

I Do

By C. Jade Wyton

It's Olivia's wedding day, and she can't believe it! It's all she's ever dreamed of— Her friends made sure of that. But even with the churchyard and flowers and her beautiful white dress, the thing that makes her most excited is that it's Daimon waiting for her at the alter.

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Olivia's heart was in her throat.

She wasn't sure if it was excitement or nerves, but as Veruca finished fixing the clip pinning back her braids (it had fallen loose after she'd gotten a *little* too excited seeing herself in the mirror and run around until she'd slipped), Olivia couldn't seem to swallow down the lump threatening to explode out of her like sick after a night of drinking.

Everyone she loved (which, admittedly, was only six people and a dog) had come together to make today perfect for her.

At first she'd been embarrassed to admit how she wanted the wedding to go. She felt like it was stupid, the things she dreamt about. That after spending so long building up her image of herself, a traditional wedding would make her friends look down on her.

But with some prodding and poking (and a playful Zone of Truth) the women of the Dawn Runners had been able to coax the information out of her. And she was glad they had been so persistent.

*An outdoor churchyard. A big flower arch. A long white dress. And Farren walking her down the aisle.*

Besides Daimon being the one waiting for her at the alter, those were the things she wanted most.

'Alright, hair is done,' Veruca said, giving Olivia two gentle *thumps* on the shoulder and immediately pivoting for the door. 'Now, excuse me. Catering was not doing job when you called me. If they are *still* not vorking, I will be making heads rolling!'

Olivia couldn't look away from her own reflection long enough to see Veruca out the door.

*She'd never thought she could look so pretty.*

'Gods, Liv,' Volante's voice sniffled from the door, and Olivia finally turned in her seat to see her friend slipping past Veruca into the room. 'You look fantastic.'

'I do!' she agreed, feeling her smile widen at the sight of her friend— Who for today, was not *just* her friend, but her maid of honour.

Olivia didn't bother pointing out that Volante needed to wipe her eyes; when Bertram had pointed it out earlier, he had gotten an earful of Volante denying she had been crying at all.

Instead, she looked back to the mirror as Volante stopped at her side.

'*Look at me,*' she whispered. '*I never thought this would be me...!*'

Volante responded with a sniffle, a half-contained sob, and an agreement that

was so blubbered Olivia barely understood it.

‘I have this faint memory of when I was little,’ Olivia chuckled. ‘I used to get into my mother’s wardrobe when she was busy with the chores and I’d pull out her wedding dress and I’d...’ she hesitated as she realised exactly what she was saying; meeting Volante’s eyes through their reflections before she cleared her throat and turned around to hug her friend tight. ‘Thank you for being here. I can’t imagine doing today without you.’

Volante sniffled into the top of Olivia’s head, mumbling a half-audible response as she hugged her friend back.

‘Yeah,’ Olivia agreed. Then she pulled away and carefully wiped her own eyes with a knuckle. ‘I can’t believe this is happening. I get to marry Daimon!’

‘Yeah,’ Volante gave a half-laugh. ‘*Someone* has to.’

Olivia smacked her friend’s shoulder playfully, feeling herself purr loud as she shook her head. ‘You’re just jealous!’ she teased. ‘I get the biggest, strongest, coolest—’

‘Dumbest—’

‘*Kindest* man in all of Pal’thar!’ Olivia bragged. ‘And you’re going to have to walk down the aisle beside Bertram.’

‘Eugh,’ Volante made a teasingly-disgusted face, though it didn’t hide her grin. ‘I can’t believe you’re actually making me do that! Are we even friends?’

Olivia just purred louder, turning back to her own reflection. ‘*I’m so pretty!*’ she whispered. ‘*Daimon’s gonna lose it when he sees me!*’

‘Lose what?’ Volante teased through a snuffle. ‘His last brain cell?’

‘Shh!’ Olivia shushed, waving a hand at Volante but not taking her eyes off herself. Then she let out a long breath and let her shoulders relax as she looked herself over again. ‘I’ve got him.... He’s never getting rid of me, now!’

‘And why would he *want* to?’ Volante asked.

Olivia didn’t have time to respond before there was a knock at the door, and the familiar voice of Farren called out to her. She invited him in and he entered with Sheshalan at his heels; Volante quickly slipping out to give them some privacy (and to fix her makeup).

The door shut behind her with a quiet *click*, and Olivia looked up at Farren, who looked down at her with sparkling eyes of pride.

‘*My little girl...*’ he whispered.

‘*Little?*’ Olivia giggled back, rising to her feet to make her point. ‘I’m taller than you!’

‘Only when you stick up those ears of yours!’ Farren retorted, cuffing her lovingly around the ears before resting his hands on her cheeks.

He looked at her for a long moment, his eyes soft and loving and proud, before—

‘YOU ARE STUPIDER THAN STUPID!’ Veruca’s voice cut through the decorative glass window above the trio. ‘ARE THESE LOOKING LIKE VEDDINGS FLOWERS? NO! THESE ARE FLOWERS FOR FUNERALS! GO FIX, OR I VILL MAKE SURE FUNERAL FLOWERS ARE NOT VASTED!’

Olivia couldn’t help but break out into a fit of giggles and turned away from Farren, who pecked a kiss on her forehead before letting her slip from his hands.

She dropped back into her chair, and then felt her own hands taken and

swallowed her laughter so she could look down at Sheshalan. The goatling shared Farren's proud and loving expression; only hers was accompanied by the stain of tears against her dark fur.

'I'm so proud of you,' Sheshalan sniffed. 'You've grown so much.'

'You calling me fat?' Olivia joked, earning another gentle ear-cuffing from Farren that sent her into a fit of giggles. 'Farren, stop! You're gonna mess up my hair!'

The cuffing turned into another forehead kiss, which turned into a hug.

As Olivia felt the orc squeeze her tight she saw Sheshalan shuffling, and opened an arm to invite the goatling in to join them.

There was no hesitation, and Sheshalan all but climbed into Olivia's lap to hold her closer.

*'Thank you both,'* Olivia whispered. *'For everything. I'd be lost without you.'*

Farren squeezed her tighter as Sheshalan began loudly sobbing, and it took all of Olivia's effort not to tear up herself.

Sheshalan was the first to pull away, wiping her eyes and mumbling something that Olivia didn't quite catch before she took a deep breath and cast her gaze to the wall. 'I checked on Daimon, earlier,' she mumbled. 'Poor kid looked so nervous. Bertram's been helping him get ready but he's so scared of messing this up for you.'

'He could never!' Olivia felt a laugh escape her. 'It's going to be perfect. Because it's him.'

'Mm...' Farren finally let Olivia go. 'His family aren't coming?'

Olivia shook her head. 'He said they don't do well at this sort of wedding.... That they'd ruin it. But they send their love.'

'They weren't offended?' Sheshalan asked, looking humoured.

'They agreed with him,' Olivia chuckled.

Sheshalan and Farren returned her laughter. Then, they fell to a calm, gentle silence.

It lasted a long while, until Olivia cleared her throat and rubbed her hands together.

'Sheshalan? Farren?' she asked.

'Hmm?'

'Yes, Olivia?'

'Will you stay with me until the ceremony starts? I'm... I'm nervous.'

Sheshalan's hands took hers, and gave them a comforting squeeze. 'Of course, Liv.'

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The walk down the aisle felt like it took years. It was as if everything was in slow motion, as Olivia took Farren's hand and swallowed her heart back into her chest where it belonged.

The silence of the congregation was broken only by the quiet music that played from the band, and the uncontrolled bleat-sobs that choked their way out of Sheshalan's throat.

Olivia glanced over her friends as she passed them, and let out a long breath

as she turned to the alter and spied Bertram, standing beside Daimon:

Of course Blueballs was still wearing his stupid hat!

She bit back her chuckle and let her eyes flick to Daimon, feeling her anxious nerves fading away as she met his eye.

She took her place standing in front of her to-be husband, and looked up at him with a blush she couldn't hide as all of her fur stood on end.

She could barely hear what the celebrant was saying, her heart was beating so loud!

She tried to keep still, but she could feel her tail lashing back and forth so strong she knew her hips were pivoting; and likewise, no matter how hard she tried not to, she couldn't stop herself from fidgeting with the flowers and knew her top half was doing the same.

Then, Daimon smiled at her and she felt herself squeal— And the only thing she could do to muffle it was bury her face into her bouquet.

Chuckles came from around her as the watching Dawn Runners all laughed; some covering their mouths, others letting their laughs escape them joyously as Olivia bounced in place and yelled into her flowers.

When she looked up, Daimon was grinning even wider. He looked to their celebrant, who gave them both a warm smile and a nod, and then took a deep breath.

Daimon reached into his pocket; a panicked look appearing on his face as he pulled his hand out and started frantically tapping all his pockets in turn before—

'Daimon.' Bertram whispered, stepping from his place behind the man and handing him a singular cue card. *'I have a copy.'*

Daimon let out a sigh of relief as he took the cue card... and then his panicked look returned as he glanced down at it.

'It's blank!'

Bertram calmly stepped forward, turned the card over, and backed away again.

Daimon relaxed, glancing sheepishly at Olivia, before looking back down at his cue card.

'Olivia,' he read, slowly. *'I love you more than.... Oh. It's smudged; my palms are too sweaty— Bertram? Bertram?! What was I gonna say?!'*

Olivia couldn't help but laugh as she reached out and placed a hand on Daimon's own. *'I love you,'* she said softly.

'I said that already,' Daimon replied thoughtlessly. Then his eyes brightened in realisation and his cheek fur puffed out in an embarrassed blush as the Dawn Runners all smothered their laughter. *'OH! I love you too!'*

Olivia felt her heart melt as the man before her looked down to the card in his hand.

'I don't remember what I was going to say,' he admitted. *'But you're the most important person in my life. I don't know what I'd do without you.'*

Olivia felt her blush grow, as her heart pounded harder in her chest.

'You're the most beautiful, wonderful, funny woman I've ever met. Maybe—' he took her hands, holding them together as she dropped her bouquet to the floor. *'Maybe you're the best woman that's ever existed, ever. There's a very real chance that you are.'*

More snickers from the Dawn Runners, and Olivia saw the celebrant bite their lip as they retrieved a beautiful red rope from their pocket.

The moment Olivia saw the rope, her heart leapt to her throat.

She couldn't hold it in, anymore, and spun in a circle. Twice.

No— Five times!

She didn't mean to squeal, either. But it came out of her before she was able to regain control and face her almost-husband again.

She knew her fur had puffed out and that she must have looked ridiculous. But she didn't care; not as she met Daimon's soft eyes and warm smile and his trembling hands took her by the shoulders and held her steady.

His hands then slipped from her shoulders to her own hands, and he lifted them up gently so the celebrant could bind their hands with the silken rope.

She didn't hear a word the celebrant said. She barely even felt the rope as she and Daimon were tied fast together. All she could feel was the beating of her own heart, as Daimon's eyes locked into hers and he breathed out the most beautiful words Olivia had ever heard escape him before:

'I do.'

—END—

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