to rip away from their life of poverty and move to a richer, better place. He had resented them for it before, and now there he was, a night away from marrying the King of Sina and grabbing onto this opportunity of freedom with both hands.

One thing he knew for sure. He was never going to go back to that place. Not because of Kenneth and his beatings or the hard work and meager pay. Now, he had gotten the taste of something better, a richer experience that would allow him to see more of the world. He had always wanted freedom but had never been able to get it because of monetary restraints. Now the King was offering it to him for free — well, almost.

Levi was going to pay him back with everything he could.

Levi was going to learn. He was going to read and write and dance and ace at etiquette. He was going to know geography and chemistry and anything that could be of use to the King. He was going to learn the subtle art of kissing and sucking cock and taking it up the ass and he was going to excel at it.

He was going to find out about the King's secret, his obsession with marrying more and more. He was going to get to the a King's heart and keep it safe.

Because he was just that kind of person.
Levi had never even been to a wedding. It was just his luck that the first one he would be attending was his own. Actually, this was a bit of a white lie he had been feeding himself for the past several hours while his body had been pampered into oblivion, washed with rose water and moistened with the finest oils Erwin's kingdom had imported for the occasion. The truth was that he had gatecrashed a wedding once – well, windowcrashed, really: a long time ago, about the second or third year into his service at Duke Kenneth's, he had been misfortunate enough to witness a ceremony. The detestable Duke had offered his estate, for quite a bit of payment, as a venue for the wedding of a very rich, very important merchant, who had been due to marry the sister of his primary partner in business. Such unions were pretty common among the rich, since they ensured prosperity for both parties using civil partnerships as a vehicle.

Levi remembered watching through the cold-stained windows as the little girl, no more than fourteen years of age, with barely a bosom to show for her adolescence, had stood at the marble altar, draped in pink and white satin and looking positively lovely. He remembered her terrified face that had emerged from beneath the flowing veil her husband-to-be, a burly man of almost fifty with a belly the size of Sina and a set of golden teeth, had lifted in front of the roomful of guests. He remembered being momentarily appalled by how indifferent everyone had seemed to be at the proceedings: as if there had been nothing amiss, as if it were perfectly normal for such unions to happen against the bride's will, as if it were completely acceptable for the little girl to stand there, crying her pretty brown eyes out with nobody batting an eyelash. He remembered how he had looked away when the time had come for the newlyweds to kiss, because he had suddenly felt a stab of sickness to his stomach, as if someone had made him down a chamberpot filled with last night's excrements. He remembered how the maids who had been watching over his shoulder and from beneath his elbow had sighed, wishing the same fate upon themselves and he remembered thinking them idiotic.

And there he was, standing in front of the mirror yet again, the very vision of a proper-and-prim bride. He had been doing this a lot in the past two days, simply staring at his own reflection, trying to gauge where Levi ended and the change began. It was hard for him to understand it, which one of the two Levi's was real anymore – the one that had arrived at the castle gates with a half-dead horse and dressed in rags but weirdly free or this one, packed in silks and silver threading, with bracelets weighing down his wrists. He had never thought he could look like this, so good, so clean, but now that he did, the trickle of doubt in his gut told him that perhaps, he hadn't really wanted to find out. Still, it was too late for him to back away from this. His ears ached with the studs that had been punched through them: as per Sina tradition, the King would replace them with earrings of his own giving at the wedding, along with the ring that Levi would only have to wear to formal functions. And thank the goddess for that, Armin had told him, rolling his eyes merrily as he had been explaining the proceedings to the newcomer among the Consorts. It's a dreadful thing, incredibly flashy and too heavy to carry around. But His Highness says he has to decorate us and show us off... Levi had tuned him out after that. He had been doubtful that anything that came out of his mouth after that would become a Royal Consort.
He had half-expected the King to do the piercing himself, considering how hands-on the man was with almost everything that concerned his public image; yet the other Consorts had given him a weird look when he had suggested that — apparently, the King's concerns for hygiene were more important than any primal notions he had of himself as a man and a potential husband. Levi appreciated that, at least.

He robe he wore was of a strange silvery color. Whenever he moved, he couldn't help but be caught up in how the fabric seemed to sizzle and glint beneath the light of the candelabras. He was glad that he wasn't clad in white, because the hue of purity would simply be wrong on a person such as himself. He already felt enough like an impostor, standing here in the middle of his room in the Consorts' wing. Everything in here was too rich for his blood, even the air seemed thick with the mahogany and gold and silk, and he felt ridiculously out of place. He knew that soon he would be living here, in this Palace, a permanent resident, the King's official spouse, well, one of them, at least; however, he didn't predict that he would ever feel truly at home. Once a piece of shit, always a piece of shit, the Duke, never one to mince words, had told him when he had received his beatings, and Levi had honestly, truly come to internalize the notion. He repeated the mantra in his head as he watched his own reflection lock in on itself, because he knew that he couldn't let this new situation relax him. One day, probably soon, the King would tire of him, and he would be out on the street with nothing but his memories of the palace and the taste of the lush Sina bread on his tongue.

Oh, the bread. He had barely eaten anything else since his arrival at the Palace. The other Consorts had thankfully written it off as another quirk that stemmed from having been a sickly boy with a weak stomach, but Levi had nearly wept the first time the taste of the bread had hit his tongue. While the others indulged in thick creams and salted, herbed butters, chickens and suckling pigs, Levi feasted on the bread alone, only daring to spoil the experience with the occasional gulp of water when the pressure in his chest got too much.

His grey gaze shifted to the floor. Beneath the silvery fabric peeked out shoes of the highest quality. Levi, being small as he was, had always had trouble finding the right size for himself. The local shoemaker near the estate charged too much for a pair of custom-made leather boots, which were the best for the kind of work Levi had done in the stables, riding horses and caring for them all day long. So he had been forced to pick up scraps off children's shoulders – there had been a couple of young boys and girls whose parents had been willing to give their shoes away. Worn as they had been, Levi had never complained.

The fine grayish leather on his feet now, though, had nothing to do with the crude designs the villagers had worn. They were made to fit him precisely, decorated with white lacings and stamped with the King's crest. Once again, when Armin had walked in with the shoes perched comfortably on a small cushion, Levi had almost burst out crying. He now knew how shoes were meant to fit him; and the experience of that alone was so fresh, so dramatic in his mind that he couldn't help but feel like he would never be able to wear ill-fitting footwear again. That in itself was troubling. The food, the clothing – all of it seemed like too much, like it was changing him into something he had never been, something he wasn’t really sure he liked. He supposed that change in itself was good, since the miserable person he had once been had vanished into thin air. He was just surprised at himself by how easy it had been for him to convert into this new person. All it had taken were a piece of fine bread and leather.

“You look very nice.”

He turned on his heel to see Jean leaning against the doorframe, already dressed for the ceremony, arms crossed, his expression unreadable. Levi had noticed upon their first meeting that the boy made a conscious effort to keep away from others; sure, he joked around with Armin and
roughhoused with Eren, he was polite and respectful and dedicated when it came to the King. Levi couldn’t quite place what it was that made him think about Jean this way, but the way the boy held himself proposed that there was much more to him than just marksmanship and horse-riding.

“Thank you.” Levi bowed his head in acknowledgement. Jean smirked at him, slinking into the room as if he had been invited in, and looking around with feigned surprise painted across his handsome features.

“You didn’t bring much with you.”

*Never had much to begin with.*

“I have to say I expected more of a pampered little flower like yourself,” Jean continued, narrowing his eyes. Levi fought the urge to turn away. He could not afford to show his discomfort.

“I thought it was unreasonable to bring many personal things with me, since the King provides for us so handsomely,” he said in a stiff tone. Jean shrugged.

“Not my business, of course. I’m just here to wish you good luck, but I see that you are holding up much better than I would have thought. You were pretty pale yesterday. Were we that intimidating?”

You have no idea.

“No, I just… new environment and all. So many people, so many things to see and explore,” Levi said with an uncomfortable smile. If Jean saw right through it, he said nothing. Levi found himself being stared down by the boy, so he turned back to the mirror.

“If that’ll be all–,”

“I hope you don’t buy Armin’s whole *King loves us all* bullshit.”

Levi snapped back to look at Jean. The boy wasn’t smirking anymore, his face was dead serious as he approached Levi, placing a hand on his shoulder in a way that was almost… comforting? Grey eyes looked at him, confused. *What the hell is he playing at?*

“What do you mean?” Levi licked his lips, suddenly finding his mouth very dry.

“I mean that the King doesn’t love us,” Jean said with a sigh. He turned his head sideways to look at one of the paintings that adorned the opposite wall, dropping his hand. “He likes us enough, I guess. He cares for us, gives us books to read and things to do. But I don’t think that love to him means the same as it does to us. If he didn’t require us to sleep with him from time to time, I’d think he adopted his Consorts instead of marrying them.”

Levi shuddered inwardly at the thought. He had seen enough arrangements akin to what Jean was describing.

“Are you trying to get me away from His Majesty?” He asked finally, eyes fixed on Jean’s face. The boy avoided looking at him directly still.

“Not really. I don’t care how many other boys he takes. It’s not like I… Well, let’s just say that what the King has to offer right now is good enough for me to stay with him. I hope it’s good enough for you. Because if you leave, he will not forget or forgive. It’s just not like him,” Jean said quietly.
“Jean, is there something–,”

“No. Nothing at all. Just bear what I said in mind. Don’t expect a whirlwind romance and all that cheesy novel stuff. Respect and dignity. Definitely not passionate love.” Levi stared at the boy blankly. Jean looked almost regretful, sad somehow, and that made him seem slightly shorter than he was, with shoulders slumped and eyes downcast. Suddenly, he looked very much his age, and Levi didn’t know whether he was supposed to do anything to rectify that. The answer came unbidden when the mask slid back into place and a moment later, Jean straightened out, back stiff, eyes cold and confident. He nodded at Levi once, brushed some invisible lint off the shoulder of his cloak, and turned on the spot. When he walked out, he left behind a faint smell of cherry blossoms.

The smell haunted Levi when he finally stepped outside his room to see the rest of the Consorts waiting for him, clad in full regalia. Their wedding rings shined on their fingers and their ceremonial hoops adorned his ears. Levi had to admire the picture the three of them made, starkly contrasting each other. He felt like he could not live up to the standard between little blond Armin dressed in baby blue robes, fiery Eren in his deep, earthy green, and Jean, haughty as ever in a yellowish gold.

“You look stunning,” Eren blurted out, surprising everyone in the room and just like that, between Levi’s blushing stutter and Armin’s easy chuckles, the tension broke. Levi gave the auburn-haired boy a thankful look and received a wink in return, which made him feel somewhat more confident. Sure, his hands were still shaking like a bitch in heat, and he knew that he would have to steady himself at least a dozen times more throughout the day, but suddenly, the prospect of being married to the King didn't seem too ominous, despite Jean’s strange declarations beforehand. Though Levi wondered what had merited them, he didn't want to question His Majesty’s motivations or Jean’s. He would have time to unravel the palace intrigue later.

“Are you ready?” Armin asked him quietly, as if he were talking to a particularly scaredy animal. Levi gave him a long look and nodded when he finally felt like his heart wasn’t going to try to escape through his chest. The four of them walked towards the main hall together, with the three Consorts trailing a little way behind Levi who headed the charge, at least in terms of pace. There was a new determination in him, something that hadn't been there before: he wanted to get this ceremony over with. Of course, that meant the wedding night was fast approaching, but Levi didn’t feel at all exasperated. The King was well aware that he had gone mostly untouched his entire life, and if the words of the other Consorts were of any indication, that did not serve as a deterrent. The soon-to-be-Consort realized that when the time came, he would probably become a nervous wreck; now, though, there was no reason to fret.

They entered the main hall through the grand doors, and Levi was momentarily blinded by the bright lights in room. Everything seemed to be sparkling: the candles, the holders themselves, the torches on the walls that provided additional lighting. The silverware on the banquet table at the far end of the room gleamed and the pristine glass of the wine goblets added to the shine. White tablecloths only seemed to brighten the room even further.

Perhaps that was good, however, considering the number of people inside. Levi had been warned by the others that the court was quite expansive and that many would want to attend the wedding, but he had not expected the two hundred-odd guests to stare at him when he walked through the door with the rest. He stopped short in front of the purple carpet that led all the way to a lavish marble altar that looked like it had seen many centuries of royal marriages. Don’t freeze, whatever you do, don’t freeze, he told himself, but his feet were unable to move, and he looked up helplessly only to see his future husband stare back at him.
The King looked absolutely astonishing. Of course he did, His Majesty was not an ugly man by any accounts, with his blond hair always perfect and his blue eyes piercing the souls of those he encountered on his way. He was broad-shouldered and tall, and held an air of confidence that served as an armor even when his golden skin was exposed. Now, though, he was every bit the King he claimed to be. Clad in royal blue with the crown, modest as it was, resting on his head handsomely, King Erwin was a vision. He was much grander than the palace, much grander than the kingdom itself, he was an institution by himself. And he was staring at Levi like a deer caught in the headlights.

Levi had seen such looks before, but never had they been addressed to him. Men had called him pretty, and women had mostly jokingly flirted with him at the market not far from the estate. The other Consorts had complimented him on his dress and his face previously, but never had another person looked at him as if he were really, truly desirable. As if he was wanted, so, so wanted by another. That look was all Levi needed to cast away his previous doubts. He threw Jean’s words to the wind, for if the King were capable of looking like this at him, then he didn’t need love or complete devotion. He would take this look and cherish it forever.

He walked as slowly as he could toward the altar, his eyes fixed on King Erwin’s. Blue and grey together, they stood in front of the Sina priest who droned on about honor and love and the good of the kingdom, but all Levi could hear was the faint pulse that beat beneath his fingers when the King took his hand. The time came for them to recite their vows and as they finally turned toward each other, Levi’s breath caught in his chest yet again. How could this man be anything less than passionate? How could he be so kind? Levi was well aware that he did not know much about His Majesty, but now he found that he was eager to find out.

He was going to make King Erwin happy because of the way the man looked at him.

Because he wanted the King to look at him like this every single day.

“Levi of Pars, will you recite your vows?”

The priest’s voice startled him and he was about to panic, his mind suddenly blank as a slate when the King’s fingers squeezed his reassuringly, grounding him. Right.

Unable to gaze into the man’s eyes any longer, Levi looked down at their clasped hands instead.

*Sickness. Health.*

*Poverty. Prosperity.*

*Yours. Mine.*

*Love.*

*Forever.*

The earrings King Erwin carefully inserted into the fresh holes in his ears were heavy, but not enough to make the lobes ache. Levi only managed to get a glimpse at the thin silver hoops before Erwin’s practiced fingers removed the virginal studs.

The King slipped a silver ring on his finger adorned with the bluest of sapphires, and the weight of it returned Levi to reality just a split second before another mouth covered his own. He’d never been kissed before, not like this, and he was slightly surprised by how soft another man’s lips could be. Levi kissed back as best as he could, eager and clumsy and perfect.
Somewhere between yesterday and right now, he had fallen for King Erwin. Was that even possible? He didn’t know. But he was raring to find out.
The Consort

Chapter Notes

And here it is, ladies and gentlemen! I am back home, nursing a sprained ankle and reliving the memories of my holidays so I needed some nice gentle Eruri lovin’. More to come soon!

Thank you to 35grams for making this absolutely amazing art:

Levi had to stop himself from combusting into full panic when he heard the heavy door behind him swing open. He had been anxious about this the entire night, and it was quite understandable, since this would be his very first time alone with the King as his Consort. The banquet had gone quite smoothly, and Levi had been very thankful to His Majesty that he had decided to forego the traditional wedding dance, which, of course, Levi had no idea about. Jean had thought that strange, claiming that the dance was the first thing that any royal Consort-to-be learnt in preparation for their nuptials. The King, however, did not explain himself to anyone, and Levi felt like they would have to rely on His Majesty’s no-nonsense attitude a lot when it came to questions about Levi’s strange ways and lack of basic Consort-appropriate education.

After their marriage had been sealed with the exchange of rings and a kiss (which still lingered on Levi’s lips, burning them in a way that left the memory vivid for years to come), the King and Levi had proceeded to meet ambassadors, merchants, knights, army leaders, all very important people who smiled politely and responded to nonsensical questions casually, making small talk seem like the most natural thing in the world. Levi’s role had consisted in accepting bows and curtseys and looking at the floor demurely, and he had been entirely content with that. He had been afraid to open his mouth and say something wrong, and it looked like the rest of the attendants knew he would be nervous, so they mostly left him to his own devices, never failing to compliment the King on how beautiful his new Consort was. When it had come to the food, though, the idea of what was going to happen that night had started to plague the newlywed’s mind, and he had been unable to stomach more than a couple of pieces of the delicious Sina bread he had taken to so much, fed to him right from the King’s fingers. His Majesty had been able to see his nervousness and he hadn’t pushed Levi into conversation, for which the dark-haired Consort was very grateful indeed.
Compared to him, the other Consorts had shone like stars, laughing and dancing and mingling with the rest of the hall like it was their job – which it was – but they actually had enjoyed the attention. Levi had seen how prettily Armin had managed to skeeter his way through the dance floor, how easily Jean had blended in with the young princely crowd, laughing and making inappropriate jokes that left the nearby ladies blushing, how Eren had stood, resolute, on the terrace, surrounded by awed admirers who had been too timid to indulge in conversation.

Levi needed to learn how to be like them. He had to be just as bright as they were. The King expected that much of him.

Now, though, the banquet was over, and Levi had been sent along to the King’s private quarters ahead of His Majesty. He knew that he was supposed to prepare himself, to look in the mirror and make sure that he was up to par for his new husband, to smoothen out the creases in his ceremonial cloak; however, he found himself rooted to the spot as he surveyed the room around him.

King Erwin’s rooms were surprisingly modest for a man of his standing. Levi had expected them to be far more lavish than even the Consorts’ wing, however, the amount of decor was quite lacking in comparison. It looked like the King pampered his Consorts more than himself. The bedroom was warm, cozy even, with a fire crackling merrily in the corner fireplace. The King only had one painting hanging on the wall, a landscape piece which depicted a place looking suspiciously like the outskirts of Rose. Levi wondered the King had something that tied him to that place; he seemed to dote on the people in Rose personally more than others. Levi knew that the King had taken the throne by battle, not through succession, and that it was unlikely His Majesty was entirely of Royal blood. Levi tried to picture him in a servant’s clothes, maybe as a squire or a baker’s son, but he simply couldn’t. King Erwin had such a presence, it was impossible to imagine him in anything other than regal.

When the door opened, adding to the tension in his limbs, Levi didn’t turn to look at the King, as his eyes were fixed on the grand bed that occupied the space in front of the farthermost wall in the room. It was big, much bigger than his own bed in the Consorts’ wing, and definitely much grander than the cot he’d held back in Duke Kenneth’s estate. It was made of dark mahogany, but the design was simple – there were no gigantic lions’ heads sticking out from the bedposts at odd angles, nor was there any gold in sight or ostentatious fleurs-de-lys with incrusted rubies. The bedding had already been unmade in preparation for their wedding night, and Levi took in the pristine white sheets and fluffy pillows with his heart pounding steadily in his chest.

“Not what you expected?” The King’s voice was low and gravely and Levi shivered despite there being no sign of a draft in the room. He still didn’t turn; however, that was unnecessary, for soon, he felt the King’s chest press up against the back of his shoulders. He was so much smaller than His Majesty, so short compared to the war machine of the man who had come and taken him away from his life in the stables. He closed his eyes with a shaky breath, not knowing exactly what he was supposed to answer.

“You can be honest with me in here, dear Levi.”

I can’t. You know I can’t.

“It’s… different from what I imagined,” he answered softly. He knew that he was not going to stay in this room, he was only here for tonight, and any other night the King requested his company. He would be living with the other Consorts in their designated wing, and be at the King’s beck and call. He wasn’t sure how he felt about that.

“I don’t like meaningless trinkets. You’ll find that I am more conservative in terms of decor than other monarchs,” the King told him quietly. Levi felt the man’s breath tickle the hair at the top of
his head and shivered once more.

“I have only met one monarch in my lifetime, Sire,” Levi said quietly. The King chuckled in response to that.

“This will change soon, dearest. We will be meeting other Kings and Queens, important people… I want to show you off to them as much as I possibly can,” he said gently. Levi closed his eyes, finding it easier to block off his sense of sight and remove the vision of the bed that burned his irises.

“Why?” He asked, his voice barely above a whisper.

There was a surprised silence in response to Levi’s question. Then he heard His Majesty sigh in a resigned way.

“You don’t see how special you are, Levi. Not yet. I will make you see in time, I promise you that.”

Am I just as special as the rest of your Consorts? Or am I just exotic because I am a commoner? Like you once were, perhaps? Maybe I am a nostalgic acquisition? Levi didn’t ask any of those questions in fear of offending the King’s intentions. His Majesty was kind to him, much kinder than anyone had ever been. Levi knew that if he wanted to stay under the man’s wing he had to behave himself, so he didn’t want to deny His Majesty’s whims. He would do everything King Erwin wanted him to do. The thought made him shake gently in His Majesty’s hold.

“You are trembling, Levi,” the King observed.

“I’m… I apologize,” Levi said, his throat suddenly dry. He knew that he had to be the one to please the King, he had to show his worth, to cast off these notions of shame and modesty and remember whatever he could from that one muddled experience he’d had when he had attempted to make money using his body. He found that his muscles were unwilling to move, though, and all he could do was stand there, in the middle of the grand bedroom, with King Erwin’s hands on his shoulders.

“Are you nervous?”

Way to state the obvious.

“I am,” Levi admitted with a slight nod. He felt the King’s deep inhalation against the back of his neck.

“Scared?”

“I…” Levi thought about it seriously and found that he couldn’t say that he was. He trusted the King not to hurt him. So far, the man had been nothing but gentle with him. “I am not afraid of you, Your Majesty. I am… inexperienced.”

“How inexperienced?”

Levi knew it was best to be honest there, because the King would know if he lied. “I have only bedded someone else once. A man. Back when I was still a boy.”

“A boy?” There was something strange in the King’s voice. Almost like anger. “Why would you do this as a mere child?”

“I needed money to survive. I thought that… it was easy. So I… I went to one of the pubs in Rose
and offered myself to the perverts who drank there. One of them accepted and… I don’t think he liked it. I think he expected me to be more knowledgeable.” Levi let out a shaky laugh. “I don’t remember much from that night, just that I drank my memories away after we were through. I remember limping back to the street corner where I took shelter and crying myself to sleep because I had thought it would just be like a game. I was a naïve child.”

“A child shouldn’t do these things,” King Erwin said sternly. Levi closed his eyes and chuckled bitterly.

“Your Majesty, with all due respect, some children do not have a choice.”

“Are there many children out there who do these things?” The King asked, seeming genuinely concerned. Levi shrugged, feeling the weight of the man’s hands on his own shoulders.

“We do what we have to do to survive. That’s all it is. There are many children who have been orphaned by the Sickness or in wars. It is quite commonplace. Some of them are simply luckier than others.”

“You will have to tell me more about those children one day, and soon,” King Erwin said urgently, and Levi was touched by the tone of his voice. “I realize that I have failed some of my subjects as a monarch and I would like to understand them better in order to be able to help those in need.”

I can tell you many stories that will make your hair stand on end. “If you so wish, Your Majesty.”

“There are other matters to take care of first, though, dear Levi.”

The new Consort shivered at the sudden change in his husband’s demeanor. He felt the King press his lips to the top of his head gently before he was spun around in the man’s hold.

“Won’t you look at me?”

Levi forced himself to lock eyes with the King and found that now he was unable to glance away. King Erwin’s blue eyes were magnetic, all he could do was stare back at the King, whose usually hard features had somehow softened, making him appear younger, more joyful, vivacious in a way. King Erwin cupped his face with one hand gently and Levi tried to relax into his touch even though the tension was still quite palpable between the two of them. He didn’t know whether he would be able to please His Majesty with his body, he didn’t know whether the King expected anything special of him. He didn’t know how the previous Consorts had done this, as they had arrived at the palace virgins as well.

“I will teach you all you need to know,” King Erwin said quietly, his eyes searching Levi’s. “I will teach you that intercourse can be pleasurable. I want you to think of me and grow hot at the thought of me taking you, as I do whenever I think of you in my bed. You need only to give in to me. Can you do that?”

Transfixed, Levi found himself nodding. He felt like he was in a dream, like none of this was truly real. King Erwin gave him a soft smile that made him look even younger still, and Levi caught himself thinking that they weren’t that far apart in age. Everyone just thought that the King was older because he was the King, and everyone thought him a boy because of his short stature and slightly rounder features than the average male wore in the Kingdom. He didn’t want to breach the subject though, lest King Erwin had chosen him because he had thought him a mere boy. He could go along with the lie, along with many lies that he had spun upon his arrival at the castle. If the King asked him directly, he would answer truthfully, for he was not going to lie to the only person who’d shown him enough kindness to last an entire lifetime and a half.
The King dipped forward and kissed Levi sweetly on the lips. It felt almost the same as the kiss the two of them had shared at the altar, yet the nervousness beneath Levi’s skin ignited it even more. He found himself keening in the back of his throat when the King suddenly pulled him closer, impossibly close, and lifted him off his feet. That was better for both of them, since Levi didn’t have to crane his neck up so much and the King didn’t need to dip down. The blond man held him in his arms with practiced ease, as if Levi’s weight was nothing to him. Levi was skinny, sure, but he was sinewy as well, with enough muscle accumulated after many years of working in the stables. Horses were difficult creatures, at times, and taking care of them required quite a bit of strength on part of the caregiver.

The King pulled him up by the waist even more and Levi let out a startled yelp, moving away from the man’s lips for a moment and wrapping his legs around his middle when he felt large hands support his backside as the King walked the two of them toward the bed. His Majesty only chuckled against his lips and took advantage of the fact that they were parted to slip his own tongue in and toy with Levi’s mouth in ways the boy had never before thought was possible. Levi’s back hit the bed with a dull thud and he let out another moan at how soft it was. The mattress itself was quite dense, and Levi briefly thought that it suited the King to have such a mattress because he was not a soft man by any means, at least when it came to running the Kingdom. But the sheets, the blankets, the pillows that Levi immediately clenched in his hands, almost instinctively, were all of the finest quality. His wrists were trapped in the King’s hold over his head and he looked up to see blue eyes gauging his reactions. It is all right, he told himself. The King knew that he was mostly ignorant when it came to carnal pleasures, and he would not expect much of him the first time around. Right now, he just had to trust the man.

He was not in love with King Erwin. That much was clear to both of them. However, they also knew that there was potential. There was so much potential, bursting with life beneath their skin while they slid together. The King’s hands worked on Levi’s fastenings and disrobed him with practiced ease. His strong, long fingers moved over the boy’s exposed chest, exploring, touching, stroking. A look of sorrow took over the King’s face when he saw the old scars and aging bruises on Levi’s chest and stomach, knowing that he would find more on his arms and legs and back as they progressed.

“It is absurd for someone to be so cruel,” the King breathed, his lips sliding down the column of Levi’s neck. The boy tossed his head back to give him better access, and King Erwin latched onto his pulse point, sucking a love bite over where the tremulous blood inched closer to the surface. “To do something so hideous to someone so beautiful.”

Levi didn’t have the energy nor the desire to argue. He was here because the King thought him pretty. And pretty he would be. He would be the prettiest whore for the King if it meant that he could stay in the palace, partake in the delicious bread they placed on the Royal table, and share his intricately decorated quarters with the other Consorts. He didn’t mind being pretty for King Erwin, just as he didn’t mind the King doing these lewd things to him. It was simple economics, such that even someone of Levi’s educational level could understand. Exchange. Simple exchange.

“You are so beautiful, Levi, my dear…” The King’s words were like music to his ears, and Levi gave himself over to the passion that boiled beneath his skin. His Majesty was a handsome, powerful man, and Levi realized then and there that he wanted him, he wanted to be possessed entirely by this wonderful, strong creature who could give him all the comfort and protection he had always so desperately yearned for. The King could make him feel alive, more alive than he had ever felt with just a mere touch. Levi wanted the King to hunger for his touch.

He was ready to fall in love with King Erwin, consequences be damned.
He found himself catching on to what His Majesty wanted him to do. Slowly, his fingers found the clasps on the King’s cloak and undid them shakily. Their shirts fell to the floor, discarded carelessly, soon to be followed by their breeches. The King buried his fingers in Levi’s hair and then slid them down to touch the earrings that dangled from the fresh holes in Levi’s ears. “Being mine suits you so well, dear Levi.”

“Yours…” Levi breathed, the word falling from his lips, unbidden. He almost balked at how needy he had sounded yet the King simply chuckled before he could do that.

“Mine. Never forget that you are mine forever now, Levi. I will care for you, I will provide you with anything you want. And you simply keep me company in return. That is all I ask of you.”

*That is all?*

“That is all.”

*Company.* It struck Levi that the King was probably a very lonely man despite being surrounded by attention all the time. He was alone in this world of riches and responsibility, comfort and harrowing guilt. He had to make decisions no other man would dare make. Levi couldn’t fathom the weight that rested on the King’s shoulders. For once, it was the pauper pitying the monarch.

“You will make me very happy, Levi,” the King said, staring him down with those blue eyes of his as his hand slid down to cup Levi’s length. Arousal shot up the boy’s spine and he let out a small noise that was somewhat of a whimper (still, he hoped it was more dignified than that). He knew that he would be unable to concentrate if the King persisted, so he looked up at the man earnestly and said, in a voice so quiet it could be nothing but sincere:

“I will.”

That night, Levi burned. He burned with fear and passion and pain and want. He moaned when the King suddenly bit down on a nipple, sending sparks of arousal over his skin. He whimpered when he felt the intrusion of King Erwin’s fingers in the place that had only been touched once before by a nameless stranger. He cried when he felt the initial penetration stretch him to what seemed to be his limit while his new husband kissed away the tears from his cheeks, whispering nonsense words into his ear. He devoured the King’s lips with abandon and clawed at his back when the heat got too much. He succumbed to the desire he had never known before.

His whimpers of pain and pleasure only served to ignite the King’s desire more, and even when Levi begged him to stop, when the fear of what was happening became impossible to bear, His Majesty only paused for a moment before proving him wrong.

The next morning, he did the walk of shame with his head held high. The King had made it very clear at the beginning that Levi was to live with the rest of the Consorts, and only come to his side when called upon, so Levi had left his new husband sleeping among the rumpled sheets with a tender kiss on his brow after indulging in a quarter of an hour of simply taking in his new husband’s handsome features.

Levi could hear the servants whisper as they passed him in the hallway while he slowly made his way back to the Consorts’ wing. He ignored them, keeping his gaze set and his mind replaying the memory of the previous night. His skin stung with the King’s kisses, the bruises visibly stark against his otherwise pale skin and there was a slight limp to his gait. But never before had he felt so accomplished.

He realized what he had been missing his entire life.
King Erwin.
The Simple Man

Chapter Notes

New chapter, which is mostly smut but it's Eruri Week! So this is my way of celebrating!

“Ah, that’s it, that’s… ah, that’s a good boy…”

Strong fingers carded through his hair and if he had been able, he would have smirked in response to the affectionate praise. The words had come out all jumbled, spilling from the very lips that were accustomed to issuing edicts and giving orders, harsh and unforgiving; yet these words, directed at him, were tender and almost… loving? Levi knew that he was fooling himself when he pretended that the King loved him, but sometimes the blond made it so hard for him to remember that. There was something about the way King Erwin looked at him, the way he touched him whenever they were together, just the two of them, alone, sequestered away in these rooms… Levi didn’t know whether it was the right kind of affection, the kind of love he’d read about in the novels stored away in the Palace libraries. It was enough for him. He didn’t even mind it when the King took another Consort to his chambers because for this brief time that they were together, alone, His Majesty only had eyes for him.

Those eyes pinned him down as he lowered his head and continued working on pleasing his King. He had gotten quite good at this: with a couple of pointers from Jean and several botched attempts encouraged by King Erwin, he had come to discover that his gag reflex was not easily triggered and quite controllable. He relaxed his throat and closed his eyes to lose himself in the repetitive motions. His hands came up to rest on the King’s inner thighs and Levi felt the man take a tiny step back to lean against the wall.

The two of them had just come back to His Majesty’s quarters after yet another tiring dinner during which King Erwin had been forced to act civil towards a particularly nasty Ambassador from a neighboring state and Levi had picked at his food disinterestedly, responding as politely as he could when the man’s wife had tried to engage him in conversation about knitting, of all things. As soon as they had said their goodbyes, the King had turned to Levi and requested his company in his private chambers without making a detour to the Consorts’ Wing. Levi could understand the man’s frustration – and sex was one of the best ways to vent it, he’d found. It was not like Levi was an expert at the deed, but he was becoming better and better at it, to his own surprise and satisfaction. The King’s breathing quickened and Levi pressed his tongue to the vein on the underside of his member, eliciting another low moan from the man who was already lost in pleasure. The Consort chanced a glance up and what he saw was enough for him to pause for a split-second – King Erwin was beautiful in the throes of carnal satisfaction that Levi’s mouth brought him. Sweat trickled down from the man’s neck to his belly, covering the golden skin with a fine sheen of moisture. Muscles flexed and clenched and a pink tongue darted out to lick at a full bottom lip. The man’s Adam’s apple bobbed up and down as he gulped before resuming his panting. The hands in Levi’s hair tightened and the boy knew it to be a sign that it was nearly over. He sped up, venturing as far as he could, the tip of the King’s cock brushing his throat. He felt hot tangy liquid make its way down, and though he could barely taste it given how deep the King had buried himself, groaning and keeping a steady hold on Levi’s head, Levi had tears in his eyes, barely able to breathe through
his nose as King Erwin spilled himself before finally letting go.

Levi pulled away, suppressing the urge to cough.

For a while, the only sound in the room was King Erwin’s labored breathing. Then, the man looked down at Levi with a blush and mild concern on his face. “Was that too much, my dear? Did I hurt you?”

The boy cleared his throat and got off his knees with some difficulty, dusting the front of his breeches off primly. “Not at all. I’m happy that I can do this much for you. Relax and unwind after a long day.”

King Erwin chuckled, taking Levi by the wrist and switching their positions with an easy motion so that he had the boy pressed up against the wall. He tucked himself back into his breeches and then proceeded to pepper kisses all over Levi’s face as the boy melted beneath the ministrations.

They had been at this for about a month now, and he was starting to wonder when the honeymoon period would end. So far, it didn’t look like there was an end to the amount of affection the King was ready to lavish on his Consorts. It wasn’t just Levi, his new spouse, but all of them, in a way.

With Armin, His Majesty exchanged ridiculously big hugs as he presented book after rare book to the boy just to see the delight in his eyes. With Eren, the King went hunting in the woods from time to time, showing him the proper way to wield a bow and arrow. With Jean, King Erwin sparred in the courtyard and then the two of them disappeared together into the stables for a suspiciously large amount of time.

And with Levi, the King found pleasure in teaching him all about the proper things to say or do with their highly esteemed guests, talking to him about life outside of the palace walls, and educating him in every possible sexual art imaginable. Levi honestly didn’t know how he found the time to actually rule the Kingdom. He had gotten closer to an answer to this question one night when he’d found the King asleep over his paperwork in the Palace library. The dark circles under his eyes were testament to the fact that King Erwin worked until he exhausted himself, day by day, and Levi couldn’t help but be in awe of him, as the man still managed to host parties and dinners and be nice to every visitor in the palace and assertive against every enemy; he also managed to keep his Consorts equally happy, even though Levi’s arrival had indeed put a strain on him. Levi had attempted to mention it once but had been cut off immediately with a claim that everything was all right and that King Erwin was happier than ever. He could do little else but believe the man and make sure that he ate well, slept a little bit better, and functioned properly. Perhaps the King really did need all four of him to take care of him since he was such a workaholic he hardly ever remembered to be a human being.

“What is on your mind, dear boy? You’re awfully tense,” King Erwin asked, his blue eyes searching Levi’s face. That was another thing Levi couldn’t quite get used to: His Majesty doted on him, he was constantly concerned, always asking questions, trying to make Levi as comfortable in the Palace as he could. Before, nobody had ever bothered with giving Levi a scrap of bread to eat when he had lived in the streets, and now he had the King of Sina asking about his moods, his health, giving him concerned once-overs when he thought that Levi wasn’t looking.

“That was another thing Levi couldn’t quite get used to: His Majesty doted on him, he was constantly concerned, always asking questions, trying to make Levi as comfortable in the Palace as he could. Before, nobody had ever bothered with giving Levi a scrap of bread to eat when he had lived in the streets, and now he had the King of Sina asking about his moods, his health, giving him concerned once-overs when he thought that Levi wasn’t looking.

“Nothing. Just trying to figure out how I ever got this lucky,” Levi said quietly and almost honestly. He didn't want the King to think that he was ungrateful. As far as he was concerned, King Erwin had been very kind, too kind for the likes of him, and he would never be able to repay the debt he owed to the man no matter how well he learned to swallow. He could spend a lifetime trying, though.
“Funny. I have spent every waking moment wondering the same thing, ever since I met you,” His Majesty replied and Levi fought the urge to slap his arm and say something uncouth like you charmer. He had been taking extra care not to become too familiar with the King. He knew that the man tolerated many things, but there had to be a limit which Levi couldn’t quite palpate yet. He had to dig deeper to get to it, that much was sure, but he was scared that a little deeper would be too much and he’d end up angering or worse yet, upsetting the man who had granted him such freedom. No, he would have to keep treading very cautiously if he ever wanted to get under the King’s skin without hurting the man. A monarch’s heart was ridiculously fragile.

“For now, though, I think we should continue this conversation somewhere more comfortable,” King Erwin said in a low, gravely voice that made Levi’s knees go weak. As opposed to the blond, Levi had not been granted release yet, and he had some difficulty understanding what it was that the King required of him as all of his blood had seemingly rushed from his brain and down to his nether regions. His Majesty chuckled as if he knew the amount of frustration Levi was feeling, and proceeded to hoist the boy into his arms and walk all the way to the bed with a slightly ruffled yet still dignified Consort in his arms. Levi didn’t protest, knowing that his point would be moot because this was the King and he was the King’s Consort.

His back hit the soft mattress and he found himself lying prostrate on the bed with the King’s much larger form looming over him. The blond propped himself on his knees and elbows to hover above Levi, and the boy suddenly felt like he had been dragged into the lair of a very gentle but dangerous predator. He looked up at the King’s face, marveling at how fucking insane this was. He had been the King’s Consort for a month now but wrapping his head around that fact would take years, ages, eons of time.

“You are so handsome,” he found himself saying before he could help it and his eyes widened in horror.

“I-I didn’t mean t-to speak out of turn—,”

“Levi,” the King said gently, stopping his bumbling. “You think I would honestly resent you for paying me a compliment like this? Coming from the most beautiful creature to ever grace me with their presence, it is quite the compliment indeed.”

If he had been able to, Levi would have blushed even harder. The King sure knew his way around words.

“Still, Your Majesty, it is… not right for me to say something so audacious. I have no right to judge your looks and—,”

“I rather enjoy your judgment, Levi,” King Erwin said, interrupting the boy again. He reached out with one hand to trace the outline of the boy’s lips with a single finger. “You are exquisite, and for you to be looking at me and deeming me handsome, as you say… It puts my mind at ease.”

“At ease? Why would you worry?” Levi asked, confused.

“I have seen the way foreign ambassadors and princes look at you, like wild animals waiting to strike. You are unusual to them, your beauty is… different to the kind they are used to seeing every day, and it makes them giddy. I am afraid that one day I will wake to the news of your disappearance on the back of someone else’s horse.”

Levi stared at the King for several long seconds. Then he laughed, loudly and merrily. It was the King’s turn to stare.
“Have I said something funny?”

Levi shook his head, glancing up at the man in wonder. “You are funny, Your Majesty. All of you. The things you say… The things you think… How could I ever look upon another man the way I look at you? When all I have is all you gave me?”

King Erwin frowned. “I don’t want you to stay just because you feel indebted to me, Levi. I am not that cruel. But I am possessive.”

“There is no need for you to be,” Levi assured the man, finding the courage to place a finger against his lips to shush him. “I am forever yours. Not for taking me away from Kenneth and giving me all this, even though freedom is more than I could have ever asked for.”

“Why do you stay with me then?” The King asked curiously. Levi knew that it was a genuine question, since the rest of the Consorts had initially arrived at the Palace with some sort of diplomatic goal to back up their appearance. Levi, on the other hand, had nothing to offer in terms of politics.

“Because I want to, Your Majesty,” Levi said solemnly. He glanced up at the King who was still looking slightly unsure. So Levi tugged on the front of his shirt to bring him down for a slow and sensual kiss, so different from the first one they’d shared in these chambers. Slowly yet gradually, Levi was learning to stand his ground whenever they were intimate and the King was allowing him to gain more power over their interactions in the bedroom. Out there, they were King and Consort but here Levi felt like he was just a little bit closer to heaven.

“Now, I do believe that you have called me in here for a purpose,” the dark-haired boy said boldly, making his sovereign chuckle as he lowered himself on top of Levi cautiously, not sharply enough to make him gasp out as the King’s entire body mass descended upon him. The fronts of their breeches brushed against each other and Levi groaned, realizing just how aroused he’d become while he’d had the King’s cock in his mouth.

“It’s a wonder I am still capable of going in for another round,” the blond said roughly, and Levi caught a glimpse of the younger, simpler man the King had been before he’d accepted the crown. He had never asked the King about his past as he felt it would be inappropriate, but sometimes he would get these small insights into who King Erwin really was. He treasured those moments, and he knew somewhere, deep at the bottom of his heart, that the rest of the Consorts noticed those moments as well. He could only hope that they accepted them and prized them just as much as he did.

“Why?” Levi asked, grinning wickedly. “Your Majesty, is that your way of implying that you might be growing older?”

He should have known that teasing the King while the latter was on top of him was not a good idea, but Levi was hot-headed sometimes, usually at the wrong times, and this was no different. The King growled, a vivacious, violent sound that had begun somewhere in the recesses of his lungs, and gripped Levi by the hair to bring him in for another heated kiss.

“Shall I show you the worth of an old man in the bedroom?” He asked, tugging on Levi’s hair mercilessly while the boy moaned, saliva trickling from the corner of his mouth. Levi nodded feverishly and found himself being stripped of his shirt and breeches with quick, almost medically precise movements that for some reason did not diminish the arousing nature of the situation. It was as if the King was proficient in the magical arts of the old world, so quick and sure were his motions. Soon, Levi lay naked and panting on the clean, soft sheets, his consciousness clouded with the King’s presence. He finally remembered himself and quickly undid the buttons on the
man’s undershirt before reaching for the breeches, the very breeches he’d unbuttoned before this night. The King was insatiable, though, and he cast away the soiled clothes with not a moment’s pause, his hands returning to roam over Levi’s body with interest. A shadow passed over the King’s face.

“Do you want me to take you roughly, Levi?” He asked, his voice hoarse. Levi’s eyes snapped to catch the King’s gaze. He didn’t understand what *roughly* entailed, he had wondered about the man’s sexual deviances for quite a while, but he had never found himself on the end of a similar request before. He was curious, though, and the stirring in his loins only confirmed his interest, so he nodded, entranced.

“I will not be as gentle as I normally am, though your abilities earlier today have shown me that you might actually prefer that.”

Levi blushed, remembering how the King had held him closely so that his nose was pressed up against the golden skin of his belly while he had spilled himself down the boy’s throat, almost violently, but not violently enough to make Levi scared of the experience never to repeat it again.

“I think I… I can take it,” Levi whispered, unable to take control of his own voice. The King nodded almost solemnly. He reached for the bottle of oil he kept in the nightstand and sat back on his heels, simply looking at Levi, as if he were gauging how much Levi could take without breaking.

“I want you on your hands and knees.” Levi’s eyes widened. They had never done that before. Sure, the King had taken him against the wall and sitting down on the desk once, but they had never ventured into forbidden territory, they had always made love face to face because that was the proper way to do things. Levi had been taught that by the numerous books on sexual and marital etiquette Armin had pointed out to him. Only filthy whores did it without facing the man who fucked them. That was the rule. Still, he found himself scurrying to turn over.

Levi felt the King’s gaze rake over the naked skin of his back and he shivered when the man’s finger entered him, slick with oil and deep, so deep from the start. The King’s other hand was already tangling in his hair and as Levi keened, searching for more from the digit that was stretching him open, His Majesty tugged on it, making the boy arch his back and surge up. Levi felt the King’s hot breath on the skin behind his ear.

“I will fuck you, Levi, fuck you like I know you *need* to be fucked.”

The boy let out a strangled moan. Hearing such profane language spill from the King’s mouth set his skin on fire. He realized now why King Erwin had taken him to bed – because he was the only one who would understand such simple, carnal language, such vile, earthly desires. Because he was simply a man, not a duke or a lord or a prince, he was just Levi and he could appreciate the King’s wishes to just let go and be the man he had once been, back before the throne had been thrust under him. If Levi was the King’s escape to the days of old, then so be it. He enjoyed this every single bit as much as His Majesty did.

“Fuck me,” he groaned, both horrified and proud of how needy he sounded. He really was going to be taken like a bitch, like a simple woman, like a *whore*, and there was nothing in the world he would rather be doing with the King right now. Gone were their previous experiences of lovemaking, tender and sweet and courteous. The man who’d held Levi’s head why he had come down his throat was back, and his slippery fingers were sliding in and out of him, striking that sweet spot inside of him and making him feel strong and weak and hot and cold all at the same time.
Finally, the King had had enough of this preparation, and he thrust Levi’s head down, pressing his cheek flush against the mattress. Levi yelped when he felt the man’s thick length enter him in one swift movement, rendering incapable of any kind of movement except the sporadic twitching that came involuntarily from his incensed nerves. The King pulled back slowly and thrust in again, one hand bruising Levi’s hip while the other refused to let go of his hair.

“Fuck.” The word sounded delicious coming from His Majesty, all the more sinful, all the more wonderful.

“Yes, yes,” Levi whispered against the fabric of the bedsheets, fists clenched. The grip on his hip became stronger and the King succumbed to his arousal, thrusting into the boy again and again, setting an unforgiving rhythm. All Levi could do was brace himself, moving his hips in tandem with the King’s as well as he could. His mouth let loose, spilling curses and moans like they were a prayer, and His Majesty reciprocated with a colorful vocabulary of his own, mixed between groans and feral sounds that suited more a wild animal than a monarch of the land.

“Oh, Sina–,” Levi felt his release fast approaching soon enough, even though he knew that he should have held out longer. But this was too different, too hot, too much, and he was glad to feel that the King’s own muscles seemed tight, as if coiling in preparation for his orgasm.

“Say it, Levi,” the King whispered harshly, whipping the boy back up by his hair so that he could mouth at the side of his neck. He gave his Consort’s earlobe a sharp nip, making him keen. “Say my name. I want you to say my name when you come.”

Levi’s eyes flew open. He was about to turn his head to repeat the request, surely, he must have misheard, but the King’s grip on his hair was too strong and as he approached his final thrust, the King growled, pulling on Levi’s hair painfully enough to make him scream in pleasure. “Say my name.”

“Erwin!” The world went white for Levi. The last thing he remembered was the familiar feeling of the King’s seed filling him, flooding his insides, hot and wet and tangy. His release crashed upon his shoulders and he screamed the man’s name yet again, garbled and messy. The King’s low groan echoed across the bedroom as the two of them collapsed under the weight of their pleasure.

Levi didn’t know how long he lay there, panting and salivating onto the mattress with the King still sheathed inside of him, his body resting on top of Levi’s. He only knew one thing. This was something he could give to the King. This was also something he needed from the King.

“I’d say this merits a repeat performance,” His Majesty finally chuckled. He withdrew from Levi’s body slowly, eliciting groans from both himself and the boy. Levi was immediately enclosed in a strong embrace and he didn’t argue against it, his head resting comfortably on King Erwin’s chest as the two of them breathed.

“Before this is over, Levi…”

“Yes?” Levi turned his head up to look at King Erwin’s moving lips.

“Say it again, one more time?”

“Erwin.”
The Adulterer

Chapter Summary

We get a little more Eruri fluff and some JeanMarco action.

Chapter Notes

You guys are such amazing readers/kudo-leavers/reviewers that I can't even. Happy past Eruri week everyone! In light of the new SNK chapter and all the Eruri feels it brings, here's a little piece of The Consort for you!

“Won’t you stay a little longer?”

Levi turned to look at his husband with a soft smile when he felt the gentle tug on his tunic. King Erwin was surprisingly clingy after a bout of morning sex, especially when there was nothing planned for the day – which was a rarity, of course. The boy had been called in at the crack of dawn, quite rudely, too, by the apologetic chamber maid who had relayed the King’s orders to come to the Royal Quarters immediately. Within half an hour, he had already been fucked once against the King’s bedroom wall (which had caused a couple of minor accidents involving a very valuable vase, a present from the King of Maria, and a couple of brass chandeliers). Levi had been quite disgruntled to having been woken up so unceremoniously to cater to the King’s seemingly insatiable appetite for copulations, so he had made sure to be extra pouty, causing His Majesty to soften his disposition and turn to whining instead of ordering him about.

“I’m afraid I have the luxury of free days regularly, and today I was actually planning on doing something outside the palace, Your Majesty,” Levi said with a smirk, turning to look at the King’s still naked form on the bed. King Erwin was a vision with his blond hair in disarray, eyes slightly blurry and the sweat still shining on the fine planes of his back and stomach. The blanket was draped leisurely over his hips, hiding the most private parts, and Levi cursed himself for a moment for not being an apt enough painter to capture the beauty he saw. Then again, he doubted that any sort of master would be able to do it well enough to be worthy of the King.

His Majesty raised an inquisitive eyebrow. “I do believe this is the first time you are planning on venturing outside these walls. What gives?”

“Cabin fever,” Levi confessed with a sigh. “As lovely as this place is, I grew up on the streets. I am used to being around a lot of space with not a wall in sight. And… I miss my horses. They were pretty much my only company when I worked for the Duke and…”

“I understand,” King Erwin said genially. He smiled at the younger man, his blue eyes twinkling. “Shall I arrange for a horse for you? Perhaps you could go riding. We’ve recently received half a dozen of the finest animals I’ve ever seen from a neighboring kingdom, you might want to take a look and choose one for yourself. Permanently.”

Levi’s breath stalled at such generosity. “Are you… giving me my own horse?”
“Depend on whether you will be able to handle it. They’re barely broken in, wild creatures.” The King reached out to stroke Levi’s pale cheek. “Much like yourself.”

Levi sniggered. “I’ll have you know, I was the finest stable hand within a thousand miles of the Duke’s estate. The local nobles would send their stable boys to consult with me.”

“I don’t doubt you, of course,” the King replied. “Go then, I will have the selection drawn up for you before lunchtime.”

“I’d like to take a look for myself, if you don’t mind. There is no need for ceremony,” Levi said, still unused to how formal every single thing at the palace had to be. He couldn’t even take a bath without notifying about a score of people of his intent. He didn’t want too many persons around the stables, as new horses tended to be skittish. The King seemed to understand his meaning.

“Oh course. Well, they’re in the Western stables, as far as I know. You will be wise to start there,” he said, leaning back against the pillows and tugging on Levi’s hand to bring the boy practically into his lap. “Ride safely.”

Levi smiled and pressed his lips to the King’s gently. “Always. You enjoy your lazy day, Your Majesty.”

“Levi.”

“What?”

The two of them shared a long glance before the Consort sighed, giving into the King’s silent request. He’d been quite demanding on this matter recently, and Levi had found himself unable to resist the practically begging glimmer in the King’s eyes.

“…Erwin.”

Soft lips covered his own again and Levi was finally let go after a moment. He smiled as he turned the door handle. Part of him wished he could just invite the King to ride out with him, while the rest of him vied to slip into the bare freedom of riding a horse by himself, just him and the undoubtedly magnificent creature he would choose as his ride. The door closed behind him and he made his way down the stone corridor. He no longer paid the bowing maids and valets any mind – they were almost as natural to him as the walls of this palace, just there to make things more convenient and yet more stifling at the same time. He did appreciate the help when he dressed, though, as some of the garments the King had gotten tailored for him had too many clasps and buttons and seemed incredibly difficult to put on for a single person with no experience in fancy clothes. Before he went out to ride, Levi stopped at the Consorts’ Wing to change into something simpler. He sometimes missed the coarse shirts and pants he’d worn at Duke Kenneth’s estate, then again, now he could finally make use of the riding breeches that had been lying in his closet begging to be worn. None of the other Consorts were in their rooms, as the weather outside was gorgeous, and Levi imagined they wanted to take advantage of the King’s day off. His Majesty would probably spend half the day reading and half the day sleeping anyway, and Eren had been complaining about losing his touch in archery for a while now. Armin was sure to be in the royal library, and Jean… well, Levi didn’t really know what went on in the boy’s head.

Soon, he was sitting atop his new horse, a real beauty from the very outskirts of the plains of Maria: a pitch-black stallion with the fiercest spirit Levi had ever encountered in a horse. As soon as he had entered the Western stables, this particular colt had begun to buckle and balk, yearning to get Levi’s attention all to himself. From then on, it had been as if the two of them could understand each other without even a single glance – even though the stable hand (incompetent, Levi had
thought to himself, feeling nothing but pity for the boy who had been struggling to keep control of
the rest of the horses) had told him that this one was ill-mannered. Of course he’s ill-mannered,
Levi thought to himself as he rode out, patting the side of the horse’s neck. You have no idea what
he needs. He needs things that only I can give him – freedom to ride out.

And so the two of them set off toward the fields as Levi tested the waters with the stallion. As
obstinate as he had been with the stable workers, now he was most obedient, heeding even the
slightest movement Levi made with the bridle. He was a free spirit, that much Levi was sure, but
he also wanted to be loved and cared for. It was clear why the black horse had taken such a liking
to him – they clearly had a lot of things in common.

Once he was sure that the horse was ready for a real ride, Levi threw caution to the wind, buckling
up and spurring his ride on to fly on with no reservations. The servants from the Palace would have
been scandalized with his lack of finesse, but Levi cared not, he was enjoying the moment for what
it was worth, wanting nothing more than to hang on to this moment of being outside, of being out
of those stuffy clothes and silly rituals. He’d only experienced such freedom at one moment before –
the first time the King had asked, almost begged him to call him by his given name.

“Erwin,” Levi whispered, his words floating with the wind for nobody else to hear. He closed his
eyes, picturing the vulnerable expression on his King’s face, the open and earnest way he’d looked
at him as Levi had ventured into the realm of the forbidden, eschewing all etiquette and submitting
to his liege’s wishes to simply be seen as a man. Since then, the King had prompted him regularly
to speak his name, as if it were a secret that only Levi was able to utter. At first, the boy had
 balked, as it was in clear violation of all the rules he’d studied so relentlessly throughout his
months of living in the Palace. But the King’s supplications had not ceased, and Levi had nothing
better to do but submit to his wishes and give him what he wanted. He didn’t mind that much, not
really, for he knew that this was a privilege that other Consorts were not privy to. It would seem
that his intent to become the best of the four was clearly in sight, for the King requested his private
company most often.

Levi didn’t know whether the other Consorts were jealous of the rapidly decreasing distance
between the King and himself. He knew that had he been in Armin’s shoes he would have at least
felt some resentment toward every newcomer that dared to enter his realm of influence. But the
blond boy was all smiles, wistful glances and giggles, seemingly content with the arrangement.
Levi himself felt no jealousy of the other Consorts, strangely enough – though he did think that, in
part, this was because he had been monopolizing the King’s private hours for a while now. Still,
there were certain moments that Levi knew made the King yearn for another’s company: when he
blanked at the mention of a book Armin had definitely read, or when His Majesty began to
describe his battle strategies, of which Levi knew very little but both Eren and Jean seemed to
know much more. The bottom line was that between the four of them, the Consorts formed one
perfect person for the King to cherish and hold – for one of them was not enough.

The fourth Consort lost count of the hours as he rode on, throughout the extensive territory of the
Palace grounds and further down into the woods. Nobody was there to chaperone him, and he was
grateful for that. If he wanted to, he could easily make a run for it and never see the King again. He
could sell the fine clothes he wore and the horse for a handsome sum of money and live quite well
in the capital city until he found a new job. If he had been the Levi who’d come into Duke
Kenneth’s service all those years ago, he would have probably done that in a heartbeat without
even thinking about the dire consequences such actions would bring. But now, the thought of
leaving King Erwin, the thought of leaving this Palace, this life of plenty – plenty of food, of sleep,
of comfort, of something that was closest to love and affection than he’d ever experienced before –
this thought seemed absurd to him. He didn’t mind being a caged bird if the cage allowed him even
this much freedom. As long as the King wanted him, he would stay and play house with the man. It
was nice to pretend sometimes; pretend that he was a noble son of some obscure political figure or
other, pretend that he was better-bred than the little boy who had been born in the dark alleyways
of Rose to a whore mother and an unknown father, a bastard child with no future but a promise of a
cold death in the winter or a bloody one were he to overstep his position in front of the town thugs.

He arrived back at the stables as the sun began to set, knowing that dinner was probably going to
be served soon. The King had told him that he would want to dine with all four of his dear boys
(His Majesty’s term, not Levi’s), and his stomach had already begun to growl, pampered and spoilt
by the fantastic Palace food and a regular intake. Surprisingly enough, though, Levi hadn’t begun
to grow fat, if anything, he’d filled out a little in the legs and shoulders, almost as if his wiry
muscles had been starved for the protein the had so lacked. Whatever it was, Levi couldn’t
complain because for the first time in his entire life, he didn’t feel like avoiding his own reflection
in the mirror. The King’s compliments, though they did make him blush from the roots of his hair,
made him feel desirable, and Levi did his best to stay in shape for his husband. He remembered the
reason why he had been invited to the Palace well enough: he was pretty. He had to stay pretty or
the King wouldn’t want him anymore.

Levi jumped off the saddle and patted the side of his new horse’s strong, magnificent body. “Good
going, Bora. Let’s get you nice and fed, shall we? I wonder if I still remember how to do it.”

He tied the horse in its assigned place, happy that there was nobody in the stables to try and help
him in doing the only job he’d gotten so good at he could do it in his sleep. Muscle memory was a
wonderful thing, and it aided Levi in remembering all the motions as if he’d only done them
yesterday. Soon, Bora had enough oats to feed an entire cavalry, and Levi smiled as the horse
helped himself to his new food, having seemingly accepted his master.

The stable doors creaked suddenly and, out of instinct brought about by years of hiding from
abuse, Levi ducked behind his horse’s form, ending up almost entirely enveloped in a humongous
pile of hay. He was about to struggle free before he was humiliated by whomever had come to the
stables at such an unfortunate time, but the familiarity of a voice stalled him, making him bait his
breath instead.

“I can’t believe I haven’t seen you for so long, it was torture–,”

“Sh, I’m here now.”

There were two men, and one of them sounded incredibly familiar to Levi’s ear, though he couldn’t
quite put his finger on it. He dared not peek out, choosing instead to sit in the hay and wait it out –
hopefully the couple would be out of there soon enough so that he could run back to the Consorts’
Wing and change without many servants seeing him covered in horse manure and oats. To his
horror, though, the telltale noises of lips smacking against each other and strangled moans escaping
two impassioned mouths reached his ears and he squeezed his eyes shut. Fuck, don’t tell me
they’re going to do it right here, that’s...

“Feel me.”

“Oh, Sina, you… How are you this hard already…?”

“It’s been almost a month, are you kidding me?”

The conversation was lewd and horribly cliché, yet Levi found himself entranced by the sounds of
these two people’s lovemaking. This was what real passion sounded like. Sneaking around in
stables and not seeing each other for ages meant that these two were really, really feeling enough to
risk such endeavors. Levi found himself feeling slightly jealous of the men. He heard the rustle of
clothes and as he peeked out, his head almost pressed up against the floor of the stables, hay in his
hair and the smell of horse permeating every breath, he saw two pairs of riding boots shuffle
around, kicking cotton shirts and breeches away, impatient.

“Get them wet for me.” Levi tried to block out the sounds of one of the man sucking on the other’s
fingers. His breeches got impossibly tight when he heard a groan that indicated where the digits
had gone, and he felt incredibly ashamed for being an unwitting peeping Tom to this display.

There was a dull thud and one pair of the boots disappeared from view, presumably already
wrapped around the other man’s waist.

“Fuck, this is gonna hurt–,”

“I don’t care, I don’t want you to let go, please–,”

The whispered plea turned into a pained moan and Levi found himself feeling slightly drunk, as if
nothing of what he was hearing and the little of what he was seeing was reality. He heard the
wooden walls of the stables creak and the rhythmical breathing of the two men become irregular as
one of them pounded into the other.

“I won’t last… like this,” one of the man half-panted, half-whispered and Levi tried to not listen to
the found of flesh slapping against flesh.

“Then don’t, fuck, come inside me, please, please–,”

“Goddess, I love you, I love you, I love you so much.”

At that moment, Levi almost came out of his hiding spot. Those were the words he knew he would
never hear his King say to him, and though he himself had already submitted to his fate of falling
for His Majesty, he was well aware that despite the fact that the King doted on his Consorts and
cared for them in his own strange way, he had a strict rule against getting too close to the boys. It
was a defense mechanism for King Erwin, and Levi respected that; though it didn’t meant that it
didn’t hurt when he thought of those warm, affectionate touches, the way the King asked him to
call out his given name; because Levi knew that ultimately, none of these things would matter to
King Erwin. He would always remain just one of the four.

These two people that were fucking so unceremoniously in the stables, unaware of the fact that
they were being listened to, they were in love. Real, genuine, sneak-around-in-the-stables love.
The kind of love that Levi refused to acknowledge if only because it would never exist for
someone like him. Green-eyed envy sat in the pit of his stomach, but he knew that despite his
destructive mood, he wouldn't be able to interrupt this incredibly private moment of passion. Love
like this deserved to belong to someone.

He heard lips collide one last time before the two men moaned, hushed, afraid of being heard.

“Fuck, you feel so god, I love you so much, I–,”

“Jean!”

It was as if he’d been struck by lightning. Levi’s eyes widened and for a moment he felt like he
forgot how breathing worked. No way, he thought to himself, his hands trembling, fingers seizing
up. There was just no way.

The two lovers groaned when their flesh detached with a squelch, and Levi finally managed to
make himself move. Cautiously, he peeked out from beneath his hiding place only to see two naked
bodies pressed up against each other, one paler than the other, their hips still touching together at the front.

“You’re beautiful.” It was definitely Jean’s voice. Jean’s face. Jean’s hands that reached out to stroke the cheek of the stable boy from earlier today. But it couldn’t be Jean. Harsh, lewd, immature Jean couldn’t kiss like this, this tenderly, as if he were afraid of breaking his lover by merely touching him. Levi watched as the stable boy melted into the tender embrace, kissing back with a lazy kind of passion, the kind that only appeared after lovemaking, when there was no need to rush anymore. Except there was, and the two seemed to realize it.

The kiss became for ferocious and after a while, Jean and the stable boy separated from each other. The Consort leaned his forehead against the other boy’s, exhaling in defeat.

“I have to go. The old man wants to have dinner with all of us tonight.”

“I understand.” The stable boy clearly didn’t, because his face fell immediately, as if he had just heard the most disappointing news of a lifetime. Jean caught his lips in another soft kiss before pulling away regretfully.

“When can I see you again?” The boy asked, and Jean only shrugged in response as he reached for his breeches, picking them off the floor. The naked stable boy remained unmoving against the wall as he watched his lover dress.

“I don’t know, depends on when I have another day off being the King’s wife,” Jean said. His words didn’t sound resentful or angry, not like he hated the King for making it so. He was just… resigned. Levi’s heart squeezed uncomfortably in his chest.

“I’ll wait for you,” the freckled stable boy whispered, his eyes impossibly wide. Jean chuckled and leaned in for one last kiss.

“I know you will. I don’t know what I did to deserve you, Marco.”

Marco.

Marco.

Jean and Marco.

Marco and Jean.

All throughout dinner, Levi watched the second Consort flirt and smile at the King from where he sat, his usual cool exterior back in place. There was not a single smidgeon of the tenderness that Levi had witnessed, and he felt sick to the stomach, though he didn’t really know why.

That was the secret that Jean had been hiding from all of them.

He had something none of the other Consorts did.

But he could never truly reach it.

Somehow, Levi couldn’t bring himself to hate him.
Levi honestly had no idea how he’d ended up in this position. Sure, he had been called to King Erwin’s chambers what felt like thousands of times before, and done things that were really not at the height of morality by any means possible, and yet this was the strangest thing that had happened to him since he’d become part of the King’s harem.

He kept his eyes trained on Armin’s blond head which bobbed up and down as the boy licked and sucked on the King’s cock, letting out obscene little whimpers that went straight to Levi’s own straining arousal. He felt wrong watching this and enjoying it the way that he was, because one, his notion of marriage, though it had loosened up significantly since he’d become one of the four of the King’s Consorts, was still struggling with the traditionalist pillars that he had grown up with back in Rose; and two, Armin was so fucking young. Too young to be doing such lewd things. Too young to be putting himself on display like this. Levi knew that Armin thought he was about the same age, and he felt terrible for getting himself involved in the King’s deception. He was a perverted old man getting off on his husband’s frank adultery with his much younger… colleague? Levi wasn’t sure what the correct term was in this case, but semantics were the farthest thing from his mind as he watched Armin’s movements speed up and the King’s hand in his hair tighten. He wondered whether he himself looked as lewd when he did the same for His Majesty, whether his voice strained in the same way, whether his breath hitched just like Armin’s when the girth of the King’s member got too much for him to handle. Whether he himself reached down to palm at his own arousal like Armin did, intent on drawing enjoyment from the process of pleasuring the King.

“Armin…” The King’s deep voice broke Levi out of his reverie and he looked up to see the blue eyes lock his with an intense gaze. His Majesty’s lips slid into an indulgent smile and his fingers got to carding through Armin’s hair. “Isn’t he quite a sight, Levi?”

It took a moment for Levi to find his voice again, and in that time, the King tugged on the blond hair in his hold, making Armin pull up, panting and rose-cheeked. The King’s strong hand turned the boy’s face toward Levi, and the dark-haired man fought the urge to look away. Armin was positively debauched, all traces of his innocence left behind in the tangle of his clothes that were strewn across the floor of the King’s chambers. His eyes glistened with tears that had appeared reflexively when the King’s penis had slid further down his throat, and his lips were wet with a mixture of his own saliva and King Erwin’s fluids. He was the very definition of sex, his pale skin flushed and his beautiful blue eyes unfocused. One of his hands was still wrapped around the member that had just been in his mouth while the other slid from his own nether regions reluctantly when he spotted Levi’s gaze straying there. Armin didn’t look ashamed, simply… ruined, in the most delicious way, and Levi’s chest clenched painfully when he realized that if he had been the boy’s owner, if he had married Armin first, he would not have wanted other Consorts because Armin was more than enough. He was a vision, and Levi felt dirty just being there with him, hiding his own upbringing, an ugly lump of coal among the jewels in King Erwin’s harem.

“Beautiful,” Levi exhaled shakily, and Armin’s eyes widened momentarily before his reddened lips
opened into a smile. Such innocence. It was painful for Levi to watch this. He was suited for this kind of job, he was made for sucking dick and being used like this. Armin was not. He was made to be displayed in a gallery somewhere, to be cherished and loved – and though Levi knew that the King adored all of his Consorts in his own way, he still believed that Armin deserved more than what His Majesty had to offer. He deserved to be venerated, to be loved and held by one who did not feel the need to turn to others for pleasure. That thought alone was enough to make Levi resent the King a little more.

His Majesty chuckled, beckoning Levi with his other hand. “Come here, my darling. Why don’t you join us for a bit? You seem lonely over there.”

Levi glanced at the little blond whose smile only got wider through his eyes remained still.

“Yeah, Levi, don’t let me have all the fun to myself.”

His lungs felt like they were on fire as he discarded the thin sheet he’d wrapped around himself while he had watched the display Armin and their husband had put on. He felt both blonds watch him, and he made it a point to crawl over toward the King’s lap in the slowest, most seductive way possible. Once he was there, the King took him by the nape of his neck with his unoccupied hand and drew him in for a toe-curling kiss. This was the reason Levi couldn’t completely hate this man. Because beneath all the riches and the demands King Erwin made, he was raw, open, like a wild animal. Levi knew that His Majesty reigned in his possessive, savage nature when he was with the other boys because they were too delicate, too well-bred to understand what it meant to want to fuck like there was no tomorrow. Levi shared that understanding once he had been introduced to it by the King himself. Perhaps is was self-sacrificial of him in a way, but he wanted to be enough for King Erwin because he didn’t want the other three to be sullied in the way that he was.

His Majesty broke the kiss and traced Levi’s lips with his thumb, eyes alight with arousal. “So beautiful yourself. Both of you. Stunning.”

Gently, the King pushed Levi to face the small blond who was watching the two of them with wide eyes, full of wonder and excitement. “Kiss him.”

Both of the Consorts stared at their King for a long moment before Levi realized they were being too obvious in their obstinance. Slowly, he reached over His Majesty’s lap and touched Armin’s cheek tenderly. His fingers closed over the boy’s chin and he drew himself closer still so that their noses were touching. He tried to convey what he felt through the look he gave Armin and he didn’t know whether the boy understood what he was trying to say, but the blond’s eyes slid shut and Levi found himself closing in on those lips.

Armin tasted like honey and the King’s fluids. It was a strange combination, a bittersweet mix that suited his situation remarkably well. Levi pressed closer when he felt a shaky moan brush over his mouth. He opened his mouth a little more and claimed Armin’s bottom lip between his own, tugging gently to receive yet another exhalation of approval from the boy. Surprisingly enough, Armin was not as good of a kisser as Levi had expected him to be. Perhaps his innocence had not allowed him to get into the intricacies of kissing, perhaps he was simply better at other things the King enjoyed; either way, Levi felt like he was tasting the mouth of a mere boy, not a Royal Consort.

It wasn’t bad, but the spark that zipped through him every time he kissed the King was absent, and he was left with a simple warm feeling. He enjoyed it, he liked the taste and weight of Armin’s tongue, the little sounds the boy emitted once in a while when he did something clever with his lips, but it wasn’t… it wasn’t King Erwin’s mouth, and that made it wrong.
It was then that Levi realized that he was perhaps Armin’s second kiss. The boy had been a virgin when he’d married His Majesty, and he had been very surprised when the King had called both of them into his chambers, as if it were unusual for King Erwin to request something of the sort from his Consorts. Unless Armin had a dirty little secret like Jean did – Levi felt momentarily nauseous – that meant that the boy had only been ever kissed by the King. Levi wasn’t worthy of Armin’s lips, he was not important, not good enough to be kissing this boy, and yet he couldn’t bring himself to refuse the King’s order. Armin seemed to enjoy it as well, though Levi really couldn’t tell whether he was acting or not. It was difficult to determine the truthfulness of Armin’s moans, as he was skilled enough to fool even the most experienced of spies. He was the perfect little doll for King Erwin to play with, and though his life in the Palace was not a miserable one, Levi still felt sorry for him.

Finally, he pulled back, realizing that the King must have had enough of the show his boys had put on for him. Sure enough, King Erwin’s smiling face swam into view and he nodded for the two of them to get to work. Levi’s eyes met Armin’s for a brief moment before both boys slid down onto their elbows at either side of the King’s hips. Their breaths mixed as they simultaneously licked a strip up King Erwin’s member, eliciting a groan from His Majesty. Levi felt a hand on the back of his head and he lowered himself down, sliding his tongue over the head and all the way to the hilt. His lips grazed Armin’s briefly but he didn’t jump away in embarrassment. There was no room for that in the King’s quarters. Armin and him were just doing their job, they were helping their husband relax after a long and stressful day with the court. This was their sole function in the palace, and they collaborated in bringing the King to the height of pleasure with tantalizing tongues and innocent looks.

Levi closed his eyes and lost himself in the motions. He felt like he knew the outline of the King’s cock well enough to map it out on parchment. The only new thing in this equation was the presence of Armin’s hot breath, his lips, his tongue, which aided him in his mission.

“Goddess, you two…” King Erwin exhaled and Levi heard a soft chuckle come from Armin. The boy’s carefree nature shone through even at a time when it was obvious that they were simply tools for the King to get his mind off things. Levi had come to realize over the past months that none of the Consorts were delusional enough to think that King Erwin loved them romantically. But they were absolutely all right with their positions regardless. It was a strange arrangement from start to finish, but Levi couldn’t bring himself to disapprove of it because he was the one who got the most out of it. He was the odd person out, he was… different, even though they didn’t know it.

He pushed the thought away and focused on making the King feel good. It wasn’t hard, not with Armin aiding him, and soon, he felt the hot rush of King Erwin’s semen slide down his cheek just as he’d been mouthing at the underside of his cock. As the King panted through his release Armin and him made quick work of tonguing up the remainder of His Majesty’s pleasure. The two of them rested their chins on the man’s hips and basked in the feeling of the King’s large hands petting their heads tenderly as if they were pet cats.

“Thank you, my dear boys…” King Erwin said roughly, his voice still coarse. Levi looked up at him and offered a soft smile in return. He glanced back down only to meet Armin’s blue gaze. The boy studied him for a moment and then leaned over suddenly, placing a soft kiss on Levi’s cheek. The King chuckled at his antics but Levi was left reeling. He looked at Armin, not really understanding the motive behind such an innocent gesture but the boy simply smiled at him and rested his cheek on the side of the King’s stomach, relaxing his body while His Majesty enjoyed the afterglow. Levi still didn’t understand the little blond, but for some reason it was… almost fine. Let Armin have his secrets. Let him be his own person.

The dark-haired man slid his eyes shut and relaxed into the soft skin of the King’s side.
He didn’t know how long they spent like this, simply lying there and enjoying the strange comfort of being together. Eventually, the King sighed, rousing from his half-daydream. “You two are the best recipe after the longest day of my life.”

Armin moved to look up at the King as he traced abstract patterns on the golden skin of his thigh with one delicate finger. “Want to talk about it?”

King Erwin sighed heavily. The hand that had been stroking Levi’s head left the comfortable position it had been in and the dark-haired man immediately felt the loss as he looked up at the blond man’s face which suddenly looked very tired. So this was why he kept Armin around. The little blond was good to discuss politics with because he was a well-educated young man with similar interests to the King’s own. He understood political throes and troubles much better than Levi could ever hope to. He was getting better and he had been reading up on Sina’s relations with neighboring states, but he hadn’t been born into this life of international intrigue, and he was still mostly clueless when it came to determining which diplomatic move was right and which could inextricably start a war.

“Titania is bearing down on us. They want those lands in the Lusitanian east that we took in the Great War because apparently they have a right to it – or they seem to think so, at least,” King Erwin said quietly. Levi understood that much, that Titania was pretty much a superpower in the north and they were touch nuts to crack when it came to diplomacy. Those people understood the language of weaponry better than dialogue, and as stillied as the King was in terms of tactics and strategy, he preferred to use words instead of swords to settle disagreements. But the truth was that Sina’s army, though well instructed and very proficient, couldn’t stand a chance until the massive numbers of soldiers of various caliber and ability in Titania. It was going to be tough for the King in the next months if he was going to try and settle the matter with the stubborn King of Titania, Roderick.

“That’s ridiculous,” Armin huffed. “They lent us, what? one regiment!”

“They supplied the weapons, though,” the King pointed out. “I did promise recompense but I assumed it would be money, not…”

“… incredibly fertile farmland,” Levi finished for the man, surprising both His Majesty and himself with the details he’d remembered from his studies. The King’s eyes widened a fraction and then his mouth twitched into a semblance of a smile as he encouraged Levi to speak with a little nod of his head. “They’ll ruin that land if they get their hands on it. Have you seen what Roderick ate at the banquet last month? Raw fish and flatbread. They have no idea how to cultivate the earth. It’s useless to them without experts and–,”

“–and slaves,” Armin interrupted. He looked up at Erwin. “What will happen to the people who live there?”

The King sighed. “That’s one of the problems. I signed a decree that declared them freemen the second we claimed that land to avoid any uprisings. And now, if they find out that I went back on my word and handed them over to Roderick who is definitely not known for his kindness…”

“You will lose credibility as a ruler,” Armin said quietly.

“You will lose much more than that if you let this land go to Roderick,” Levi said sharply, raising himself up on his elbows. He glanced down at Armin who looked at him curiously. Levi had never been very vocal about his political attitudes, since he had never had much to say, preferring to keep his conversations as boring and Consort-appropriate as possible to avoid the danger of being discovered. But this was a matter of principle, a matter of the people trusting the King who had
first conquered them and then promised them a better life only to take it all away because of some political dispute. Levi was not much, he was not a prince or an ambassador, but he knew exactly what being handed over like cattle felt like.

It was, after all, how he had ended up at the Royal Palace.

His Majesty nodded at his dark-haired Consort. “I know, Levi. This means that we have our work cut out for us. We need to charm the pants off Roderick, and we will start the second he sets food in our great hall.”

“He’s coming here?” Armin asked in alarm. He remembered how unpleasant Roderick had been the first and only time they had met, back before Levi’s time. The man was a pig, and he had made it a point to assert his authority in King Erwin’s own court by putting his hands on his Consorts. Armin had taken it with gritted teeth back then but it had taken both him and Jean to restrain Eren and not allow him to lash out at the disgusting man.

“I intend to invite him for Beltane,” the King sighed. “It’s the only option we have outside of a war that we will definitely fail to win.”

“Then all will be lost,” Armin said quietly, eyes downcast.

That night, Levi and him walked back to the Consorts’ Wing hands brushing against each other in silence. Just as they stopped in front of the entrance, Armin tugged on the dark-haired man’s sleeve and spun him to face him. “Thank you for today.”

Levi lifted an eyebrow. “It’s our job to help the King any way we can.”

Armin looked down at him in wonder. “You really believe that?”

Levi nodded without hesitation. The blond gave him a curious look before nodding.

“His Majesty chose well when he took you. You’re definitely going to change things around here.”

Then, he was gone.
Chapter Notes

Wrote this one up on the flight to Madrid. Time for college yay!

This was the height of pleasure, as far as Levi was concerned. He was riding again, just him and the wind and the rush of almost flying in his ears. He had made it a point to escape his chambermaids who had attempted to dress him in appropriate Consort attire, and had opted instead for practical, slightly shabby, by Royal standards, anyway, clothing that allowed him more freedom to move around and steer his horse as easily as he had done before, back when he had been fine with wearing just one layer of grainy, rough cloth against his skin. Those had been the days, in a way, but Levi was not about to complain, even despite the fact that he was now conveniently confined to the premises of the palace grounds. Those were large enough to get lost.

Just him and the horse and the wind.

“Levi!”

Oh. And the King.

His Majesty had unexpectedly come along for the ride, after having heard that Levi had been intending to go. Not that Levi minded in particular, sometimes it was nice to have a companion go along for the ride. Except it was kind of a big deal when said companion was the King of Sina, Erwin the First, or whatever the hell his official title was. Levi had attempted to learn the full list of His Majesty’s titles and regalia but Erwin had shushed him, telling him that none of that mattered. It was easy for the King himself to say.

“Your Majesty?” Levi stopped his horse to turn and look at the blond who was just about to catch up to him. The King was an amazing rider, as Levi had expected him to be: after all, those military victories hadn’t just come into his hands readily for his handsome face and sculpted body. Levi’s eyes slipped to take in the sight of the King’s fine legs wrapped in white riding breeches, and he felt a jolt at the bottom of his stomach that indicated he was definitely interested in some extracurricular activities after the ride. But of course, it wasn’t up to him to decide. The King was the authority in the bedroom… and the rest of the palace, for that matter.

“You took off like a shooting star there, dearest,” said the King, laughing. Levi was momentarily entranced by the way the corners of his eyes crinkled affectionately when he smiled. Surprisingly enough, that did not make him look older, instead, it brought a boyish sort of charm to his stoic face, the face that he usually showed his councilors and various visiting ambassadors. The thought of the latter immediately made Levi think of why they had taken this chance for an outing: King Roderick would be coming to Sina the next day, and thus, all inappropriate frolicking would be under direct scrutiny of one of the most irritable human beings in the world. Roderick was everything King Erwin wasn’t: unpleasant, militaristic, and overall, not nice. He was also well known for his sexual advances toward other Kings’ spouses, which had apparently brought about more than one international conflict in the previous years. Levi was definitely not looking forward to the banquet upon the man’s arrival, which was thankfully the only formal function he was required to attend. At least he would have the silent support of the other Consorts, since King Roderick had requested all of their presence in his missive, which had sounded more like a
dismissive order to King Erwin himself. Levi had seen the way the vein in His Majesty’s temple had risen to the surface when he’d opened the letter delivered by a smug-looking messenger. Levi appreciated the fact that King Erwin felt protective of his Consorts; word was that Roderick, on the other hand, had already lost count of how many marriages he’d been in. His land only allowed singular couplings, officially, that is; which meant that he was known as a scandalous adulterer and professional divorcee. To King Erwin, who was known for his brutal honesty when it came to the affairs of the heart, the man’s very existence, not to mention his so-called principles, were an absolute insult.

“Sorry,” Levi panted, smirking at the King, satisfied that he had managed to outrun him on horseback. Though he doubted the he could ever do the same in battle, of course. Levi had never been a soldier in his life, obviously, and he had only fought for his life a couple of times in Rose when the men from outside the estate had tried to stake a claim on his body. “Just enjoying the wind today. It’s glorious, isn’t it?”

The King smiled at his Consort warmly. “It is. Although I see something far more beautiful than the landscape right in front of me. Or rather, someone.”

Levi snorted. “Does that line ever work, really? I’m pretty sure even the most recent love novels contain far more creative ways of getting in one’s pants.”

Erwin laughed in response to Levi’s words. “You are harsh as always, my love. You know, when I married you, I had been hoping that I’d captured a village romantic.”

“So sorry my pragmatism ruins your vision of our pink-tinted future,” Levi responded, eliciting another bout of chuckles from his husband. That was another thing that made Levi feel like he could deal with the King not being in love with him: he made His Majesty laugh. Before, Levi’s slightly strange sense of humor and deadpan manner had failed to elicit anything but derisive sneers and blank glances. The King, however, made him feel like he could actually be funny, like his company was enjoyable, and not just because he readily offered his body to the man, but because he could keep up in a conversation with King Erwin without feeling ashamed of who he was.

He realized that this was another reason why the King had married him, a simpleton from the stables. King Erwin himself came from a prosaic background – he did not have generations of former Kings behind his shoulders to reinforce his right to the throne. In fact, he had grown up a normal man in a normal village, at least, according to the court gossip. Levi had not dared delve any deeper for the fear of insulting the man. Though it seemed as though His Majesty didn’t mind talking about his upbringing much, Levi still felt like he was walking on eggshells whenever the topic was brought up, and thus, he figured it would be best to avoid it, just to be safe.

“I really don’t have a vision of the future,” the King confessed suddenly, and Levi lifted an eyebrow.

“Aren’t you supposed to? With all due respect, as a monarch, you probably have some sort of grand design for Sina—,”

“I just want to give my people the best life I can offer them.”

Levi glanced at the King, searching for the lie in the crooked smile, the gentle slope of his temple and the tiny, almost imperceptible dimples that appeared on his cheeks when he laughed. He could find no deception there, and either Levi was getting bad at reading people (which he doubted, considering he had to constantly be on the lookout for palace plotters and dishonest ambassadors) or the King really was a fantastic actor. Or he wasn’t lying, which was the most disconcerting thing
that could come to Levi’s mind.

“An unselfish King?” He asked, grinning. “Forgive me if I don’t believe in such a myth.”

“I suppose my monarchical status does not add to my credibility,” the King said, looking almost guilty for wearing a crown. Levi gave him an odd glance. “I do know how bad the conditions are in the smaller towns and villages and... perhaps it is the villager in me who wants to give back to the people who had raised me all those years ago.”

Levi shrugged. “You know that not all villagers are nice and honest.”

“That’s the kind of thinking that requires deeper exploration, darling,” the King said, hopping off his horse and motioning for Levi to do the same. The two of them led their horses deeper into the woods, walking side by side. “You of all people should know that it is the conditions of their life that lead the villagers to dishonesty and rebellion.”

“So you endeavor to give them a better life? Using what money?” Levi asked suspiciously. The King chuckled humorlessly.

“That is the biggest question, isn’t it, Levi? I suppose you would think me a fool if I told you that I would like to divest the nobility and the merchants of their unreasonable riches and give them to the poor for equal distribution?”

Levi stared at King Erwin for a long moment, halting his gait. His Majesty kept on walking only to realize that Levi was no longer by his side. He turned back, taking in the stunned expression on Levi’s face which was then replaced with pure mirth. “You’re something else all right, Your Majesty.”

“Meaning?” The King lifted an eyebrow. “Do you think it a dream that cannot be? Are you that skeptical of social justice?”

Levi continued walking behind the King. He shook his head. “I have an all right relationship with social justice, don’t get me wrong. I just don’t know if there has ever been a monarch who would even consider the option of... I can’t even say it.”

“Helping others but himself?” The King offered, and Levi smiled.

“That too. But you readily came out and said it. As it were the most natural thing in the world. That’s something... well, having been with Duke Kenneth for so long, I do believe I have become jaded when it comes to such things.”

“The Duke of Rose is not renowned for his generosity,” His Majesty said, nodding.

“Unless we’re talking about beatings and insults. Then he has plenty to give and he gives it gladly,” Levi muttered darkly. The King’s smile slipped.

“I am sorry that you have to go through such things. I do believe that nobody deserves abuse. Particularly if they are of a lesser social standing, unfortunately.”

“You don’t pick on the weak?” Levi asked, a small smirk on his lips.

The King sighed as the two of them entered a quaint little glade. He tied his horse to the nearest tree and motioned for Levi to do the same, and then took his Consort’s hand, leading him to the very middle of the place. He plopped down onto the thick emerald grass ungracefully, and patted the ground next to him. Levi laughed but flopped down in a perfect imitation of the King.
Somehow, the two of them ended up lying on the grass, face up and looking at the sky, with the King’s head resting on Levi’s left thigh.

“I grew up a wimpy little kid,” the King confessed, and Levi smiled wryly.

“Somehow, I find that very hard to believe.”

“Believe me when I say that I was not remarkable in any way.”

“You still aren’t.”

King Erwin laughed out loud, his booming voice echoing across the clearing. “You wound me. In any case, I was never someone respected in the small village I grew in with my father.”

“What kind of man was he?” Levi asked, daring to be curious for a change. The King smiled, the dim film of memory coating his blue eyes.

“The most intelligent man I’ve ever known,” he replied with fondness in his voice. “To me, a child, it seemed as though there was nothing my father couldn’t know. He was a schoolteacher in the village, and he practically ran the entire school by himself. Literacy wasn’t a popular feature among rural dwellers. It still isn’t. But back then it was worse. He was the only source for knowledge most children had.”

“He sounds a bit like you. A challenger at heart,” Levi mused.

“You have no idea,” the King laughed. “The children loved him because he would always see a promise through. If he promised to talk of seas and islands far away, then he would. He would travel to the neighboring bigger towns just for the sake of getting books and materials for his classes.”

“That’s… nice of him. The professors at my weekend school didn’t even bother showing up half the time even though some of us were actually eager to learn,” Levi replied, making the King frown.

“We’ll have to change that. If there is one thing my father taught me it is that only those who are truly passionate about education should become teachers.”

Levi sighed. “Most of them weren’t teachers by choice. In Rose, we took whatever job came our way. Anyway, enough about my sad childhood. Tell me more about your father… Your Majesty.”

The King laughed at his obvious lack of decorum. “Well, he was the one who urged me to read more and explore more. He’d sometimes send me to other villages and towns just to allow me to travel.”

A frown marred His Majesty’s features. “That came to an end when he died of consumption. Or so they said, the doctors who delivered the news to me, a child of ten. Although later I heard rumors that my father had actually been questioning the policies of the local governor. Some said that he had been poisoned. It didn’t matter that much at the time, since the death rates were high. Nobody paid a dead schoolteacher much mind. His son ended up on the street and set off to seek a better future, and maybe even the truth, in Sina.”

“What about your mother, was she…?” Levi trailed off ambiguously.

“She died giving birth to me. I was left alone. The children in the village weren’t the most friendly bunch. To them I was the teacher’s son and thus, an undesirable. Even after my father’s death, I
was still… I don’t know, I guess they didn’t want to mix with someone who could sell them out, even though I would never… Children are hard to understand. They bullied me and one day I had enough. So I walked.”

Levi nodded in understanding. He had been the runt of the litter himself, so he knew what that felt like, having experienced first hand how cruel some kids could be.

“How did you end up… well, a King?”

“I know they say I staged a military coup and took the crown by force.” The King offered Levi a wry smile. “I have done nothing to dispel the rumors if only because they make me seem like a force to be reckoned with. In reality, I ended up much like in the position you were in, a stable boy at the Royal Palace. I was taken in out of pity by the former King, Uri.”

Levi frowned. “I read about him. He didn’t seem like the kind of person who would take pity on a child. No offence, he was a bit of a -,”

“Not a nice person?” The King interrupted and Levi glanced at him gratefully. “He wasn’t. At least, not to most people around him. But he took a liking to me. He had no heirs, so for some reason he set his sights on me, since I was able to read and write and had a good grasp on geography and economics. Eventually, he would teach me things about the other Kingdoms. Of course, I never would have thought that he was grooming me to become a successor.”

“So how come there’s so much talk of a coup?” Levi asked carefully, unable to shake the mental image of the fearsome King Uri with a teenaged Erwin in his lap.

“The King fell sick just as I was about to turn eighteen summers. He called me into his quarters and gave me his sword telling me to stab him in the chest and take the crown,” His Majesty said and Levi gaped.

“He asked you to kill him? Why?”

“He said nobody would accept a street urchin like me as a successor even if he named me one. My taking the throne called for far more drastic measures, and since he was dying already, he had decided to hand over the crown to me in such an… unconventional manner.” The King’s lips twisted into a smirk that seemed both fond and painful. “I did it. I remember crying. And then it just stopped. The tears didn’t come anymore. I have not been able to shed a tear since then.”

“Not many people would have been able to do something like this,” Levi commented. The King looked up at him. “I can’t help but feel happy that you did.”

“Why?”

“Because you ended up a King. And you came for me at Kenneth’s estate. And now I am frolicking in the grass with the greatest monarch Sina has ever seen.”

The King actually reddened in the face upon hearing the praise. “You give me too much credit, darling.”

“I give credit where it is due,” Levi dismissed. “I think it takes a lot of guts to go from a helpless village boy to King Erwin of Sina.”

“I like it when you say my name,” the King said suddenly. Levi glanced down at him, startled. “You should do it more often. Call me by my name.”
This was a shaky subject for both of them. Rules were rules, no matter how unconventional His Majesty was. Levi only ever called out his given name in bed, when the two of them were in the throes of animalistic passion and propriety was the last thing on their minds. This was entirely different.

“I cannot, Your Majesty, you know that—,”

“Just when it’s us two,” the King said, eyeing Levi carefully, as if he were afraid of spooking him.

Levi gulped. “Do you offer the other Consorts this privilege?”

“No.”

Now he definitely didn’t know how to deal with this development. This was a breach of contract between him and the other Consorts, since they were all supposed to be equal in the King’s eyes. He didn’t want to be singled out among the others, he didn’t deserve to be acknowledged more than them. And yet the King was offering exactly that.

“Don’t overthink it. It’s just a name, Levi.”

It’s not just a name and you know it.


“Again.”

“Erwin.”

“Again.”

“Goddess, aren’t you demanding all of a sudden?” Levi laughed, feeling elated. His hands and feet tingled with excitement and he slipped from under Erwin and straddled him instead, looking down into the man’s handsome face.

“Erwin.”

“Levi.”

“Erwin.”

“You know, I’ve never fucked anyone beneath the stars,” Erwin said and Levi looked up pointedly.

“It’s still light outside, you know.” Erwin turned to look at his Consort and slowly stretched out his hand, touching Levi’s cheek affectionately.

“You don't mind waiting, do you, Levi?”

The dark-haired man paused, glancing down at his husband. He shook his head affectionately, getting off Erwin’s waist and settling into the crook of his elbow instead. The two of them looked up at the cloudless blue sky.

“I don’t mind waiting with you… Erwin.”
The Dancer

Chapter Notes

New chapter to celebrate the first week of college being over! Not beta-ed, of course.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I can’t believe we have to spend the entire evening entertaining that shi-,”

“Eren!”

The green-eyed boy glanced at Armin through the mirror, his face exasperated. He was halfway through putting on the various pieces of jewelry that Erwin had requested him to wear. Nimble fingers paused at his earlobe, which was already adorned with the Consort’s traditional earrings – Eren had been adding more, as per tradition in his homeland. Roderick had made it quite clear that he was looking forward to socializing with His Majesty’s exotic beauties, as he had put it; and so Erwin had delivered the message himself, looking tremendously guilty, that every single one of his Consorts was required to wear the traditional clothing of their origin. Everyone, that was, excepting Levi, who was decked out in the Parsian robes of black and white with silver thread and agate buttons. He didn’t mind wearing the outfit even though it was a far cry from what was traditional among stable boys in Rose. In any case, it was better than what Eren had been forced to wear, in Levi’s opinion.

The boy’s tanned skin was exposed at his arms, ankles and stomach, and the rest of him was draped in golden and red cloth of satin and fine silk. His clothing was decorated with coins and little bells that chimed whenever he moved. When Levi had first seen the boy in this getup, he’d lifted a questioning eyebrow, and Eren had gone on to explain, with an eye-roll, that this type of clothing was actually traditional among the women of his country. And yet, it seemed like Roderick had this mindset, this… picture of what King Erwin’s Consort was supposed to dress like, and Erwin’s hands were tied. Eren had accepted the mission graciously, and told the King that he would be making up for it, to which the King had only nodded and held out his arms to embrace all four of his Consorts.

Levi felt bad for the man. It was obvious that the King was under a lot of stress: Roderick was a horrifyingly bad monarch and diplomat, and yet he was also very powerful. It was that power that Sina couldn’t stand against, for the lack of manpower and resources. Which was why it was up to Erwin and his Consorts to try and make Roderick see reason. Right.

“You know it’s important for His Majesty,” Armin said, admonishing Eren for his audacious words. The little blond was decked out in a pretty simple set of clothes – flared midnight blue pants and a pristine white shirt that was unbuttoned a little more than was strictly necessary, in Levi’s opinion. Every time he caught a glimpse of Armin’s exposed clavicle, he couldn’t help but remember the sight of him with his lips wrapped around the King’s cock, head bobbing up and down, blond hair messy and eyes closed in concentration. Though he was young, Armin was also the most experienced of the four of them, since he had been with the King the longest. He had been forced to interact with Roderick many times before, and he probably knew how to give the man what he wanted without giving too much, which was what Levi was afraid was being requested of Eren.
“It’s important for the entire Kingdom,” Levi said quietly, glancing at himself in the mirror. “If we don’t get him to back off, Sina will be in a great deal of trouble.”

“Just goes to show how the most important negotiations happen behind the scenes with the help of pretty faces,” Eren said, scoffing at his own reflection. “Just look at me, I have never seen a whore this naked back home and–,”

“I should imagine a Prince would have nothing to do with whores in his own home,” Armin said dryly. “You look nice, Eren. The fabric compliments your skin tone.”

“That’s just fantastic,” Eren said defeated, giving himself a disgusted once-over as he fixed the last golden earring in its place. “I am a whore with nice skin.”

“I never said you had nice skin,” Armin teased, making Eren sputter indignantly.

Levi watched the two boys banter back and forth, feeling worried. He had no idea what Roderick was going to ask of them, since he had only gotten a chance to greet the man once. The impression he had of the foreign King was that he was a savage, a man with no finesse who barely held anything sacred. That was the way Roderick had appeared, at least, when he had dug into the dinner the finest cooks had prepared for his arrival without so much as regard for polite conversation or social etiquette. Though Sina was a mostly secular country, it was customary to say grace before the meal, especially in such a prominent social setting; it was a way of thanking the master of the house for their hospitality and the guests for coming and sharing their company. As a King, it was unlikely that Roderick was ignorant of the tradition, since every single noble person Levi had ever met had been educated in the most basic forms of social reciprocity in the neighboring countries. Which led him to believe that Roderick had done that on purpose, as a way of establishing his authority over not only Erwin but the people of Sina as well. That in itself was very troubling, considering the tensions the two countries were experiencing over military and economic matters.

Roderick was trying to get land from them, and his state was already much bigger than Erwin’s. Along with that land, he would want the people that lived on it. Erwin had freed the conquered villagers after the war, that had been the word of honor he’d given to them; to go back on that promise would be unthinkable. The King felt personally responsible for every citizen of Sina, big and small, and the idea of handing them over to a ruthless person like Roderick weighed heavily on his shoulders.

“Speaking of nice skin, anyone know where Horse-Face is? It’s about time to go,” Eren said casually, earning himself a jab in the ribs from Armin.

“Don’t call him that. Be nice, we’re–,”

“One big happy family, yes, yes, I know, Armin,” Eren said, smirking at the blond. “I just don’t think it’s fair that we’re all here, getting dolled up for the viewing pleasure of that… spineless piece of… uh, King Roderick, while he’s out playing hooky with his boyfriend–,”

“Eren!”

Levi froze, turning on his heel to face the two boys. He had thought that Jean’s affair was a secret, which was why he had felt burdened by the notion and now the two other Consorts were looking at him with wide eyes.

“You two know about–,”
“Shh!” Armin shook his head vigorously, making Levi fall quiet. He took a step towards Levi, his voice low and face somber. “You know as well?”

Levi hesitated for just a moment before nodding. He glanced at the door, making sure there was nobody approaching their chambers, before sighing. “He really should be more careful. I… might have seen him in the stables with his… whatever they are to each other.”

Armin’s eyes went wider – apparently that was possible – and he bit his lip. “This is bad. We’ve told him so many times that–,”

“This has been going on for long?” Levi asked, surprised. Sure, he’d seen how devoted Jean and that Marco kid had seemed to be to each other; then again, the passion of an affair was oftentimes more eloquent than a nice, long, stable romantic entanglement. “How long?”

Armin and Eren shared a glance. “Uh… we don’t know exactly,” Armin began, wringing his fingers. “All we know is that it’s at least been a year and–,”

“A year? He’s been sneaking around with the stable hand for a year and the King never–,”

“And he never will,” Armin said firmly, finally meeting Levi’s eyes. The dark-haired man took a step back when he realized just how serious Armin was being. The little blond was suddenly exuding authority. “His Majesty cannot know. It will destroy him. He thinks he loves Jean. He thinks he loves all of us, and that we love him back. You realized what I’m saying, don’t you, Levi? You’re his favorite now, you know what he is like when–,”

“I’m not his favorite.” Levi shook his head, pointing at Armin wildly. “You are, it's obvious–,”

“That things have changed drastically since you came to the palace,” Armin said quietly. Eren nodded behind him. “Look, I am not trying to make this into a competition. His Majesty has given us everything we could ever hope for and more. I have a family now, thanks to him. So does Eren. And so do you. And even Jean, even though he’s struggling against it. We all need to be here for the King because he has to know that we support him. We are the gauge he uses for his political affairs. We also are in charge of making him happy.”

“B-but–,”

“Levi, you don’t realize how much King Erwin’s changed since you came to the palace,” Eren said quietly. “He seems… more at ease now. We all know that… he’s had issues with trust before, even with us, and he tried so hard to make us happy, to please us, to shower us with affection and gifts but he was never truly satisfied with the results. With you here… he’s different. More relaxed. Content.”

Levi scoffed. “Nonsense. He can’t–,”

“He’s the King. He can do whatever he wants to do, whatever his heart wishes for. We are only here for support and company.”

“That being said,” Armin continued, his blue eyes piercing Levi with their intensity. “He cannot know about Jean. We are the only people in this entire Kingdom who cannot betray him. If he finds out about Jean’s affair, he will be devastated. He will think that it was his fault, that he didn’t do enough to make Jean devoted to him. He doesn’t understand that Jean’s just… he’s in love. All right? He’s the luckiest one out of all of us because he’s in love, and that is also what makes him the least happy. Because he has to hide. If needs be, he will have to spend the rest of his life hiding the fact that he is desperately in love with a commoner.”
“What will happen if Er- if the King finds out?”

If Armin had caught Levi’s slip, he didn’t let it show. His facial expression shifted to a dark kind of sobriety. “Nothing good. He might just kick Jean out. Or he might do something rash. He’s not a forgiving man. Betrayal is… a touchy subject for him.”

“So we keep it secret for both their sakes,” Eren said quietly. Levi looked at him for a long moment before sighing. He knew that it made sense, even though he couldn’t comprehend what a life of sneaking around was going to do to Jean. The boy was still young, so young and yet so caged already. As much Levi liked Erwin, he couldn’t help but feel just a little bit resentful over the fact that Jean was never going to be truly happy in the Palace.

“We take care of each other here, Levi.” He looked at Armin who was already turning back to glance at himself in the mirror one last time. “And we take care of King Erwin.”

A knock on the door disturbed the three of them, and they scrambled to put finishing touches to their clothes before making their way out of their chambers and into the corridor where Jean already stood waiting for them with a servant who led them toward the grand dining room. If Jean’s lips were just a little too red, nobody ever mentioned anything, though it weighed on Levi’s mind greatly. On the one hand, he was a little jealous of the boy, because Jean had found something with this Marco kid that was clearly good for him… and on the other, he tried not to imagine what would happen to all of them if Erwin were ever to find out. It was then when he resolved to make the King as happy as he could to get his mind off Jean. He would protect both of them, just like Eren and Armin had been doing. He glanced at the three boys who were all walking serenely toward an evening of unpleasant company and political talk, their faces schooled into perfect expressions of boredom. He had to do the same. He had to.

For all their sakes.

The evening began with introductions. Even though Roderick was familiar with most of them, he still made it a point of kissing their hands (well, slobbering, Levi thought as he tried to surreptitiously wipe the back of his hand on his robes) and commenting on how pretty Erwin’s concubines were. The King of Sina corrected him immediately, proudly stating that they were all perfectly legally married, which evoked an eyebrow lift from the odious man.

Erwin looked absolutely stunning, as he usually did, clad in full regalia with his parade sword strapped to his belt. His circlet crown was polished to perfection and his robes of deep purple were pristinely washed and ironed. He’d clearly made an effort as well, even though Levi knew that the man could wear nothing and still be perfect. He couldn’t help but stare a little, which earned him a knowing smile from Armin. Damn that kid for always seemingly knowing everything that went on in their heads.

The four Consorts sat on Erwin’s left side, as per tradition, and Levi, as the newest one, earned himself a spot right next to the King, which also put him in the perfect position to listen in on the conversation between the two monarchs – although most of what Roderick was saying seemed like complete drivel. As the night wore on and the wine supplies began to wane, the man’s face took on a permanent red tint, and he became more and more familiar with Erwin who looked perfectly comfortably with it, though Levi was sure that he was seething on the inside.

“Say, Erwin, that pretty Consort of yours, does he have any talents?” Roderick asked, baring his yellow teeth at Levi. The dark-haired man immediately looked down into his half-full plate to avoid answering the question for himself. I suck good cock, he wanted to say so badly, and he almost did, but Erwin’s large palm settled on his knee, making him feel more secure than he had the entire evening.
“He has many, Roderick,” Erwin told the other King, slightly defensive for the first time. “He is still new to the court, though, so the public eye might be a little uncomfortable for him.”

Roderick’s eyes narrowed but he preferred not to comment, turning instead to look at Eren.

“What about this one? Where are you from, boy? Your choice of clothing tonight is quite… enticing.”

Eren gulped visibly. “I am of Turk origin, sire.”

“Turk, really?” Roderick leered. “I heard there were beautiful dancers in your land who know how to bewitch the mind with a turn of their hips. Is that true?”

Eren looked decidedly uncomfortable. “While it is true, my Lord, I–,”

“Dance for us, then!”

Green eyes snapped up to look at Erwin, mortified. “I c-couldn’t possibly–,”

“I am sure you dance beautifully for your husband and your… brothers in law,” Roderick said, smirking at the boy who looked like he was about to either go off on an angry rant or burst out crying. “Dance for me. I am a guest, after all. Erwin, where is this traditional Sina hospitality of yours?”

Levi looked at Erwin expectantly, knowing that the man was in a pinch now. After a long moment, the blond sighed, a guilty look on his face. “Eren… Would you honor our guest with a dance?”

Eren’s face closed off right then and there, and Levi knew that the King would have to do a lot to atone for this. Then again, Eren understood that tonight was important on so many levels, so he stood, back perfectly straight, and made his way over to the middle of the room. The court musicians scrambled to join him, sitting in the corner as they tuned their instruments quickly.

“Come then, entertain us,” Roderick said, his eyes fixed on the bare skin of Eren’s belly. The boy nodded in defeat.

“Yes, sire.”

Levi’s eyes went wide when the music began, sending Eren’s body into rhythm. He had never seen dances like these before, definitely not among the villagers who had been his sole company where he’d been raised. Eren’s body moved along with the music, his hard angles and muscles disappearing into a soft, sensual dance. His wrists looked like they had no bones in them as he twisted them along to the sound of the drum, and his bare feet made no sound against the hard stone floor as he slowly made his way toward the head of the table. Then, something happened, and Levi couldn’t contain a gasp of wonder when the muscles in Eren’s stomach began to move along to the music, muscles that Levi had never known could be trained to do so. The dance became more and more sensual as Eren lost himself in the rhythm, his body arching and bending together with the sound.

His hips snapped and his eyes opened, and he fixed Roderick with a gaze that was so intense, it caused the foreign King to chuckle in a way that made Levi shiver. Eren was putting himself on display like this, defiling the traditions of his people, just for the sake of their success. He managed to catch the boy’s eye and for a moment, the two of them shared meaningful, sad smiles. Then, the moment was gone, and Eren flew back into the music, the dance becoming a frenzied collection of twists and turns and impossible muscle movements that left the entire room breathless by the time he was done.
Roderick clapped loudly when Eren finished, and the boy managed to put on an appreciative smile before excusing himself to sit at the table once more, a light sheen of sweat covering his skin. Levi handed him a goblet of water and he accepted it with a soft smile.

“That was beautiful,” Levi found himself saying, which made Eren blush harder than he had for Roderick’s compliments.

The four Consorts were allowed to return to their chambers an hour later, and Roderick watched with envy as Erwin bent down to kiss all of them on the lips by ways of good night.

“Don’t I receive a token from the beauties?” Roderick asked, grabbing on to Levi’s wrist, and pulling him in for another kiss on the hand. He looked up, leveling his eyes with Levi’s and smirking at him. A chill went down Levi’s spine but he said nothing, forcing himself to smile instead.

“The next time, dear Levi, it will be you dancing for me.”

Chapter End Notes

This is the dance I had in mind while writing Eren's: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wzDntuye_k
The Peeping Tom

Chapter Notes

Here it is, ladies and the occasional gentleman! Lots of JeanMarco going on in this one!

It would seem that Levi had an innate talent for landing himself in awkward situations. He had successfully avoided King Roderick’s company for an entire day after the banquet, which was a feat within itself as the man had seemingly taken a shine to him – and that particular type of shine was not something a healthy human being would appreciate. The man’s eyes constantly searched his form, as if he were looking at a horse or a slave at the market. He was looking at Levi’s value, as a body, as a pretty face, and that drove Levi crazy. He hated being objectified like that and he was coming to gain a new appreciation for the arrangement the Consorts had with Erwin – at least he was interested in what his boys had to say, and not just how good they would look spread out beneath him on the bed.

Which was why Levi wasn’t a fan of having ended up in the same room as the man, right next to the Palace kitchens. He had just wandered there for a drink of water – he had promised himself that he wouldn’t bother the chamber attendants for such trivial things, – and now him and his glass were being stared down (well, devoured would be a more correct term) by Roderick whose slippery eyes were raking all over his form. Levi cursed himself for not having worn the outer robe, leaving himself exposed for the man to see in just his breeches and tunic.

“Ah, dear Levi, and here I was wondering the Gods didn’t want us to meet,” Roderick said jovially, sending shivers up and down Levi’s spine. The Consort took a small step back, trying to come up with a viable excuse to escape the man’s company. So far, he was blanking, and he hated the fact that this man was capable of incapacitating him in such a way. He had to get out of the room because he knew that King Roderick was only a King in title; he had no gentlemanliness in him, unlike Erwin, and he would have no qualms forcing himself on Levi. While that the Consort could handle, the repercussions his rejection would have on Erwin’s affairs with Roderick’s kingdom could be horrible; and Levi wasn’t about to become the reason for an international conflict. Not when he was of questionable heritage and if anyone dug deep enough, they would find out that he was not a noble, and that he had never even been in Pars.

“King Roderick,” Levi acknowledge with a polite nod, raising his glass to his lips to occupy himself while his mind reeled.

“Please, dear boy, there is no need for such formality when we are alone together,” Roderick said, eyes burning with lust. Levi nearly choked on his water – he hadn’t been in a conversation this forward and awkward since he’d left Rose, where if someone wanted to fuck someone, they just came out and said it. He had become too accustomed to high society and the intricate ways of maneuvering the conversation where it was most desirable. “Just Roderick is good enough… if you’re uncomfortable with that, you can always call me ‘My Lord’.”

Levi struggled not to make a face. You are definitely no Lord of mine, he wanted to say, but he kept his mouth shut. Instead, he just bowed his head in recognition and tried to slip past the man’s vast form back out of the room. He suspected that Roderick himself had gone in here to eat – since his
great mass clearly indicated he was not someone who would wait for lunchtime. He hoped that Roderick was hungry enough, and he would just leave him alone. The man was an animal, after all.

“Well, my Lord, I am afraid I must return to my chambers,” Levi said with a small forced smile. “There are duties I need to attend to–,”

“Oh, please, stay,” Roderick said with a smirk on his face that Levi definitely didn’t like one single bit. “Keep me company. It gets a bit lonely around here, me being a guest and all.”

“You should have brought your wife with you, then,” Levi said with a bit more of an edge than he’d intended to. “My Lord.”

Roderick chuckled deeply. “My wife doesn’t have the stomach for traveling. And I am afraid that her beauty would pale in comparison to what Sina has to offer. She would be greatly upset about it, poor dear. Very insecure, you know. Women are like that.”

“If you say so,” Levi replied, wanting nothing better than to punch the man in the face. He was sure that Roderick had just flat-out refused to take the Queen Consort with him because he knew that he would be able to harass Erwin’s spouses instead, along with all the pretty servant girls that lived and worked in the Palace. He was definitely not above that, and as Levi looked upon the man, he had a great sense of déjà vu. He had seen this type of man before; he had even worked under him. Roderick and Kenneth were both birds of a feather and Levi was very willing to take up a bow and arrow and shoot those kinds of birds. Vile creatures that fed on cadavers. That’s how he pictured them in his mind. Disgusting, horrifying, winged beasts that held nothing sacred. “I don’t think that Sina has particularly beautiful women, not compared to the neighboring kingdoms. Then again, I am not a good judge of female beauty–,”

“If you wanted a woman, dear Levi, I would have taken up your husband’s offer of providing me with one last night,” Roderick said. Levi lifted his eyebrows. He hadn’t expected Erwin to behave so lewdly, then again, the King of Sina was a smart man, and if he had seen the way Roderick had been eyeing all of his boys, he would have definitely come up with some solution to the problem. It didn’t seem that the problem wanted to be solved, though, as Roderick was currently advancing towards Levi. The young man felt the stone wall press against his back and he was about to protest against Roderick’s forwardness when both of them heard footsteps. Instinctively, Levi dove behind the curtain that held the storage compartment of the room and after a split second, the King was in there with him. Levi didn’t have the energy to protest. He didn’t want to be caught lurking around utility rooms with another man. Erwin was a forgiving person, but he would definitely not be all right with something like this.

“Jean!”

Oh fuck. Levi’s blood ran cold when he realized whom the voice belonged to. Two pairs of feet ran into the room hurriedly and the door slammed shut. He felt Roderick go still next to him, listening intently. This is bad, he thought to himself. This is so bad. He could do nothing but stand there helplessly for the fear of being discovered.

There was a low grunt and a soft thud and Levi saw Roderick’s hand reach out to pull the curtain to the side just a little bit to see what was going on. He peeked out as well, knowing that there was nothing else to do. He had to know the extent of damage control he would be forced to perform.

It was vast.

Jean had the stable boy, Marco, pressed up against the stone wall where Levi had just been seconds ago, his mouth devouring the other man’s. Jean’s hands were bracing his wait so that he was
looming right over Marco, and the moans he was emitting as he kissed the boy were incriminating enough to show that this wasn’t just some random moment of entertainment for him. As he pulled away, he pressed a chaste kiss to Marco’s lips.

“I missed you so much,” he murmured, cupping Marco’s chin with his hand and drawing him in for another kiss. Marco melted into his touch immediately, as if these had been the words he’d been expecting all this time the two of them had spent apart. As if they were the words to unlock his normal professional demeanor and give way to something more primal, more beautiful. He fist Jean’s shirt in his hands and deepened the kiss so that their chests were pressed against each other impossibly close. Levi saw Jean slip his leg between Marco’s and the stable boy moaned into the kiss, boneless and pliant in his hold.

“Why would you miss me, Your Highness?” Marco asked playfully when Jean finally pulled away. Levi saw Jean make a face at the title and he only then realized that the two-toned boy was just as uncomfortable with it as he was. He had always considered Jean a pampered prince with few hobbies, all of which included horse riding and sword wielding in some capacity. He’d thought Jean was spoilt and yes, maybe he was; but there was something in the way he interacted with Marco that indicated this was not necessarily the case. He was almost a different person with the stable boy, and Levi wondered which one of the Jeans he’d had the privilege of observing was real. Something told him, though, that this Jean was the real one. It terrified him to know the Roderick was now aware of it as well. The man was stupid, sure, but even a man like him could see that this was serious.

“Are you joking?” Jean asked, his hands already working on Marco’s shirt. They were a stark contrast against each other: Jean, in his fine linen tunic and breeches, all perfectly combed and styled and perfumed to perfection; and Marco, in his stable clothes, coarse wool and thick leather, with not a hint of personal grooming on his face. Levi found himself thinking that this would have been Erwin and him if things had stayed the same after they had first met. He didn’t know what had made his mind wonder in that direction, but goddess, he couldn’t help but fantasize about a normal life with Erwin, just the two of them, with no duties or obligations or protocol.

With real love. Not just the sentimental attachment Erwin seemed to foster for all his Consorts. Levi didn’t know if he was special because he’d been allowed to use the man’s given name. He didn’t want to be special, for the sake of the other Consorts, but as he watched Jean’s hands slip beneath Marco’s open shirt and stroke the tanned skin of his stomach, he ached for it so badly. He wanted to be cherished the way Jean cherished Marco; going so far as to commit treason and sneak around right under his spouse’s nose. Levi also felt bad for Erwin’s sake, just because he was being deceived, yet he couldn’t bring himself to hate Jean for it.

Jean had found it.

Levi glanced at Roderick who was watching the scene hungrily, a dribble of saliva pooling at the corner of his mouth. Jean could lose this. Jean could lose everything, he thought desperately, and a flood of something warm, something angry and beautiful, rushed into him. He felt protective of Jean, and he knew then and there that he would definitely do whatever was in his power to protect the boy’s secret from being found out.

Jean held on to Marco’s hips with a bruising hold as the other boy reached down to undo their breeches. Those only went down halfway, as Jean got too impatient, pressing himself closer to the freckled boy. The two of them let out quiet little gasps and began to move together, in sync, as if they had done this thousands of times before. Well, maybe not thousands, Levi thought speculatively, but since this had been going on for at least a year now, they probably knew each other’s bodies quite well at this point.
The two of them moved frantically against each other, lost in the rhythm of their rutting. Levi couldn’t look away, just like that time in the stables. They were too beautiful together, too good not to look at, and he felt immensely guilty and horrified at what Roderick was going to do but he was paralyzed, the man’s hand digging into his wrist.

Finally, he heard a strangled moan and saw Marco sink against Jean heavily. A few moments later, Jean came with a gasp, panting, as he got down from his high, his face buried in the space between Marco’s jawbone and clavicle. They stood there in silence, the only sound being their heavy breathing.

“I needed this so much,” Jean whispered finally, drawing back to look Marco in the face. The boy only nodded in agreement. Levi admired the way he seemed to know when not to say anything: Marco probably knew how much of a strain Jean’s duties put on his shoulders with the threat of this affair ever being discovered. Levi knew that he wouldn’t be able to do that; that he would be demanding, that he would want his partner to be only his – and though he wasn’t necessarily jealous of Erwin and the other Consorts, he knew that if he had his way, Erwin would only be his and his alone.

“It must be frustrating,” Jean murmured, reaching forward to stroke Marco’s face. “I’m sorry for doing this to you.”

Marco looked up at him earnestly. “I know I can’t wish for more. It’s all right, I can… I can deal with it. As long as you’re safe.”

Jean’s face softened and he leaned in to kiss Marco chastely one last time before pulling away. “I… I wish things were different. Sometimes I wish I had never met you.”

The hurt look on Marco’s face said it all, and Jean hurried to correct the damage his words had done. “But I am glad I did. Damn it, Marco, I… I don’t think I can go on like this for much longer. This… sneaking around, hiding from everyone else–,”

“No, Jean,” Marco hushed his lover with his fingers, pressing them to the boy’s lips to make him fall quiet. “You are the King’s Consort. You belong to him. It is I who should be ashamed of–,”

“I love you,” Jean said against Marco’s hand and the freckled boy closed his eyes for a moment, as if he were taking in the words and committing them to memory. Jean took his face in his hands and forced him to look into his eyes. “I love you so much and I don’t want to hide from the rest of the world. I want to take your hand and walk out of here and never look back.”

“But the King–,”

“The King has my utmost respect and admiration,” Jean said seriously. “But try as he might, he does not have my heart. That part of me belongs to you. And it will remain that was for as long as I shall live. Do you understand?”

Marco hesitated for a moment before nodding mutely. He could do nothing but accept the situation for what it was. He drew a breath and then let it out in a crestfallen sigh. “Then I guess we just… go on like this. I can’t risk you being thrown out of here. Because then I won’t see you again.”

“You know my parents have high hopes for this union between the King and their only son,” Jean sighed. He pressed his forehead against Marco’s. “Damn it, why couldn’t I have been born a stable boy like you?”

Marco chuckled. “You wouldn’t be able to handle it. You’re too high maintenance.”
Jean snorted. He kissed Marco deeply one last time before allowing the boy to stand on his own two feet. “This week’s been hellish.”

“I imagine the pressure is great,” Marco said. “I won’t pretend to know much about politics but I… I understand why you have to do the things you do.”

“That makes one of us, because I sure as hell don’t.” Jean moved to button his own shirt up regretfully. He tucked himself back into his breeches and then proceeded to do the same for Marco. Levi couldn’t believe it – this was the boy who demanded the servants dressed him every time, seemingly incapable of even doing up one button, but there he was, taking care of Marco’s clothes for him and almost pampering him, in a way. Jean was so different, so soft, so… so not like Jean.

“I will try to see you as soon as possible,” the two-toned boy told his lover, and Marco nodded sadly. “I can’t promise anything yet, we still have to charm the pants of King Rod before the week is over. Which means I have to play arm candy for His Majesty all the time.”

“Well, you know where to find me. I’ll be there, waiting for you,” Marco said softly, and Jean looked like he was about to cry as he led the boy out of the room. He stopped at the door, looking out into the corridor cautiously to see if anyone else was there, and then nodded at Marco. The two of them left without another word, and Jean squeezed his lover’s hand one last time over the threshold before letting go. Levi wondered just how precious those stolen moments were for the two of them. It looked like Jean was being ripped apart into two, and it was pretty clear as to which direction his heart wanted him to go. His rational mind, however, knew that whatever he had with Marco was impossible. They were just living on borrowed time. This affair was…

“Disgusting,” Roderick muttered under his breath. He shoved the curtain aside and walked out of the storage area, rounding on Levi with dark eyes. His face was twisted into an expression of sick fascination, and Levi was worried for the man’s sanity at that point. Although there wasn’t much to be worried about to begin with. “You knew this was happening, didn’t you, little Levi?”

The Consort looked back at the man, his form still. He wasn’t going to say anything that was more than what was necessary. He couldn’t break the promise he’d given Eren and Armin. They had vowed to take care of Jean’s secret and he wasn’t about to betray that vow.

“So the King’s Consort is not in love with him like we’re all supposed to think, huh? I wonder what Erwin would say if he knew. He’d be devastated, the sentimental fool,” Roderick said with a grin on his face that churned Levi’s stomach.

“You Majesty–,”

“You knew about this, darling Levi,” Roderick said, now approaching him in earnest. Levi was once again backed into a corner, trembling as the man’s stale breath brushed over his face. Roderick smelled like decay. “You have been covering for your little friend here, haven’t you? All of you know, probably. This is why you weren’t surprised. This is why Jean’s not been around as much as the other three of you.”

Levi tried to look away but Roderick forced him to look him in the eye. “I’ll make you a deal, little Levi. Since I like you so much and all.”

Levi’s entire body went cold when he realized what kind of deal it would be. He wanted to struggle in Roderick’s hold but his hands were figuratively tied, so he just looked back at the man, praying that he still had a modicum of humanity left in him.
“Come to my chambers tonight. Don’t tell your precious husband. I want you to entertain me. Offer me something better than the satisfaction of seeing Erwin crumble,” Roderick said.

“Please—,”

“No, no, dear Levi. It is your job to keep Erwin happy, isn’t it?” The King smirked and Levi felt like he was drowning. “So keep him happy. Or else.”

All Levi could do was nod numbly.

“Right after the banquet. Don’t be late or Jean-boy here will be facing a very gruesome end. Him and this little lapdog of his. They might be cast out… or part with those pretty little heads of theirs. It’s up to you now. Little Levi.”

Only when the door slammed shut did Levi regain his ability to breathe. He sank to his knees and buried his face into his hands. He wouldn’t cry. He couldn’t.

The horrible feeling of complete and utter doom in his stomach weighed as much as a boulder, and he found himself staring at the floor as his hands shook, folded neatly in his lap.

*I have to keep Jean’s secret.*

*I have to keep Erwin happy.*

*He can’t know.*

*I have to do this.*
Levi sighed as he put on the earrings Erwin had given him on their wedding day. He didn’t know why he so desperately wanted to wear them when he was about to commit one of the biggest mistakes of his life, and yet, the thought of having a piece of their relationship, a testament to the fact that he was still Erwin’s was comforting to him even as he felt entirely out of sorts with himself.

He smoothed out the creases in his tunic, looking at his treacherous reflection with a mixture of disgust and desperation. Just this morning, he’d gotten out of bed with just a mild knot of anxiety in his stomach, ready to face the day of being a Consort yet again, a day of entertaining their guest and hiding his feelings for the King who had turned out to have locked himself in his quarters to do some serious planning. He had planned to maybe have lunch with the Consorts and then go for a stroll around the Palace grounds. He had planned to sit down with a book or two to kill time until he was needed again.

All of his plans had come crashing down in one spectacular moment, or rather, moments, when he had encountered King Roderick in the storage rooms next to the kitchens. When Jean and his lover had come crashing through the fragile house of cards he’d built for himself and offered Roderick the best chance to take advantage of having gotten close to him.

Logically, he knew that he could just let Roderick tell Erwin about what they had witnessed. But he knew the man wouldn’t forego mentioning that Levi and possibly the rest of the Consorts had known about Jean’s affair and had neglected to tell Erwin. He knew that he, in good conscience, couldn’t allow their illusionary peace to fall. Not only because he cherished whatever it was that he had with Erwin, but also because he had come to feel protective of the rest of the boys. Though they didn’t know it, he was older and tougher than them, and it was his responsibility to take care of them. Not that they had ever said anything. Not that he had ever appointed himself their protector.

But this was the right thing to do. Out of all the wrong things, this was the best option, Levi thought, as he glanced over his reflection. He looked good, just like he had done since the first day he’d arrived at the palace. Impeccably dressed and decked out in fine silks and silver accessories. His ring felt like a dead weight on his finger, but he chose to ignore the desperate voice of his consciousness beating against the inside of his skull, begging him to stop and reconsider. There was nothing to reconsider. He had to go through with this.

He could only hope that Roderick was an honest man and he wouldn’t… but he definitely would. What Levi was about to do would give him power over all of them. The alternative, though, was even worse.

“Levi?” He turned on the spot to see Armin in the doorway, and cursed himself for being so slow.
“What are you all dressed up for?” Armin asked, leaning against the wall and eyeing Levi with curiosity. “I didn’t think we had to get all decked out for tonight.”

“No, I just… felt like it. It feels nice, sometimes,” Levi said quietly, turning back toward the mirror in what he hoped looked like a nonchalant gesture. He saw Armin’s bewildered reflection but ignored it, choosing instead to go over the last details of his wardrobe. He had purposefully chosen the tunic and breeches that had the most clasps and buttons on them, so that it would take more time to undo them; even though in his heart of hearts he knew that there was no staving off the inevitable. “What?”

“Nothing. Just… strange of you to want to get dressed up since you’re usually so casual,” Armin commented and Levi cursed him for being so fucking observant.

“I wanted to go for a walk and not look like trash. What’s wrong with that?” Levi asked, a bit harshly. Armin winced, and he immediately felt bad for lashing out.

“All right… I guess I will see you tomorrow, then?” Armin asked timidly, playing with the ends of his blond hair. Levi wished he could tell him. He knew that Armin was smart enough to come up with at least a half-assed solution to this. But something stopped him. Perhaps it was pride; or the need to protect the innocent boy from what was definitely not innocent. Armin couldn’t know. Nobody could.

“Yes. Good night,” Levi said firmly, and walked past the boy, out of the chambers and into the hallway. His pulse was banging against his ribs, making him feel a little dizzy. He couldn't allow Roderick to see how scared he was. How bloody cowardly Levi could be when the time came to face the consequences of what the world around him was like.

He was standing in front of Roderick’s chambers far too soon for his liking. He stalled, not wanting to knock. He didn’t… fuck, he didn’t want to do this. He wanted to lash out and beat the man to a pulp, maybe even kill him for threatening the life Levi and the others had built for themselves. But he knew that was an impossibility. Killing Roderick would start a war that Sina couldn’t survive for long; and Levi would be damned if any of his actions imperiled Erwin’s plans. He respected the man far too much for that. Perhaps, he even loved…

No. He couldn't think of that right now. Not when he was about to knock on the door of the only man who would touch him outside of wedlock, at least, since Levi had married the King.

Roderick spared him the trouble by opening the door and leering at him. “Good night, little Levi.”

He reached out and pulled Levi into his room unceremoniously by the wrist. Levi had to suppress a yelp – the man had a surprisingly strong grip for someone so unfit, yet it was somewhat fitting: Roderick was known for taking, taking, taking things that didn’t belong to him and making them his own.

Levi was thrown onto the lavish divan that stood as a centerpiece in the guest King’s chambers. He spared the room a once-over, noting how ridiculously decorated it was compared to the rest of the Palace, designed to schmooze and impress any visiting guest. Gold and mahogany and all the things that Erwin despised were present here in spades.

“A little poor for my tastes, yes,” Roderick commented as he closed the door, turning the key with a malicious little smirk on his face. “But then again, what was I to expect from a country so poor and a King so inept–.”

“Your Majesty, with all due respect,” Levi said firmly, looking up at Roderick with a defiant
expression. “I told you that I would do this for the sake of keeping Jean’s secret. But there is no way I will allow you to badmouth my husband and my home country.”

“Feisty,” Roderick commented with a smile. “Fine, Princess, don’t worry about your King’s reputation, it’s safe with me. No badmouthing intended.”

He sat down onto the divan, dangerously close to Levi. The Consort unconsciously shrank back, smelling wine and fish on his breath. He didn’t remember there being wine and fish at dinner, so he assumed the man had once again raided the kitchens afterward, clearly dissatisfied with the fare Erwin had carefully planned out for him the day before. That made Levi even more resentful, as he remembered the fascination he’d experienced the first time he’d come to the Palace, even going as far as eating only bread, just because the bread here was so much better than the kind he’d ever eaten back in Kenneth’s service.

“Now, dear Levi, tell me… Why do you think I called you here?” Roderick asked, his arm sliding casually around Levi’s small shoulders. Levi forced himself to relax into the hold, even though his entire body was screaming at him to run, to do something, something that would prevent the man from touching him or ever laying eyes on him, preferably.

“Because… Uh…” Levi didn't really know how to respond to that. By ways of an explanation, Roderick reached out and stroked his left cheek with one of his chubby fingers.

“Because you are exquisite. Very beautiful. And I like beautiful things. You see, I have a major vice…”

Just one?

“I see pretty things and I want to own them. Now, I know that stealing you away from my dear old friend Erwin would give grounds to a political scandal, so I have to settle for the next best thing.”

“Blackmailing me into sleeping with you?” Levi asked harshly, making Roderick laugh out loud.

“Essentially, yes,” he said, pressing the finger against the hinge of Levi’s jaws and then sliding it down to touch Levi’s lips. Levi struggled with the urge to bite the digit off. Something told him that he would be able to, right now. Roderick inched closer, and the stench of fish got more pungent. “But you are willing, right? Very willing… to save that little rat who decided Erwin was too rich for his blood. I bet you hate him. I bet you want to skin him for making you do this, for not cherishing what you boys have with that master of yours.”

“Not at all,” Levi said with a glare. “I respect Jean enough to–,”

“Whom are you kidding, little Levi? I bet you hate the fact that you have to jump through hoops for that pampered little brat. Considering… you would take far, far less… am I right?”

Levi’s eyes widened and he glanced at Roderick, eyes wide.

“No…"

“Erwin is a naïve fool if he thinks it’s not a piece of cake to discover such details about his little
Consort,” Roderick said, smirking in the most unpleasant way possible. “The Duke of Rose was much more forthcoming with information than he is, after all. It only takes a bag of gold pieces to ease it out of him. He sends his regards, by the way.”

“I-,”

“Don’t worry, that secret is safe with me as well… Unless, of course, you think that I will keep my jaws locked for free,” Roderick said. He saw the horror on Levi’s face and smiled wider. “I am here for another several days, after all. Which means that you will have plenty of opportunities to pay me back for my kindness.”

“You k-kindness?” Levi stuttered, completely paralyzed.

“You didn’t think this was a one-off event, right?” Roderick said with a laugh. “I told you, I am a greedy man by my nature. You are going to entertain me here every single night until I am gone. And every time I visit Sina, and now that Erwin and I are such great friends, I will visit a lot… You will be here to show me what village boys can do that princes can’t. I’m sure you have a couple of tricks up your sleeve.”

Levi felt his throat tighten in panic. No, he couldn’t do this. He couldn’t allow Roderick to touch him like this every time he… oh, goddess, Levi felt like he was drowning, suffocating against his own desperation.

“Now, there’s no need to be so shy around me, dear boy. We are going to become very well acquainted over the next… years.”

Die, you swine. Die. Don’t touch me. Don’t you dare-,

The smell of fish turned into taste as Roderick covered Levi’s lips with his own in what Levi was sure was the worst kiss in the history of the act. It was slobbery, disgusting, and so wrong it made him want to balk. He pushed against Roderick’s chest desperately with his hands, but the man held on fast, and though Levi was fighting with all his might, he knew that his strength wouldn’t hold out against Roderick who was much bigger and definitely experienced in assault. Fuck, was this the end of Levi’s dignity?

He felt himself lift off the divan as Roderick picked him up and threw him onto the bed unceremoniously. He shook violently as the man stood over him, eyes glinting with desire.

“Strip. I want you to show me what Erwin is so in love with… or rather, what he wants so much that he’s willing to lie for it,” Roderick said hungrily. Levi looked up at him, unable to move. This wasn’t happening. This had to be a dream. He had imagined this over and over again in his head the entire evening, and yet, the reality was so much worse than anything his mind could have conceived.

“Take off your clothes, Levi. I am not a patient man,” Roderick repeated, sitting down onto the edge of the bed. Levi felt like his joints had locked up. Incapable of waiting, Roderick reached forward and ripped the buttons on Levi’s tunic in one swift movement, making them scatter all around the floor. “I suppose I will have you pick those up on all fours later tonight. With not a single thread of clothing on that sweet ass of yours…”

That was when Levi lashed out. He didn’t know what exactly had spurred him on to move but suddenly he was all the way across the room, cowering in the corner as Roderick nursed a fresh bruise on his cheekbone. He tried to keep the tunic together, covering up as much of his skin as possible as he looked for a way out. Roderick had locked the door, and Levi was sure that it was
going to be hard for him to get the door open fast enough to get out of the room before Roderick assaulted him again.

“That’s not very nice, little Levi… is this what you village boys do as foreplay?” Roderick asked with a hysterical little laugh. Levi looked at him with disgust. It looked as though his hit had only served to make Roderick more eager about this entire affair, instead of deterring him. The man was truly sick, and Levi had no way of getting out of the room. Still, he ran towards the door, trying to turn the knob desperately for perhaps a split second before he was ripped away from it and thrown back onto the bed.

“Now you listen closely, you little bitch,” Roderick hissed into his ear as he pinned him down on top of the cover. “Either you do as I say or I will force you to do it.”

Levi looked up at him defiantly, kicking and hitting him as hard as he could. It was difficult to move beneath Roderick’s immense weight, and he felt his strength leave him bit by bit. “You’re going to have to force me, I will never—,”

“Good. I like it when they fight. You are so predictable, little Levi… so sweet thinking that Erwin will still want you after I’m done with you,” Roderick hissed, his hands working on removing the tunic from Levi’s shoulders. As Levi struggled, he sucked a bruising kiss to the side of his neck and Levi wanted to scream – nobody, nobody could mark him, nobody but the man who had the right to do so.

The thought of Erwin made him weak. Erwin seeing him like this, Erwin hearing of him like this… It was unthinkable.

“Looks like someone’s loosing their fight? And here I thought you would make things more interesting for me, little Levi….” Roderick said, leering at him as he bent down to place another hickey on the side of Levi’s neck. The dark-haired man suppressed a yelp, thankful for Roderick’s open palm pressing against his mouth. He couldn’t make a fuss. The walls in the Palace weren’t particularly thick. If he shouted, someone could hear and come running and then… he would be doomed.

Silent tears made their way down his cheeks while Roderick straddled him, sitting across his hips and continuing to undress him. Thick fingers reached out to touch his skin, trailing all over his chest, his shoulders, down further to play with his nipples, twisting them painfully.

He remembered how Erwin being rough had felt to him, and it had been so different, so… so good… He remembered Erwin’s fingers pulling his hair, his teeth marking him as his own, his lips sliding over his chest and his tongue delivering the most delicious feeling of euphoria onto him. Yes, this had been so different with Erwin, and Levi felt dirty just thinking about it. How could he think of Erwin at a time like this? He wasn’t worthy of even thinking the man’s name.

Dirty.

“You whore, you’re not going to resist anymore?” Roderick asked with a sick grin. He looked down at Levi who sobbed quietly, his own hands now pressed to his mouth. He knew there was no escape, this was going to happen whether he liked it or not, and he had come here of his own volition and… goddess, he had been the biggest fool in the universe. He had thought that Roderick would just get it over with. But then again, the man had a reputation for being one of the most vicious torturers on the continent. Of course he would enjoy making Levi feel like he was going insane with guilt and terror.

“I bet you’re thinking about him right now.”
“I will fuck you while you’re thinking of him.”

“I will take Erwin’s little toy and break it.”

Roderick reached into Levi’s pants.

“I will–,”

Suddenly, the door crashed down onto the floor with an impossibly loud thud. Roderick looked over his shoulder, annoyed at the intrusion, only to get thrown off the bed by a murderous-looking King of Sina, in the flesh.

Terrified, Levi could only watch as Erwin towered over Roderick’s crumpled form on the ground.

“You dare come into my house, my kingdom and–,”

“And take your fucking whore!” Roderick said with a maniacal laugh as he spit out some blood.

“Yes, I dare! Because you’re weak, Erwin, you’re pathetic! I will take everything you have starting with this bitch Consort of yours, all of them, even that two-toned kid who’s fucking another behind your back–,”

“Don’t lie to me,” Erwin hissed dangerously, bending down to grab Roderick by the hair and pressing the blade of his sword to his neck. “Don’t you dare–,”

“This little bitch only agreed to come here to save his little sister wife, isn’t that fucking precious?” Roderick hissed, spitting into Erwin’s face. The blond didn’t even flinch.

“Get the hell out of my country before I have you strung up.”

Roderick looked at him for a long time before pushing his hands away. “Fine. But he came here willingly, Erwin. Keep that in mind.”

Levi watched through blurred eyes as Roderick got off the floor heavily, making his way over to the door. The man turned around before leaving, and gave Levi a sickening smirk that made him curl up and start sobbing. There it was. The crash.

There was silence in the room as Erwin stood there, panting. He finally turned to look at Levi, his expression unreadable. “My quarters. You have five minutes or I swear, I won’t hear any of it.”

He threw Levi’s destroyed tunic at him. As he left, Levi thought he saw Armin’s small form hover in the doorway.
The Giver

Chapter Notes

This chapter is mush and angst and fluff. Blame the theology paper that's due on Tuesday.

Levi stood in front of his husband, shaking from head to toe. Erwin watched him from his perch atop his massive mahogany desk, eyebrows and jaw set firmly. There was no fucking way this was going to go well for Levi. Or either of them, really.

“Care to explain to me what happened with Roderick?” Erwin finally asked when Levi began to feel like running out of the room, the Palace, and back to getting the shit beaten out of him by Duke Kenneth. At least Kenneth had always been predictable: you do something he considers just a toe out of line, and you get the beating of a lifetime – many times over. That was easy to deal with, at least psychologically, considering Kenneth’s one-track mind and his propensity for bad humor that usually involved laughing at his servants while he hit them with his cane and had them hung by their wrists in the courtyard of his mansion for his own viewing pleasure.

Erwin was not predictable in any way. The man was a storm, a hurricane, and one could never know when Erwin’s usually mind disposition would give way to something much more primal, much more aggressive. Levi was happy to think that all of his previous experiences with the man had only involved aggression in the sexual context. But the way Erwin had gone off on Roderick just a couple of minutes before… Levi had never seen Erwin that livid. He’d never seen the King in action, and what he had borne witness to just now had been unsettling.

What was more unsettling, though, was the look of pure disappointment on Erwin’s face. He looked past Levi, as if he didn’t even want to lay eyes on him, and that made Levi’s heart contract painfully in his chest. He realized that he was being rapidly demoted in Erwin’s eyes, all because of a stupid mistake he had been cornered into making.

“I…” Levi began, wetting his lips with his tongue nervously. He looked down at his own bare feet and sighed. There was no way he could explain this without implicating the rest of the Consorts, particularly Jean. “I… I cannot tell you.”

“You cannot even look at me.” That made Levi glance up guiltily. Erwin looked decidedly hurt.

“Tell me, Levi, what did I do to deserve such treatment?”

“Nothing,” Levi said quietly. “You have done nothing wrong, Your Majesty.”

“We’re back to that, then? Your Majesty? After I gave you my trust, gave you the right to use my name, and… I gave you a home, Levi. Was that not enough for you?”

“It was more than enough, My Lord,” Levi replied, looking away, unable to face Erwin right now. He tried to think of something, to come up with some sort of plausible story; but he knew that he couldn’t lie to Erwin. Not to his face. Not like this, when he was being stripped bare of the truth by the man who had been nothing but kind to him. Nothing but accepting. The man Levi had begun to fall for so desperately, the man he’d sworn to protect. The man he had ended up hurting so badly because he just wasn’t smart enough to work out a different way. Levi cursed himself for being so
fucking stupid.

“Then why, Levi? Tell me why.”

“I–,”

There was a knock on the door and Levi thought for a moment that Erwin was going to send whomever was behind it away, but instead the man cleared his throat, casting another disappointed glance at Levi before calling for the new arrival to enter.

Levi’s eyes went wide when Mike, Erwin’s right-hand man, strode into the room with two guards following him, each dragging what looked like struggling potato sacks. They were thrown onto the floor unceremoniously and Levi recognized Jean and Marco, both red in the face, their eyes wet with tears.

“So I see,” Erwin said gravely and Levi gulped. Jean looked up at him and his eyes narrowed.

“You.” He staggered up into a standing position, leaning heavily on his right leg. “You sold us out, didn’t you?”

Levi was about to protest but Erwin cut him off.

“He did nothing of the sort. Looks like he went to great lengths to protect your secret, Jean. So I wouldn’t take that tone with him if I were you.” He turned towards Mike inquisitively.

“We found them mounting the horses in the Western stables. It looked like they were tipped off by someone and about to flee.”

“Armin,” Levi breathed, eyes widening.

Erwin nodded at Mike. “I will handle this from here. Thank you, Mike. My apologies for having you rouse your men so early for a domestic dispute.”

Mike didn’t crack a smile as he bowed out together with his guardsmen. Erwin turned back to the three boys. He got off the side of his desk and approached Marco who cowered in front of Jean’s feet, looking absolutely terrified. His worst nightmare was coming true and Levi could do nothing but watch as Erwin took him by the front of his rough cotton shirt and raised him to his feet. He inspected Marco’s face closely and then turned to look at Jean who was paler than a sheet.

“So this is the man who took you from me, Jean?” He glanced at Marco’s tear-stained face. “What is your name, boy?”

“M-Marco,” the stable hand replied shakily. “Your Maje–,”

“I will do the talking and you will only speak when answering one of my questions,” Erwin said sternly. He let go of Marco’s shirt, making him stagger backwards. “That goes for all of you. Understood?”

Levi nodded mutely, seeing Jean do the same out of the corner of his eye.

“The way I see it, this is what happened. Jean here saw me as an unfit husband for his royal tastes and decided to commit adultery with an easy target. Then Levi found out, somehow, I will be asking how that happened, and decided that he would protect his fellow Consort because of a sense of camaraderie. Next, King Roderick discovered the affair and blackmailed Levi into sleeping with him, which Levi did because, well… Why did you do it, actually?” Erwin asked, glancing at Levi.
The boy gulped.

“B—Because there was no other way. He said he would tell,” he replied quietly. “I’m sorry, I couldn’t allow that to happen.”

“Very noble gesture. Misdirected, yes, but noble nonetheless. Of course, you would then be committing adultery as well, you realize that?” Erwin said, his voice unnaturally calm and quiet. Levi could do nothing but nod.

“Tell me, then, you two, what did I do to deserve your hatred?”

Both Levi and Jean balked at that.

“My Lord, I never—,”

“Silence.” Erwin looked decidedly tired at this point. “I would prefer it if you two stopped lying to me. I have had enough of that for a lifetime, wouldn’t you think?”

“With all due respect, Your Majesty, I could never hate you,” Levi said firmly, looking up at Erwin. “Because you have given me more than—,”

“So you see our marriage as an exchange?” Erwin asked disappointedly. “Nothing more than that?”

“You don’t?” Levi shot back, too tired to be dishonest and polite about the matter. “Your Majesty, it began as an exchange and—,”

“And for you, it stayed that way?” Erwin asked, stalking over to Levi to tower over him. “You feel nothing more than… Is this a bond of duty?”

“You know it’s more than that,” Levi said quietly, looking back down at his feet. “I wanted to protect you.”

“Protect me from knowing that my Consorts were cheating on me? Lying to me?” Erwin turned toward Jean. “Because I couldn’t give them what they thought they deserved?”

“It’s not like that!” Jean blurted out. He gave Marco a short glance before turning back to his husband, a vein pumping against the thin skin of his temple. “We cannot help whom we fall in love with, Your Majesty. I… I love Marco. I cannot just… make it go away. I tried. Believe me, I tried. And I do love you, I do… just not the way I am supposed to love you.”

“You thought I wouldn’t understand?” Erwin said quietly, looking between the two lovers. “You thought that I was callous enough to not see reason if you presented it to me?”

“Clearly, you don’t!” Jean replied angrily. He took a step back. “You… you could never understand because you don’t know how to love someone like I love Marco.”

Levi’s eyes went wide. That was something Jean had mentioned to him before, in the confines of their quarters, that Erwin was unable to handle the kind of love that all marriages deserved but few had. But to say it to the man’s face when he was already so incensed was factual suicide. He looked over to Erwin who suddenly deflated, sinking back against the edge of his desk.

“I failed you as a husband.”

“N-no—,”

“I did,” Erwin said, wiping his face with his hand. “I apologize for that. I suppose we have all been
living in a world that... we invented for ourselves. I thought I was happy. I thought you four were happy with me, that... Sina, I really was a fool to think that either of you would be satisfied with just what I had to offer..."

“What you offered us was plenty!” Levi said, his chest constricting painfully again when he realized that Erwin’s carefully constructed life was crashing over his head like a stained glass window. And he had been the one to throw the first stone into it.

“It just wasn’t enough, was it?” Erwin replied, chuckling sadly. Levi itched with the urge to comfort the man, to embrace him, to finally tell him about the things he’d been feeling for Erwin over these past months, but he knew that Erwin would just toss it back in his face now, because there was no way for the two of them to be together after he’d breached his trust the way he had. After he’d willingly (well, almost willingly, in any case) offered his body as payment to another man. “I understand. I should have understood earlier.”

He turned to look at Jean one last time before sighing. “You two can go. Leave the Palace and never return.”

Jean’s mouth fell open. “B—but–,"

“This is all I can give to you. An opportunity. The story of the runaway Consort will definitely spread like wildfire, so I cannot guarantee that the rest of your life will be as comfortable as it was here, but... it will be a life with someone who deserves your love more than I do.”

Jean looked his King in the eyes for a long time before sighing deeply. “And here I thought you would never understand. I’m sorry, old man. I really am. I wish I could love you the way I’m supposed to.”

Erwin gave him a sad smile. “I wish you could as well.”

He glanced at Marco who was gripping Jean’s hand, quite speechless. “You take good care of him, stable boy. He’s a handful. Needs lots of pampering.”

Marco nodded dumbly in response to the King’s words. “I’ll... do my best.”

“I suppose that’s good enough for Jean,” Erwin concluded. “Go. Before the sun rises.”

The two boys scrambled towards the door and as Marco ran past the doorway, Jean paused, glancing back at Erwin. “Thank you.”

Erwin nodded mutely and Jean gave him a soft smile, so soft Levi had never seen before on him. Then he was gone. Levi and Erwin watched the empty doorway for a long moment, as if they were expecting to see the two boys return and admit to the wrongness of their ways.

“That was... very nice of you,” Levi said quietly, breaking the silence. He wanted to move this along as he was anxious to find out what fate had in store for him. Erwin sighed and strode over to him, taking Levi’s hands into his own larger ones. He looked down at the Consorts contemplatively.

“What you did for Jean was foolish. It was foolish and it was wrong in so many ways, Levi.”

The dark-haired young man nodded, his heart sinking.

“But I’m sure that if I had been in your position, I would have probably done something similar.” Erwin sighed, cupping Levi’s cheek with his hand. “I thought I could tame you. That a comfortable
life in the palace was all it took to make you mine.”

“I’m yours,” Levi breathed. He boldly reached out to clutch at Erwin’s shirt, much more at ease with what he did now since they were alone in the room. He looked into Erwin’s blue eyes, a stone sinking in his gut. “I am yours, Erwin, I promise you that.”

“Am I supposed to believe you now after everything that happened?”

“Erwin, I promise you, I am not in love with Roderick–,”

“Heavens forbid, no,” Erwin said, chuckling gravely. “But you do not belong with me. You should be with someone who knows how to love you. Just you, and to the extent to which you deserve.”

“Your love is enough for me,” Levi said desperately, clinging to straws at this point. He couldn’t let Erwin push him away. Not now, not ever. He had come to…

“I’ve come to love you, Erwin,” he said quietly. “So much it hurt me to see you with the others every day. I tried to push it down, this feeling I had, it wasn’t jealousy it was just… I didn’t want to be one of the four. I wanted to be the only one. I thought that… If I were good, you would come to see me as something more than just part of your harem.”

“My harem? Is that what you think of our arrangement?” Erwin asked, his face dark.

“What else would you call it?” Levi asked sadly. “We are here for entertainment and decoration.”

“You are here because I want you here.”

“What if you stop wanting us here?”

“I won’t.”

“What if an enemy comes and takes us hostage?”

“I will fight for each and every one of you because… I treasure you. So much,” Erwin said quietly. “But I cannot love.”

“Because you are scared of love,” Levi concluded quietly.

“Correct.”

“So where does that leave me?”

Erwin pulled his hand away from Levi’s face. “That depends on you, Levi.”

“How so?” Levi asked. “I cannot go back to Kenneth’s estate. I won’t belong there either. You have turned me into this… mixture of the rich and the poor, and I won’t fit in there any more. Just like I could never truly fit in here.”

He glanced up at the King. “That was why you preferred me when you wanted to experience a moment of your past, wasn’t it? Because I was a simple man, because I was happy with a loaf of bread on my plate? Because I could curse and make disgusting jokes that reminded you of what life used to be like? The life you loved and yet threw away for the crown?”

“Perhaps.”

“Damn it, Erwin,” Levi said quietly. “You do this all the time. You never say anything. You keep
it all locked inside. No wonder someone as verbose as Jean thought it was—,”

“What? Boring?”

“I didn’t say that,” Levi replied stubbornly. “I just… Why won’t you try to understand us more? Like Eren? Armin? They adore you. They think the sun rises and sets with you but they know nothing about you, just like you know nothing about them. That is what a harem is. We appreciate what you’ve done for us but… we want more.”

“You deserve more.” Erwin turned away, his shoulders set. “I understand. Thank you for that insight. I wish I knew what it was that made a mere stable boy better than a King—,”

“I used to be a mere stable boy,” Levi said. “And I was no better. Nor are you better than anyone, Erwin. You are more powerful. You are richer. But you are not better. People are the same wherever they live, no matter what food they eat and what clothes they wear. You taught me that when you took me in and showed me what I could be.”

“Then… what do I do?” Erwin asked, looking completely forlorn. “I want them to stay. I want you to stay.”

“Then give us something worth staying for. Tell us why you want us to stay.”

“I cannot do that.”

“Then…” Levi breathed in deeply. “I guess you have to let us go. You won’t be able to live with yourself knowing what you know now.”

“Eren and Armin knew,” Erwin said. It wasn’t a question.

“We all knew.”

“I was so blind.”

“You were.”

“You could have told me. Sold Jean out for favors at court.”

“I wouldn’t do that. You wouldn’t have wanted me to do that.”

Erwin gave Levi a long look. “I suppose you understand me better than I ever gave you credit for.”

“If only the opposite were true,” Levi said. He placed a hand on Erwin’s cheek and pressed a kiss to his unmoving lips. “I think… I think you need time to figure things out. All of us do.”

“What do you suggest?” Erwin asked.

“I don’t know about the others but I… I want to travel. I want to see the world. And then I want to come back home to my husband with new feelings in my heart.”

“Distance makes the heart grow fonder, right?” Erwin asked with a bitter smile. “Suppose I let you go, where will you be off to?”

“Somewhere you can find me when you finally figure out what you want.”
Dealing with the aftermath of Levi’s little sabbatical and Jean’s flight was more problematic than Erwin had initially thought. The emotional turmoil that ensued within his own head notwithstanding, there were also the disapproving murmurs of the court nobles, all whom had been angling to find at least one reason to stage a coup and deem the King incapable of running the country. Their argument this time, of course, was the fact that Erwin had been unable to even create stability within his own family (that was the way they said it, sneering the word out as if it were poison). Not to mention the fact that both Armin and Eren had been hurt and confused by their fellow Consorts’ departure.

The only thing that soothed Erwin’s mind was that both Jean and Levi were happy – in their own distinct ways. Of course, he had not been foolish enough to let Jean and Marco go without supervision. Though the two boys were unaware of it, he had a couple of Mike’s men follow them to their new place of settlement and keep an eye on them for at least the first couple of months.

The reports that returned from the men made Erwin feel this much better about having let Jean go. As far as he knew, the two boys had settled in a small town on the edge of the country, where few people knew about the King’s Consorts, and none of them had ever seen even a picture of them. This didn’t mean that some visitor or merchant wouldn’t be able to identify Jean; however, for now, the two of them were safe. Mike’s spies reported that Marco was pretty apt at teaching Jean to live the peasant way. Even though Jean had always been very resistant to being a simple person, it looked like his lover’s tutelage was paying off. The last report even included surprising news: that Jean had managed to get a job as a sword fighting tutor for the local children and squires. Marco was still doing his favorite kind of work: keeping an eye on the locals’ horses whenever he was needed. All in all, Erwin couldn’t really bring himself to resent the fact that Jean had left him for someone younger, poorer, less… kingly. Because he had Levi’s words in mind every time he listened to Mike’s reports. Learn to understand us, Levi had told him, and this was exactly what he was trying to do. He had thought it would be easy considering his own non-noble upbringing, but he found it extremely difficult without Levi’s down-to-earth approaches.

Levi, on the other hand, was fantastic at being elusive. The second he walked through the gate of the Palace grounds, every single trace of him had vanished. Erwin’s spies had been unable to locate him and had returned to the King with lamentation on their faces and frustration in the set of their jaws. For some reason, Erwin hadn’t even expected this little ploy to work – Levi was too smart and resourceful to ever allow Erwin to violate their agreement.

Reunion will come, Mike had once told Erwin over a cup of wine, which had become a weekly routine for the two of them. Erwin found himself growing close to the man; and though Mike definitely had his eccentricities, he was genuine, if not a little rough around the edges. Perhaps this was also why Erwin tended to gravitate toward him. Mike reminded him of his former Consort, of the life he could have had. Not that he was using Mike as a friendly rebound or anything. It was just nice to enjoy a drink with someone who didn’t really care about elbows on the table.
Erwin also made it a point to spend more time with Armin and Eren. Slowly, their lewder activities had become almost non-existent, bar the occasional kiss on the mouth, and Erwin realized that there was nothing sexual in the love he had for the two boys. Sure, they were very beautiful, and he had enjoyed every single moment they had spent in his bed, but there was certainly something missing whenever either of them responded to his advances. He couldn’t exactly put his finger on it, but… he knew that something hadn’t been missing with Levi. It had been there, a small spark, a small tug over his navel that had made him return to Levi’s side over and over again, that had made Levi into his favorite. It hadn’t just been the sex.

At least, Erwin didn’t think so.

Tentatively, Armin started coming out of his shell. He requested some books on strategic planning, which Erwin had yielded with a bit of surprise. It turned out that the boy was quite the tactician, and Erwin had been absolutely dumbfounded when during one of his council sessions, Eren had pushed his fellow Consort forward and demanded that the knights listened to what Armin had to say. Shyly, the little blond had stuttered out a plan that Erwin would have never thought of. The plan was later implemented in battle with a neighboring eastern country and inevitably led to its defeat. Armin had been sitting in on council sessions ever since.

Eren was bored during those, so Erwin allowed him to roam free. The boy immediately latched on to books on the outside world – things that were not present in Sina, like the ocean, the various differing cultures, the languages… By the third month of Levi’s departure, Eren had pretty good control of his Sindhuran, and even worked at a diplomatic meeting to interpret Erwin’s words to the ambassador of the country who was quite impressed by the development, considering the fact that the language was very complex and not at all like what they spoke in Sina.

With all of these successes, though, came the drawbacks.

Erwin was alone. He knew that he had consciously let his Consorts go, to some extent, and yet every time he looked at Eren and Armin embrace each other or converse over some sort of obscure tome, he found his heart yearning to reach out and touch… just not Eren or Armin.

Slate-grey eyes invaded his thoughts every single day, and he was powerless as he recollected the fine lines of Levi’s face, the soft lips, the biting wit. The tight yet pliant body that was so different from those Erwin had taken before.

He realized that distance did make the heart grow fonder, the body more frustrated, and the mind more restless. Yet he appeased himself with the thought that Levi was probably doing what he wanted to do. That was the most important thing, right?

This semblance of stability came to an end when King Roderick finally decided to take revenge. Needless to say, the foreign King was absolutely livid about the fact that he had been kicked out of Erwin’s abode unceremoniously without so much as time to gather his belongings. He had returned to his kingdom to lick his wounds and plot – Erwin was not delusional enough to think that his actions wouldn’t yield some sort of reaction.

And they did.

News of Titania attacking the southern border came in the middle of the night. Erwin was ripped from his bed and placed in the council room, together with a barely-clothed Armin and a worried-looking Eren, as well as the rest of his trusted knights, all of which seemed to have aged greatly in the past several hours. They spent the entire night trying to come up with something, anything at all, that would allow Sina to withstand the superior military power of Roderick’s kingdom. Though Erwin was a good strategist, he knew that the power of Sina’s army couldn’t be overestimated.
They had fewer soldiers, fewer resources, fewer *everything*, compared to Titania, which was practically a military state in itself. Military service in Titania was absolutely compulsory for every single citizen, male and female (unless they were with child at the time of the conscription), and training was rigorous. The reason why Titania relied so much on slave labor and import was because they barely grew or yielded anything of their own.

Erwin’s first thought was to cut off the trade routes between Roderick’s country and the rest of the lands in the region; however, the missives he received from the neighboring rulers clearly indicated that they were very humbled by Titania’s power and thus not ready to antagonize Roderick even further. What was more, the altercation between Erwin and Roderick had become a subject of public discussion and though nobody knew all of the details, it was clear that rumors that had spread throughout the continent were detrimental to both the relationship the countries had with Erwin and the one they had with Roderick. Nevertheless, Roderick had military power on his side, which acted as a catalyst.

Erwin was left with no choice but to plead with the lower tier nobles of the kingdom. He sent out missives to every single dukedom in Sina, practically begging (in a very dignified fashion penned by Armin himself) his vassals to led him some of their private powers. Unsurprisingly, most of them responded with a resounding yes, with only a few having the audacity to negotiate. Armin’s response was that if Titania destroyed Sina, their riches would burn together with them. That was the end of the argument.

Bar one.

The Dukedom of Rose headed by one despicable Duke Kenneth flat-out refused to supply any of its help to the palace. By a flat-out refusal, it meant that Kenneth didn’t even bothered with sending a reply to Erwin’s petition. The King was being ignored.

Which was why Erwin took a score of men and trekked down to the Dukedom of Rose in order to settle the score once and for all. Come to think of it, ever since Levi had been taken from him, Kenneth had been surprisingly quiet in his correspondence.

Erwin discovered the reason behind that upon his arrival. The villagers of Rose told him with hushed voices that Kenneth had died several months ago and the entire land had fallen into chaos. The people, as much as they had despised Kenneth, now had nowhere to go, sticking to their homes out of fear and sentiment. However, they told him, there was a change coming – a new ruler had been sent from the capital, they’d told him, making him raise his eyebrows. He hadn’t been aware that such orders had been sent out. He would have remembered that.

Apparently this new ruler was restructuring the entire land governance system, including Kenneth’s private police. The process was long and arduous, though. The women shrugged when Erwin asked them who this new man was, only saying that he was a bit on the rough side, yet much gentler than the previous duke.

Erwin made his way towards the Duke’s home only to discover that it had been abandoned. He asked the locals where he could meet the new Duke, and they pointed him towards a non-assuming single-story house on the hill behind Kenneth’s former dwelling place. He was surprised, to say the least, but that made him even more curious about meeting this eccentric noble who was possibly an impostor as well.

He gave him men leave which they took gladly to the nearest tavern, and then walked uphill towards the small house. It wasn’t brand new, so it had been there before, which was another indicator that this new Duke was a strange one. He didn’t even build himself a great big palace to show off Rose’s riches.
Erwin knocked on the door curiously. Footsteps sounded from within and then Erwin stood facing the one man he had least expected to see in Rose.

“Levi?”
Levi was definitely having a weird experience. Something must have gone wrong in the ways of the universe, otherwise he would have never ended up the way he had: naked, lying prostrate on his bed, panting and nursing several sore joints after having just finished fucking his husband whom he hadn’t seen for almost a year. When he had opened the door to his new residence as the Duke of Rose and discovered said husband (also known as the King of the entire realm) breathless and pleading on his doorstep, he had sort of been stumped. Because apparently Erwin had sent out thousands of missives all across Sina since King Roderick didn’t take rejection very well.

After leaving Sina, Levi had spent quite a bit of time wondering around the country, incognito, of course. It helped that few commoners knew what King Erwin’s mysterious (not Levi’s words, he wasn’t vain enough to think of himself this highly) Consort looked like. He had gone from village to village, town to town, absorbing the world like a sponge. It had not been enough. The things he’d read in Erwin’s library, the various discussions he’d had with Armin about the world outside of the capital were nothing compared to the things Levi had seen on his trip. One thing he had discovered, though, was that despite the many rumors that surrounded the King’s person, both good and bad, a dominant majority of the people seemed to like his policies. Levi had seen many sides to Erwin – but he had not seen the most important one, what he was like as a ruler. The feedback he had received from the people had almost forced him to turn back, throw caution to the wind and throw himself at the King’s feet, begging to be taken back into the Palace. However, Levi had managed to strange those sentimental feelings and made himself proceed onward. He had promised Erwin that he would become a man worth marrying. Not just a pretty face and a sharp tongue.

“So I stumbled around Sina for some more time and… I suppose I did get a bit sentimental in the end,” Levi said softly as he carded his fingers through Erwin’s soft hair. The blond looked at him openly, waiting for Levi to finish the story. “I ended up standing at Kenneth’s gate far earlier than I had ever thought I would and what I saw… I saw him treat the servants just the same way I had been treated. The abuse had escalated, actually. So… I… uh, well, it’s not like you liked the guy, so I won’t keep it from you.”

Levi drew a breath. “I killed him. He was… a monster and I killed him. Stole my way into the mansion and added strychnine to his evening stew. Kenneth always liked to make a show of his dinners and he would force his servants to stand there and watch while he ate. Of course, they got nothing off the table. Even the food that he never finished went into the trash instead of the empty stomachs of those who served him… so he wasn’t exactly popular, as you might imagine.”

“I thought I was doing something good.” Levi shook his head with a soft chuckle. “I suppose I got ahead of myself. I ran after killing him just in case someone had seen me – although I highly doubted it. I returned several months later only to find that the entire Dukedom had fallen into chaos. And since I was the one who fucked it up, I guess I decided to take responsibility. Which is
why I am here now.”

Erwin smiled softly. “Imagine my surprise.”

“Imagine mine. There have been no news from the capital for ages and now you show up on my
doorstep and tell me that there is a war coming? With Roderick’s army, no less?” Levi snorted.
“You and I really know how to make a reunion count.”

Erwin laughed. “Goddess, I missed your sense of humor.”

Levi glanced at him inquisitively. “Surely the others have kept you company, right? How are they,
anyway?”

Erwin’s smile turned down a little. “I wouldn’t know. I’ve been focused on strategy so much that
I’ve been neglecting them. And, in any case… things have been very different since you left.
Particularly in terms of… intimacy.”

Levi’s heart gave a small jolt but he chose to ignore it for the time being. “Meaning?”

Erwin propped himself up on one elbow, his eyes never leaving Levi’s face. “Meaning I… I
decided to reevaluate the relationship I have with my Consorts. All but one, that is. You.”

The dark-haired man felt himself blush. “Whatever made you do that? You know that Armin and
Eren are perfectly willing and capable–,”

“They are capable, all right. But they are not you. And they are… I do realize now that it was
wrong of me to assume they would just accept the fact that they had to hop into bed with me every
now and then,” Erwin said seriously. Levi looked at him and frowned.

“I did.”

“I know you did,” Erwin replied softly and reached out to touch Levi’s cheek. “And I am very
sorry for that.”

“Erwin…” Levi sighed. “You know that I… the things I said before I left, I really did mean them
but now that I think about it, they probably came out a little… harsh.”

“A little?” Erwin chuckled. “Yes, just a tad. But it made me think about what I wanted to do. What
kind of King I wanted to be. What kind of man. What kind of husband. I don’t want our marriage to
be all about what I want.”

“You have the right to ask for that. You’re the King. We’re your subjects, first and foremost,” Levi
pointed out. “We’ll do anything for you. I know that the three of us will, for sure. Probably Jean as
well. Even though he might have been bitter about it, he liked being married to you to a certain
extent. He was comfortable being a Consort.”

“I don’t want to be married to subjects,” Erwin said, sitting up against the pillows. They really
were quite comfortable, almost as comfortable as the ones in the Palace. Levi had never slept much
but when he had, he would emphasize the quality of sleep versus the quantity of it. “I want to be
married to people. I want to understand you, just like you told me back there. That is my priority as
your husband and as a human being.”

“So… Armin and Eren?” Levi asked, now genuinely curious, the flutter of hope in his chest
making him feel a little bit short of breath.
“They are in the Palace with me, as usual. They make public appearances as my Consorts. But I allow them complete freedom of choice when it comes to bedding me... or other people,” Erwin said. He bit his lip. “I do realize it is kind of unorthodox, but seeing as divorce is a public matter and a hassle is the last thing I need right now, we all decided it would be safer for them to stay with me for the time being.”

“Divorce?” Levi asked, confused. “Why would you divorce them?”

“Because they don’t belong with me. As much as I enjoy their company, they are far too young for me. Far too full of life.”

“And that is not a concern with me, then?” Levi ventured. Erwin smiled down at him.

“You honestly think I didn’t know that you are much older than you pretend to be?”

Levi’s eyes went wide as saucers. He sputtered, pulling away from the King. “W-what?”

“Come now, Levi. We both know that you are far too old for the age you are supposed to be. I know that Kenneth lied to me, and though upon our first meeting I really did think that you were a stable boy, I realized soon after that it couldn’t be the case. You have a certain... quality to you that only comes with age.”

Levi huffed. “Quality, huh? You make me sound like a commodity.”

Erwin immediately stopped smiling. “I apologize.”

Levi gave the man an incredulous look. “You can’t be serious. I was joking, Erwin. You know, there’s this thing called humor?”

The tension flooded out of Erwin’s shoulders and he grinned softly. “I suppose I’ve forgotten what it’s like without you around.”

“My personal sense of humor is a bit...”


Levi looked at Erwin for a long moment and swallowed. “I missed you.”

“I missed you too. All of you. Not just the jokes you make that only people like us get.”

People like us.

“I can’t leave the people of Rose behind. Sure, I know you can whip me into shape and make me a soldier, and I would be proud to fight side by side with you but I just got here... This place was a mess when I arrived, and it’s a mess that I started. I can’t just go,” Levi said seriously. He was really considering it, though. Because throughout his wanderings he had thought of the King. A lot. Too much to be healthy. So much, in fact, that he knew in his heart of hearts that wherever he went, he would eventually return to Erwin. He didn’t understand this pull that drove him to the man, but he wasn’t going to fight it for long; he belonged to Erwin, in every sense of the word. The man had made him into the Consort, into the person that Levi was. Before he’d come to the Royal Palace, he had been a human, just another one of many, he hadn’t been special at all. Erwin was the one who had made him feel like he was worth something.

The King thought about it for a moment and then his face lit up with a genial smile. “I think I have a solution for that.”
A week later, Levi stood in the stables, strapping in Erwin’s horse. He patted Gloria’s head fondly, feeling a weird wave of nostalgia wash over him. To think that Gloria had practically been the one who had gotten Erwin and him together. The King and the stable hand.

“You know, you could have someone else do that.”

He turned on his heel to see Erwin walk into the stables, completely decked out in his travel regalia. Levi shrugged. “I don’t mind. Makes me feel at peace in a way.”

Erwin smiled. “Then you can do it anytime you like, stable boy.”

“Oh, fuck off, old man,” Levi said, crossing his arms. “Cradle-robber.”

“Liar.”

“Jealous husband.”

Erwin bent down and placed a kiss on Levi’s lips. “I have a lot to be jealous of.”

Levi rolled his eyes. He looked towards the entrance and untied their horses, leading them outside. The rest of the knights were already mounted, waiting for them to leave. Erwin helped him up onto Shitstorm’s back – embarrassingly enough, – causing some of them to break out in chuckles.

“Not you too,” Levi muttered darkly.

“Hey, you’re one of us now, Princess. Better get used to being part of the team,” said one of the knights and Levi cast her a glare. The others simply laughed, causing Erwin to smile as well as he got onto his horse. Levi looked at the mansion one last time.

“Do you think Armin will be all right in there?” He asked the King. Erwin reached out and squeezed his hand.

“He’s a smart kid. And he has Eren to help him out. Call it practice for when he replaces me as King after I die.”

Levi’s face contorted in mock horror. “Better keep you alive then.”

Erwin smiled softly. “I know you will.”

He steered Gloria towards the path, with Levi following closely at his side.

Who knew what was going to happen?

Who knew where they would end up?

The only way to find out for certain was…

“Onward!”
Hey there!

I know some people hate it when authors do this, but here's my new Eruri fanfic (canon!verse and omegaverse): An Omega's Life.

Enjoy! And thank you for reading my fics!

Mari

End Notes

Be sure to drop me a line here or on Tumblr :)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!