

Chapter 9

Celia

I heard gasps around me once again as Jasper's voice echoed through the hall, stunning everybody.

In a room full of courtiers, jam packed with highly ranked nobles and elites, in a room that had his father and brothers, he had addressed me as a dignified member of the court.

But, I was not so startled by the declaration but more so by his gaze.

His silver eyes were looking away from me, fixated on something at the other end of the table.

His hand came up and brushed my knuckles as he reached for the button and undid it, freeing my lock of hair.

He did not look at me, allowing me to admire him from up close. The way his hands gently brushed my skin left me begging for more.

I was merely an inch or so away from his face and if I leaned forward, my lips would brush his cheek.

I could feign losing my balance but that would be too much. And as if knowing what was going on in my mind, Jasper breathed,

"Still gawking?"

This time his voice was low, barely a whisper but loud enough to reach me.

I quickly straightened myself and got up, and meant to go back and stand behind him. But he put his arm to the side, not letting me run behind his chair.

I had no idea what was going on in his mind but I bit my lip nervously and turned around.

And only then did I notice who he was busy staring at.

Borivin.

I had completely forgotten about his existence the minute Jasper had entered. But so had the rest of the royal court.

Borivin had a look on his face that rivaled that of a deer caught in headlights. All his cockiness had been wiped off his face and his skin now looked paper white.

Jasper had not even uttered a word but Borivin looked as if he was choking on his breath.

His gaze went from me to Jasper as I resumed my work of filling his chalice.

Borivin was awkwardly standing, the only man who was standing while the rest of them shifted uncomfortably in their seats, their robes swishing around them.

"Why are you standing?"

Jasper asked Borivin who blanched to be addressed by the prince. Borivin looked around as if he wanted to find the nearest exit and run.

His gaze swept to those who had joined him earlier in mocking and humiliating me, wishing that they would come to his aid but they all studiously ignored his gaze, looking anywhere but at him.

To say that I was enjoying his reaction was an understatement.

I was truly relishing it.

Though, it came not because of my power but the man seated beside me. But, I reveled in seeing Borivin getting humiliated nonetheless.

"I...uh...your majesty...I...I got up to raise a toast for you"

Borivin stated weakly and gave a nervous chuckle. Sweat was glistening on his forehead as he brought out a handkerchief to dab at it gently.

"But it looks like you were busy talking to someone..."

Jasper's voice trailed off, a question in his voice without stating it so explicitly as he closed his fingers around the chalice.

"I...I...I do not recall, your majesty"

Borivin attempted meekly and I couldn't help but grin at his

discomfort.

"Perhaps a drink or two would remind you then"

Jasper said as he tipped his chalice sideways. Borivin began to sweat buckets as he nervously raised his own chalice and took a few sips.

I could his hands shake visibly. He was a grown up man, well past his fine days and he was also well-built. Yet he was cowering in front of the prince who was quite younger than him.

Those seated around him went rigid as they felt the storm slowly build up. The only noise that reached my ears for a while was the clinking of silverware against the plates and the careful sipping of liquor.

Borivin's mind was hard at work, trying to save himself from whatever the prince planned to do with him.

Would he lie to the prince? That would incur his wrath if the prince ever found out the truth.

But then would he state the truth and wait for the prince's reaction?

No, I was not under any delusion that the prince harbored any feelings for me. At most, he would use me at night to satisfy his desires but I was not delusional to think I was on an equal footing with him.

Jasper gently swirled the chalice as the liquor sloshed

against the brim, some of it trickling down.

"Congratulations Prince Jasper. Your majesty has a fine taste"

Borivin tried but failed miserably when Jasper asked pointedly, "In?"

The middle-aged man's gaze darted to me for a split second before he looked at the chalice in his hand, "The liquor, beloved prince"

"Liar"

Jasper commented as he took a sip and Borivin looked as if he would pee his pants. Jasper's silver eyes bored down holes into the man whose knees began to quake.

"N-No my prince, the liquor tastes fine"

Jasper gave a smirk as his elder brother who had been observing silently all this time, commented,

"Jasper, find someone else to play around with"

It was Prince Draken, whom Violet was fanning with a small wooden fan in her hand despite it not being too hot.

Borivin looked relieved and was about to sit when Jasper's sharp voice made him stop dead in his tracks.

"I did not ask you to sit yet"

I let out a chuckle that reached Jasper's ears as he wove his

arm around my waist and pulled me close.

I tried not to give a startled unladylike cry and let him pull me close. His hand rested on my bare skin and I felt a tingling sensation shoot up from where his hand was touching me.

Goddess, his hand was lightly resting on my bare skin but I felt as if I was on fire. The pads of his fingers brushed against my waist, tracing loose circles on my skin.

Damn, this prince was seduction personified.

I did not think he was doing it consciously. It seemed to be a subconscious act like you would drum your fingers idly against a table top.

And that touch somehow made me feel emboldened. He might be doing it absent-mindedly but I wanted to mortify the man beyond measure so that if he would never have the courage to look at me again.

"Sir Borivin wanted to give me company at night"

I whispered softly, my voice low enough to only reach the prince's ears which were not too far from me considering that we were at the same height when I stood beside him while he was seated.

A muscle in Jasper's jaw twitched as he looked at Borivin evenly.

"So you feel lonely at night, do you? Maybe I should assign

you to patrol duty at night”

Jasper mulled over the thought as his hand had gone still.

I ached to have his touch, to have his fingers trace those loose circles on my skin again.

The fabric that hugged my curves was painfully thin and delicate but at this moment I wanted nothing more than his hands to tear it off and touch my bare skin again.

What was wrong with me?

I blinked again as those indecent thoughts began to make me feel dizzy again.

And as if he could read my mind, his fingers resumed tracing those loose circles on my skin again.

I felt oddly relieved when he started that and it gave me something to concentrate on, other than the rage building inside me at the cowardly man in front of me.

Borivin had been all prideful and cocky in front of me alone but in front of the prince he was a headless chicken.

“I-I apo- apologize your majesty if I somehow misbehaved. That was not my intention”

Borivin said as he bowed deeply.

“You think just your apology would suffice?”