



Fire Emblem – Houses of Fate

Blue Lion Arc I: Harness a Bit

“What are you looking at?”

“A beautiful girl, doing beautiful things.”

“Are you flirting with me?”

“...no. I'm, uh, I'm here to help you practice. That's all.”

Ingrid grimaced, riding her horse around the practice grounds again. Her eyes only sometimes strayed to where Sylvain was standing, waiting, shuffling and nervous. She'd known him since childhood and he seemed different today – pretty and foppish, yes, but. But. There was a nervous energy to him, sweat glistening on the back of his neck.

She knocked the practice dummies down and he picked them back up, resetting the course for her. His hands were clumsy, fingers trembling.

“Are you sick?” she asked him, but he shook his head. “Seriously, Sylvain.”

“I'm fine,” he lied.

He was always lying, always flirting, always so confident with nothing to show for it.

She knew a better way to live.

Astride her horse, she drilled herself and her strider to the point of exhaustion. Her horse was panting, she sweating on top of it, stripped out of her jacket to better move through the motions of piercing and slashing with her lance. She set targets and hit them, her movement like liquid, she and her animal acting as one.

She expected to catch Sylvain leering at her, but he wasn't. Face flush, maybe, but not leering.

Why are you so nervous? was the question she wanted to ask, but she settled for, “Why are you here?”

“There's something about watching a knight do what they were meant to do,” Sylvain stammered. He managed his usual grin, resetting her targets as she directed, stepping back so she could have another go.

“You should get your horse and join me,” Ingrid said, taking a moment to catch her breath.

“Our Crests are similar.”

“I guess.”

“A little hard work wouldn't kill you, but a lack of it might.”

He opened his mouth to say something and she rode on by, her lance moving with a terrifying alacrity. This is what her Crest let her do – perfect aim and frightening dexterity while astride a horse. It was a small thing but she could make it strong by understanding it, practising with it, learning about every last thing that it let her do.

She went through the motions again, a third time, aiming for perfection and coming close enough for Sylvain.

"Not good enough," she muttered, having him set it all up again. "It has to be perfect."

The fourth time, it was.

Everything clicked into place: her horse moving underneath her, the reins in one hand and lance in the other, she and her horse pivoting as one – slash, pierce, trample, slash – a host of pretend enemies falling before knightly fervor.

Sylvain looked like he might swoon.

"I know where I want to be on the battlefield," he said.

"Where's that?"

"Beside you."

Clapping from the other side of the practice field caught their attention. Cornelia, a High Mage in service to the royal family of their native Holy Faerghus, was watching with two strangers. Ingrid stared at them and frowned – pretty ladies, she thought, even if she couldn't see their faces. They looked like they were wearing mourning shrouds, mourning gowns.

Perhaps they had come from some far away land to Garreg Mach on pilgrimage?

"Do you know who those people with Cornelia are?" Ingrid asked. Something about them was making her feel uneasy.

"No," Sylvain answered, frowning. From the tone of his voice, he was feeling it, too.

Cornelia was waving them over.

They had no reason not to go.

"Stay close to me."

"I will."

They got closer, Ingrid not dismounting, not putting her lance away. Sylvain was still nervous, she saw, his hand never straying far from the hilt of his sword.

They were in Garreg Mach. They were supposed to be safe.

"Lady Cornelia, who are those two?" Ingrid called, bowing her head politely. "Pilgrims?"

"Of a sort," Cornelia answered, and both of the women with her tittered.

"Did she say something funny?" Sylvain asked, falling into a fake relaxation, his usual flirting – and Ingrid wondered how she had never noticed that his rakishness was a means to mask his intentions, to hide. "I'd love to learn the nature of the joke so I can bring more smiles to your faces."

"Pilgrims," one of the two said, and laughed. "So concise. So amusing. Do you want them, or will you do me the kindness?"

The silent one lifted a hand and Sylvain staggered and fell to one knee, blood trickling from his nose and ears.

Without thinking, Ingrid spurred her horse forward and brought forth her lance. She didn't know what was happening, not really, but she was a knight and a knight protected the people that she cared about from any and all attackers. Cornelia was still smiling, one of pilgrims still and waiting, but the one that had collapsed Sylvain was aiming her hand at Ingrid with a smug confidence.

Ingrid's lance lashed out and struck sparks against some unknown barrier, not cutting the pilgrim down the way Ingrid had hoped.

"How sad," the pilgrim tittered.

Ingrid lashed out again, yelling in challenge, yelling for help, but Cornelia was doing something, casting some spell, isolating them to what was here and now.

Fine, she thought, this is fine. The knight always triumphs in the stories. I just have to-

Things might have gone differently if she wasn't already exhausted. Her breathing was heavy, her grip loose from sweat, her fingers sore from an afternoon spent drilling and drilling and drilling again. Her horse was tired, she was tired. Her jacket was off and she was unarmored. On a fair battlefield she still might have won but this was not that.

"Treachery," she gasped, knocked from her horse to the ground below. Her lance rolled away as her enemy stood over her, and despite the veil Ingrid could tell that the other woman was smiling. "In a fair fight-"

"Stupid animal," the pilgrim tittered, drawing closer, kneeling down beside her, "there's never been any such thing."



Darkness covered them, a shimmering shell of inky blackness to keep the world away.

The mourning woman was over her, holding her down. She didn't look stronger than Ingrid, but there was some slithering dark in her clothing, in the air, and it was that darkness that held Ingrid down despite her struggles. She tried to kick, to grab her enemy, but her limbs were held to the ground as she strained and screamed for help.

Tilting her head, she looked at Sylvain's unmoving body.

Cornelia was leading a creature Ingrid did not know towards him.

"Get away from him!" she screamed, bucking her shoulder up. Her arm stayed down and the mourning woman above her pressed down between her breasts, shoving her palm hard into the base of Ingrid's rib cage and driving the air from her lungs.

"You have your own worries," the woman smiled, tittered, leaning closer.

"Pitticus, stop playing with your toy and make certain she is secure," Cornelia called, letting the creature she'd led by hand go, letting that *thing* fall all over Sylvain.

"Males of your species are pathetic," the mourning woman, Pitticus, tittered. "Prone to anger, laziness, pretension. We can do better with you." The fingers on her gloves snapped into small sharp blades, more scalpel than talon.

"Get away from me!"

"No."

A careful cut down her blouse and bra, down to the top of her skirt and lower, down the hemline of her pants, all the way to her boots. The scalpel cut through all of it, leaving a thin red line along Ingrid's body as her clothing fell off of it, leaving her naked and on her back, exposed to the unknowable monster above her.

"So much pretension in you," Pitticus continued, moving the hand that had been holding Ingrid from her breasts to her throat and pulling back. "Always looking down on everyone else. Well, we can fix that."

Her enemy released her, standing back, and Ingrid was free.

Still naked, she rolled backwards and to her feet, meaning to spring for her lance but there was something tightening on her neck, something that been left on her neck. She reached for it, touched, a cold smoothness that felt something like water and something like metal.

"What is this?" she asked, pulling at it as it tightened again.

"One must always mark an owned animal."

The presence on Ingrid's throat surged, circling her neck and tightening. She pulled at it and felt it slither onto her hands, darker than night, darker than black against her pale skin. It crept along her fingers and bound them, forced her hands into black-clad rings. She tried to brush it off but the source at her neck was pushing up and down at once, circling her face and moving down her torso.

She felt it squeeze her breasts, circling them with straps and lines, down her belly and lower. She moved her bound hands, hoping to fight it, somehow fight it, but her wrists attached to black liquidy bands that were circling her thighs, locking her arms in place and forcing her back straight, her breasts out. More of the darkness cupped her breasts from below, holding them firm as an offering. Pitticus reached out and grabbed a breast, twisting painfully.

Ingrid tried to scream, tried to call for help, but the slithering dark made it's way into her mouth and held her tongue, silencing her. She tried to run but her feet felt heavy, the same darkness shifting down her long strong legs and coating them, forcing her feet to arch, forcing her legs taut and straight.

The mourning woman easily strode towards her, hanging reins from Ingrid's mouth granting the woman total control of her. Pitticus yanked on them, establishing that control.

"I want to look in your eyes as you experience this," Pitticus tittered.

Experience what? Ingrid wondered.

She did not wonder long.

Holding her by the reins, Pitticus made Ingrid watch as the cold slithering dark circled her hips, cupping her ass and working down towards the space between her legs. Ingrid bucked

and fought, twisting her head, but Pitticus held her steady as she felt the darkness trickle inside her, first a leak and then a river, filling her, breaking her open.

Ingrid screamed.

She closed her eyes and screamed.

Even with her eyes closed she could feel it, the violation, the invasion, the expansion of the darkness inside her.

"Silly little nothing with such pretension," Pitticus tittered. Ingrid could feel the extensions inside her begin to hum, shaking her hips. She wept – for now, this was a violation, but Pitticus whispered that she would get used to the pleasurable feelings in time, that the sensation would dull the sharpness of her mind into compliance.

She could see herself, she herself being ridden, being used, being

"Oh, you're not a thing meant for war," Pitticus tittered. "You are common as anything, as each blade of grass. You are nothing more than our animal, and your fate lies in my hands."

Ingrid felt a pinching sensation on her lower lips that held, painful. With each step she could feel a pull on her lips, feel the small buzz rocking her gently, seducing her, toying with her, playing with her.

"We'll use you as a beast of burden," Pitticus teased, grabbing her breast, running her hand up along the soft flesh to Ingrid's neck. "You rode an animal but now we know the truth of you – you are an animal to be ridden."

Ingrid bucked, tried to scream, tried to kick, tried to free herself, but she was helpless, hopeless. Sylvain lay on the ground and the *thing* over him rose, smiling the lazy grin belonging to the corpse beneath him.

"You need a new name to remind you of what you were always meant to be," Pitticus tittered. Not-Sylvain came over to her, running his hands over her naked back, down her ass, looking down at her.

"Looking good, cutie," he said, his voice and inflection the same as the man he had replaced.

Pitticus held up a chess piece, one shaped like a horse, and giggled.

"I think we'll call you Knight."

Ingrid bucked and wailed as Not-Sylvain tugged on her reins, leading her away from the light and into the dark.