

## Chapter 13 Thirteen

Theo willed his lips to stay flat, as difficult as it was. He'd gone through two-thirds of the class by now – both voluntary and involuntary ones. But they weren't giving him the answer he wanted, one that, judging by the look on Reida's face, he was sure she knew.

Reida would've attempted to answer right after Eleni if it wasn't Eleni who answered the question. She didn't want to make it seem like she was competing with her housemate, so she chose to sit this one out. But it seemed her professor was having other ideas.

Meeting his gaze and resisting narrowing her eyes, she said, "The abcs – angel leaves, especially in tropical regions; bisectal petals, more so after rain; and crisscross algae, worst when dried and brittle."

The corners of Theo's lips tipped. "Thank you."

"But that's not right!" a protesting holler came from Eleni as Iridia turned purplish pink. "The textbooks say it's the three ls. The abcs aren't mention anywhere!"

"Humor me, Ms. Sfalma, and repeat the question I asked."

Eleni's rage was reined back by mild perplexity, and she stared into space and repeated, "Who can tell me the three most powerf—"

She didn't finish Theo's question before realizing her mistake. Her skin burned in humiliation but her eyes lit in fury, finding their way to Reida, who wisely chose to doodle in her new textbook and mentally plan to ask Liam to slap Theo for her later. Telling Eleni where she went wrong directly would've been fine but he just had to make her find out this way in front of everyone. Reida was going to get Liam five lemon tarts to make sure he'd do as she asked.

Turning back to his students, the majority of whom now realized their mistake and groaned while the clueless minority were still skimming the textbook like it held the answer when it didn't, Theo announced, "The question was name the three most powerful flora in Incanta, not the three most lethal. There's a realm of a difference. Ms. Paw-Claw has managed one of the most fundamental skills that two-third of you have failed in – answering a question based on what's asked. Nothing less and nothing more."

Most were in awe of the lycan princess, already forgetting the doubt in her qualifications from the earlier history lesson. But some seethe in envy at the way the professor beamed when she gave the right answer, yet no one seethe harder than a witch who'd lost both face and her self-imposed competition.

Reida was giving Theo a look, hoping he'd take the hint to move on. But he dragged on the admiration she was amassing from her peers for a few more moments before finally giving in, and began the lecture on the roles and limitations of the most powerful flora in concocting lethal potions.

As the lesson progressed, so did the rights answers, much to Theo's relief.

Eleni tried her best to snatch up every question being asked while Reida tried her best to dodge answering the questions Eleni had attempted and failed at answering, yet she was called on the second time when three-quarter of the class were giving wrong guesses to how many petals does it take to kill a being.

Reida tried not to groan when Theo called her name. "It depends on which petals and which being, Professor."

Theo's lips tipped the same way. "Finally." Casting the students another look, he said, "Fundamental skill number two: ask for specifics before answering, or you'll be answering in the dark." Gaze pivoting back to Reida, he elaborated, "Petals from bisectal. Wizards."

Reida's head cocked. "Purely-bred wizards or hybrids?"

Theo's lips tipped higher. "Purely-bred."

"I know this! It's t—"

"Ms. Sfalma, you've been given a chance. It's now your classmate's turn to try."

"I don't mind if she answers it, Professor." Reida tried her luck.

Theo couldn't help himself from giving her an arched look. "Last I checked, I'm the professor," he began, resisting another smile. "Your answer, Ms. Paw-Claw?"

Reida was buying Liam ten lemon tarts to make sure he punched his best friend in that damn face. "Two-hundred-and-two. Ground. Faster if coupled with shrouded gold faery dust taken between five and six in the morning."

From the other end of the room, Eleni fussed, "But that's giving more than what was asked! It was supposed to be nothing less and nothing more!"

Most of her peers were groaning at this point. This wasn't just petty. It was bordering unhealthy competitiveness.

But Reidā saw it as an opportunity to mellow things out, and she cheerfully said, "You are absolutely right! It was an unjustifiable mistake on my part, and I should be barred from answering further questions in the next class!"

The class broke into a loud guffaw, which fumed Eleni but confused Reidā.

Lilac eyes instinctively searched for those plum-purple, seeking refuge when Theo only beamed brighter. "Excellent sense of humor, Ms. Paw-Claw. You'll be needing it to stay sane for the rest of the term so I suggest you keep it up."

"I wasn't joking," Reidā clarified.

The dragon shifter, whose name Reidā would later learn was Wilfred Ēnkavma, said, "Sure, Your Highness. Sure."

Theo was not helping her, especially when he concluded the class with, "That's all for today. Read up on leaves for next week, and go to Ms. Paw-Claw if you need to laugh off the stress for a bit."

More chuckles followed as students stuffed books into bags and chairs scraped the floors, the majority feeling happier than drained despite the gruelling first class after Reidā's "joke". Most didn't bat Eleni an eye but glanced at the princess with smiles.

Reidā returned those smiles but could feel the scald of Eleni's glare on her and chose not to look her way. She did meet Theo's gaze, though – his smiling, knowing gaze that only seemed too proud of an accomplishment.

Forget lemon tarts for Liam. Reidā was going to get lemon tarts to toss them at Theo herself.