

36 To The Dance Floor

Eve~ 1

After the little incident with the reporter who looked like she wanted to sink her fangs into my neck, I felt a bit more at ease. The moment the question had come out of her mouth, it hung in the air like an anvil waiting to fall on my head if I didn't do something quickly.

I wanted nothing more than to run, but when every eye had landed on me, my anxiety spiked. There was no escape. There had been a time when public speaking had been my forte. I had been tutored and trained to be a girl who was supposed to inherit the throne. I was supposed to be Alpha someday.

But the years had changed me and shifted my course. Still, when it came down to it, I managed to channel the princess I once had been and found my tongue enough to put the reporter where she belonged. As much as it pained me to admit, Hades' warning had helped.

I was sure he had only helped me because he didn't want me making a fool of him in front of his royals, politicians, and ambassadors. Still, he

had helped me.

Now, I stood awkwardly as Hades was approached by an obviously influential man. None of them paid any mind to me, so I just stood there.

I looked around, but after catching some eyes on me, I trained my gaze elsewhere, anywhere but the guests. A server came up to me with a platter of red wine. I picked up a glass, my throat parched with anxiety. I took a sip and froze.

I pulled the glass away from my lips, my eyebrows scrunching in confusion and mild apprehension. I sniffed it, and my stomach turned.

It wasn't red wine. It was blood wine. The kind only Lycans drank because they were part vampire. My gut lurched, and I felt myself going faint before a hand steadied me.

I looked up and saw the blond man I had seen at the Obsidian Tower.

He didn't look as severe as he had back then. Here, he was dressed like the rest, his light hair styled and gelled.

He had a lopsided grin on his face as he handed

me a flute of champagne. "Here, drink this instead," he offered.

I eyed him warily.

The blond man's grin widened. "I promise, this one won't make you sick."

I took it hesitantly, still feeling slightly queasy from the blood wine. "Thanks," I murmured, raising the glass and taking a small sip to make sure it wasn't something else I couldn't handle. Thankfully, it was just champagne.

The man leaned in slightly, his voice lowering conspiratorially. "They really should label the drinks better. Not everyone's... used to the Lycan palate."

His light humor caught me off guard, and I felt a small smile tug at my lips. He radiated an easygoing charm that helped melt away some of the tension still lingering in my body. "Yeah, a warning would've been nice," I replied, feeling a little more at ease with him.

He gave a mock-serious nod. "I've been meaning to write a strongly worded letter to the event planners. It's on my to-do list, right after convincing the Lycans to take a break from blood-soaked power struggles." His eyes

sparkled with amusement, and I couldn't help the laugh that escaped me.

It was a genuine sound, louder than I intended, and the ease of it surprised me. I hadn't laughed like that in... well, longer than I cared to admit. For a moment, it felt good—normal, even.

"See?" he said, his grin widening as I laughed.
"Not so scary after all."

I smiled, the tension slipping from my shoulders.
"You're not so bad yourself."

He winked playfully. "Glad I could help." His tone was light, friendly, but not intrusive, and for the first time that evening, I felt like I wasn't completely drowning in the atmosphere of the gala.

But then I felt it—an unmistakable prickle down my spine, like the air had thickened. I could feel eyes burning into my back. Slowly, I turned, the pleasant warmth from the champagne and laughter fading as I locked eyes with Hades.

He was still a distance away, but his gaze was unmistakable—dark, intense, and very, very displeased. His jaw was clenched so tightly I thought it might snap, and even from where I stood, I could sense the tension radiating off him



like a storm about to break.

The easy, carefree moment shattered. My heartbeat picked up, and I swallowed nervously, my fingers tightening around the champagne flute. The blond man noticed the shift immediately, his playful demeanor fading as he glanced over his shoulder and spotted Hades.

"Well," he said with a slight chuckle, clearly unbothered by the sudden change in mood. "I think someone's coming to claim his date." He gave me a quick, reassuring smile before taking a step back. "Good luck, princess. It was nice talking to you."

I barely managed a nod in response before he disappeared into the crowd, leaving me standing there, exposed. Hades was approaching, his movements slow and deliberate, as if he were holding himself back. His eyes never left mine, and the closer he got, the more I could feel the heavy weight of his presence.

By the time he reached me, my pulse was racing. His dark gaze flicked from my face to the champagne flute in my hand, and then back to me. "Making friends, are we?" he asked, his voice low and deceptively calm. But there was an edge to it, a barely restrained intensity simmering

beneath the surface.

I hesitated, unsure of how to respond. "He was just being friendly," I said, my voice quieter than I intended.

Hades's jaw clenched tighter, and he took another step closer, his presence almost suffocating. "Friendly," he repeated, his tone cold, though the tension in his body told me there was more behind it than he was letting on.

I could feel my earlier confidence slipping, and that familiar nervousness returned in full force. But then, something in his gaze caught my attention—something raw, something unsettlingly possessive. His darkness pulled at me, threatening to swallow me whole, and yet... there was something about it that made my heart race in a different way. Almost as if... part of me didn't mind the attention.

But I pushed the thought away quickly, shaking it off as I met his gaze. "Is that a problem?" I asked, trying to sound stronger than I felt.

Hades didn't answer immediately, his eyes still locked on mine as if searching for something. Then, with a sharp exhale, he leaned in close, his lips brushing the shell of my ear. I gasped when

he palmed my hips, so low that he could've groped my ass. "Let's dance, princess." And just like that, he pulled me onto the dance floor.

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