

Too Lazy to be a Villainess

Chapter 19

Papa moved again.

His boots struck the floor with slow, deliberate steps, the sound ringing in the heavy silence. Each step sent a shiver through the room, a weight pressing down on everyone present.

Mareilla flinched, kneeling as if the ground beneath her had suddenly turned to ice. Her hands twisted in the fabric of her skirt, knuckles pale.

Papa stopped in front of her. The air grew even tighter.

"Why did you leave the princess's side?" His voice was quiet, but it cut like a knife through the heavy silence.

Mareilla trembled, bowing lower. "Y-Your Majesty, I... I didn't mean to. A maid came to me... She said the Head Maid needed me urgently."

Papa did not react. His eyes bore down on her, unblinking, sharp as the blade that had nearly taken my life.

Mareilla swallowed, her voice breaking. "I thought— I thought it was important, so I went. But when I reached her chambers, the head maid told me she never sent for me."

Silence.

Then—

"M-My Lord," one of the guards stammered, stepping forward cautiously. His hands were shaking as he lowered his head. "The same thing happened to me... A knight came and told me the Captain needed to see me, but when I found him, he said he never summoned anyone."

Another voice, higher-pitched, whispered, "Me too. I was sent away by a different maid. But the head maid swore she never called for me."

"I was sent away too..." Another spoke up. Then another. And another.

One by one, the voices of the palace staff rose, their fear tightening the room even further.

It wasn't an accident.

It wasn't just carelessness.

It was a plan.

A trap.

A carefully laid out scheme to leave me alone.

To leave me vulnerable.

So I could die.

I stopped drinking. The warmth of the milk sat heavy in my belly, but my little hands tightened around the bottle. I knew the weight in the room had changed.

Everyone did.

Papa's presence was suffocating. His crimson eyes burned like the sun, but his anger was ice, sharp enough to freeze the air itself.

His jaw clenched.

Then—

"Theon."

A single name. A single command.

Theon stood even straighter. "Your Majesty."

Papa's voice was quiet, but every syllable struck with the finality of death. "Find them. Before dawn."

A shiver ran through the room. No one spoke, but everyone knew the truth. Attempting to kill an Imperial Princess was not a crime one simply walked away from. It was treason.

Theon bowed. "It will be done, Your Majesty."

Papa turned his crimson eyes onto the trembling group of maids and guards before him.

"Until then," he said slowly, dangerously, "lock everyone in the dungeons. Make sure no one escapes."

Mareilla let out a quiet gasp, her face pale as she was dragged away. So were the guards, the other maids. No one dared to struggle. Even if they were innocent, they understood—this was bigger than all of them. This wasn't a matter that could simply be forgiven.

Papa stood still as they were taken away, watching until the last of them disappeared.

Then, when the doors groaned shut—when the only ones left were Nanny, Theon, and us—he finally turned.

His eyes landed on me. His gaze, still fierce and dangerous, softened. Just a little.

"Is she done?" he asked.

Nanny, who had been holding me close, wiped the last drop of milk from my lips and nodded. "Yes."

Papa reached out. His fingers, still tinged red with another's blood, touched my cheek. It was gentle. Warm. I blink up at him. He was still angry. He was still furious. I could feel it radiating from him like a wildfire, his rage barely contained beneath his skin.

Papa didn't say a word as he carried me out of the terrifying room, his arms firm and unyielding. The scent of iron clung to him—the scent of blood. But his warmth surrounded me, shielding me from the cold emptiness the palace now held.

There were no servants. No guards.

Just us.

Theon walked silently behind, his steps purposeful. Nanny followed as well, her face drawn with worry, but she said nothing.

Papa moved through the empty halls with long, powerful strides, his grip on me unwavering. His body was tense, every muscle coiled tight with anger, with fury, with something deeper—something I didn't yet have the words to name.

We entered his chambers. The doors shut behind us with a soft thud, sealing us inside. Theon stayed near the door, standing guard. Nanny lingered at the edge of the room, uncertain.

Papa didn't stop.

He walked to his massive bed and sat down, lowering me carefully onto the silk sheets. Then, without hesitation, he removed his bloodstained cloak and tossed it aside.

For a long moment, he simply stared at me. His crimson eyes, still burning, swept over my tiny form. Over my little hands, my round cheeks, and my small fingers that still clutched the blanket.

I blink up at him. The silence stretched.

Then—

A deep, shaky breath.

Papa reached out again, cupping my cheek with his large, battle-worn hand. His thumb brushed against my skin, slow, deliberate. He exhaled, and this time, it sounded almost... exhausted.

Almost pained.

"You were almost taken from me today." His voice was quiet. Not the sharp, cutting tone from before. Not the Emperor's voice.

Just his voice.

Soft. Rough around the edges. Heavy with something unspoken. I didn't understand all of it. But I understood enough.

He was scared.

Not for himself. Not for the palace.

For me.

I reached out, my tiny fingers curling around one of his. He stiffened for a moment, staring at the small, fragile hand holding his.

Then something shifted. Papa let out a slow breath, his shoulders loosening ever so slightly. His large hand turned, his fingers wrapping around mine. They engulfed my little hand completely, warm and strong.

He held it there.

Silent. Unmoving.

As if grounding himself.

As if reminding himself that I was still here. I cooed softly, squeezing his hand in my tiny grip. His lips parted slightly, his expression unreadable.

Then—

Slowly, carefully, he leaned down. And pressed a kiss to my forehead.

Warm. Lingering.

Protective.

He pulled back, resting his forehead lightly against mine, closing his eyes for a brief moment.

"I won't let this happen again," he murmured.

His promise was absolute. His fury had not faded. His vengeance would not waver. But for now, in this moment—

It was just us.

I didn't know what happened after that because, after all that crying, I slept. Slept like the dead. And when I woke up, it was already dawn.

Now, I was here.

The throne room was silent, thick with tension. I sat on Papa's lap, nestled against him, as if I belonged there, which I obviously do. In front of us, two maids trembled, their foreheads pressed against the cold marble floor. Their bodies shook, and their breaths came in sharp, panicked gasps.

Papa's fingers rested idly against the armrest of his throne, his other hand settled against my back. He was calm. Too calm.

And everyone knew what that meant.

Theon stood rigid at his side. Grand Duke Regis, expression blank, rested a hand on the hilt of his sword. The truth had already been uncovered—these two had helped the assassin enter the palace. And the assassin...

She was the sister of those women. The ones who had been entrusted to care for me before Papa found me. The ones who left me to starve.

I blink, forcing myself to stay still, but my fingers clench into the fabric of Papa's robes. The maids before us trembled even harder.

Papa didn't move.

The air in the room felt suffocating, as if the weight of an unseen storm pressed against the walls, thick with the scent of impending bloodshed.

Then—

Slowly, deliberately, he stood.

The shift was immediate. His arms left me, and I was weightless for a moment before I was settled into Nanny's waiting embrace. She clutched me tightly, her grip firm and unyielding.

And then—

Shhkkk.

Papa drew his sword. The sound sliced through the silence like the blade itself, sharp and merciless.

The maids gasped. "No... Your Majesty. Please... spare us..."

Sigh...are they idiots! I mean, what's the point of begging now? They should've thought of this moment before helping an assassin try to kill the Imperial Princess. But of course, people only regret when death is staring them in the face.

Idiots!

Papa didn't listen. He loomed over them, his crimson eyes gleaming in the torchlight. I had never seen a man so terrifying. I had never seen a man so still, yet so full of death.

And then—

His lips parted.

"Because of you," he murmured, his voice soft and deadly. "I almost lost my daughter."

The maids flinched violently.

"Because of you—" His grip tightened on his sword. "—she took her first step not in front of me, but in fear."

Huh? What!

Even everyone was confused. I blinked.

Wait.

First step?

Oh... right.

I had stood. I had pulled myself up against the crib's edge, grasping anything—everything—just to stay away from that sharp, glinting knife.

Papa's voice shattered my thoughts.

"You do not deserve to breathe."

The maids sobbed, pressing their heads even lower. "P-Please, Your Majesty—"

Schlck!

A scream.

Blood splattered across the pristine marble floor. One of them crumpled instantly, twitching for only a second before going limp.

The other wailed. "Mercy! I—"

Schlck!

The second body collapsed.

Lifeless.

Silence.

Not even a breath.

Then—

Grand Duke Regis sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Well. I suppose that's one way to handle it."

I didn't care about the dead bodies. They were nothing but insignificant stains on the floor now. My eyes were on only one person.

Papa.

He stood there, his bloodstained sword hanging loosely at his side, his face unreadable. His golden eyes, which had burned with such rage moments ago, were colder now—distant, as if some unseen force had already pulled him away from this room, away from me.

I stretched out my small, beautiful hands toward him. I wanted to go to him, badly. I thought he would walk to me, looking at me with a little bit of softness, but...

He didn't look.

Instead, he turned his back to me.

"Take Lavinia to her room," he ordered.

WHAT?!

Nanny bowed respectfully. "Yes, Your Majesty."

WHAT! NO!

I squirmed in her arms, kicking and wiggling with all my might. "Mmm! Nngh! Ughh!!" I made noises, I flailed, but nothing. Papa didn't even spare me a glance.

No. No, no, no. This was wrong! He wasn't supposed to act like this! It's not like this is the first time I've seen him kill someone in front of me! He's done it plenty of times! Why was he acting so cold today?

Was he crazy? Did he hit his head? Did the sword accidentally stab him in the brain??

I wiggled harder, but I was getting tired. I had only one move left. My ultimate trump card. The most powerful weapon in the entire universe.

He was walking away.

He was leaving.

I sucked in a deep breath, my tiny fists clenching. I reached out, stretching my little arms toward him once more.

And then, with every ounce of my being, I wailed.

"PAPA!"

Everything stopped.

The room, the air, the world—froze.

Papa froze. Theon's jaw hit the floor. Grand Duke Regis shocked. The knights gasped as if they had collectively been stabbed in the chest. Nanny looked at me with all the emotions in her eyes.

And then Papa turned around.

His crimson eyes, which had been so distant and unreadable, were now locked onto me. It was the first time I had ever called him that.

The first time I had ever spoken.

I reached for him again, little hands desperate, my crimson eyes blurring with frustrated tears. "Papa..."

Something flickered across his face. He looked stunned, like he had been struck, like I had thrown a knife right at his cold, ruthless heart.

And then—

He dropped his bloodstained sword. It clattered loudly against the marble floor, echoing through the throne room like a war drum.

He stepped forward, each booted footfall deliberate, slow, like he was afraid to scare me away.

I didn't look away. Neither did he.

"Did... did she just call me Papa?" His voice was low, disbelieving.

Nanny nodded eagerly, tears of joy in her eyes. "Congratulations, Your Majesty."

Theon, still looking like he had witnessed the gods descend from the heavens, bowed deeply. "C-Congratulations, Your Majesty."

Grand Duke Regis chuckled under his breath, shaking his head. Papa's hands trembled slightly as he reached for me, and I was immediately pulled into his arms.

Ah! Finally.

His embrace was warm. Strong.

I melted into his chest, burying my face in the black and gold fabric of his robe. He still smelled of steel and blood. I didn't care.

He may not have seen my first step, but I would give him this present.

My first word.

His arms tightened around me, his body—once trembling with fury—now trembling with something else. Something softer. I felt it in the way his breath hitched, in the way he buried his face in my curls, in the way his hold was unyielding yet careful.

"Can you say that again?" he asked.

"Pa..pa.." I said and giggled.

Then—

"Theon."

Theon straightened immediately. "Y-Yes, Your Majesty?"

Papa's voice was firm. "Declare a national holiday."

Theon blinked.

I froze. WHAT!

"...I—Your Majesty?" Theon stammered.

Papa's Crimson eyes gleamed with absolute authority. "Declare it."

Theon's lips parted as if to protest, but one look at Papa's face shut him up instantly. "My daughter spoke today for the first time. This is a historic day."

Shit! I really forgot, I was a daughter of a cold, ruthless, crazy person.

And the entire empire was about to shut down for a whole day because their terrifying emperor had turned into a complete fool for his daughter.