

Royal Secret: I'm A Princess!

Chapter 81 - A FOX'S INSTINCT

"PRINCE NERO, I didn't know that chicken could taste this good," Rubin told her with a bright smile on his face. Thank goodness he looked like a normal little boy now. By that, she meant that he finally didn't look like he had the whole universe on his tiny shoulders. "These chicken poppers are so good. The fries, too."

Neoma smirked proudly. "I know, right?"

To be honest, chicken wasn't a popular protein in the empire. It took the royal chef a while before he was able to perfect the dish up to her standards. She rejected the earlier versions that he made because he tried to make the chicken too fancy.

I mean, chicken is a comfort food.

Back in her second life in Korea, she used to order fried chicken with beer. It was already perfect as it was, no need to make it fancy to suit a noble's standard.

"Thank you for giving me the chance to have a taste of the palace's new dish," Rubin said with a shy smile. "I loved it, Your Royal Highness."

"I'm glad that you ate," she said, then she sipped her tea before she continued. "I heard from the servants that you hadn't been eating for days."

"Ah, that was Gavin's doing," he said, averting his eyes from her. "He took over my body and started to lash out on the servants. He also refused to eat even after Father stopped punishing me as a way of making me weak. Whenever I'm in a vulnerable state, he would use that chance to come out."

"Then, don't skip your meals from now on," she said. Well, she was aware that it wasn't the best advice that she could give Rubin. But she realized that she couldn't really do anything to help him get over his personality disorder. "If you don't want Gavin to take over your consciousness again, you have to be stronger than him in mind and body."

"I will try, Your Royal Highness," he said hesitantly. "Uhm, Prince Nero?"

"Yeah?"

"Thank you for protecting me from my father."

She was just about to say something but her prodigal son beat her to it.

"His Royal Highness didn't protect you, Sir Drayton," Lewis deadpanned. "The royal prince only did that because it's his duty to keep the order in his palace."

She glared at Lewis who just shrugged. Knowing that she couldn't lecture him at the moment, she simply let it slide for now and faced Rubin again. "No need to thank me, Rubin," she said. "I just did what I have to do for a friend."

"Friend...?" he asked, his cheeks suddenly turned red. "Do you consider me as a friend, Your Royal Highness?"

She gave him a business smile. "Of course, we're friends now, Rubin."

Rubin smiled shyly at her. "Thank you for considering me as a friend, Your Royal Highness."

"Sure, no problem," Neoma said. "Now that we're officially friends, do you mind giving feedback to my chicken dish?"

"DEALING with kids is a tough job," Neoma complained to Lewis as she plopped on the sofa. They went back to her palace after she visited Rubin's room. She would have an afternoon tea with Hanna later but for now, she would take a rest in her chamber. "One is someone I don't wish to be involved with but I have to, and the other is my son who's in a rebellious phase."

And said prodigal son had the guts to ignore her while she was scolding him.

Lewis usually stood behind her when she was sitting on the sofa. But this time, he was standing in front of him while looking around as if he was looking for something. Of course, that behavior bothered her. But she was distracted when she remembered something.

"Lewis, you're a member of the White Lion Knights, right?" she said with a snap of her fingers. "Have you heard something about the former Comman- mmf!"

She wasn't able to finish her sentence because all of a sudden, Lewis leaned down and covered her mouth with his hand. Then, he put a finger on his nose to discreetly tell her to keep quiet. She caught on and realized that her son must have noticed that they were being spied.

It was kind of distracting because Lewis's hand smelled like... baby powder? It was hard to explain but it was a nice smell.

Focus, Neoma de Moonasterio.

When she nodded to signal him that she understood the situation, he pulled his hand away from her mouth. Then, he moved so fast around the room that her eyes barely followed him. All she could tell was he searched for every nook and cranny of the chamber.

After a few minutes, Lewis came back in front of her with several spirit stones in his hands. Each one looked like a brooch with an emerald gem in the center. She was pretty certain that it was the kind of device that could record voices.

She let out a deep sigh before giving an order to her son. "Destroy it."

Lewis broke the devices in his hands. But she could tell that it wasn't easy. She flinched when she saw and heard the spark of electricity as her son's hands began to change. His nails turned sharper and probably harder.

In just a span of a few minutes, her son successfully destroyed the spirit stones in his hands until each one turned into dust.

"Are you hurt?" she asked worriedly.

He shook his head while dusting off his gloved hands.

"That's a relief," she said. She was used to Lewis's silence by now. Sometimes when he could answer with simply nodding or shaking his head, he'd do that. Not in front of other people, of course. "I bet it's Papa Boss's idea."

She remembered the time that her father commented that she acted like a child. In the end, he said that it was because she looked old. Of course, she didn't buy that b*llshit. But she also didn't make a big deal out of it because she didn't want to appear more suspicious.

"He's suspicious of me," she said. "I wonder why though. I mean, he didn't care that I'm too mature for my age because it runs in the blood. So, why get suspicious now."

"Ah," Lewis said as if he remembered something. "House Hawthorne sent me a letter. The young duke wants to know if I'd be willing to sell the mountain to him if he convinced His Majesty to reconsider giving it to me. Lord Hawthorne said that he'd compensate me well if I agree to transfer the land to his name."

"Oh, he already made a move?" she asked in surprise. If Jasper Hawthorne sent a letter to Lewis, then he definitely sent a letter to the emperor as well. "Lewis, why didn't you report it to me right away?"

He scratched his face as if he was embarrassed. "Sorry, Princess Neoma. I didn't know it was important."

"Ah, it's okay," she assured him. "It's my fault because I forgot to tell you that I'm waiting for Lord Hawthorne's movement. I didn't expect that he'd move this fast though. That only means that he already knows what going on in Mount Kimbro this early."

It was a gamble that she was glad she took.

"Princess Neoma, what's in the mountain?" Lewis asked curiously. "Why does Lord Hawthorne want it?"

"Lord Hawthorne doesn't want the mountain," she said carefully. "He wants the Death Camp— the one where young slaves are imprisoned and abused."

She noticed that her son suddenly looked like he was in pain.

It was written all over his face.

Her heart thumped against her chest painfully when all of a sudden, Lewis's golden eyes glowed menacingly. It also looked like that he suddenly had a difficulty in breathing because he was clutching his chest tight while panting.

She realized right away that he was triggered when she said the word "slave."

He used to be one after all.

"I'm so sorry, Lewis," Neoma said, her voice filled with guilt. She stood up and tried to walk towards him but he raised a hand to stop her. Then, he took a few steps away from her. "It's okay, Lewis," she consoled him from the spot where she stood. "Take a deep breath."

Lewis, despite his current state, still listened to her.

He took a deep breath, then he slowly breathed it out. She asked him to do it until he calmed down and he followed her. Thankfully, it seemed to work.

"Are you okay now, Lewis?" she asked worriedly. "Do you want me to bring you to Madam Hammock?"

Lewis shook his head. "I'm okay now, Princess Neoma."

"Are you sure?"

He nodded firmly.

"I'm sorry," she said, her voice filled with remorse. "I should have been more careful."

"It's my fault," he said. "I should have gotten better but there are moments that everything just comes back."

"Did that happen when you were in the training camp?"

He shook his head. "You told me to think about your face if I'm upset or mad. I did and it worked."

She laughed at what he said. "Should I give you a picture of mine so you'd be able to calm yourself down even if I'm not with you?"

Lewis didn't verbally respond but his face lit up.

Neoma smiled at her son. "Alright, I'll give you one later," she promised him. "For now, let's think of a plausible excuse to erase my father's suspicion."

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