

Chapter 44 He Doesn't Have A Choice

Madeline Dankworth was still finding it very hard to be at peace with her thoughts.

It was a miracle how well he had been able to handle himself in the presence of the elders today. She had never doubted Lancelot's leadership qualities or his intelligence, but the gravity of the situation earlier today made her feel that if she didn't speak, Lancelot would be ruined.

Before then, Madeline had to make sure that it was done, and dusted. She continued to walk from one end of her room to the other. And her husband, who had come to make sure she was not killing herself with worry, sat on her bed and looked at her worry.

Defeated, he heaved a sigh and started to speak.

"Madeline dear..."

"Please Edward, do not tell me not to worry because that would only make me worry all the more."

On hearing her, Edward stood up and walked to her. He understood Madeline and knew how important Lancelot was to his wife, even though she had a very weird way of showing it. Madeline had always expected the best from Lancelot, she failed to understand that he too had his faults, and could not always be the perfect son.

But Madeline did not want to understand it. And so, she was always very tough on him, even as a little boy.

As Edward moved closer to her, he took note of the creases on her forehead, the heavy bags under her eyes and the protruding veins around her neck and hands. It was a sign that she was over working herself. All her thinking, worrying and scheming was taking a toll on her.

Even as he stood in front of her, she seemed to take little note of his presence. She was about to walk past him when he held both her hands back.

Taken aback, her eyes flew to the soft blue ones of her husband. Edward had a knowing smile on his face, but Madeline frowned. She did not understand how he could afford to smile at a time like this. And frankly, she did not want to understand.

It was clear to her that she was the only one who cared about how much Lancelot's actions might affect their family.

"You need to relax my love," Edward spoke, brushing loose strands of hair away from her face. While his touch gave her a faint sense of comfort, Madeline did not believe she deserved to feel comfortable at such a time.

The elders might have looked past his mistake for now, but she could not bring herself to do so.

"And you need to be less relaxed," she bit back, watching as Edward frowned lightly. When his grip on her hand lessened, she walked past him.

"You are too relaxed Edward. Lancelot almost sent everything we worked for together to hell today, and here you are, smiling at me."

"And what did you suggest I do?! Take off his head?!" Edward's voice was loud as he yelled. He had been trying to keep his cool since, all for her sake. But she did not appreciate it. Instead, she was hell bent on seeing him frown and walk around like the whole world had turned against him. Why was she refusing to calm down?

Madeline turned to him again, a frown on her face.

"It is ten years too late for that Edward. I always told you that you were too soft on him, but you wouldn't listen to me! Now look! He just did whatever he wanted to do, now we are in trouble, and guess who is racking her head, draining her blood while trying to find a way out of this mess?"

Edward did not reply to her rhetorical question, so Madeline decided to reply herself.

"Me!" she stated, swaying her arms dramatically.

Edward's jaw tightened as he looked down at her.

"Lancelot is still young. And he has proven to be very strong and intelligent. We can't rule him off and see him as incapable because of one mistake..."

"Incapable?" Madeline cut in, slowly closing the gap between she and her husband.

"Lancelot is not incapable. No pup of mine is incapable."

Edward looked over her thin frame again before settling his eyes on her face.

"So why don't you believe he can handle this?" Edward asked. It was a question he sincerely needed her to answer. Lancelot had already promised them, before the court that he would take care of the issue and make sure it never repeats itself again, he did not understand why Madeline did not have faith in him.

"Can't you see it?!" she asked back, plunging Edward into more confusion.

His brows furrowed as he stared down at her.

"See what?"

Madeline scoffed. Clearly, her husband was too blind not to see that Lancelot had a lot going on within him, more than he cared to tell any of them.

"Lancelot is not okay! He probably doesn't even know what he is going to do!" Her hands flew to her hair dramatically, and Edward's gaze suddenly became pitiful.

"You need to have a little more faith in him dear." Edward's tone was calm again. The ability of her husband to switch countenance at such a quick rate was one of the things that always amazed her. However, it did not stop Madeline from shooting him a glare.

"I should have more faith in him? The last time I did that, a human female disrupted the ceremonial hunt! Who knows what would happen next? A human would get pregnant for him?"

At that moment, she stopped talking. Her eyes widened in realization as she looked away from Edward. He noticed his wife's countenance and followed her gaze to the floor. "Madeline dear?" He moved to touch her, but she moved away from him.

"Edward."

"My love."

Her eyes rose up to meet his again.

"We have to do something about that woman, and we have to do it fast."

Edward sighed and moved to her. "Madeline..."

The faint knock on the door interrupted his sentence, he would have damned the knock if Madeline did not hurry to the door. It was as though she was expecting another bad news. He stood there and watched her.

Frantic, Madeline moved to her door. When she opened it, she was partially relieved to see Ava standing there. But her relief was flushed away by Ava's sad face.

"Your Highness," Ava said, with her shaky and teary voice as she bowed to Madeline. The older woman smiled sadly, and turned away from her.

Madeline looked at her husband, giving him a signal that told him he might have to leave the room, at least for now.

Curious, Edward walked to the door. He needed to see who it was that had caught his Queen's attention.

He saw Ava standing in front of the door. She bowed to him and greeted him. Edward smiled and replied her before walking past her, away from his Queen's door.

When he was gone, Madeline's eyes fell on Ava. She moved away from the door to usher the young girl in, while wondering what it was that caused her to be sad.

As Ava walked into the room, Madeline closed the door behind her and turned to the girl. Ava's face was pale, and her eyes were heavy, it was very obvious she had been crying. "My Queen," Ava spoke again, moving closer to Madeline.

Madeline's eyes softened at the young girl. From losing her first betrothed, to being shipped to another, Madeline could not imagine everything the girl would have had to go through. "Are you okay child?" she asked, moving to hold Ava.

When she placed her hands on Ava's shoulders, the girl broke into tears.

"I am scared my queen, I am very scared."

Madeline's eyes danced all over her beautiful face.

"Now child, why would you be scared? Did something happen to you? Did Lancelot say something to you?"

"I wish he did," Ava started. "But ever since he returned, he's been doing his possible best to avoid me. And now, with the human female..." She stopped, her crying intensified.

"I'm scared that he doesn't want me, my queen."

Deep down, Madeline shared the girl's fears. But, she knew that there was no other way. Ava was the one who had been trained all her life to fit into the role of Lancelot's bride and Luna queen and nobody... Her jaw tightened. ... Absolutely nobody was going to change it.

So, she smiled and pulled her closer.

"Lancelot has just been really busy my dear..." she tried to reassure Ava as she placed the girl's head gently on her shoulder.

"I know, my queen. But..."

"No buts. Lancelot is yours and only yours, believe me when I say that." She paused and patted Ava's hair.

"At dinner today, we would all talk about your wedding. So do not fret, you're Lancelot's chosen Luna already, he likes you..."

'He doesn't have a choice,' she wanted to add, but she stopped at that.

"Thank you so much my queen," Ava mumbled, against the Luna's shoulder.

Madeline smiled and continued to pat her hair gently.

"Now don't cry, everything is fine."

But it wasn't, at least not yet. Madeline knew she had to do something about that woman, and she had to do it before any more harm was caused.