

## Chapter 1578

That evening, Ryan and Clarence sat by candlelight and spoke quietly. They avoided discussing court politics as Clarence had no interest in such matters. As long as the kingdom was peaceful, that was enough for him.

He was no longer the eldest prince of Starhaven, and only had himself to look after now. Everything else had faded into the past.

It was better not to speak of politics; it was too sensitive a topic. In his younger years, Clarence hadn't understood why his "death" was so tied to such matters. But over the years, Sebastian had explained everything to him, bit by bit, including the risks and consequences.

The bond between Clarence and Cecil was not without affection. However, to gamble with one's life and future for the sake of family might not be the wisest choice for any of them.

Clarence had come to terms with it. Life had to go on; it was better to live it well today than to wonder about tomorrow.

"Aunt Carissa said you're no longer able to stand, but you were walking when I arrived. How is it that you can walk a few steps now?" Ryan asked.

"The year my father passed away, a group of people came to examine me. They confirmed that my legs were severely injured and warned that if I continued the treatment, not only would it fail, but my condition would worsen and the pain would never stop. They told me I needed special treatment to have any hope of standing again," Clarence replied.

"Did another Miracle Healer come from somewhere? Did you start the treatment then?" Ryan asked in surprise.

Clarence shook his head and smiled. "A healer from Nerathia came. He

examined me and left that very day without treating me. He only returned last month with some medicinal wine. I slept for a whole day after drinking it.

"When I woke up, my legs hurt terribly. After a few days, the pain lessened, and he asked some people to help me stand. At first, I couldn't stand for long, but little by little, I managed to stay on my feet. Now, I can walk a few steps."

Ryan was stunned. "Was it a Miracle Healer from Nerathia? Is he still here?"

"He left as soon as I could stand. He told my mentor that I would need to learn to walk slowly, and my recovery depended on my efforts. So, I kept practicing. And now, here I am, able to walk at least a bit."

Clarence's pale, slender face shone with pride. "I can stand and walk a little. I want nothing more."

"I'll stay here and help you practice until you can walk just like anyone else," Ryan said excitedly.

Clarence shook his head. "He said it's impossible for me to walk like a normal person again, and I don't expect that. But to be able to see you again in this state makes me truly happy. There's no need for you to stay with me. You should leave in a few days. You've just inherited your title—there must be much for you to do."

"You want me to leave? That's simply not possible." Ryan chuckled, his eyes twinkling with mischief. "At the very least, I must stay until all the flowers on these mountains have withered."

Clarence raised an eyebrow. "If that's the case, you won't be leaving

anytime soon. Once the azaleas fade, camellias will bloom. And when the camellias are gone, roses will arrive. There is always something in bloom here, no matter the season."

Ryan stretched his legs out in a relaxed manner. "In that case, I shall stay."

Clarence smiled at him. "Very well, then. Stay as long as you wish."

And so, Ryan settled at Eldermere Keep. He met Clarence's mentor, a man named Xander, who was one of Sebastian's apprentices.

The keep was not short of inhabitants, though most of them kept to themselves, retreating to their studies of herbalism and the crafting of medicinal pills, which were then sent down the mountain for sale. Now, they were even able to produce Snowdrop Pills, which earned a good deal of money every year. 1

Each day, Ryan would carry Clarence outside the keep, taking him into the nearby mountains to admire the flowers and trees, and sometimes even fish by the stream. On smoother paths, Ryan would support Clarence, helping him take a few steps.

After such a long period of injury, progress could not be rushed—it had to come slowly.

However, there were times when Ryan would carry Clarence up to the highest peak. They would seek out a large tree, and Ryan would fly them both up amidst its branches. They would sit there together, gazing at the swirling mist and distant mountains.

Clarence's smiles grew more frequent, his spirits lifting with each passing day. He spoke to Ryan of a friend named Otto, who had left the

mountain two years prior but would return to visit every year.

"If the chance ever comes, I'll introduce you to him," Clarence said.

Ryan's heart stirred at the thought. "Do you wish to go down the mountain?"

Clarence's eyes clouded momentarily, and he fell silent. After a long pause, he shook his head and said, "No, it's better not to stir things up. There's no need for it."

Of course, he wanted to go down. But his appearance, though changed in some ways, remained much the same. Those who had known him would surely recognize him if they saw him again.

Although he had "died," he didn't want to cause any disturbances or bring unnecessary unrest to those around him.

Ryan understood. He knew that Clarence longed to leave, but was bound by his concerns.

After a moment of contemplation, Ryan spoke again, saying, "I'll go back and learn the art of disguise from Winona. Once I've mastered it, I'll bring you down."

Clarence smiled, taking it as nothing more than a comforting suggestion. "Very well, then."

But Ryan was serious. He would not allow his friend to remain at Eldermere Keep for the rest of his life. This beautiful world was meant to be explored, and Clarence deserved to see more of it.