

A couple of young, male Chevaliers ran up to them. They bowed. One said, "I'm Crible and this is my pairling Fourag. We would like to offer ourselves as squires to you, Chevalier Guardpont and Exotique Calli. We would be honored to groom your exceptional volarans."

They both needed to fill out, one taller and thinner than the other, who looked as if he'd turn stocky. Both had threads of silver at each temple. Some Power, then.

Calli glanced at Marrec to find him looking at her with raised eyebrows. I approve of these two.

Do you know them?

I've seen them around. They work hard. They are ambitious.

The two young men, she thought they might be around twenty, looked neat and clean and there was the faint smell of horse and volarans on them.

"How good are you with horses?" she asked.

Fourag grimaced. "Fair."

She wanted someone more than fair with horses on her staff. Staff! Imagine that. But she'd had ideas about staffing the ranch at home and those could certainly be flexed to fit her new, incredible, circumstances.

"You wish to become Chevaliers?" asked Marrec.

"Yes!" they replied in unison.

I approve, Marrec repeated.

"Fine," Marian said. "But I also want a squire...a personal assistant who wishes to remain in that post who is exceptional, she liked that new word, had learned the meaning from Marrec's mind, with horses as well as volarans." She glanced around to see a lot of Chevaliers and most

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of the Marshalls in the Landing Field. "Let everyone know." She wasn't sure how a person went about advertising for staff. Word of mouth was good, it worked fine on Earth.

Thealia Germain, Lady Knight of the Marshalls, strode up. "Let's lunch in the Marshall's dining room and review this morning's training session."

A surge of disappointment came with the stiffening of Marrec's arm behind Calli's back. She supposed she needed to do this. It wasn't as if she'd never watched her own performances time and again to see what she could have done better in a sixteen second ride. She'd even seen the last time, seen Spark slip, her own fall, his crushing her.

She shook off the memory, sent a responding pulse of disillusionment and resignation to Marrec, reached over and took his hand to link fingers with him.

Marrec nodded at the two hopeful young men. "You're hired. Speak to Seeva Hallard about rooms. Move your things from the barracks to Horseshoe Hall. If either Dark Lance or Thunder doesn't like you, you're back to being soldiers."

Thunder stepped near the young men at that, snuffled at each of them, butted Fourag.

This one smells good.

I like this one, Dark Lance said at the same time, eyeing Crible, the taller, lankier man.

"Sounds good," Marrec said. He waved Crible and Fourag to the volarans. "Take care of them."

The two hurried to comply, murmuring to their new charges and walking with the flying horses to the stables. Calli had the impression that they were giddy with relief that their plan had gone so well and intended to groom the volarans to the last tuft of feather.