

Breeding Boudoir

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Part 1

The overlapping sounds of casual, polite conversation and the occasional clink of a crystal goblet were punctuated on rarer instances with a louder laugh or a formal introduction as those who were in attendance of this special social gathering arrived at the lavish mansion in the countryside just outside Bordeaux. A very elegantly dressed and carefully groomed reindeer doe of near artistic beauty stood roughly in the center of the meeting hall as those around her celebrated in a reserved and equally refined fashion. Her hair was done up as high as her antlers, a very widely recognized feature for this representative of such an important local family.

Simone Villepin most certainly felt the burden of her station, having been placed in charge of this event as a valued servant to the very wealthy and respected Girard family. It had to go well because this was a once in a lifetime experience for her dear charge, the young lady doe, Madeline. Incapable of having children herself, Madame Villepin had eagerly immersed herself in raising Madeline from her very first moments of life to this special day, where Madeline was finally coming of age.

The energetic and sometimes challenging little doe had grown to a fine measure of nobility and poise before her family's eyes in large part due to the intense diligence of her house's most trusted servant. Because of how close Simone was to the girl, her family had no trouble placing her caretaker in charge of this event. It seemed perfectly right, and they provided liberties and instructions which surprised even the perpetually loyal and serious Villepin herself.

It was distinctly this understood level of uncommon freedom for this event that had Simone nervous. She knew she was trusted, but this level of confidence only made the older doe more fiercely focused on making sure this ceremonial and nearly sacred day was not marred by even the smallest flaw.

The sun had set quite a bit before the evening event began as winter embraced the land and Le réveillon de Noël punctuated an additional sense of merriment and celebration through the already festive event. The important birthday aside, the end of the year holiday celebrations already had the manor lavishly decorated and keen to receive visitors. Villepin gazed across the room toward the table where wine was being served and saw a concerned expression on young Madeline's face as she spoke with a younger doe, a close friend of hers. Her caretaker made an immediate beeline for the pair. She would not have anything worry her charge on this special day.

“... but my grandfather said they all defected because they had cut one meal from the rations. Imagine that! Abandoning your post for mere loaves bread!”

“Lady Margaret,” Simone got the girl’s attention.

“Yes, Madame!” The girl stood straighter, a darker-toned and leaner doe. Her features were immediately marked with worry.

“You are wanted in the foyer.”

“Yes, Madame...” The younger doe hung her head a bit and shuffled off. There was absolutely no misunderstanding. The foyer was outside the ballroom. Get out. It was taboo to bring up conflict during a celebration of life. Margaret messed up. There would be no hassling of the lady of the hour. Her birthday, her coming of age, and all that was planned to follow were not to be discouraged by concerns beyond the hedges. Any guest invited knew their manners or they’d not have been on the list.

“She was fine,” sighed the lovely and more petite Madeline.

“You should concern yourself with enjoyment this evening, Madeline. Nothing else. You will have much to concern yourself with now that yesterday passed the last days of your youth, sweet girl. Let this day be a celebration before all such responsibility becomes due.

“Margaret loves all things political. If I expected not to hear of it, I’d have not have shared a moment with her at all.”

“Shall I bring her back?” asked Simone, her long, graceful cervine ears falling back to show her disapproval.

“It’s fine,” noted the doe, her shorter hair tidily drawn back and set to tight, long curls. She looked up with a smile. “I would have had to part from the conversation all the same. The clock shows six.”

“The hour you joined this world.” Villepin took Madeline’s keratin-tipped finger in her own, looking at the little points of youthful antlers, dwarfed by her own more impressive ones. “And a happier time began for me that hour which persists to this very day.”

“You always say that, but I have made you suffer every day hence, have I not?” she inquired.

“Nonsense.”

“I’m nervous. I feel I should faint,” expressed the smaller doe. Villepin took a long, narrow and elegant folding fan from her belt and wafted at the younger doe.

"Don't you dare. Fainting is too common. You have prepared for today, have you not?"

"Margret says preparation does not leave one truly prepared," Madeline huffed.

"What experience does *she* have in such matters?" replied Villepin.

"Point made," sighed the blushing smaller doe.

"Introducing the Noble Monsieur Beaufort." The call came out at the door to the elegant and spacious gathering hall of the Gerard mansion. The name jerked a gasp from Madeline. Her attention snapped to the foyer where her more socially capable parents greeted the new guest with genuine enthusiasm. They positively glowed with countenance and importance even in this room full of richly dressed and highly respected folks.

"Poise," warned Simone, touching a scarlet-tinted doe ear with her folded fan.

"Easy for you to say. You have more experience." There was a wince from the girl. "I'm sorry Madame Villepin," she whispered, "I did not intend to suggest... I know you can't... I mean, not ..."

"Calm yourself. I'm fine with my life. And I get to enjoy this vicariously at least, so show cheer. For us both, if not just yourself." The older lady doe smiled brightly. Yes, she could not have a family of her own, but she certainly didn't regret making Madeline her own, even if she were not a daughter of her own flesh and blood.

"I worry I will seem young and foolish. Look at him..." Madeline had to avert her gaze, fearing that she'd be caught staring as the largest and most well-groomed buck in the room strode confidently and purposefully in.

"He worries of the same thing, I assure you," stated Simone calmly.

"I bet not. Is he coming this way?" whispered Madeline uneasily.

"He is. You can look, you silly child." Simone felt a bit mirthful at the girl's nervousness. Madeline was typically stubborn and a little hot-headed. She was out of her element and it was charming to see.

"Okay. Okay, I can do this." Madeline stood up straighter again, facing Beaufort as the soft thumps of his hooves on the polished hardwood floor announced his approach. He was massive, beautiful, and exuded refinement and respect. He was dressed as nobility and his hair was bound back attractively to help provide that clean feel of masculine perfection. His antlers were perfect and sturdy and didn't boast any uncouth scarring.

"You are, I suspect, the beautiful Lady Madeline Gerard?" asked the smiling buck after peering at the dead-silent doe for a moment or two. He took her gentle and graceful hand in his. She gave a rapt, diminutive squeak that put a happy flutter in Simone's heart. It was absolutely adorable to the older doe. He drew that delicate smaller hand to his smiling lips and pressed a worshipful kiss upon the back of it. The suddenly painfully shy doe averted her eyes again, ears back and rose-tinted.

Simone did not look away, however. This was delicious. This was everything she'd been looking forward to. This was Madeline's coming of age, and her day of selection.

Madame Villepin had been looking forward to this even more than Madeline had, she was sure, and Madeline had been anxious and excited for nearly six months about it. She'd been eagerly awaiting it since her parents selected Monsieur Beaufort from the list of noble suitors who were collectively interested in providing young Madeline that which she hoped for most of all – Motherhood. The doe accepted their proposed choice of buck eagerly and this evening's plans were crafted with a sense of resolute joy.

This revered function and respected tradition of nobility was something that Villepin had been denied herself due to a childhood illness. It would have been completely fruitless and that perceived flaw reduced her standing in her own family so much that she moved away entirely. She had not expected to find a new family in the Gerard household, but they took her in and offered her kindness and guidance such that it left the nearly broken Simone indebted to them permanently. When Madeline was born no gift could ever match them allowing Villepin to be Madeline's caretaker, and no order from the family she served had ever been more revered.

This day, this hallowed day, was the culmination of it all. Older and wiser, Villepin felt no regrets for the chance, the experience she lost. However, most unexpectedly, Madeline's family made a peculiar and fascinating offer to their most trusted servant, framed as a request that the elder doe would not dream of denying.

"I suspect then that you are Madame Villepin?" offered the buck, smiling confidently up to Simone. She put her fan away rather hastily, having not even realized that she'd taken to cooling herself with it as she watched him politely romance his intended doe.

"That is correct, Monsieur." She bowed her head slightly.

"I have been instructed to fear you like none that I have feared before. You have my abject terror, Madame."

"My condolences on your loss," Villepin responded with a sinister grin.

"My loss?" returned Beaufort curiously.

"No one would have instructed that you say that to me unless they were absolutely certain they would already be dead by the time you said it." Simone fixed her eyes on the only slightly younger lad sternly.

"Oh... My apologies, Madame, I-" he started, rising and appearing immediately tense.

"She jests," Madeline spoiled.

"Ah..." the tone from the buck was still nervous, so Villepin smiled to him so he'd know the younger doe spoke the truth.

"A pleasure to meet you both. I... I have been instructed that we will depart slightly from tradition." He eyed Simone carefully, his own ears tinting, though not so much as Madeline's.

"You had agreed to this, yes?" asked Simone.

"I understood and agreed, yes, but I will admit... joking aside... it's still a bit daunting. I do not wish to offend and it is doubly so under the watchful eye of one who has raised the one who I intend to... tend to... this night." There was another anxious squeak from Madeline.

"I have promised only that she shall not be harmed. As you have been likewise instructed, I expect that you may, if you like, ignore me completely. I will do nothing to interfere unless it's been made clear that I must." She referred, of course, to the request. Be with Madeline when she takes her gift of motherhood from the strong and respected Monsieur Beaufort. Aid her if she needs it. Ensure the experience is as enjoyable as it possibly could be for her.

It was the part that she was told *after* that which had Simone on the edge of losing her own poise and dignity. Not what was ordered, but what had ultimately been permitted.

Though trained to not show it, she was arguably more excited and anxious than either of the younger reindeer.

Tonight would be something they *all* would be encouraged to enjoy.