

Too Lazy to be a Villainess

Chapter 4

There wasn't much written about Emperor Cassius Devereux in the novel. He only came into the light when the female lead was learning about the history of the Elarion Empire.

According to the novel, Emperor Cassius was a tyrant. He killed his own father. Slaughtered his mother. Erased his brothers, sisters, cousins—basically, he wiped out his whole family and snatched the throne.

A total tyrant.

He didn't hesitate to swing his sword and kill someone. Whether it was in the royal meeting hall or a sacred church—if he found you offensive, you were as good as dead. So naturally, people feared him. Even those who worked in the royal palace.

But.

It was also said that, despite his bloodthirsty nature, he ruled the empire remarkably well. But there was one thing he always hated... yet never swung his sword at.

Lavinia.

Not because she was his flesh and blood. Not because he felt any fatherly attachment. But because—

"Dirtying my sword with her blood will leave a stain." That's what he said when he saw Lavinia for the first time when she was fourteen.

Before that?

He didn't look at her. He didn't even know she existed.

So... how come now... in his grand royal office, behind an ornate, gold-trimmed desk, signing one document after another, I was nestled in his lap, nibbling on a golden milk bottle?

Shouldn't he be ignoring me? What kind of alternate universe was this?

I was supposed to be the hated villainess. The ignored princess. The one whose presence he despised! And yet, here I was—in the lap of the emperor-tyrant himself, drinking milk like a lazy baby.

This was not in the script.

At all.

Then, a voice suddenly broke the silence.

"Your Majesty... perhaps you should lay the princess in her crib? It would be more comfortable for her to drink the milk."

The speaker was a man standing nearby—tall, well-dressed, and looking extremely capable. This was Theon Alderic, the emperor's personal assistant.

Cassius glanced down at me, his crimson eyes studying my face for a few seconds before he spoke.

"Are you uncomfortable?"

I froze mid-sip.

...Did he just—

Did he just ask me a question?!

I mean, sure, I could answer... but unless he understood fluent baby gibberish, that wouldn't be very helpful. And then—

"YOUR MAJESTY!" Theon suddenly yelled. "She is a baby! How can she reply to you?!"

...!!

My eyes widened in absolute horror. I nearly choked on my milk. This man... just yelled at Cassius Devereux?!

At the bloodthirsty emperor?!

Did he have a death wish?!

I clutched my golden milk bottle like a lifeline, waiting for the inevitable. Any second now, the Emperor would pull out his sword and—

...

....

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But he didn't.

Instead, his red eyes narrowed. "Lower your voice. You scared her."

...HUH?!

Is he... not going to kill him? Theon just yelled at him. Yelled. At the Emperor. I eyed Cassius, waiting for him to suddenly unsheathe his sword and slice Theon in half. But nope. The tyrant just sat there, looking mildly annoyed.

I mean, c'mon, just wipe him up.

But nothing happened. Instead, Theon just crossed his arms and pouted. "It's you who made me yell in front of our precious princess."

Precious... what now?

Before I could even process that absurd statement, Theon's eyes turned toward me, brimming with pure admiration, sparkling like he had just witnessed the arrival of a divine being. I had never felt so violently stabbed by someone's enthusiasm before.

"Just look at her! She's just so tiny and cute!" Theon gushed, clasping his hands together. "Princess, do you know how adorable you are?"

Cassius shot Theon a glare. "Stop gawking at her."

Theon gasped dramatically, placing a hand over his chest. "Your Majesty, how could you say such cruel words? Have you no heart?"

Cassius ignored him. I, on the other hand, continued sucking on my bottle with an air of superiority. Of course, I knew I was cute. Adorable. Beautiful. A work of art, really. Theon's reaction was only natural.

But then—

"She doesn't like you," Cassius stated flatly.

I paused.

Wait. I didn't say that.

Theon looked utterly devastated. "W-What?! How do you know?"

Cassius didn't reply. He simply stared at Theon with the usual cold indifference, as if Theon wasn't even worth answering. And then Theon looked at me like I broke his precious heart.

Bro, I really don't care.

Ignoring their ridiculous bickering, I sucked harder on my bottle and snuggled deeper into Cassius's lap. At this point, I should really stop questioning my life choices. I had milk. I had warmth. I wasn't starving. Life was good.

And then—

KNOCK! KNOCK!

A knock at the door.

"It must be her," Theon murmured.

Cassius nodded, his expression unreadable.

"Come in," Theon said.

I perked up, momentarily distracted from my golden milk bottle. Who could it be?

The heavy doors creaked open, revealing a maid clad in a plain, modest dress. Her figure was thin, almost frail, and her dull brown hair was pulled back in a tight, severe bun. She bowed deeply, keeping her head low, and greeted Cassius in a quiet, hoarse voice.

"Your Majesty."

I squinted at her. She looked... tired. No, more than tired. She looked like someone who hadn't slept in years. Someone who had seen too much, lost too much, and yet still carried on because life refused to let her go. Her hands were clasped in front of her, knuckles slightly white, but her posture was unwavering.

Cassius studied her. His crimson eyes were as sharp as ever, analyzing, calculating. Then, without a word, he reached down and pulled the milk bottle from my mouth.

...Excuse me?!

I wiggled immediately, reaching out for my precious milk. No! I wasn't done! Give it back!

"You've had enough," Cassius said, his voice as cold and unmoved as ever.

I shot him a betrayed look, my tiny fingers grasping at the air in protest. But he didn't waver.

Rude.

Huffing, I flopped against his chest in dramatic defeat. Fine. Fine! I was full anyway.

He, of course, completely ignored my suffering. And that was when it happened. The maid lifted her head, just slightly, and her eyes finally landed on me.

Something shifted.

Her dull, lifeless eyes softened, melting into something warm. Something heartbreakingly tender. The kind of gaze that a mother had when looking at her child.

I blinked.

She didn't look at Cassius. She didn't look at Theon.

She only looked at me. Cassius, still holding me securely in his arms, stood up and took a step closer to the maid.

"I have heard everything about you," he said, his deep voice cutting through the silence like a blade. "What happened was... devastating. But no one could do anything to stop it."

Devastating? What happened? What was he talking about?

I looked between them, thoroughly confused, but neither of them seemed to notice my growing curiosity. Cassius exhaled lightly and continued, "I can't bring back what you lost... but—"

He took another step forward. "I want you to be my daughter's nanny."

The maid's breath hitched. Her entire body went still.

Cassius didn't falter. "She doesn't have a mother. And I've heard that babies need... motherly care. I want you to take care of her. I want you to give her everything you have left to give. Will you do that?"

The maid's lips trembled. Her gaze flickered to Cassius, then back to me. Tears pooled in her exhausted eyes, her throat working to form words that wouldn't come out. For a long moment, there was only silence, heavy with emotions I didn't quite understand.

Then, in a voice so soft it was almost broken, she whispered, "I... I will."

I stared at her, wide-eyed. I didn't know what had happened to her. I didn't know what kind of pain she carried. But I could feel it. It was in her voice. In her trembling hands. And yet, when she looked at me, there was no sadness.

Only love.

A love that wasn't mine.

But maybe... just maybe... it could be.