

CHAPTER 38

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SABRINAS POV

I've never been to a festival so naturally I didn't know what to expect.

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But it certainly wasn't so many people packed under the sky, and so much going on that I felt dizzy just being here. Sounds sights, smells, everything made me so dizzy

"Are you okay?" Caldan's voice brought me back to reality. I looked at him and nodded, a small smile on my lips.

Im fine." I said. Tm just a bit just a bit overwhelmed with everything"

"Your first festival?" He asked, a gentle smile on his face. His eyes were so bright, and so blue.

My heart caught in my throat and I nodded. I opened my mouth to reply but someone popped up in front of me and made me pause. A young girl of about fifteen, carrying a tray of shiny red apples. "Hello miss, you look lovely this evening! May I interest you in trying out our candy apples?" She asked, her freckled face full of bright smiles

"Candy apples"" I asked.

"Yes! My mother made these herself? They re made with the finest produce of the seasons. You should try one, and your lover

too

"Um... I hesitated, my eyes roving between the apples on the tray. My cheeks turned pink as she referred to Caldan as my lover. "I don't think I should

"How much are these going for?" Caldan stepped forward and asked. He slipped his hand into mine and squeezed reassuring

"A silver coin for two sir!

"I don't have any money. I numed to Caldan and said. It hadn't hit me then, but I had literally no money to my name.

"Rina, relax. You don't have to pay for anything, it's my treat, okay?" He said. He took out a silver coin for the girl and took two apples from the tray. "Thank you sir!" She said with a bow. "And allow me to say, the both of you make a very beautiful couple."

That's very kind of you." Caldan said.

"Thank you." I said. feeling shy from her compliment. As a force of habit. I looked down at my clothes. But if I must say myself, I look pretty cute.

Nena, the girl who had given me the basket had quickly become somewhat of a friend to me. All the harem girls in fact, they had warmed up to me over the past three days. At first I had been suspicious, but I learned that they meant no harm. Somehow they had been able to coax lady Nifra into providing a selection of gowns for me. The one I wore now was one of

them

It was a pale pink gown with sheer long sleeves. Flowers and butterflies motifs were sewn onto the sleeves and the belt of the bodice. I looked like a sugar plum fairy wearing it Xena and two other girls. Bell and Chrissy had made my hair When they heard that I was going to the festival with sir Caldan they all went wild. They fussed all over me, rambling about makeup, and appeal and looking my very best. They put flowers in my hair, doing elaborate braids and ringlets. Even though I tried to tell them that it was not a date, they still made me look pretty. I liked it, for the first time I felt like I was part of a sisterhood. A real

one

For the first time. I felt like a real tribute and not a slave.

I felt beautiful And even though I looked in the mirror and I could still see that I was very terribly skinny, I didn't loathe my reflection for one. The soft pink of the gown went well with my unnaturally red lips and rosy cheeks.

I looked up at the candy apple girl. She was still staring at me with wide shiny eyes. I laughed softly. "What?" I asked

"Nothing" She Shrugged "You're just so beautiful." She said, and before I could say anything she ran offww@.n©VeiWøŔm.com

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"She's right," Caldan said, handing over one of the apples to me. "You look stunning, Rina"

"Stop," I blushed. "But thank you." I took the apple from him and bit into it.

We walked hand in hand, eating the delicious candy apples. The festival was in full swing. Stalls and stalls of fresh farm produce were lined up. The air was laced with the smell of various foods, music floated in the air mixed with the sounds of conversations. The harvest moon overhead seemed happy, smiling.

"Look at that! It's a fishing game!" I turned to Caldan, my face aglow with smiles. "Can we go there, please? I want to catch a cute fish!"

For [course. Let's go."

I had barely taken a step forward before a weight slammed into my legs. I paused, stunned from a few minutes as I tried to process what had happened. I heard the loud wailings of a child, sniffles. I looked down to see a girl of about two or three years old, clutching to my skirt and crying. Her small hands clutched fistfuls of the material, her face pressed tightly into my leg.wøW.ÑOveIwøŔm.C(0)m

I don't know what happened. But I felt a change.

My vision tunneled, the sounds of the festival swamped out by a sharp ringing sound in my ears. I stared at the child, frozen, unable to speak or do anything. The ringing in my ears mixed with her cries. Deeply pained cries that cut through my heart. I bent down and scooped her up. She latched onto my neck, her face buried in the crook of my neck.

She smelled like wildflowers and poppies. Her blond hair soft and tickling my chin. Her tiny body trembled with the weight of her sobs, and I felt a wet patch growing on my shoulder.

"It's alright," My lips moved before I realized I was speaking the words. I stroked the back of her head, my other hand under her legs and holding her close to me "You're alright,"

ig my name, their voice sounding so far away, like I was under water.

I heard someone calling my

The child sniffled, her tiny hands grabbed the hair at my nape, and I let her. My vision went blurry, and before I knew it I was crying too

Memories. In their unwanted troves came rushing to my mind. A child of my own, one of my deepest rooted wishes. A wish that never came to pass. Something that cost me my life. My mate. My family.

Iris and her baby bump. She probably has a kid by now, right?

1 held the crying child closer, rocking her softly and whispering soothing words to her. My lips wobbled, and tears rushed down my face.

Why am I crying? Why can't I stop crying?!

"Eloise!" A loud screech filled the air. "Eloise! Where are you!"

The child raised her head up and sniffled. "Mama?" She called weakly.

I blinked and cleared my eyes. "Your mama?" I asked.

The girl turned to me, and her eyes were the loveliest shade of green. Her cheeks and nose were red from crying so Much. Without thinking. I wiped her blotchy cheeks. She nodded. She raised a hand to my face and wiped my cheeks. "Sorry," She whispered softly.

"Oh Eloise! There you are!" A woman ran up to me, heaving and sweating. She favored me a small smile and reached out from the girl

r so much and 1..."

Im so sorry, she ran to me crying so nw©w.(n)øVø©wØrm.çØm

"I should be saying sorry. The woman said. The girl went over to her, she held her, and her own eyes were full of tears. I'm so sorry for the inconvenience, please forgive her.

"Oh your gown! It's ruined!"

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"No no, I shied away from her touch as she tried to touch my shoulder. "It's just a dress."wwøw.nøVøŔm.com

The woman looked at Eloise and sighed. "Children. Sometimes you don't know what to do with them

I forced a laugh. "I wouldn't know, but I'd say Eloise is a lovely child indeed"

The woman opened her mouth to reply, and I think that's when she saw Caldan behind me. her eyes went wide and she bowed.

"Lord Caldan!" She gasped. "My sincerest apologies! I... I'm so sorry!"

"Whatever are you sorry for?" Caldan asked. "Please, rise."

The woman raised her head up. "Please, stop by my stall. I'm sure I can put together a small token of my apology, please I implore you."

Caldan stepped closer to me, his hand snaked around my waist from behind. You didn't commit any offense, miss. Enjoy the rest of the evening

I looked Eloise. She smiled at me, her teeth white and her gums pink. "Bye bye." She waved,

Take care, okay?" I waved back.

Her mother bowed again, she turned and walked off. I turned to Caldan. He raised a hand to my face and his thumb brushed the remnant of my tears. "What happened back there?" He asked.

I looked at Eloise and her mother retreating and sighed softly. I hadn't told Caldan about my past, and about how I ended up here. It wasn't something I wanted to rehash all over again. So I turned back to him and leaned into his touch. I cry easily." I said with a smile.

He laughed. "Are you still in need of that cute fish?"

"Yes. Absolutely. We should...."

My blood turned to ice in my veins.

"Fuck me." I gasped under my breath, my eyes focused off in the distance.

"What is it?" Caldan asked.

I couldn't form any words, I could only stare at him.

The king.

He's here.