

The Lycan Princess & the Lethal Potions Wiz — by Stina's Pen —

PROLOGUE & CHAPTER 1

[PROLOGUE]

MANY, MANY YEARS AGO

It was tedious. But it was done.

Her position was now secured.

The voices from the realm's Crimson Dust echoed through the ears of High Lady Calliope as a triumphant smirk lifted her lips. She could hear them now – the buzzes and whispers, meaning that the power was now hers.

Finally.

Just as she was about to move, a more distinct echo came, one that whispered in an eerie tone of rage, “One who misleads the land issues a challenge... challenge...challenge... to Incanta's Spirits and that will never be forgiven... given... given...”

[CHAPTER 1]

PRESENT DAY

“Why are you holding it upside down?” Reida asked, confoundment arching her brows.

The man's gaze was stolen from the page. Dark brows rising, his plum-purple eyes pierced into her lilac ones in equal parts annoyed and confused. “Pardon?” he replied, his deep voice carrying a lilt exhibited by the oldest and some of the most revered wizarding families in Incanta. Hair as deep as raven with the occasional dark purple streaks was tied into a high bun as some strands fell over his eyes, which he pushed back out of habit.

Reida saw him from a distance. Her family had just arrived but her parents were caught in a conversation with Incanta's politicians. Reida wasn't one to care much about politics, so her eyes wandered, and she spotted him sitting alone on one of the leaf-shaped benches outside the walls of Thavma University.

There was a book on his lap, where his eyes were glued to. A white bird with black and gold butterfly wings soared and landed on the pages, pecking on the side the wizard

was reading. He gently plucked the small creature off the page and set it on the bench next to him. The action was so natural, like it wasn't the first time he'd place a bird aside when it landed on his things. The bird wasn't pleased, and its blunt beak pecked against his thigh, receiving no response from him so it chirped and hopped like it was throwing a tantrum before ultimately giving up and flying away.

"The book," Reida said like it was obvious, pointing at the thick, indigo hardcover with an elaborated white design, the standard image of a potion bottle sat on one side – upside down. "How are you able to read it like that? Are you using a spell?"

Befuddled, his brows dipped lower. His gaze dropped, and he angled the cover toward himself. His bewilderment turned into comprehension and amusement. "Why yes," he said. "And the spell only requires one simple ingredient." The mischievous glint in his eye held her curiosity-lit pair when he continued, "Glue."

He flipped the book around, surprising Reida when the interior *wasn't* upside down. That was when she noticed the edges of the book were tattered, like the whole thing was ripped off the cover before being glued back – upside down.

Her curiosity vaporized, annoyance taking its place and filtering through her skin. Reida's cheeks burned in embarrassment and a tinge of anger, a reaction that was amusing him, judging by the way he was pressing back a smile. "My apologies. I was just being friendly."

"Were you?" Reida retorted, hearing her mother in her tone and reigned back her pulsating anger, dragging out an exhale. "Never mind. Let's start again: are most books in the university torn out and glued upside down?" She *knew* she should've requested the Library Guide to be sent with her textbooks!

His lips pressed and lifted like he was trying to contain the laughter bubbling in his chest. "That would be quite a world to live in, won't it?"

Tell that to her mother and the queen would probably tear someone's head off and glue it back upside down.

"But no," he uttered, bringing Reida out of her thoughts as he leaned back against the bench, two fingers secured between the pages he was reading like a bookmark. "I'm probably the only one with a book like this, thanks to my former roommate."

"Why would he do that?"

"I put his name on a volunteer list, and he had to cancel a date because of it."

Brows furrowing, Reida asked, "So, you made him volunteer and... stole his date?"

A visible shudder crawled down his skin and all humor drained from his face. His plum purple eyes emanated only fear. "Holy Spirits, no. I'd take cleaning Chancellor Higgin's bunyip over pursuing Messephire Mabel any day."

Reida found that name familiar, like a piece of information that had been tucked deep in the crevasses of her mind but needed dusting from its prolonged lack of usage.

Messephire Mabel. Where had she heard it?

"Anyway," he continued. "It wasn't as if he was alone. We were volunteering together. I put my own name down right after his. Messephire Mabel was after his status, nothing more. I'd say I did him a favor, but..." He trailed off, waving the book between them. "...I don't think he agreed."

"Something tells me you're prone to pulling everyone's leg," she said, brows pulling to the center but she couldn't fight back a smile.

He released a brief chuckle. The depth and roughness of the sound was quiet, but carried across the space and warmed her center. "Not everyone," he admitted. "It depends on the person."

There was an ease in this, in talking to him. Unlike her mother, Reida was not gifted to excel in a social setting. That gene must have bypassed her and gone to her brother. But with this wizard, she didn't even remember being bad at holding a conversation with a stranger. It was odd. But it was also liberating.

"And I happen to exhibit the necessary attributes to have my leg pulled?" she queried, leaning into his energy.

"Well, you do share certain attributes with the only other person's leg I pull, so..."

"Oh, your former roommate's a lycan?" she exclaimed.

"Fortunately, no." He looked genuinely relieved. "Can you imagine the increased strength he'd have to deliver that punch to my stomach? He already had to drag me to the infirmary after the blow because I couldn't walk properly on my own. And I had to drink an antidote made from a combination of roots that were far from pleasant. If he was a lycan, I probably had to drink a combination of soils and worms *with* the roots."

A chuckle escaped her. Something in his words drew Reida closer. She wasn't sure what it was – his response, his aura, his action, his relationship with this roommate she hadn't met yet, the gleam in his eyes, or just his smile. There was something about him, something warm yet distant, direct yet layered. A faint breeze blew past them, and she detected his scent of cedar, white musk, and a fresh woody fragrance she'd been smelling from Incanta's trees, never thinking these scents could be combined and produce such a welcoming aroma until now.

His eyes skated across her face, wondering how long the deity spent sculpting a woman this beautiful. She gave off an inviting presence, and her face was the definition of perfection, curving in the right places and angling where it should, from her brows to her nose to the curve of her lips. Still, it'd take a lot to beat those lilac eyes. The essence in them was something he'd never seen. He'd seen a photograph to aid recognition when they met, but it paled in comparison to the life version of her.

"Reida," she introduced herself, her right hand stretched to her left shoulder – the manner of greeting in Incanta.

His palm goes to his own left shoulder as he stood in his deep purple button-up suit, towering over her by several inches, returning her greeting when he murmured in a quiet baritone, "I know." His eyes travel over her shoulder, seeing someone approaching. "I'll leave you to it, Your Highness," he uttered.

He barely turned when her voice hauled him back. "You haven't given me your name."

He tried his best to hide the way her voice affected him, the insistence in it that tugged the organ in his chest when they barely knew each other. With a casual smile, he simply replied, "How about we save that for the right person to introduce us? I don't think this was how we're supposed to meet, Your Highness."

"It's just Reida."

There was something in his smile – the slight tip of his lips, like he wanted to take her up on the informality but knew he shouldn't. "We'll see."

He picked up his book, offered a curt dip of his head with that slight quirk of his lips, and left.

Reida watched his retreating figure, puzzled and bemused.