

Royal Secret: I'm A Princess!

Volume 2: NEOMA SUPREMACY

Chapter 120 - MAIDENS IN LOVE

"HANNA, SWEETIE, do you want to go home for the meantime?" her mother, who sat beside her on the bed, asked. "Your father already got permission from His Majesty. You may leave with us if you want to."

Hanna, who was about to drink the herbal tea that Madam Hammock made for her, stopped and blinked in surprise with her mother's question. "I thought I'm supposed to stay in the palace until the Moon Festival is over. Am I being kicked out because of what happened, Mother?"

She knew that she was only invited in the Royal Palace to be the crown prince's company. After the crowning ceremony comes the week-long festival. That meant her job as the royal prince's company wasn't over yet.

Anyway...

She and her mother were alone in the infirmary now.

Princess Brigitte of the Hazelden Kingdom was with them a while ago. But her cousin and aide dropped by a while ago to bring her a set of new clothes. The first princess excused herself and went to the other room with her attendant to change her outfit.

"No, you're not being kicked out," her mother said while shaking her head. "But your father and I thought that you'd be more comfortable to rest at home. Since the week-long festival will begin tomorrow, your father will be very busy. He's afraid that he may not be able to visit you in the palace as often as he'd like to by then. You know that he's the leader of the Public Order, don't you?"

She politely nodded as a response.

Her father, Duke Rufus Quinzel, was the captain of the Black Hawk Knights—the private army of their family. But aside from that position, His Majesty also assigned her father as the leader of the Public Order.

It's one of the positions that my uncle, the former Commander Gavin Quinzel of the White Lion Knights, has left when he betrayed His Majesty. I heard rumors that say our father is being punished by the emperor by making him shoulder all the responsibilities that my uncle has left behind. But it doesn't look that way to me.

"I can't also visit the Royal Palace without a proper reason," her mother added. "And just like your father, I also have my duties as the Duchess of House Quinzel. Our family is heavily involved in the preparations for the Moon

Festival after all." She held her hand and squeezed it gently. "Having said that, your father and I think that you'll still be safe in our home. We can see you anytime we want to if you're back at our house, sweetie."

"Mother, I understand why you and Father are worried about me," she said with a smile. "But I still want to stay in the Royal Palace and fulfill my duties as the crown prince's company. I like spending time with Neoma. And I want to make the most of the remaining time that we have together." She squeezed her mother's hand gently. "The incident with the Devil couldn't be helped because they're very strong. But as long as it's not the Devil, no one or nothing else could hurt me while I'm here, Mother. Please allow me to finish my duty and spend more time with my precious friend."

Her mother looked at her warmly, then she smiled. "I'm glad to see that you're getting along well with Princess Neoma."

She smiled and nodded as a response.

"But is Her Royal Highness the only reason why you want to stay in the Royal Palace?" her mother asked in a teasing tone. "Your father is worried about your relationship with the real Prince Nero."

She felt her cheeks flush.

"Since you're still very young, I assured your father that what you may feel for the crown prince is just a silly crush," her mother continued. "Although after you risked your life for Prince Nero, your father and I both think that your feelings for him may be deeper than we like to admit."

She took a deep breath before she had the courage to ask. "Mother, am I not allowed to like Prince Nero?"

Her mother fell silent for a while, then she shook her head gently before she explained. "Hanna, sweetie, do you know that you're a candidate to be the crown princess?"

She was surprised to hear that. "Me? But becoming the crown princess means..." She felt her cheeks burn even more. "B-Being Prince Nero's w-wife."

"Exactly," her mother said. "Sweetie, you are very much qualified to be Prince Nero's future bride. After all, you're the only daughter of House Quinzal. Fortunately, marriages between second cousins are legal in the empire, so your relation to the crown prince won't be an issue."

Hufzare ovfo qftu vuz duui vfnnw.

But that also made her wonder about one thing.

"Mother, I'll be honest. I've always thought that I am qualified to be the crown prince's future wife," she said. She wasn't being arrogant though. She just simply knew how political marriages worked. After all, there were only a few

high-ranked noblewomen like her around Prince Nero's age. "But since you never told me about it before, I pushed that thought in the corner of my mind."

"Your father and I have a reason why we didn't tell you that you are considered as one of the candidates to be the crown princess," her mother said carefully. "Aside from the fact that you're still too young to engage in a conversation regarding your own marriage, we don't want you to think that our family is sacrificing you to atone for the sins that Sir Gavin Quinzel, your uncle, had committed against the royal family."

Ah, the betrayal. Still...

"Why would you think that way, Mother?"

"There's a reason why His Majesty didn't heavily punish House Quinzel despite what your uncle did," her mother explained. "House Quinzel is one of the oldest families in the empire, sweetie. That means our family has accumulated wealth and influence that even the royal family couldn't seize. So instead of directly punishing us, people say that His Majesty plans to take everything away from House Quinzel through a political marriage between you and Prince Nero. Your father and I don't want you to hear such ridiculous claims. And thus, we opted not to tell you about your position as a candidate crown princess until after your coming-of-age, at least." She smiled with a hint of sadness in her eyes. "But who would have thought that you'll fall for the crown prince this early? Please don't grow up so fast, sweetie. You're still a baby."

She would surely stay as a baby to her mother and father's eyes forever.

I'm lucky to be blessed with loving parents.

"Mother, don't worry," she assured her mother. "I'm not in a hurry to be a grown-up. Moreover, I'm aware of my privilege as the daughter of a duke. Not every little girl in the empire has a choice regarding their marriage. There are girls my age that are already being married or sold off to men much older than them."

Pity crossed her mother's eyes.

"I will not waste the privilege that I was born with thanks to Mother and Father," she said with a smile. "I will cherish my life the way you cherish it."

Her mother smiled and hugged her.

Their moment was interrupted when they heard a knock on the door. A few moments later, Sir Glenn poked his head inside the room. Then, he smiled and let himself in. They exchanged polite greetings after that.

"Pardon my intrusion," Sir Glenn said with a smile. "Young Lady, Lady Nara Quinzel is requesting your presence in the next room."

She let out a soft gasp.

'Lady Nara Quinzel' was the real Prince Nero's disguise. That meant the one requesting for her presence wasn't Neoma but the crown prince himself!

What should I do? I don't want to look sickly in front of Prince Nero...

"Sir Glenn, may I implore you to wait and give us a few moments to prepare?" her mother, who stood up when she greeted the knight a while ago, said. "We promise not to make Nara wait for too long."

Sir Glenn smiled and nodded before he bowed to them. "I will wait outside, Your Grace and Young Lady Quinzel."

Adouz gattare ovuq emmtgwu, ovu craevo iudo ovu zmmq ypauoiw.

Then, her mother turned to her with a smile. "Now, shall I make my little princess prettier for her waiting prince?"

Hanna's face turned red but she couldn't help but smile this time. "I'll be in your care, Mother."

BRIGITTE was often scolded by her father and older brothers for beings "loud."

They said a woman like her should just keep her mouth shut and listen to men. But did she listen to them? Of course not.

But after her shameful slip of the tongue (aka her accidental confession to Sir Glenn), she forgot how to use her voice. She couldn't even look at him in the eye. Thank goodness the knight was gentleman enough to just smile at her a while ago.

I fell for the right man.

"Your Royal Highness, I shall wait outside your room," Sir Glenn told her when he gently tucked her in bed. "Once Lord Elwood returns, I shall leave my post."

"Wait," Brigitte said, then she got up and grabbed the hem of Sir Glenn's blazer. She knew that it was rude and inappropriate to do so. Especially since she was a princess from a foreign land. But this was now or never. "Sir Glenn, about what I said a while ago..."

The knight smiled at her. "Should I pretend that I didn't hear it, Your Royal Highness?"

"No!" she said, then she bit her lower lip and apologized for raising her voice for no reason at all. "I mean, you can forget about the part where I cursed. It's unbecoming of a princess to curse like that, isn't it?"

He chuckled softly. "I really don't mind, Your Royal Highness."

That reaction surprised her. It was as if Sir Glenn was used to seeing or hearing a princess curse. But was there really a princess like that? There

couldn't be one in the Royal Palace since the emperor only had a son. But whatever, it had nothing to do with her anyway.

"Then, are you okay with someone like me, Sir Glenn?" she asked, her cheeks flush and her heart beating loud and fast against her chest. This was the first time that she confessed her feelings for someone. After all, this was the first time that she fell in love. "Since I don't like beating around the bush, please allow me to be straightforward: I'd like to date you with the intention of getting married."

She didn't know that waiting for a response could be this nerve-wracking!

And to be honest, this confession could be a reason for her to be disowned by her father, the King. She was tasked to seduce the emperor, not to be seduced by His Majesty's personal knight. She didn't regret it though.

After all, she promised herself that once she returned to Hazelden, she would solve her problems with her own hands rather than depending on a political marriage.

I want to marry for love.

"Princess Brigitte, first of all, I'd like to thank you for liking me. Your confession made me happy," Sir Glenn said with a smile. But she noticed that his smile didn't reach his eyes this time. "I'm sorry but I can't accept your feelings, Your Royal Highness. Right now, my priority is to protect our crown prince," he explained, then he bowed to her. "I'm really sorry, Princess Brigitte."

Av, oval lphcl.

Her heart hurt for being rejected. But surprisingly, she didn't feel humiliated. After all, Sir Glenn took her confession seriously and gave her a proper response. He didn't lead her on, and he didn't make any excuses.

The rejection she received was short, brutally honest, and yet gentle.

"Thank you for being honest, Sir Glenn," Brigitte said with a sad smile on her face. Then, she stood up and bowed to the knight. "This is a selfish request but please don't forget that a foreign princess from a faraway land has you in her heart, my lord."

"ARE YOU really serious when you told me that you're going to marry an average man?" Trevor asked her. "Why an average man though? It's a shock to hear that from someone who's obsessed with good-looking people."

Neoma raised a brow at Trevor's curiosity. But since it was a harmless question, she didn't mind answering it. Plus, she needed to kill time anyway. Later, she had to return to her palace and meet with Saint Zavaroni. "I want a peaceful and quiet married life," she said. "And I really don't mind if the man who will catch my attention is plain-looking. Even though I like good-looking

people, it wouldn't be enough for me to stay interested in them if the only good thing about them is their face."

"Ohh," the demon boy said. "Interesting. Since you have a strong personality, I thought you were the type of woman to shun love or marriage."

"Just because I'm a strong, independent woman doesn't mean I don't want love or marriage," she said. "There are women who choose to be alone and I'm happy for them. But just because I crave for romantic love and a married life doesn't make me less of a strong woman that I am. Why do people even assume that independent women don't need love anyway?"

"Well, it's probably because strong women give off the vibes that they don't need a man."

"Hey, don't assume that every woman wants a man for a partner," she corrected him. "But in my case, I want to fall in love with the right man in this lifetime."

"And what's the "right man" for you?"

Neoma smirked at the talking book. "Definitely not you, Trevor."

Lewis stifled a laughter at her remark.

"Hey, don't laugh at me," Trevor complained at Lewis, then he turned to her with a confident smile. "I will work hard to change your mind, my Moon Princess."

Whatever.

[A distant memory...]

"MONA, have you gone crazy?" Gale asked her master who seemed to have lost her mind already. Right now, they were in Mona's garden of sword lilies. Her master was practicing her (hopeless) swordsmanship, while she was having tea. "Do you really want to become Nikolai de Moonasterio's woman?"

Mona laughed softly, then she turned around to face her. "Hey, don't call His Royal Highness by his full name casually," she scolded her, then she put the wooden sword on her shoulder. "Anyway, is there a reason why I can't be with him?"

"I can give you a long list, you know," she said. "Let's start off by the fact that you're a Roseheart and he's a de Moonasterio."

Her master avoided her gaze.

Ah, someone is guilty.

"Mona, your clan is the only clan in the empire who can keep the royal family in check," she reminded her coldly. "Although House Roseheart already fell from grace, you still have the power to kill a de Moonasterio—"

"Stop," Mona warned her. When she turned to her, she saw her pale blue eyes glow. She also noticed a glint of sadness in her master's gaze. "Gale, I love him."

Ah, it was already too late to stop her master's craziness.

"I understand, Master," Gale said. She rarely called Mona formally, only when she felt like it was appropriate to do so. And at that moment, she knew that her master needed her as a Spirit Guardian and not as a friend. "I will do everything I can to stop William from destroying your happiness. But..." She stood up and gave her master a sad smile. "Are you sure you won't regret this, Master?"

"I will definitely regret this later," Mona said with a soft laugh. But despite what she said, she saw the lovely glimmer in her eyes that told her she would make it work. "But Nikolai is worth fighting for, Gale."

Hi. You may now send GIFTs to our Neoma. Thank you~