

## Chapter 261

### Dowager Queen

"Sleep tight, princess." Rowan leaned over and kissed her cheek before he left. He didn't trust himself to stay any longer there. After all, he had been celibate for months now, the last time he touched a woman was before he left for Ogregon kingdom and this auburn woman was too tempting.

Zaya didn't get to meet with Rowan last night, because apparently, he returned very late, but when she woke up, a woman around the age of thirty was standing at the feet of her bed, waiting for her to wake up.

However, Zaya noticed how she tried to avoid her eyes. She looked... wary.

If she was not mistaken, her name was Mary, she would be her personal maid. There were two more young girls that would assist her, which meant Zaya had three maids on her own, who would attend to her every need.

"You are awake, princess," Mary said, she then went outside and the other two girls entered the room, holding a basin and clean towel for Zaya to wipe her face and cleaned herself.

"Thank you," Zaya said. She caught the look of surprised on their faces when she said that, but they didn't utter a word, while helping Zaya.

They did their job in silent; they looked very solemn to her liking.

After she was done, they helped her to change her dress and then did her hair. They were rather confused about what to do with her hair, because they had never handled curls before and Zaya's curly hair was pretty hard to be tamed, especially in the morning.

"I will do it," Zaya said, as she made a bun with half of her hair and braided the rest. She looked fresh and beautiful in her white dress that emphasized the color of her hair. "Where is Rowan? I mean the king."

"The king is in the morning meeting," Mary replied.

"When he finished?" Zaya was slightly disappointed because she couldn't see him again, but she could understand, after all Rowan had been away from his kingdom for long, there must be a lot of things that he needed to handle.

"I am not sure when it will finish."

Zaya nodded. "Can you show me around?" Rowan said he would be the one, who would do it, but he seemed very busy, so Zaya took the initiative, since she didn't know what she needed to do.

"Sure, princess."

With that, Zaya followed Mary and the other two girls walked behind her. "Why there is no guard?" They had walked from a hallway to another and then crossed the garden, but she couldn't see a guard at all.

Rowan told her that he didn't like to have anyone around his palace, but it was too quiet.

"The guards are stationed outside of the palace. The king doesn't like to have them around inside his palace."

Zaya knew that, but still she found it weird. She walked a little bit more before she finally realized there was some part of the palace that Mary avoided.

"That's the king's study room, the king's bedroom, the meeting room where the king used to hold the morning meeting and his training ground. You are not allowed to go there without the king's permission."

"Meeting room? It means Rowan is there right now?"

It didn't go unnoticed by Zaya the way they grimaced when she called Rowan by his name.

"Yes, the king is there, but you are not allowed to get closer to the room."

Zaya only nodded and continued to walk away, but when she wanted to go out of the king's palace, Mary stopped her.

"You are not allowed to go out of the palace without the king's permission."

"Why not? I am not a prisoner here." Zaya wanted to meet with the other magic users.

Mary shook her head. "You are the king's woman. You should ask permission from the king if you wanted to walk out of the palace."

Zaya's brows furrowed, she didn't like this rule at all. She would talk with Rowan later about this.

Thankfully, Rowan didn't neglect her a whole day like yesterday because in the evening he came to have dinner together with her.

"I want to see the magic users from the Holy Kingdom." Zaya knew about the agreement between Rowan and Zander. Her brother made sure that she had her own power here and those five hundred magic users were under her command.

"I want to talk about that too," Rowan said. He put a big slice of meat on Zaya's plate. "I have given them separate quarter from the knight's and they have their own training ground as well. I will take you there."

Zaya was surprised, but she was also pleased with his thoughtfulness. It would be hard for those magic users if they had to blend with the knights right away.

She didn't know, who had come here, but she knew most of magic users in the Holy Kingdom.

"I gave myself a tour around the palace with Mary earlier, there are a few places that I am not allowed to enter and I need your permission to go out of the palace." Zaya was not happy, especially with the later.

Rowan chuckled. "You can go wherever you want. That's an old rule. I don't have any intention to keep you inside the palace all the time."

Zaya was happy to hear that and the next morning, she went with Rowan to the magic user's quarter. It was a nice and big place with a huge land that stretched out at the back, the place where they could practice their magic safely.

"I will not stay. I need to be somewhere, but I will come three hours from now," Rowan said, he leaned over and captured her lips. "Have fun."

Zaya watched Rowan left with Addie and then entered the building, where all of the magic users there greeted her. Zaya recognized most of them.

They were confused what they needed to do there, but Zaya gave them what they needed to expect, which was to guard the kingdom's territory. They only needed to cast a barrier to protect their territory.

However, the reality was not that simple, especially for Zaya, because when she was having a nice chat with her fellow magic users, a guard came to inform her there was someone, who wanted to talk with her.

"Who is that?" Zaya asked, she didn't think aside from Rowan, there would be someone else, who would come to see her.

"Dowager queen," the guard replied.

Zaya was surprised when she heard that. Dowager queen Katerina. Zaya didn't know much about her and forgot completely that Rowan still had a living parent. He killed his father and brother, but he had never said anything about his mother.

It was the error on Zaya's side for forgetting this important thing, but to her defense, she was only in this kingdom for less than three days.

"I will come and see her," Zaya said, as she stood up and headed toward the front door, where she could see there were a big entourage that came with Dowager Queen Katerina.

Zaya thought this was too much, but then she didn't know the tradition here, so she would assume this was normal for a visit.

"Greeting, queen Katerina," Zaya greeted her politely, she bent her knees slightly to show her respect and when she lifted her head, she smiled at the queen before her. Now she knew where Rowan got those sharp eyes, but the rest he must have taken after his father.

"Let's talk inside."

Zaya thought when the queen said 'inside' they were going to go to inside the building, but instead, she went to her luxurious carriage.

Confused, Zaya followed her and then took a seat across from her. "My apologize for not greeting you first and you have to go all the way here." Zaya started. "I should have come to you first." She made a mental note to chided Rowan for this mishap. He should have told her.

The carriage was spacious, but the way the queen looked at Zaya, it made the air was sucked out of this place.

It was obvious that she scrutinized her, but Zaya met her eyes. She didn't look at her defiantly, but obviously, she wouldn't let this queen to think that she was less. She was also a princess from a great kingdom.

"I heard what happened to the three generals." Katerina completely ignored Zaya's statement earlier. "You caused so much trouble in the first day of your arrival here."

Zaya's small smile didn't falter. "I will assume that you have not yet heard the whole story about what actually had happened." Zaya was calm, but she could see how the queen was warry of her, just like Mary and the other two girls. They must be afraid of the power that she was holding, especially when there were five hundred magic users here.

"I have heard everything."

"So, you agreed that they had slandered my name and insulted the king?"



"Ridiculous!" Katerina growled. She looked unhappy with Zaya's attitude, though she didn't even show any. "You shouldn't have eavesdropped and interrupted their meeting in the first place."

"I didn't mean to, but I happened to be around when they talked about me. Do you even know that they called me a witch? Not in a nice way, but in degrading way. I will be the future queen of this kingdom, don't you think what they said and done had crossed the line?"

## Chapter 262

### She Knew Her Role

"You can't be so sure that you will be the queen of this kingdom. The king has not yet decided that yet."

"That's not what he had agreed on."

"Even if you are the queen, it doesn't mean you can overrule the kingdom. You have to know your place." Katerina leaned her back. "I am not sure how you were raised, but here, a woman's virtue is to follow your man and obey them. Your action of interrupting the meeting is not acceptable."

"In that case, the king can tell me directly."

Katerina shook her head. "You are an outsider. You don't know our tradition and what the meaning to become the woman from Marca El. Since you are very confidence to become the queen of this kingdom, you need to learn our tradition."

Zaya's eyes flickered with malice when she heard the word 'outsider'. She hated the word so much, she was barely able to control her anger. She looked at Katerina closely when she spoke again.

"I am not a woman from Marca El. I will learn your tradition, but I will never forget my root."

"What is your root? A monster? A witch?" Queen Katerina stared at her auburn hair. The look of worry and disgust were apparent on her face. She disliked her. Zaya was an outsider.

Now it clicked in Zaya's mind when she heard that. These people didn't see her as a real human. They had never seen magic user and the thought of a human could shift into a beast must be terrified them.

Sometime, what you didn't know would scare you. Zaya could understand that, but she wouldn't allow her to put her down and control her.

"I am a princess from Oregoon Kingdom, my mother is a great magic user, who was hailed from the Andel Kingdom, while my father was a great ruler, who had brought the kingdom out of the darkest time. Both of them were well respected people. It's too shallow for anyone to assume that holding a power that great is a shame. The world is too vast; it's not stop within Marca El continent."

Katerina's face turned so red, she hated to be talked back and Zaya had done it in their first meeting.

"I don't think you suit to be the queen of this kingdom," Katerina said through her gritted teeth.

"I believed that's not up to you to decide."

Katerina must be not older than fifty, but she looked so young, she must have taken care of herself greatly to gain this young look.

However, right now, her face had turned ashen and she looked like she was going to spit fire from her flaring nostrils.

Rowan said the woman in this continent was demure, but apparently, they only looked docile in front of the man. Zaya thought to herself.

"You are a stranger. I don't know anything about you." Katerina looked furious because Zaya defied her.

"Let's keep it that way."

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Zaya's meeting with Dowager Queen didn't end in good note in her opinion, because she left fuming. She wanted to teach Zaya how to be a

perfect queen for this kingdom, which meant she had to tame down her aggressiveness and talked less.

"She said I couldn't even say 'no' to Rowan," Zaya said to Alice. She stared at the ceiling. Currently, the two of them were inside one of the rooms in this building, while the other magic users practiced in the clearing area. They could see them from the window.

Alice chuckled. She was one of the magic users from the Holy Kingdom. "I saw how the women in this continent acted with their men. They looked... obedience, almost very submissive."

Zaya didn't say anything, but Alice kept talking, she was staring at the other magic users out there.

"Do you think we can start a new life here?" Alice asked, she was one of the closest people that Zaya could call friend. Just because she knew almost all of them, it didn't mean they were her friends.

"I think, we can..."

The Holy Kingdom was no more and all of the magic users went under a thorough and exhausting investigation under the command of princess Abby. Those, who was proven involved in the activity of black magic would be executed immediately.

Only a few people, who survived and these five hundreds magic users here were a few of them.

Despite everything, the Holy Kingdom had been their home ever since they were little, thus losing it caused them a great sense of lost.

But they were promised a new beginning in this new continent. The problem was; they didn't even tell them that there might be a chance that they wouldn't be accepted by the people.

And now, they were stuck here. Their only comfort was knowing Zaya would be the queen, which meant, their life wouldn't be miserable, right? She was their last hope to have a good life in this foreign land.

"You know that you will always have our full support, right?"

"I know." Zaya stood up and then walked toward the door. "Tell me everything that you know and learn about this place. Even the thing that you didn't think it's important."

Alice smiled, nodded vigorously. "I will."

After that, Zaya went out to inspect those magic users, who were practicing their magic. Thanked to Zander, they wouldn't run out of magic stones.

She watched them and gave advice here and there until Rowan returned, he came back two hours later, which was an hour early than he told her.

"My mother came to see you." Rowan put his hand behind her back. "What are you talking about?"

That was the first thing that he said and it was not even a question, he must have someone reported the even to him, but he didn't know what the conversation between the two of them inside the carriage.

"Nothing important, she only told me to be more docile and hold the virtue of being a woman from Marca El."

"And, what is that?" There was amusement that flickered in Rowan's eyes when he heard that and saw the look on Zaya's face.

"Apparently, I couldn't say 'no' to you." She gave him a look and Rowan chuckled. "Why didn't you take me to your mother or even talked about her?"

"Because she is not important," Rowan said lightly, he helped her to enter the carriage before he came after her and sat down next to her. "She is still pissed because I killed her husband."

Zaya nodded. "I can understand that. I will be pissed too." She turned her head to look at him. "So, what she wanted to achieve by pissing me off instead of you?"

It was not Zaya, who killed her husband. She should come after Rowan instead of her.

"Simply because she couldn't get to me."

Zaya was not happy with this. "I should have asked in more detail what kind of trouble that I would face in this kingdom." She should have asked two or three hundred thousand knights in return for all the trouble that she would face in the future.

Rowan seemed to understand what was in her mind, he leaned over and kissed her cheek. "Regret?"

"I couldn't say I regret it, but I thought I will get at least a week of peace before I have to face any of this." But, as it turned out, even in her first day, she had to deal with their strong rejection.



"You don't need to see them if you don't want. I will not allow anyone to enter the king palace and the magic user's quarter. You can leave freely and you are not required to answer to anyone except me."

Rowan eyed Zaya's reaction with his offer and just like he had predicted, she crossed her arms. She was not happy to be sheltered.

"Why should I hide from them?"

Rowan caressed her cheek with his thumb. "So, what do you want to do?" He shifted his position to listen to her.

"I know that you will put the magic users in every border line of the kingdom's territory. I will train them until they are ready and I want them to familiar themselves with the way the knights are fighting, so it will require for them to have sparing every now and then. Some of the magic users are not a combatant."

Rowan smiled brilliantly, he knew that Zaya was smart, but it still surprised him that she had thought that far.

"You have thought everything carefully." That was not even a question, but a statement.

Zaya shrugged her shoulders. "I think I will disappoint your mother, but I don't want to be a queen by name only." She then squinted her beautiful blue eyes. Her curls swayed to the side of her shoulders when she tilted her head. "I am sorry to disappoint you too."

Rowan chuckled. "I want to see how defiant you can be."

"I have a lot of people, who obeyed me, princess. I don't want you to be one of them." Rowan played with her curls. Women in this continent didn't have these curls and the color of her hair, also her blue eyes. "I am sure, you are not going to fuck me over with your defiance, right?"

Rowan knew that his woman was smart and Zaya wouldn't cross the line. He didn't mind her defiance behind the close door. She could defy him as she liked, but it wouldn't be a wise behavior to display in public.

## Chapter 263

### The Angry Zaya

"You are cursing again."

"I did."

Rowan leaned over and captured her lips with the same mouth that he used to curse, but Zaya didn't mind it as she reciprocated the kiss. He had been kissing her very often now, in every chance he got, probably because here, there was no Zander or other warriors, who watched his every move.

And just like he said, he could be himself in his own kingdom.

"No," Zaya said, as she pushed him away when he was about to take things too far.

Rowan growled, but he stopped.

"I am not going to be pregnant out of wedlock." But, not only that, her position was not secured until she had the title and got the ceremony. She trusted Rowan wouldn't play dirty with her, but she had to protect herself

too, since it was not only herself that she had to think about. There were five hundred magic users that relied on her in this foreign land.

"This will not get you pregnant, princess," Rowan said, as he put his hand on her stomach and caressed the surface of it with his thumb, teasing her. "I don't want to bring this topic up when you just arrived, but I think with how everything went so fast, I guess it will be right to go ahead with the ceremony to secure your position."

Rowan could see there would be the problem with Zaya's origin, but he didn't expect it would be this fast, since they had not yet arrived for a week and the first trouble had knocked on their door.

With the ceremony and the title, Zaya would have a solid power to make her move and build her own power within the kingdom and this would give the magic users the assurance that they needed that they were not below any knights in this kingdom. It would give them a foot step to stand up for themselves.

And for Zaya, the title of the queen would make her movement easier.

Hearing that, Zaya was rather surprised, it almost like Rowan could read through what she was thinking and giving her exactly what she needed.

"Sure, I will start the process."

"I will send the people that will help you with it." Rowan ran his fingers through his thick hair. "I am not sure that I can be any of help, since I am not familiar with the whole thing, but you can do whatever with the ceremony. Just let me know if there is some tradition that you wanted to perform during our ceremony."

Zaya was pleased when she heard that. Rowan made sure that she would be comfortable with the ceremony and gave her more freedom that she expected.

"Why are you being so nice with me?" Zaya looked at her intensely. She didn't want to think this way, but she had a bad experience with people who were overly nice to her and this left her with suspicion with their real intention.

People wanted something in return and it was always that way since the beginning of the time and her life in Holy Kingdom taught her that trust was fragile. There would always be give and take in everything.

"Is that questionable to be nice to my future queen?" Rowan's smile disappeared. His voice turned serious when he spoke again. "You put your guard up."

Rowan knew how calculative Zaya could be and she was within her right to try to protect herself and his people, but there was something off...

Zaya shrugged her shoulders and the look on her eyes disappeared. "I have no one here, if I don't have you, I will not be able to do anything. I only want to make sure that you will always have my back."

"I will."

After that, they talked about trivial things, Rowan told her what happened to the three generals and what kind of punishment that he gave to them.

Rowan didn't go crazy on them; he only cut off their salary for three months.

"They were surprised that I didn't give them a death sentence." Rowan winked at her, which made Zaya laugh.

"It seems, my charm doesn't work on you. I should have practiced more."

Zaya was not concerned with the punishment for them, but it was nice to know that Rowan had them within his grasp and trusted their loyalty to him. The three of them were the people who helped him when he usurped the throne.

The three generals didn't like the previous king because he used to make a decision based on what his mistresses whispered to his ear, sometime it would be a ridiculous thing.

Therefore, they were worried when they learned the king brought back a witch to be his queen. They didn't want to have a king, who was stirred by women again.

Yes, the women were docile, but it didn't mean, they didn't have a way to get they wanted. The women wouldn't say 'no' to their men, but they held power behind their obedience as well if they knew how to use it.

The next day, aside from Mary and the other two girls, there were three more women that Zaya had to meet in order to prepare for her ceremony.

But, on the third day, there was an invitation from Dowager Queen Katerina, inviting her for a tea party. She wished to introduce her to the other ladies.

It was important for Zaya to associate with them, but she knew this tea party could be a trap.

"Will you come, princess?" Inez asked, she was one of the two girls, who always assisted Mary. She combed Zaya's hair before she went to bed.

Zaya folded the letter and smiled at the young girl through the mirror. "Of course. I love tea party and socialize with other people." She wanted to see what Katerina would do.

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"Are you sure, you are going to that tea party?" Rowan asked when they had their breakfast together at the small garden next to the fountain.

Zaya felt she was being abandoned because Rowan was very busy, thus he always made time to have, at least, breakfast together, which meant the king would only leave the palace after he had his breakfast with her, not earlier from that.

He would make time to have dinner with her, but so far, he only managed to get two dinners with Zaya, since he was too occupied with the trouble at the border and could only arrive after midnight.

"Yes, why?" Zaya asked, she sipped her tea and looked at Rowan, he had a sword leaned against the table leg, which meant, he was going to inspect the border.

Rowan put down his cutleries and leaned back, contemplating something, while staring at Zaya, which caught her attention, she did the same thing and they stared at each other.

Addie was standing nearby and he heard their conversation, he knew what the king was thinking right now.



The moment Zaya received the invitation from queen Katerina, Rowan was given the information about who would attend the said tea party and his expression turned ashen. In one glance of the guest list, he could see what his mother was trying to do.

Addie advised him not to let Zaya attend and give the queen a visit to warn her, but ever since Rowan took the throne and killed his brother, his mother's words became very harsh to hear and now Rowan refused to see her.

Rowan also banned his other five brothers from the main palace too. They could still visit their mother, but the main palace and the king palace was off limit for them.

However, Rowan had different idea.

Sooner or later, Zaya would learn about this, therefore it was better if she heard about it from him, rather than someone else. They could add their own words and spiced things up to rile her.

But not only that, Rowan wanted Zaya to be prepared and know what she could expect during the mention with his mother.

"Something is bothering you?" Zaya finally broke the silent. "Something that you wanted to tell me?"

"This will not be pleasant to hear," Rowan stated and Zaya squared her back, as if she was ready with the news. She looked adorable when she did that. One would underestimate her when they saw her petite figure, but Zaya surely knew how to fight. "All of the women there are women who I slept with in the past."

There was this eerie silent that stretched between them, as if even the wind was too scared to blow in their direction before the tablecloth was burned.

Addie jumped out of his skin. He frantically looked around to extinguish the fire, but he didn't need to do that because three second later the fire had vanished, leaving ashes on the table.

Both Zaya and Rowan were still staring at each other. The king didn't even flinch when he saw the fire earlier, as if he had expected that.

"You are right, I don't please to hear that," Zaya said, her voice was even, as though she was not just burned the tablecloth in her rage.

"It happened in the past. I have been celibate since I left the kingdom for Ogregon."

Another fire. Addie took three steps back. He wondered how Rowan was very sure that Zaya wouldn't burn him down. The king was unfazed.

"You are angry," Rowan stated the obvious. He was unfazed, but was rather mesmerized by the angry witch before his eyes, as if he was fascinated.

## Chapter 264

### The Tea Party

Addie wanted to curse out loud. Of course, she was angry! She was mad! From Addie's point of view, it almost like Zaya was holding back from burning the entire place down, which was nice of her though...

"How many?"

"There are fifteen women."

And now, fire surrounded them. It was small circle that burned the grass, creating a barrier around them. Addie had to take another step back, he considered to call for the guards, but then he didn't think that was a wise decision to do.

People had been talking about the fact that Zaya was a witch and started a rumor that the king was bewitched by him, if they saw what happened, it would only ruin Zaya's name even further. No matter what, he couldn't add to the rumor.

More so, the king didn't say anything. Addie could only pray the king would be fine. A woman's wrath was scary...

"So, how many women you have been sleeping with?"

Addie felt his heart lurched to the ground. He chanted in his mind for the king to lie to her. To not aggravate her even more.

However, Rowan seemed to determine to kill himself.

"I am not sure. I lost count."

Addie covered his mouth dramatically, gasping. "Heaven, it's over..." he watched with horror in his eyes when Zaya stood up, but the fire around them suddenly extinguished and she walked closer toward Rowan. Her blue eyes turned darker.

Addie swore, he would choose to go in that battle with monsters rather than facing Zaya's wrath.

"Did you father any child?"

"No. That I know of." Rowan corrected himself. "I am sure I don't father any child, or else there would be a woman came forward with a baby."

He was the king now, who didn't want to have the king's child?

"Fuck you, Rowan!" Zaya hissed viciously.

"You are cursing," Rowan pointed out. "I think I became a bad influence on you."

Zaya glared at him and then turned around. She stormed away and when Rowan was about to catch up to her, she created a barrier that prevented him from coming closer to her.

"I told you, you should have lied."

"No."

Rowan watched Zaya disappeared at the corner. She was furious and it was obvious.

"She is going to burn down the palace." Addie grimaced.

Rowan touched his chin. "What do you is the way to calm her down?"

"How should I know?"

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Zaya was in a very bad mood right now, she felt like she wanted to fight someone and because of that, she went to the training ground for the magic user and spar with them, since the tea party would be held in the evening.

Alice noticed her bad mood and when she asked about it, Zaya didn't say anything.

"You look like you wanted to kill someone..." Alice pointed it out.

"Not someone, maybe fifteen people." Fifteen or maybe sixteen women including the Dowager Queen to be precise.

Alice raised her brows, but she didn't dare to ask further when she saw the storm on her expression.

But, even after her training session with the other magic users, Zaya didn't feel better at all. She was so mad.

"No. let my hair loose," Zaya said. She knew that her hair attracted attention, even so the color. She used to tie it because she didn't want them to look at her differently.

Probably deep down, she wanted to be accepted by these people, because no matter what, she would rather to have a peaceful life than the one with constant hatred and felt unaccepted.

But now... hell with those people.

She was different and would she want to be the same like them? Why would she care what they were thinking about her when she didn't do anything wrong? She was proud of her bloodline and her ability to use magic. Their opinion shouldn't deter her and make her felt less than them just because she was different.

Zaya was wearing her dress. The style of the women dress in this continent was different from Ogregon and Andelus. Before, she tried to blend by wearing the dress that Rowan had prepared for her, but right now, she was wearing the dress that she liked.

The dress from this continent didn't show much skin, it looked very modest, in which it would cover your neck to your wrist and with dull color of grey or deep red, something that you would only wear when you didn't want to attract attention.

However, Zaya was wearing yellow color. This color complimented her hair perfectly and had a V neck, which showed her beautiful collarbones. It didn't show much skin, but you could see how beautiful this dress was when the fabric was very soft. It looked like they made of fairy wings.



It was different from the fabric that the women here used for their dress. The fabric was heavy and thick. It made you look so rigid when you walked around.

"Princess, this..." Mary wanted to voice out her disagreement, but she couldn't get the word out of her mouth.

The only time Zaya was wearing the dress that she brought from Oreggon was in her first day here, but it was because Rowan had not yet sent a few dresses for her.

"What? Don't you think it's beautiful?" Zaya twirled in front of the mirror and looked at her own reflection, satisfied. She had been suffocating inside those heavy materials and this, her silky dress allowed her to breath.

Zaya auburn, long hair reached her hips, the curls made her face looked smaller and they bounced on her back whenever she moved. She liked it. She got those curls from her mother and she loved it.

"It's..." Mary gulped down. "I think it doesn't suit the style of this kingdom."

"I don't plan to suit the style of this kingdom, Mary. I didn't bear and grow up in this kingdom, I will not pretend that I belonged here when all the people here thought of me as an outsider."

Zaya turned around and watched Marry, Inez and Leah lowered their head. She was right with what she said.

"Is the carriage ready?" Zaya asked, she walked toward the door and the three of them followed from behind, telling her that the carriage was ready.

It was only Inez, who came with Zaya, since she was only allowed to bring one of her personal maids. Mary wanted to go with her, but she chose Inez. She was the youngest and looked more naïve than Leah.

From the look of it, she just joined in and Zaya was right.

"I entered the palace six months ago and I am lucky to serve you, princess," she said in small voice. She had freckles across her face and she had a dimple on her left cheek when she smiled. Zaya liked her.

"Here, take this," Zaya said, she fished out something from her pocket. It was a ring. There was nothing important about this ring, only a piece of jewelry that Zaya owned and she had a lot. Zander made sure she had a lot of these things, to show the people here that she was not less from them.

Inez's eyes opened wide when she saw it, she gasped but then she shook her head fearfully. "I can't, princess, I can't accept it."

"In my homeland, refusing a gift considered as a rude gesture," Zaya said, feeling slightly bad because she pressured her, but then she didn't do anything bad. At least, not yet...

Having people on her side was important when you were in foreign land and the quickest way to get them was by giving a gift.

"But, I can't, princess. This is too much for me."

Just like the other maids, she must have grown up in poor environment. Being able to join in the palace was already an achievement for her, therefore this simple ring must be too extravagance for her.

"I am very satisfied with how you took care of me; you learned how to do my hair well. Take it, this is a gift."

Inez was the one, who learned how to do Zaya's hair and even tried to style it differently.

After some hesitation, Inez finally took it, but along their way to the queen Katerina's palace, she kept glancing at Zaya, holding at her ring in her pocket. Her lips curled into a small smile.

Zaya could feel Inez's eyes on her, she tried to make it less obvious, but needless to say, she was not good at it.

Zaya knew that she was waiting for an order, even in this continent, people like Inez knew that a gift didn't come for free. There must be something that she needed to do for their master and it could bring them more privilege and more gifts to be their master's trusted person.

However, Zaya pretended she didn't see that. She would use Inez when the time was right, but not now. She wanted to be close with her first, to gain her loyalty, because if a gift could buy her loyalty, then anyone could do the same.

That was not Zaya's goal... she was playing a long game here.

Fifteen minutes later, they finally arrived at queen Katerina's palace. There were a few carriages outside, which meant, all of the guests had arrived.

Zaya didn't have any intention to come early, but she didn't come late too. The fact that everyone was already here, she assumed she was given the wrong time. Well, she didn't really care.

## Chapter 265

### The King's Affection

When Zaya stepped in, she could hear the laughter, as all the women had been cozying themselves and having a good time. A guard at the door announced her presence and the sound from the garden died down.

All eyes were on Zaya, especially when she was wearing this bright yellow dress with her auburn hair tumbled down on her back. She looked breathtaking under the soft light of the sun.

And the way she carried herself made all of them felt intimidated, as they should. They already feared her because she was a witch after all.

"Dowager Queen Katerina," Zaya greeted the queen, she bent her knees slightly to show her respect and waited for the queen to say something.

The queen looked at her, disapproving look was very strong in her eyes with the dress that Zaya choose, she glanced at her hair and frowned.

And when the queen didn't say anything and let Zaya stood up in front of her like a fool, she thought she could give her a little lesson, but obviously she didn't know Zaya at all and what she was capable of doing.

Zaya clapped her hand to the queen's personal maid, which shocked everyone.

"Why are you just standing there? You can see that I don't have a chair, right? Do you want to embarrass Queen Dowager for not preparing this party carefully, to the point you forgot how many people that the queen invited?"

Everyone gasped, even Inez's face turned pale. No one dared to reprimand the queen's personal maid, because it was an indirect insult the queen herself.

What Zaya had done was so bold, they were scared for her, but the princess looked calm and compose.

Zaya was unfazed.

"Queen Katerina, from the look of it, you should teach your personal maid some manner. Not only she doesn't show any respect for your guest, but also to the king's future queen of this kingdom."

Zaya was annoyed because she still needed to bring Rowan in this situation, especially after their conversation this morning, she really

wanted to disassociate herself with Rowan, yet in this situation, bringing his name would be the most effective solution.

But, of course, on the surface, she looked as graceful as ever.

"Bring the chair," queen Katerina growled at her personal maid, who immediately went to get the chair for Zaya.

It didn't take a genius to know that the queen did it on purpose, but Zaya came prepared, she was armed with her anger too, which made her look bolder than usual.

"What a beautiful dress," one of the ladies said, she tried to ease the tension, but all Zaya could see was the woman that Rowan had fucked.

It was so childish of her to think that the king had been celibate for all those years before they met. Rowan was the same age like Zander and Zenith and there was no way he had never touched anyone.

However, to think she was surrounded by women he had been with, made her stomach churned. She wanted to burn this queen for this humiliation.

Taking a deep breath, Zaya plastered a smile when she sat down next to the queen. She had been standing there, so it was only right if they brought the chair to her.

Queen Katerina was not happy to sit next to Zaya, but she couldn't care less about that.

"Thank you, lady..."

"Osborn," she said, she had almond shape eyes and long black hair, she was wearing deep purple color dress that reached her neck. She sat straight and picked her tea cup gracefully.

"Thank you, lady Osborn," Zaya said. "What am I missing?"

"I am glad that you finally grace us with your presence," queen Katerina said and when she finally spoke, all the faces of the ladies here became relax, they put their best effort to make what happened earlier had never happened in the first place.

Well, Zaya knew how to play this game. She relaxed herself and let Inez to pout a cup of tea for her. She sipped the tea and liked the taste of it.

Zaya only spoke when she felt the queen's piercing glare on her face because she didn't respond to her cheap jab, while the tension returned.



Zaya really wanted to laugh. It was easy to rile them up. Who was the one annoyed now?

"I think I came right in time, the queen personal's maid must have given me the wrong time," Zaya said lightly, she stated clearly the time on the invitation.

The queen personal's maid's face fell; she tried to lower her head to prevent herself from glaring at Zaya.

"Ah, princess Zaya is already here, so that's what important, right?" Other ladies tried to smooth the situation, saving the queen from saying anything.

From the look of it, they were trying so hard to please the queen. Bad news for them, queen Katerina would no longer be the queen once Zaya got the title and had her ceremony.

"That's right," Zaya said cheerfully.

"Princess Zaya, let me introduced myself, I am Cassia Issa from the house of Issa." The lady in blue dress introduced herself followed by the rest of them. "Do you mind telling us the story of how you met with the king?"

Zaya contemplated about it for a while, but then her shoulders relax, as she leaned her body back, a beautiful smile tilted on her lips, which made the queen looked at her with anticipation.

This woman was... alarming to say the least. Katerina wondered how her son chose someone unbridled like her to be the future queen of this kingdom. She didn't suit for this kingdom at all. They should have shipped her back the moment she showed this attitude and her dress...

Katerina faked her smile, as she listened to Zaya's story about how her king son courted her.

However, there was something wrong with the way she told the story. It didn't sound like her son at all. Gradually, she was frowning.

"You said that... you went into a battle with him? You fought in the last battle? How could a woman go into a battle?" It didn't make sense for Katerina for a woman to fight. And even after knowing that, her son still wanted to be with her. It didn't make any sense at all.

"Yes," Zaya said proudly.

All of the ladies gasped with that statement. They looked at her with horror in their eyes, which was good.

If they couldn't respect you just yet, fear would do to keep them in order and worry of you. Zaya didn't want to be part of their circle, but at the same time, she could use them. These ladies came from prestigious families and she could make use of it.

"He chased after me and courted me every day."

All of them widened their eyes in surprise, because as far as they knew the king was not a type of man, who would court his women. He was the king after all.

"He said he love me on the first day we went out. He said I am the most beautiful woman in this world and he promised me to be the future queen in this kingdom." Zaya raised her hand and covered half of her face, as she looked at them all bashfully. "He kissed me when we went to the town for the first time. He brought a bouquet of flower with him."

All of them gasped, their faces turned very red when they heard that the king kissed her. It sounded very romantic, especially with the way Zaya described the event. She gave them the detail of the event and what happened.

Zaya also told them all the cheesy thing that Rowan had said to her.

"He said that I am a gem. He found a gem when he found me."

At this point, all of them couldn't care less about what the queen wanted. Yes, they had slept with the king. All of them, but the king had never showed any affection, not even an ounce of affection when he was with them.

The king was very curt and cold. Once the deed was done, they were kicked out of the room.

Therefore, it was hard to wrap around their head to imagine the way the king treated this princess. They came here with the intention to humiliate her, but in the end, it was them, who were jealous of Zaya.

If only they were favored by the king that way, they would be over the moon. Their status was also not bad, even though it couldn't be compared to Zaya.

All of them swallowed back their bitterness.

"Are you sure that's my son?" Queen Katerina opened her fan and hid her laugh behind it. "That doesn't sound like my son at all."

Zaya tilted her head. She looked at her with her blue eyes that shone brilliantly under the soft sunlight.

"If my son really liked you that much, I am sure, he will come here to see you if you called for him, don't you think?" Queen Katerina put down her fan, bared her teeth, which she thought was the same like when she was smiling. "Why don't you call him here?"

"Sure." Zaya didn't see any problem in that.

"Okay." The queen nodded, but then she added. "My son doesn't like tea party or anything that related to what women do in their free time, but more importantly, it had been years since his last visit to my palace."

Shit.