

Royal Secret: I'm A Princess!

Volume 3: ROYAL PAIN IN THE NECK

Chapter 282 - [Bonus Chapter] NERO AND MONA'S SECRET

[AFTER Nero found his mother in the Black Ocean...]

[‘NERO, don’t let Gavin Quinzel get near Neoma at all cost!’]

Nero opened his eyes when he heard his mother’s voice in his head.

When he woke up, he found himself in the room that he was temporarily using in the Spirit World’s Royal Palace. His head ached and the last thing he remembered was being knocked out by either Queen Tara or William.

Finally, he remembered that he was able to speak with his mother for a moment.

[Mother...]

‘Prince Nero, are you alright?’

It was Tara, the queen of the Spirit World.

Despite her rank, she was standing in front of his bed politely. Her Majesty also looked genuinely worried about him.

‘I’m alright, Your Majesty,’ Nero said politely. ‘Thank you for asking.’

The queen smiled gently. ‘Nero, may I ask a question?’

He sat on the bed properly. ‘Of course, Your Majesty.’

‘I’d like to ask you a question,’ the queen said hesitantly. ‘I know that you’ve heard Lady Mona Roseheart’s voice. But may I know if you’ve seen her clearly?’

He was about to say how her mother looked like she was frozen in time when he heard a strange yet familiar voice in his head.

[‘Nero, my baby, please don’t say anything to Tara...’]

His head suddenly cleared.

[Mmovuz?]

He couldn’t only just hear his mother’s voice. In fact, he could also feel his mother’s presence in his heart. He was confused, but for now, he remained calm. Then, he listened to his mother’s instruction.

For some reason, he could tell that the majestic presence inside him was none other than the soul of Lady Mona Roseheart.

‘No, Your Majesty,’ Nero said politely while shaking his head. ‘The water under is too dark. But like I said, Mother is trapped in a huge block of ice.’

The queen fell silent. ‘I see.’

He wondered why Her Majesty asked that.

And he was also curious as to why her mother wanted to hide her presence from the queen of the Spirit World.

[It’s amazing how Mother can hide her presence in front of the Spirit Queen herself.]

‘Prince Nero, are you not going to ask me why we stopped you from going on the surface?’ the queen asked. ‘We stopped you even though Lady Roseheart gave you an important task.’

He wouldn't lie— he was still very upset.

But it didn't matter now.

He needed to talk to his mother alone.

'I understand why you had to stop me, Your Majesty,' he said politely.

'I just hope that William relays my mother's message to Neoma.'

His mother's message was strange.

[I'm glad that I can talk to Mother again.]

Asking the queen to leave his room would be quite rude. Even in his Spirit form, he was still the royal prince of the empire. In the end, he did what Neoma did best: acting.

He acted like he was in pain while holding his head.

'Prince Nero, are you alright?' Her Majesty asked worriedly. 'Should I give you a thorough check-up?'

He politely shook his head. 'I'm fine, Your Majesty,' he said. 'But I'm sleepy.'

Tara nodded her head, then she smiled at him. 'Please have a rest, Prince Nero,' the queen said. 'I will wake you up once William has returned.'

Nero nodded politely. 'Thank you, Your Majesty.'

NERO was a little surprised when a pink dolphin inside a transparent crystal ball filled with water. But it didn't like ordinary water.

[Is it Mana?]

Yes, it looked like Mana— a pure, white Mana.

He also noticed that the Mana coming out of the small hole on top of the crystal ball covered the entire room. But for some reason, the Mana felt...

[Natural.]

‘My Mana is something similar to nature, Nero.’

His eyes widened in shock when his mother’s voice came out of the pink dolphin.

‘Mother...?’

‘Yes, Nero,’ the pink dolphin said. ‘This is one of my borrowed Spirit forms. I tore a piece of my soul so this is the best ‘physical body‘ that I can use temporarily. How do I look?’

He was instantly reminded of his mother’s coral pink hair.

Moreover, it was also Neoma’s favorite color.

‘You look lovely even in that form, Mother,’ he said softly. ‘Is it safe for us to talk like this? Won’t the Spirit Queen notice your presence?’

Her mother laughed softly. ‘Tara didn’t notice me earlier. Even if I used my Mana, the queen will still not notice it because as I said earlier, my Mana is not that different from nature. Thus, I covered this room with my ‘trace.’ Moreover...’ The pink dolphin inside the crystal ball got closer to him. Despite her form, he could still see the playful spark in her mother’s eyes. ‘Nero, who’s your mother?’

He couldn’t help but smirk. Now he knew where Neoma got her playful side. ‘My mother is Lady Mona Roseheart– the greatest Summoner in the world.’

‘My baby is smart.’

‘Mother, I’m no longer a baby.’

‘You will always be a baby to me,’ her mother said with a soft laugh.

‘Nero, thank you.’

‘Why are you thanking me, Mother?’

‘When you touched the block of ice, some of your Mana were absorbed by my cold cage,’ her mother explained gently. ‘Your Moonglow and Roseheart Blood entered my body and flowed through my veins until they reached my Core. Thanks to that, my cold body warmed up a bit and allowed me to gather my own strength. Thus, I was able to latch on to you in this form.’

‘I’m glad that I was able to help you, Mother,’ he said sincerely. ‘But Mother...’

‘What is it, baby?’

‘Why do you want to hide your existence from Queen Tara?’

His mother fell silent for a few moments before she spoke again. ‘I just want to observe for now before I decide.’

He noticed that despite her mother’s gentle expression, he could tell that she was being serious and careful. ‘Decide about what, Mother?’

‘Let’s not talk about that for now, my dear son,’ his mother said gently. ‘We need to talk about something else first.’

He nodded. ‘I understand, Mother.’

His mother fell silent for a few moments, then she laughed gently.

‘I’m glad that my son is calm,’ she said. ‘I’m sure that you have a lot of questions.’

He nodded again. ‘But I’m patient, Mother,’ he assured her. ‘I won’t force you to tell me the things that I shouldn’t learn yet.’

‘My goodness!’ his mother said excitedly, her dolphin tail wagging.

‘My son is so mature. I can’t believe that Nikolai raised you well.’

‘Mother, I am mature because Father didn’t raise us with love.’

His mother fell silent and despite her appearance, she could see the sadness, anger, and regret on her face.

He felt guilty that he had to drop that kind of ‘bomb’ right away.

But he wanted to be honest with his Mother.

[I hope Mother punishes Father once she returns.]

Yes, he could tell that his mother would return earlier than expected.

[We need Neoma’s flame, and Neoma is already strong. If I train in my Spirit form, maybe we wouldn’t need William’s help anymore.]

‘Nero, it must have been hard to live with a Nikolai who lost his heart,’ his mother said in a soothing voice. ‘I know that it’s not an excuse but please don’t hate your father too much.’ She paused before she spoke again. ‘It was partly my fault why your father ended up the way he did. Moreover...’

He noticed that his mother’s voice trembled.

‘It was my choice to abandon you, Nero,’ his mother’s voice said in a voice filled with regret. ‘When I gave birth to you and Neoma, I chose your twin sister over you because I can’t take both of you with me. I’m sorry—’

‘You did the right choice, Mother.’

He didn’t mean to be rude when he cut her off like that.

It was just that he didn't want his mother to apologize for something that he wouldn't hate her for.

'I... did the right choice?' his mother asked, confused.

'Mother, I understand why you chose Neoma over me,' he said softly. 'The empire is cruel to female royals. On the other hand, Father needed an heir. I don't hate you for the choice that you had to make. I'm sure that you would have chosen to take both of us if you could.'

He heard his mother sob.

'I would hug you if I could, Nero,' his mother said between sobs. 'You're already so thoughtful and selfless at that tender age of yours...'

He smiled apologetically. 'No, Mother. I'm not thoughtful and selfless,' he confessed. 'I just love my twin sister dearly.'

His poor Neoma thought she wasn't loved in the past.

The memories that he had of his past life were a blur so he didn't want to depend on it. And therefore, he decided to love his twin sister unconditionally in this lifetime.

But perhaps, he didn't 'decide' it.

Loving his twin sister came naturally this time since they grew up close.

'Neoma is well-loved even in this lifetime,' his mother said gently. 'Nero, can you find a way to return to the Black Ocean?'

'The Spirit World is good to me so it won't be a problem, Mother,' he said confidently. 'May I know why we need to return to the Black Ocean?'

‘We need to talk in private– somewhere far from Tara’s reach,’ his mother said seriously. ‘I will tell you the truth about Neoma’s relationship with Commander Gavin Quinzel.’

Nero clenched his hands and nodded. ‘I understand, Mother.’

[THE NIGHT Neoma returned from the Death Camp...]

NEOMA threw up all the food that Ruto served her for dinner that night.

She felt like she was also throwing up her insides while she was on the bathroom floor. It was messy, but she didn’t have the time to reach the sink. She knew that she needed to puke or else, she might die.

[It hurts...]

She was able to eat after everything that happened because Ruto was with her earlier.

But now, the nightmare of killing people with her hands began to haunt her. Technically, Madam Giselle Averon and her lover weren’t humans. But still, they were living things that she stabbed to death.

[It was so easy...]

She looked at her tiny hands. They were probably clean but in her vision, they were bloody. And no matter how much she washed her hands, the blood just wouldn’t get washed off.

[It was so easy to kill...]

The smell of burning corpses.

The feel of her blade piercing through her enemies’ flesh.

The sounds of their cry.

The sticky feeling of the blood splattering all over her.

The awareness of one's life slipping from her little hands.

Ah, she wanted to puke again.

[I'm a murderer.]

No matter how much she justified her sin, it wouldn't change the fact that she was a murderer.

She closed her eyes.

Then, much to her surprise, her body was lifted by a familiar built.

When she opened her eyes, she found herself in Lewis arms while he was walking towards the gigantic bathtub. In the corner of her eye, she saw Stephanie silently clean after the mess that she made on the floor.

'We just have to live with it,' Lewis said softly. Then, he stopped in front of the tub to look at her. His beautiful golden eyes were filled with warmth. Ah, this boy knew what she was going through. 'We just have to save more lives than the ones we took away as atonement.'

She remembered that she said something similar to Lewis before.

Neoma smiled and closed her eyes. This time, her heart was calm. The blood in her hands hadn't disappeared, but the bloody color was starting to get faint.

[Let's live and atone.]

NOTE: Yeah, both scenes are a flashback.. Hehe.

