

The Dragon King's Substitute Bride Chapter 119

MIDAS

“And is her life more important than all the others in your kingdom?”

The memory comes to him unbidden.

Echoes from a time that seems like forever ago.

When he had asked this question to the King of Averia, his entire aim, to take away something precious from the realm that had taken his parents from him, he had done so in mockery.

He did not believe that they had much of a choice.

And yet ultimately, the royal family had chosen to risk everything by saving their daughter instead.

When he found out, the king inside of him had been enraged but the dragonkin that he was had laughed and shook his head at their foolishness.

This was why humans would always be less.

Because they acted with emotions rather than their head.

An entire kingdom for just one life.

It should have been a forgone conclusion from the moment those words were uttered.

And yet now that he stands faced with an ultimatum far worse than the one he had given the king of the human realm, the dragon king says nothing.

If he allowed Hermani to open the portal and bring Azarath to the surface world, he would not only be giving up on the 5th realm and all who dwelled it.

He would have damned the entirety of the 7 realms to the danger of a very powerful and extremely vengeful god.

So it was not simply one life for a kingdom.

It was one life for the life of countless others.

Hermani yawns.

A large, exaggerated sound that drags him forcefully back to reality.

“Time is ticking Midas and I grow bored of waiting. What will it be? Will you give me the key to freeing Azarath or shall I slice open the neck of your pretty little queen.”

“Midas No... don’t do it.”

“Your highness...”

The chief Ryder, still bleeding and in pain tries to rise to his feet but he has lost too much blood and he crumbles to one knee again, leaning on his sword.

Midas closes his eyes.

Hands clenching and unclenching.

Every single possibility runs through his mind.

Every scenario that did not involve him giving up the key and condemning every living creature in the 7 realms to either certain death or an eternity of war.

The images play through his mind at a speed faster than lightning.

And there was not a single one that would not end in her death.

“Dragon king...”

The voice of his dragon in his head.

Calm and deciding.

The dragon who was once faced with the very same decision.

Save the world or kill his tether.

“Do not make the same mistake I did.”

He hears her straining against the grip of the dark elf holding the knife to her neck.

“Midas, look at me. Please!”

The Elven queen giggles.

“Yes, Midas...look at her.”

He hears her turn to spit in the dark queen’s direction.

“Oh you shut the f**k up Hermani!... Midas?!”

His Hera, fearless even in the face of her own death.

The dragon king opens his eyes and everything else falls away.

Everything but the scent of her, the sight of her.

“Hera.”

Her face is streaked in tears, her hair, her face and her body covered in dirt and bruises.

And it takes every last ounce of his self control to stop himself from attempting to cross the distance to rip in half the dark elf daring to lay it's filthy hands on her.

His pain...her pain...mix together in his veins and flows to his heart like black poison.

Infecting it until his chest starts to hurt.

Something happened out there. Something that damn near broke her heart.

He growls at Hermani.

“What did you do to her?”

Hermani wisely steps out of arms reach, her nose still misshapen and bleeding.

“Nothing...yet. But trust me dragon king when I tell you I can hurt her in so many ways.”

Midas' jaw ticks.

He glances from Her to Hermani and then back to her again.

“I...”

“Midas, No! listen to me. Do not give it to her.”

He clenches his jaw, unable to bring himself to look her directly in the eyes.

“You ask me to let you die.”

“I am asking you to save your people and all of the seven realms. If Azarath comes back he will kill us all. It is not worth it... I am not worth it.”

Midas shakes his head. “You do not understand.”

“Midas...”

“No!”

“Midas.”

He forces himself to meet her eyes.

“If I have to watch you die... it will not be Azarath who burns the entire world to the ground...”

She called him a monster once before and perhaps she had been right.

Because if he lost her here, not even the gods would be able to stop him from turning the seven realms to ashes.

Hermani sneers at him.

“I tire of this dragon king.”

And then to her minions she nods her head.

“Cut her open.”

He smells her blood as the knife starts to dig into her skin and every part of his body is set on fire.

“Fine.”

“No! Midas.”

He turns his back on her and hisses at Hermani through clenched teeth.

“Let her go and I will give you what you ask.”

Hermani narrows her eyes at him, tongue flicking over tongue.

Midas stares back, his gaze firm and unwavering.

“Let. Her. Go.”

And then just when he is beginning to think he might have to sever Hermani’s head from her body after all, the dark queen raises her hand and the knife falls from Hera’s neck.

But the dark elf holding her does not let her go.

Hermani steps closer and he can hear the greed and barely concealed excitement in the roughness of her voice.

“Okay Midas. Where is it?”

“Right here.”

Hermani bares her teeth, spittle dripping from her mouth, pink and stained with blood.

“Do not test me dragon king. The knife to her neck is sheathed, not lost.”

“I am not testing you.”

“Then where is it?!”

Midas swallows, feeling like he is about to betray everyone that ever looked up to him.

It is okay dragon king. Do what you must.

The ruler of the 5th realm straightens to his full height.

“It is I. I am the key to opening the portal and freeing Azarath.”

Hermani pauses, her eyes narrowing into even thinner slits.

“How?”

“Er’gan, the dragon to which my soul is bound, was the very first dragon. Raised and gifted his powers by the patron god of magic.”

“Waste my time no further dragon king. What does that have to do with anything?”

“He is the embodiment of all of Azarath’s early powers and its blood flows through my veins.”

The Dark queen stills.

Her green eyes swing from one point to another.

Each word filling her face with realization

“And so if Azarath were to get it back...”

She gasps. “He would be able to cross through the portal and regain his true form.”

Midas says nothing.

He remembers the day his father had told him who he was.

The argument that had unknowingly revealed the truth of the extent of the powers that lay within him.

“You must be more responsible Midas!! You cannot keep running off like some spoilt child. You are not just protector of the dragon realm. You are protector of everything!!”

Hermani claps, her smile pulling her cheeks almost to her ears.

“Oh isn’t that wonderful. All this time...”

She nods her head and suddenly Midas feels firm grips on his arms. “...We knew the key was hidden somewhere in your pathetic realm.”

They are close to the altar where the two dragons sit, the one of ruby and gold, intertwined to form an arch.

Hermani starts to walk up towards it.

The dark elves holding his arms force him after her.

“It is why we chose to take refuge in your forest in the first place. And we were content to stay quiet, letting you and your father think you could contain us in that miserable forest as long as it meant we could search for the key without anyone of you realizing what was going on.”

He watches her reach for one of the ceremonial basins on the dias at the top of the altar.

“But after so many wasted years, we decided that waiting was no longer enough.”

Midas watches her every move, struggling the entire time to keep his rage under control.

“So everything. Turning Radarth and Adarin against themselves, bringing in Wolfsbane into my realm...”

She smirks at him.

“All a distraction so you wouldn’t know of our efforts to search your realm. yes...at first.”

“Something changed.”

“See dragon king. You are not as stupid as I thought you were. Yes, something changed. She came.”

She walks down the steps again, a knife appearing in her hand from hades knows where.

Midas frowns but he bites down his tongue.

He would not give her the satisfaction.

He would not ask.

But Hermani does not seem to care whether he asks or not.

She wants to gloat.

To bask in the success of their schemes.

“Do you remember the day you caught me in the fields?”

He remembers.

It was the day after they had found out that the elves had opened a portal to bring Wolfsbane into his realm.

She reaches him and grabs his wrist.

Her grip hard and intended to inflict pain.

“I was certain it was all over. That you would kill me on the spot.”

A forceful twist turns his hand upwards.

“But you didn’t did you. Instead you brought me into your palace, gave us the access we had been struggling to have on a platter of gold. And it was all because of her. Because she had changed you. Made you soft and weak.”

She sneers and spits at his feet. “Pathetic.”

She draws her face closer to his until he can smell the stench of dark magic on her breath.

“You think that we are the rot, sneaking into your realm and destroying everything to claim a throne that is not ours and perhaps it is true.”

The blade rises in the air.

“But the truth is dragon king, the one you should really be blaming...is her”