

Royal Secret: I'm A Princess!

Chapter 79 - MY ADVANCE BIRTHDAY GIFT

"LEWIS, you just gave your knight's oath to me," Neoma said in disbelief. "Do you know what that means? You can only give your pledge of loyalty once."

Lewis nodded. "I know, Princess Neoma."

"How can you serve Nero once he returns now that you gave your knight's oath to me?"

"I never intended to serve the royal prince."

"Shh!" she scolded him. "If my father hears you, he'll get mad. He brought you here in the Royal Palace because he wanted you to be Nero's knight."

He tilted his head to one side. "I already told His Majesty that I'll follow you once you leave the Royal Palace."

Her eyes widened in shock. "And Papa Boss allowed you to live after that?"

He just nodded.

She pinched the bridge of her nose.

Of course, hearing that Lewis said that to Emperor Nikolai gave her a mini heart attack. Her father was a ruthless person. It was a miracle that he allowed Lewis to live even after he said that he chose her over Nero, the real crown prince.

But on the other hand, she was happy that Lewis was really on her side.

"Well, I have no choice now but to bring you with me once I leave the palace," Neoma said, then she stretched her arms. "But for now, let's go back to the palace and get some much needed rest." She covered her mouth with her hands when she yawned. "We have to work hard first before we escape this hellhole."

Lewis stood up and nodded. "Yes, Princess Neoma."

NEOMA smiled as soon as Hanna stepped out of the carriage.

She heard that her cousin would arrive at her palace alone because Duke and Duchess Quinzel had to visit their dukedom for an official business. Apparently, they were supposed to bring Hanna with them. But Hanna insisted to go back to her residence instead of going to a trip with her parents.

I love her for that.

"Welcome back, Hanna," Neoma said when Hanna walked towards her. She got so excited that she hugged her cousin despite having an audience. "Thank you for coming back."

She noticed that Kate, the personal maid that Hanna brought with her, averted her gaze.

Even without looking, she knew that the servants behind her did the same thing. That was probably their little way of giving her privacy with Hanna. After all, the only people around them who knew that she wasn't the real crown prince were Alphen, Stephanie, and Lewis.

"Thank you for the warm welcome, Prince Nero," Hanna said with a warm smile after their hug. "I'm happy to be back."

She offered her arm to her. "Shall we go for a walk? Let's take a look at the autumn leaves."

Yes, the leaves of the maple trees in the palace had already begun

changing. It was a sign that the fall/autumn season had finally arrived in the empire. That meant her and Nero's birthday, which was October 23rd, was only a few weeks away.

What a missed opportunity for mommy and Papa Boss to name Nero and I 'Fall' and 'Autumn' respectively.

"Hanna, I'm sorry," Neoma said while they were walking on a path surrounded by trees with beautiful autumn leaves. Various shades of yellow, orange, red, purple, and brown could be seen anywhere she looked. She loved the warm colors around them. "I failed to protect you. You got sick because you had to use your Mana to protect yourself. I'm really sorry about that."

"You don't have to apologize, Neoma," Hanna said. They asked their servants to leave them alone so they were free to talk like that. "It's my choice to use my power. And even though I'm a sickly child, I don't expect anyone to protect me."

She smiled at that. "You're strong, Hanna."

"Not as strong as you are, Neoma."

They giggled, which made her feel that she was really a child. She felt comfortable enough with Hanna that she could forget that she was an a.d.u.l.t and just have a good time with her.

"Neoma?"

"Hmm?"

She noticed that Hanna's cheeks had a tint of pink on them. And when her cousin spoke, she realized what the source of her blush was.

"Do you happen to know what Prince Nero would like to have as a birthday gift?" Hanna asked shyly. "My family and I have already prepared a present for you and His Royal Highness. Even though Prince Nero is still in a deep slumber, I'd like to prepare a personalized gift for him. I want him to know that he's in my

thoughts even during the times that we can't meet."

She smiled awkwardly.

To be honest, even though Hanna was only their second cousin and marriages between second cousins were allowed in the empire, she still wasn't sure if she could support Hanna with her one-sided feelings for Nero. And it wasn't just because of their blood ties.

First, in her past life, Nero was fated to fall in love with the Black Witch called Dahlia.

Second, Hanna would die in the near future.

Can I change Hanna's future in this lifetime?

"Neoma?" Hanna asked worriedly. "Is something wrong?"

"No, I'm fine," Neoma assured her with a smile. Although she was worried about Hanna, she didn't know if she could save her considering that she died in the past because of her weak body. But for now, she'd enjoy the little moments that she could spend with her cousin. "Anyway, I think Nero like collecting daggers and other hand-carry weapons."

"HOW IS Rubin?" Neoma asked Lewis while she was busy doing her homework in History. Since she just woke up, her teachers decided to let her finish all the homework that she failed to submit because she was unconscious for days. So for the past few days, she was actually stuck in her study room. She barely played with Hanna lately. "Is he doing well?"

After the incident with Duke Drayton, Rubin had locked himself up in the room. But thankfully, she heard from the servants that the young lord was eating his meals properly. According to the rumors, Rubin was just probably embarrassed because of what happened with his father.

I should pay him a visit soon.

"I heard Sir Rubin hasn't come out of his room yet," Lewis answered.

"Oh," she said. "Let's pay him a visit later."

As usual, her son didn't comment on that. She noticed that Lewis's hostility towards Rubin got worse after he heard what Rubin did to her in her past life.

Maybe he's really in his rebellious stage.

"Ah, Sir Glenn sent a message a while ago," her son said. "Princess Neoma, His Majesty requests your audience later."

She groaned in complaint. "What does he want with me this time?"

"About your upcoming birthday?"

"Ah... ah!" Neoma said excitedly when a brilliant idea came to her mind. She even clapped her hands, then she looked up at Lewis. "My precious son, can I borrow your last name?"

"I'm not your son, Princess Neoma," Lewis deadpanned. "And you can have my last name."

Uhm, she just wanted to borrow it... okay?

"CHOOSE."

Neoma looked at the map of the empire on the long table. He summoned her in his office but instead of ushering her to the lounge area to have tea like usual, he told her to follow him in the part of his office where Glenn placed the map on the table carefully. "Papa Boss," she said, then she looked up at her father who was standing opposite her. "Are you asking me to choose a territory that I want as my birthday gift?"

"Yes," Emperor Nikolai said bluntly. "But of course, it won't be yours. Officially and legally, the territory that you will choose will be put under Nero's name. So keep your brother in your mind while choosing a piece of land that you think he might need in the future."

"Then, how about my gift?" she demanded casually. "It's also my birthday, Papa Boss."

"You can't own a land under your name," he said bluntly. "'Neoma de Moonasterio' isn't officially registered in the royal family."

She already knew that and although it used to hurt her in the past, she didn't care about that anymore. Why would she bother when she already know that the royal family wasn't a family to her? "There's a piece of land that I want," she declared. "You can put it under Lewis's name. Since he's now the head of House Crevan, it wouldn't be weird for him to receive a piece of land from the emperor."

That was the reason why she "borrowed" Lewis's last name a while ago.

Her father raised a brow at her. "What piece of land do you want?"

"I want Mount Kimbro and the land surrounding it," she declared seriously. "It is in the border of Oxspring, the land that you received from the former emperor back when you were a crown prince. The territory is yours so you can give it to me, can't you?"

"Have you lost your mind, Neoma?" he asked with a frown. "Mount Kimbro and the area surrounding it are considered as a cursed land. Not even the saint can purify it."

"Nah, I don't need it purified," she said while waving her hand. "I just need it for something."

It was the bait that she was going to use to lure Duke Jasper Hawthorne.

Speaking of the elusive duke, she remembered that she still had a lot of things to prepare for their meeting.

"Papa Boss, I choose the Abbiss territory for Nero's gift," Neoma said while pointing at the territory in the map. She remembered that in her past life, it was the land that her father gifted Nero when he was officially declared as the crown prince. It was a flourished land that would only prosper more in the future. Plus, it was as expensive as the biggest dukedom in the empire. "I believe it's more than enough to show-off to the higher nobles."

"Very well," Emperor Nikolai said. "You are dismissed, Princess Neoma."

"ARE YOU sure about that, Your Majesty?"

"Yes, throw it away," Nikolai said without looking up at Glenn who stood in front of his desk. After all, he was busy signing the papers that he needed to sign for putting Abbiss under Nero's name. He'd do the same later for Mount Kimbro that he would put under Lewis Crevan's name. "I don't need it anymore."

"But you prepared it for Princess Neoma's birthday, Your Majesty," Glenn said in a disappointed voice. "I'm sure that the royal princess would appreciate the gift that you personally prepared for her."

"I didn't personally prepare it for her," he denied. "I just bought it out of whim."

"Your Majesty, that would be the first birthday gift that you'd give to Princess Neoma and not to Prince Nero—"

"Just throw it away," Nikolai snapped at the knight. Well, he did prepare a gift for Neoma because of the splendid job that she had done for the past few years. But he wouldn't insist on giving it to her if she had already something else in mind. "Neoma has already chosen the gift that she wants."

Glenn looked like he still wanted to argue but when he glared at him, he bowed immediately. "As you wish, Your Majesty."

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