

Royal Secret: I'm A Princess!

Chapter 9 - PRINCE NERO'S THREAT

NEOMA ran towards Nero as soon as she saw him. She ran past Emperor Nikolai— who was walking in front of her— to get to her twin brother.

Nero was lying on the ground while being engulfed in a strange golden light. He was also surrounded by several royal knights. The old man dressed in a white cloak with a wooden cane must be the royal doctor, aka the best Healing Sage in the whole empire.

"Nero!"

Nero tried to get up when he heard her voice. But the Healing Sage immediately got down on one knee to stop him and make him lie on the ground again.

"Your Royal Highness, you cannot move yet," the Healing Sage said. Then, the old man glared at her. "Princess, please do not disturb the royal prince."

"Don't talk to my sister that way," Nero warned the old man.

The Healing Sage looked confused when he turned to the prince. "But Your Royal Highness—"

"Let the royal princess stay with the royal prince," Emperor Nikolai ordered. "Bring the royal twins to my palace."

Neoma was kind of shocked by the emperor's order but she ignored him for now.

She kneeled beside Nero. When her twin brother looked up at her, he looked shocked. He obviously didn't like that she cut her long hair as short as his.

"Neoma," Nero said sadly. Then, he touched the strands of her now short hair with a pained look on his face. "You did this to protect me even though you loved your long hair so much..."

It was true.

She liked how pretty her long hair was. It pained her when she cut her hair but now that she had confirmed that Nero was safe, it didn't matter anymore. Her small sacrifice to protect her twin brother was worth it.

"It's okay, Brother," Neoma said with a smile. Then, she held his hand and placed it on her cheek. "I love Brother more than I loved my long hair."

She wished she was just saying to suck up to her twin brother but sadly, she had gotten attached to him for real.

[Gosh, I'm such a softie.]

NEOMA looked at her reflection in the mirror long and hard.

Right now, she was in a guest room in Yule Palace– the emperor's residence. Yes, the palace was named after the Moon God that their citizens worshipped.

As expected, even though it was only a guest room, the chamber was luxurious. The huge paintings had golden frames, and so were the windowsills. The antique vases and the other decorations also looked expensive. The room had also its own bathroom and toilet.

But the "star" was the huge bed, of course. It had four posts and a sheer dr.a.p.e. The mattress was super soft and the bed sheets were elegant and comfortable.

She wasn't in the mood to appreciate the luxury though.

[I really cut my hair, huh?]

To be honest, she was kind of surprised at how similar she looked with Nero. Even though she was wearing a nightgown, it would be easier for anyone to mistake her for her twin brother.

[Nero is super pretty for a boy.]

And yes, the prince looked feminine as well. But they were still kids so it would be safer to say that Nero looked androgynous for now.

[In my past life, a.d.u.l.t Nero still looks pretty but no one would mistake him for a girl.]

But maybe she should stop thinking about her first life.

[This is so different from what happened in the past.]

Posing as Nero would definitely be dangerous.

That meant assassins would come after her throat thinking that she was the crown prince. Of course, Emperor Nikolai would try to protect her until Nero was powerful enough to protect herself. But knowing her father, he probably wouldn't exert much effort to keep her safe.

To the sc*mbag, she was just a pawn that he needed to buy Nero some time.

[But I'm sure that my father would need me as proxy for a long time.]

Nero was still in the "infirmary" in the palace.

When she told the Healing Sage that she saw the assassin's blade turn into dust and entered Nero's mouth, the old man was shocked. Apparently, it was a dangerous spell that would kill anyone from the inside in the most painful way possible. To be precise, it was a spell that would make a person's insides rot slowly but surely.

Worse, the spell also served as a seal to one's Mana. That meant as long as the spell was inside Nero's body, he wouldn't be able to unleash his full power. Not even his Soul Beast.

[Poor baby brother.]

When she heard that, her resolve to take his place for the meantime strengthened.

"Take all the time you need to heal, Brother," Neoma said under her breath. "I'll try to survive until you come back."

[Now, let's think about the three wishes I'll ask from His Majesty.]

"NO," NERO told Emperor Nikolai defiantly after he heard his plan for him. Right now, he was in the Yule Palace. But the room he was in was similar to a hospital room. It might be the private infirmary wing in the emperor's residence. "I will not leave Neoma alone in this palace. I won't even let her pretend as me! Are you insane?"

Glenn, who was standing behind Emperor Nikolai (who was seated on the accent chair beside his bed), looked shocked at the way he talked to the emperor. The knight seemed like he was about to scold him but Emperor Nikolai raised a hand to stop him.

"You heard what Marcus said, Nero de Moonasterio," Emperor Nikolai said. 'Marcus' was the Healing Sage who looked after him. "The spell that was used on you was an ancient one. It's dangerous enough that not even Marcus could heal you. The only person who could save you is the saint. But the saint isn't allowed to leave the Astello Temple, so you're the one who should come to him instead." He raised an eyebrow at him. "If you die now, you'd abandon Neoma de Moonasterio as well. Do you want that to happen?"

Of course not.

But still...

"Can I not bring Neoma with me?" he asked desperately. "If it's His Holiness's temple, then wouldn't it be safe for us? The Holy Knights protect the church after all."

"Don't be ridiculous," the emperor scolded him. "The saint wouldn't allow just anyone to step foot on his temple without a valid reason. Even if we are the royal family that rules the entire Moonasterion Empire, we don't have much power over the church. We even need permission from the saint before we enter Valmento."

Valmento was the proper name for "Holy Land"—the small country where the saint lived.

Although Valmento was within the territory of Moonasterion Empire, it still functioned as a separate country. According to his History teacher, the royal family couldn't touch the saint or the church because the saint had the citizens to back them up.

Most of all, the saint was believed to have the ability to talk to the gods. Angering the saint was said to be equal to gaining the wrath of heavens.

"Does Neoma really need to pretend as me?" Nero asked bitterly. "You don't care about my twin sister. I'm certain that you'd only do the bare minimum to protect her."

"That's not true," Emperor Nikolai denied. "Once Neoma takes your place, I'll treat her like how I'll treat my heir. I'll give her the best protection that I could give her. If I don't do that, then the enemies would realize that she's just someone pretending to be you."

"Will that really work?" he asked dubiously. "There had been spies in the Luna Palace. That means there are people outside the palace who know that I have a twin sister."

"I'll deal with them," his father said confidently. "The servants in Luna Palace, save for Alphen and Stephanie, had already been taken care of."

That meant the poor servants were killed except for the head butler

and head maid.

[Neoma shouldn't know about this.]

"The general public doesn't know that you have a twin sister," the emperor said. "When you were born, only the birth of the prince was announced to the public. Even within the palace, there's only a few that knows about Neoma's existence. We can pull this off."

To be honest, he hated to agree with his father.

But right now, he didn't have the power to protect Neoma. How could he do that when he was slowly rotting inside? He had to be healed quickly if he wanted to return by his precious sister's side right away.

"I'll go to the temple," he said firmly. "Make sure that you'll protect my twin sister properly or else..."

"Or else what?" the emperor asked with a smirk. "You're going to kill me?"

"No," Nero said seriously. "If Neoma dies before I return, then I'll kill myself to follow her wherever she would have gone to after her death."

Emperor Nikolai looked shocked by his threat. But in the end, he smirked as if he was amused by what he said. "I can't let my heir kill himself, can I?"

NEOMA blinked several times to make sure that she wasn't dreaming.

But no matter how many times she blinked, the boy straddling her h.i.p.s didn't disappear.

[Who the hell is this dude?]

The "dude" in question was a handsome young boy who was probably aged eight or older. He had silver, slightly gray-ish hair and golden eyes. His skin was as pale as a canvas.

He looked too pretty but still, she couldn't trust anyone in that palace.

So she did what a girl ought to do when she woke up in bed being straddled by a stranger: she sucker punched him in the gut.

The young boy flew and hit his back against the wall.

And damn, the part of the wall that caught the impact got wrecked. Was his body made of steel or something?

Neoma's eyes widened in shock. "Who the hell are you, little boy?"

"Girl," the weird, handsome boy said in a monotone tone. Then, he pointed a long and slender finger at her. "Princess, not prince."
