

Grace thanked her, took the keys from the lady, and both Karol and her went straight to their room. Walking inside, Grace was pleasantly surprised to find everything pretty clean. She half expected it to be coated in dust or for the beds to be falling apart, given how aged everything she had seen so far was. But no. None of that was the case. Sure, the décor looked like they walked into the home of someone's grandparents, and the building itself was probably constructed 50 years ago, but nothing was in disrepair. All the furniture was very well-maintained. Oddly enough, it gave the place a rather comforting, rustic feel. As if Grace had traveled back to a much simpler time. A time when Esmer was nothing more than rural farmland and Lionhead had yet to exist. Or at least that's what Grace assumed it would be like.

Once they had set their belongings down, both of them took a seat on their respective beds. Grace did a big stretch and yawned.

"Hoooooh boy... All that drivin' has got me beat."

Karol was unamused. "I don't see how you'd be so tired from sitting down all day."

Grace frowned. "Yeah? Why dontcha try drivin' fer a whole day? It ain't exactly effortless to keep focused fer that long. 'Specially when it's as borin' as drivin' through empty roads fer 7 hours straight."

Shrugging, Karol moved onto another subject.

"So, What did you plan to do here, anyway?"

"The same thing I did in Olarch," Grace replied. "Sellin' my trade. Whaddabout you? I know ya said ya were gonna try and get people to fight Lionhead. Do ya got a plan fer that?"

Guiltily, Karol looked down at her hands as she clasped them together.

"N-No.... Not yet. I'm still working on it."

Still unconvinced, Grace slowly nodded. “Uh huh,” she unenthusiastically replied. “Good luck with that, I guess.”

Karol huffed and turned away from Grace. “Gee, thanks for the vote of confidence.”

Grace sighed and briefly rubbed the bridge of her nose with her left hand.

“Look, I’m sorry that I ain’t exactly on board with such a crazy idea as *destroying all of Lionhead*. This quest of yers is just gonna get yerself killed.”

“*What do you know?*” Karol angrily retorted. She was tired of hearing Grace’s dissent.

“It’s not like you’ve even *tried!*”

“I don’t need to! You’ve seen what kinda stuff they keep hidden! They burned down yer home and plenty of other places with that stuff. Who knows what else they got!”

“And? Who cares?! I’ll take them all on! Some fancy gadgets aren’t going to scare me! Especially when I’ve got an army to back me up!”

Grace growled, frustrated. “It don’t matter if ya got a million people fightin’ with ya! They got stuff to deal with that many people too!”

“Yeah, right. You’re just scared of them!”

“YER GODDAMN RIGHT I AM!!” Grace shouted.

Her sudden outburst caused Karol to flinch and fall silent. Shaking, Grace took a deep breath.

“... Wh-Why the hell WOULDN’T I be scared of ‘em! You’ve seen how they handle things! They don’t leave nothin’ untouched! They ain’t afraid to ruin lives at the drop of a hat! They do things to people that you’d only see in nightmares! Goin’ up against ‘em is like challengin’ *death!*”

Karol crossed her arms. “... Then I’ll just have to get strong enough to beat death!”

Defeated, Grace slumped over and started rubbing her face with her hands.

“Stubborn sonova- Ya really ain’t listenin’ to me, are ya?”

“I am. What I’m hearing, though, is someone scared of a *damn boogeyman*. They aren’t invincible. No one is. There’s always a chance that I can win, and I would rather take that chance than sit around and pray they don’t show up like a *certain someone*.”

Having no response, Grace waved her hand dismissively and got up to start unpacking.

“... Whatever. Do whatcha want, I guess.”

Karol huffed. “I already was going to. I wasn’t exactly looking for your permission.”

Grumbling to herself, Grace shot an annoyed look at Karol behind her as she emptied the contents of her luggage onto the bed. *Moron*, she thought to herself. *Don’t come cryin’ to me when yer plan fails.*