

# PLEASE DON'T DIE, MY LADY

## Chapter 4: Reflection

The echoes of my screams pleading for help mixed with Ariana's mocking laughter as she sneered, "But we saved you!"

At first, the commoners seemed uneasy, but after seeing me revived, they eagerly joined in.

The ceaseless sound of my face being slammed into water echoed endlessly.

The pain, so suffocating it felt as if I'd stop breathing at any moment, washed over me in relentless waves.

It was a fear so consuming, it felt like a living hell that had descended upon me to judge me eternally. At some point, my mind gave way.

"Remia Adelian?"

"...Ah."

I was jolted awake by the professor calling roll.

As I blinked, trying to make sense of my surroundings, I realized I was in an intact classroom.

All the students were seated at their desks.

Even Ariana and some of the commoners who had held my head underwater were present.

It seemed that while I had dozed off with my head on my desk, the professor had arrived and started class.

So it had all been a terrible nightmare.

Yet it had felt so vivid that even now, every sound seemed muffled, as though I were still underwater. My breathing felt strained.

But at least it was just a dream.

If it had been real, I'd probably want to die right away.

Yes, if it had been real...

I'd have screamed, sticky fluids streaming from my eyes, nose, mouth, and perhaps even elsewhere, as I ran to my room.

I'd have locked the door, buried myself in blankets, and cried for days.

But now?

...No, of course not.

The noblewoman in me would never allow such disgraceful behavior.

The daughter of the prestigious Adelian duchy, who had always been expected to act with dignity and as a role model, couldn't shed her "noble" persona, even when her honor had fallen lower than that of a commoner.

Barely managing to force a trembling smile, I told myself to stop avoiding reality.

I could still feel it—the presence of those who had tormented me.

Especially Ariana, who was resting her chin on her hand, smiling at me like I was some amusing spectacle.

She must have been pondering how to further mold me into something more obedient under her thumb.

How to train me to be even more subservient.

The thought made my smile falter, so I hid my face in my trembling hands.

I had been waterboarded right up until class started.

At a glance, I didn't seem to have any new injuries.

They must have ensured I was seated at my desk, looking as though I'd been asleep all along, without leaving any visible wounds or physical aftereffects from the torture.

Or perhaps they had simply hidden the evidence.

The lingering dizziness and ringing in my ears continued to torment me.

Impressive.

With how much they'd done to me, you'd think something would have been left behind.

Yet even pre-existing injuries were untouched, as if the traces of the water torture had been meticulously erased.

Healing me in such a specific way must have been more difficult than just leaving marks.

It almost felt like an obsession—a need to make my suffering as thorough as possible.

Suddenly, something my mother had once said came to mind:

“Those given power but devoid of humanity become more cruel than demons.”

Indeed, they might treat their fellow humans worse than livestock destined for slaughter.

Or perhaps I wasn't even human in their eyes.

These days, I was starting to believe that myself.

“...?”

Thunk. Something hit the back of my head and fell to the floor.

It was a crumpled piece of paper, likely thrown by someone sitting behind me.

I unfolded it to find hastily scrawled words:

Did you have fun?

“...Fun?”

That simple sentence seemed to foretell the endless hell awaiting me.

It was so blatant that I couldn't help but chuckle bitterly.

After all that torture, this seemed like petty bullying between students.

Healing magic was a game changer.

It removed the primary obstacle to acts of violence: the lingering consequences.

No wonder the threshold for brutality here was higher than in the real world.

Once the violence stopped, the natural progression seemed to be this insidious form of harassment.

After all, they were just boys and girls who hadn't even graduated yet.

No, I shouldn't think like that.

It only made me feel more pathetic for being unable to resist these “boys and girls.”

Not that it was untrue—truth always stings more than lies.

As I laughed softly, more objects began flying from behind, hitting me intermittently.

Thunk, thunk. The periodic sensation of something striking my body was almost rhythmic.

It was tolerable.

At least it wasn't direct physical pain.

Some of the objects stung when thrown too hard, but it wasn't unbearable.

I tried to empty my mind and idly observed what they were throwing at me, as if it were someone else's problem.

All garbage.

An assortment of waste.

I wasn't referring to the people.

Probably.

\*\*\*

"Uh... please turn to page 134."

The professor's monotonous voice echoed through the room.

Sitting near the front, I was in the perfect position to listen to the lecture.

Not that I had any intention of doing so.

My mind wasn't in the right state for it.

I quickly discarded any thought of paying attention and began reflecting on my current state instead.

Let's go back to the beginning.

I was an ordinary person who, without warning, became a girl in another world.

That premise underpins everything I've experienced and, understandably, sounds like the delusion of a lunatic.

So why did I so readily accept this world as reality?

Something so absurd couldn't possibly happen.

It seemed far more plausible that I'd lost my mind or was hallucinating under the influence of drugs.

Or perhaps I was always Remia Adelian, and the fall of my family had driven me to fabricate memories of another world as a coping mechanism.

If this is a delusion or hallucination, how do I wake up?

A strong stimulus?

But even water torture didn't snap me out of it.

If that were the answer, I would have woken up long ago, back when I was with the organization.

So, is suicide the only solution?

It's the only method that seems quick and decisive enough to both escape and jolt my mind awake.

But what if this is all just the noblewoman's delusion?

In that case, wouldn't I essentially be killing her by seizing control of her body?

What kind of low-budget horror movie logic is that?

Then again... maybe I'll take things slow.

Self-harm is often seen as the precursor to suicide.

Start small, perhaps by pinching my arm, and gradually escalate to cutting my wrists or strangling myself.

If I'm lucky, perhaps I'll wake up somewhere along the way.

That would be the most realistic best-case scenario.

Keeping the noblewoman's body alive and returning to the cherished normalcy of my life as if nothing ever happened.

Ah, but hallucinating due to drugs doesn't quite count as normal.

I hope reality is better than this place.

Still, it's a decent idea.

Among all the methods I've considered so far, this seems the most reasonable.

Maybe I'll get a knife when I return.

A sharp one—it would hurt less.

...Of course, that's all just idle thinking.

Remia Adelian, with her inflated pride and cowardly disposition, would never even imagine hurting herself.

Even her plan to commit suicide the day before graduation was only possible because she had the promise of a year of freedom to brace herself.

She hates pain and, as a pampered daughter of a duke, had only faced it a handful of times in her life.

Even after falling into ruin, she failed to grasp the gravity of her situation.

And here I am, fantasizing about a painless death.

No, perhaps I'm just using the noblewoman as an excuse.

If all this is merely a hallucination, then the noblewoman herself is likely just a creation of my mind.

So what does that mean?

Do I not actually want to wake up from this hallucination?

I don't know.

Maybe the real issue is trying to distinguish between her and me.

"This concludes today's class. Have a pleasant lunch break, everyone."

Lost in my own world, I didn't notice class had ended.

Time seemed to have flown by.

There were a few more pieces of trash around me than before, though.

As the professor left the room, the noise level around me began to rise.

It seemed pointless to delve any further into my thoughts.

And so, once again, my reflection ended without any meaningful conclusion.

Not that I even knew what the conclusion was supposed to be.

I'd always known there was little value in these musings.

It's not like this was the first time I'd had such thoughts over the past few years.

When there's no one left to talk to—not even an acquaintance—the only conversation you can have is with yourself or your own delusions.

Still, the fact that I keep returning to these reflections...

Maybe it's just because everyone escapes into daydreams when reality becomes too painful.

And honestly, this might be the most productive thing I've done recently.

Delusions, after all, can be comforting.

They offer baseless hope—that there's still a way that I can return.

"Your expression looks good. Did you enjoy the lecture, Lady Adelian?"

See? Just as the delusion ends, reality drags me back down.

I turned my head weakly toward the voice.

Ariana and her group were approaching me, as if they'd been waiting for class to end.

There were more nobles this time. Why, I couldn't say.

"Still, it's best if you wake up a bit.

We don't have much time. Let's finish the fun before lunch, shall we?"

As I stared at those surrounding me, at Ariana's now all-too-familiar mocking smirk, I curled the corners of my mouth into a smile.

Smiling is convenient.

With just a small movement of my lips, I can hide my emotions.

Not that hiding them really serves any purpose.

I don't know. I don't know anything anymore.

I just...

I hope it doesn't hurt too much.