

# The Dragon King's Substitute Bride Chapter 121

MIDAS

“Fire to ashes...”

“The waters after the rain...”

“Some parts depart...”

“Some parts remain...”

He lowers the torch carefully.

Waiting until the flame licks eagerly at the blades of dried grass.

“gods of darkness..”

“gods of Light”

The flames catch and start to spread.

Greedy tongues of bright orange burning starkly against the bright grey of a cloudless sky.

“On this path of bewildering inanity...”

“The thousand steps of a journey unknown”

“Be my comfort..”

“Be my guide...”

“From death...”

“...and into immortality.”

The king makers nod softly at the dragon king dressed fully in his battle armour but he does not see.

He is not looking.

All his attention is fixed on the boat floating out to sea.

And the body aboard it that will never be seen again.

Rite of passage or not, burials were the hardest part of death.

They made it real.

Forced you to confront the fact that the ones you loved were no longer with you.

He hated every second of it.

He turns away from the river bank and the rest of the dragon realm bows.

To his right are the kingmakers who had just finished conducting the lighting ceremony in accordance with the customs of the dragon realm.

And then to his left are the clan chiefs.

His eyes meet those of Adarin and Radarth.

He recognizes the look in their eyes, in the way their chins hang just a little more than usual.

Of all the other clans, they had lost the most in this war.

He acknowledges their pain by inclining his head slightly in their direction.

And then he turns swiftly and walks away.

The image of the burning flames etched firmly into the crevices of his mind.

“Dragon king.”

Midas stops, his feet poised to step into the carriage that would take him back to the castle on dragon’s mount.

He takes off the helmet of his armour.

By custom, He should have worn the other one.

The one with the fearsome dragon head helmet that he usually wore into battle.

But she had told him once before just how much she hated it.

and so tradition or not,

He knows he will never wear it again

Arydian places a firm hand on his shoulder.

“The dragon realm mourns along with you Midas, but they will only start to heal, when you do.”

The dragon king blinks past the small old man and out into the fields where his people stand in small clusters.

Some getting ready to head back home

Others still, standing and looking out over the water.

Not willing to let go just yet.

All the families who had lost the ones they loved.

The families of soilders and dragon Ryders who gave their lives to protect their realm against forces far greater and more evil than they could have imagined. Read more free novels at [Jobnib.com](http://Jobnib.com)

Some would heal, allow their lives to slowly return back to normal.

And some would not.

But all of them would never forget.

And when they looked inwards, there would always be a gaping hole once filled by the love of someone who was now no more.

Midas returns his eyes back to Arydian.

“I shall try.”

Arydian smiles softly, leaning heavily on his cane. “That is all we can ask.”

He steps into the carriage and sets the heavy helmet on the seat beside him.

With a slight lift, the carriage starts to move and he leans backwards, eyes closed.

“You should have let me come with you.”

He squeezes the gloved hand wrapped around his arm and rest his chin gently on the top of her head.

“You should not even be out of bed in the first place.”

“And you should not have had to send off the bodies of your people all on your own. I should have been by your side.”

He places one finger beneath her chin and tilts her face towards his.

“And you are.”

She blinks up at him and reaches up to kiss him softly. “Always.”

Then she lowers her head and leans it on his shoulder once again.

He pulls her closer and thinks about just how close he had come to never being able to hold her again.

“Hera...Hera...Open your eyes...”

But she does not move.

He mind links the dragon on which they are flying, yelling at it in his head to go faster.

She feels cold in his arms.

So very cold.

He pulls her even closer to his chest.

Partly to warm her, partly to shake her gently awake but her eyes remain stubbornly closed.

“Hera... please...”

Her skin is as pale as bone and her lips are slowly beginning to turn blue.

She was dying.

The woman he loved was dying in his arms and he could do nothing to stop it.

“Dragon king...”

“Not now Er’gan.”

“Dragon king.”

“Er’gan I said not now.”

The dragon falls silent, but only for one breath length.

“Dragon king...Her heart still beats.”

Every part of Midas freezes. And then he listens, allowing Er’gan extrasensory abilities to flood his veins.

It is true.

He has to strain but he can hear it.

The faint thumping of her fading heart.

And then suddenly, he knows what he has to do.

Not even bothering to mind-link, he shouts over the wind

“Change course. Take us to the capital instead. To Arydian’s Apothecary.”

The dragon banks sharply.

His arms tighten around the form of the human who was about to die and take his heart right along with her.

“Hold on for me Hera. For just a little while longer...hold on.”

Mere moments later, they are flying over the capital.

The dragon lands in front of the red brick building and the dragon king slides down, her prone, nearly lifeless body cradled gently in his arms.

“Arydian!”

He kicks the door open so hard, it makes a dent in the other side.

“Arydian!!... Arydian!!”

“I am in here.”

Descending the treacherous steps into the stuffy, dimly lit store with her in his arms is not as challenging as attempting to navigate past the leaning tower of books and piles of meaningless nick nacks to get to the center of the room.

He manages to do so, knocking over only one pile and sending clouds of ancient dust into the air.

“Dragon king.”

“I need to speak to them.”

“You know that is not possible.”

“Fine. You speak to them for me. Tell them that if they give her back to me, I shall do whatever they want.”

Arydian’s grey, unseeing eyes stare intently into his.

“Do you know the possible repercussions of what you wish to do?”

“I do not care.”

“If it comes to it, are you prepared to give up everything?”

“Yes.”

“Even your throne?”

Midas struggles to control the shakiness of his voice.

“I would give up my very life if it meant the Fates would give back hers.”

Arydian is silent, his head bowed in thought and Midas starts to wonder if he will have to threaten him.

But before he can do so the kingmaker’s head snaps back up.

“As you wish dra gon king.”

And then as Midas watches, the kingmaker winks out of existence.

The dragon king lays her down on a couch in the far corner of the dusty room.

Her hand is like ice.

He wraps it in both of his and brings it to his lips.

The day he had found out that both his parents were dead, the dragon king learned that to lose a loved one was the most gut wrenching feeling in the world.

But as he gazes on her still face, he realizes that losing the other half of your soul, brought about a pain he could not even begin to quantify.

She is his life. The sole purpose of his existence.

If she died here today, he would never be able to go on.

Never.

“Dragon king.”

He bolts up and turns around to look at the kingmaker who had appeared suddenly behind him without so much as a whispered breath.

Was his mind on the verge of collapse or was the small dragonkin man glowing?

Arydian places both hands on the cane in front of him.

“The Fates have heard your petition and are prepared to grant you your wish.”

Midas chest tightens and releases.

Breath rushing in with full force.

But he says nothing.

Arydian continues.

“They will give the human back her life but in return they ask that you give them one thing. A sacrifice to balance out the scales.”

Midas swallows and looks back at the woman who taught him what it truly meant to be king.

To love and be loved.

And then he turns back to the kingmaker. “They shall have whatever it is they desire.”

“Swear it.”

“By the all the gods known and unknown.”

“Good. It shall be done.”

Midas gazes down into the grey eyes of the kingmaker who is he now certain is most definitely glowing.

“What do they ask of me?”

The kingmaker falls silent.

“Arydian...what do the Fates wish for me to give up?”

A sudden bump of the carriage over cobbled stone jolts Midas back to the present.

He gazes out the window of the carriage to see that they are just entering the capital’s square.

He turns back to her just as she stirs awake and gazes up at him with slightly sleepy eyes.

Her lips pouting in that way that makes him fairly ache with the need to kiss her.

“Are we home already?”

“Not yet. But... perhaps you fancy a snack?”

The carriage stops.

She looks out the window and out at the bakery across from which they have stopped.

It is the same one he had taken her the first time they came into the capital together.

“If I did not know better dragon king I would think you were trying to fatten me up.”

“And so what of it?”

The door opens and he steps out first.

Turning around, he wraps his hands firmly around her waist and lifts her out the carriage and unto the smooth, cobbled stone of the dragon capital's streets.

"The bigger you are, the more of you there is for me to love..."

Then he leans in, his voice dipping to a raspy whisper and his hand slides down to below the small of her back

"And to touch..."

"Behave, we are outdoors."

She slaps his hand away but she is laughing and that is all he needs to hear.

He kisses the top of her head. "Wait here."

But when he returns, bags of all her favorite flavors in his hands, she is not where he left her.

"Hera...?"

She appears from somewhere behind the carriage. "Oh there you are..."

Then she reaches for one of the bags in his hands and disappears around the carriage again.

A servant rushes to take the bags from his hands and he walks around the carriage, head turning this way and that.

And then he sees her.

Crouched in front of a small child whose face is matted in tears.

She offers him the bag and his tears start to slow.

She lifts the child unto her hip, her wound totally forgotten and Midas sees her wince slightly.

He wants to stop her but he knows better.

That doing this makes her more happy than anything else.

So he simply watches. Content with anything that means he gets to stare at her for as long as he likes.

She smiles broadly at the boy.

"Oh aren't you the cutest thing. Come on, eat one. I promise they're absolutely divine."

But the dragonkin child is more interested in touching and pulling her hair and the queen of the dragon realm merely laughs. Her eyes filled with a happiness that made Midas' heart thump loudly.



An image flashes in his mind.

An image of two little children. A boy with hair as red as his mother's and a girl with her smart, sharp tongue.

A family to call his own.

He hears the footsteps as they come to stand beside him.

"Your highness..."

"Leo"

The chief Ryder bows low and Midas nods.

"You may rise."

"Come morning, I shall be headed to the fourth realm as we discussed to inform the queen of Fae about...her sister."

Midas shows no reaction to the mention of the elf who had almost taken the most precious thing in his life.

"When will you return?"

The chief Ryder is silent for so long that Midas knows the answer even before he says it.

"I am... not certain."

"But you will return won't you?"

Another silence.

"If the Fates will it."

Both dragonkin men gaze out unto the busy capital.

Their eyes falling instantly on the same person.

The human girl with fire in her hair.

Midas glances at him. "You are still in love with her aren't you?"

His best friend smiles sadly. "Makes you want to kill me doesn't it."

"Only a little."

The chief Ryder grins and looks away.

A moment of silence passes and Midas sighs.

“Ask. I can literally see the question burning a hole through your tongue.”

“How does it feel?”

“How does what feel?”

“To be without him, without Er’gan?”

Midas looks out at the busy capital square.

The dragonkin walking, laughing, buying and selling.

His realm at peace once again.

“It feels...It feels like it does when you lose a tooth. It hurts at first. But over time, the pain goes away...and you start to forget. And then once in a while, your tongue slides over the emptiness, the space where something that once was is now gone...and you feel the hole it left behind.”

“Do you regret it?”

The dragon looks out once more at the woman for whom he had given up his dragon and his immortality.

He watches her smile.

Watches the way the rays of the setting sun get caught in the brightness of her hair.

Watches her move and breathe and live.

Laughing among the dragonkin people she had once feared.

The woman he had finally been given the chance to grow old beside.

The ghost of a smile lifts up the corners of his mouth.

“Regret it?...Not one Hades blasted bit.”