

The Alpha King's Hated Slave

Chapter 271

THE ARRIVAL OF THE END OF DAWN.

Seven weeks later.

Queen Danika is in court again. There is discussion about the upcoming Fire Festival which is a very important festival in Mombana, it is celebrated once in every year. The discussion is going on around her, but her mind is so far away from there.

Her child is long overdue to come, but he hasn't. It relieves and disturbs her at the same time.

It relieves her because Lucien hasn't been able to come back to Mombana again like he promised he will. Through his occasional messages from the messenger bird, he has been so busy with his Kingdom and a lot of marital procedures with the Kingdom of Navia.

It took a little longer because King Valendy fell sick, and had only recently recovered from his illness but everything has been concluded because Kamara will be arriving before the paleozoic moonlight.

The paleozoic moonlight comes on the day after the morrow. So, that means that the Princess Kamara will be in the palace today or on the morrow.

That is great news because she either arrives with her lover or her lover arrives on the day after she arrived to await his punishment from the Princess's bethroned.

It will all be over, he'd informed her in his last message.

She clings to every word of his, missing him so badly. Knowing that he wants to be here with her when she gives birth, it relieves her that she still carries her child.

But, more than relief, it disturbs her a lot. Worries her so much that she is long overdue and yet she has not gone into labor. Just so much pains, and a few false labors.

She is forty weeks pregnant. Ten months and one week.

Her body no longer feels like her own at all. So heavy. The pains are insurmountable. And the tiredness? Whenever she works too much, she feels like she will drop dead any second. She wants nothing more than to birth her child and have her body back again.

“Your Highness!?”

She barely stopped herself from startling at the loud voice of the Minister of Finance. She turned and saw all the eyes of the Ministers staring at her with concern.

With the way they look at her, they must have called her name before but she didn't answer. They know she spaced out. Again.

“Yes?” Her voice was firm. She refused to look guilty for being absent-minded.

The Minister's lips pursed with disapproval, but he repeated, “We were wondering if we should use the Buno market square or the Asinta market square since—”

“We will use Buno.” She replied, cutting him off.

“But, Asinta is bigger and wilder than Buno.” Minister of Taxation stated.

She turned to him, “We used Asinta last year. I might have been a slave in Salem at that time, but I still heard. Buno and Asinta are the biggest markets we have, so it is only right to hold this year's in Buno. That way, those that lives in Buno town who weren't able to attend last year's, will be able to make it this year.”

They thought about it, nodding their head meaningfully at her sensible contribution.

“You are right, your Majesty.” The Minister for Finance agreed with her.

While they continued the loud discussion, she sniffled a yawn. She was bored and tired of all these men here.

Then, the Minister of Public Affairs glanced at her and his eyes twinkled. She knows immediately what the next topic will be.

He began, “So, your Majesty, about the third Royal Marital invitation, we have send words out for—”

Queen Danika held her waist immediately and cried out. “Arrrgh!”

Her eyes went wide at them. She cried out again, her voice filled an epitome of pain.

Chaos broke out everywhere immediately. Movements filled the Court as the ministers rushed up from their seats.

Two Ministers rushed towards her and held her, their faces filled with worry and concern.

Most of them were speaking at once.

“Guards! Come and take the Queen!” Taxation.

“I think the child is coming again!” Minister of Justice.

“He might really come this time around...!” Public Affairs.

“The Queen is in so much pain...! GUAAAAARDS!!!!” Minister for Defense.

The Queen cried out again. Longer.

The door burst open, the guards hurried in as usual. Omna rushed closer and lifted her into his arms.

As he hurried out of the Royal Court shouting, “Get the Royal Doctor!!!!” The other guards followed fastly behind him.

Left in Court are the confused and concerned ministers, who are wishing and praying that their Queen is alright.

The thoughts of the Royal Marriage completely forgotten. Again.

The sound of her carriage coming to a stop informed Princess Kamara that she’s in her destination, even before a knock came at the door of her Gold State Coach, followed by the voice of her one of her guards.

“We are here, Your Majesty!” He announced.

Princess Kamara took a deep breath, putting all the thoughts out of her mind before she opened the door and got out.

Turning around, she took in the familiar surroundings of the palace, nodding her head reluctantly to the greetings of the palace staffs bowing their head to her as they passed.

Finally, she is here again. Finally, after four months, her Callan will be free again. Anything else does not matter.

Salem’s guards and maids rushed towards her. They formed a line in front of her and bowed their heads in Royal Greeting.

“Where is the King?” She asked one of the guards she remembered to be Dargak.

“He is in his study, Your Highness.” He replied with a bow of his head.

“Take me to him, please.” turning to her personal maid, she added, “Henna, you can take our belongings to my former bedroom.”

“Right away, Your Highness.” He turned, leading her towards the entrance of the palace. She followed him, her eyes taking in her environment in familiarity.

Before long, they stood in front of the King’s Chambers. Dargak knocked twice.

“Come in.” Came the hard command from the inside.

She turned to Dargak, “I’ll take it from here. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, Your Highness.” He bowed his head before walking away.

Princess Kamara opened the door and walked inside.

Her first thought is that nothing has changed about the Golden Chambers even after six months. Still as beautiful, as masculine, as intimidating as ever.

King Lucien looked up from the scroll he was writing and saw her.

She curtsied for him, “Greetings, Your Majesty.”

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“Princess Kamara, you have arrived?” His soft tone belied the hard man he is.

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

“I hope your journey was smooth?” As he asked, he came out of his chair and walked towards her.

“Yes, it did. Thank you, Your Majesty.” She outstretched her a glove-covered hand.

He took the hand and kissed the back of her palm. “I’m glad.”

With all protocols observed, there was nothing more to say. Silence descended.

Princess Kamara broke under the silence. The tears she has been holding filled her head, she lowered herself to her knees in front of him.

“Princess, this is not necess—”

“Thank you so much, thank you so so much, King Lucien.” She cried, “Thank you for answering my desperate letter and coming to my rescue! I was so desperate, I know nothing else to do...!”

His face softened, “It’s okay, Princess.” He extended his hand, “I did not get your messages beforehand, or I would have responded earlier.”

She took the hand he extended to get to her feet. “Thank you so much.”

“How is your lover?” He asked.

“He is doing good, fortunately. After you came calling, my father allowed him to be getting fed, so I stopped sneaking around to get him food. Then, my father fell sick which took his mind completely away from Callan’s side, so I was able to get him lots of better clothes and spend some time with him in the dungeon.” She confessed with an embarrassed flush.

King Lucien observed her. This isn’t the Princess he met during Courting Week. That princess was trying to carry out her responsibilities reluctantly, but this princess here is a woman in love.

“You must love him so much.” He stated.

She nodded admittedly. It wouldn’t be fair to him that he’ll marry her without knowing that her heart belongs to another. “Yes, your Highness. I love him so much.”

“I am curious to see this young man that has taken a Princess’s heart to the extend that she is ready to go to any length for him.”

She smiled, her eyes glowing with love. “He is worth it.”

He nodded, turned and walked back to his desk. Settling himself to his seat, he glanced at her, “When is he arriving?”

“On the morrow, Your Highness.” Her lips thinned, “My father refused to let him travel together with me because of...well, our relationship.”

“Understandable.” He picked up his inked-feather, “Once he arrives safely, we’ll sort out some things. Then, I’ll be on my way to Mombana. I have delayed enough.”

“It is all because of me, I apologize, Your Majesty. How is Queen Danika?” She misses her friend so much. It has been so long.

His eyes softened blatantly. The instant change to his features just at the mention of her name revealed a lot to Kamara that had her shocked.

She'd always known that Danika loves the King so much. She has no idea that the King feels the same way.

"Let me guess, they talked about your 'marriage' again?" Baski asked the Queen lying down on her bed in her room.

Queen Danika nodded, a smile feathering her face. "You need to see how troubled they were when they thought I was about to put to bed." she snorted, "Manipulative old men."

"They fall for the same trick every single time." Baski remarked with a smile of her own.

The Queen managed to get up from Baski's bed, hitting her shoulder reluctantly in an effort to reach her aching back. "They have to. They know I'm long overdue to birth my child."

That gave Baski a pause. This is her constant worry in the past few weeks now.

She chewed on her bottom lips worriedly, "My Queen, I told you about the herbs I have that will help you go into labor"

"You also told me that it is risky." The Queen reminded her.

"Everything is risky in life, My Queen. It has worked for a lot of women over the years. Just a few had...complications."

"I've told you before that I don't want to take such herbs, Baski." She is worried too, but she does not want to take herbs like that, "My child will come out when he wants to."

With that, she smiled at the older woman before heading towards the door. "I will be in my bedroom, I'm very sleepy and tired."

"Alright, Your Highness. I will have food brought in for you when you wake." Baski returned her smile.

"Tell the guards not to bother calling the Kedo. I'm fine." She called after she walked out, referring to the medicine man.

"Got it!" Baski called back.

Queen Danika made her way to her bedroom with one hand supporting her waist and the other one hitting her shoulder repeatedly in an effort to reach her back.

She entered her bedroom, closed the door and locked it. Then, she took a step forward...and froze in her track.

Someone else is in this bedroom.

No sooner than the thought occurred to her did she look up towards her bed. Vetta was seated on her bed, staring right back at her.

Shock kept her foot rooted to the floor. At the back of her mind, she knows that nobody is aware of her presence in Mombana...in his palace. Nobody.

How did she get into her bedroom...? Most importantly, what is she doing here...?

A cold shiver worked down Danika's spine.

"Greetings, Queen Danika. We meet again." Then, the mistress stated with a cold blank face.

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Chapter 273

BONE-DEEP HATRED

"Greetings, Queen Danika. We meet again." Then, the mistress stated with a cold blank face.

"Mistress Vetta." Queen Danika's voice held firm belying the fear inside her.

Vetta can only keep staring at her. Coza has been disturbing her for the past weeks for her to carry out her own part of the deal. She paid him no heed at all, because she is not killing Danika as part of any deal she made with the monster but because this is her revenge.

This is her revenge. Her pain. Her hate. Her vengeance. She will do it on her own terms. In her own time. Which is why she's in this bedroom today.

The hatred she feels for this woman. The pain she and her father had caused her. Here she is, living a good life again as a Queen, after she and her father had destroyed her life. How is that fair?

But, she brought you food when you were dying of starvation in the dungeon. A voice whispered inside her.

That voice again. She is starting to hate this annoying voice that has suddenly taken over inside her since she got out of the palace to 'heal' and 'live a new life'.

She did not have this voice before, but all of a sudden it's there... saying things she does not want to hear.

"You will not ask me what I am doing in your bedroom? How I got in?" Vetta flashed her teeth. It wasn't a nice smile at all.

Queen Danika shrugged, "Would it matter if I did?"

"No, it wouldn't." The knife hidden under her breast feeling like the extra weight it is...reminding her what she's here for.

Queen Danika nodded her head. Then, she turned and walked towards the table, "I have to get those herbs, I'm afraid. It helps for my back." She said conversationally.

She arched her brow, "Shouldn't you have given birth? It's long overdue...if King Lucien is truly the father of that thing."

Danika didn't rise to the bait. She only shrugged again, while she poured her liquid concoction into a cup. "He's taking his time to come but I'm not in a hurry."

"Maybe, he does not want to come into a world where his mother is a monster and his grandfather...?" She let out an empty laugh, "let's us even go there."

"How have you been, Mistress?" Danika asked with concern, "There has been a lot going on for me, I haven't been able to inquire."

Taken aback, Vetta arched her brow and stared at her more thoroughly. The concern she saw on that face threw her off-balance.

She forgot all about taunting her as fierce anger whip through her. "Don't you DARE put on that act of pretense for me here, or I swear to the heavens, I will kill you in a more painful way that will leave you in EXCRUCIATING agony until you take your last breath!"

The hate and anger that spewed from each of those words made Queen Danika cringe inwardly.

She has never felt such magnitude of heavy negative feelings from anyone at all, it only took everything within her power for her to curb her fear.

“So, you came to kill me?” She asked simply.

“Surely, you did not think I came here to play with you or to congratulate you?” Vetta crossed her arms, “I do not think you to be so dull in the brain.”

“The King will hate you if he finds out about it.”

“If he finds out about it.” She replied easily.

“Do you hate me that much? Enough to kill me...?”

That empty laugh again. “If you have any idea how many times I have tried to get you killed in the past, you will know how much I hate you, Danika.”

“You have tried to kill me before?” Queen Danika was not too shocked—she knows the Mistress hates her so much—but she was shocked nonetheless.

Vetta raised her fingers and began separating them one after another as she talked. “I paid those market women to beat you up at the square, they would have killed you but your sidekick intervened. I planned with Karandy to set you up that day at the storage room, too bad that bastard was the one that died instead.” she smirked as her eyes met Danika’s wide ones, “there are a few more of them actually. So, since you have found out about it, you can stop all those pretense now.”

Danika was speechless. Too speechless.

“Why are you telling me this now?” She forced herself to ask.

“Because I know I’m going to kill you today. Finally.”

“Then, why don’t you get on with it? Why are you just sitting there on my bed? Why don’t you do it?” Queen Danika asked in a whisper.

Vetta shrugged, “I am taking my time with you. You know how it is? You savor a delicious meal before you eat it? I am savoring my revenge.” she said simply.

The hand that held her liquid concoction trembled.

She dropped the wooden cup on the table and faced the Mistress squarely, “Do you think killing me will erase everything my father put you through? Do you think killing me will make you feel better?”

Vetta hesitated for the first time, a different look crossed her face. But only for a second.

The look cleared, replaced by the cold angry one, “I know that seeing you alive does not make me feel better.”

That hurt. Queen Danika lowered her eyes to blink back the pain of those words, she almost gave up. But something inside her does not want her to give up.

Silence descended.

“I know you love the King.” Queen Danika looked up and stared at her, “I know you love King Lucien in your own way, Mistress. I carry his child inside me...if you kill me, his child will die too. It will hurt him more than anything in the world.” She whispered, her voice laced with pain.

Vetta averted her eyes, “He can always birth another with any other woman.” her head whipped back and she glared at Danika, “Thanks to you and your father, I will not be able to give him a child!”

Queen Danika shook her head slowly. “He cannot birth another, Vetta.”

She let out that empty laugh again, “You are surely thinking too highly of yourself.”

“That’s not it. The King is sterile, he has been for the past five years.”

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Chapter 274

: AND A WHISPER OF CONSCIENCE.

Vetta gaped at her, “WHAT!?”

She swallowed tightly, “When he was roasted...it happened. The seers said that it’s a miracle we are having a child now...” She caressed her belly lovingly.

The world tilted around Vetta. She wanted to rage at Danika for telling her a lie like that in an effort to save her own head, but suddenly, a lot of things were starting to make sense to her.

Why she never got pregnant for him for the past five years she’s been his mistress even when she took fertility pills, only to get pregnant with Karandy’s child after that one time...

All those women were brought into the palace and slept with in the next year after their slavery...

Why he was so happy when he found out about this child...

It suddenly made sense. That one night three years ago, they were talking after he took his pleasures from her body and he called himself "A King that can never have an heir".

Then, she'd dismissed it because she thought he does not want a child... Now she knows it's because he can't father them.

Queen Danika watched how devastating the news is for the mistress, that is when she actually believed that the mistress does not know was about this before.

But will this revelation save her from the other woman's hatred and rage?

"Please, don't kill me... don't kill our child." She pleaded then.

When Vetta looked up at her, Danika really did give up then.

She saw tears in Vetta's eyes. Through the tears, she saw her own death in the Mistress's dark-brown eyes.

Then, the mistress sprang to her feet and withdrew a knife with a long sharp blade. She has never seen that kind of knife in her life, and she knows without a doubt that a knife like that will tear through the body killing instantly.

Danika had the great urge to scream, but she opened her mouth and no sound will emerge. She was too shocked.

Vetta walked towards her before she could open her mouth to give screaming another try. She placed the knife to her belly, "I hear a scream and I dig this knife deep inside your belly before I dive out of your window."

Queen Danika snapped her mouth shut. Tears filled her own eyes. Heavens, I'm going to die...!

"When I think your father did enough, a new one presents itself! How dare you stand there and look so righteous after you all destroyed our lives!?" Vetta glared at her, her eyes swimming with angry tears.

"Do you have any idea what I went through in your father's hands!? Do you have any idea what it feels like to live in hell for ten good years waiting for your own day to die!? Do you know what it feels like to be raped by several different men every single night and you cannot do anything about it!? Do you have any idea what it feels like to be whipped day and night until your back is all shredded and torn, filled with b***d and bruises!!!?"

Queen Danika lowered her head as guilt and shame overwhelmed her. No matter how she tries to tell herself that it isn't her fault, the feeling weighted inside her.

Vetta is not done. Tears slipped from her eyes, “Do you have any i-idea what it feels like to do things against your will!? Do you have any idea what it feels l-like to take a life!?! Do you know what it feels like to be FORCED to take SEVERAL lives!?”

It was getting harder to talk for the mistress because of the tears, “A-And then, most especially, d-do you have any i-idea w-what it feels like to protect someone you love with e-everything in you only for someone e-else to come out of nowhere and take him from you...!?”

Not only that, that woman is the DAUGHTER of the MONSTER that ruined your life...!!!?

And now she’s pregnant for him, about to give him something you can NEVER be able to give him!? You have any i-idea w-what it f-feels l-like!?”

Danika is opening crying now, tears falling from her eyes in waves.

Vetta was no better. She was crying too while holding Danika tight in the arm.

She swiped the tears angrily from her eyes, “Then, t-they expect you to j-just t-throw everything away...? To just get up one morning and m-move on...? Vetta, the s-saint...why not just let go and forget? They s-say it like it is the easiest thing in the world when it’s the h-hardest...”

She looked Danika in the eyes, “Tell me, Danika, h-how does s-s-someone forget s-something like this a-and just m-move on...?”

“But, that is why it h-hurts so much, i-isn’t it?” Danika’s voice broke into low whispers, “Because you are starting to forget? To let go? You are starting to let go of t-the hate you have been holding onto for so long and you h-hate yourself for it...?”

“Shut up your mouth!” Vetta hissed.

“You hate that you know deep within yourself that killing me will not make you feel better. You hate that killing me will not r-reverse those years of pain... You know that killing me will not heal your pain... You know that killing me will not make the King love you...”

Angrily, Vetta raised the knife to Danika’s heart. “I swear to the heavens that I will bury this to your chest if you DON’T stop talking...!”

But Danika’s mouth could not stop, “You hate that h-hating me does not come so naturally anymore as it does before... You hate that d-deep within y-yourself, you know that I am not p-pretending to be who I am. You hate that these d-days you have to look at me and t-try so hard before you can call up that hate... You are healing, and you hate that too... You developed a conscience and you hate that too.”

Vetta gripped the knife so tight until her muscles hurt. Her teary eyes were glaring daggers at Danika.

Then, Queen Danika took a step back from her. She lowered herself to her knees before Vetta, ignoring the shards of pain that shot to her h**s at the position.

“What the hell d-do you think you are doing...?” Vetta snapped, still poised over her with the knife hanging in the air.

“What I should have done a long time ago.” she sniffled, looking her straight in the eyes, “I am so s-sorry for everything. I am sorry for what you went through in my father’s hands. I am sorry that you had to live in hell for ten good years waiting for your own day to die. I am sorry that you were ráped and whipped until your back is all shredded and torn, filled with b***d and bruises.

I am s-sorry that the King fell in love with m-me when it should have been you. I am s-sorry that I am c-carrying his child inside me. I am so sorry that you feel so forsaken and thrown away because of his love for me. I am sorry that we c-can not tell ourselves w-who to love. I am sorry for l-loving him with everything inside me. I am sorry that e-even if y-you kills me today that I w-will still keep l-loving him.” She blinked. Tears rained down her eyes. “I am s-sorry that my father turned you into this w-woman. I am s-sorry t-that you had to l-live with hating me for so long. I am sorry for everything, Anarieveta...”

Vetta trembled from head to toe.

The hand that held the knife shook so badly like it is attached to a vibrating ring.

Tears rained down her eyes in massive waves.

Then, the knife dropped from her hand. She fell to the ground before Danika and began sobbing her eyes out.

A huge pain-filled sound turned from the very heart of her. She cried and cried and cried so badly, she shook so much.

Danika crawled towards her and wrapped her arms around her neck. She was crying too, “I am so sorry. So so sorry...”

For a moment, Vetta leaned into her and wrapped her arms tightly around Danika’s shoulders. She cried on her shoulders, bawling like a child who’s pains can never be describable. For a moment.

Then, she sprang away from Danika’s arms and got to her feet. She walked to the bed, took out the cloak she used to disguise herself while sneaking in, and pulled the black cloak to cover herself.

She came back and glared at Danika with red teary eyes. “D-Don’t think I l-let you g-go. A-And d-don’t think I w-will not be back. I will b-be back, and I will k-kill you! I just need...”

She did not finish, clamping her mouth shut. Then, she turned towards the very high window and dived out of it.

Queen Danika was alone again. With the knife lying in front of her.

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Chapter 275

That night, King Lucien’s sleep was disturbed much more than it has always been.

For some painful incomprehensible reasons, nightmares about what happened to Declan plagued his unconsciousness. His waking moments are no better.

An hour after midnight, he was wide awake with a hurting heart and a head filled with painful memories of his cousin who died in the most horrible way right in front of him.

In the dark of the night, he clenched his hands into fists, wishing the pain will stop. If only Danika was here...

Danika. His heart unclenched a bit at the thought of her. How is she? How is his child?

Getting up from the bed, he entered the bathroom, turned on the cold water overhead, and let it wash over him.

Not for the first time, he regretted giving his word to help the Princess and her lover. If not that he is a man of his word, he will already be in Mombana to await the birth of his child.

On the morrow. No, it is the early hours of the morning already.

After today, he will make hasty plans to be in Mombana as fast as he can.

But first, the pain from the memories of his dead brother will have to leave him first.

After all these years, it does not hurt less.

It is a rocky ride. The carriage keeps bumping into road obstacles, shaking the prisoner in all directions at the same time.

“Sorry, bud.” The prison guard drawled mockingly. The others laughed.

They aren’t sorry at all. In fact, they enjoyed rocking him around, it’s their own way of playing jokes on him; Navia’s Prisoner.

Callan pressed his lips together, folding his tied hands together in front of him and squeezing nervously.

When he found out that he was going to be moved from Navia to Salem, he does not know if he should be happy or filled with dread.

He was both. The Princess might actually trust this King so well that she was so happy when she told him that his Judge and Jury is no longer in her father’s hands, but he wasn’t.

With her father, he knows that he’s going to get killed but with this new King, he has no idea if he’ll be freed or he’ll be tortured, humiliated and then, killed.

But, his Princess is happy, so he had to go with it.

Being in that godforsaken cold cell for more than four months was almost driving him to insanity. That place is a living nightmare for him... literally.

There was no single night he had a good sleep in that cold, barren, place. Every night was a reoccurrence of a part of his past that must have been so traumatizing that his place had to block it out. Hard.

His flashes got so worse in that dungeon, that he was able to figure out a few things in these past few months;

He’d been in a dungeon-like that before in his life, and a lot of his bad memories happened in that place.

He’d been raped before—the day he was killed. It was so horrible, it made his strong brother bawl and shout like a baby while he begged his abusers to stop and kill him instead.

He was able to remember his brother’s name. Lucien.

He was able to remember his brother’s face.

He's not a peasant. He has no idea of their status in society, but they were no peasants.

His brother had loved him so much... Had fought for him so much... Had protected him so much. His brother loves him. There's nothing much he remembered, but he always had the urge to cry whenever he remembers his brother.

Another bumping of the carriage on something jolted him out of his thoughts.

"Oops. Sorry." Another guard said amusingly.

He'd had enough. "I'll make sure the Princess hears about this joyful ride, I assure you all."

The smile disappeared from their faces. They looked at each other nervously, and back at him, "Uhm, it was c-completely unintentional."

"Of course, it was. That must be why we are riding the bumpy sides, instead of the clear road."

They cleared their throats self-consciously. The carriage rider changed routes instantly and turned the horses towards the smooth route.

As the journey progressed—more smoothly this time—Callan wondered if a time will come when he will be able to see his brother again.

After all the postponing and planning and researching and chickening out, Talia finally decided that she will poison the King and Zariel today.

Coza had been very angry the night before when he didn't hear any chaos and upheaval from the people. It only means that the Queen of Mombana did not die.

His anger only escalated when all his messages to the mistress went unanswered. He'd sent more than five messages through messenger birds, but they've all flown back empty. No reply at all.

He'd taken his anger out on her, taking sexual pleasures from her body in the most brutal way...

"Kaya!" Came the loud voice behind her.

She turned and stared at the cook wide-eyed. "Uhhhmm?"

"Where's your mind!? That tea...!"

She turned and glanced at the tea she was pouring into a cup. “Ooooh!!”

That was when she realized that the cup has filled up and overflowed.

Dropping the old kettle down, she glanced sheepishly at Maima, “Sorry...”

The cook’s lips turned down in disapproval, “Keep your head around you next time, will you?”

“Yes, Maima.” She replied obediently before she faced her task again.

Outside, Talia looks all cool and reserved as she added honey and stirred the King’s tea but on the inside, she is a mess.

“The King asked you to get his tea for him?” Maima, the Royal cook asked conversing as she chopped the vegetables at the other side of the kitchen.

“Yes. After his training with the guards, he ordered me to get him tea.” She replied.

“Just make sure you don’t put lots of honey to it. The King absolutely hates a lot of it.”

“Of course.” She’d done her research very well before she finally gathered up the guts to execute this plan after two months.

Lifting up the two wooden cups, she made her way out of the Royal Kitchen to her bedroom to add the poisonous concoction.

As she walked, her legs shook. By the Gods, this is more a suicide mission than any conspiracy she has been involved in all her life.

Thank God nobody knows her identity in this palace.

No one knows she will be killing the King and one of his strongest guards on this day.

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Chapter 276

Long after sunrise, Vetta laid on her bed staring out of her window. Her eyes were swollen and there’s no strength left in her body.

She'd been crying all the way from Mombana back to Salem, all through the night. Danika's apologies had thrown her off guard. It was so unexpected. As unexpected as hearing her name from her lips.

She'd freaked out. Till now, there's no way to explain the way she felt in those moments, she'd done something that she'd never expected she'll do. Running away.

That unplanned, uncalculated, escape cause her to bruise her arm at the unceremonious fall she'd landed on. But, the pain was hardly felt.

With a soft sigh, she got up from the bed and walked towards the window. As she watched market men and women go about their daily activities and children playing around, Danika's words filled her ears over and over again.

****But, that is why it h-hurts so much, i-isn't it? Because you are starting to forget?

You hate that h-hating me does not come so naturally anymore as it does before...

You hate that d-deep within y-yourself, you know that I am not p-pretending to be who I am.

You hate that these d-days you have to look at me and t-try so hard before you can call up that hate...

You are healing, and you hate that too...

You developed a conscience and you hate that too.*****

Tears threatened. She blinked them hard away.

She'd told Danika everything she did to her in the past. Not only that, but she also knows that she'd come to kill her.

Will she tell King Lucien about it?

It's the perfect weapon against her. Will Danika use it to ruin her? To make the King hate her so much and even execute her?

Does she even need to wonder about it? Anybody will report something like that.

Taking a deep breath, she wiped the tears from her eyes. Well, she isn't going to sit around waiting for her doom to come.

She'll go to the palace today to see King Lucien today. It's been so long she saw his face, she misses him so badly.

Baski and Sally were helping Queen Danika get ready for Court.

The Queen is seated in front of the mirror with pale tired eyes that look like they didn't see any sleep last night at all. Sally stood behind her, combing her hair and rolling them at the top of her hair while glancing worriedly at her occasionally.

"What happened in your bedroom, yesterday, My Queen?" Baski asked for the countless times as she cleaned the Queen's shoes.

I almost died yesterday, that's what happened. Queen Danika swallowed the words.

"Nothing, Baski." She replied as usual.

"Yet, you tightened the security of the Royal Quarters and transferred all the guards that were on duty yesterday. There's a strange knife I haven't seen before in your dresser." Baski g*****d.

"You didn't add that she cried all evening long, "Sally added softly. "I was so scared."

Queen Danika raised her hand and touched Sally's soothingly, "I am sorry for scaring you. You too, Baski. But, I am fine."

Sally's expressive eyes obviously say that she doesn't believe her, but she nodded her head anyway. "If you say so, My Queen."

They settled into silence afterward.

*****D-do you have any i-idea w-what it feels like to protect someone you love with e-everything in you only for someone e-else to come out of nowhere and take him from you...!?

Then, t-they expect you to j-just t-throw everything away...? To just get up one morning and m-move on...?

D-Don't think I l-let you g-go. A-And d-don't think I w-will not be back. I will b-be back, and I will k-kill you! I just need..." *****

"I got the news that the Princess Kamara has already arrived at our Kingdom Salem." Baski's voice filled the air.

It jolted the Queen out of her painful thoughts. She swiveled her head to see Baski, "Really? She has!?"

“Yes.” The woman was smiling, “Now, the King can carry out whatever plan he has so fast and come back to Mombana.”

“I still can’t believe he came here on that night.” Sally added, “It’s still unbelievable even though I smelled his cologne at your bedroom the next morning.”

“I know right? The cat swallowed my tongue when I saw him in the hallway that night,” Baski grinned, “I remember thinking that Lord Riverdale is about to enter a big trouble.”

“It’s fortunate that he was able to go home in one piece. The maids rumored that he ran out of the Royal Quarters like his legs were on fire.”

As they conversed freely, Queen Danika settled back into her thoughts.

Will she tell Lucien what happened?

The truth is, she has not made any decisions yet, but somehow, her heart was strongly against telling him.

Somehow, her heart holds onto the memories of Anarieveta, crying so badly and shaking in her arms.

She was so into her own head, she had no idea tears were falling from her eyes until Sally’s hand wiped her wet cheeks.

She turned and saw them staring at her so worriedly. “Are you really alright, My Queen?” Sally asked, almost on the verge of tears herself.

Giving them a watery smile, she nodded her head. “Yes, I’m fine. Don’t worry your heads, it’s just my hormones making a mess out of me.”

But Baski didn’t buy it. “Will you ever tell us what happened...?” She asked worriedly.

The Queen lifted a shoulder...and let it fall exhaustedly. “Maybe. Someday.”

“We are at the borders of Salem! Almost there.”

A guard’s voice woke him up from sleep. Callan looked around the small-spaced carriage, he must have fallen asleep out of tiredness.

Then, he brought his head out of the carriage and looked around.

They were in a desert of some sort with so many guards all over the place. A small mountain stood so many distances away to his left. Indeed, they were at a border of some sort.

Those guard's uniforms... They looked so familiar. Too familiar.

"We are expected in the palace." A prison-guard's voice filled the air.

Callan watched from the carriage as the prison-guard interacted with the security guards.

A few minutes later, the guards cleared the route and allowed them entry to the Kingdom.

"Welcome to Salem!" One of them shouted.

As their carriage passed through, Callan was transfixed. He couldn't stop looking around.

As they entered the Kingdom, his heart stopped in his chest. Then, it ran away.

This place... This place...

Memories assailed him.

Unlike before, these ones were flashes, but a film of the part of his life he forgot.

Lots of flicks. Pictures. So much of them.

"Arrrgh!!!!" He screamed, grabbing his overloading head with both hands. So many memories...!

Starting from a young age. His aunt, Queen Meetia who raised him. The death of his parents. Happy memories with his aunt. Her death at old age. Living with his new family in the palace. His cousin... Prince Lucien.

Memories assailed him of all his moments with his big cousin. All those times he followed his cousin like a tail wherever he's going anywhere, especially during his sword-trainings. A time when he was young when he skinned his knee, his cousin kissed it and made it feel better.

Then, the night they were ambushed. Enslaved in Mombana. All the tortures they endured... All the tortures his brother endured for him... The nights he could not sleep, his brother talked to him and put him to sleep.

The memories of the day he was killed. Everything that happened on that day filled his head. The woman that killed him. The woman that saved him.

“Are you alright?”

“What is wrong with him...?”

“Pour him more water...!”

“The Princess will have us whipped if anything happens to him...!”

“What is happening...?”

The guards’ voices slowly dragged him back to consciousness.

Callan looked around to see the guards’ worried and relieved faces. They’ve soaked his clothing with water while trying to revive him.

“Are you alright?” One of them asked, looking so relieved that he’d come to.

“Yes. Yes, I am fine now.” Callan was able to reply, his voice hoarse.

“Thank goodness! Let the journey continue!” The rider announced.

As the journey continued...as they moved deeper into the Kingdom of Salem, Callan felt like a new man.

His memories have returned. All of them.

Oh, and his name is not Callan. He is Prince Declan.

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Chapter 277

Vetta arrived at the palace, going straight to the training ground, knowing that the King will be there training the young warriors.

Indeed King Lucien was there, but the training session is over. When she saw him, he was addressing Dargak in a low tone. He hasn’t seen her yet, so she used that moment to really look at him.

He has changed indeed. If you aren't so close to him, you will not notice the subtle change because physically, he still looks the same. Hard, huge, scary, calm with a dominating presence that is almost domineering.

But that coldness that surrounds him like a cloak is not there any longer. It makes him look a little more...approachable.

"Vetta."

His deep voice dragged her out of her thoughts. She looked up, her eyes meeting his. Her lips stretched into a smile as she walked closer and bowed to him.

"My King." She greeted.

Taking a step forward, he kissed her forehead. "How have you been?" He inquired, soft unfamiliar light in his eyes.

Her eyes slid close as his mouth touched her cheek in a gentle gesture. "I am fine, Your Majesty."

"You look...different," he stated as he began walking. She fell into steps with him.

"How different? Is it my clothes?" She no longer has her mistress clothes.

"No," sparing her a glance, he said, "Your smile looks more beautiful now. I think the outside world has been great to you?"

"I think so too," she admitted softly.

"Your eyes are swollen. Have you been crying?" He looked worried.

Before, she would have manipulated this opportunity to her favor—to get more of his attention—in so many ways. But now, the idea didn't appeal to her as it would have before.

"No, I think it's what I ate last night, Your Majesty." She replied softly.

The worry lines disappeared, his face looking more relaxed than she has seen in a long time.

"I heard Princess Kamara is finally here again," Vetta asked.

"Yes, she arrived yesterday."

"Will you really marry her?" She has no liking for that princess who slapped her more times than she can count. She does not deserve King Lucien.

The King seemed to consider that. Silence ensued.

Then, "For now, it'll be sane to see it like that." Was all he said.

"Oh." She responded, for lack of better words. A very confusing reply, that one.

"Tell me about your life in these past few months."

That he will voluntarily ask her this so genuinely touched her embittered heart more than anything else.

Does healing make someone like this too? Does it really clear your heart of all hurts and help you see clearly, the things hate never let you see before?

"Vetta?"

His voice urged her on. So, she began telling narrating her life outside the palace. All the way to the Royal Quarters, to his Chambers, she told him about her new life.

In his Chambers, King Lucien seated behind his desk studying a new scroll while she clattered about the days she went to market.

She was so deep into her tale—he was listening too—when a voice interrupted from behind the door.

"Tea for his Majesty!" The voice was oddly familiar, but Vetta couldn't place it. Yet.

"Come in." King Lucien commanded calmly.

The door opened and Talia entered the King's bedroom.

Vetta's words cut off halfway, as her eyes settled on Talia and the hot liquid she carried in the wooden cup. The maid, on the other hand, almost dropped the teacup at the sight of the Mistress.

"Mistress!" Tore from her lips, fright, and horror blanketing her face. Her hands began shaking.

King Lucien was scribbling down on the scroll in front of him, paying them no attention.

Vetta glared at Talia and the liquid she carried. Anger boiled her.

Coza might have given his word not to hurt King Lucien but his word is as good as trash. She has no trust in Talia. And her expression...?

“What is in that cup!?” She hissed angrily.

“The K-King’s tea.” Talia stammered, staring hopefully at the King.

“Bring it this way.” King Lucien g****d, turning the back of the scroll to write something on it.

Relief filled the maid. She hurried towards the King with the tea, but Vetta stepped into her path, blocking her from getting to the King.

What do you think you’re doing!?! The former Mistress’s eyes asked the fierce questions silently.

Talia lifted her chin wordlessly, haughtily,

in a gesture that says, ‘You can’t stop me because you will implicate yourself too.’

Vetta narrowed her eyes angrily. Silence ensued.

At the delay, King Lucien finally lifted his head and stared at them. His brows knitted in confusion when he saw the way Vetta blocked the maid from bringing the tea to him.

“Is anything the matter?” He asked, bewildered.

Talia’s eyes twinkled with evil mischief, daring the Mistress to try explaining the matter to the King.

“Nothing.” Vetta let out, at last, stepping out of the way.

Victory flashed in the maid’s eyes before she walked past the Mistress towards the King.

Dropping the tea on his desk, she announced demurely, “Here is your tea, Your Majesty.”

He nodded his head curtly, dismissively.

Talia stepped out of his sight but didn’t go out of the room.

She watched victoriously from one corner as King Lucien lifted the wooden cup to his mouth and—

“I’ll drink it.” Vetta’s raised voice stopped the King’s descending head.

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Chapter 278

King Lucien glanced up at her, curiously. “You want tea? I will send words to the Royal Kitchen to make you the one—”

“Please, I’m t-too thirsty, I c-can’t wait. Let me drink this one while Maima m-makes you another one. Please, My King.” Vetta has no idea what’s inside that tea but she’ll be damned before she let him drink it in front of her.

Shaking her head, she walked towards him and took the tea from him. It’s an insolence, to snatch what the King is holding without his permission, but that is not her thought at the moment.

Taking the wooden cup, she stepped out of his reach.

King Lucien does not understand Vetta’s insolence. But, it didn’t get past him that it’s the first time Vetta is making such an insolent move with him.

“Alright, you can take that one. I’ll have Maima make me another one.” He decided.

Victory fled from Talia’s face, replaced by horror as the Mistress took the drink far. Terror followed the look of horror.

Master Coza will kill her...! Not only did the King not die, but the Mistress who’s his useful weapon will die!

At the look of terror, Vetta smirked at her even as tears filled her eyes. Oh, she knows so well that Coza will have her head for this.

Then, she stared at the hot tea she palmed in her hands and swallowed tightly.

But, as she raised it to her lips, there was a commotion outside the palace. A loud commotion that interrupted King Lucien’s writing.

“What is going on?” He g*****d as he raised his head and stared towards the door.

Just then, the door opened and Dargak hurried inside the King’s Chambers with a huge smile on his face.

For a guard that does not smile, it was downright shocking seeing such a big smile on his face.

“Your Highness! Your Highness! There is someone here to see you!” He shouted, bowing his head to the King.

Only one person was scheduled to him today, and that is the Princess Kamara's lover, King Lucien thought.

"Has Navia's Prisoner arrived?" He asked Dargak, still wondering about the smile on the guard's face.

"Yes, Your Majesty! He stands outside your door, waiting for your command to come in!"

"He needn't wait. He should come in—" King Lucien cut off suddenly at the sound of his door opening. A figure walked through the door.

King Lucien swiveled his head in that direction. He froze.

Declan walked into his Chambers. Declan...?

There is a small crowd of the people of Salem at his door too—how did they get into the Royal Quarters?—which the guards were trying to contain. But, at that moment, King Lucien turned deaf and blind to them.

All his focus centered on his cousin brother who died in the most horrible way six years ago, standing right in front of him. Declan...?

Has he finally lost it in his head...? Has he finally gone insane?

He must really have gone insane. That is the only explanation for the reason why he'll be seeing his dead cousin right in front of him in the middle of the day.

At one corner of the Golden Chambers, Vetta's eyes were wide as saucers, staring at Declan standing before the King. She was so shocked, the wooden cup fell from her hands and the tea poured out to the floor.

She spared it no attention, unable to stop staring at the ghost in the room.

The look of horror at Talia's face before was nothing compared to the one that is there now as she stared at the man she was very sure died, six years ago. The man she washed die.

"By the Gods..." The maid trailed off, her throat suddenly too dry. Today must be her doom. Clearly, it is written in the stars.

Dargak's smile slipped at the utter blank expression that has replaced the relaxed look on the King's face before. No, the King does not look happy at all. He believes that what he's seeing is unreal.

There was no reading this face at all. It was completely blank. No feeling. No expression. Nothing.

But, it isn't Dargak's explanations to give, so, he did the only sensible thing required of him. He bowed his head and excused himself from the bedroom, closing the door behind him.

Declan can do nothing but stare at his brother that has been nothing but flashes in his memories in the past few years.

His cousin, who is ten years his older cousin, is his big brother. Heavens, he cannot believe he's seeing his brother again.

But, his brother is not looking at him with recognition.

"Brother... It's me..." He said hoarsely, his voice filled with emotions.

That voice...

Even as his brother is a figment of his obviously-gone-crazy mind, King Lucien's throat closed up at hearing the sound of his voice again for the first time in ages. His chest tightened so much, it was almost hard to breathe.

He said nothing. His expression didn't change either.

"I'm here... I am truly here, Prince Lucien. I'm here, King Lucien. It is me..." Declan took a step close to his brother that stood frozen like a statue but stopped two feet in front of him because of the terrifying blank look on his always-strong cousin's face. He has no idea what is going through his brother's mind.

Memories assailed Declan.

Memories of his big brother taking whips for him. Giving him his own food to eat while he goes hungry. Memories of his big brother assuring him every night that everything will be fine one day.

"I really am here... It's me, brother." He tried again, his voice breaking with emotions as he drank in the sight of his one and only family.

Silence descended.

No voice was heard in the Golden Chambers. Nothing.

Finally... What seems like an eternity later, King Lucien pulled his eyes from the ghost in front of him, raised his hands, and stared at his fingers.

What kind of torturous dream is this? What kind of torturous dream is this in the middle of the day...?

His hands were shaking. His eyes blurred with tears. Then, he let out in a pained voice,

“Now, my mind even conjures you up to the extent that I see you in the light of the day... I am so sorry, Declan.”

A tear dropped from his eyes and splashed into his hands.

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Chapter 279

REUNION: The Ocean Of Unexpected Truth and Pain.

.A tear dropped from his eyes and splashed into his hands.

The sight broke Declan’s heart. “You have nothing to be sorry for, Brother. You did everything you could. You did as you promised. You brought us out of that shíthole like you promised.”

“Not until it was too late,” his voice sounded scrapped raw, “Not until all the damages have been done.”

“No, you’re wrong. Damages was done, but here we are today. Salem is magnificent again, I was flabbergasted when I entered the Kingdom,” Declan closed the distance between them then, grabbed his shoulders and shook him, “The Kingdom is wealthy, beautiful and prosperous again! In just six years! No, all damages was not done.”

Deep into that hurtful place King Lucien was buried into, a realization began setting in.

Declan is touching him. Really touching him.

“You’re touching me.” He rasped in awe.

Declan’s eyes were glassy but he smiled, “That’s because I’m alive. I’m not a ghost.”

“But, h-how is that even possible...? How is this possible? I don’t understand...” For the first time, in as long as King Lucien can remember, he sounded dumb to his own ears. He was too confused. He was too filled with hope.

Declan sniffled, “A long story. But I’m—”

King Lucien threw his arms around his brother then. For a moment, he dreaded that the fantasy will be over and Declan will disappear in a poof of air from his arms.

But, nothing happened. No, his brother wrapped his arms around him too, burrowed his head into his neck and his shoulders began shaking...the only indication that he's crying.

"By the Gods...! Deck...!? You're really here, Deck...!" King Lucien held him tight, the world zeroing in on him.

His brother is alive! His brother is right in front of him! His brother is alive! Heavens, Declan is alive!

"Big cousin... I've missed you so much." He sniffled into his neck. "Even without my memories, there w-was this huge hole in my heart whenever I h-have flashes of you... I missed you so much, even when I can't r-remember you."

His small brother had lost his memories. He's here now. King Lucien clutched him tight, closed his eyes and allowed the euphoric feeling to wash over him. His brother is alive. His brother is here.

"Oh, Deck, this is all too much for me. You're alive, you're here. Heavens are smiling at me in the most unexpected way."

Another tear dropped from King Lucien's eyes, "Declan is alive. What's left of my family...what I thought was ripped away from me in the most horrible way...is right in front of me... Alive. Well."

"Yes, yes. I'm alive, brother. I'm so sorry that it took me so long to come back here." Declan cried from the both of them.

King Lucien was too emotional for words to explain. Pulling back, he palmed Declan's cheeks, his eyes darting all over him searchingly, "There's nothing to be sorry about. Thank you, Deck... Thank you for being alive...!"

They were hugging again. Declan's broad shoulders shaking at the strength of his weeping, while the King's eyes slid shut and he only clung to his brother tighter.

"Thank you so much, Deck. I can never thank you enough... Thank you so much for being alive." His voice hoarse, his eyes glinted.

"I had help, that was how I stayed alive." He pulled back then, wiped his tears and sniffled.

“Tell me all about it. Tell me what happened, Deck.” King Lucien took his hand then and turned with the intention of leading him to a comfortable chair, but his eyes found the two females in the bedroom.

That was when he remembered that Vetta and the maid are in his bedroom. That was when he remembered that he isn't alone.

“Declan...!” Vetta cried then, and flew across the bedroom towards him.

He caught her up in his arms and lifted her off her feet. “Vetta...”

“Oh, heavens!” She began crying. Huge sobs racked her throat, she hugged him tight. “You're truly here! You're really alive...! You survived....!”

Her cries were loud. Filled with pain, happiness, guilt and relief all at once. Heavens, it does not matter anymore. If anything happens to her it does not matter..!

Finally, her greatest guilt is in front of her again! Did Declan remember what happened? Did he remember EVERYTHING that happened?

Will she be executed? Will she be vindicated?

It does not matter which one it is. What matters is that he is alive. Declan is alive and well!

What matters is that today, her greatest guilt is falling away after six years of living inside her...of eating at her.

“Oh, heavens...! Thank, heavens...!” She cried for so long, losing herself in that strong embrace.

Out of the corner of Declan's eyes, he noticed another figure in the bedroom. Another figure leaving—sneaking—out of the bedroom.

This maid...!

His hand shot out without releasing Vetta, and grabbed hold of the maid.

His euphoric voice dimmed a bit, replaced by a mountainous hatred that has festered in his heart for the past six years manifested in his face...his body...every part of him.

“You... It is you.” His voice vibrated with fierce hatred and rage.

The maid's eyes widened in terror. “P-Prince Declan...”

“Do you know her?” King Lucien asked then, his brows furrowed as he glanced back at the maid.

“Yes I do. You asked me to tell you what happened right? How I survived?” He glanced at his brother, still clutching Talia’s hand tight, barely aware of Vetta pulled away from him with tears in her eyes.

“Yes, I asked. Tell me about it, Deck. Does it have something to do with this woman?”

He nodded once. “She killed me. Drove a blade through my heart and enjoyed doing so. She loved every moment of it.”

Silence filled the air. For a few seconds, the air was tense around them.

Then, “What did you just say?” King Lucien’s voice has turned grave. Dangerous. Angry.

Declan glared at the woman who’s now struggling to pull free from his grip at the deadly look in the King’s eyes.

“This maid here killed me. She is no ally to Salem! She works for King Cone and Coza. She is a traitor of the Kingdom!”

“Who is there?” The King raised his voice slightly.

The door opened and Dargak hurried in. “Your Majesty?”

In two steps, King Lucien caught up with the guard. In one move, he pulled Dargak’s sword from it’s sling and turned towards the maid with the sword already resting on her neck.

Talia froze. Already she can see dead hovering around her. She stilled her struggles. Instead of the usual fear, a cold calmness took over her.

“I didn’t do it alone. The mistress did it with me.” Her eyes lifted and landed on Vetta, “She killed Prince Declan with me.”

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Chapter 280

“I didn’t do it alone. The mistress did it with me.” Her eyes lifted and landed on Vetta, “She killed Prince Declan with me.”

King Lucien stilled.

“What...!?” His head swiveled and landed on Vetta, “What...!?” He repeated.

Vetta did not move a muscle. There were tears in her eyes...tears of guilt and pain. But, she did not say a word.

“The Mistress has no words because she knows I speak the truth! We killed Prince Declan together and we enjoyed it!” She laughed maliciously, “It’s a pity that he is still alive!”

King Lucien returned fierce blue-eyes at the woman.

She lifted her chin, “Yes, it’s a pity that he survived! I hate it! But, I’m not worried,” that evil laugh again, “My master will still kill you all! He will have the victory! He will—”

Her head separated from her shoulder. King Lucien had cut off her head. It dangled on the floor in front of King Lucien’s shoes.

“Dargak, clean up this mess.” He stated simply.

The guard needn’t be told twice. He hurried about to clean out the girl’s body and b***d from the King’s Chambers.

Then, King Lucien turned cold eyes towards Vetta.

Does Declan remember everything?

Will I be executed today? Or will I be vindicated?

The question repeated itself over and over again in her mind as she stared at the man whom she has loved for so long...whom she has sacrificed everything for, over and over again. The same man who’s staring back at her with questioning eyes as cold as ice.

She said nothing at all. There was nothing to say.

“What did I just hear?” He grated, “Was she right, Vetta? Did you have a hand in killing my brother?”

“Yes. King Cone gave me a sword to Kill Declan and an ultimatum.” She stated at last. “It was either him or you. I took the sword from him and chose to keep you alive.”

“You killed Declan...?” The disbelief and pain in his voice were too much.

"I was left with no choice." There were tears in her eyes, but she lifted her chin proudly, looking him in the eyes. "Do you know the worst part of these? If it repeats itself again, I will still choose to keep you alive."

King Lucien's head was overloaded. Too crowded, his thoughts were all jungled up. His head was no longer making sense to him.

But his heart was torn apart into two.

Declan moved then, getting in front of him, blocking his view of Vetta...standing between him and Vetta. "No, Brother. You are getting it all wrong."

He turned then, his gaze boring down on Vetta. "You're getting it all wrong because she is telling it all wrong."

Vetta looked up at him with tired tear-filled eyes. The look of betrayal, coldness, and hatred in Lucien's eyes directed towards her was shredding her heart to pieces in her chest.

"Why won't you tell him all the truth?" Declan asked her, softly.

"Because there is nothing to say." Is this the result of all the pain she has caused him both voluntarily and involuntarily? There is truly nothing else to say.

"No," Declan put his hand on her shoulder, "No, there is a lot to say."

"What is the matter, Deck?"

He faced his big cousin, "After King Cone dragged me away with Vetta, I was half-dead and barely alive after the beatings...the rape, but I was there that night. Right there on the floor of King Cone's bedroom, bleeding from my butt because of the brutality of the rape. I was aware...I heard everything that happened. King Cone and Coza taunted her with you as they..." his eyes closed at the painful memories, "...they took turns raping her."

Vetta lowered her head to hide the shame, the pain of that particular nightmare. Tears falling from her eyes.

"Afterwards, King Cone brought in his personal spy, our traitor. That's the maid. Then, King Cone ordered the two women to finish me off. Vetta refused verbally, but King Cone blackmailed her that he will poison you if she does not follow his command."

King Lucien flinched.

Declan nodded his head sadly. “I was there. I heard how she begged, Big cousin. She cried. She pleaded. King Cone was done. His guards took me out back to one of the empty storage rooms. I stayed there and waited for my death.”

He swallowed tightly, “Already, I can feel death coming as my whole body feels like it was stumped on repeatedly by a huge horse. It was still a long wait, waiting to be killed. Then, that night, that maid entered and stabbed her sword beneath my heart. The scar is still there. I died there...”

I was sure I died there... But I remember feeling surprised through the pain coursing through my body when I retained awareness, even after the maid left me. Vetta entered behind her and shouted to the maid that I am dead. The maid replied that she should still stab me anyway to be sure I've died completely.”

“I stabbed him. Talia was about to enter the storeroom again, so, I stabbed him.” Vetta whispered shamefully, tears running down her eyes.

“She stabbed my arm where it's visible, gathered b***d from that wound—and the one Talia made—using her sword and spread all over my chest, making it look like there's a stab wound there.” Declan's face was glazed over in memories. “Talia entered again, she saw three stab wounds and a dead man.”

“She was satisfied, so she left to go and inform her masters. Vetta hurriedly found a big cloth, she spent the next few minutes stopped my bleeding. Afterward, she gave me a glass of water...which saved my life as much as not bleeding to death.

Then, she'd whispered to me...’ I'm sorry for choosing to keep the Prince Lucien alive. I'm so sorry that you had to die this way, Prince Declan. You are the lucky one, at least you have stopped suffering here.’...” he paused, “After she left too, I was taken to the trash bin as a corpse.”

King Lucien's face gave no reaction at all. But his eyes were an ocean of pain.

Vetta was weeping into her hands. Gut-wrenching sobs.

Her pains... the guilt of that particular event six years ago...He really did remember everything. She was not executed, she was vindicated. She couldn't stop crying.

“So, King Cone sent two women to kill me, big cousin.

One killed me.

The other saved my life.” Then, Declan walked closer to her and pulled her into his arms.

“Thank you for saving my life, Anarieveta.” He grunted into her hair.

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