

# Her Lady

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Submitted: November 17, 2005

Updated: November 17, 2005

*Kara, a Lady of Damcyan, goes to deliver a letter to the Queen of Mysidia. Once there, she decides to meet with an old childhood friend. However, 'he' is not who she thought 'he' was...*

*Shoujo-ai warning! ^\_^*

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## 1 - Bandit Attack...?

Thudding softly against the dusty dirt road, the sounds of the horses' hooves were the only sounds breaking the oppressive silence of the rocky highway. With a sigh, the lone passenger of the carriage closed the curtains. `It's just so... boring, here. Where are all the people? Does Mysidia not have an immense population?' She then folded her hands in her lap, and tried to block out the logical answer her brain provided, and failed. Mysidians, of course, lived in the southern expanses of their country, leaving the large, roaming plains in the north for the immense population of the famous Mysidian horses. Bah... She hadn't even seen a fly yet, much less a horse.

A soft groan of utter boredom escaped Kara's lips, unfortunately drifting out of the cabin of the carriage, and reaching the driver. Turning his head to look through the window at his charge, the tall, lanky gray-haired man called back to her, "Are you alright, Madam? We have plenty of time to stop and rest if you are feeling unwell."

Sitting up quickly with a slight rustling of her dress, the young Lady Guardie replied to her manservant, "Oh, no, that's won't be at all necessary. In fact, could you please speed up? I would like to get there before tea time, that I might dine with Her Majesty for tea."

Chuckling softly, the driver sped the horses' pace slightly. "Which means, My Lady, that you are bored to tears during this trip, and are trying to disguise the fact by practicing your high-court manner of speech on me."

With a faint blush, Kara brushed a stray bit of pale brown hair from her forehead. "Is it quite that obvious, Jark?"

"Yes, Lady, it is, but only to those of us who have known and cared for you your entire life. I'm absolutely sure that you'll be a smashing success at court."

She sighed, and clasped her hands together. "I hope so. I don't want to betray Papa's trust in me..."

“You most certainly won't. You're an excellent diplomat, top of your generation.” The old gentleman then paused in his words for a moment. Slowly, he continued, “In fact, much better than your father was at your age, if I remember correctly.”

Kara poked her head out of the cabin, and into the driver's seat. There, she frowned and said, “But, I thought Papa was the very best of his class?”

“Well, he was. Unfortunately, that was only after hours upon hours of studying on diplomatic tactics up in his room. Your father had to work very hard for his talents.” Beaming at his young Mistress, the long-standing servant of the Guarde family ruffled her hair. “But, you, on the other hand, My Lady Kara, have it naturally. I've never seen you study a bit, and yet you've surpassed even Lord Dumas!”

Giggling, she moved away from her attacker's hand, and blushed. “Lord Dumas! I can only dream to have the smallest bit of his intelligence. You really have too high an opinion on me, Jark.”

“Hah! More like you humble yourself. After all, your skillfulness have led you to be chosen for this mission, has it not?”

Now looking like an over-ripe tomato, the diplomat's daughter recalled exactly why she got the task. She specifically asked for it. As soon as she heard that the job was open to members of the higher class, Kara raced home to ask her father to place her up for the job. It required a female, preferably of noble birth, with excellent diplomatic skills and was discreet. She fit the job requirements perfectly. Not only that, but it gave her the chance to go and live in Mysidia for a time, depending upon how long the job was needed, as a Lady of the Court. It didn't take much pleading on her part to convince her father into allowing her the job, as he was thinking about asking her if she might like to take it, anyway. However, being her father, he made one condition. “If I send you to Mysidia, you'll fall behind in your studies. You must have a tutor to teach you during your stay in La Fay. In fact, I have the perfect candidate...”

And so it was not quite skill, but rather her father's influence that had gotten her the job. Kara couldn't say that, of course, so the light-haired brunette ducked back into the cabin of the carriage. She sighed. “And now I feel guilty about it. If I hadn't asked Papa to give the job to me, they could have given the job to someone older and more experienced, like Lady Halo.” Another sigh, “And, yet, this is the only change I may have to actually meet Sam again.”

Now smiling gently, Kara pulled a letter from her bodice. It was her latest letter from her childhood friend, telling how he had been promoted from a simple stablehand to a Royal Groom. He was now caring for the high-caliber horses of Queen Cid, and her children, Prince Abyss and Princess Witch of the Highwind Family. Kara and Sam had been the best of friends back when she and her father had still lived in Mysidia, about ten years ago.

She blushed. Sometime after her thirteenth birthday, she'd been at a sleepover with her friends. The subject of boys came up, and they started talking about the cutest boys in their school. Then, out of the blue, the thought came to her, 'I bet Sam's cuter than any boy at school.' After that night, Sam's crush easily came out, as she began noticing other things, such as her lack of any real interest in the other boys at school, and how very much she looked forwards to every letter from Sam. Simple, friendly things alone, but when she put them together in her mind... She definitely had a crush on him.

"My lady?" Startled from her most pleasant, and private, thoughts, it took a moment for her to collect herself. Jark kept talking, though. "It seems we have a companion on the road. There's a horseman following behind us. I don't wish to worry you unnecessarily, but, he may be some sort of brigand." The old gentleman looked back into the carriage, worry lining both his face, and his voice. "Stay in here, no matter what you hear. I'll knock on this shutter three times fast, then three times slow, if all's clear." He paused. "Please lock this after I close it, and all the windows and the door as well." Without waiting to see her nod of compliance, he shut the panel quickly.

She was shocked. A bandit? What was a bandit doing down on the northern road? From what she knew, they raided the prosperous South Mysidia, and only came to the north to steal horses... or to capture powerful political hostages and hold them for ransom. She gasped. What that why they were out here? To capture her? Quickly, she jammed the deadbolts locking the panel and the door in place. The inner shutters of the windows were next, and the young diplomat to be quickly locked them as well. With this done, however, all the outside light was shut off, and Kara was left to sit down and wait.

It seemed like hours and hours that she waited anxiously for something to happen. 'I do hope Jark's okay... He may not be that old, but what can a single unarmed man do against a killer thief?' Worriedly, she nibbled the end of one of her bangs. The image of a slain Jark, lying facedown on the ground, as a villainous, evil-looking man hacked away at the door to the carriage came unbidden to her frightened mind. She shuddered. 'I wish Papa was here... he'd know what to do.'

From outside, a shout reached her ears. It didn't sound like her guardian, so it had to be the rider hailing the carriage. Her fear temporarily abated by a nagging curiosity to know what was happening, Kara pressed her ear against one of the window shutters. Faintly, very faintly, she could hear the sound of the rider's horse's hoofbeats. However, they quickly became clearer as he, or she, as Kara quickly corrected herself, came up along the side of the carriage. Any minute now, she mused, Jark would probably spur the horses to a full-out gallop, probably hoping to lose the pursuit, or to get help from some passing by traveler. She abandoned her spot at the shutter just as the voices of her guardian and the bandit started exchanging words, their voices a mere murmur. Hopping into her silky, cushioned seat, she braced herself for the rough takeoff of the horses, the force of which would, she knew, send her tumbling backwards into the cushion.

...And she promptly fell forwards in a jumble with a surprised scream as the carriage came to a sudden, jerking, halt. Slowly, groaning more than a bit, Kara picked herself up off the carriage floor. "What was that?" She gingerly touched the large bump on her head, breathing in sharply with a hiss. `Ow ow ow ow ow... That... hurt... But why did he stop? It makes absolutely no sense. Unless...' She gasped. Aloud, she said, "Did the bandit..." With a shudder, she fell silent. There was no need, nor was there any want, to finish that thought. For a moment, nothing happened, and there was no sound but that of her own steady breathing. The scented wax candle, set firmly in its holder by a screw, still flickered in the darkness. It illuminated eerily her disheveled face, her hair out of its customary do with hair falling across her face. Automatically, she brushed it away. `Did.... Did they go away?'

Boom! Boom! Boom! Three times, a heavy fist pounded upon the door, ruining the strange calm that had held her world for those few moments. Terror returned tenfold to her, and the young lady screamed shrilly and scrambled hastily back against the other side of the carriage. Voices, still little more than murmurs though they were such a close distance, raised ever so slightly on the outside. Her mind raced. `There's more than one!? Oh no, oh no oh no oh no oh no...' Some of the most horrific tales of injuries and grievances to women happened during highway robberies. The mere mention of such occasions could send most duchesses into a swoon. Kara did no such thing. Instead, with the sort of reckless bravery born of anxiety and despair, she searched for something she could use to attack her attacker. `I'm NOT going to let anything happen to me without a fight. There must be something... Ah hah!' Hazel brown eyes alighted upon a jewel encrusted dagger, meant as a gift from the King to Princess Witch, a maiden warrior who could fight twice as well as any man, yet was just as fair as Princess Ryo of Damcyan. Kara was certain that nobody would mind if she used it to defend herself. After all, if she failed, the dagger, along with the rest of the gifts from her father to the royal family of Mysidia, would fall into the hands of the accursed, lawless bandits. She crawled over to the small weapon, and seized it.

Just in time, too. The handle to the door began to turn, with a high pitched squeak. Though her mind told her to flee, to run, to hide, the emboldened Lady crept to the door, crouched and ready to pounce upon her assailant. The handle seemed to stop for a moment, and the world go silent but for the loud, continuous thumping of her heart. Adrenaline rushed through her veins. The young lady's last coherent thought was, "I wish, just once, that I had gotten to see Sam again." Then, with a simple click, the door

was pulled open from the outside.

With a yell, she hurled herself out into the sunlight. Blinded by the sudden, intense burst of light after being so long in the candlelit darkness, she was almost more surprised than the great big man in armor she tackled was. Shocked by her attack, he fell backwards. The wind was promptly knocked out of him as the small heroine tripped over his armored leg and fell on top of him. She was dazed for a moment, but it quickly passed. Before the armored man could catch his breath, she had the dagger tickling his throat. Looking down, she found herself gazing into the deepest brown eyes she had ever seen. Kara blushed. Her `assailant' laughed. His eyes twinkled as he merrily grinned up at her. With the slightest hint of amusement and humor gracing his voice, the knight, which he was, said, "How... pleasant to meet you, considering the circumstances in which we have met." A nod. "I am Neet Riht, also known as Sir Bard to many. And, depending upon whether you slay me or not, your tutor."

Author's Notes: Heh. This is my first attempt at shoujo-ai, so I hope it goes well. ^-^; In fact, the next chapter has a nice scene... Heh. Please review if you're just read this, and thanks to the people who've helped me edit up all the mistakes!

## 2 - Camping and Dancing

As quickly as she could, Kara rolled off of the knight, blushing furiously. Standing up, she started to apologize, "I'm sorry! I thought you were a bandit, and, and..." She trailed off, as she noticed the knight was laughing heartily at her while he was trying to get to his feet. Unfortunately, the combination of his armor and the intense laughter made him fall back onto his backside. Thoroughly embarrassed by now, she continued, "And, ah, I'm please to meet you, Sir Bard... I think."

Rolling over onto his belly, the unhelmed knight pushing himself to his knees. From there, he easily got to his feet. When he turned, she was once again struck by how handsome he was... She blinked, as he took the dagger from her hands. "Nice... Wonderful workmanship, excellent balance, perfect for throwing or stabbing... Good Damascus Steel, too." Ignoring her rather unintentionally, he studied the dagger intently.

Profusely blushing, and insulted by his behavior, the young lady simply stood there, waiting for him to finish with the dagger and take notice of her again. 'How... utterly rude! Looking at a dagger while I'm trying to introduce myself!' After a few minutes of looking at the dagger, the knight calmly reversed the blade and handed back the dagger. He grinned, "Sorry about that. I'm somewhat of a weapon connoisseur." Then, noticing her furious facial expression, he said, "Oh! Where are my manners?" Rubbing the back of his head sheepishly, Bard began an apology, "Sorry about scaring you like that. I didn't think your servant would tell you I was a bandit, even if my armor was covered up by my travel cloak." He grinned again. "Then again, most ladies I know would have only been frightened out of their wits. I've never actually been attacked by one."

Blushing and looking away, she mumbled softly, "Well, I did think you were a bandit..."

Still grinning, Bard patted her on the shoulder. "Don't worry about it. It's a compliment. Now, since I've already stopped you, why not go ahead and break camp here for the night? The gates of Mysidia will be closed by the time you get there, and I've never heard of them opening them back up for anyone less than Royalty."

"O-okay, I guess, but where will you sleep?" Handsome as he was, there was no way Kara was going to let him sleep in her carriage. She wouldn't even allow Jark to sleep in there; he was stuck sleeping on

top of the carriage in a sleeping bag, or, if it rained, underneath the carriage. Fortunately for him, it hadn't rained yet on their trip.

Nodding at his horse, the youthful knight replied waving his hand to the left, "I've got a sleeping bag over there, and it doesn't seem likely that it'll rain tonight. In fact, a nice campfire's all I'll need, and I can start that right now." With a simple, "I'll be back later," the brown-haired lad leaped onto his horse and rode away.

Kara was surprised at the knight's sudden departure. Usually, there was a bit of a lingering process after you meet new people... Blinking several times slowly, she turned back to the carriage. Jark was there, carefully taking down the camping items and her bags from the roof, where they were strapped in for travel. Walking carefully now, so as not to get the hem of her silken dress dirty (Ignoring the fact that the front was covered with dirt), she approached her elderly servant and took the bag he was currently holding. "Let me help you."

Nodding, albeit reluctantly, Jark took another bag down, the cooking stuffs, and passed it down to her. "I'm sorry, my lady, that I didn't give you the all-clear signal. I offer no excuses, only my apologies." Ashamedly, his steel-gray eyes looked down at hers.

Shaking her head, she quickly replied, "No, no, Jark, it isn't your fault. You didn't know he was a knight. Neither did I, until I hit that armor of his." Rubbing her shoulder as inconspicuously as she could, the lady thought to herself, 'Not to mention I'm going to have a bruise for days.'

Pausing as he handed Kara another bag, a thoughtful expression mixed with an amused twinkle in Jark's face bloomed in the elder man. "Well, it was rather funny to see you tackle him..."

Giggling, she lightly punched him on the arm. "Hey!"

Chuckling, the older man hopped off of the carriage's foothold with the last bag in his hands. "Well, if we're gonna stay the night here with that knight, why don't we break out the last of our flour and niceties, and you can bake up some of your biscuits!"



She frowned. "Biscuits? I can't cook biscuits, Jark. Last time I tried, they came out as black as Papa's beard." Jark merely looked at her expectantly, "What? I already told you, I couldn't cook... Oh!" Giggling, she nudged him with her elbow. "They're called cookies, Jark! Not biscuits! But, yes, that's a great idea." `Perfect, too, to apologize for attacking Bard...'

Later, all three were gathered around a blazing campfire, the wood it was feeding off of having been gathered by Bard. The pale moon shone brightly overhead, making the landscape both gleam with silver and dance with shadows. Even the knight's horse was silver, looking almost like a mythical unicorn. The campfire too, contributed to the scene, cackling and burning merrily, showering the travelers with warmth and casting a soft orange glow about itself.

Though, truth to tell, they really didn't notice.

Jark and Kara simply sat there; gawking at their companion as Bard busily shoveled food into his mouth. "Glmph mmph, great! Snarf, Totally awesome! I've never had cookies this \*Crunch\* good!" Trying to talk about eat seemed a particular ability of Bard's; Somehow, every single word of his came out as clear as if he spoke without food in his maw. "Glmph, ah! That was tasty! Though, cookies do make one thirsty... I'll be back; I remember a stream only a minute or two away. No need to drain the canteens!" Grinning at his newfound comrades with bits of cookie in his teeth, the young warrior jumped to his feet and bounded off into the shadows. For a moment, there was no sound but that of the fire, and the much louder sound of a large figure in armor clanking off in a seemingly random direction.

Then, Kara turned towards Jark, her eyes wide with shock. "I-is he human?!"

Gulping, the bug-eyed older man replied, "I've never seen another human being eat like that. Not ever Baron Dral." In an attempt to regain his composure, he took a handkerchief and dabbed his brow. "Well, we certainly can say that he has a healthy appetite. Just as well that we're going to be at Mysidia tomorrow. I doubt we have enough to feed him much more than a single meal.

"Y-Yeah..." Almost unnoticeably, the young lady shivered softly. The young knight was handsome (quite cute in her mind) and she had begun to get the slightest bit of a crush on him. But... `He eats like a starved snow leopard...' she thought.

With a slight sigh, she laid back and look up at the stars that gracefully adorned the night sky. `Eiyaaahhh... The sky is beautiful tonight...` Smiling at the sense of peace that the sight gave her, the young maiden started to trace the heavenly constellations in her mind. There was the great Fox, most wide known of all the constellations, with the Three Hounds always at his heels, ever chasing him across the sky. There was also Odin, the great warrior king who had never died, but had arisen to the Heavens as a shining star to guide future heroes and wanderers. Indeed, the current King of Damcyan, Edward De La Fere, had used it as a guide to lead him to victory in the Great Goblin War of 46'. Oddly enough, however, the blazing Sapphos dwarfed Odin that night. Sapphos was, traditionally, the Damcyan goddess of women, and the Mysidian goddess of romance. It was a powerful omen whenever any constellation or star outshone Odin. `Very powerful...` though Kara, `Something to do with Sapphos is afoot. Ah, well... It's no omen to me. I wonder whose omen it really is...?`

Heaving a deep sigh of both relaxed and bored nature, she slowly closed her eyes to the world. She knew she should go back to the carriage before she fell asleep, but the carriage was cold, and it was so warm here by the fire... Slowly, her breathing stilled, becoming no more than a gentle lifting and lowering of her chest. Her limbs were made of lead, and the day's traveling and events came back with a vengeance, making all the more obvious the aching bruises from tackling Bard. Sleep was irresistible, so she simply let herself fall into its comforting embrace. "So.... \*Yawn\* Sleeeeeepppy...."

~The Last Call, a bar in Mysidia~

Groaning, a dark brown haired lass slumped dejectedly on the table. Her cup slipped out of her hands and fell to the table with a clatter. This drew the attention of her two tablemates, one a brunette with longer hair, and the other with an odd mix of brown, blonde, and red hair. "Ugh..." Her two friends exchanged a glance, and the oddly haired one reached over and patted the sorrowful girl's hand. "There, there, Sam. You were too good for her anyways. You should just go out there, honey, and find a nice, sweet girl to take home and-"

"NO!" Reddened, bloodshot eyes glared up from the table. With a drunken blush across her cheeks, and her nose wrinkled up in frustration, she looked like a rather cute guy that had just a bit of a feminine look about him. Her short hair did nothing to dispel that illusion. "I don't want another one-night stand. I thought I had her this time. The One." She slumped back down, sprawled across the table. "Maybe I'm not supposed to have anyone. Maybe I should just stop looking."

Oblivious as she was in heartbroken self-pity, she didn't notice as her friend's hand abruptly left hers. What she did notice, however, was the sudden, warm embrace she found herself enveloped in. "Never,

ever stop looking, sweetie. You just haven't found the right girl yet.”

After a few minutes of silence, Sam leaned back into the hug with a sigh. “Fine... I won't, Sisi.”

The cheery elder girl gave her a quick squeeze, then stood up. “Okay. Now, I'm gonna take my delectable little morsel of a girlfriend out on the dance floor. I expect a smile on your face by the time I get back, Hon, or else...” She let her words trail off with a mischievous grin. Offering her hand to the third person at the table, she led her girlfriend across the dance floor, where they were quickly lost from sight amongst the enormous crowd of dancers.

For a while, the last girl left at the table made little movement from the position she was in. Then she began to laugh. ‘Sisi... You're priceless.’ The shorter, but older girl had been the brunette's best friend for two years, since she was sixteen. In fact, she was also her first girlfriend. Even feeling as down as she was, the memory of the time Sisi had slept with her brought a blush to her cheeks and a smile to her lips...

~Two Years Ago~

Two women laid in bed, covered in but a sheen of sweat and a thin white sheet. They were content in each other's arms, basking in the afterglow of their earlier activities. “Why,” mumbled one drowsily, “did you do that?”

Giggling, Sisi, lying on top of her, kisses her collarbone. “Because you're cute, sugar.” She purred softly as a kitten as she trailed her fingers down Sam's sides. “Are you sure you've never done this before? You're very good.”

She blushed, a faint rosy glow about her cheeks and other, unmentionable, places. “No, I've never done this before... But do you believe me now that I'm not a boy?” Running a hand down the purring girl's back, she used her other hand to brush her bangs aside.

“Oh, I knew you weren't a boy...” The smaller girl nuzzled into the crook of her lover's neck. “Though, if

you had been I wouldn't've complained.”

For a short time, there was silence again, Sisi drifting off into the gentle caresses of slumber, and Sam lost in her own thoughts. Then, just before sleep claimed the Sisi, she spoke up. “Hey... Sisi?”

“Mmmn... yes?”

“Umm... I like you and all, but...” She trailed off, wondering how to continue.

“But...?” Sitting up a bit, the shapely elder girl looked her straight in the face. “You aren't attracted to girls, dear?”

“No, no, no,” she blushed, “Last night was wonderful. Its just...” She paused a moment, to plan her next words carefully. Then, taking a deep breath, she finished, “I like you, but only as a friend. No offense, but I wouldn't be able to stand being around you every waking moment.”

“Hmm...” With a sly look upon her face, Sisi moved around until she was straddling Sam's hips. “Too bad, babe,” she purred into the boyish girl's ear huskily, “But I think I can survive... So long as we can keep doing \*this\*” Slowly, too slowly, her hand-

~End Flashback~

Blushing profusely, she cut off the memory right there. `As nice as that thought is, this isn't be nest time or place for that.' Sighing, she sat up again and took a sip of the beer in front of her. `I wish Susan hadn't left me... I thought we had something special, that it was love...' Gazing around the bar, her eyes made their way slowly to the window, left open to let the breeze flow in and cool down the sweaty dancers. Looking out, up into the night sky, she noticed the star Sapphos, shining brightly in the sky. `Sapphos... The goddess of love...' slowly, a small smile drifted across her face. `Maybe she wasn't the one... Maybe...'

“Whew!” Coming seemingly out of nowhere, Sisi plopped herself down into the seat across from Sam, startling her. Grinning happily, she looked her friend over. “You're smiling! What brought this about?”

“Just memories, and a bit of superstition.” Still smiling softly at her best of friends, she went to take another sip of her drink. Stopping halfway and blinking, of course, as she caught a good look at her cheek. “Sisi? What happened to your cheek?”

Laughing, the oddly haired girl lightly touched the enormous red handprint on her cheek. “I tried to grope her out on the dance floor... I don't really think she's decided to be quite so open as you or me. Too bad... Fate's such a hot little minx in bed.” With an exaggerated sigh, the cheerful young woman watched her best friend collapse onto the table again, shaking with tears of suppressed mirth.

~Author's Notes: Well, here's chapter two, folks! Now that I've completed this, I'm gonna take a slight break and focus on my RPin and writing a story for the Evil Spring Fanfiction Contest. Still, though, that doesn't mean I'm gonna stop writing this! Much thanks to the real Sisi, who beta'd this chapter for me, and tons of thanks to all the people who reviewed my story; It really helped me out a lot. Much thanks to everyone!