

5 princes and I Chapter 70-73

Chapter 70 Nora

Ren and I both stopped and turned towards the greenhouse entrance to see Nora. Today she was wearing a purple dress and her hair was in a side fishtail braid. She was not looking at us but at the direction of the pond where Ace lays. Immediately, Ren and I stepped away from each other as we blocked Ace's view from Nora.

"Nora? What are you doing here?" I asked nervously. I looked at Ren to see him doing his best to block Ace from her view.

"My brother is sick, isn't he?" She asked. "I heard my brother talking to father yesterday. I thought it wasn't a big deal so I waited until today to check." She said and moved her head to get a look at her brother.

"Well...um...." I looked at Ren for help, but he only looked away seeming uncomfortable with the situation. Useless b*****.

"Is Aish going to die?" Nora asked. Tears started to build up in her eyes.

Oh crap. Just imagine if Ace wakes up right now and sees her little sister crying in our presence....we're toast! Ren and I exchanged glances and I noticed that he was probably thinking the same thing as me. We better think of something to cheer her up right now before the unspeakable thing occurs.

"Nora, Ace is going to be fine. You don't need to worry. He's just....sleeping." I said.

"Will he wake up?"

"Of course he will." We just don't know when.

"When?"

"Um...I'm not sure-"

"Then you're saying that there is a chance that he won't?" Nora started to sniff and was on the verge of crying when Ren suddenly knelt in front of her.

"Hi, Nora. I'm Prince Ren. A friend of your brother. Maybe." He said and Nora nodded in acknowledgment. "Listen, do you want your brother to wake up?"

"Yes." Nora nodded.

"Do you believe that he will?"

Another nod from Nora.

“Good.” Ren smiled. “Because, you know, if you believe that something is going to happen and if you cling on to that then it would surely happen. That’s what I learned from a wise person that I know.” At that, Ren glanced at me.

“If I believe that Aish will wake up then he will?”

I knelt beside Ren so I could talk to Nora. “Of course. Especially if it’s you because Ais-I mean – Ace loves you very much.”

“Okay.” She said. She stopped crying but you could still see the upset look that she has on her face. Ren and I exchanged glances again as we thought of a way to make that sadness go.

Finally, Ren looked back at Nora. “Hey, Nora. Would you like to play with us?” Ren offered.

“What game?”

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“The Princess, the knight, and the monster.” Said Ren and looked at me with an evil glint in his eyes. Somehow I don’t like that look and I backed away slowly. But I didn’t get too far when Ren hit me at the back of the head, took Nora, and ran away from me. Nora let out a squeal when Ren carried her. “Rose is the monster. Runaway!”

“Ren, that hurts! Get back here!” I growled and ran after them. We ran in circles and I was getting frustrated that I couldn’t get in touch with him or Nora. Ren was just too fast and slippery. I finally cornered them and stalked them slowly when Ren jumped from one side to the other and tricked me into going that way when he was going to the other. I was finally able to catch them when they thought that I tripped and fell.

Ren and I switched places then. I’m the knight, Nora is the princess, and Ren is the monster. Since Ren was faster I made it harder to catch us by going deeper into the greenhouse and putting a tree in between us. In the end, we were dancing as we went circling the tree.

Nora was the monster next. And since Ren and I will be the players it is obvious who the princess is.

“CARRY ME~!” Ren suddenly jumped on my back in a piggyback style. And I, who was unsuspecting of it, was plummeted by his weight that we both fell on the ground face first with him on top of me.

“I just showered!” I shrieked. “Ren!” I growled.

“Zzzz!!” He feigned sleep.

“Stop playing and get off of me!”

“Comfy~!”

“You pig! You’re heavy you know! MOVE!”

A sudden burst of laughing distracted us. I looked at Nora and she was laughing as she looked at us. She was clutching her stomach and was pointing a finger at us. Tears streamed her eyes but it was not from sadness anymore. “You two are funny!”

I felt a hand on top of my head and – despite Ren’s weight – looked back. Ren was looking at me and when our eyes met he grinned. Even without speaking in my mind, I know what that smile means. It means that we were successful in making Nora laugh. I grinned back and before long, we joined Nora and laughed.

“So my brother is your political and history teacher back at the palash?” Nora asked. After our little game, we all decided to take a break and sit on the picnic cloth. Nora then decided to ask us about how Ace was.

“Yeah...but he’s very strict and easily loses his patience,” I said.

Nora tilted her head at the side. “Aish? But he doesn’t get mad easily.” She wondered.

“Oh yeah. Right. Sorry. It must have been Ren and not Ace.” I said and earned a glare from Ren.

Ren snorted. “Well, you can’t blame me for losing my temper.” He said and looked at Nora with a smile. “Honestly, this girl is a pain. I’m her tutor on proper behavior and it’s pretty challenging since she’s like a female barbarian.”

“Hey!” I protested.

“She is?” Nora looked at me before looking back at Ren. “She doesn’t look like it. Princess Rose looks pretty and she’s very nice.” Defended Nora.

I felt a smile coming out and I inched closer to Nora and pulled her into a hug. “Aw thanks, Nora,” I said and gave a victorious look at Ren as I stuck my tongue out mockingly. Ren frowned.

“I wanna be like Wose when I grow up.” She suddenly said making my smile grew even wider. Pride swells up in me.

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“Yeah, it’s okay I guess. But don’t be here and be less barbaric. Trust me, that kind of quality is not attractive.”

“Aren’t you attracted to her?” Nora said, making Ren give her a double look.

“Pardon?”

Nora smiled and shook her head. “Your aura is turning pink.”

Ren and I exchanged glances. Somehow getting confused about what she was talking about. Aura? What aura? Is this Nora’s gift?

I looked back at Nora and wondered if I should ask her about it but I didn’t get a chance when she suddenly stood up and said,

“I’m gonna get something to eat! Brother Dawem brought me dead apples yesterday. I’m going to bring some back!”

Ren nodded. “Be careful.”

“Okie!” She said and we watch as she made her way out of the door. Bouncing up and down as she did.

Once she was out of sight did I say, “She’s so cute.”

Ren chuckled. “You said that yesterday.”

“But she is!”

“I know. I didn’t say that I disagree with you. And...as unmanly as this sounds I want to pinch her cheeks.”

“Right?!” I agreed.

“Prince Ace is so lucky to have such a cute sibling. Dan is not even cute and I have no urge to pinch his cheek. Only to punch him in the face from time to time.”

I laughed. “Can’t say I won’t agree on you for that.”

“Right?!” He said and let out a sigh when he lay his back on the ground. “Man, I’m so tired I want to go to sleep.” He yawned and stretched out before resting his head on his arm.

I frowned as I noticed how tired he was. “Then why don’t you?”

Ren raised an eyebrow at me as if the answer was already obvious and I didn't realize it. "If I sleep now then you'll be bored to death."

I rolled my eyes and snorted. "Please. You'll be bored to death. Not me."

"Whatever helps you sleep at night princess."

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"Don't worry I-

"Shh!"

I blinked, then glared at Ren. "Did you just shush me?!"

"Shhh!"

"There it is again. Ren, why-"

Ren suddenly sat up and covered my mouth. "Shhh. Listen." He said and closed his eyes in concentration.

Out of curiosity I closed my eyes and tried to listen. Nothing. I opened my eyes to look at Ren. "I don't hear anything."

"It's Nora." He said. "She's somewhere out in the forest. It doesn't seem like she's moving." Then he started sniffing the air.

"Is something wrong with her?" I asked worriedly.

"I'm not so sure." He shook his head but even though he's not saying it I know he's also worried.

"We should go to see and see if she's alright," I suggested.

Ren nodded at my request as he got up and offered me his hand. I took it and let him help me up before he went to the bushes and got his sword out. We headed out of the greenhouse and I let Ren lead the way. He guided us through the thick forest, pushing leaves and vines out of the way as we continued ahead. Ren suddenly stopped. "Look." He said and pointed at a figure by the tree curled into a ball. It was Nora. She was just in front of us but she had her head buried in her knees that she wasn't able to see us.

"Nora," I whispered as I looked at her form. She seemed scared. "Shall we go?"

Ren nodded grimly. "Let's. But be careful. I have a bad feeling about this." The look on Ren's face was enough to scare me as it is. Whatever was scaring Nora must still be close. "Stay close to me." He said and we started to walk slowly towards Nora.

"Nora," I whispered loud enough that she could hear once we were getting close to her.

At the sound of my voice, Nora looked up. When she saw us, a mixture of relief and horror crossed her face. "N-No. Get back." She said. Tears were streaming down her cheeks. She was frightened.

I knelt in front of her once we reached her. I stroked her hair comfortingly to reassure her that she was safe. "It's okay, Nora. It's just me and Ren."

Despite my tries into comforting her, Nora shook her head and cried harder. "No No No. You shouldn't be here. It's...It's...It's here." She whispered and she lifted her eyes behind and above us. Her eyes widening in horror and she clung to me, burying her face to my chest as she cried.

What's here?

I suddenly heard Ren letting out a snarl. Somehow I have a feeling that something very bad is behind us. Very slowly I turned and saw that Ren was shielding us from the predator before us. Just at the top of a tree curled a very large snake with its reptilian eyes looking at us. Its forked tongue flicking from time to time as it regarded us.

Chapter 71 Within the Woods

I have never seen an Anaconda before but I'm guessing that it is about this size – or maybe larger that it can swallow a man whole. But though it might be as big as an Anaconda it still differs from it because of its skin. It was white with a few hints of blue, green, pink, and yellow on it. I have seen snakes in pictures but surely there is nothing like it back in my world.

Then I remembered a prehistoric snake back in my world that thankfully doesn't exist anymore. A Boa. But I bet this one is bigger. The snake slid down and was now on the ground.

Stay back, Rose. And don't move. It won't see you. Ren then drew his sword as he readied for combat. I don't even know how a sword could do damage to a snake as big as that.

"Y-You should too." I stuttered and looked at Ren worriedly. Even though Ren is a fighter and a werewolf, I still fear for him.

Too late for that. He said as the snake started to strike at a fast pace that if he wasn't a werewolf with amazing reflexes then the snake would have swallowed him. Ren didn't

move but he used the side of his sword to hit the snake back. I suddenly wondered why he didn't dodge the attack, but as I pictured him moving aside the attack would have been directed to Nora and me.

"Be careful."

Don't worry about me. Worry about yourself and Nora. Make sure you make your escape once I distract this sh^t.

"Over here, you slimy no-legged b*****!" Ren waved his hands in the air to catch its attention and started running to the side. The snake hissed and followed Ren. It struck again and this time, Ren jumped to the side to dodge.

"Are you telling us to leave you? You are out of your mind!"

As much as I appreciate your concern I would still ask you to leave when the chance comes. You have Nora with you and she must be safe. Also, I want to see you safe too. Just as he said it the snake lunged again and Ren hit it with his sword. There was a clang and I am guessing he hit its teeth.

I don't want to leave Ren to fend off of that thing, but what else could I do? I can't fight. I don't know-how. And what chance do I get when faced off with that snake? I'll just be a liability to Ren. I looked down on Nora to see her trembling in my arms and imagined what Ace would do to us if harm got to his beloved sister.

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I cursed and looked back at Ren. "Don't you dare let it bite you?" I hissed at him and he only chuckled in return.

Ren moved farther and the snake followed him. Now it's back facing us. NOW! Ren ordered.

"Nora, come on," I said and carried her in my arms. As we were headed back for the forest Nora dropped her dried apple on the ground making me step on a few of them. Oh, shoot. "I'm sowwy!" Nora cried out loud and I don't even know what caught the snake's attention more. Is it her or the dried apples? Probably both.

The snake averted its attention to Ren and focused on us. I stopped moving but Nora was too busy crying and wiping tears from her eyes to notice the snake. The snake started to slither towards us, completely losing interest in Ren as it has its eyes on us.

"No!" Ren screamed and lunged for it. He drove his sword down on the snake's body and to the ground. The snake hissed his pain and used its ma**ive and powerful tail to throw Ren back with a large impact.

“Ren!” I screamed. There was a sickening sound of bones cracking and dislocating where Ren fell but I couldn’t see him behind the snake blocked my view of him.

The snake turned back. Flicked its tongue a couple of times before coming towards us very fast that we don’t even have the time to run. I only did what I had to do then as I pulled Nora away and shielded her with my body. Nora whimpered in my arms and I closed my eyes and waited for the snake to bite, but it didn’t come. Instead, I heard a growl and a loud hiss.

I slowly opened my eyes and looked back at the snake. It was Ren. He was biting down on the neck of the snake but it was too big for his jaw to fully tear it apart. The snake drew back and started to shake Ren off. Ren jumped off and ran towards it again for another round.

He tackled, clawed, and bit. The snake lunged at him and Ren jumped up and stepped on the snake’s head and clawed at the wound he did earlier. Once he made it deep enough he used his sharp canine teeth to finish the job and held it firm. The snake wiggled and tried to lift, but was only able to do so slightly because of Ren’s weight and jaws. I could see Ren tightening his hold onto the snake the more he wiggled under his hold, but later on, the snake stopped moving. Ren waited more than a couple of minutes before he finally released it.

Once he did, he snorted at the snake and went to our side. I have only seen Ren as a werewolf up close only once, so I am still amazed at how big he was compared to a normal wolf. I was so stunned to see him that he had to give me a little nudge to bring me back to the present.

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Are you both alright? He asked.

“I should be asking you that,” I replied and earned a wolfish smile from him.

Nora, on the other hand, had stopped crying and was looking at the crow on top of a tree branch. It was looking at us with midnight blue eyes, which makes me wonder if crows have such an eye color. But Nora didn’t seem to mind as she beamed and pointed at it with her finger.”Aish!” She said.

“Aish? You mean Ace?” I asked Nora but she was too busy looking at the crow.

A movement at the corner of my eyes caught my attention. The snake was on the move again and slithering fast towards us. “Ren!” I said, trying to warn him of what was coming.

Ren was quick to move but was not entirely ready as the snake wrapped around his wolf body and started constricting him. Ren let out a mixture of a growl and a whimper

as he struggled to get free. But from what I am currently seeing, the more he struggles the tighter the snake's hold on him. I started hearing bones crack and I heard Ren's wolf whimper yet still growling at the snake as he clawed weakly at it.

R-Run. Ren spoke in my mind. Even though it was just mentally spoken, you could recognize his struggle as he delivered the message to me. Take Nora and get out of here. At this point, Ren could die. And hell if I would just stand around here and do nothing.

I met his gaze and conversed with him with my eyes saying, I am not leaving you.

I turned to Nora, grabbed her shoulder, and said, "Stay here. Don't move. But if things start to get bad then run." After that, I went and grabbed a fallen branch and charged the snake. Its eyes. If I can just temporarily blind it then we will have enough time to escape. All of us.

Rose, no! Get back!

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"Yeah right." The snake was too focused on Ren to even see me coming. I trusted the branch and drove it to its eye. It let out an animalistic wail and loosened its hold on Ren.

Ren dropped to the ground and jumped away from the snake to stand in front of me. His fur was now bloody and I was guessing that his ribs are bruised from how badly he stands. He growled at the snake, who was now shaking violently to move the branch from its eye. By now we weren't so sure of whether it might attack us or not, because it kept wailing and darted back and forth.

"Worse! Wen!" Ren and I turned in the direction of Nora, who was running toward us. She tripped on the snake's leg making the snake stop, pause and turned its attention to her with its good eye.

Oh no.

"Nora!" I ran back towards her when the snake started moving in. I managed to reach her just in time as the snake opened its jaws wide and prepared to either bite us or swallow us whole – maybe both. I shielded Nora with my body and pushed her to the ground so she could avoid the snake's attack, but before it reached me, Ren jumped at the back of the snake and sunk his teeth into its flesh.

The snake roared again and managed to shake Ren off. Ren landed on the ground and slipped when one of his front legs gave in.

The snake now has its eye on Ren and started to attack again. It opened its mouth as it started forward when an arrow appeared out of nowhere and tore through the snake's upper mouth. It roared again and moved away from Ren.

We were all shocked and stunned as to where the arrow came from. Nora started to squeal and jump up and down in joy and excitement. Her eyes trained on a single spot up above the trees. Ren and I followed her gaze and my jaw almost dropped at what I saw.

"You are a fool if you think you can defeat a Boa alone, Prince whoever-twin-you-are. Though I must say you did pretty well in keeping my sister and that other woman over there safe from that abomination." Ace glared at the giant snake that was now rubbing its head at the ground in pain. He looks better now. The color on his face is back, the glow in his eyes is brighter, and his hair, even though it's messy, looks healthier. He had his huge blue metallic bow in one hand while the other he used to steady himself on the tree branch. "So this is the animal that has been bothering my people. Makes sense."

Chapter 72 Coming Back

The moment Ace jumped down from the tree did I notice something. "Did you just call me that woman?"

"Ren!" I said and started towards Ren, who was now back on his feet and looking at Ace. "That snake is a Boa. They don't have poison but they can kill you through constriction. They are very hard to find and detect because part of their ability is to conceal their presence. They are strong and would most likely require 5 men to take it down. But your strength and my skills are more than enough. Help me kill this monster." He said to Ren.

Ren gave him a curt nod and a snort.

Ace nodded back in return. "The weakness of a Boa is by cutting its head. You distract it while I find a way to its back and cut off its head. Make sure to stay clear from its good eye. It will give you an advantage."

Ren frowned and made eye contact with Ace. He shifted on his feet and bounced on his heels.

"No, I am not doubting your skills in battle. It's just that you are too injured and have bruised and cracked ribs. Your wolf is not healing that fast." Ace said and I think that Ren must have said something to him using his Alpha link.

Ren made a noise again. "I am not insulting your wolf, mutt!" Now Ace was losing his temper. "Now get out there and distract the damn thing so we can kill it already!"

Ren's wolf flinched and made some grunting sounds before charging at the snake. He stood in front of its bad eye and poked the branch that I embedded into its eye. The snake roared when Ren pushed it farther back and jumped out of the way when the snake snapped at him. Ren growled.

"Keep my sister safe, Rose. And you too." I took my eyes off of Ren to look at Ace. His back was to us so I couldn't see his face as he said it. He sounded sincere, but I couldn't help but wonder if that tone of voice only applies to Nora or the both of us.

When the snake now has its back fully exposed to Ace did he start to move. He started to run and, as swift and light as a cat, he jumped, broke his bow into two twin blades, and sliced the snake's head. The cut was not that deep so Ren jumped up and finished the job.

Somehow I managed to cover Nora's eyes throughout the whole cutting process that she was safe from the gruesome image that we had to witness. The snake's blood started to spill and pool on the ground as its head landed and rolled a few feet back.

Ace and Ren were covered in blood as they walked towards us.

"Aish!!" Nora screamed and pulled herself away from me to run to Ace. Ace dropped his bloody weapon to the ground and wiped the blood on his pants before he went to carry Nora. "You're cured!"

"I'm so glad you are safe, Nora." Ace whispered as he hugged her.

I smiled and watched with envy as the siblings hugged. It made me want to hug my sister right now, but we all know that it is impossible at the moment.

I'm glad you're safe, Rose. I felt a nudge at my side and saw Ren in wolf form looking down at me.

"I should be saying it to you," I said and gave him a light pat on his shoulder.

Ow! Careful. My skin is sensitive! He said, making me laugh.

"I think it is time for us to head back right now." Ace suddenly said. Nodding at both Ren and me as he placed Nora back on the ground. He picked up his weapon and strapped it to his back. "Let's go."

Nora ran back to me and held my hand. "Come on, Rose. Wen, let's go!" She said and beamed brightly. Ace's eyes suddenly narrowed at this.

"Ren, a word." Ace said in a hard tone making Ren tensed up a bit. He then looked at me and I shrugged, not knowing why Ace wanted to talk to him.

We started to head back with Ren and Ace waking ahead of Nora and me. I held Nora's hand as we walked. She had a bright smile on her face and she kept humming. I smiled. "You look happy. Happy that your brother is well?"

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Nora's smile grew wide and she looked up at me. "Yep!" She giggled. She looked at Ren and Ace before looking back at me. "Princess Worse? Are you in a relationship with my brother?"

That made me stop and I had to look at her like she was crazy or something. "Did you bump your head or something?" Like seriously, why would she ask me that? She saw how Ace addressed me earlier with clear disdain.

"Are you in a relationship with Prince Wen then?" She asked.

"No, Nora. I'm not." First Ace now Ren? Is she the Queen or something? Why is she interested in relationships?

Nora tilted her head to the side as she looked at me. We started walking again. "Prince Ren is nice. He plays with me and even risks his life to save us, right, princess Rose?"

"Uh hu." I agreed as I focused on walking.

"Is Prince Ren in a relationship with someone?"

"I don't think so," I said.

"Why?"

"Um...I don't know? I guess his mind is too childish to even think of having a relationship? Well, that or he's not attractive at all." I chuckled. Of course, I was joking about the unattractive part. Ren is handsome and hot just like the rest of them.

You all did not hear it from me.

"No, he's not. He's good-looking!" She said and pouted in my direction.

"Woah! What's with that face?" I laughed and poked her cheeks. "Don't tell me you have a crush on Ren." I laughed even harder, but when I saw her blush I stopped right away.

"Wait. You have a crush on him don't you?"

Nora pursed her lips as looked away. It took everything in me not to laugh and pinch her cheeks even harder because she looks so cute then.

Oh my gosh! Nora has a crush on Ren! This is priceless!! I looked back at Ren, still in his wolf form, walking beside Ace, who was frowning as he talked to him.

No wonder Ace looks annoyed when he looks at me right now. Ren chuckled as he spoke in my mind. It doesn't take a genius to know that he was eavesdropping on us. Well, I can't say I blame her. Who wouldn't be attracted to a fine werewolf as I?

I coughed, "Someone is starting to sound like Nate." I coughed again.

Nora only raised her eyebrows at me wondering who I was talking to while Ren shivered in disgust in his wolf form. Ace looked at him and raised his eyebrow, probably wondering about his peculiar behavior.

Gross! Rose, do not compare me to him.

I started laughing and Nora now seemed scared as she watched me laugh. She probably thinks I am going nuts for laughing by myself for no apparent reason.

"Nora." Ace suddenly calls his little sister. Nora turned to Ace, who then motions for her to come. Nora then ran towards Ace and I watched as he carried his sister and placed her on Ren's back. Nora squealed when Ren playfully snapped at her leg, but Ace wasn't having any of it as he hit Ren on the head. "Take her to the castle safely. If you drop her, then there will be hell to pay." He warned.

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Ren grunted and when Ace turned his back to Ren to face me Ren automatically made funny faces at him, which was weird and awkward since he was in wolf form that I started to laugh. Ace saw my expression and immediately turned to Ren, who immediately plastered on a blank face.

He let out a snort as he headed off into the woods with Nora riding at his back.

Once they were gone, Ace suddenly turned to me and motioned for me to come. "Walk with me." He said and I suddenly felt nervous. What does he mean when he says that I walk with him? Does that mean I am in trouble? Did he hear my insults to him back at the greenhouse? Whatever it is, I know it is something serious because having a walk with this prince is not normal.

I swallowed and nervously quickened my pace until I was walking right beside him. We were silent and I was already dying to know why he let Ren and Nora go off first. As we were starting to emerge from the forest and into the castle Ace stopped.

I stopped as well to look at him. "Um...."

Ace turned to me. His face was emotionless and I could not tell if he was angry or not. "Listen, there is something that I want to say." He said in a serious voice making me tense up. "You-

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry for insulting you when you were asleep! I'm sorry for calling you names. I just did all that in hopes that you would wake sooner and it works! I promise I won't do it again unless you still act like a jerk towards me." I blurted out.

Ace looked at me with confusion evident on his face. "What are you talking about?"

"I'm....apologizing?" I said and stared at Ace, who doesn't seem angry at all as I pictured him to be. Now it was my turn to be confused.

This made him more confused. "What?"

"Isn't that why you called me here?" I asked and earned the same confused look from here. "Um...I'm guessing we are not on the same page."

"No, we're not." He agreed.

"So what then? Why did you call me here?" I asked.

Ace averted his gaze and let out a sigh. "Well earlier you kept my sister safe. You almost got hurt in the process while protecting her."

I looked at him as I tried to process and the meaning behind his words. "Are you..." I paused. "Are you trying to say thank you?"

At this, Ace turned to me and said, "Well now we are on the same page." He sighed in relief. "Glad you understood then." And with that, he started walking away.

Wait. That's it? He just wanted to say thank you and he didn't even say the words to my face! I am not having any of this.

"Hey!" I called out to him. "Get back here and say properly thank you!!" I said and ran after him.

"You already understood what I said. Saying my thanks are not needed." He simply said.

"Say your grat**ude properly!"

"I did."

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“Say the words!”

“It’s not even necessary!”

“Ugh! Fine!” I growled at him. Getting tired of this conversation would lead to nowhere but us bickering in circles and throwing insults at each other’s faces. I forgot that he’s the rude prince am*** them. In my anger, I turned my back to him and stomped my way back to the castle. Let him walk on his own!

“Careful. That part is muddy.” He said. I ignored his warning and continued to move forward. As I did, my foot stepped on something slippery making me slide back and forth like a crazed ice skater. I stumbled forward and grabbed a random vine from a tree. It broke, making me spin a couple of times like a failed ballet dancer. My hand touched a tree trunk, but I did not manage to grasp it when I started falling back again. This time, I did fall and landed on my b***.

Well, that was an epic way to exit.

“Pffft!” Someone snickered behind me and I quickly turned around thinking that it was Ace but he has a stoic look on his face.

Maybe it was my imagination...

I turned back as I started to get up. “Pff!” Someone snickered again and I turned back. Ace still has that dead look on his face.

Okay...

Turning back again, I pulled myself up and noticed that my feet were stuck in the mud. I cursed and tried pulling them free and only managed to remove my foot from my shoe and I ended up falling again. This time, I did hear someone laughing and I quickly turned around to find Ace holding out his arm in front of him to lean on a tree trunk as he laughed.

Blushing with embarra**ment I got up and glared at him. “Come on! It wasn’t that funny.” I yelled but he just laughed even more that he had to wipe tears from his eyes. I watched in annoyance and waited until the prince would calm and shut the feck up.

But in all honesty, he looks like a normal prince now like Ren and Dan, who are always on the good side of things. It’s a new look for him and you can’t even picture him to be someone as rude as he is in most days – scratch that – in every day.

When Ace finally shut up, I diverted my attention from him and stared at my shoes buried in mud. Great. Now how am I supposed to get them?

“Let me.” Ace suddenly appeared to my side and used the tip of his bow to fish out my shoes. He shook the mud off of them for a bit before handing it to me.

“Thanks,” I muttered as I put them on.

“Thank you.” I must have gone deaf because I suddenly looked up at him. Surprised at what I hear and disbelieving that I heard the words from him.

“Did you just...”

He frowned. And the old prince was back again. “I am not repeating myself.” He said and walked back into the castle.

Wow. I forgot that this guy is bipolar. One minute he’s laughing and the next he’s ready to kill someone with a fork. But in any case, I felt myself smiling when I remember him saying thank you. I won this round because I managed to get Ace to say those words! Ha!

But even though he didn’t say those words properly with a long speech I think I’d still be happy because he’s all better now and back to his usual self. No more worries about his condition again and we don’t have to worry about when he’ll wake up or if we are going to leave him behind.

One thing is for sure though. We will be heading back to Thalia without another prince leaving the group.

Chapter 73 I Am a Plebian

“Now listen here, bloods***er. Ren and I have nothing to do with this. This was all your fault.” Said Dan.

“Me? Who’s idea was it to chase the deer for our next meal?” Nate retorted.

“Ours.” Admitted Ren. “But it wasn’t our idea to get deep into the woods,” Ren said.

“My idea? I only suggested that we have a small compet**ion on who catches the deer first to know who’s a better hunter!”

“See? Bad idea.” Dan pointed out.

“How is that a bad idea?”

“Every compet**ion with us will most likely end in a disaster. You, Nate, of all people should know that.”

As the three idiots continued to argue I was busy looking at our map trying to figure where we were. Now I know this is unusual of me trying to be helpful, but hey, when you're bored you just do things – even trying to help.

But of course, you guys would be wondering how on earth did we manage to get ourselves lost now, wouldn't you? Of course. I'll keep it short then starting from the day that Ace left me in the mud to find my way back to the castle. News travels fast – and when I say news I meant Ren – because as soon as we got home, Ace's whole family was there including his father, King Klaus – pfft! Santa KLAUS pfft!

Yeah...don't tell the king I made fun of his name.

It was a happy reunion. We had a big feast that night with Ace's brothers hugging him like crazy and Ace almost stabbing them with a b***er knife – this is so brutal – if Nora wasn't there sitting on his lap with him feeding her – it was a cute picture. And the day after that we left but not without bringing some fresh new clothes and stocking up on our food and water supply – of course. And after a few miles away from the kingdom of Tordis the twins saw this deer and thought that it would be a great idea if we could try hunting for our food. Then Nate here suggested that they make it a compet**ion to see who is the better hunter of them all.

Don't get me wrong they are all good hunters. Especially Ace – Yeah I admit he's pretty good looking back at how he teamed up with Ren to kill that giant snake. But when the three of them started arguing on who's a better killer they spooked the deer making it runoff. And so we started chasing. It wouldn't have gotten that far if the three weren't busy trying to trip each other off of their horses. Finally, Ace seemed to have had enough that he took his bow and arrow and hit the deer cleanly in between its eyes. A clean kill. And only when the deer was dead that we noticed that we were already in an unfamiliar part of the forest.

“You know what, brother? I say we kill this vampire slowly. Open up a small wound on his stomach and carefully pull out his insides.” Dan said without a trace of disgust on his face.

“I agree,” Ren said and pulled out a forked. “How do multiple holes in the stomach sound to cut?”

Dan shook his head at Ren. “Bad idea, brother. Very bad indeed.” He said and looked at Ren with a sinister smile. “I like it.”

“You two badly need help!” Nate declared before he addressed me. “So, Rose. Any luck on finding out where we are?”

“What?” I asked and looked down on the map on my lap. Hey, hold on a minute. Where's my map? I looked at Cloud who was standing beside me while I sat on the ground. She was chewing some sort of ancient-looking piece of crappy paper and –

F#\$%^&*!

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SHE'S EATING THE MAP!

I quickly got up and started pulling the end of the map.

“Let go, girl. Let go!! This has like zero calories and 100% germs on it! Let go! Stop! BAD, CLOUD, BAD!!!” The paper tore, making me stumble back and land on my b*** with the small piece of crap – I mean paper – from the map.

“Aw sheez!!” I cursed. Cloud started towards me, sniffed my hair, and ate the remains of the map from my hands – greedy horse.

“Um.....” Slowly I turned around to find that all the princes were looking at me expectantly. I let out a nervous laugh as I carefully got up and dusted the back of my dress. “Er...No. But I have good news and bad news.”

“The horse ate the map?” Ren suggested.

“Yes!” I pointed at him with approval. “That’s the bad news.”

“Rose!” They all complained, making me cringed.

“Oh shut up! You’re all grown men and you still whine! Know some shame people!” I crossed my arms over my chest.

Nate did a facepalm. “Can we at least hear the good news then?”

“Good news yes.” I nodded. “I may have found an easier and alternative way to find our way back. Plus, it’s eco-friendly.”

“So the map isn’t?”

“Dan? Shut up.”

“Yeah shut up so we can hear this alternative.”

“Thanks, Nate,” I said. “As I was saying. There is another way for us to get out of this hell hole that we fell into.”

“And that is?”

“Not that. A who.” I said and pointed at a certain prince leaning his back against a tree.
“PRINCE Ace.”

All eyes then turned to Ace, who was now glaring at me for making him the center of attention. "What?"

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"Why him?" Ren asked.

"Well...." I said since I wasn't so sure of myself why I suggested him either. "Can't you make contact with the forest or animals? You know, make some magic and go all Snow White mode and tell them to lead the way?"

As the words left my mouth that's when everyone started to let the idea sink.

"Yeah."

"It could work."

"PRINCE Ace, can you do it?"

Ace was still glaring at me as he said, "Yes, I can."

"You can?" Ren asked in disbelief. "Why didn't you say something?"

Ace suddenly looked bored and looked the other way as if he didn't hear us.

"Don't tell me...you didn't tell us because you find it troublesome and you enjoy seeing our work for it, right?" I guessed and almost immediately I saw him smirk.

I suddenly became interested in a very pointed rock that I wanted to hurl at him.

"Why you little." Before I knew it I was rolling up my sleeves and marching towards Ace. Almost immediately Nate was behind me and holding me back. "One time, Nate. One time! Let me hit him." I whispered.

"You know I can't let you do that, Rose. As much as I want you to, so calm down now, and let's find some other ways to solve this."

"Fine," I said and pulled myself away from Nate while still glaring at Ace. "Here's the plan: we find a river and follow it. It usually leads to a town. At least from what I see in movies."

"What are movies?" Dan wondered out loud.

"Alright!" Nate cheered. "On your horses everyone." He said and started to get on his horse.

"You're not the boss of us!" The twins said at the same time.

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"I said move it!"

"Yes sir!"

"And how do you suppose you'll find a river?" Ace asked no one in particular but it was enough to make us all freeze in place.

Suddenly all heads were on me. "...GO STRAIGHT AND DON'T LOOK BACK!" I yelled trying to sound enthusiastic.

"Pfft!" I turned and saw Ace trying to hold in his laughter. "Good luck with that. You'll just end up in circles."

His comment infuriated me more. I swear ever since he came back from his deathbed he has become meaner and a complete and total D-bag. "Well if you are so sure that we'll just go in circles then why don't you stay here and greet us hello when we drop by?" I challenged him.

He shrugged like my threat of leaving him here doesn't phase him at all. "Sounds good to me."

"Urgh!" I clenched my hands together tightly and started to turn away from him and head for Cloud.

"Rose. Hey, idiotic princess! Stop!" Ace suddenly called out in panic but I ignored him. "Hey, don't move. Stop!"

Without turning back I said, "Oh, so now you want to come? Well, tough luck because you ain't going anywhere with us." I saw a small movement to my left and turned to see furs behind the bushes. Hey, wait a second. Isn't that the wolf spirit from the ruins of Gija? The little brown wolf locked eyes with me before it tilted its head upward into a silent howl.

While I was busy looking at the wolf I was suddenly pulled back by Ace. "Umf! Hey, what's the big idea?"

"Watch where you're going!" He snarled at me and looked at the stray arrow at the tree trunk. "Rogues." He said guessing who made the shot.

As soon as he said did we see figures emerging where the arrow had been shot? "I must say I'm quite impressed that you saw that one coming. Now I'm just embarra**ed that our welcome gift was found out so easily." Said a large muscular man with an eye

patch. He was tall and his body was covered in scars that are very evident since he was shirtless.

“We’re leaving.” Ace said and pushed me rather harshly behind him.

“Leaving so soon? Without a welcome party? Oh, come on!” He said and gave us all a once over. He grinned. “Well, what do you know?!” He said in a booming voice as he addressed Nate. “Prince Nathaniel Denver! Young prince from the kingdom of Vertex. Last I heard you were in the kingdom of Thalia fighting for a petty throne! And since you’re here, I’m guessing the rest of you are princes as well! Ha! Now we need to throw you guys a party!” He said and his comrades, I counted at least 12, yelled in agreement.

“Hm? Oh, what have we here?” Scary eye patch man said when he saw me behind Ace. “A girl? Are you the princess of Thalia?”

“I am just a plebian, who’s pa**ing by and eating dirt.” My mouth automatically said.