

## Chapter 6 The Strange American Woman

After paying the driver, she touched the door handle and turned to him.

"Remember, stay close to me and do not say a word. I do the talking and you smile, shake hands and kiss my forehead when necessary."

She turned away from him and opened the door. A thought crawled up to her head and she returned her face to his.

"Note. I said when necessary."

Her emphasis on the last two words caused him to scoff.

If he wanted to, he would kiss her forehead-that and every part of her body-soon enough. Only if he wanted to; and he knew he wanted to.

If he was going to get an answer to the questions raging in his head, he was going to have to touch her.

The urge to hold her was strange to him. Knowing how much he hated physical contact, Lancelot wondered what it was about her that caused him to want to hold her. Maybe it was the fact that Ziko had warmed up to her.

ARMED UP.

Ziko had not only warmed up to her, he had acknowledged her as his mate. That wasn't possible. She was a human female! Not only that but an American one as well.

The royal house of Dankworth would laugh him to scorn.

When they stood together, Roxanne stretched out her hand.

Confused, his brow arched. Roxanne sighed.

"As far as everyone in here is concerned, we have been friends for a long time and we are about to take our relationship to the next level."

Lancelot's eyes widened. He couldn't help it.

What did she just say?

Roxanne noticed the look in his eyes and burst out laughing.

"It's just for tonight. No one is expecting you to propose to me tonight. Although, Rayla might just pass out from jealousy." The thought caused Roxanne to smile; she took Lancelot's arm and locked hers in it. His eyes widened, the nerve of her.

Tensed against her hold, he stayed quiet as they walked hand in hand into the church.

"Wait!" Roxanne exclaimed.

Rolling his eyes, he frowned and looked down at her.

"What is it?"

"We have to give ourselves code names," she whispered, looking up at him.

Was she joking? Her eyes were dead serious. No, she wasn't.

Lancelot looked over her and shook his head.

What was wrong with American women?

"Code what?"

"You know, just in case I need your attention at any time."

"You've strapped me to you, I won't be leaving anytime soon."

Her brows furrowed. She didn't believe him.

"Just in case you decide to wander off. Men, they can never know with you guys."

The second sentence came out with a hinge of malice.

Lancelot sighed and looked ahead. He simply could not wait for all of this to be over just yet.

"Lance."

"What kind of name is that?" she bit back, tearing her gaze away from him.

Before he could retort, a beautiful black woman approached them.

Her wide smile was directed at the woman by his side.

Suddenly agile, Roxanne unlocked their arms to embrace her.

"Emily!"

"The wedding is almost over. You came late," Emily mumbled against her best friend's shoulder. As she pulled away, Roxanne winked.

"I am just in time."

They burst out laughing.

Emily's eyes drifted to Lancelot's, he stared back at her with a blank expression on his face.

"Who's our man?" she asked, smiling at Lancelot.

Roxanne gripped his arm in reflex, the action caused Lancelot to groom a smile on his face.

"This is Lance. Lance, this is my best friend Emily."

Emily smiled and extended her hand for a handshake.

Lancelot forced himself to return the smile and pulled out his hand from his pocket.

Their palms locked. Lancelot wished for the sake of his sanity that he would feel the same spark he felt when his hands touched Roxanne's.

It would tell him that he had only been flustered by the way she approached him so casually. It would tell him that the jolt of current he felt flash through his entire body was as a result of being unknown. It would tell him that the concept of anonymity amazed him.

He waited. No fire.

Lancelot drew his hand back. His eyes fell on Roxanne's face on impulse, she appeared distant: he wanted to reach out to her. He wanted her to talk to him.

"Let's go in, before your mother comes out screaming," Emily directed her talk to Roxanne.

She nudged Lancelot and they walked into the cathedral together.

The wedding was over.

Roxanne felt herself let out a relieved sigh. She would not be tortured by either of them. All that remained now was to survive the wedding party.

Lancelot looked around the hall. Besides the guests dressed in beautiful dresses and colorful clothes, there was nothing to tell Lancelot that a wedding had just occurred.

That was until he locked eyes with a very familiar figure.

Standing in a white long and flowing dress, Lancelot could swear Roxanne had escaped from his arms, changed into a white dress, and was currently in the arms of a seemingly excited man clad in a black tuxedo.

When the woman's eyes locked with Lancelot's, he could tell it wasn't Roxanne.

Firstly, because her grip on his hand tightened as they watched the woman approach them. Secondly, her eyes were not as simple as Roxanne's; they held greed and malice.

"Hold me, please," she pleaded.

His eyes fell to hers. The urgency and desperation in them would not let him look away.

Her lips quivered, her body shook vehemently.

'Just how much did this hurt you?' he wanted to ask.

Instead, he spread his left arm around her waist. Now that he was here, he could as well maximize his help to the full potential.

That way, he could dismiss her with peace of mind, before Ziko continued to harbor more IDEAS.

Something passed between them, like lightning moving electric currents from one body to another. Their eyes remained on each other.

Lancelot felt his knees weaken. Blue eyes fell to her lips, they were partly open. His heart rose and fell, he wanted there and then to press his lips to hers and claim it fully. He wanted to reach out and cup the back of her neck while kissing her anxiety away.

Roxanne had never felt anything like it. The intensity in his stare, his eyes danced around her face as if searching for something. The part of her waist his arms rested on felt warm, his hold felt secure. Roxanne wanted to lean in, just feel protected and loved.

Love. It had been so long since she felt it.

"Roxy!" Rayla exclaimed, smiling wryly as she opened her arms for an embrace.

With a shrug, Roxanne fixed her eyes on her, standing still as Rayla wrapped her arms around her.

"I am so happy to see you! Jonah felt that you wouldn't be coming and it completely disheartened me. I had already told mother I wouldn't want to carry on without you, but she insisted. You have no idea how much your presence means to me." Another embrace followed after her speech. Roxanne forced a smile.

"You know, everyone thought that you'll be so jealous you won't be able to stand me wearing a dress that should have been yours. We know how much you loved Jonah and I'm so sorry you found out the way you did. But everyone knows that Jonah and I are meant to be together."

'Somebody, please stop her,' Roxanne pleaded within her.

On sensing her thoughts, Lancelot's grip around her waist tightened, he pulled her closer to himself.

Rayla's eyes fell to where his hands rested, before looking up at him.

Lancelot questioned his reasons for doing what he had done. Why did he feel the urge to protect her against her sister's malicious eyes and vicious tongue? Why did he find himself fighting back the urge to tear her sister into pieces? When he felt her grow numb against his hold, Lancelot's anger rose.

He had to do something, and he had to do it fast.

Another glance at Roxanne told him she was in no position to manage a retort, he felt the nursing desire to do it for her.

He wanted to protect her. The way he ought to protect his mate.

His mate. The words rang a bell in his head, it was more of a warning than a reminder.

He would think about that later. Right now, he had to do what he came here to do; stand by her.

"Roxanne is quite stronger than anyone thinks. I insisted she didn't come to this function. I for one would have made sure you didn't see this day.

But Roxanne would have none of it, she wanted to see you happy. And so I brought her here, against my will."

His statement ended with a kiss on Roxanne's forehead.

Deep down, he was mad at himself. Why was he doing so much despite how hard he was trying to show so little?

Embarrassed, Rayla managed a nervous laugh and looked back at her sister.

"I'm glad you came nevertheless." Her eyes narrowed at Lancelot.

"So I'll see you at the wedding party?"

He pulled Roxanne closer, sending Rayla a glare that almost caused her to stumble.

"Yes. Of course."

Roxanne thought she would blush. But she was too weak to move.

"A dress that should have been yours," Rayla had said. Roxanne felt tears gather in her eyelids. She coughed, fighting the tears back. She would not cry, not here.

She had thought she was ready to face Rayla, but seeing her here, she realized she had not been prepared in the least.

If Lancelot hadn't been by her side, she would have stormed out of the hall in tears.

A smile crept on her face as she thought of his name.

Lancelot.

For someone who was just here to pay for the damages his driver did to her car, he was doing a hell of a good job.

Emily returned to where they stood after Rayla had walked away.

Concerned, she took one look at Roxanne.

"She's flustered. Take her to have a drink," Lancelot spoke up, his anger had not settled.

Ziko wasn't taking it easy either. With his new attraction, Ziko was suddenly overprotective of Roxanne.

It still unnerved him. Everything was happening too fast, way too fast.

He had never found his mate, but he had read a lot about how it was supposed to be. Still, he had resigned himself to the fate of never finding her.

Now that Ziko had acknowledged this lady, he was finding it hard not to do so as well.

If he continued to stand in the same space as the woman who caused Roxanne to brood, he might just tear skin to shreds and pick his teeth with her bones.

He had to go outside; he had to get air. Or Ziko would surely tear someone apart.

Emily nodded. With her hands stretched, she pulled Roxanne away from Lancelot's hold.

Just when he turned his back, he felt her hand around his wrist again.

He knew it was hers because his heartbeat quickened.

When he turned back to her, she was smiling.

"Thank you," she mouthed; he couldn't hear her with all the raging voices in his head.

He watched quietly as she moved away from him. He suddenly felt empty, like a great part of him had left. The farther she walked, the more it seemed his heart fell.

He shook his head vigorously. Maybe if he shook it hard enough, he could think straight again.



His eyes drifted to Rayla again, with a scowl on his face, he walked out of the hall.

The wedding party. He would definitely be seeing her there and put an end to the living circus in his mind.