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WARNING: May contain coarse language, violence, gore or sexual content. Reader discretion is advised.

Chapter 14. "Porridge And Bed Rest"

He never thought he would fall asleep, but being that close to Shari was incredibly calming. The bit of sleep he did get was extremely refreshing. Shari was still breathing into his neck. Her arm was still on his chest. Her leg still snared his. And her body was still pressed against his. He couldn't think of a way to escape. The sun was about fully up by his guess after watching the light from outside turn from red to yellow. He could hear faint movement outside as the villagers were off to work. He could hear birds singing in the distance.

He lay there for several minutes when Shari breathed in sharply and groaned as she stretched. Her arm slid across his chest and off the side. Her leg slid down his and then over by his other leg at an angle.

"Vilkas," she said sleepily. She rolled off of him and onto her back.

He glanced over and quickly back to the ceiling as sweat had made her gown see through where she pressed against him.

"So hot," she groaned and tussled about with the blanket before settling down.

He closed his eyes and sighed in relief. "I have to get out of here," he thought and glanced over at her.

She was covered by the blanket just above where the sweat spot began. She had her right arm angled up with her hand by her head. Her left arm was across her stomach over the blanket.

"So beautiful," he thought and shook his head. "No, Darijus. She's your friend. Nothing more."

He stealthily moved from the bed and to his feet. He closed her door until it was just propped open. He stripped out of his night clothes and used a cloth in the washroom to clean off some of the sweat from the night. He kept glancing at her bedroom door to make sure she couldn't see him. He moved from the washroom and dressed in his room. He made his way back to Shari's door and peeked in.

"I need to do something," he thought.

"Vilkas?" He heard her call.

"Shari?" He said, not expecting her to be awake. He saw her stir and look over at the door.

"Come here," she said and lazily waved her right hand.

He slowly made his way into the room and stood by the bed. She looked up at him through half open, sleepy eyes.

"I don't feel good," she whined and pouted.

"I know," he said quietly and drooped his head and ears. "I'm sorry."

She gave a weak smile and closed her eyes as she reached over to him with her left hand. "Hand," she said and made a grabbing motion with her hand.

He looked at her hand for a second before reaching out and placing his hand in hers. She slid her hand up to his wrist and grabbed it. She pulled on his wrist causing him to bend over. She pulled his hand over to her forehead as she closed her eyes. Her forehead was extremely warm and damp from sweat.

"Is it hot?" She asked and cracked her eyes open.

He nodded. "Yeah."

She pouted again and let go of his wrist. Her hand flopped against the bed as she sighed heavily. He stood upright, unsure of what to do.

She looked up at the ceiling and glanced over at him. "Take care of me?" She asked in a child-like manner.

"Yeah," he said and scratched the back of his neck. "I'll try."

"Thank you," she said quietly, her voice cracking, and closed her eyes.

He rest his hand on his neck as he thought of what to do to help her. He thought of what they did yesterday. "Perhaps I should just ask around," he thought. "Her father and sister," he thought and perked up. "They'll know what to do."

He made his way out of the room and closed the door until it was slightly ajar. He put his hand on the door handle to the house and stopped.

"I don't have any money," he said with exasperated realization. His eyes darted across the wooden door as he tried to remember where she kept it. He sighed with determination. "Her father might help, regardless," he thought and opened the door.

He quickly pushed the door back until the latch tapped the door frame. He rushed to the room and quickly pulled on the sleeve and cap, then tied up the sling. He dashed out the door and walked over to the pub.

He activated the bell trap as he walked through the door. He glanced around the nearly empty room.

"Welc-oh it's you."

Tangi had stepped from the back room and stood at the bar with his glaring gaze fixed on Vilkas.

"Daddy, are you harass-oh it's him."

Valeska stepped from the back room and around the counter. She had her hand on her shifted hip. He took a breath to relax and collect his words.

"Your escort may not be here, but I'm not holding your hand to a table. Sit wherever you want," she remarked with irritation. She flipped her left hand in the air, indicating open seats as if it were a bother.

"Keep a cool head and be polite," he thought as he glanced between the two and walked towards the female - assuming she might take his words better. He glanced down at the floor until he was close to her, blinked and looked her in the eyes. "I need your help," he said in a hushed tone.

Her expression turned even more sour as her left eyebrow raised and her muzzle tilted down.

"I'm sorry, but Shari has a fever and I don't know how to help her. I gave all my coin to her for all her help, so I don't have any. I apologize for the trouble."

He noticed a menacing presence behind Valeska that moved to her side.

"So you come into this town, pretend to make nice with our family, cause a scene, trouble *my* daughter, pass your disease on to her...and *now* you walk in here with your tail between your legs *begging* for a handout?" The stout shepherd asked with his tree trunk arms crossed over his chest.

The father and daughter exchanged glances.

"Yeah," Vilkas said and made eye contact with Tangi. "Please... for Shari."

They both twitched as if taken aback by his words. Again they exchanged glances.

Valeska sighed, her expression softening. She reached over and held out her right hand in front of Tangi.

"I'll give you some of my tips to get some supplies from the market. But I'm going with you and I'm coming to check on her," she said with a stern look. Tangi dropped coins into her hand as she said, "You better be speaking the truth. If I find out you've done something to her..."

Tangi stepped close to Vilkas and leaned in. "Then it's my turn," he said menacingly. He stepped back and turned to look at Valeska. "Make sure my baby's okay. Stop by after the market. I'll send some porridge."

"You bet-cha," she replied with a nod. "Porridge and bed rest works every time."

Tangi stepped back behind the counter.

Valeska glanced over at Vilkas and pressed her lips together. "Let's go," she commanded as she stepped past him.

"Yeah," he said and followed her out the door. "Remember to smile," he recalled.

He walked out of the pub and followed Valeska to the left towards the market.

She picked out various things such as herbs, tea, round, orange fruit, vegetables and chicken. Some of the items he placed over his arm in the sling. The rest he had to balance in his hand against his chest. Then they stopped by the pub.

Valeska left him outside and returned with a pot with a lidded pan on top. She walked past Vilkas and towards Shari's. She stepped past the door and turned. She side-nodded to the door. He looked at her full hands and then his. He stepped up to the door and tried his best to open the door with his right hand and foot.

He unloaded on the counter by the cooler and she placed her items on the stove.

"Shari?!" Valeska called and walked quickly to her bedroom.

Shari groaned.

"Why are you sleeping like that!? Pull your gown down!" Valeska disciplined.

"So hot," Shari groaned.

"Yeah, well you're not here alone so you can't sleep like that."

Vilkas remembered something she did for him while he was ill - if only because he needed to take his thoughts away from their conversation. He grabbed a clean cloth from a drawer and wet it with water.

"He won't mind," Shari said back.

"Well I do," Valeska returned.

He walked down the hall. The bedroom door was open a few inches. He could see Valeska with her fists on her bent hips hovering over the bed. Shari was lying on her back with her hands in loose fists over the top of her chest - wrists bent in and the knuckles almost touching. It reminded him of a feral cat he once saw.

"He's already seen me naked," Shari declared with a coy grin.

Vilkas' eyes went wide as Valeska straightened at blazing speed. He could feel his heart try to escape his chest with how violently it skipped and pounded.

"Is that so?" Valeska asked rhetorically with contempt.

Vilkas thrust his hand through the crack in the door to present the damp cloth. "Here," he said, his voice squeaking. He stared at the closet door, waiting for Valeska to take the cloth from his hand.

"Vilkas!" Shari called. "See! Look! He's my friend and he's trying to take care of me."

Valeska stomped over and snatched the cloth from his hand.

"Thank you, sweetie," Shari said.

"You're welcome," he said and walked into the dining area.

"He even slept with me because I slept with him," Shari said and giggled.

"HE WHAT?!!! WAIT...YOU *WHAT!!!!?*" Valeska screamed. Vilkas felt the house shake.

Vilkas went to the stove and looked in the pans on the stove. The pan had what looked like a mess of breakfast items. The pot contained the chicken, vegetable and rice porridge Tangi promised.

"Not like that," Shari corrected. "But I did jerk him off," she said in a hushed voice.

"WHAT?!!!" Valeska screamed. Vilkas heard it echo several times in his ears.

He grabbed a bowl from the cupboard and a spoon from the utensil drawer and set them next to the stove. He grabbed a ladle and closed the utensil drawer and scooped some of the porridge into a bowl. Anything he could to exclude himself from this conversation.

"Yeah, he's, like, half feral. But he's one hundred percent a stupid, ignorant meathead. He thought it was broken or something," Shari continued in the hushed tone and giggled some more.

"SHARI!!! What has gotten into you? Are you *that* deprived or *that* desperate?" Valeska continued with her interrogation.

"He may be a stupid, ignorant meathead," Shari went on, ignoring Valeska's questions. "But he's super nice. He helps with dinner and dishes. He even sang me to sleep last night," Shari said quietly with admiration.

Vilkas' pulse pounded in his head and resonated in his ears. The ringing in his right ear intensified as he stared at the bowl in his hand.

"He...said...me...and I...back but...friends..."

Shari's words were lost on his ears. The sound in his head was nearly deafening. All he could do was stare at this porridge bowl and hope he wasn't killed by Shari's family.

"Shar-...sister...no," Valeska quietly said.

"It's okay, sis," Shari said calmly. "It's...nothing. I'm his doctor and his friend."

Vilkas made his way to the bedroom with the bowl and spoon.

"He's my patient and my friend. It won't be like last time."

He saw Shari lying with her hands over her stomach. The cloth was on her forehead. He slowly extended his arm through the door.

"Breakfast...Shari," he said and stared at the closet again.

"Thank you, sweetie," Shari called with that child-like innocence.

He felt the bowl lift from his hand and the spoon slide from between his first finger and thumb. He went back to the dining room and poured a tankard of water. He drank half of it before taking a breath. "I'm a dead man," he thought as he stared out of the covered window. "I did say I would die without regret last night."

"Daddy made this for you so you need to eat it and get better," Valeska said. There was a long pause. "When you get better, we need to have a serious talk."

"Thank him for me?" Shari asked. "It's good."

"He'll be beside himself, I'm sure," Valeska said calmly and chuckled. Her tone turned sinister. "Especially when I tell him you're bedding strangers."

"MOW!" Shari cried, sounding as if she were talking through food. "Ow boo ip," she said in forfeit.

Valeska chuckled devilishly. She sighed. "Okay. Get better, sis. Porridge and bed rest, okay?"

"O-gabe."

"I have to go back to work. But first, I have to speak with a certain meathead," Valeska said and the door creaked open.

"Be nice to him. He's trying really hard to belong here. He's a smart meathead. Treat him like you would Socorro if he were a giant wolf. Please?"

Valeska sighed heavily. "Fine," she breathed out. "I'll see you later, sis. Take care of yourself and...be careful...for me?"

"Wait," Shari said in realization of something.

"What is it?"

"Can you give me a shot before you leave?"

"Wait...what?" Valeska asked in disbelief.

"Please," Shari begged. "I can't ask him to do it. It has to go here."

"He'll go nowhere near there," Valeska declared. "What do I need?"

"Needle in the drawer of the cabinet straight ahead. Also the jar on the second shelf from the bottom, in front, on the right hand side of the left door."

"On it."

Vilkas had refilled his tankard and was sitting at the table, staring into the clear liquid. Valeska moved into his room and messed with the drawer and cupboard door. She moved back into Shari's room.

"Put your tail down! I don't want to see *that!*" Valeska shouted.

"I had to see *yours* as you forced a child from it!" Shari retorted.

Vilkas now looked dumbfoundedly into his water as he had no idea what they were talking about.

"That's...that's...different," Valeska stammered.

Shari laughed. She then gave Valeska directions on how to administer the shot. Valeska returned to his room and back.

"I *really* have to go now, sis. Get better, okay?" Valeska said with kindness.

"Thank you, sis. Love you," Shari replied.

"Love you, too."

Vilkas heard Valeska move out of the room and paused to pull the bedroom door closed but unlatched. She walked into the dining area and stood across the table from him. She had a serious look on her face.

"I'm not happy with you," she began and placed her hands on her hips. She leaned in a bit. "I'm not happy with her, either." She sighed and closed her eyes as her arms crossed under her large breasts.

She opened her eyes and looked at him sternly. "She claims you're 'just friends'," she began, speaking with disbelief. "So you better take care of her until she feels better." She sighed with a long blink of her eyes. She looked at him calmly. "Daddy made you breakfast," she said, giving a quick glance to the stove. "Make sure she takes those herbs. Do you know how to make tea?"

He nodded.

"Good. Use them like tea in warm to hot water. That should make enough for after her meals. Without food, they upset your stomach. If she's thirsty, give her one of those oranges and a glass of water. Make sure she eats the porridge for breakfast and lunch. Do you know how to cook?"

He looked down at the tankard. "I'm learning."

Valeska sighed. "It's fine. Me or daddy will stop by and make dinner. Make sure to keep that cloth cold and damp. Make sure she's drinking a lot of water and eating those oranges."

He looked up at her. She sighed through her nose and her eyes narrowed as she looked at him. She moved over and began putting the meat and vegetables into the cooler. She returned to stand across from him with her hands on her hips. She sighed and rolled her eyes.

He smiled. "Thank you for your help. Sorry for bothering you both," he said honestly.

She scowled and leaned in. "I don't like it," she said flatly. "But she's a grown woman. I won't see her like that again. Keep your filthy paws to yourself, you hear me?"

His smile faded and he tilted his head in confusion. "I don't understand."

Valeska scoffed. "And I'm supposed to..." She trailed off as she gave him a once-over with her eyes. Her expression softened and her eyes grew a bit wide. "You're serious?" She asked rhetorically. She straightened up and said, "Let's just keep it that way, shall we?"

Valeska turned and walked to the door. She stopped and looked over her shoulder as she held the door handle in her right hand. "Thank you for being with her. Just remember that you're her *friend* and keep your damn hands off her, got it?"

He nodded. "Understood."

"Good. I'll...see you later," Valeska said and left the house.

He faintly heard her as she walked away. He took a drink from the tankard and stared at the door.

"I don't know what's going on," he thought. "I may be in danger. It feels like danger. I'll have to be extra careful if I'm to gain their trust."

"Vilkas?" Shari called from her room. "Can I get some more, please?"

"Yeah," he said and made his way to her room.

She was sitting cross-legged on the bed facing the mirror with the cloth on top of her head. When he entered the room, she held out the bowl in both hands with the spoon inside of it. He carefully took the bowl from her hands and smiled weakly at her.

"Thank you, sweetie," she said.

"You're welcome," he replied.

She seemed to look better, but her eyes still looked dull. They weren't bright like they usually were. She wore a forced smile, too. It didn't feel right to him. "Is she hiding something?" He thought as he scooped soup into the bowl. "She's not lying to me with that smile, is she?"

He pondered these and other questions as he scooped another ladle full into the bowl. Since she didn't eat as much as him, he figured half a bowl was enough. He brought it to her room. Her smile when he returned seemed more genuine. "Maybe I'm just imagining things," he thought as he handed over the bowl.

"Thank you for taking care of me," she said and settled the bowl into her left hand. "I'm sorry if my sister was harsh with you. She's not as bad as daddy, but she means well."

"I understand," he said and smiled. "Let me know when you're done. I'll wet the cloth and you should rest more."

"I know," she said begrudgingly.

He went to the kitchen and grabbed a plate from the cupboard. He slid some of the breakfast food onto a plate and sat at the table. The whole thing was delicious. There were eggs and meat. There were also green strips, white chunks and mushrooms. The cheese melted on top was a nice addition. There was plenty there to fill him up.

"Vilkas," Shari called as he put his breakfast dishes in the wash basin.

He made his way into her room. She was holding out the bowl and spoon. He took them from her and turned to leave.

"You coming back?" She asked in a somber tone.

"Yeah," he said and turned towards her.

He spotted the cloth on top of her head. He glanced from the bowl in his hand and back to the cloth. He stepped towards her and leaned in. He carefully snagged the cloth in his mouth and returned to the kitchen. He placed her dishes into the basin and

set the cloth to the side. He pulled out a cup and grabbed the herb mix Valeska purchased.

"Maybe this will be okay not being warm," he thought as he scooped some out using the tea strainer.

He placed it in the cup and poured water over it. He grabbed the honey and a spoon. He looked in the cooler and saw they were out of lemons. He tapped the strainer against the cup and stirred the contents with some of the honey. He put the spoon aside and ran some water over the cloth. He rang out the cloth and returned to her room with the cup.

She was still sitting on the side of the bed. Her arms were across her thighs with her hands in the space between her body and her legs. She was staring at the floor with a distant gaze. Her mouth was partially open as she breathed through it. She looked troubled.

He folded the cloth as best he could and placed it atop her head. She flinched and looked up at him. Her eyes began to water.

"I'm sorry I'm such a bother," she said in a weak voice.

"No bother," he said and sat next to her.

He handed over the cup. She took it from him and began to drink. "Ick," she said with her tongue out.

He wrapped his arm around her and placed his hand on her left shoulder. She drank from the cup as tears began to stream down her cheeks.

His arm hung in that spot as her body moved. His eyes grew as wide as dinner plates as she buried her face into the chest of his tunic. Her hands latched onto the empty cup she'd placed in his lap. She let go of the cup and latched onto his tunic while wailing as if being tortured.

"What do I do?" He asked himself in utter loss.

"I'm sorry," she breathed into his chest over and over.

The cloth began to dampen his tunic. So were her tears. He regained his composure and let his hand settle onto her back. "It's okay," he said as he began to caress her back. "You're okay."

She cried into his chest for several minutes. She fell silent and her grip on his tunic eased. Several minutes later, he could hear her softly snore into his chest.

"Shari," he said quietly. She groaned and rubbed her head into his chest. "Let's get you in bed."

"Hrrmm," she complained but pushed off his chest.

He grabbed the cup and stood from the bed as she scooted to the middle and slowly fell into the pillow. He set the cup on her dressing table and slid his arm under her legs while moving them from atop the blanket. He pulled the blanket over her and placed the cloth on her forehead. He quietly left the room with the cup and closed her door.

"Her head was so warm," he thought as he made his way into the dining area. "She needs to rest. I can't let her get as bad as I was." He nodded with determination as he looked at the wash basin. "Anything I can do to help her get better."

[Shari](#) belongs to [Celeste](#)