THORNS 63

Chapter 63: Rich & Famous

"Ms. Valentine! You're finally back! Mia told me what happened, I've been worried sick! We all were!" Wendy held the skirt of her maid uniform as she trotted down the red carpet steps of Diana's mansion.

Diana finely combed back the loose hair that was stuck to Wendy's forehead and calmly said, "Wendy. I apologise if I scared you and the other workers but just know that everything is alright now."

"Alright? Ms. Valentine, according to witnesses you've been teleporting all around Eldoria while screaming to 'make it stop'! You even showed up in front of the royal guardsman that were stationed at the grand gate of King Dorothy's castle. You've been missing for almost an entire 2 days! How can things be al–"

"Wendy!" Diana gently pinched her two cheeks in order to get her to stop talking. "Look at me Wendy. Do you see anything wrong?"

"N-Nyo but–"

"Then all is well. Again, I apologise for scaring you. I'll even personally apologise to those royal guardsmen since I'd imagine they must've made quite the fuss to the king" She released her.

"Y-Yes... Please do so. *Sniff* *Sniff* What is that stench coming from you? *Sniff* Is that... fish? It's very subtle but it's there."

"Haha, how embarrassing. You there!" She snapped her fingers at a maid passing by. "Have my bath prepared in five minutes please. I need to leave soon. Oh, and make sure it's rose scented."

"Y-Yes Ms. Valentine! Also, welcome back!" She bowed and quickly jotted up the stairs.

Once she was out of sight, Wendy let out a sigh of relief and visibly relaxed back to her composed self. "So where were you, ma'am? Your mother has also received word of your disappearance and is extremely worried. And the adventurers guild..."

"The adventurers guild? Why are you mentioning them?"

"They... They are forming a worldwide search party of its best explorers in order to look for you."

"Oh my great heavens..." Diana rubbed the stop between her eyes. "I see. I shall make my appearance over there as well to soothe whatever chaos is going on. Is there anything else I should know about?"

"No, Ms. Valentine. Other than a few obsessive fans of yours who came here to check whether or not what they heard about your disappearance is true, everything else is fine. And you don't have to worry about those fans. Our personal security safely escorted them away before things could escalate."

"Haaaaa, sometimes it's hard being this beautiful and loved by many~ But alas my love could only be given one person, and that person has finally entered my life~"

"Wait–"

"Your bath is ready, Ms. Valentine!"

"Thank you, darling. Wendy, let's chat again later, okay? Ta-ta~" Diana walked up the stairs with a light skip in her step.

".... Oh my goodness... Oh my goodness! Oh my goodness! Oh my goodness! Wait until Madam Valentine hears about this!"

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"Five hundred gold coins!? You’re drowning in money, lad!"

Kurt and Willy stood at the counter of the bureau that handles business related to appraisal and exchange.

"Willy, you gotta stop screaming out like that! Let’s keep it hush hush."

"S-Sorry laddy... So it’s true what they say about the rich getting richer..."

"Mr. Rossana. Would you like me to exchange these items for coins or would you like to keep them?" The receptionist asked.

"Exchange them for coins. I don’t want to be walking around with a giant sack all day."

"Right away, sir. Just give me one moment."

"Laddy, are you sure you don’t want to take anything? A lot of these things look valuable."

Kurt flicked open his blazer and showed Willy what he was carrying. "I already took this steel sword and two daggers. That’s more than enough for me. Besides, if I need anything else I’ll just buy it. I’m rich now after all."

"Heh! What a showoff. We should go for drinks after this, ay lad? Call it a celebration."

"Oh, sorry but I don’t drink..." Kurt subtly touched his eyepatch. "But we can go out to eat instead. I’m really starving~ And let’s get the good food. I’m talking about the real expensive ones that people could only dream of affording."

"Oho~" Willy stroked his gray beard. "Then I know the perfect place. We can bring Sherry too. Being cooped up behind that desk all day must’ve made her forget about the wonders of life, and good food, heh heh."

"I guess we could add another person. Hey Mr. Receptionist, how long are you going to take?"

"O-Oh! H-Here you go sir." He handed back Kurt's tag.

"Jeez if you were done then why didn't you say so..." He tried taking back his tag, but the receptionist, for some reason, wouldn't let go.

"What are you doing? Give it back."

"U-Uhm... I... uhm..." Despite being asked firmly, he still wouldn't let go.

"What's wrong with ye? We're done here so leave it be. Want me to call ye boss. Huh!"

"S-Sorry!" He finally let go and Kurt put the tag back on the chain and around his neck.

But this time he grabbed Kurt by the arm and started sweating nervously.

"What the hell's wrong with you?! Let go of me!"

"S-S-Sir!..... I-It's very nice outside today, wouldn't you say?"

"What? You're acting weird and I don't like it. Let go of me before I make you."

"But s-sir! T-The weather! I-It's nice, wouldn't you say?!"

"Jesus, would you knock it off! Holy shit!" Kurt forcefully removed the receptionist's hand by swatting it away. "Go outside yourself if you're so freakin' obsessed with the weather, you creep."

Suddenly the front doors barged open and entered five men who were all heavily armed in prestigious armor.

"R-Right here, royal guardsman!" The receptionist screamed. "This is the man you were looking for! Kurt Rossana!"

The five royal guardsmen marched through the crowd, which fearfully gave way for them, and surrounded Kurt and Willy.

"Why are the royal guardsmen looking for ye, lad?" Willy whispered.

"How should I know? I don't remember doing anything that warrants this level of attention."

The leader of the five stepped forward first and looked between a piece of paper and Kurt.

"I see. This person does indeed match the reports and descriptions we've received. Good work citizen." He pulled out a pouch of coins and handed it to the receptionist. "This is your reward, 50 silver coins."

"T-Thank you very much!" He gratefully took the pouch and scurried back behind his desk. "I was afraid things would've gotten violent had you showed up any later."

"Is that so? Should we add that too on your list of offenses, Mr. Rossana?"

"List of offenses? What did I do? Why're you here? Is this why you kept on talking about the weather?" Kurt glared at the receptionist. "You were stalling for time? Classic. Yet I fell for it..."

"Kurt Rossana." The leader stepped in front of him. "You are hereby being detained by the royal guardsmen of Eldoria on three accounts of offenses. Number 1: On the offense of endangering and kidnapping the principal of Future Academy, Diana Valentine."

GASP!

The whole room audibly gasped together when they heard what he had done.

"Kidnap? I didn’t kidnap–"

"Number 2: On the offense of attempting to murder a priest of the church."

"But that’s already been cleared u–"

"And finally. Number 3: On the offense of assaulting the first prince of Eldoria, Prince Maxwell Dorothy, Jr."

"... Assaulting royalty..."

"... Has he gone mad?..."

"... He dares to try and kill a priest?"

"... Shame on him..."

The whispers got louder and louder as they began to rain judgement on him.

"Excuse me, royal guardsmen. Surely there must’ve been some sort of mistake?" Willy tried to help Kurt out but everyone knows that once a royal guardsman has personally comes for you, it’s over for that person.

"Patrol officer Willy." The leader spoke.

"A-Aye? Ye knows my name?"

"Yes I do. You’re quite famous around these docks."

"O-Oh! Why I'd never thought I'd be–"

"Patrol officer Willy, do you have any proof that what I am listing as his offenses are not true?"

"Why, no but–"

"Then you are to standby and not interfere with our work or you'll be detained on the suspicion of colluding with the criminal. Men, cuff Mr. Rossana here and take him to the magic teleport circle. Don't forget to confiscate any weaponry he has."

'Dammit! Why is all this happening?! I can understand the third offense but c'mon I didn't even know who the hell that kid was. The first offense was just a misunderstanding even if it didn't look good and the second offense has already been proven to be false.'

The four other guardsmen began to search and take anything that would be considered dangerous. After which they cuff him with mana blockers and proceeded to take him away.

"I-I'm sorry lad. But this is the royal guardsmen..."

"It's fine, Willy. I know better than to resist an arrest and besides, I'm sure I can clear this all up when I'm given the chance."

"Keep it moving! We don't have all day!" One of them pushed Kurt forward.

"Alright already, jeez..."

Once they were outside, flashes of light could be seen all across the street as people began to capture this moment with their recording tags.

"Haaa. And so my reputation grows..." Kurt mumbled to himself.

’Something about this whole ordeal stinks.’ Willy thought to himself as he ran in the opposite direction. ’I best warn Dominik about this. Hopefully I can still catch up to him on horseback at full speed.’

Chapter 64: Race Against Time

At the end of the pier that is connected to the docks, Kurt and four of the royal guardsmen were standing inside of a large magic circle.

"Ive set the teleportation coordinates. We’re good to go." The leader confirmed when he returned to stand with the rest of them.

"Finally. The stares these people are giving me is starting to get annoying."

"Be quiet you fucking criminal!" One of the guardsmen pushed Kurt on the back, however, this had no effect on him as he just stood still.

"... No need to get so handsy." Kurt glared at him from over his shoulder. "I was just venting because I’m being wrongfully arrested and I’m hungry."

"Good. Then you can starve to death in a cell."

"How the hell are you gonna call me guilty without any trial or giving me a chance to prove I’m innocent? Are you seriously doing the ’Guilty until proven innocent’ act?"

"I said shut up! I saw what you did to the illustrious Crimson Flash when you appeared at the royal gate! That’s more than enough evidence we need to lock you up and throw away the keys!"

"Illustrious Crimson Flash? Are you seriously being driven by emotion? If you’d just let me explain, then you’d see that–"

"Don’t you dare speak her name with that filthy mouth of yours! Why I oughta just kill you right fucking here!"

"That’s enough from you two!" The leader slammed down the base of his spear on the ground. "We’re about to teleport so settle down! Rossana, save whatever excuses you have for when you meet the king. And you, soldier, act appropriately. You’re a fucking royal guard for Goddess’s sake. We command respect. Not bark at those whom we’ve already captured like some kind of mutt."

"But captain! If only you saw the look on her face when–"

"Soldier, no, David. I understand that you two were part of the ten representatives during your time at the academy and that you look up to her. But killing him here won’t bring her back. We need him alive."

’Are these two actual freakin’ morons!?’ Kurt looked between the two guardsmen completely dumbfounded.

"U-Understood, captain. I apologise for my uncouth behaviour. It’s just, whenever I remember the look on Dian– I mean, on Principal Valentine’s face I... I just wanna..." David looked at Kurt like he was about to attack him at any second.

’I see. The moron doesn’t just admire Diana, he loves her. Heh, poor little David’s hearts going to crumble when he finds out about us~’

"... Do you think you’re in any position to be smirking at me like that you fucking criminal."

"Oh, I have all the right, David~ I’m especially going to laugh in your face when you come to learn the truth."

"You little–"

VOOSH!

Before David could get another word in, the teleportation circle activated right then, and so they all vanished to the king’s castle.

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Clip-clop! Clip-clop! Clip-clop!

Galloping on a horse along the long stretch of road which led to the city was Willy.

Clip-clop! Clip-clop! Clip-clop!

’C’mon Dominik lad, where are ya?!’

After riding over a small hill, Willy finally saw a small silhouette of a carriage and a cage in the distance.

"Ah, there they are! Heeya!" Willy cracked the whip so that the horse could catch up to them.

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"Hm?" Emelie looked back at the approaching sound.

’Is that?’

"Hey Dominik! We’ve got company!" She called ahead to him.

"Company?! Friend or foe!?" He yelled back.

"Friend! It’s Willy!"

"Willy?!" Dominik stopped the horses and waited for Willy to arrive, which he shortly did thereafter.

"Dominik lad!" Will stopped his horse by bringing it down from the rear. "I'm so glad I caught up to ye!"

"Why're you here, Senior Willy Where's Kurt?"

"Aye, he's the reason I'm here. It's the royal guards. They came and arrested him."

""'Arrest him!? For what!?"" Both Dominik and Emelie shouted together. Clearly this was the last thing they were expecting to happen when they went on without him.

Willy then explained to them how everything went down. From the appraisal and exchange, to when the guardsmen barged through the door and detained him on three offenses.

"That's bullshit! All those charges could easily be proven to be false... except maybe that last one– but that was because he didn't know who the prince was! Is Prince Maxwell, Jr. really that petty to arrest someone over a misunderstanding?!"

"Junior isn't," Emelie shook her head. "But the king is very protective of his children. Especially towards Junior since he is the first prince and heir to the kingdom. *Tsk!* This is why I called him an idiot for hitting royalty..."

"But Kurt didn't know..."

"Tell that to the psychopathic parent that is your king."

"Fine then! I will tell him!" Dominik sat up straight and got ready to ride away.

"Dominik, wait! Aren't you forgetting about your duty to these cultists and women! Stop being so hot-headed and calm down!"

"I– F-Fuck... you’re right. Sorry Emelie..."

"You don’t need to apologise. I understand why you feel this way. Instead," She floated off her horse and gave the reins she was holding to Willy.

"I’m much faster than both you and these horses combined. I’ll fly over to Principal Valentine and explain the situation to her. With them now being together, she wouldn’t let this injustice stand. Also, she holds a lot of influence with her being who she is. She’ll be able to clear up any misunderstandings that could hurt Kurt and everything will be hunky dory."

"Alright! I’ll try to be there as fast as I can once I’ve finished my business!"

Emelie nodded once and shot straight towards the city at blistering speeds leaving behind a trail of dust in her wake.

"... By the way, lad." Willy asked Dominik. "What did the young lass mean by ’them being together’?"

"Kurt didn’t tell you? Him and Principal Valentine are now lovers–"

"They’re what?! Since when?!" Willy screamed in his face.

"I-I dunno? One minute they were complete strangers and the next they were obsessed with each other."

"My goodness... to think that the ma’am has finally found her second half..."

"Oh, and make sure you don’t tell anyone about this."

"W-Why?"

"Because I want to see how the world would react to this news in real time. I'm sure you know this but people from all around the world have been trying to court her since her academy days only to be harshly rejected. And the only explanation she gave them was 'You're not the one'.

If they tried to force her, she'd comically decimate them, and now after all these years of rejecting them, a complete stranger comes and steals her heart away? I could only imagine the chaos it would bring. And I'd be there, watching, from the front seat~ Heh heh heeeh."

"I see you're still the same little rascal you once were, lad..."

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WOOSH!

"Kyaaah!" A woman held down her skirt as a strong gust of wind blew past her.

"""""Hoooooh!""""" This earned her the eyes of many men who were there to have been blessed by the lucky event.

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WOOSH!

The sudden gust of wind blew its way through the commercial district.

"Whoa! Mama! Was that a bird?!"

"I... I don't know, little one..."

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WOOSH!

"Waaaah! What the hell?! W-Was that a magic aircraft?!" A random passerby nearly fell over as he got hit by the trail of dust that followed whatever flew past him.

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WOOSH!

The sudden gust of wind then blew up the hills that led to the academy and, soon enough, made its way into the building and through the hallways, where luckily not many students were caught up in the aftermath.

"Was that Emelie?" Amber said as she held her hair back from obscuring her vision.

The wind finally stopped in front of the principal's office, as the cause of all this wonder slammed open the door and screamed,

"Principal Valentine!"

"Emelie? I thought you went back to your family's estate. What brings you here? " Mia, who was sitting at the main desk and buried in work, looked up to ask.

"Secretary Mia? Has Principal Valentine not returned yet? I thought she'd be here."

"Returned? Has she come back!?" Mia skidded the chair back and ran up to Emelie to hold her hands.

"Y-Yes. She should be. She teleported ahead of us at the docks after we brought her back."

"We? So are both Diana and Kurt safe? What about Dominik? He still didn’t come back home after he chased after her! Was he with you too?!"

"W-Wait... One question at a tim–"

SHWOOSH

"Mia, I’m back. Oh, Emelie. What brings you here?"

""Principal Valentine— Diana !!!!"" Both Emelie and Mia ran up to her and bombarded her with questions.

"Where were you?!"

"Why did you suddenly disappear like that?!"

"Weren’t you supposed to be the Crimson Flash?! Why are you so slow?!"

"Where’s my Dominik?! Is he safe?!"

"Kurt’s been arrested by the royal guards and needs your help!"

"You didn’t kill both Kurt and Dominik, did you?!"

"Wait, what did you just say!?" Diana stopped them both before they could continue.

"You didn’t kill–"

"Not you, Mia! Emelie, I thought I heard you say something very important. Can you repeat that?"

"B-But my Dommy *sniff!* Where is he?!"

"Argh! Dominik's fine! He should be on his way to the prefect station! Now get your snotty nose off me!"

"O-Oh. That's good *sniff*. Sorry about that, hehe."

"Emelie!"

"It's Kurt. He's being arrested by the royal guardsmen on false accusations. If you don't want to see him being wrongly thrown in a prison cell I'd say you best hurry to the king's castle."