

## Chapter 1574

Once back at the palace, Salvador was unable to rise from his bed. Sebastian spoke briefly with him, hinting that he didn't have much time left. If there was anyone he wished to see, it should be done as soon as possible.

The first person Salvador wanted to see was, of course, Victoria.

"That child... When he saw me, he couldn't stop asking about you. You didn't love him in vain, Mom," Salvador murmured, his voice weak.

Victoria sighed deeply. "How cruel... his life must be lived hidden away in the mountains, never able to leave. Is there truly no hope for his legs?"

"I believe there is no hope," Salvador replied softly, his lips pale and drained of color. "But as I was leaving, he said, 'Dad, once I've learned enough medicine, I'll cure you. I'll make you better.'"

Victoria's heart ached. "What a good child."

Salvador's gaze drifted to the ceiling, his voice barely a whisper as he repeated, "Yes, he is a good child."

After speaking with Victoria, Salvador asked Rafael to bring in Cecil.

In his better days, the king had taken the boy to court, to the royal study to review reports, and to meet with officials. He knew his third son had been forced to grow up too quickly, but there had been no other choice.

Cecil's birth mother, a low-ranking concubine, had died young, and her family had no power to help him. Sylvia had loved him like her own son, but to protect him, she was gone too. Now, only the Lloyd family remained, but they had little strength to offer.

Lying on his deathbed, Salvador entrusted Cecil to Rafael.

This time, he didn't ask his brother to swear an oath. He simply looked at him and said, "I entrust the crown prince to you. Take good care of him. If he misbehaves, you, as his uncle, must discipline him, and punish him if needed. You two are not ruler and subject, but family."

Rafael fought back tears. "Don't worry, my brother. I will not fail you."

"Cecil," Salvador called out.

The king slowly turned his gaze, looking at the child who had already shed the innocence of his age. His eyes were brimming with tears—he clearly understood the pain of parting.

"I am here, Dad," Cecil answered, his voice trembling as he sobbed.

"Listen to your uncle, do you hear?" Salvador sighed deeply, his voice heavy with unspoken regret. "When you take the throne, never be the kind of ruler who discards his most loyal subjects once they've served their purpose. Your uncle... has done so much for you."

He paused, his gaze distant. "In the end, it was I who failed him. When you grow up, you must repay him with loyalty and respect." 2

"I understand, Dad." Cecil gripped the edge of the bed, tears streaming down his face. "I promise, I'll be a good king."

Salvador's voice was weak as he continued, "A good king... must recognize talent and use it wisely. He must govern diligently, care for the people, listen to honest advice, rule with kindness and fairness, and reward and punish justly. He must not be swayed by flattery, must not be blind to the truth, and must never indulge in excess..." 1

He seemed to drift back to his own youth, when Trevor had made him memorize these lessons every day. Trevor said they must be etched in his mind, never forgotten, if he was to be a good king. 1

Salvador wasn't sure if he had ever been a good king—he had only tried his best.

Afterward, with Octavia at his side, Salvador met with the royal family, Jeremiah, Trevor, and all the high-ranking officials.

Rafael had expected him to appoint ministers to balance his power as regent, but Salvador did nothing of the sort. Instead, he instructed the nobles and officials to follow the orders of the regent until the crown prince came of age at eighteen.

Once the matters of the kingdom were settled, he held Octavia's hand and said, "When I am gone, my queen and my children will be left alone, without protection. I entrust them to you, my loyal ministers. Please watch over them." 1

How could a final plea like that not break the hearts of the gathered officials and nobles? Though they struggled to hold back their sobs, their tears had already fallen like rain.

After meeting with the royal family, nobles, and court officials, Salvador allowed no further audiences. As his strength faded with each passing day, he spent most of his time asleep, waking only occasionally and speaking just a few words. Under Sebastian's care, he was barely able to eat a few spoonfuls of millet porridge.

In his sleep, Salvador sometimes murmured, but Octavia and Derek could never quite make out the words.