

Ylena x Penelope

Timetable: IDK sometime after Atheos gets clapped

Husband dies with Ylena somewhere nearby (28 STAB WOUNDS)

Introduce Penelope Friedrich

Enemies to lovers this shit girly pop

Some bullshit I'll write later

Happily ever after

Side project: NUCLEAR BOMBS

"Well, that could have gone better", Ylena Devall stood up from the bloodied mess of a body laying before her. Stab wounds covered his upper chest and neck, who the man was, she didn't care, he had fucked around, and subsequently, found out. Last lesson he'll ever learn, don't fuck with a doctor, they could kill someone in more than 300 ways, most of which no one will know, at least not without dying to said method.

She sheathed the bloody knife after cleaning the blade on her sleeve, and began to rifle through his pockets, looking for any form of identification. She had killed the man, the least she could do is report him as KIA, he'd get passed off as another field casualty.

She found his ID, the first name was too far worn to read, but the last name froze her to the core: Friedrich. Her pulse quickened. It couldn't be. Was this man related to Admiral Friedrich? And if so, why the hell was he out here of all places? She felt the weight of her actions settle heavily on her chest. If this was who she thought it was, the fallout could be monumental.

"Shit," she hissed under her breath. She couldn't afford for this to blow back on her. Not now. Not with the rumors already swirling about a serial killer targeting officers on the front lines.

She quickly stabbed a coagulant pen from her medpack into his arm, if she was going to call his death in, better to make it look like she tried to save him and save herself from the wrath of an admiral. Ylena stepped back and adjusted the body's position, creating the illusion of a desperate attempt at resuscitation. Blood pooled beneath him, dark and thick, painting a scene of chaotic struggle. The story was convincing, at least enough to satisfy a cursory glance.

This marked the first body she will have called in, at least the first one she had caused, it was safer to not call her own bodies in as rumors of a serial killer plaguing the front lines and rim worlds had spread quickly, a little too quickly for her liking. However, she liked the name they had given her, Hemlock, it felt good, a little too good. All the years trying to help people, no one gave a damn how much effort she put in, it was never good enough, this was revenge, clean and simple.

High ranking officers were the main target, she had kept as many of the ground troops alive as she could, because they had done nothing, just in the wrong place, at the wrong time. They at least appreciated her help.

Glancing at the knife sheathed on her hip, she'd have to get rid of it, and quickly, it matched the description of the blade used, a pity really, she had liked that blade, stolen from a marine corps officer, a squealer that one was, wouldn't shut his mouth before his throat had been slit unceremoniously. She unclipped the sheath, burying both under a pile of rubble nearby. Satisfied, she clicked her earpiece on.

"Command, this is Doctor Ylena Devall reporting from in field", she said, clicking the radio in her earpiece on, "Got a casualty here, multiple stab wounds, chest and neck, ID is worn, can only make out the last name, Friedrich", the radio static hummed for a bit before a voice returned the call.

"Copy Devall, send us your location data, that's someone we need to bring back, dead or alive" the voice on the other end was flat and emotionless, just another day at the office for them.

"Sending up a beacon" Ylena replied, quickly tapping at her PDA, allowing for her position to be shown.

"We see you. Transport is 5 minutes out" the voice said before the line went dead.

The line went dead, and Ylena exhaled slowly. She couldn't afford to let her guard down yet. Five minutes was plenty of time for someone to stumble upon something she'd missed, unlikely, but not impossible. Her gloved fingers flexed as she considered the next move. Something still felt off. Why did Command care so much about one body? Officers died all the time, and unless they were high-ranking or politically important, no one batted an eye.

That name, Friedrich, lingered in her mind. Could it really be tied to the admiral? If so, her move to clean her tracks became even more crucial. A devious plan formed in her mind, *fuck it*, she thought, *it's worth a shot*.

"Command, I've got a weapon here, combat knife, about 8 inches long, marine corps standard, matches the wounds on the patient" she said keeping her tone as flat as

Commented [CP1]: Might need to shift around pacing in this section, putting her setting up the body after calling it in and learning that a transport was inbound, it works alright as it stands.

possible, she was glad that she always wore gloves, no chance of getting caught when there's zero DNA transfer possible.

"Copy that Devall, bag it and bring it in with the body" the responder answered with the same cool tone.

Ylena smirked faintly, glad she'd buried the knife before calling it in. The satisfaction was short-lived, though, as her thoughts returned to the admiral. Admiral Friedrich was known for her ruthless efficiency and an unrelenting pursuit of enemies, real or perceived. If she even suspected foul play, Ylena could become her next target.

The faint hum of the approaching transport reached her ears. The countdown had begun. Glancing once more at the scene she'd crafted, Ylena allowed herself a moment of grim satisfaction. The story she'd spun would hold for now. The game was always about staying one step ahead.

As the transport touched down, the marines and paramedics disembarked. Ylena straightened, adopting the stoic posture of a doctor who had fought valiantly but lost. Her expression was a perfect mask of frustration and fatigue.

They moved with practiced efficiency, securing the perimeter while paramedics hurriedly followed, carrying their gear in a futile attempt to make a difference. The man on the ground was far beyond saving, his life snuffed out by chaos, not her standard precision, if she could go back and do it again, do it properly, she would in a heartbeat. Although, she hoped the mess would frustrate them, maybe even force Admiral Friedrich's hand, off her trail and onto something else.

Admiral Friedrich. The name sent a flicker of disdain through her. She had never met the woman, but she didn't need to. She had heard the stories, seen the decisions Friedrich had made on the battlefield and off. A staunch believer in order, discipline, and justice—at least on the surface. Ylena smirked bitterly. Justice. What a flimsy veil for revenge.

Friedrich's hunt for her wasn't just protocol; it was personal. No admiral would expend this much effort for a single rogue agent unless they had something to prove. And yet, Ylena wasn't foolish enough to believe she was Friedrich's only focus. She was a thorn in the admiral's side, a loose end that didn't fit neatly into the military's tightly controlled narrative. But a thorn was still a far cry from being the root of the problem.

"Doctor Ylena Devall?" a sharp voice cut through her thoughts, dragging her back to the present.

She turned to see one of the marines standing at attention near the transport, his rifle slung casually over his shoulder. His face was unreadable, a perfect mask of military decorum.

Behind him, the rest of the squad was holding security while a pair of medics prepared a stretcher for the body. The scene was efficient, clinical, a well-oiled machine performing a grim but routine task.

"That's me," Ylena replied evenly, brushing her gloved hands together as though ridding them of invisible dust. Her tone betrayed none of the tension swirling in her chest.

The marine nodded, his gaze briefly flicking to the bloodied mess of a body at her feet. "You called in a casualty. Stab wounds. Last name Friedrich?"

"Yes," she said, gesturing to the corpse. "I attempted resuscitation, but the injuries were too severe. There's nothing more I can do."

Her words were measured, her tone perfectly calibrated to convey professionalism tinged with regret. It wasn't her first time lying to a soldier's face, but this time, the stakes felt higher. Friedrich's name carried weight, too much weight, and she couldn't afford even a single misstep.

The marine's expression didn't change, but she noticed his eyes linger on the body for a fraction longer than necessary. "Understood, Doctor. We'll take it from here."

She nodded curtly, stepping back as the medics moved in. The stretcher's metal legs unfolded with a mechanical snap, and they began the careful process of lifting the body. Blood dripped onto the ground in thick, sluggish drops, staining the dirt beneath their boots. Ylena watched silently, her mind racing.

If Friedrich's family was involved, this would escalate quickly. She couldn't shake the nagging feeling that the admiral would see right through her carefully constructed story. The coagulant injection, the planted weapon, it all felt too neat, too easy. And Friedrich didn't strike her as the type to overlook even the smallest inconsistency.

"Doctor," the marine's voice broke through her thoughts again, and she looked up to see him watching her carefully. "Command has requested you accompany us back to the outpost for debriefing."

Ylena's stomach twisted, but she kept her face impassive. "Of course," she said smoothly. "Standard procedure, I assume."

"Standard," he confirmed, though his tone was clipped. Something about his posture, the slight stiffness in his shoulders, the way his hand hovered near his sidearm, set her on edge. He didn't trust her. None of them did. And why should they? In their eyes, she was just a civilian doctor caught up in the chaos of the front lines. Useful, perhaps, but not entirely above suspicion.

“Let me grab my things,” she said, motioning toward her medpack. She crouched down, taking a moment to compose herself as she secured the pack’s straps. Her gloved hands moved with practiced ease, but her mind was a storm of calculations. If they started asking the wrong questions, if Friedrich herself decided to get involved...

No. She couldn’t let herself spiral. She had gotten out of tighter spots before. This was no different.

Straightening, she slung the medpack over her shoulder and followed the marine toward the transport. The hum of its engines grew louder as they approached, a low, steady drone that vibrated through her boots. She climbed aboard, her gaze flicking briefly to the stretcher where the body was now secured. The ID tag now hanging from the corpse’s wrist glinted under the harsh overhead lights, a stark reminder of the name that had thrown her carefully constructed world into chaos.

As the transport lifted off, Ylena settled into a seat near the back, her expression calm but her mind racing. Friedrich’s hunt was closing in, and this latest move felt like a step too close to the edge. She would need to tread carefully, very carefully, if she wanted to stay one step ahead of the admiral’s reach.

The ride to marine outpost was nearly silent, somber, the fallout of the body in the transport weighing heavily on the mind of those around me. Ylena pondered the importance of the corpse riding next to her in the transport, the nervous glances exchanged by the medics gave away everything she needed to know, she had just stepped into the lions mouth, and the jaws were rapidly closing.

The outpost was bustling with activity when the transport touched down, squads of marines loading vehicles, medics running in and out of the temporary buildings, carrying all manners of equipment. The outposts commanding officer stood outside of the landing zone and approached when everyone had dismounted.

Ylena felt his eyes land on her and scan up and down before turning to the marine who had talked with her before.

“This her?” he shouted to the marine over the roar of the transport’s engines.

“Yes sir!” he yelled in return, “confirmed it herself”.

“Good, high command wants her held here while we confirm the body” he said as the group began to clear the landing zone, “and they’ll want her side of the story”, it was said as a passing comment, but it sent shivers down Ylena’s spine, it was just maintaining a story, holding her position on what happened. This was nothing new, but something bugged her, the stakes felt higher.

The commander led them into a medical building, the usual hustle and bustle of a field hospital was missing, replaced by only the sterile stillness of what looked to be an autopsy table, a pair of medics in clean uniforms, and several officers standing inside.

“Put the body onto the table” the commander ordered the medics, to which they quickly obliged and left the medical tent without another word, relaxing a little outside of the commander’s field of view.

The officers immediately began circling the body like sharks, each one taking a thorough look over before nodding their approval, the last wiped a bit of blood off the wrist of the corpse, I saw a small tattoo I hadn’t seen before, at least not while stabbing the man.

“Yep, this is him” the last officer said grimly, looking towards his comrades “Call it in, tell the admiral that her husband is dead”.

The words stun Ylena for a moment, she had killed the admirals’ husband, even if she wiggled her way out of this, the bounty on her head would be monstrous, this entire star system wouldn’t be safe, hell, nowhere would be safe, as if it wasn’t already unsafe, she reminded herself.

“Can you two quit standing around and see what you can find” an officer snapped at the two medics who jumped slightly before moving quickly towards the body, filling in the space where the officers had stood, poking and prodding every which way, taking blood samples, measuring the stab wounds, checking the bodies temperature.

“As for you, doctor”, the commander said his voice low, “how do you fit into this picture”.

“I’m not with the navy, that’s likely already known, I’m sure you ran my name and saw that I left it long ago” Ylena began, keeping her voice steady, *show no weakness, show no hesitation*, the statement repeated in her head. “I still work in the field, saving those I can, sometimes I tag along with marine groups, kept soldiers alive in many situations”.

“Yes, yes, we know all that” one of the grouped officers said impatiently, a scrawny man with beady green eyes, “How did you find the fucking body”.

Start chatting shit and find out, she thought, shooting him a sharp glance before continuing, “found him outside of a ruined building, I was looking around for supplies” that last part was the truth, the supplies she went to find were hers, they had been stashed away a couple weeks before, just a couple basic rations and tranquilizers.

“It looked like he had been bleeding out for a good minute, bits had dried but there was still a steady flow” she stated while recalling what he had looked like when being brought aboard the transport.

“And the weapon?” the same officer snapped, goddamn if she had her way with him, he’d be made into a ritualistic sacrifice, not something she’d normally do, but he deserved it.

“That one I have,” the commander stepped forward, quieting the officer’s huffs and puffs. Ylena noticed he had a sterile bag with the knife and sheath in it.

“As the doctor said over the comms line, it matches the wounds perfectly” he said, glancing at Ylena “I have reason to believe it may have come from the group of marines paired with him as security detail”.

Oh shit, she thought back to the marine who had been snuffed out for that weapon, he *had* screamed something about a VIP, that they wouldn’t stop hunting her, that they would find her. It was something her victims said every time, a way to try and incite a plea deal from their impending deaths, only this time, it was true.

“And what makes you think that?” another officer questioned this time, short with brown hair, a rounded pair of glasses sitting on the bridge of his nose.

The commander shifted slightly before speaking, “Just a hunch” he said, his voice low, “They dropped off comms about a day prior to the doctor finding Friedrich’s body”.

“Well, whatever your hunch is, the admiral will like to hear it” a third officer spoke, this one more confident than the rest, her uniform no less pristine. “We have orders to bring back the body, and the doctor” she said, glancing at Ylena, “Both to the admiral for processing”.

If this was the lion’s den then she was heading towards the damn firing squad, Ylena thought, keeping herself steady despite the panic slowly creeping in around her. She was going directly to the admiral, the woman who had been hunting her for the past year, it was a death sentence.

“I will have the medics prep the body for transport then” the commander spoke, breaking Ylena’s thoughts, “and you doctor, do you have anything we might need to know before departure?” his gaze is piercing, as if trying to break into her very soul to get answers. She returned his gaze, *try me, I won’t break*, she thought to herself.

“I only have what I carry, I’m ready to go when this crew is done squabbling” shooting a pointed glance at the officers who had gone back to looking like a rather awkward group of ducklings.

“I am already liking this one” the commander chuckled, “head over to the mess tent doctor, I’ll come and get you when we’re ready to leave”. He pointed across the outpost to a covered area where a steady flow of people wandered in and out.

Ylena nodded and left the medical tent, but not before hearing the female officer say “she humbled you all rather effectively” followed by a hearty laugh emanating from the tent, likely from the commander.

She made her way over to what had been referred to as the mess hall, which was really an open area covered with a camouflage net and tables in neat rows, although, it seemed as if a lot of the marines were content with sitting on the ground, gear in neat piles around them.

She wasn’t all that hungry, the perks of learning to live on very little in the field, but decided it couldn’t hurt to get something to eat. She walked over to what could only be described as a pile of shipping containers repurposed into a crude kitchen. She had to give them credit, they were crafty, sometimes too crafty, some of them had become a little too interested in rigging traps in the areas they clear, but all they did was leave tools for Ylena to bury them with.

One of the marines behind the counter spotted her walking up, “Hey there doctor” he called out, “what can we do ya for?” his tone was friendly, and she quickly recognized him as one of the many battlefield casualties she had treated in the past couple months, Marcus Holloway he had said his name was.

His commanding officer had met a gruesome end, stringing someone up like some a human puppet wasn’t her usual standard, but it was fun to toss around new ideas every now and again.

“Whatcha got?” Ylena responded leaning on the end of the makeshift counter, almost mimicking his tone and joviality, the men on the ground weren’t the issue, they never were, it was always the officers, those abusing the power handed to them, abandoning civilians or tossing their own soldiers into the line of fire without having the balls to do it themselves.

“As far as high command cares, the standard MRE options” Marcus responded curtly, “but outside the eye of command...” he glanced around before whispering “local fauna are quite tasty seasoned to perfection and served with a special sauce”.

Ylena’s eyes narrowed, “Aren’t most of the fauna around here almost all insects?”. She questioned the marine, who responded with a witty smile.

“Surprisingly no, they’re crustacean in origin, crabs and lobsters and such” he explained not hiding the glee in his voice. The MRE’s must have been really getting stale to this crew if they were willing to look that far into it.

“Point me in the direction of that then!” Ylena exclaimed, it would probably improve her mood to have something other than bland MRE’s, especially if it was as good as he was making it out.

“Oh, you don’t have to go anywhere my friend” Marcus beamed proudly “we have a whole smoke rack and boiling setup back here” he stepped to the side, allowing her to see back behind him where several large oil drums sat, each one on a pair of legs with light grey smoke gently wafting from the top. Ylena gawked at the sight, if they had gone to this much trouble, then it had to be good.

“Well, what piece do you want? Or do you want a mix?” he continued with a grin.

“If it’s anything like crab, a couple legs will do fine,” Ylena replied, anticipation building, “dealers’ choice on how they’re prepared”, she quickly added.

“One order of legs for the fine doctor please! Your call on smoked or boiled!” he yelled over his shoulder at another marine standing next to the smoker. She smiled, clicking a pair of tongs together before turning her attention to the smoker.

“So, what have you been up to, it’s been a couple months since I’ve seen you” he said turning back to Ylena.

“The usual, treating casualties, helping where I can” she replied coolly.

“Did you ever hear what happened to the captain?” he questioned, his voice dropping to no more than a whisper, “They found him strung up like a puppet, barely alive, claimed Hemlock had done it to him”.

“Oh... did he survive?” Ylena returned with a question, better to push any possibility of getting caught up in this whole ordeal far out of the way.

“Died no more than an hour after we found him, lost a lot of blood” he said grimly, glancing around to make sure no one could hear the next part, “Between you and me, he had it coming”.

“Ah” he said as his comrade emerged from the back, a small tray of something that really did smell like crab legs in her hands.

“One order of legs for the doctor” she smiled at Marcus, “and the house sauce for dipping” handing the tray to Ylena.

“Thank you so much” she said to the marine taking in the smell of the food on the tray, it smelled almost exactly like crab legs with a cajun boil seasoning hinting through.

“No, thank you doctor” Marcus replied “You’ve been a lifesaver for many of us on the ground, keep doing the good work” a smile plastered across his face.

Ylena returned the smile before turning away and finding a spot to sit on the ground nearby, quickly digging into the food, it was amazing, spiced to perfection, rivaling upscale city

food. Trying the sauce next, it was akin to a type of sweet barbecue sauce, paring incredibly with the spice of the seasoning. As she ate her mind began to wander, back to the captain of Marcus's unit, and the fate that he had met at her hands. The scene was still vivid in her mind, and Marcus was right, he had deserved it, more than he knew.

A month prior

The room was cold, the only light came from a small lamp in the corner of the room, candles sat around the room, waiting to be lit. The marine officer dangled in the center of the room, suspended by a series of intricately knotted cords. His body hung limp, his limbs positioned as if he were a grotesque puppet awaiting a master's command. Blood dripped from the shallow cuts along his arms and legs, pooling on the floor beneath him, the pattern deliberate, controlled chaos, like an artist's brushstroke.

Ylena stepped back, her gloved hands coated in a thin layer of crimson. Her white coat, pristine except for a single splash of blood near the hem, billowed slightly as she turned to inspect her work. The officer's head lolled forward, his breaths shallow and ragged. He was still alive, but barely.

"Beautiful," she murmured to herself, her voice soft and almost reverent. She tilted her head, her eyes narrowing as she studied the scene. "Symmetry is everything."

She moved with purpose, adjusting the cord on his left wrist, ensuring the angle of his arm was just right. The knots were surgical in their precision, each one serving a purpose. The wires weren't just for show; they were tied to hooks embedded in the walls and ceiling, creating a system that could manipulate his limbs with a simple tug. A macabre marionette, brought to life by her hands.

The officer stirred, a weak groan escaping his cracked lips. His eyes fluttered open, clouded with pain and confusion. "W-why?" he croaked, his voice barely audible.

Ylena crouched in front of him, her dark eyes locking onto his. She pulled a scalpel from her coat pocket, twirling it between her fingers as she spoke. "Why?" she echoed, her tone light, almost amused. "Because people like you never learn unless you're made an example of. You think you're untouchable, that your rank shields you from consequences. But in the end, we're all just flesh and blood."

She stood, her movements fluid and deliberate. "And you," she continued, circling him slowly, "you were particularly arrogant. Ordering men and women into situations you wouldn't dare face yourself. Sacrificing others for your ambition. That's why you're here."

Reaching up, she grabbed one of the cords and gave it a gentle tug. His arm jerked upward, the motion sharp and unnatural. He winced, a choked sound of pain escaping him.

“See?” Ylena said, her voice tinged with mockery. “Even now, you’re not in control. How does it feel, Captain? To be nothing more than a puppet?” She punctuated the word with another tug, this time lifting his head so he was forced to meet her gaze.

“P-please,” he stammered, tears mixing with the blood on his face. “I’ll do anything. Just... stop.”

Ylena’s smile was cold, devoid of warmth. “Oh, but we’re not done yet. This isn’t just about you. It’s about what you represent. Cowardice. Corruption. A broken system.” She stepped closer, her voice dropping to a whisper. “You’re the lesson.”

She placed the scalpel against his neck, the blade biting just enough to draw a thin line of blood. His breathing quickened, his chest heaving against the restraints.

“I could end this now,” she said, her tone almost gentle. “But that would be merciful. And mercy... well, it’s not something I have much use for anymore.”

With a flick of her wrist, she made another shallow cut, this time along his collarbone. His cry of pain echoed through the room, bouncing off the walls like a haunting melody.

Stepping back, Ylena wiped the scalpel clean and slid it back into her pocket. “Don’t worry,” she said, her tone cheerful now, as if they were having a casual conversation. “I’ll leave a message for them to find you. Something poetic. Fitting for someone of your... stature.”

As she turned to leave, she glanced over her shoulder, her expression unreadable. “Oh, and Captain? When they find you, tell them Hemlock says hello.”

The door closed behind her with a soft click, leaving the officer suspended in silence, his gasps the only sound in the room. The cords swayed gently with his movements, a macabre dance orchestrated by a killer who left no trace of her true identity.

Ylena walked down the corridor, her steps steady, her mind already calculating her next move. The thrill of the kill still lingered, but it wasn’t enough. It never was.

“Doctor Devall”, a sharp voice cut through her thoughts, bringing her back to the present. It was the outposts commander.

“Yes?” she replied, returning to her food, realizing she had stopped eating.

“Just making sure you were alright, staring off to nowhere for a minute there” he sat across from her, a similar looking tray in his hands, studying her face for anything he can understand.

“I’m perfectly alright, just thinking is all” she replied coolly, shaking the memory of the kill from her mind, even if just for a moment.

Ylena spotted her immediately. The admiral's presence commanded the room like a storm cloud rolling in. She stood in full uniform, the epitome of precision and authority. A crisp white overcoat draped over her shoulders, contrasting sharply against a tailored grey suit vest and a darker grey button-down shirt beneath. A neatly knotted black tie completed the ensemble, its stark contrast drawing the eye and lending an air of understated power.

Her silvery-grey hair was slicked back with a slight tousle at the front, the only concession to the otherwise immaculate presentation. A pair of thin, wire-framed glasses perched on the bridge of her nose, catching the overhead light in a way that made her expression unreadable but undeniably sharp. The room seemed to shift under her gaze, the weight of her presence pulling every eye in her direction.

Even the air felt heavier, as if the very atmosphere was bending to accommodate her. Conversations stopped mid-sentence, and the faint hum of machinery seemed to quiet, leaving a vacuum that amplified the sound of her measured footsteps. It wasn't just the uniform or the title that demanded attention, it was her. A force of nature in human form, and everyone in the room knew it.

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