

The Day I Made a Man Crawl

Revulsion claws up my throat the moment I see him.

Of all the men in this cursed kingdom, he is the one who walks like the world should kneel simply because he was born male. Always lingering too close, always wearing that smirk I've been tempted far too many times to wipe clean off his face. He actually believes I'll eventually fall at his feet like some storybook damsel.

Seeing him here—in my space—makes my vision darken at the edges.

"How dare you come into my room," I hiss.

He grins as though standing in my private chambers is a right carved into his birth certificate.

"That's no way to speak to your future husband. Your mate. Your king."

I laugh. A real one. Sharp and incredulous.

"Future what?"

"Mate. Consort. King." His eyes gleam with sickening condence. "Titles you'll give me soon enough."

I take one step forward, towel gripped tightly at my chest.

His gaze ickers downward—hungry.

I see it. I see everything.

And it fuels something dark inside me—an urge to rip both his eyes out and watch them roll across the oor.

Gods, how satisfying it would be.

"You might be the Alpha King's daughter," he says, stepping closer, breath sour with a condence he never earned, "but at the end of the day, you are still a woman. You'll be my obedient little—"

"I won't repeat myself."

My voice drops, cold as steel.

"What. Are. You. Doing. Here?"

"I followed you," he says proudly, as if stalking me is an accomplishment. "From the throne corridor. You didn't even notice me. Like always."

He waits for a reaction. I give him none. My face is blank stone.

"If your father nds out you were eavesdropping on him and his ocials," he continues lightly, "you'll be punished. Princess or not, you know exactly how furious he'll be. What he'll do to you." He waves a hand as though he's doing me a favor. "But relax. I'm not going to tell him... at least not yet."

"So that's your angle?" I ask atly.

"Actually—" he straightens, chest pung like a rooster—"I'm here out of respect."

"Respect?" I echo.

"Of course. With the arranged marriage coming soon—well, for both of us—I thought I should greet my future wife and queen."

I stare at him and I couldn't help myself and laugh again but it was sharp, humourless and cruel because he cannot possibly be this delusional.

"There are long lists of candidates," I say. "Dozens. Men with more strength, more rank, more intelligence—more everything—than you. What makes you think you will be chosen as king?"

His grin cracks, but he forces it back in place.

"Everyone knows I'm the best choice. I'm the strongest. The most suitable. You should feel honored. You'll submit to me, Ravelle. The whole kingdom will. Even a princess must bow to her king—"

Something in me snaps so violently it tears straight down my spine.

The word bow rings in my ears, and the temperature in the room plummets as my wolf rises inside me—silent, ancient, merciless.

My voice softens, deadly calm. Always the rst warning.

"I will bow to you? As king?"

He opens his mouth, but I don't let him speak.

My power slams into the room like a storm bursting through windows.

Not visible—but heavy.

Crushing and alive.

His smirk falters.

I walk toward him slowly, and with every step I take, he takes one back—until he presses against the wall, instinct driving him even though he tries to hide it.

He can't stop himself.

"You truly believe a marriage gives you a throne," I whisper. "You think mating with me binds me beneath you. You think a ceremony will make you king?"

His breath stutters.

I tilt my head, studying him like an insect pinned under glass.

"It's adorable," I murmur. "Truly. How little you understand."

The pressure tightens around him—my will, my birthright—wrapping him like iron bands.

"Ravelle—" he whispers.

"Quiet," I say softly.

His mouth snaps shut.

He tries to ght the command. I feel it—the icker of deance.

I crush it under my heel.

"You think being born male makes you my superior. You think tradition protects you. Even if an arranged marriage happened," I breathe, "you only gain a crown after the mating is sealed and my power ows into you. Only after the bond is formed would anyone see you as king—because of me."

I smile—slow and deadly. "And that, will never happen with you."

"What—what are you saying?" he stammers.

"I'm saying," I whisper, letting the heat of my power curl around him like smoke, "that I have power over you. Over anyone foolish enough to dream of becoming king."

His throat bobs.

"I am not just the Alpha King's daughter," I continue. "I am the blood heir. The true line. The prophecy everyone twists to suit their fears. The one born to lead. The one with the strength."

He swallows hard, his eyes darting, panic ickering through them.

"I was born to rule," I say. "Not you. Not any man tossed onto a list like a dog."

His knees start to shake.

I push harder—just a small ex of power—and he collapses, dropping at my feet as if his bones melt and his joints forget how to function.

Fear pours off him in waves.

"Look at you," I whisper. "The man who thinks he'll tame me."

He tries to speak; only a broken rasp escapes.

"You are nothing," I say coolly. "And you will never be king."

His breath hitches... then breaks into a panicked whine.

And then—

A sour, acrid scent hits the air.

He loses control, completely.

He stares down at himself in horror.

Slowly, I smile—dark and sated.

"Kneel properly," I command.

He obeys instantly, palms at on the oor like a dog forced into submission.

"Lower."

His forehead touches the ground.

I circle him, my power coiling around my steps. "Tell me, Darian. Where is that condence now? Where is that arrogance? Where is the man who thought he'd rule over me?"

He makes a strangled, humiliating noise.

"Speak," I order.

"I—I'm sorry," he stammers. "Please—Ravelle—"

"Wrong answer."

My power snaps out, sharp and primal.

"Bark."

He freezes.

"No—please—"

"Bark," I repeat, voice dripping with cold authority.

A pathetic, broken sound echoes through my room.

A whimpering bark.

I laugh softly, the sound wrapping around him like a blade.

"You think I'm powerless," I whisper. "But you have no idea what I am. You have no idea what I could do. What I will do to this world."

His shoulders shake violently.

Fear—real fear—spreads through the air like incense.

I lean close, letting him feel the warmth of my breath brush his neck.

"Tell me," I murmur, "do you still believe you'll be my king?"

He shakes his head so fast I almost hear something crack.

"So easy," I coo. "So fragile. So... obedient."

I straighten.

"Now crawl," I command. "Out of my room."

He scrambles forward on his hands and knees—disgraced, terried, humiliated—dragging himself across the oor and out the door.

I watch him with cold detachment, arms loosely folded, expression unreadable—princess mask gone, something older, sharper, far more dangerous exposed beneath.

He slams the door behind him as if it can hide what just happened.

It can't.

It never will.

A slow smile pulls at my lips.

Of course he won't dare breathe a word of this.

How could he?

The great warrior—one of the kingdom's most disciplined, most feared ghters—reduced to barking like a dog at the feet of the princess he thought was delicate. No one would believe him. They'd laugh rst, then question his sanity, then wonder how a man like him let a woman—royal or not—make him crumble.

He knows that.

He knows the humiliation would destroy him long before I ever needed to.

And I prefer it that way.

Everyone sees me as the perfect princess—the soft voice, the serene smile, the gentle touch. I've spent my whole life crafting that illusion.

Polishing it. Sharpening it. Letting them love the mask so they never look close enough to see the eyes behind it.

Let them believe I'm harmless, because then, when I move...

when I strike... no one will see it coming.

I exhale slowly, feeling the ember of power inside me glowing hot, still tasting the fear that poured off him like smoke. This is the rst time I've let even a fraction of myself slip free.

The rst time the truth has pressed through my skin—raw, untered, undeniable.

It feels... intoxicating.

If I can break a man like him—a trained killer bred to command and conquer—then anyone who dares step out of line, anyone who dares spit disrespect or whisper nonsense in my direction...

They'll crawl, too.

And unlike him, they might not leave the room afterward.

I walk toward the mirror, gliding my ngers along its cold edge as I study the reaction staring back at me. My smile softens into something sweet, delicate, utterly receptive.

The perfect princess.
The perfect lie.