

CHAPTER 39

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He stood a few feet away from us. A young flower seller stood up to him, showing her lovely collection of flowers. He crouched down to her eye level, a tender look I hadn't ever seen on him before etched in his eyes. He conversed with her, and she excitedly showed off her goods. She took out a wild pansy and stuck it in his hair.

He looked so... different. So normal.

He had ditched the kingly robes I knew him to wear, and instead was dressed in a white tunic and dark blue pants, with boots on his feet. His long hair was tied into a low ponytail, he wore dark gloves too. He stood tall and imposing, and people took a second look when they walked past him. The ladies whispered amongst themselves and blushed, even the men didn't hide the way they looked at him.

But none of that murderous aura of his was around him. He just looked like a very tall, very handsome member of society.

Why did I think that just now?

"Oh my," Caldan said, shock in his voice.

I contemplated running then I decided against it. I'm not doing anything wrong by being here, right? I did all my duties on time. And this is my free time. I'm sacrificing my sleep for this

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Just as I was about to turn around and leave like I hadn't seen him, he turned and his eyes met mine.

All wind was knocked out of my lungs.

His eyes lacked their frightening intensity, a dull red rather than the bright crimson I was used to. But even across the distance, I felt like I couldn't breathe.

He's seen us. Fuck! Fuck!

"We should go now." I said to Caldan. I grabbed his hand and turned to leave. "We'll just pretend like we didn't see him."

"That's too late now, isn't it?"

"Fuck!" I screamed, jumping two feet in the air. His voice sounded right behind me. I turned around, a fake smile plastered to my face. "Your ma..." I said and paused. "Good evening. That flower in his hair is taking me out.

The king turned to Caldan. "Enjoying yourselves?" He asked.

"Very much, brother Caldan said firmly. I didn't expect you to be here."

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The king looked around and nodded to himself. "These are my people. It'd be a shame not to celebrate with them."

"I see. Caldan said. "You have a..." He gestured to the flower stuck in the King's hair.

"Oh this, it's a gift from my new friend, Freda." He turned and waved at the little flower girl who waved back in excitement. "She said it suits me."

I bit my lip hard.

Oh, that's right.

None of these people know that he's their king. They only know Caldan as a representative of the king. But I bet if he let his true aura and presence show for even a second, everyone would instantly know who he was. "Well, this has been most wonderful!" I spoke up with a forced chuckle. "Enjoy the rest of the evening, your Majesty," I said the last part under my breath.

And

you too." He said, but his gaze was focused on Caldan,

I held Caldan's hand tightly and we walked over to the fishing pond. The fishes glowed in the soft golden light of the

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"I don't want fishes anymore! I whispered on Con

I want to go hor

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hark to my bed.

The king wok the fishing hoop and in one swipe caught there tiny fishes.

took

"Impressive" I said, dryly. He glanced at me and raised a groomed brow

"Thank you," He replied. [www.NoVilWor\(m\).com](#)

I wanted to ram my fingers into his eyes

The seller parked the fishes into a transparent bowl and handed them over to the king

"For you" He said, pushing the bowl in my face. [www.noVEIW0RM.com](#)

"No thank you, ur" I said the sir pointedly. I turned to Caldan "Let's go, please The last word a desperate plea [www.NoVilWor\(m\).com](#)

Caldan looked at the king, and I could see the helpless look in his eyes have a wonderful evening brother He und Avery nire way of saying, stop following us

The king nodded, and ha

twinkleed

are amusement. I knew it! He's doing this

Caldan eered the deeper into the festivities. A stall that had crystal jewelry on display caught my attention I glanced over my shoulder, and surely I sighted the king Not too far, and not too close to us. He rolled lessurrly, talking to sellers and inspecting stalls Ident are the fish bowl in his hands, so I guess he must have given it away. Three girls approached him. wiggled are flaunting their elaborate gowns

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That should keep him occupied.

"Look at this crystal," Caldan pulled my attention back to him. He held up a crystal necklace.

"It's beautiful." I said.

"That crystal is also poisonous. I heard the kings voice behind me,

I screamed and jumped, my hold on Caldan's arm tightening. I snapped my head to the king. He came up beside me, his gaze on the crystal display.

"Did you know that?" He asked, turning to look at me.

"I most certainly did not." I said pointedly. It was on the very tip of my tongue to tell him off.

But I can't, I must control myself.

"And also, that crystal isn't poisonous." I said, taking the crystal from Caldan. "It bears a resemblance to its sister, dark agate. That's the poisonous one."

"Dark agate has linings of silver. This one has linings of silver." The king said calmly.

"No it's doesn't..." I started to argue and sighed. "Who cares about a stupid crystal anyway?" I grumbled under my breath. I'd swallow that necklace whole if it'll save me from this awkwardness.

"The poison is only released when the crystal is ground into fine powder and ingested. Caldan said. "In this form, it's not a threat. He picked up another crystal and held it up to my face. This one matches your eyes."

"It doesn't." The king said. "The colors are wrong. There isn't a crystal here that matches her eyes."

I resisted the urge to claw my hair out and scream in frustration.

One festival.

One harmless festival where I get to frolic and eat some street food and have fun with Caldan. Maybe steal a kiss or two

But I can't do any of that now. Not with the king keeping watch like a mother hawk!

"Oh dear goddess, I groaned, rubbing my hands over my face. Save me. Save me, please.

I raised my head up and smiled. "I'm having a most wonderful time."

I lied. I want to go home. Back to my bed.

I looked at the king and shot him an angry look. The closest I could do to snapping at him.

"What's the matter with you two?" He asked, if he noticed my death stare he didn't do anything. "You're not enjoying the

festival?"

"We are." I said sarcastically. "It's so much fun. Isn't it, Caldan?"

Caldan's eyes widened, and i realized I had used his name. He cleared his throat. Above us, the sky exploded into fiery, colorful sparks.

"We should watch the fireworks. I said to him, hoping to pass a message to the kind that we didn't want him around "That's a wonderful idea. They're certainly more lovely this year. The king said. Oh fuck me.

Is this how the rest of my evening is going to go?!