

## Chapter 23 Twenty-three

I couldn't take the insults anymore as I suddenly raised my hands at her. I would have never done this and would rather protect her, but she was taking it too far about Freya and I wanted to teach her a lesson.

"Your highness, please!" Freya begged with her soothing voice, and I tried my best to come back to my senses. Seeing Emelia almost in tears and seeing my hands that were about to reach for her face made me feel guilty, but she had brought this upon herself.

Perhaps all of this disrespect was because I had not publicly claimed Freya as my bride and since the elders wanted me to have a bride, why not claim her right here and right now?

"Freya," I called for her as I stretched my arms towards her. She reluctantly approached me with her head bowed.

"Perhaps the reason for the disrespect is because she's yet to be married to me," I said, and watched how the whole hall went dead silent.

"Brother, you can't..."

"At this moment, I claim Freya as my bride and mate, and also the future queen," I announced, cutting Emelia off her sentence and watching her look at me in awe and disbelief.

At least now I won't have much to worry about. Denying Freya for so long had affected me, and the moment I accepted her, I could feel a wave of relief in me, like a heavyweight was removed from my back, but there was one more thing that needed to be done.

"Apologize to Freya, Emelia," I ordered her and watched how she scoffed in response before giving me a stern look.

She spat. "I'd rather die than apologies to an abomination." I could feel my anger rising from those words, but I knew I'd regret it if I didn't leave her presence immediately, so I left without looking back and with my hand holding Freya's arm.

We arrived at the room, and all I had to do was convince myself that I was doing the right thing and wouldn't end up losing my dignity by rejecting her as my bride after accepting her.

I loved her whole personality and obedience, but the one thing I hated so much about her was her smell. I didn't know if I would be able to get used to it, but I needed to, so without wasting any time, I brought my face to hers as my hands held her neck for support while I inhaled her breath for some moments, trying to find the good in it.

Even though different horrible images from hell flashed through my mind, I tried to shove it off and focus on the good of it. Those images were from the past, and I was willing to leave the past behind and start a new life with her.

Soon, I was able to smell past the stench as a very mild scent hit my nose. Just like the way she smelled the first day we met.

With happiness on my face, I placed a mild yet swift kiss on her lips before pulling away with a smile on my face to admire her for who she really is.

After I had finished professing my love to her, I realised I had some important work to do as some villagers claimed they spotted someone abducting and slaying some 16-year-old girls yesterday, which wasn't even up to the usual due date on which they always get killed. Which means I really need to act fast before the killer continues.

I'll leave now, but I'll be back soon. I have work to do," I said to her before placing a kiss on her forehead and walking out of the room, but first I needed to settle something with Martinus because his name and Freya's name have been called together way too much.

I checked the palace but he was nowhere in there, so I suggested he might be at his usual spot feeding the horses since he loved to do that when we were still little.

I strolled to the field and saw him feeding the horses, but he hadn't noticed me. Memories from the past flashed through my mind as I remembered standing there as a boy admiring him, but now I'm a man standing there with scorn on my face.

"Oh, your highness." He finally noticed me and gave me a small bow.

"Hm," I replied, before taking closer steps to where he stood.

"Martinus, what's going on with you and Freya?" I asked and he looked like he didn't understand what I was talking about as his brows cringed in confusion.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

I've heard too much about you and Freya, and I've seen the way you look at her, lest I say that I also know you gave her bread in her cell that day. I said and watched how he was shocked but was quick to shove the expression away from his face.

He probably didn't know I knew about the food, but I've been studying all of these for a while and only chose to be quiet about it because he was my beta, but sometimes one needs to be audible in order to express some feelings.

I have nothing against her, your highness, and I only did all of those out of pity and care because I knew you were only doing all of those from a place of anger and didn't mean it. Just like how you claimed her as your bride today after making her go through hell," he stated, but his tone held disgust.

"You're in no place to tell me how to treat my mate!" I growled in anger, but I shouldn't be doing this. I've spoken my mind to him, and there's no need to get mad at him. I don't want to start a fight with him.

"Value what you have before it's too late!" He muttered just as I was about to leave, and the anger in me spoke too soon as I landed a punch on his face.

