



Fire Emblem – Houses of Fate

Golden Deer Arc IV: Unseen, Unheard, Unwanted

Ignatz had tried to get her out, he really had, but Leonie hadn't listened.

“We made a terrible mistake,” he'd said. He'd taken her by the hand and tried to pull her away. He'd said a lot of things about art and *seeing things from a distance* and a bunch of other nonsense. “A thousand years, they've been waiting for a thousand years and it was staring as in the face, and they're doing it now and we're not ready, we're not-”

“What are you talking about?” Leonie had asked, pulling her hand free. His hands and grip were strong for his stature, but he was an archer. She, on the other hand, *had been trained to fight by the greatest warrior to ever live*. The only person that might have possibly been a challenge to her was Byleth, the girl her true father had left her for.

“It's r-religious d-d-doctrine,” Ignatz sputtered. He talked fast when he was scared, stammered when he was worried, and he was out of his mind panicking right now. “I'm pretty sure we're the only two left. We need to get out of here right now.”

“The only two what?” she asked, and he was looking around.

“The only two students,” whispered Ignatz, “the only two people.”

Leonie looked around, looked back at the school. Things were quiet for an early evening, but there was no other sign that anything was wrong. Still, a chill crawled up her spine and settled in her shoulders.

“Jeralt is here,” she whispered.

“Jeralt is probably dead,” Ignatz said. “Or worse. The Professor, too, she and Rhea would have been the first to fall. And we will be, too, unless we get out of here right now.”

He tugged at her arm again and she pulled herself free.

“We can't leave,” she said, “not if what you're saying is true.”

“I'm sorry,” he said.

And then the coward fled.

Alone, Leonie looked up at the comforting invincible towers of Garreg Mach and felt a sliver of dread. Setting her shoulders, taking a deep breath, she walked alone towards whatever horror awaited her.



She wasn't the archer Claude or Ignatz was, but she was no slouch with a bow. She grabbed one from a corpse as she moved past, following the sounds of small skirmishes. Her enemy was not like anything she had ever seen before – she wasn't sure which house had betrayed the treaty to stage what had to be a coup, but she would find out.

Her arrows found homes in the eyes and hearts of those that were stalking the priests and guards. She went to them, picked them up and rallied them – this is what she had been trained for all her life.

“Report,” she commanded, and the guard did. She learned that the main monastery and faculty quarters

had been the first to fall, hit from tunnels running under the monastery. After those places had been quietly secured by ambush, the attackers had continued to use ambush tactics to take out all three houses – Blue Lions, Golden Deer, and Black Eagles alike. Only a handful of outliers remained free.

“We should retreat,” the guard said, and, as much as she hated to acknowledge, retreat was her best option. She knew nothing about the enemy, nothing about their numbers or capabilities. She had no idea how many had fallen.

Grimacing, she looked at the quiet towers, the smokeless mess hall, and nodded.

“Give the order,” she said. “Grab what arms you can. Do we have any cavalry?”

“No.”

Fuck.

“Okay, I need a horse,” she said. “You’re my second. I’m going to take point and we’re going to do a quick loop around the outskirts, see if there are any other survivors, and then we’re going to pull out, regroup, and work towards avenging what was done here today.”

“Sir, yes, sir!”

“Keep quiet,” she admonished. “We don’t know how many of them there are or if they have any scouts at hand. Get everyone together. Anyone that can’t fight needs to make for the woods, led by a scout that can fight, and they need to flee south towards Varley. The rest of what’s left are with me. Understand?”

“Sir, yes, sir.”

“We’re going to get through this,” she said, putting a hand on his shoulder. The stables weren’t too far away. “Keep calm, follow my orders, and I’ll make sure we get out of here alive.”

I’m father’s first and best apprentice. I can beat anyone, anything, even this, she thought.

Nodding to herself, she made a beeline for the stables while her second relayed her orders.



The horse was skittish, nervous. He could sense the trouble they were all in.

Leonie had taken point. They’d rescued two more small groups of stragglers from their strange attackers, learning very little about them, and had almost completed their circle around the Monastery. And then

A woman who looked like Monica was standing in a clearing, holding a very limp and barely breathing body. She was surrounded by the forces of the enemy, slithering out of the twilight dark, surrounding Leonie and her few remaining forces. She held up her hand and created a sphere of light, illuminating the body’s face.

Claude.

She stared at the leader of the Gloucester Alliance. His eyes were fluttering and the lids were closed. There was blood on his lips, soaking through his clothes. He wasn’t moving. He wasn’t responsive. Not-Monica dropped him, let him fall on the grass. She was trembling, Leonie noticed.

Good.

She issued quiet commands, taking point, accepting leadership. This is what she had been raised for. This is what she had been waiting for all her life.

“We were frightened of three beasts,” Not-Monica said. “Just three. Our plans accounted for everything and everyone else. Jeralt, Byleth, you. No one else.”

“I’m not a beast,” Leonie said. She paused, taking stock of the situation. “What do you want?”

“Every last Crest bearer in our custody,” Not-Monica said. “You, in my hands. The rest can wait.”

“Can they?” Leonie laughed and shook her head. “Dad is still out there, somewhere. And his daughter.”

“Jeralt is dead,” Not-Monica said, smirking, licking her dagger. “I can still taste him. His surprise. We started this by stabbing him in the back and gutting him while he was talking with his daughter at his wife's grave.”

Leonie stared, half-caught in a laugh. She didn't believe it. She couldn't believe it. She laughed but it strangled at the certainty in Not-Monica's eyes, the cool confidence in her voice.

She wasn't lying.

She wasn't lying.

“And Byleth was obviously taken,” Not-Monica continued. “Obviously. Couldn't let her go. My game, my rules. And that leaves only you, Jeralt's little afterthought.”

“I am going to kill you.”

The words were quiet. Not a threat, a statement of fact. The sun was warm. Grass was soft. The shadows were dark. She was going to kill this girl.

Not-Monica dropped Claude, let him lay limp at her feet.

He was still breathing.

“Or,” Not-Monica smiled, “You and all your Crest-Bearers can give yourselves up. I'll let your people come and collect little Claude here and take him wherever they think they can go.”

She narrowed her eyes, considering.

“He's nearly dead,” Leonie said. “He might die before they can get him to safety.”

“Put down like an animal, yes,” Not-Monica said, tilting her head back, smiling. “He dies for certain unless you give me what I want.”

“Just me,” Leonie seethed. “The others go free.”

“Done,” Not-Monica said. “Throw down your weapons, beasts.”

“No,” Leonie commanded, and everyone – even Not-Monica – froze. “You know who I am. You know the value of my word. I don't know who you are or what your word is worth. My people collect Claude and go. Then, I'll drop my lance and bow and dismount.”

Not-Monica smiled, nodded.

“What are you doing?” her second-in-command hissed at her.

“The people will rally behind one of three people – Edelgard, Claude, or Dmitri,” Leonie said. “We don't know what happened here. We don't know if either of the other two survived. What we know is that we lost here, badly, and if we have any hope of winning the war we need someone to rally the people behind. Claude is the only one I know is still, for certain, alive.”

Her second did not look happy about it.

“I don't like it, either,” Leonie whispered. “You start for Varley, split the party – scouts and a single healer take Claude north along the river in Faerghus, then cut through the mountains near Galatea towards Allell.”

“What's there?”

“Nothing, which means they won't be looking for you there,” Leonie said. “Walk slow until you're out of sight, then move as fast as you can and do not stop running. You understand?”

It took him a moment, but he did.

She waited on horseback while her people collected Claude and retreated. She kept her lance at the ready, her hand on the reins, waiting for treachery. When her people were out of sight, she let the bow fall from her shoulder, the lance from her hands. She dismounted and waited for them to kill her.

They moved closer to her and she smiled, stepped forward and laughed when they paused.

Even now, she thought, they fear me.

She let them take her, bind her. Only then did Not-Monica turn to her people.

“Go after them,” she ordered. “Kill Claude.”

“And you call us beasts,” Leonie muttered.

Not-Monica slapped her so hard across the face that she lost consciousness.



She expected them to kill her.

They didn't.

Leonie had been stripped and placed in the central courtyard of Garreg Mach Monastery where any of her captors could come and see her, touch her.

Her heels were forced off the ground by a metal brace that forced her onto her very tippy toes, keeping her legs painfully straight, her ass impossibly taut. Another metal brace was wrapped around her ankles, keeping them a few inches apart, keeping her legs open.

Behind her calves and thighs two parallel beams rode up her legs and connected under the crack of her ass, riding up her spine and shoulders and neck to her head. A steel band wrapped around her cheeks to something that pressed down on her tongue, silencing her.

Two more metal bars pushed out from her bottom, one for each forearm, holding her arms out and keeping her helpless. She could barely move. She was completely exposed and surrounded by people that saw her as an animal.

She tried to pull herself free, tried to break out, but the metal held.

There was a nearby plaque that told people who she was, she thought. She had never seen it, but her captors knew her name and knew that she had been trained by Jeralt. They walked up to her and spit in her face, slapped her ass, molested her, hit her, groped her, abused her.

Leonie considered herself a strong girl, but day after day after week after month of this abuse wore her

down. She couldn't look anyone in the eye. She couldn't help but tremble and cry when people came to taunt her, pretending they were going to hit her just to watch her flinch.

Once every few days they would send Judith to clean her. A war hero, a former member of the faculty. The strength in her arms used to scrub the spit and abuse from Leonie. Seeing her like this broke something in Leonie; this hero, this actual living legend, reduced to nothing, her body crisscrossed in welts and bruises, her steps weak and mincing.

At least she can walk, Leonie thought.

Her body ached. Being forced to stand in place hurt. Her muscles stung, losing definition as time passed. She was simply a trophy, something for her captors to come and abuse, relieve themselves in or on, spilling and taking their hatred out on. She suffered their attentions, their slaps and canes. She cried and she whimpered and no one cared.

Day after day after week after month.

She wasn't sure why she never had to go to the bathroom, why she never felt hungry, why her cycle never came. Her days slipped into a meandering trail of abuse and emptiness. Over time, her captors paid less and less attention to her – she was just a fixture in the temple, a piece of art to be ignored.

No one abused her anymore. She was cleaned and she was left alone. She cried when she realized she missed the abuse – at least the abuse had been something, but now she simply hung in a vast pit of apathy. No one cared about her. No one cared that she was there. The sharp edges of her mind dulled, her imagination drifting away.

Judith cleaned her and she hung, alone, isolated, meaningless. No one spoke to her. No one hurt her. Judith cleaned her and she hung alone, isolated, meaningless.

She wished someone would come and abuse her just to break the monotony of her life.

Why had they even done this to her? Who were they? Who was she? It all seemed to melt away. At one point someone she had known – *Monica? Not-Monica?* – came to visit her and she felt a wave of hatred and gratitude. Gratitude for the visit. Hatred for a reason she could not name.

“Hello, Leonie,” Not-Monica said, groping her. “I wanted to show you something.”

She walked away, spun the sign that had been in front of her for so long. She squinted, trying to make sense of the letters, trying to remember how to read. She cried when she realized she couldn't.

“I can't believe anyone ever feared you,” Not-Monica said, laughing and shaking her head. She patted the captive's – *Leonie's?* – cheek. Thinking hurt. Remembering hurt. She tried to push her face into the warmth of Not-Monica's hand. “Disgusting.”

Not-Monica removed her hand and wiped it off on her clothing.

“I just wanted to let you know that it's the 22nd of the Verdant Rain Moon,” Not-Monica said. “Do you know what that means?”

The captive didn't.

“You don't because you're just a dumb animal,” Not-Monica said, and spat on her. “I'll come back and check on you next year, maybe. In the meantime, *stay.*”

The captive watched her captor leave with yearning in her heart, and when she could no longer see Not-Monica, the girl once known as Leonie wept.

