



## Chapter 23

My hands started shaking, my feet were tapping restlessly against the plastic mats on the floor of the car and my heart was erratically beating in my chest.

Any minute now I would start to hyperventilate, I knew my tells and if my breathing picked up a little more I would have a full blown panic attack on my hands.

"So calm the hell down."

"It's not that easy!" I hissed at Trixy.

"You can't let him know that you're nervous, Hazel."

"You need to back off. Don't forget that I can feel what you feel too."

She went silent for a second before quietly warning, "He's watching." She said.

I looked up, straight into the mirror where I saw his green eyes staring back at me. Why would he choose me when whenever he chose to show emotion it was always anger? 1

Trixy was pushing up against me, more present than she had ever been and it sucked because I felt her fear as real as I felt my own.

After a long glare heating my face reminding me that I was on the threshold of the devils home, he finally turned his glare onto the road ahead. The one that led to his lair.

"That's one hell of a lair." Trixy mused.



We looked out over the palace, the one that would put all others to shame.

I knew that humans had hierarchies just as we did. They had kings and queens, palaces and guards to protect them. The people gathered in masses and laid down their hearts for the royalties of their countries, in that sense we were not much different from each other.

But in every other sense, the differences were so vast and severe that it led to the segregation of our two species.

The palace stretched in front of us. Four towers stood reaching to the sky with several levels, rounded corners and the crowns on top. Two bridges stretched across the castles different parts and I could stand for hours without truly seeing everything.

Acres of land reached far beyond what my eyes could see all around us. A fountain with crystal clear water washed down in a waterfall from the bowing wall in front of the palace.

The hedges were trimmed to a 't' in different shapes, spirals, balls, crescent moons and one was in the shape of a rose.

Gardeners were walking around trimming and maintaining the large estate grounds, I could spot five by the time we reached the palace.

The doors opened up and out marched servants, cleaners, the chef and some others that I couldn't tell on their clothes what their job was in the palace.

They clasped their hands in their fronts and smiled as the car came to a stop. My door was opened by a man in a tux who, even as I thanked him, didn't make any eye contact whatsoever nor a single sound.

Darian stepped out and I could've sworn the air shifted, we all felt it. I saw



the cleaners fighting to keep their smiles up, except for one older woman who's wrinkled face looked bitterly at Darian when he exited the car.

"The King has come home," her voice was raspy but strong and in unison after her statement, they all bowed their heads for their king.

I stared at their eyes glued to the ground, their necks visible in a show of submission and then I turned and looked at Darian who was buttoning his suit jacket and his eyes were locked on me.

"Welcome home, puppet."

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