Three Square Meals Ch. 150.3

John panted for breath, feeling groggy after his senses had been overloaded by the incredible intensity of his climax. He glanced down at Auralei and saw her still kneeling before him, her slender green hands slowly caressing the rounded dome tenting her dress. She looked just as dazed as he felt, but he knew that in her case, Auralei had been overwhelmed by the telepathic contact with his mind.

They were psychically bonded now, he could sense it, a powerful active connection existing between them with the catalyst filling her stomach to the brim. He reached out to gently stroke her cheek, feeling a surge of affection for the trusting young woman who had just pledged her life to being with him. He was determined to make sure she never regretted forging that alliance, and that Auralei would lead a life full of love and happiness under his protection.

After checking on one very good girl, he then turned his attention to a very naughty one.

“Oh, don’t be like that,” Alyssa said with a sigh, moving around to sit beside their newest recruit.

“Be like what exactly?” John asked, narrowing his eyes.

Alyssa met his level gaze and raised an eyebrow. “Before you tell me off for being naughty, just answering me this question: Did you, or did you not, just experience one of the most intense orgasms of your life, knowing that you’ve just claimed Larn’kelnar’s daughter?”

He shook his head in frustration and sat up straight. “That’s not the point, Alyssa! Why didn’t you warn me beforehand!”

“But where’s the fun in that?” she asked in genuine confusion.

“Don’t play games with me, I’m serious,” he replied, looking back sternly.

“So am I,” Alyssa said, adopting an equally stern expression. “Very serious.”

“This isn’t a joke,” he said quietly. “Auralei trusted us, and now I feel like I abused that trust.”

Alyssa deflated and shook her head. “I wish you’d trust me for once.”

“Hey, don’t turn this around on me,” John protested. “You’re the one keeping important secrets!”

She gazed up at him, a deeply hurt look in her cerulean eyes. “Auralei never met her father. She knew that Larn’kelnar had slept with her mother thirty years ago, but she had no relationship with him. She’s been grieving over Seldanna’s death, but she never thought twice about Larn’kelnar. Her family is not like Calara’s... this is not the same as if you’d just killed Jack Fernandez.”

John’s face fell. “Oh...”

“The only people that know who Auralei’s father is, are you, me, Edraele, and Jade. Obviously none of us are going to say anything, so I was planning on leaving it to you to gently break the news about the part Larn’kelnar played in her mother’s death. I suspect she’ll be very grateful to you for executing that asshole and avenging Seldanna, but what do I know? I’m just totally irresponsible, right?”

“Alyssa... I’m sorry,” John said, feeling like crap.

“I just wanted to give you a pleasurable experience, because I know how much you dislike the girls going into the trance. At least this way, instead of feeling guilty about it, you could feel elation at having rescued a kind-hearted young woman from a malevolent monster. If we’d fought Larn’kelnar just a few weeks later, Auralei would’ve turned thirty and taken her Ceremony of Allegiance. That means drinking a cup dosed with traces of Larn’kelnar’s cum... and she’d have been connected to his psychic network. Instead of finding this beautiful girl here, she’d be a shrivelled up husk. That’s how much of a shit Larn’kelnar gave about his daughter.”

“I didn’t know any of that,” he protested. “I really am sorry, honey.”

She nodded and let out a forlorn sigh. “I am too. I’m afraid to tell you that you’ve just invalidated the terms of our bet.”

“What do you mean?” he asked, narrowing his eyes in suspicion.

Alyssa leaped to her feet and pointed at him in accusation. “The terms of the bet were that if I won, you’d owe me a favour and go along with whatever I wanted without any complaints or arguments. I’m dreadfully sorry, Mr. Blake, but accusing me of keeping important secrets from you, very much counts as ‘a complaint’ which subsequently led to ‘an argument’. Therefore you’re in violation of our agreement... and you still owe me a favour!”

“Wait a minute!” John protested, holding his hand out towards the kneeling girl in question. “I went along with everything you wanted. We just recruited Auralei!”

She ignored him and started doing a victory dance. “You still owe me a fa-vour! You still owe me a fa-vour! You still owe me a fa-vour!”

He couldn’t help laughing at the absurdity of the situation. “Yeah, yeah, very mature.”

“You still owe me a fa-vour!” she sang, leaning down to give him a kiss. “Isn’t that better than me being deeply hurt at you for not trusting your fiercely loyal matriarch?”

John sighed in defeat. “Alright, you win. I still owe you a favour... and I really am sorry for not trusting you like I should have.”

“No problem, you’re forgiven!” Alyssa replied with a beatific smile.

“I should’ve listened to Jehanna,” he muttered. “She tried to warn me that you’re way smarter than I give you credit for.”

She wiggled her eyebrows at him and whispered, “You still owe me a fa-vour!”

John groaned in protest, then stood up and refastened his trousers. “We need to move Auralei and let her sleep this off. She’ll be out for the next fourteen hours.”

Alyssa nodded and gently stroked her hair. “I asked Sakura to search the palace. She found Larn’kelnar’s bedroom... she can sleep it off there.”

He tried not to laugh and shook his head. “You’re incorrigible. Auralei’s first time is not going to be in her dead father’s bed.”

She raised an eyebrow and looked at him speculatively.

“I wouldn’t enjoy it that much,” he said, scooping up the comatose girl in his arms. “You’d be wasting your favour.”

“Fair enough,” she agreed, sashaying along at his side and humming a happy tune to herself.

John glanced down at Auralei and couldn’t help smiling at her fondly. “She does seem like a lovely girl. Is she really an orphan?”

Alyssa nodded. “Everything I told you was the honest truth. Auralei was devastated when her mother died; she’s been crying herself to sleep almost every night for the last two weeks. Along with all the stress of trying to take care of the survivors, with no training or leadership experience, the poor girl’s on the verge of a nervous breakdown.”

John shook his head in sympathy. “I had no idea. She seemed so happy.”

“She was just overwhelmed at meeting you for the first time and being instantly smitten. You really have rescued her just in the nick of time,” she said, leaning over to pat Auralei’s hand.

He nodded in understanding, his expression solemn. “Thanks for pushing me to recruit her. We definitely did the right thing.”

“I think so,” Alyssa said softly.

As John had his hands full, Alyssa gestured towards the doors and they swung open before them. The armour-clad Lionesses were waiting outside, and they turned to smile at the new arrivals.

Calara was the first to stride towards them, her brown eyes sparkling with excitement. “Oh my god, she looks so beautiful!” the Latina gushed. “When I first saw Auralei dressed like that, it was like she’d just stepped out of a fantasy holo-movie.”

“Like an Elven princess?” Jehanna suggested, enthusiastically nodding in agreement. “Yeah, I know exactly what you mean.”

“Oh? What holo-movie was that from?” Rachel asked, looking at her with interest.

Jehanna blushed furiously. “Um... I’ve forgotten the name.”

Rachel grinned in amusement. “Oh right... that kind of movie.”

When the laughter died down, Sakura said, “I take it that pulse of blue light was related to Auralei?”

“Yeah, Sakura was just telling us about that,” Calara said, looking intrigued. “She was the only one that saw it.”

“Can we continue this discussion on the move?” John requested, glancing down at the young woman in his arms. “I want to get Auralei settled in the Raptor.”

“Of course,” Alyssa agreed, setting off beside him.

Rachel glanced at Auralei, then up at John. “The pulse of light must have occurred at the precise moment you fed her for the first time. The fact that only Sakura could see it means that it was related to psychic connections, and the nature of that pulse must mean it spread out to cover a considerable area. It was blue, which is your signature colour... so that must mean you’ve psychically claimed the Larathyran race.”

John blinked in astonishment at her rapid leaps in logic.

Before he could say anything, Alyssa nodded in confirmation. “The two Larathyran engineers with Dana were both affected by the pulse a couple of seconds after it swept out of the palace. I thought something like this might happen.”

“Wait, you planned this?” John asked, looking at her in bewilderment.

“Of course,” she replied with an enigmatic smile. “Why do you think I asked Jade to teach me ancient Maliri? I love you very much, but it wasn’t just so that I could serenade you with tributes to mighty Baen’thelas. I knew we’d be travelling to Larn’kelnar’s homeworld eventually, and I wondered whether you’d be able to claim multiple thrall races. Apparently the answer is yes... you most definitely can.”

“Why didn’t you say anything?” he protested.

“You’re wonderful in many different ways, John, but you do have a bit of a problem with recruitment,” Alyssa explained with sympathy. “I understand, I really do, but if I’d started talking about recruiting a Larathyran thrall, how would you have reacted?”

He glanced down at Auralei and frowned. “I’d have been worrying about it from the moment you mentioned the idea.”

“That’s why,” Alyssa said, leaning over to give him a gentle kiss. “There wasn’t anything malicious behind it. I just didn’t want you to start worrying about me cashing in my ‘favour’ when you already had far too much on your plate. There was the Brimorians to deal with, then your guide, the matriarchs, Kythshara, the thrall fleets... I couldn’t burden you with anything else. Besides... XO is in charge of recruitment.”

John chuckled at that and conceded the point with a nod.

“So you really learned ancient Maliri just to speak to the Larathyrans?” Calara asked her girlfriend in fascination.

Alyssa nodded. “Them and any other unclaimed thralls we might bump into. Jade taught me a lot of very useful phrases.”

“Like what?” Jehanna asked, looking intrigued.

\*Ith bregnol, hast elair imenn’eier voluith,\* the blonde replied, her dulcet tones making the exotic language sound like liquid honey.

John chuckled and shook his head in amusement.

“What did that mean?!” Calara asked, listening avidly.

Alyssa lovingly caressed the Latina’s stomach. “You’ll look beautiful with a baby bump.”

Calara blushed and the girls all laughed.

“I’ve had some good use out of that one already,” Alyssa said, with a meaningful glance at Auralei.

John gave her a pained look. “What have you been promising her?”

Alyssa held up her hands defensively. “Nothing! But she does know that eventually you’ll be the father of her children, just like the rest of us.”

“And how did she take that bombshell?” John asked with a wry smile.

“She cried tears of joy,” Alyssa said softly as she stroked Auralei’s hand. “She couldn’t believe her luck.”