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# **THE HEAVILY ARMoured NOBLE GIRL MONETTE**

**– How To Break a Curse You Don't Remember Casting –**

**- VOLUME 2 -**

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**[ Experimental Translations ]**

# Chapter 32

## First Step Homeward

The next morning, we quickly ate the breakfast Gina prepared and left the mansion.

At the time, my curiosity was piqued slightly because contrary to her gorgeous mansion, the locks she put up were simple things.

\*Katchin\* A small ding sounded with the turned lock. A small and slender silver key was held in Gina's nimble fingers. If it was responsible for locking every entrance in this gorgeous mansion, then we would not be able to leave until the sun had completed its journey across the sky.

When I asked about crime prevention, Gina looked at me for a long time with wide open eyes before she started to lovingly caress my helmet. Apparently, the question I asked was an extremely 'beginner witch' thing to ask, and it was just too cute for Gina to bear.

"There is really no need to lock it."

"The key? What if someone comes by? With such a beautiful mansion, surely a thief....."

Gina shook her head and gave me her explanation with a bemused smile.

To reach Gina's mansion, you have to be guided by Concetta, climb up the rock walls, venture through the valleys, and read the magic words to find the door hidden in shadows.

It was a course that would be almost impossible for even the most seasoned explorer to follow. In other words, it is only possible for witch's invited to visit that are able to arrive at the mansion. A simple lock to let any previous visitors know she was not home was all she needed.

I picked up everything she said interestedly and nodded my head when she was finished. I would have to set up my dwelling in an equally out of the way location when

I moved here.

Let's make a complicated mechanism using magic so that my home cannot be reached easily. Alexis and Percival will get lost trying to find it and end up wandering around while their eyes dart every which way. Then me and Robertson can watch them bumble around from an out of sight location.

Entertaining such a fantasy, I handed off my luggage to Percival who received it silently.

While watching me enjoy my thoughts, Gina passed off her luggage to Alexis as if it was a natural thing to do. As expected of a true witch, to not feel anything as she thoughtlessly passes off her luggage to a country's prince.

Her figure while embracing Concetta and striding forth was the epitome of elegance, and even the princely dignity of Alexis would have to bow before her.

This was the way a witch was supposed to be. Thinking so, I tried to imitate her stride and follow after her..... but my legs suddenly stopped.

"Gina, you're going the wrong way."

"Wrong?"

"Because it was from here."

I pointed to the road that we came in on because Gina had started to walk in the opposite direction.

Alexis and Percival were clearly wondering the same thing. Both of them were staring at Gina with a strange look on their faces, and Percival even pulled out a map he had for the area and looked it over.

Even so, Gina calmly received the combined stares of us three before looking down at Concetta who was content purring in her arms. Then she said,

"Oh Concetta, did you guide our guests through the road that is almost impossible to walk through again?"

To her declaration—me, Alexis of course, and even Percival had our eyes opened wide

in surprise. Then Alexis probably remembered the bottomless swamp he and Percival had gotten stuck in which caused his shoulders to drop from exhaustion.

The journey back to the city led by Gina was a distance comparable to the incoming route, but there was no steep change in inclination nor were there any rocks or scaffolding for us to climb up nor any scaffolds for us to balance our way across.

Nevertheless, there were no obvious markings on this path, and if you took a single wrong turn, you could end up lost forever, so this road would also require some directions. But there were no rocks or swamps, so the sky was still bright and happy by the time we reached the city.

“.....What was all that hard work for?”

Percival’s sigh was depressing.

Alexis was walking next to him, carrying Concetta after Gina handed him off saying, “He’s cute, but I can only carry him for 30 minutes before my arms get numb.” He was begrudgingly looking down at the small cat in his arms..... before he suddenly turned his head away. The sudden movement made me curious, so I focused in on the bundle in his arms.

What I saw was Concetta with his mouth half open, and is he not staring up at him? It’s the kind of expression that is hard to describe.

“A-Alexis, what’s wrong with Concetta?”

“I read in a book once that cats do this around certain smells.”

Listening to Alexis’s answer, my gaze turned back to Concetta.

According to Gina’s follow-up, it seems that a type of grass which Concetta dislikes grows around the area we are currently passing, and he opens up his mouth like this whenever it is nearby.

Although it is a weird face, it is still adorable in its own right, so I decided to caress Concetta myself..... Alexis’s arms were trembling slightly after holding Concetta for so long, but he will be okay. Probably.

Then as soon as we arrived to town without any difficulty, Percival headed over to pick up a horse-drawn carriage.

Gina watched him go and laughed with gusto and spirit telling him, "I look forward to the carriage you bring back!" A wonderful threat to get him to rent the most luxurious of carriages. In addition, because she ventured off to do some shopping in the name of food procurement, I unexpectedly started to smile at her abundant free-spirited nature.

I always called myself a quirky, spontaneous witch, but I am nowhere near Gina's level. Truly a wonderful witch.

"I am going to procure food along with my senior witch."

"Go. I will watch Concetta and the luggage."

Alexis took Concetta back in his arms from Monette and watched her run off after Gina. Monette's voice gave away her excitement, and she was quickly sucked into the store that Gina had entered a moment before.

Meanwhile, Alexis was left alone with Concetta. Looking down at the cat resting in his arms, he smiled and asked, "Should I buy something for you as well?" Although the fatigue in his arms were greater than before, he did not feel like putting the adorable cat down.

"Shall I buy a fluffy cushion for Concetta?"

"Let's see. Indeed a large cushion would make the carriage ride comfortable. Then my arms..."

"It's starting to get a little painful. Although there is no way I would be forgiven for putting you down."

"My arms falling off from holding a cat for too long, is this another unfortunate event from my bad luck?"

While droning on about much of nothing, Alexis was rocking Concetta in his arms.

As if he were a baby, Concetta slowly closed his eyes and relaxed. Eventually falling asleep. Alexis leaked a bitter smile and mumbled, "He got heavier." It was becoming

painful holding up Concetta all this time, but the expression on Alexis's face was still content. This was much more preferable than sinking into a bottomless muddy swamp.

Percival returned somewhere in the middle of Alexis's soliloquy after completing his errand.

Monette and Gina returned a little time later unexpectedly carrying two large paper bags. It seems that the two ladies bought quite a bit of food to eat together.

"I bought a lot of additional confections along with some fruit bread from a very popular shop."

"...Ms. Gina, that food is not really suitable for traveling."

"Nonsense. Delicious food is an essential part of any trip. Ah, Alexis, I'll charge you for the cost later."

Everyone was stunned by Gina's carefree remarks, but the first one to recover and broke the following silence was Percival with a small cough in his hand.

"I was able to arrange the best carriage in the city. It is wider and faster than the previous carriage, so the trip home should be faster than our journey here."

After Percival's story, Monette's excitement rose to newfound heights. We had always been riding in good quality horse-drawn carriages, so something even beyond that must be the picture of luxury.

This will be such a pleasant ride... but then I caught something in the corner of my eye. After news came that everything was prepared, Alexis's face warped into something strange. The knowledge that a good carriage was prepared made him far too tense.

Concetta is resting in his arms as usual, but now he was not enjoying the cat's cute sleeping face.

What's wrong... I wanted to ask, I swallowed the words before I could.

Returning home means beginning the search for the real criminal who cursed him.

As a result, it could mean that his curse will be solved or it could mean that everything

could become that much worse depending on how deeply the hatred of the culprit really is..... there are a number of ways that this can go. Not to mention the fact that he will be returning to hostile territory, and the possibility remains that someone might end up making a move on him.

For Alexis, it will be like returning to the needle's tip. No, it might be better to say he is returning to a country full of needles.

Nevertheless, Alexis got over his anxiety and looked up to Gina with resolute eyes. Gina, who had been watching him as well, shrugged her shoulders before taking out a piece of bread from one of the paper bags.

She then proceeded to shove it into Alexis's mouth. Alexis made an absurd \*Muguu\* sound as the surprise attack caught him completely off guard and almost resulted in him choking. At that moment, Alexis's sudden flailing about resulted in Concetta being shaken from her slumber.

"Fuiina, ith..."

"Alexis, have you been attacked by misfortune since you met me?"

".....Acthuly, I thlept shine..... Co-Contheta!"

Concetta, who had been sleeping in Alexis's arms until now, had woken up and had started to nibble on the bread still hanging out of Alexis's mouth. It was a scene so cute it could be fatal for cat lovers as two people—well one person and a cat—ate from both sides of the bread, each taking half the loaf. Well, probably a little more in Concetta's case considering how fast she was nibbling away at that bread.

I watched him go like that for a moment, lost in his cuteness, before having an aside with Gina.

"Gina, did you apply curse avoidance to that bread?"

"Hm? I didn't use curse avoidance on the bread."

"Well but, Alexis's bad luck has occurred....."

So where did she apply the curse avoidance?

Before I could finish my question, Gina started to caress my helmet once again and patted my back.

“There’s no need for me to constantly reapply a spell for a curse placed by a pathetic small-fry witch.”<sup>1</sup>

Gina’s tone showed that she held no falsehoods in what she was saying, and she made it seem like it was not a big deal or something that even needed to be thought about.

She was so beautiful I felt a little embarrassed gazing upon her like this although she did feel a little cold. Still, contrary to her appearance, her voice was low, strong, and got stuck in the ear causing your spine to tremble.

Then, as Gina started to walk away, I—along with Alexis and Percival who had been eavesdropping—were all left behind stunned..... ,

“A real witch,”

and murmured under our breaths.

# Chapter 33

## Witches First

The carriage we got into this time was the widest and the most luxurious one yet. It easily had the fluffiest cushions and brand new blankets. It seems that both the horses and the coachmen can run without rest. The sight of it all was enough to make me leak a sigh of admiration out of my helmet although Gina seemed to not be as impressed simply saying, "I suppose it will do."

Once the four of us got in, the horse-drawn carriage almost immediately got on its way. Even though the horses were running, there was almost no shaking, and even when they increased their speed, virtually no vibrations came through. It's not just special in how it looks but in how it is made as well.

Meanwhile, Concetta was still sleeping in Alexis's arms.

Every time Alexis's arms went numb he tried to set him down, but Concetta would open his eyes and give out a little purr in response. Alexis's resolve would then shake, and he would wait until Concetta lied back down before trying it again... his groans growing louder after every defeat.

After repeating this game several times, Alexis resolutely held Concetta in his arms having surrendered completely.

"Alexis, shall we switch?"

"No, he is sleeping comfortably, so let's leave him be."

Alexis returned my small smile with his own bitter one while lightly rocking Concetta..... and so I drew out a piece of parchment from my pouch. \*Shaa Shaa\* I drew up a portrait of Concetta based off of how he looked sleeping in Alexis's arms.

Concetta's appearance sleeping like a baby was beautiful, so I drew up a picture that could only be described as adorable. I was very confident in the finished product.

"Monette please, my mind needs preparation if you suddenly show me some hideous

monster vomiting out dissolution liquid all over the place.”

“Cute Kitty-cat!”

Impolite! I gave Percival a cold glare before eventually turning my eyes to Gina.

As a fellow witch, Gina will surely understand the splendor of this picture! I looked up to her, eyes filled with hope and expectation. Gina looked carefully at the charm held in my hands.....

“I thought about getting you a spellbook.”

and she started to appraise my magic.

A small, supple hand began to stroke my helmet. Was her intention to praise me through physical means? Her hand worked its way down and touched the side of my helmet.

“Gina, the picture?”

“But it’s a bit risky that you have to use blood.”

“What do you think about my drawing?”

“Let’s find a more efficient way for you to craft your magic. Even if you use blood, you should be able to reduce the amount after awhile.”

“The cute kitty-cat.”

“I’ll show you a few tricks later, so let’s enjoy some sweets for now.”

Gina held out a cupcake to me. My eyes narrowed at the sugary confection in her hand, but I ended up receiving it. Maybe it was Percival trembling while trying to hold in his laughter or maybe it was Alexis hogging the lovely Concetta, but the entire carriage was white.

I frowned inside my helmet. Even though I was able to draw it so well, nevertheless I ate the cupcake Gina gave me without saying another word.

Then I passed my cute little spell over to Alexis. At the moment, he was relaxing just

fine without anything bothering him. Well, so long as nobody put sand on his hind feet.<sup>1</sup>

“Monette, what’s this?”

“It’s so that your arms don’t get numb. It’s not a concrete spell, so the effect will be short though. Would you like me to draw up some more?”

“Oh, thanks, but I am okay. My arms can endure.”

“.....It’s a monster spitting up dissolution liquid anyway.”

“No it’s not!”

While I was burning up with anger, Alexis chimed in with some follow-up laughter and a wry smile.

On the contrary, instead of backing me up, Alexis told me that I did not have to force myself to draw up spells for him. My eyes went round in my helmet, and it was like a fog had been lifted.

He has become uncomfortable with using a spell drawn in blood ink, or maybe now that Gina is here, he feels like he doesn’t need the help from a beginner witch..... the more I think about it, the more obvious it becomes that I have been used.

Alexis took my accusations and returned a bitter laugh before suddenly saying, “Thank you.” His tone of voice was far too gentle and different from the atmosphere we had going until now. I unintentionally ended up scratching my helmet because of how uncomfortable I started to feel.

The unpleasant sound of iron scraping against iron reverberated in my helmet creating a particularly unpleasant noise which ended up morphing together with Alexis’s words and getting lodged in my ears.

After exchanging brief conversation for awhile, the sun eventually began to fall, and a familiar voice yelled out signaling we were at the border. When I looked out the window earlier, I could tell that we were traveling much faster than before. The scenery seemed to be running past us twice as fast as it was before.

I wonder if it is impossible to fully appreciate the scenery when it is going by so fast, but I suppose that is the price for fast travel.

In this situation where everything was going better than perfectly, Gina was the only one who looked genuinely confused about something, staring curiously at Percival.

“Percival, how long will you be traveling with us?”

“Me?”

“Yes, if you keep following us for too long, you won’t be able to make to the city today.”

“...What are you talking about?”

Gina asked her question, and all it did was confuse Percival.

It was a funny sight watching both of them tilt their heads in the same way and at the same time, but neither Alexis nor I really knew what to say, so we both just watched them in silence.

What does she mean for Percival to return to town?

“Gina, what’s the matter?”

“Um, isn’t Percival a guide for this country?”

After he thought about it for a moment after hearing Gina’s explanation, Percival muttered a soft, “Ah,” after he realized what she meant.

“So last night, you told me to go pick those medicinal herbs. You thought it was the fee for me guiding them.”

“...Was I wrong?”

“You are wrong. I am the bodyguard for Prince Alexis.”

When Percival answered her, I nodded as well so that Gina would be certain. Apparently, she misunderstood something.

I laughed lightly without thinking at the fact that a genuine witch could make such a

mistake, but I quickly reeled myself in and apologized for being rude. Still, “So Percival crossed the border along with Monette,” Gina once again clarified the situation in order to correct her misunderstanding.

I gazed at Gina and nodded my head one more time which led her hands to start caressing my helmet once again. “I see.” Her smart, beautiful smile really was something to behold.

“I have misunderstood. My apologies.”

Gina herself started laughing about the whole the whole situation which made everyone else grow a wry smile on their faces. Of course, I was laughing right along with her.

However, it is reasonable that Gina would misunderstand.

If a prince of a country were to visit another country, a welcome would be normally required. Naturally a guide from the government would accompany him.

Sometimes a chosen knight would serve as an escort, a young lady with suitable status would lead him around to deepen their friendship, and sometimes the royal family themselves would come out to view the countryside with them.

No matter how unpopular he is in his home country, Alexis is still a prince. For Gina, the thought that Alexis passed the border with Monette—a witch of his country—and asked Percival to act as a guide..... it’s a natural mistake to make.

However, something seemed to be plaguing Gina’s mind as she muttered, “I misunderstood,” under her breath. For some reason, I don’t think she was referring to just now either..... but it’s none of my business, so I forced my eyes away and looked out the window.

I could see the border hut back in the distance. I was surprised that we had already come so far, and Percival ended up having the same thoughts as I.

“It’s a really fast carriage, isn’t it?”

“Yes, you probably won’t find a better carriage than this if you looked through the whole country. Thanks to that, we will make it back much sooner than planned.”

“Plan? I feel like this trip never had a schedule in the first place.”

“.....I at least have one thing planned.”

“Is that so. What is that?”

“I will return home without dying.”

I shrugged my shoulders at such a Percival.

Is that not an incomprehensible plan? Rather it's not a plan at all. It is a desire.

But I do not mind not pointing that out to him because I see a bit of hesitation in his eyes as he looks back at the border hut. Looking over, I saw that Alexis also had a shadow cast over his face while solemnly looking out the window.

Even though we were returning home, the two's trepidation was obvious.

When I saw it, I was about to say something.....

But once again I swallowed the words, this time because Gina had shoved another loaf of bread in Alexis's mouth.

“Don't make such an awkward face! C'mon and eat!”

“Fiina, I'm alhedy hull!”

“Don't talk with your mouth full! Percival, come over here and eat some as well.”

“Oh no..... I am.....”

“Eat in silence! Come over here Monette; I have some delicious sweets. Let's eat them together.”

“The disparity in treatment is amazing.”

Even though I recognize the injustice, it doesn't mean I complain about it while taking a seat next to Gina.

She handed over to me a delicious looking cookie. It was coated in sugar and adorned

with fruits which made it look especially appealing.

It was crisp, warm taste that made me smile. Meanwhile Alexis was sharing half his bread with Concetta who should have been sleeping , while Percival had started nibbling on the bread forcibly handed over to him.

“Monette, do you know what the one thing in the whole wide world that a witch cannot beat?”

“What I cannot beat... is it a witch slayer?”

Witches can have threaten a royal family and get a country behind them, but witch slayers can penetrate their whims and threaten a witch’s freedom. With their magic, a witch is able to obtain power far stronger than a normal human being, so a witch slayer that can bypass that magic could be put on the same level as other witches who are also immune to a witch’s magic.....

But although I was sure my answer was right, Gina gave me a soft smile and shook her head. Apparently it was something else. I didn’t know what else it could be, but before I could figure it out, Gina started gently stroking the cheek of my helmet.

“What a witch cannot beat, it’s deliciousness.”

“Deliciousness?”

“Well, deliciousness gives a sense of happiness to the person who ate it, and the effect is on a whole other scale compared to our magic.”

Laughing with a large grin on her face, Gina held up a piece of cookie to the mouth area of my helmet.

I wonder is this is what people call one of those ‘Ahh’ moments. Unfortunately my mouth is invisible by the mechanisms of my helmet and magic, so I had to hold her hand and direct the cookie in accordingly.

This tasted differently from the one before as the fruit was a little drier. I wonder how well it would go with some black tea.

“I bought quite a few, so be sure to eat a lot.”

I looked over at the two men and gave them a wry smile as Gina began pulling out more of the sweets she had procured for us, and I shrugged my shoulder at them before turning back around and talking with Gina about all the food.

The border was getting further and further away, and the food was disappearing into our mouths just as fast. Even so, the food Gina purchased is delicious, and she has more than enough to last us the trip.

Meanwhile, three people watched the two ladies pack away the food in complete silence. Even Concetta, who had been comfortably resting in Alexis's arms until now, could not look away from the sight. The image of a plump stomach in the girls' future popped into their minds, and in a panic, the three of them each shook their heads to scratch out those dangerous thoughts.

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## Bonus

### **Armored Girl Monette** [?](#) **An extra story that didn't fit earlier** [?](#)

"It might be better to change the way we call Alexis."

I suddenly put out a suggestion while the carriage was smoothly rolling along—although poisonous moths continue to enter in regularly, we were expecting that to happen, so that fact does not affect on whether or not the journey was going smoothly.

Percival who heard me suddenly lifted his head and looked at me completely confused. Alexis was sitting next to him leaning against the wall having not moved too much in quite awhile. His shoulders do move subtly along with his breathing, so we can assume he is sleeping.

"How to call him?"

"Alexis is carrying his own circumstances where it might be good if we dropped the Prince and started calling him by a pseudonym."

Currently, the surrounding evaluation of Prince Alexis is so low that it has become impossible for it to go any lower.

Some people are even indignant over the belief that Alexis' previous popularity was the result of his trickery, and there is no way to say that these people won't end up making a move. "A courageous citizen finally put down the tyrannical prince." It's not something to be praised from a normal standpoint, but the culprit would still be revered. There is no story more popular than a normal person overthrowing the bad guy.

Percival thought about what I said for awhile before nodding his head with a murmur.

"Indeed. Things could get unpleasant if the Prince is found in this area."

"In other words, we use a pseudonym to avoid his bad reputation, and he will become a whole new person with a nickname."

Because the witch's curse is involved, problems could arise just from the knowledge that he is out with the general public.

He could be accused of coming here to play around even though he is actually looking for a way to break the curse, but if we come out with a completely fake name, the ruse could be discovered. Something like that could further exacerbate the rumors.

That's why it's best to come up with a nickname.

The people in the area will get caught up in our way of addressing him, and they will be fooled. "It looks like Alexis, but those people are calling him in such a way, so he is a different person?"

Nevertheless, it will leave open the option upon discovery for the excuse, "This is the way I am addressed by certain people when I am traveling together with them," and he will be forgiven for the deceit.

It is not the truth, but it's not a lie either. This is the ideal.

But when it came time to decide Alexis's nickname..... I was coming up short.

Is Alec a good one? If we call him 'Alec', the surroundings might misunderstand our relationship as siblings, and in case of an emergency, it would be easy to abandon

'Alec.'

It is common enough name that if it is heard, it would not be particularly noteworthy, and if we were to get into any trouble with another person, we should be able to avoid a confrontation by chalking it up to some 'bad luck' and apologizing.

And so I tried to propose my nickname of 'Alec', but before I could, Percival – who had been thinking with his head held down until now – unexpectedly raised his head and said, "I have an idea." With that...

".....Akkun."

This was it.

"The distance was closed in an instant!"

"Ah, but when I say it out loud, it sounds rude of me."

"No, but 'Akkun' might be surprisingly good. Maybe."

"Do you think so?"

I nodded deeply to appeal to Percival who seemed to be taken aback by my seriousness.

But it could seriously work out. In what world would a prince be called 'Akkun' by his subordinate or a wicked witch? Anyone listening in would feel uncomfortable in a moment, and most people would think, "That Prince Alexis is nothing like Akkun. Surely Akkun just bares a resemblance to Akkun."

The more I talked about it, the more confident Percival became in his own suggestion.

It was around that time that the sleeping Alexis stirred and picked himself up with a small groan.

His deep brown eyes slowly opened themselves up and idly looked around at his surroundings.

".....sorry..... I guess I fell asleep..... Did you two need me for something?"

“No, it’s alright. You look tired, so feel free to get some more rest, Akkun.”

“Then, for a bit longer..... Wait, what Percival?”

“No bad luck has occurred recently, so I will wake you up when it is time to switch shifts. Akkun.”

“.....Monette?”

Why are they suddenly calling me akkun? After having just awoken, Alexis was completely unaware of the changes happening around him—although it would be normally impossible for an ordinary person to arrive at our conclusion even with all the background information—Alexis was left with a large question mark hanging over his head.

When Percival and I both told him, “Good night, Akkun,” and pushed the subject to the side, Alexis’s eyes soon started to slowly close along with all his doubts and confusion. Alexis’s soft breath eventually mixed in with the simple sound of the wheels rolling on soil once again.

“.....This is not it.”

“.....This is not it.”

Such a small conversation was exchanged one night inside the carriage.

# Chapter 34

## The Sound of a Bodyguard Knight Falling 1

A moment after crossing the border, a darkness had spread across Alexis's face, but this did not get by Gina who stuffed a loaf of bread into his mouth. The resulting flailing woke up Concetta who enjoyed eating the stuck out bread.

The combination was truly a splendid sight. In spite of this, Percival sat there stunned wondering where all the tension from before had disappeared to.

And so the horse-drawn carriage continued to run onward, making it possible to reach an accommodation before the date changed. Originally it was planned for us to stay a night inside the carriage, but I am not one to look a gift horse in the mouth.

It is quite luxuriously built, but a horse-drawn carriage is still just a horse-drawn carriage. If asked whether I want to sleep inside it or on top of a comfy bed: the answer would obviously be the latter. Besides, if I stay inside an inn, I can enjoy a hot bath and eat my meal while relaxing.

I was thankful for the opportunity to relax..... but,

“Is there only one room?”

Percival was the one talking with the front desk clerk at the inn.

While listening to them talk, I took a peek at the registry book, and isn't there an open space right there? If it's for the night, they can't deny that there is a room available, but on the contrary, it seems like we were lucky to get this room at all.

It seems that they were fully booked for the night, but a reservation they had had canceled a small time ago. There are two large beds in the room, so four people could easily sleep inside..... the shopkeeper was talking as if there was no problem.

Furthermore, he says that they will prepare a midnight snack for us and add in breakfast free of charge. He refuses to leave this one room open. A true salesman's spirit here.

“It sounds like this was a room that four people had originally booked for the night.....”

Percival continued to try and persuade me, but I didn't have any real objections. It's still better than sleeping inside the carriage. Gina shrugged her shoulders, appearing to agree with me, but she was clearly more reluctant.

A slight relief came across Alexis and Percival's expressions at our responses—probably because if the two of us did strongly object to sharing a room with two people of the opposite sex, they would have been the ones spending the night in the carriage.

Watching them both be so happy, I felt a grin spread across my face inside my helmet.

“No, after all I don't want to share the same room as some men! Percival should sleep in the carriage tonight!”

“Miss Monette, I'm surprised you can make jokes with that helmet...”

“Percival, you can sleep on the carriage's roof. Be careful not to trip over yourself as the road is a little tilted though.”

“.....the roof? Wait, is this retaliation for what I said the first time we stayed here?”

My smile became even stronger underneath my helmet as I performed a little dance in my heart for the first time in a long time with Percival glaring daggers at me.

Of course I am joking. If they were trying to force us to sleep in the same bed, I would have kicked them outside..... I would have felt a bad about it at least. Besides, we had slept over in the carriage several times before, so it is a little late to be worried about two people of the opposite sex sleeping in the same room.

That's why,

“I'm sure that the roof of such a luxurious carriage would be extremely comfortable.”

My one-sided domination of the conversation clearly frustrated Percival.

I remembered the intimidation and sharpness in his glare from before, and it increases my sense of superiority seeing the frustration in his eyes now.

As my laughter echoed inside my helmet, you could see Percival tremble.

“.....I’ll sleep well.”

He murmured.

“You can’t threaten me!”

“Threaten? I was just thinking that I’ll be a little more sleepy than usual tonight.”

“If you feel sleepy, then hurry up and go to bed!”

Laughing as if he was invincible—though his smile looked a little pained, probably because it’s heartbreaking using your own issues like this—Percival’s glare collided right with my own. Of course, there is a helmet making it impossible to tell that I am glaring at him, but still.

Meanwhile, Alexis and Gina were watching us after taking a long distance away. At the end of it, they both just shrugged their shoulders and made their way to the room without us.

Finish up the late-night snack quickly before creating a clear bathing order..... and hurry to finish any work that needs to be done tomorrow before our departure.

Then when it was time to go to sleep, I sat on top of one of the two beds and laid my helmet atop of the fluff.

As the clerk said, the room was set up with two large beds. It is a size that adults could sleep well on even if they were sprawled across, and it could easily be described as a quadruple bed.

If you fall asleep here there is no need to worry about the combinations.

“Monette let’s go to bed on this one.”

I looked up and nodded my helmet as Gina embraced me and started to stroke my armor. As a matter of fact, I will be sleeping with my senior witch tonight.

Based on that, “..... Is it alright for you to sleep with me?” I had to ask. After all, sleeping in the same bed with a large, clunky suit of armor would be bad for the body.

When I asked though, Gina let out a small laugh and tightened her embrace around me. She gave me a small wink before whispering to me, “I will sing you a lullaby.”

A bold declaration. I politely refused since Gina wasn't going to bed right away, but I do wonder what kind of lullaby it would have been.

After we decided the wake-up time for tomorrow morning, I entered the futon alone.

“Atsuuu.....”

It was Gina who was groaning early the next morning.

I slowly crawled out from underneath the bedding and fanned myself after peeling off the futon.

Compared to the mansion built inside the valley, this land and lodging was much higher in humidity and temperature causing sweat to pour down my back and making the futon cling to me.

I started to think about taking a shower... but while thinking about that, my gaze fell onto Monette who was sleeping right beside me.

Monette insisted on keeping her armor on in front of other people, and I insisted on the two of us sleeping together. As a result, Monette had entered the bed wearing all her armor. Although she complained that it was, “Hard to sleep,” in the beginning, she was able to sleep soundly throughout the night, even if she had started to stir after I woke up.

I stretched out my hand towards Monette and started to gently stroke the helmet of my junior witch covered in iron.

“Monette, I am going to take a shower.”

“.....yes..... okay.”

“Please enjoy your sleep even without me.”

I swore that the scorching heat was actually worse out in the middle of the room as compared to underneath my blanket. And I could tell Concetta felt the same when he leapt off of Alexis’s chest, following closely behind me as I made my way to the bathroom.

If it was with Concetta, I might try taking a lukewarm bath. Thinking about it, I picked Concetta up in my arms..... before putting him right back down when his fur started to cling to my sweat-drenched skin.

Then after awhile, a shadow rose up with a groan and a grunt from the bed next to the one Monette was sleeping in..... It was Percival.

I scratched my head several times with half-opened eyes and slowly got down from my bed. I picked up a cup I had haphazardly placed on my desk last night without turning on any of the lights and emptied the contents down my throat.

Then I tried going back to my bed..... but I missed it and headed to the next bed over belonging to Miss Monette. I cuddled together with the sleeping Monette and gently tapped on the bed.

Monette, who had just gotten to sleep after being awoken by Gina earlier, slowly woke back up..... and groaned with still sleepy eyes.

“Monette, I’m sorry I could only get us one room.”

“.....Next is Percival?”

“The best room aside, for all you’ve done for us, I should have at least gotten you your own room where you could take off your armor and relax. You can’t have a proper sleep in that armor.”

“.....I have been sleeping just fine until now.”

“I won’t sleep at all in the carriage tomorrow. I want you to get as much sleep as possible.”

“.....Why..... Why are you waking me up like this if you want me to get as much sleep as I can?”

Regardless of Monette, who continued to complain and grumble, Percival continued to laugh and tap, tap, tap her helmet.

He wanted her to go to sleep as fast as possible, but his behavior was producing the exact opposite effect.

Eventually, Monette’s grogginess did outweigh her overall annoyance, and her voice did change from a constant groan to a resigned, “Good night.” At those words, Percival softly smile, placed his arm underneath Monette’s helmet, and quietly said, “Good night, Miss Monette.”

It was the so-called arm pillow.

However, Monette had no margin to complain about it at this point. Percival would return to sanity after fifteen minutes at most. Her best bet would be to ignore him and sleep for now, and when she was fully rested she could torment and curse him to her heart’s content.

Then of course, after fifteen minutes Percival was curled up radiating self-hate.

“I did it again...”

It was ten minutes of silent depression before I said anything.

Sanity had returned slowly like an incoming tide, but the self-hatred had sprung forth suddenly like a boiling geyser. I instinctively sighed while scolding myself; all the while my eyes dropped down to my side when I felt something pressing down on my arm.

It was, of course, a pile of iron armor. Miss Monette.

My eyes shot open at once upon realizing what I had done, staring at the arm pillow I had forced upon her. She must be really angry..... Thinking so, I hesitatingly called out Miss Monette’s name—prepared for the worst.

What kind of unspeakable curse will she unleash on me? Maybe I’ll get lucky and

things will be settled with her punching me in the gut? No, she will probably make me simmer for a while and curse me after I have dropped my guard down. Even if she decides to go with all three, under the circumstances, I will have to just accept it.

So I steeled my heart and worked up my courage to speak up. “Miss Monette.....,” again, somehow Miss Monette did not answer or give one of her usual witty retorts. For the moment, she just continued to rest her helmet on my armor.

“.....Miss Monette?”

Is she so angry she can't speak?

A cold sweat built up on my back and an urge to run away ran through my chest.

However, Miss Monette never responded to me no matter how much time past, nor has she moved at all..... Rather than being angry, could she be.....?

“No, there's no way.”

Denying the possibility to whomever might have heard my thoughts, I carefully listened in to Monette's helmet.

I was careful not to wake her up—just in case she was sleeping—because if I happen to wake her up—considering the improbable scenario where she is actually asleep on my arm right now—it would be hard for me to explain this situation, and me being head-butted by a helmet would be a fair response.

When I carefully touched her helmet, I listened in as carefully, and quietly as possible.

Suu...

The sound of slow breathing.

Listening to it, my face instantly turned blue.

I was prepared for her to scream something right in my ear, but I heard something completely different instead. Gentle, quiet, slightly higher pitched breathing.

“.....She's sleeping.”

Staring down at Monette, I had completely misunderstood the situation.

I cannot see what is inside that silver-tinted ball of iron, and the whole thing looks ridiculous lying on its side on top of a bed underneath the covers. Nevertheless Monette was definitely asleep inside it.

Even when I called her name she didn't stir, so she is pretty far under at that.

Right next to me.

With an arm pillow.

Shoulder to shoulder.

“.....!”

I could no longer breathe at that moment. I could still grunt and make this weird, choking noise, but I could no longer breathe in.

The moment that I realized Monette was sleeping on me, a heat built up and burned through my body. My chest hurt from my heart beating inside it like a church bell, and the breath I was finally able to take was hotter than a campfire.

Something sounded within me. It was a loud, clear sound. Like something falling somewhere. No, not somewhere. It's because I knew exactly where this sound was coming from, exactly what this feeling meant, and that was why everything felt so hot.

That sound just now was the sound of falling in love.....

It's not really a sound but more like a vibration you feel through your entire body.

Well,

The iron made a gentle sound.

Monette had woken up and was frustrated that her armor was getting crushed, but the gushing emotion of the man doing it left him completely unaware to the fact.

# Chapter 35

## The Sound of a Bodyguard Knight Falling 2

Percival Galette desperately tried to calm himself down.

Even now, Monette was still face down asleep on his arm. After embracing his emotions to her, in the end, even the sense of touch and the weight on his arm was enough to make his heart speed up and to turn his vision opaque.

He doesn't think she's cute. He's thinking that she's really cute.

"Calm down Percival Galette..... She's wrapped up in a suit of armor....."

I tell myself this over and over again.

Monette's whole body is covered in armor. I don't know the color of her hair nor the color of her eyes. I'm not even positive that there is a woman in there.

If there was a stranger in this room right now, there is no way they would assume that there was a woman in there. Rather, they would be wondering why there is a suit of armor on the bed in the first place. If they were the clerk, they'd be yelling right now to have the suit of armor moved off the bed and tossed to the corner of the room.

Besides, since I'm giving the suit of armor an arm pillow right now, that stranger might actually decide to call a doctor, and said doctor would then run a thorough diagnosis of me because there is clearly something wrong with my head. This entire scene would be absurd.

The point is, Monette's appearance is much to quirky.

If she were to stand quietly in the hallway, you would think she was part of the furnishings.

For some reason such an armor is appearing cute.

No, of course it is Monette inside the armor who is cute, so a feeling of romance isn't

too weird, but Monette is sleeping in a full body suit of armor.

Yes, it is a suit of armor!

Telling myself once again, I took a deep breath.

To calm down my heart which is ringing like a dinner bell, I close my eyes—dropping the room into complete darkness—and try to regain my calm.

“Calm down, I..... the other person is armor, a full body suit of armor. What is so cute about it?”

I remind myself of the facts before taking a deep breath in, then breathing out.

Each word is sucked into my consciousness, and the raging ocean of emotions that disturbed me until now smoothed out.

At the same time that my thoughts regained order, a bitter smile began to leak out across my face as all the stupid thoughts that had been plaguing me until now culminated into one clear revelation.

That’s right, I’m in love with Miss Monette..... So I conclude with myself.

I have never seen what kind of woman Monette is underneath that armor, and I have no idea what she looks like without a wall of iron masking her. Even Alexis doesn’t remember what she looks like, and he was the one who called her ugly.

I do not know what kind of woman Monette is, her time in that armor is all that I know. I do not want to judge a woman by her appearance, but a full body suit of armor is obviously an exception. Far from how she talks or how she looks, I can’t even say I’m positive on what her gender is, and a person would be hard-pressed to distinguish her from a hallway ornament.

I cannot think of such a Monette as ‘cute.’ I’m sure that this is all just an overreaction to a feeling of comradery I have with her as two people working to dispel the prince’s curse. To mistake friendship for love, isn’t that too ridiculous for a royal guardsman such as myself?

Reaching my answer, I nodded my head inside my room of darkness.

Although Monette's helmet was still resting on my arm, it no longer bothers me now that I have recomposed myself..... although my arm is feeling a little numb.

"What in the world was I thinking?..... I wonder if I'm still a little sleepy."

Denying my past actions with a bitter smile, I opened my eyes and looked at Monette who was still sleeping in my arms..... Before hurriedly turning my face away.

"What!? Too cute!"

And, that's it.

Despite all my conclusions and denials, after all <sup>Full body armor</sup> Monette still looks cute.

Once again the heat in my chest flares up as I look at her. The heart that should have already calmed down was once again ringing like a dinner bell, and all of my concentration was diverted to my numb arm where the helmet was resting. As for the numbness, I even started to consider the feeling pleasant and no longer wanted it to go away. The weight –

"What's wrong with me!?" I am!!"

I was about to scream at the top of my lungs. I covered my face with my empty hand and muffled it back into my throat.

However, possibly noticing the noise, Monette moved, "nn....." and made a small grunt. The armor creaked against itself, and the helmet on top of my arm shook slightly.

\*Badump\* I thought my heart would bust out of my chest, and in a panic I shook the suit of armor while calling Miss Monette's name.

"Mo- Miss Monette, sorry to wake you up."

"Percival, are you sleepy again.....?"

"No, now I'm....."

"Then quit shaking me around, and go to bed. We have to get up early tomorrow....."

Monette was complaining while still half-asleep.

On the other hand, I wasn't sure what to say and responded with an, "Yes, um, ah....." Miss Monette still hadn't left my arms, and she has gone back to sleep even though she would be so clearly against the current situation.

It was a cheap reaction, but also cute. That's why my heart was beating away like a drum even though my mind was yelling, "Calm down."

Monette is seeing the current situation as, "Percival is just sleepy again," so she is just doing her best to ignore the situation and go to sleep. So all I need to do right now is regain my sanity, release her, and stuff away these emotions.....

And I was going to do just that, but when I was about to call out her name to let her know I was moving, Miss Monette spoke up in a sleepy voice, "Good night."

\*Badump\*

And I pulled the iron armor closer to my chest.

The heart that had until now been erratically beating like a thrashing bull had slowed down to a slow, steady pulse as if it were a lullaby hum.

In that moment I blinked my blue eyes a couple times.....

".....That's unfair."

I muttered noiselessly while once again covering my face with my free hand.

I looked at the silver hand resting on the bed. I have no idea what kind of hand is inside. I have no idea what Monette looks like or what kind of woman she really is. All I know about her is what I have experienced from this trip.

But even so, the Monette sleeping in my arms right now is unbearable, and I can't help but to treasure her.

"Aah dang it, it's perfectly....."

I have fallen in love perfectly.

Finally recognizing and accepting the emotions springing forth within myself, I slowly removed the hand from my face and released a deep sigh..... ,

“Aah what are you doing Percival? What are you doing.....?”

From the depths of my heart, I darkly muttered, “This is bad,” from within myself.

“So he acts strange whenever he’s sleepy?”

Gina sounded so surprised by this information that I ended up cocking my helmet to the side while eating breakfast.

Percival has the curious disposition that whenever he is sleepy, he will embrace and fawn over other people. It is something that is beyond his control, but after fifteen minutes goes by, his senses return to him and all the memories of that time remain with him.

After hearing the explanation, Gina looked at the three of us with a strange expression on her face, but still replied, “I see,” before continuing to graciously eat her croissant.

“I hugged Monette last night as well, but is there any connection to that person’s actions and his intentions?”

“Hmm, what do you mean?”

I’m not too sure what Gina means, and I tilted my helmet to the side once again while buttering up my warm yet firm toast. It is unpleasant that the crumbs would fall into my armor no matter how careful I was, but it was tasty, so I didn’t mind.

Gina seemed oddly satisfied with my reaction as she released a relieved sigh while forking up some of the tossed salad in front of her. She then picked out some of the sasami<sup>1</sup> and called Concetta’s name.

Currently sitting on Alexis’s knee, Concetta had been swiping the sasami off of his salad up until now, but after being called, relocated to Gina’s knee.

Alexis stared down at his own salad all the while muttering, “I like sasami,” after realizing that over half of it had already been stolen from him.

This was just another part of his bad luck.

Although, the most unfortunate person in this current situation would have to be.....

While thinking about him, I took a quick glance outside.

“So, that’s why I will not Percival into the room.”

Finishing off our conversation like that, Gina smiled elegantly while stroking Concetta’s head who was vigorously eating the sasami..... I did not agree nor disagree, instead opting to just laugh instead.

When I saw her smile, I knew there was nothing else to say. Turning my eyes to Alexis, I saw that he was wearing a conflicted expression, but as he turned his eyes to look over his shoulder, I could tell that he wasn’t going to say anything.

The veranda from which the morning sun was pouring through.

There, Percival swung about unconscious while being rolled up in a futon hanging from the ceiling.

It’s not that sad of a scene. Gina said that his punishment will end when the chord inevitable snaps, and he falls from the ceiling.....

Well, he’s not that high up, and it seems like he is asleep right now. Well, I am impressed that he is able to sleep in that type of situation, but I should say as expected of someone capable of sleeping while embracing a full body suit of armor. If we leave him like that, he should be fine. Deciding so, I refocused my attention back to the toast and ignored any noise ongoing outside noise.

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## **Bonus**

### **Armored Girl Monette ☒ An extra story that didn’t fit earlier Pt. 2**

“This is serious. Hot water is coming out!”

It was only Gina who had no idea what Alexis was talking about.

I completely skipped the shock stage and jumped to the stage where I looked down on him with pity while Percival patted him on the back saying, "That's great."

".....Hey Monette, what's the big deal?"

"Because he's only taking cold showers for the past year, his brain has cooled down a lot."

Gina tilted her head, clearly not understanding what I meant, but I wasn't sure how best to explain it to her.

Still, after awhile she did start to understand what we were talking about as she sighed, "bad luck." The tone she took while stroking Concetta who was resting on her knee shows that she clearly considered this someone else's problem. Although it was probably because of her that we had hot water right now in the first place.

Thinking that way, I made sure that Alexis thanked Gina for her help. He did eventually after thoroughly enjoying his hot water bath.

Then the time came when everyone had finished bathing and gotten ready for bed.

Alexis was tirelessly fanning himself while asking if he could open the room's window a little bit.

Is it that hot? Everyone's expression was clearly asking this question. It was only Alexis who was stretching out his shirt's neckline, fanning himself while standing next to the open window in order to cool himself down. He kept taking large breaths and mumbling to no one in particular about how nice the night breeze felt.

"Prince Alexis, have you come down with a fever?"

"No, I think it's something else."

"Different? But you're hot."

"Yeah, ever since I got out of that hot water....."

As soon as Alexis said the words, I wanted to jump on them.

You're hot because of the hot water? I had also taken a bath, but the hot water that came out of the faucet was an ordinary temperature without too much heat. Rather, if you were to try and enjoy the night breeze while your hair was still wet with that water, you would most likely end up with a cold.

Although Alexis is enjoying the night breeze right now.....

"After a long time, your body became adjusted to the temperature."

I had to hold myself back from laughing as I told him the answer.

"His high adaptive ability is actually working against him....."

"This is also part of your misfortune," I said underneath my breath, but Alexis ignored me. "It's just hot in here," he said, but as Alexis made his way back towards the bathroom, the fact that neither Percival nor Gina would look him in the eye did not go unnoticed.

# Chapter 36

## A Hardship after a Hurdle

We leave the inn, borrow a carriage, and we are on our way once again.

Today's departure lacked the excitement that yesterday's did, and a lot of grumbling and mumbling about what the future holds could be heard bouncing around the carriage walls. The tension was obvious on Alexis and Percival's faces. No matter how far from town they traveled from, two or three rumors would always pop up, and this time they had left the country entirely.

That's why it was imperative that they travel immediately to the royal palace and explain about the witch's curse. His Majesty would have to believe them if two different witches testified on his behalf. Alexis was a wonderful son to them, and someone they were deeply proud of until a year ago.

I am sure they will understand. That's why Alexis's eyes seemed to shine slightly with the light of hope, and Percival was patting his back saying, "Soon His and Her Majesty will know the truth."

Then would come searching for the culprit alongside the two witches Monette and Gina to solve the curse.....

But Alexis and Percival didn't say anything after that. Because even if they find the criminal, there is no guarantee that things will ever be able to return to how they used to be. It has already come so far that even if the cause is resolved, the effects could leave behind scars that would never heal.

To see Alexis who would be unable to say anything as mud is thrown at him from across the country while taking the thrown....., it might even become necessary for him to abandon his line for succession. Percival's knuckles turned white from gripping his sword handle too tightly due to stress.

By the way, it was only Alexis and Percival who were so beside themselves thinking about the future like this.

While stroking Concetta atop my knee, I waved off their worries as, “Something that can’t be helped,” while taking out a loaf of bread and shoving it into their mouths. Afterwards, I pulled out a sugar confection from my bag for me to enjoy. Concetta cried out when I did, clearly asking for some bread for himself as well.

Although his attitude towards me is a little different from other people in the carriage, I suppose that’s just that natural result when considering the position I hold.

“So Monette, when everything calms down, be sure to invite me over to your old castle as well.”

“Yes, Robertson would be delighted to meet you Gina.”

“A spider best friend, I look forward to meeting him.”

Whenever a serious air began to brew and oppress the carriage, a piece of bread was packed into the guys’ mouths. I continued petting a cat straight out of a fairy tale eating my own piece of bread.

While such an unfamiliar sight was transpiring inside the horse-drawn carriage, a familiar sight was passing by the window.

Roofs densely crowded together radiating around a large building at the city’s center. The figure of the royal palace always had looked as if it was watching over the downtown area. This will be the end of my journey to a different country. Realizing so, I breathed a sigh of relief.

...Yes, this was supposed to be the end.

Although we had safely arrived to the city area, we were quickly surrounded by knights as soon as we had descended the carriage, and we were brought to the royal palace without anyone saying a word to us.

Everyone wore a rigid expression, and some people were even releasing a bit of bloodlust while holding sword in hand.

“Such a generous welcome is nice, but completely unnecessary, don’t you think?”

“Well, yeah I suppose...”

Gina was walking along while holding Concetta looking a little irritated at the whole affair. I tried to be as nonchalant as her, but dumbly nodding and halfway agreeing with her was the best I could manage. A knight was sticking close behind us, watching our movements prepared to act in the event that one of us moves away from the group.

As expected, I have a long way to go before I can be at Gina’s level.

Rather, Gina’s level where she can speak mostly leisurely in this type of situation is too abnormal. Indeed, Percival had yet to say a word as he glanced back and forth between his former colleagues with the stern expressions, and Alexis—who was the most vigilant of us all—was white as a ghost.

It’s natural that he would be pale right now.

“I do not know what type of rumors could be floating about, so we will head immediately to the royal palace.....” The plan itself was going perfectly. Although I’m sure what he was planning and the current situation are far from what he imagined.

He had yet to say anything either, so I continued to glance after him from the corner of my eye here and there.

In the first place, if he were to say anything, he would end up silenced by the knights.—In the first place, Gina had already been told to refrain from talking by one of the escorting knights. Of course, she shut him up with the words, “What type of knight tries to silence a woman?” As a bonus, Concetta meowed right alongside as if to back up his mistress.—

The knight seemed to be instinctually intimidated by Gina, so after clearing his throat with a cough, he backed away.

“Gina, you’re pretty amazing aren’t you?”

“Really, don’t forget that you’re a witch too Monette. A witch is someone who can’t be held down by ordinary human beings. Here, embrace Concetta and walk with your head held high.”

“No, Concetta right now.....”

I tried to hold back, but Concetta was pushed into my grasp and held him a little cautiously. I wonder if the mewling he is doing right now is him thanking me.

If you walk in to the royal palace while holding a cat, you will certainly give off a certain air about you. By confronting a witch with that much confidence, you might be better off just fighting a demon with your bare hands.

“But he’s heavy...”

Muttering such, the knight walking behind me coughed once, most likely realizing that he was to blame.

Then we were taken to the royal palace and placed before his Majesty.

The reunion of Alexis and his parents was a moving sight..... it goes without saying that this was not the case. Naturally, nothing was prepared for us in way of hospitality. In lieu of an audience, we had numerous knights surrounding us on all sides. This was starting to feel less like a homecoming and more like an interrogation.

The king held a steady gaze down upon us while the queen blatantly looked away, only occasionally turning towards us with a wrinkled nose before looking away once again. It was the second prince, Alexis’s younger brother who stood between them and us.

The three of them were clearly not delighted with Alexis’s return, and the heavy air they were giving off made even me, someone not sitting squarely under their gaze, was affected. The intimidation I felt sent a chill down my spine, yet the iron of my armor almost burned at the touch.

“Is this the majesty of the royal family?” I muttered in my heart. – It would still be awhile before I learned that the source of this intimidation came from somewhere else. –

“Alexis, do you know what you’ve done?”

The king’s voice was low when he spoke, and there was no warmth in his voice for the son returned from a long journey. On the contrary, he seemed to be almost blaming Alexis for having come back. As Alexis whispered, “Father,” underneath his breath, his words and feelings were being completely ignored.

Still, despite his unease and pain, Alexis held his head up and looked back at the father who talked down to him.

“Using government expenses for personal pleasure has been a crime since our country was first...”

“Government expenses!?”

Alexis was completely taken aback by the accusations his father put forth.

But it was Percival who shouted out his outrage. Knights jumped forth and held both of his arms to prevent him from moving, yet he looked back at his king without fear.

“All the travel expenses we used were what I earned! We never laid a hand on any government expenses!”

“Silence, Percival! Screeching at the top of your lungs like a witch casting a curse. Accompanying Alexis so far on his folly, have you no pride as a knight!?”

The king’s frosty words came down like a hammer, and all Percival could do was narrow his eyes in frustration.

He moves due to his loyalty to Alexis. Yet the king standing before him was also someone he had made a pledge to. No, obviously his loyalty to the king would have to weigh more than anything else, as was his duty as a knight.

That’s why Percival backed down with a heavy heart, muttering, “fidelity...” in a voice no one could hear.

“Alexis, you will be remanded to your room for awhile.”

“Wait, I must find the culprit...!”

“Are you still going on about such nonsense that you were cursed by a witch? Do you not understand all the trouble I’m going through to lighten your punishment this much?”

“Punishment...”

The word lodged itself in Alexis’s throat. Then, in case he was planning on moving,

another knight reached over and grabbed his arm.

Percival told them not to touch the prince, but all that did was lead more knights to grab hold of him to prevent even the tiniest amount of resistance.

I watched all of this through my helmet and looked around me to see if anyone was making a move on me.

Unfortunately, I don't feel like sticking my neck out into this family drama, and I'd rather not be dragged into this heavy atmosphere. If I were to move poorly here and get caught by some knights, things could get unpleasant. I may be a witch, but it could be said that I'm not that different from an ordinary girl.

However, if things keep moving at this rate, then Alexis is likely to end up imprisoned. Likewise, Percival will end up dragged off somewhere and could end up as a scapegoat for the current situation—in other words, the worst possible situation.

This is bad... or so I was thinking until Concetta drew my attention away with a hiss.

Unlike his usual demeanor, Concetta had his ears pointed down and his teeth barred, and all the hair on his body was standing upright.

"...Concetta? Hey Gina, Concetta is..."

"Something fishy has come."

I tried to ask the smiling Gina, but before I could...

"Please! Please don't do anything terrible to sister Monette...!!"

A girl entered my field of vision inside my helmet, making a pained appeal,

"Emilia."

and I whispered her name to myself.

# Chapter 37

## Of Witches and Witches

“Please. Please don’t do anything terrible to Sister Monette...!!”

Emilia ran in, grief deep in her voice, running straight to her fiancée Alexis... not. She actually ran straight to Rodel, her future brother-in-law.

He made Emilia stand right next to him and rubbed her arms to calm her down. Afterwards, he moved his hands down to her waist in order to support an uneasy Emilia. Slowly, the distance between them shrank, and then it shrank some more.

Rodel was inferior to Alexis in terms of looks, but with Emilia wrapped up in such a gorgeous dress standing next to him, don’t they look like the perfect couple?

.....No, they probably already are a couple. The fact that His Majesty is not saying anything despite their unacceptable proximity is proof of that.

“I beseech you Prince Rodel... Please...”

She begged while clinging to Rodel, eventually resting her hand on his chest.

She wrapped her hands around a necklace hanging from Rodel’s neck like she was saying a prayer.

At that moment, my waist gave out and my knees hit the floor. The sudden impact caused vibrations to transmit throughout the armor, and my whole body felt like it was bristling.

When I looked down to find out why I had suddenly collapsed, my eyes were drawn to my waist—specifically at my pouch. Inside I kept all my parchment and ink that I used for my spells.

In addition... , there was something else scratching at the back of my mind, but before I could put my finger on what it was, Rodel—who had been busy trying to comfort Emilia until now—called out to me.

“Emilia truly loves you. Will you please stay by her side?”

“...Me?”

“Emilia is lovely yet still a bit childish. Won’t you stand next to her and watch her become a wonderful princess?”

The tone of Rodel’s proposal, it was like he was truly thinking about her..... It’s like he actually meant what he was saying. As a matter of fact, when I peered back towards Emilia, I saw the loving look in her eyes as she looked up to him, and I could feel my expression soften slightly.

Emilia as a princess..... it would be just like all those fantasies we used to come up with as kids.

As I looked over the figure of these two easy-to-understand people, Emilia was looking back at me, wearing her heart on her sleeve. Her eyes that were always lovely were now shining with a mystifying light.

Such an expression from my cute little sister made my chest, hidden beneath this cold, iron armor hurt. A small sigh passed through my lips as I opened my mouth to speak..... ,

\*Potan\*,

Off of my head, I swallowed the words I was about to say when something fell on top of my helmet.

Emilia let out a small scream. The Queen let out a rather breathtakingly shrill voice right along with her, and the eyes of the surrounding knights were stunned.

However, I, who was inside the helmet that everyone was pointing towards and screaming at, had no idea what had just fallen on my head. That’s why I stretched out my iron gauntlet to find out what..... and I called out the name of my very best friend, the spider that came scurrying down in front of me.

“Robertson.”

Eight hairy legs along with a plump stomach and buttocks. Undoubtedly, it was Robertson who I hadn't seen since I left the abandoned castle.

My eyes inside this helmet began to shine as bright as this spider's as he slowly climbed down a hanging thread to Concetta's head who was still lying in my arms.

On top of Concetta's fluffy head, Robertson was riding on top like a decoration..... This combination could not be described as anything less than supreme, and it was impossible for me to hold back the ecstatic squeal that leaked from my lips.

At the same time, I whispered out a small thanks to Robertson whose landing had caused me to swallow the answer I was about to give to Rodel's proposal.

What a lovely and gorgeous little sister I have. I have no choice, I will stay by your side.....

Why I thought such a thing, I can't say the reason now that I've calmed down..... I really don't know why I was going to say that at all. Thinking so, my gaze turned back to Emilia cuddling up to Rodel.

“I can protect her, but I'm afraid I cannot stay by Emilia's side.”

“But sister..... Why?”

“Because I am a witch.”

Witches are whimsical. Whether it be a request from the royal family themselves or a cute little sister's wish, we don't do anything unless we want to.

So right now I would obviously refuse.

“Right now I feel like unraveling Aleix's curse.”

Once I said this, a pained expression spread across Emilia's face while Rodel who was standing next to her and Her Majesty wrinkled his brow. It was probably an innate reaction to the word 'witch.'

But there's a witch out there who has cursed Alexis and Percival..... the prince and

his accomplice who've been using government funds to play around, it's only natural that things would turn for the worse now that I think about it.

Rodel stretched out his arms in some effort to shield Emilia from me, and the surrounding knights strengthened their alertness.

Their piercing gazes seemed to penetrate through my armor and felt like

they were looking right through my whole body as well. I felt sweat start to bead up on my forehead, I tried to divert my eyes anywhere else..... and the Gina called my name and brought my eyes back up to her.

When I looked up at her, I saw caring eyes radiating love, and with a tone that made me feel like all my problems were somewhere else,

"I'll take Robertson and Concetta into my arms, my prentice witch.

she said.

Those words didn't sound like much, but in my bones I understood, Gina was seeing me as a true fellow witch.

Given that, I obediently nodded and handed over Robertson and Concetta who was using Robertson as a crown. As I passed them over, though, I made sure to tell Concetta how pretty he looked like that, and I could tell he also enjoyed having Robertson ride his head like that.

Tearing away my gaze off of the two of them, I turned my eyes back towards Alexis and Percival. Their expressions carried a tint of despair that has never been there before, and when I saw it, a murky mist rose up in my chest.

I reached out to my pouch in order to push back that mist and took out a pen and piece of parchment from inside. That muddy feeling only felt worse when I saw Emilia was still holding her hands together as if she were in prayer.

"Hey, what are you doing!?"

Raising his voice, a knight grabbed my arm.

Although he put a bit of force in his grip, it was an arm made of iron. There wasn't any

pain when he grabbed me, but the sudden movement did cause the parchment and pen I was holding to fall to the floor.

“Hey, knock it off! Don’t touch Miss Monette!”

And then Percival’s voice rose up as well.

Several other knights joined in on holding him down, but Percival continued to twist and jerk his body around despite the increased hold. Even though his own circumstances were like this, his eyes were still pointed towards me.

At the sight, I stood back up off the floor.

It’s my job to curse him.....

Those words ran through my mind, and I forcibly pushed away the hand of the knight who had so rudely grabbed me.

However, these were knights who underwent rigorous training on a daily basis. Being so forcefully shaken off, he did not hesitate to swiftly draw out his sword from its sheath and pointed it at my head.

With a sharp blade in front, I closed my eyes.

However, the impact I had expected did not arrive, and after working through that moment of fear, I opened them back up.

Rather than a cold edge, golden hair shook before my eyes now along with a broad back. Grasping the raised arm of the knight.....

“Percival.....”

Although I called out his name, he did not turn around nor did he answer me.

It was a knight whom he had trained beside, yet it was a knight he now stood against. Especially now that he had fought off several other knights holding him back, there had to be a limit to his strength against one of his peers. Even now I could see his arm trembling.

“Percival, what are you thinking!? Why do you do so much for such a prince...!?”

I guess the knight in question was acquainted with him as he put forth this question. Perhaps they were close. Of course, Percival was a knight, so him standing against his comrades like this, men he had spent his days alongside, could not be called amusing.

I can not see what type of expression Percival carries on his face. Still, when he asked, "What is a knight's loyalty for?" I could see the power returning to his outstretched arm.

"If a knight's loyalty means turning my eyes away from the facts and taking not even a second to doubt these follies lodged against our prince, then I'll gladly give up the title of knight here and now!"

Percival strong declaration pushed the confronting knight back for a second..... before he returned to his senses and stared him down with a stern expression.

Even if Percival had grabbed hold of this knight's sword arm, that only meant that the rest of Percival's stance was off-kilter and fragile. With that gap in mind, the knight gave Percival his reply by shaking his arm free after giving a straight punch to Percival's gut.

The sound of the blow echoed inside the castle hall. Following it was a low groan from Percival. Still he did not move and remained as a wall standing before me.

Only being able to watch his back until now, my gaze was eventually drawn to the sight of the knight raising his sword above his head, aimed squarely down on Percival.

It's my job to curse him.

I won't forgive anyone other than myself who tries to hurt him.

"Do not touch a witch's prey with those filthy hands of yours!"

I ripped off the armor covering my right arm, and I stuck my pen not at the piece of parchment lying on the ground..... but to my own palm.

The nib made a sound as the pen tip broke skin. In a moment, red hot pain would rush

through me, but I still continued to press forward and dug the pen further into my flesh.

“Alexis!”

It was Gina’s voice who called out to the captured prince.

She saw my actions and tossed Concetta from her arms towards Alexis. As if Concetta was also aware of his Lord’s intentions, he put out his paws, sticking to Alexis’s body while his fur glowed a dazzling light with Robertson riding atop his head. At the same time,

“{Prostrate}”

my voice resonated with the surroundings.

In the next moment everyone let out a low groan as if they had just been hit before lying down and stretching their arms on the floor. The king, the queen, of course Rodel and even Emilia.....

Although some people quickly raised their faces up afterwards, the distorted facial expressions they carried showed this was all they could do. There were lots of people wriggling their fingertips, scratching at the floor, but they were unable to move their limbs.

It was like a work of art to those who could still stand which included me, whose breath had gone rough inside my helmet as blood trickled down my exposed hand, Alexis who was stunned and could not grasp the current situation, and Gina who looked extremely satisfied while looking around her..... and Percival who was looking down at the knights wondering what had just happened.

While moaning was the only sound that continued to reverberate inside the room, my senses quickly returned to me.

As soon as they did, the pain from my palm became apparent, but I don’t care about that right now.

“Let’s go..... Anyway we have to get out of here!”

“Well,... shall we head for somewhere else for now? Percival, since you’re still standing,

please bring Alexis with you.”

“.....Yes, Prince, let’s retire for now.”

Following Gina’s orders, Percival rushed over to Alexis. Alexis was not lying down, but his feet would not respond to him, and he could only walk with Percival’s assistance.

Concetta descended from his arms and ran alongside their legs. On his head sat Robertson, the two’s combined glow acting as our guiding light.

I quickly left the room following after these two..... Disregarding Emilia’s voice calling out to me from behind.

# Chapter 38

## A Cup of Tea

Everyone in the royal palace was prostrating on the floor, and I had started to worry about those people working in the kitchen or near the fountain. This was because of the possibility that a chef cooking something may have started a fire when he was forced to lie down or that people working near the fountain or in some water may have started to drown themselves. Now that I think about it, there were probably people who had fallen off ladders or down the stairs as well.

“I hope they’re alright...” I grew more worried about them the more I thought about it, but when I mumbled those words under my breath, Gina who was walking beside me laughed a little.

“Monette sure is kind.”

“Kind?”

“Oh yes. Me, I was starting to get annoyed by the overinflated ego of everyone in there and was about to blow them all away.”

“Scary.”

“Hoho, that’s just the way it is.”

“Such a scary thing..... but, I see, that’s why you have Concetta.”

When I muttered Concetta’s name underneath my breath, Concetta—who was walking a little ways in front of us—thought he was being called, and his fur started blinking light. It stopped blinking a few seconds later when he realized I was not calling for him. As usual, such a mysterious cat.

No, this cat is not the only wonder here. Robertson is also shining brightly.

When I called his name while he was riding atop Concetta’s head, this time he started blinking. This is surely..... But, since when.....?

There were lots of questions flying through my head, but they were overwhelming me, so I shook my head violently inside my helmet while continuing to step forward.

Let's take things in order, starting with what had happened in there. Yes I tell myself.

Gina could sense danger and realized I was about to release some big magic I guess—although her thoughts were going in a far scarier direction—so she tossed her familiar towards Alexis.

Further ahead of me, I could see Alexis who still had to rely on Percival's assistance in order to walk. He was affected by my spell as well, but Concetta had managed to block some of my spells effects, so he was not made to prostrate on the ground as well.

.....Alexis.

Thinking up to this point, I stopped my feet.

The moment I did, Percival turned around to face me along with Alexis who was partially there for the ride.

“Miss Monette, what's the matter?”

“Oh, no..... what will we.....”

“For now, let's escape the royal palace. After finding a safe place to hide, we can see how things develop and plan our next actions from there.”

At Percival's urging, my helmet clunked around as I nodded my head and immediately started walking once again.

We walked past those people lying on the ground, sometimes having to step over them..... every once in awhile my large boots would stumble over some rude person lying around in a bad spot. Although, I was the one to make them fall over in the first place.

We left the royal castle and headed towards the forest in a way that would allow us to avoid crowds as much as possible.

Fortunately nobody had followed us from the castle, and the people of the city didn't care to pay us any mind. I felt a little bad for the people probably still glued to the floor,

but giving them a silent apology from in my heart as we entered the forest was all I was going to give them.

Even though we would hide ourselves in the forest, obviously we could not hide in my castle.

Although the old castle is located inside the forest, it's not a place that is impossible to find without a guide like Gina's mansion. The knights sent by the king would soon arrive there to search for us.

After discussing what to do amongst ourselves, Alexis came over to apologize to me.

He wore his hopelessness plainly on his face, and I am starting to wonder if he really needed Percival to support him because of my spell or because of his own mental state.

"Monette, sorry..... because you got involved with me, your house....."

"Alexis."

"If I go back now, then everyone else..."

'Perhaps they will leave everyone else alone,' is what he was probably going to say. Instead, all that came out of his mouth was a small 'Uff.'

To say it simply, it was Gina.

To say it specifically, it was Gina's bread.

It was crammed down his throat, and Alexis's deep brown eyes went round. It seems that he had not expected her to pull off this gag in such a serious situation.

However, Gina was not someone to care about something as trite as the lingering atmosphere, and following in his lord's footsteps, Concetta ignored the atmosphere, jumped onto Alexis's legs, and began nibbling on the hanged out bread.

Even though Concetta was clinging to the collapsed Alexis's chest, he paid little mind to the cat nibbling away at the food in his mouth. His eyes were locked squarely on the witch before him.

"Fuina....."

“Alexis, you are free to decide to give up and allow yourself to be captured by them. But since you and I have shared the joy of traveling together, I will offer you some friendly advice.”

“Fuende adfife?”

“Because I’m going to crush this country, I would give myself up afterwards if I were you. If you don’t, you might get caught up in the chaos.”

Alexis couldn’t believe the terrible things he had just heard come from a woman who was currently giving a very elegant smile. Percival was taken aback as well being left staring at her blindly, but I have to admit that even I was caught a little off-guard by her sudden declaration.

Gina’s smile was beautiful and calm; it was a smile you would expect from a mother. If we hadn’t seen the words come out of her mouth, we might have thought that there was a fifth person among us.

But there wasn’t a fifth mystery person, and the words, “crush this country,” had clearly come out of her mouth. There was no evil grin or maliciousness coming from her, but neither was there any regret.

“Gina, to devastate this country.....”

“Isn’t it natural?”

Gina narrowed her eyes slightly, gave a gentle laugh, and stretched out her hands to begin caressing my helmet.

Through the iron, I do not know what her skin feels like, but the kindness was transmitted loud and clear, and her loving expression spoke volumes. But still, the declaration she made remaining burning in my mind, so I turned my eyes up into hers.

This was the first time Gina had visited this country. The king’s attitude was appalling, but this type of behavior could be said to have been expected due to the curse’s effects. Yet why is it that Gina would be so set on destroying this country even if Alexis and Percival ended up embroiled in the chaos? I had thought about it for a moment before tilting my helmet to the side with a clank and asking her.

“.....Is it because of poor they are at hospitality?”

Towards my inquiry, Gina laughed before returning a nod. Apparently, I was right.

In other words, she was angry because when she visited the royal castle, neither Rodel nor His Majesty had taken the effort to act hospitably towards her, so she was now going to ruin the country. Alexis and Percival seemed unable to accept that for some reason.

“Gi- Miss Gina..... hospitality, surely that’s not all?”

“What are you saying Percival? Isn’t this natural for a family who doesn’t even offer their guests tea?”

Gina is a refined woman who looks all the more beautiful when she laughs—completely contradictory to what shes says as if this is all some big joke.

This gap creates an air of intimidation. Alexis and Percival feel it even as they smile and try to write this all off as the joke they hope it is. Me, though, I understand. I was the only one looking at her with shining eyes through my helmet.

Yes, this is a witch.

They are capricious, moody, and impossible to judge by ordinary people.

Regardless if they are another witch or a member of royalty, wherever they stand, their relationship with a witch can be determined over a simple cup of tea. It is a time where you must bow your head for the survival of your country.

Yes I was brought in to this wonderful aura, but Alexis and Percival were still unable to believe her.

A witch is someone unjudgeable by ordinary humans, and they are most certainly not witches. That is why all they can do is stare after Gina while the person in question laughs asking, “What would you have me do?”

Whether he wanted to honestly give her an answer or he was trying to find out if she was being truly serious, Alexis ignored Concetta’s whining while removing the bread from his mouth and called Gina’s name.

“Gina, why would witches...”

“It’s because we’re witches. Even though this member of the Avalkin family had asked, I was not given a cup of tea. Not only that, they had to gally to dismiss a witch’s curse as if it were some seasonal malady caught from standing too long in the rain. This isn’t about me; this is about the mockery made to all us witches.”

This is why a lesson must be taught.

The tone of Gina’s voice was elegant as it was intimidating, and her words twisted around the listeners heart and squeezed. How long before a low level witch such as I can enthrall those around me like this?

Alexis tried to say something more about Gina’s power and what is and not allowed in society, but for such a refutation..... the bread was returned to his mouth. It does not appear like any objections are allowed.

Percival tried to say something as well, but he met the same fate as his master. I was the only one who stepped forward and tugged on Gina’s sleeve.

“Gina, I will join you, for I am a witch as well!”

“I thought you would say that, Monette. Now, let’s show these people what a witch is, and what they can do.”

“Yes!..... In addition, I have something I have to do.”

My enthusiasm dropped with my voice as I unconsciously murmured, “My sister,” underneath my breath. Gina overheard me however and so she stuffed a loaf of bread into my helmet while narrowing her eyes. It was slightly crushed, but this had no effect on the taste.

It’s just a little more compact..... the moment that I thought this and started nibbling on my own piece of bread, the sound of leaves shaking reverberated overhead.

Somebody has come. We were all aware of this fact immediately, so we scanned the environment around us, remaining alert..... ,

“It sounds like you’re talking about something funny, my cute nephew. That story, I wonder if you could tell Uncle as well?”

We were all stunned by the man who appeared through the leaves.

He looks to be about as old as my father would be. His brown eyes were aged and worn, but they had a light to them like a child who had just found an exciting new toy to play with. He carried a unique atmosphere that was both equal parts warrior and village fool, yet he also had an air about him similar to His Majesty's and Alexis.....

I really didn't know what to make of this man in front of me, but then I turned my gaze to Percival and Alexis.

They had become as pale as ghosts however they weren't carrying the same desperation they once had. If I had to describe it,

Ah, a troublesome person came..... ,

is what their expressions are telling me.

## Chapter 39

# The Troublesome Royal Brother and the Prince who Turned the World Over 1

For now, in order to hid ourselves we were urged to get into a gorgeous horse-drawn carriage, and Gina was calmed down with the fragrant tea given to her. I was given some black tea with sugar in it as well, but when the servant bowed his head and apologized saying, "I'm sorry that this is all we had," my helmet creaked as I tilted it to the side. Us witches only desired an appropriate cup of tea, so something this delicious was more than acceptable.

By the way, Alexis and Percival were sitting a short distance away with tired expressions on their faces. "You should have some water as well," was what they were told, but the two men have spent the last couple of minutes staring into their cups that had not contained anything to begin with. Isn't the disparity in reception just a little too obvious?

The man's name was Ordo Radoll. He holds the position of royal brother and is Alexis's uncle.

Alexis introduced this man who should be nowhere near the capitol with strained cheeks.<sup>1</sup> Gina smiled and returned a graceful bow to royal brother, so I bowed my helmet down as well.

When I raised my helmet back up, I gave Ordo a good look over. He looked quite similar to Alexis who was sitting close to me.

Maybe they would look the same if Alexis were to suddenly grow older, mix in an intimidating aura with a taste for the wild, and improve his physique? It might also be necessary to twist his organs around.

A person with an overwhelming presence.

Although Ordo was the royal brother, he has dreams about ruling the country, and he had the ambition to one day take the throne..... No, instead of embracing ambition,

it is more like he was always like that.

Even after his brother had officially been crowned as the royal heir, this man had still pulled many tricks to try and get him disqualified, and it was said that even had tried to assassinate his brother while he slept.

“.....After I tried to take over on my 13th birthday, I was driven to a remote area away from all of my relatives so that I couldn’t start up a rebellion. I should stay quiet after all that..... is what they seemed to be thinking at the time.”

Alexis heaved a large sigh as he continued the story his uncle had started. As we could have guessed, Ordo was driven to a remote area, but against the expectations of the royal family, he was not quiet.

The remote area he was driven to was a special area that had retained a portion of its autonomy despite it existing inside the country. It goes without saying that it was quickly brought under Ordo’s reign. As soon as he was driven away, he grabbed the hearts of the people who lived there and declared independence. Despite being cast so far away, he was still picking a fight with the king.

Troublesome would be underselling it. Although despite the distance between him and the capitol, even he had heard the tale of the young noble woman who lived her life wearing a suit of armor staying inside an old abandoned castle outside of the capitol. Of course, it was all information collected from bad rumors.

“.....I’d always get tons of complaints about him, but he never left his territory so there was nothing we could do. Every time he did something it would mean a huge headache for me.”

“Excuse me Alexis. But I will have you know that recently have moved passed the need to scratch my brother’s head in his sleep.<sup>2</sup>”

“That’s not really something you should say with so much pride.....”

Inbetween Alexis’s mixed sighs, Ordo remembered back to his younger days and made a small sigh of his own while muttering, “I was such a fool back then.”

Everyone’s gazes immediately focused on him after these words.

You could feel the sadness in Ordo’s slim brown eyes as he gazed out the carriage

window. I wonder if he was ashamed of the folly of his own actions or if he was lamenting the trust lost between him and his family. I tried calling out to him from within my iron helm..... ,

“It was stupid of me to think that I could simply take over by having my big brother killed. In order to sit on the throne, I must strengthen where I stand first.”

I shut my mouth and narrowed my eyes inside my helmet at his words.

Apparently, humans don't change that easily. Ordo was still attempting to scratch the king's sleeping head. Or maybe it would be more apt to say that he is trying to flip the whole country over and scratch his feet instead.

He was an adult who had already fallen far.

Alexis had a heartbroken expression on his face, and his words, “I thought so,” made even me feel exhausted. I was able to fully understand Ordo's nature just from how he talked with his nephew.

Talking about such things, is he completely unaware about all the looks that are being thrown his way? Or is he just ignoring them? — Given what I know about him so far, it's probably the latter. — After finishing the introductions like that though, he changed the subject with a clap.

His expression immediately changed to an evil-looking grin.

Unlike His Majesty who carried a neat, royal look or Alexis with his tender, elegant demeanor—I watched Ordo who looked so similar yet so completely different.

“I planned to bite you over a year ago. Though those strange rumors had suddenly become rampant, and your reputation immediately plummeted. As a result, my brother grew plans of kicking you out as well, so all my effort ended up completely wasted.”

“.....Sorry for the trouble.”

“So I reworked my plans and waited for the right opportunity to strike. I thought about causing some extra chaos during the confusion of your return and using the chance to kill my brother, but by the time I reached the royal castle, things had already gone weird. I thought this might be my chance, so I followed you.”

“You could have helped me..... did that thought never occur to you?”

“Hm? No not really. I thought you might be useful if I picked you up, but I intend to abandon you if it turns out you’re useless.”

“Of course.”

Despite this bombshell remark, Alexis waved his hand as if he was used to it. There was no surprise or disappointment there.

Listening to their conversation, I stopped watching them with half-closed eyes through my helmet and just shut my eyes entirely. I had heard rumors about Ordo before, but isn’t this way beyond any of that?

And now, such a troublesome has picked us up.

With that in mind, now that I have gotten involved with such a troublesome individual, I increased my vigilance. What I want to say is that this is Ordo. There is no way he is just helping us out of the kindness of his own heart. Then again, he already said flat out that he was helping us because, “we might be useful.”

Is he not quite the straightforward man? Although the ease of which you can understand him has no connection to his good will for now.

“But Uncle, I have no role anymore.”

“Alexis?”

“It’s all gone. I have nothing anymore..... It would be better for you if you hadn’t picked me up.....”

Alexis’s voice had severely sunk when he remembered what had just transpired between him and his family. Percival watched his prince with sorrow in his eyes, rubbing Alexis’s shoulders to try and calm him down. Watching such an exchange, Ordo was slightly thrown off, and his eyes opened wide. His surprised expression somewhat resembled Alexis’s, but he quickly returned to normal as he turned this way and slightly bowed his head.

I was so astonished that no words would leave my helmet while Gina who was sitting next to me smiled gracefully and let out a small laugh.

“I thought these two were just a good little boy and a foolish nephew, but it turns out they’re both idiots. I’m sorry.”

Ordo’s tone was so polite, I could tell he was apologizing from the bottom of his heart.

But even if he apologizes like this, I’m not to sure what to do, so I just tilt my helmet to the side. Gina on the other hand was clearly amused and was still smiling widely. Looking up at her, is that expression not saying that she has full respect for this apology?

Then Gina noticed my line of sight, and her beautiful expression gave me a playful wink.

“It’s no wonder those guys need the help of two witches.....”

“Really, don’t mind it. Something like this can be fun every once in awhile.”

As Gina started laughing once again, Alexis and Percival could do nothing but look helplessly on.

The two’s perplexed expressions only added on to Ordo’s surprise who let out a deep sigh.

Alexis called out to his uncle while looking partially embarrassed at the sudden familial scolding he was receiving and looking partially annoyed that it was his uncle who was the one doing it.

“Uncle, what are you.....?”

“For now you have nothing, but your words can overthrow this country and even the world.”

“Me?”

When Alexis tilted his head, incredulous to what he was hearing, Ordo sighed once again.

Percival was likewise sitting beside him with a mystified expression. I wonder why Alexis who just had to flee from the royal castle would be able to overturn the world.

While the two men were where wrapped up in their own confusion, I was able to hear Ordo mutter, “Really,” underneath his breath before he turned his gaze to Gina.

# Chapter 40

## Even if Everything is a Witch's Curse

“Good Alexis, even if you search this entire world, you will not find a single monarch with a witch on their side. Do you know what that means?”

“Not really. Does it mean that not many countries have tried making them allies?”

“Wrong, fool. If you actually think that, then the other nations will have you wrapped around their fingers.”

Alexis's eyes had gone even rounder than before as Ordo told him off with a tone chiding him for the fact that something like this even had to be explained. It's an idea that is far too strange for him. I can see a large question mark hanging over his head right now.

Having seen such an Alexis, Gina let out an elegant laugh and added on, “It is just as Ordo says.” Before he could say anything in his defense, Gina shoved a piece of bread into his mouth though saying, “Be quiet for a moment or else the story cannot progress.” Then Concetta, who should have been sleeping, was suddenly up! He turned his eyes towards Alexis, and as to be expected at this point, he jumped over to his lap and started to nibble on the bread hanging from Alexis's mouth.

Percival looked like he wanted to say something or complain, but before he did, he pressed his own hand against his mouth. “I won't say anything, so please spare me the bread,” he muttered through the gaps of his fingers.

Ruling with a piece of bread, is this another skill developed through from a witch's skill?

.....No, it's probably something else.

I forcefully denied this thought that had popped up in my mind as Gina was still facing Alexis.

“Let's see,” Gina mused as if she were about to tell some funny joke as her eyes focused

on him narrowed more and more.

“For example, if Ordo here were to say, ‘Lend me your power so that I can change this world,’ I would ignore him because I really do not care. But if Alexis were to say, ‘I’m tired of everything going on, so help me change the world by destroying this country,’ I would accompany you.”

“Gina, Alexis seems to completely lack any form of ambition.”

“Indeed. Monette, what would you do if he asked that?”

“If Gina goes, I will go as well.”

Of course I gave an immediate reply, and Robertson who was sitting on my knee put one of his legs forward. I bet he is also agreeing to join in.

His declaration was small, but it warmed my heart. I gently stuck out my iron covered forefinger, and my finger and Robertson’s leg touched. It seems that we are able to communicate through our hearts.

Gina watched the whole exchange between Robertson and me, and so she reached out her hand to my helmet and brought me in for a hug. She was grinding her cheek against metal, but this just goes to show how much she loves this newbie witch who looks up to her. As I thought that, a smile spread underneath my helmet.

I suppose this interaction between Gina and I just serves as more evidence for why Alexis could overthrow the world.

If Alexis decided to do so, Gina would assist him because she has taken a half interest in this matter, and I would join in as well following Gina like a chick following its parent. In conclusion, Alexis has two witches backing him.

Originally, witches would never just agree to something that sounds like it might be a pain even if it is a royal decree, so there is no real precedent in any other country for this type of situation.

Of course, even this situation is due to a witch’s whim. Nobody else can try and take charge even if Alexis were to ask Gina to follow Ordo’s command.

“From this point on, you are now a bigger threat to me than my brother.”

As Ordo clearly stated this, the realization finally started to sink to for Alexis, freezing him.

But Ordo showed little interest in him, and on the contrary, he changed the subject and moved his eyes to Percival. Clearly not expecting to be suddenly called upon, Percival just sat there under Ordo's gaze with a dumb look on his face.

“By the way, why is Percival accompanying Alexis in this situation? Actually, what is the situation?”

“No, that is, even I do not know why I am alone in defending the Prince. But with the witch's curse..... so, His Majesty and the people.....”

‘Being deceived’, Percival's words and explanations about his comrades and the citizenry quickly lost volume as his voice descended into some unintelligible mutterings. He was most likely reliving what had just happened in the palace.

Clearly not motivated enough to care about Percival in his current state, Ordo listened to the story and said, “What, so this is all some hoax brought about by a witch?” Everyone was slightly taken aback by his casual response.

According to him, he figured that something strange was going on in the background, and some of the strange details of what he had learned led him to believe that a witch may have been involved. Halfway through, he started praising the witch for her unique yet effective method. —It seems like he was having a little fun, probably because he was thinking about how he could pull said witch to his side—

“Uncle, when you heard the rumors..... you didn't believe them too?”

“I was able to figure out that it was a hoax, but I could never find out where the rumors were coming from.”

“Even though I asked everyone around me, they had all been deceived.....”

Even though they were only ever baseless rumors, the fact that there was someone out there who did not believe them was surprising for Alexis.

Ordo took this moment to look at Alexis very closely and placed his hand on Alexis's shoulder.

The wild look in the royal brother's eyes was able to slightly calm down the prince with eyes of the same shade. The sight of these two like this almost looked like it was straight out of a painting, and I unintentionally let out a sigh of exclamation.....

"I don't trust you, and I never had a high impression of you in the first place."

I narrowed my eyes and lost every ounce of warmth that had built up in me.

".....Uncle, you don't need to shake me."

"I have always despised you just for sharing the blood of my brother. Furthermore, I knew that there was no way that some childish honor student like you would ever put your hand on a woman like that."

"The fact that my uncle has such stalwart faith in me truly touches my heart."

"Rather than listening to some absurd rumors of infidelity, I thought, 'I guess even he has someone he wants to do it with.'"

"That's highly appreciated! I have never once been unfaithful!"

I am innocent! Alexis's mood rose as if Ordo was sending energy straight through his arm. At the same time, Ordo was calling Alexis words like 'virgin,' but everyone ignored such small details.

"I have never pushed my work off onto someone else, nor do I have any illegitimate children. I have never used government expenses for personal pleasure!"

"What, as usual you're a childish honor student."

".....No, I can no longer return to being a good honor's student."

Ignoring Ordo's words of calling him boring, Alexis returned to his normal behavior and turned his eyes on me.

I could tell he could feel the pity in my eyes even though they were hidden beneath my helmet, but even then he had a determination to him. His deep brown eyes looked darker than usual, and the longer he looked at me, the more a sense of pressure grew on my shoulders.

Looking like he wanted to say something, he narrowed his eyes trying to find the right words. At the moment I was about to urge him to spit it out though, he called my name before I could say a word.

“Monette, I have been continuously apologizing to you. I had hoped to be forgiven for my past mistakes, and I thought that if I just kept apologizing to you, someday I would be forgiven. If everything that had happened, if all the problems in my life were because of a witch’s curse, I figured that I would finally have forgiveness.....”

“.....Alexis.”

“But it was me. I was the one who rejected you and caused you pain. I will continue to apologize for what I’ve done, but I no longer want you to say that you forgive me..... Even if everything was caused by a witch’s curse, please continue to hate me forever.”

Alexis’s eyes showed his strong will.

He is coming to the heart of the matter, and so he has abandoned the witch’s curse as an excuse.

For what reason, there is no need to think about it.

“Even if everything was caused by a witch’s curse, I cannot forgive them. That’s why, I cannot ask you to forgive me either.”

Alexis’s words were heating him up and I, who those words were aimed at, had lost my breath underneath this iron helmet.

He abandoned the excuse of the witch’s curse and gave up on being forgiven for his former disrespect. Because he decided that he was not able to forgive everything that had been done to him because of a curse, he was not going to seek forgiveness for the pain he had cause either.

Any words I could say were lost, so I took a deep breath in order to calm myself down and gather my thoughts.

My mind wandered to past memories of my parents and my sister. The happy times I spent with my family and the fall that had ended it all.....

The time where the expectations my family held of me were crushed, the

hopelessness, the misery, the jeering eyes that chased me all the way into the old castle. But was this all because of Alexis's words? No, it's different. Those words were the starting point from which all the misery started.

In the same vein, a single word from my family could have caused it all to go away, yet I still have not yet heard those words.

I also have to come to a decision. Believing so, I held Alexis's gaze.

"Yes, of course. Even if everything was caused by a witch's curse, I will not forgive the pain I have received."

These words were for Alexis, but it seems like they had rebounded off of him and soaked into my armor, or perhaps even my heart. It has blended into my heart, run through my body like an arrow and penetrated those memories I held of my family.

Thinking so, I breathed in deeply once again.

# Chapter 41

## The Misunderstanding of the Heavily Armored Noble Girl and Witch Slaying

Looking back and forth between each of us to assure our readiness, Alexis's gaze eventually fell on Percival.

The two of them probably confirmed their resolve to each other long ago as he was sharing Alexis's serious expression. Alexis bowed his head and called Percival's name in an attempt to voice an apology, but Percival obstructed him from saying any more.

"No, I have already abandoned my title as a knight and the name of my house."

".....Percival."

"From the moment I followed you out of the royal palace, I was prepared to take responsibility and face expulsion."

That's why Percival was speaking with a bitter smile.

In this case, he was also losing everything he had. He continued to doubt a single rumor that everyone else steadfastly held to be true about the prince's unfaithfulness and claimed it was all the effect of a witch's curse. Then he ignored the warnings from his surroundings and left the castle along with Alexis.

Because he did not mind throwing away the title of a knight before the king whom he had sworn to protect, it is unavoidable that Percival's actions as a knight would be seen as a betrayal towards his country.

Although it is natural that his title of knight would be deprived, his name is removed from his familial line as well for the sake of appearances.....

He had already thought about everything that could happen and followed Alexis out of the palace anyway even though he knew doing so would throw him on a bed of nails. So when Percival says so, Alexis's expression relaxed and he returned words of thanks

instead of an apology.

Ordo looked strangely amused as he watched the interaction between the two of them. The way his mouth arced up and his eyes narrowed, isn't this him clearly saying he is planning something no good?

"There are two witches, one childish prince, and an unemployed..... There will be a lot of work to be done."

"Un- Unemployed!?"

"Of course. What would you call yourself now that you are no longer a knight?"

"That's..... Un-Unemployed....."

As the sudden realization brought low Percival's previous determination, and Ordo began laughing at the funny face Percival was making. "I could always use another miscellaneous clerk," he called out between fits of laughter.

To be honest though, being a witch is not a real job and Alexis's position as a prince could be called into question right now, so the three of us are not in too much of a different position from Percival now that he is no longer a knight and has been expelled from his house. Whether the person in question is conscious of this while Ordo continues to kick him while he is down could not be said as the only thing apparent about him right now was the sad expression on his face.

I stared at Percival for a moment before turning my gaze to my armor clad chest.

His repugnant expression was supposed to make me feel good, but somehow I am not happy at all right now. The girl inside my heart is not doing any sort of dance. Instead, there is this large, dark swirl running rampant in my chest smothering any type of jubilation and causing my eyebrows to scrunch up instead.

While trying to push away this unpleasant feeling, I turned my gaze to Ordo who I decided was having too much fun.

"Sir Ordo, Percival is not unemployed."

".....Miss Monette, I meant no offense. Please forgive me."

“I will not pursue it. However, if the enemy were to use witches like us, then Percival would become our strongest trump card.”

My remarks, as if I were trying to defend Percival, were foreign to me, and I did not understand why I was voicing them. Still, I proceeded to talk.

If there was ever a chink in his armor, then I would poke it thoroughly, but even when Ordo had managed to find such a gap, my mood refused to turn sunny. On the contrary, my stomach was stagnating.

Is this also due to a witch’s whim? If so, isn’t this far too inconvenient? While thinking such things, I turned my gaze back to Percival.

I can’t say anything for certain, but the vibrant blue color of his eyes look strange to me.

“Percival, when I used magic in the royal palace, everyone fell down, but you remained standing. Can you understand why?”

“.....That’s right. Certainly at that time, I was standing. Everyone else was groaning in pain, but I did not feel anything. Why is that? Even though I did not have Concetta with me, why.....”

“There is only one reason.”

Hearing my words, Percival moved his eyes around the carriage as if something in here would give him the answer. Was he remembering what I had once told him, or was he ruminating the things he had done so far? Either way, his blue eyes started to slowly shake.

Having reached the same conclusion I had, his eyes opened wide and his breath got caught in his throat. Accordingly, he opened his mouth and gave me an almost inaudible answer.

“No way, it’s because of my love.”

“It’s because Percival is a witch slayer..... Huh? What did you say right now?”

“Nothing! No, nothing please go on talking. Because I’m a witch slayer..... wait, I’m a witch slayer?”

Percival's eyes went round and released a strange cough after I gave him the answer. For a moment there he was saying something, but he was mumbling and I could not hear what he was saying. Well, he himself was saying that it was nothing, so there is no need for me to press for any more information.

More importantly, there was the matter of him being a witch slayer to discuss.

As a matter of fact, not only Percival but Alexis as well had frozen, and even Ordo was giving Percival a surprised look while mumbling the words, "witch slayer....."

But Gina was not surprised. She was stroking Concetta who had jumped back to her lap with a somewhat tender yet expressive look in her eyes. Seeing her reaction, I realized that she probably knew since long ago.

"But Miss Monette, you said that there were no witch slayers anymore....."

"Yes, I thought that all the witch slayers had been wiped out, but that was just an assumption I made after reading one book, and that book was a mystery novel. Gina, were all the witch slayers wiped out?"

"Yes, that's right. But unlike witches, the traits of a witch slayer do not flow through a person's bloodline. That's why witches can always stamp down on witch slayers, but they can never be rid of them permanently."

At Gina's words, I once again remembered where I had gotten all my information from.

The book I read did not talk about how witch slayers came about. What was written in it was about the incident that led to the event known as the 'witch hunts' and the long struggle from then on and how witches were cruelly hunted.

It had also written quite extensively about a few of the famous witches, and while the material was truly fascinating, it was conspicuous to say the least. It was a book made purely for entertainment. That was the one book on the subject I had read.

And it was written in that book that the witch's 'witch slayer hunt' had stopped at the end of the book. That's why I misunderstood and thought that all the witch slayers had been eradicated in the end.

If all the family members were killed, then there would be nobody to pass on the witch slayer bloodline, was what I thought.

It is not merely a fact of, 'the last witch slayer was killed' but a matter of 'this was the last witch slayer we found and killed before growing bored and stopping.' Witch slayers were born after that it is just that there were no witches who cared enough to hunt them down.

Because I had thought that there were no more witch slayers, the fact that Percival was a witch slayer went by completely unnoticed by me. But now that I think of it, were there not several times that Percival had resisted a spell?

I should have noticed it sooner. As my mind and heart fell with regret at my own inexperience, Percival was mumbling to himself finally starting to grasp his own status.

"I am a witch slayer..... Is that why the curse did not affect me.....?"

"A witch slayer is immune to all magic. Whatever witches come in the future, their magic will be unable to do anything to Percival....."

I only realized what I was saying as I said it, and my voice trailed off before I could finish.

There is no doubt at this point that Percival is a witch slayer. Witch's magic will not work on him. There is no witch who can curse him: past, present, or future.

Even Gina, a witch who has inherited the blood from the long line of the Avalkin witch line shrugged her shoulders and said, "It is impossible for me."

No witch can curse a witch slayer.

Even when everything is over, I cannot curse Percival.

".....What do you mean, 'you can curse me when everything is done'? You cannot curse a witch slayer."

"Miss Monette!?"

"I have been deceived. Percival is a liar."

\*Hmph!\* With a huff, I turned my head away and hugged a cushion to my chest. Then I told him from overtop the cushion, "Witch slayers are the mortal enemies of witches,"

before throwing myself back into the comfy seat's cushiony embrace. Percival hurriedly called my name.

"Miss Monette, I didn't know!"

"Whether it was known or not, it is a fact that I cannot curse you. Percival is a liar."

"Then you do not have to curse me directly. When everything is over, please hit me with a brick."

"No. I would become a criminal."

Tearlessly, I buried my helmet into the cushion. The muddy mist inside my chest has dissipated, and in its place a whirlpool has begun to swirl. Listening to Percival's voice, that vortex unnecessarily accelerates.

That's why I stuffed my helmet into the cushion telling him that I would hear no appeal. In the end, Percival kept talking, saying, "Then just beat me with something like a brick," offering a mysterious compromise.

Alexis was wearing a bitter smile with a sense of frustration that our interaction had destroyed the air of tension and the determination he had just finally built up. Suddenly, he turned his gaze onto me.

"Well, if Percival is a witch slayer, then perhaps the Lady of the Lake.....!"

It was Gina who stopped Alexis from finishing whatever it is he was about to say. Of course, she did this with her signature Gina bread attack.

"Fui, Fuina, wha....."

"Oh, it's nothing. Concetta, please eat up."

Gina allowed Concetta to jump from her lap and eat up the hanging bread effectively sealing Alexis's mouth. As a result, Alexis resigned himself to his fate and held Concetta close to him.

He did not try and say anything more partly because he could feel the pressure coming off of Gina and partially because every time he tried to talk, the bread in his mouth vibrated slightly and Concetta meowed at him. Sandwiched between a witch and a

familiar, Alexis closed his eyes without asking for any assistance.

Inside the carriage, Monette had her helmet buried into the cushion repeatedly saying, “Liar,” and “Exaggerating,” while Percival sat there looking confused trying to think what he was supposed to do in this situation. Alexis had transformed into Concetta’s plate while Gina’s graceful smile carried an intimidating feeling that would not allow any unnecessary remarks.....

Watching all of this go on while the country was soon to be in turmoil, Ordo laughed to himself saying, “I picked up something good.”

# Chapter 42

## Troublesome Royalty's Luxurious Mansion

After a few hours of moving forward with a tense air, the horse-drawn carriage slowly came to a stop.

I sluggishly moved my helmet from the cushion, sleepily muttering, "Percival is a liaaar....." while peering outside with half closed eyes.

Apparently we have reached the inspection point at the territory's boundary. There were a few guards that ran up to meet the carriage, and their eyes looked dizzy when their gazes met with mine. They are most likely surprised to see a full body suit of armor peeking out from the carriage their lord is riding in, but that was nothing compared to the look they gave when they saw that the unfaithful prince Alexis was in the carriage as well.

One person ran up to the carriage in a panic, but he made sure to control himself enough to speak quietly so that only Ordo could hear him. I guess trying to smuggle such a suspicious group into the territory was useless.

In contrast, Ordo calmly raised his hand, "It's alright. Let us pass," and finished the issue with a word. With that signal, the security bowed their heads low and left us.

Once everything was settled, the horse-drawn carriage finally started on its way once again, and Ordo cackled with a large smile spread across his face.

"It was bad to take our time like this. Security is a nightmare every day like this."

Ordo's tone sounded oddly satisfied despite the content of what he was saying.

In the first place, he seemed to have confidence in his defenses which is why he was so daring while performing certain actions.

As if to say, "I do not allow other people to enter my territory so easily," but I decided that none of that had much to do with me and shrugged my shoulders before directing my eyes back out the window. After awhile, there was a second check point that did

perform an examination of the carriage—probably to make sure we were not rebels holding their lord hostage and sneaking into his territory.

It was very different from the country's border that we passed through before that went without the guards even looking inside the carriage to see who was crossing over and ended after the driver and guards had a friendly chat.

We have fled from the royal palace to this place, but will we be able to rest?

Maybe if I had magical feet, I could just jump up into the clouds and relax up there.

I thought about fluffy cloud bedding as my helmet rested back onto a cushion, sleep taking hold of me as Ordo continued to brag about the surrounding lands.

Ordo's mansion was big enough to leave me stunned as I looked upon it, decorated with fancy trim yet having a sturdiness to it that left it intimidating like a fortress. A fountain was set up in a fine garden, and in terms of of gorgeousness and luxury, it would in no way lose if compared to the royal palace.

Although there were some places with so many decorations that it felt too conspicuous, but even that served to give off that air of intimidation a commoner would feel walking to a nobelman's mansion. Is it not actually a very homely mansion?

The interior did the exterior a service, having high quality carpets that spread over long corridors and expensive vases and suits or armor lining the side as decorations.

Ordo walked down one of these halls in a dignified manner, and for the first time since I met him I felt the dignity that came from being a lord.

Besides the looks of reverence and respect that the servants gave Ordo as he walked past, the servants mostly just stared at the rest of us and frowned.

Is this not a little too rude? However, Ordo vouched for us, and after hearing his words, the servants had a relieved look spread across their faces before they gave him another bow and left.

“In order to sit on the throne, you have to solidify the ground underneath you.”

These were the words he said in the carriage.

Indeed, it seems that his territory is firmly compacted and upheld.

Walking behind such an Ordo, I stopped my feet because Percival had fallen out of line with the rest of us and was looking at a suit of armor standing at the side of a hallway.

Tilting my helmet in curiosity, I aligned myself next to him and took a look at the piece myself. It was a decorative suit of armor that had most likely never been worn. However, the expression Percival wore as he stared at it was completely serious.

“What’s wrong Witch Slayer Percival?”

“.....I feel thorns in your voice when you call me like that.”

“It is just your imagination, Witch Slayer Percival.”

“Of course. I guess I’m just being overly cautious.”

“That’s right Witch Slayer Percival. So what are you doing? Was there something strange about this armor, Witch Slayer Percival?”

Emphasizing the ‘witch slayer’ part to try and work out some of this strange feeling bubbling in my stomach, Percival gave a small sigh before his gaze returning to the suit of armor lined up in front of him.

Unlike armor for actual warfare, this one was polished beautifully and kept a sword decorated with ornaments tied off to its side. Would it be too luxurious to call this a masterpiece?

“It is fine.”

“Well, it is certainly a wonderful suit of armor.”

“But it’s just fine. It is not cute.”

My eyes opened wide in surprise at Percival’s words.

Armor lined up on the side of a mansion hallway, if it looks fine then that it enough. Wanting it to look cute is something nobody would want at all. Wearing hair

ornaments on top of the helmet and a gorgeous dress overtop the chestplate, is that what he means? It's more funny than cute.

Even so, Percival was looking at the armor and giving himself a self-satisfied nod. Is his expression just a tad too sunny for the type of self-evident observation he is making?

A voice called back to us to keep walking. Still, I do not know the reason at all for his observations causing my eyebrows to crease and furlough together underneath my helmet, but before I could ask him what it was he was going on about, Alexis called back to the two of us to quickly join back up with them.

"I cannot check all of them to be sure, but my armor was not cute at all, and the rest of these decorative pieces are just fine."

"Percival, what are you talking about?"

"No, it's nothing."

I chased after him, my helmet still tilted in confusion as Percival continued to walk on while muttering something to himself.

We walked further into the mansion, and eventually we ended up in Ordo's private office.

It was a spacious and luxurious room decorated with art pieces collected from both masters and amateurs. I do not feel like gauging the value of this room alone.

Although it was so elegantly furnished, Ordo walked through paying little care to trinkets and baubles he put out, so I directed Robertson up to the ceiling and asked him if he wanted to make a web for himself. If these decorations serve for no other purpose than to show off his wealth, then I am sure he will not mind if a spider makes a cozy little home for himself.

Although a real avid collector may faint if they were to hear such a thing.

I do not care whether a person has authority or not, but doing something like this is certainly refreshing.

In such a room, Ordo urged each of us to take a seat on his sofa. The feeling of my body sinking into the fluffy cushions was pleasant, and my accumulated stress from sitting in the carriage for so long finally had a release.

“I’m afraid I’m not too good at opening wine bottles. Gina, Monette, do you have any requests?”

“My, I don’t mind. Whatever Ordo chooses will be fine with me.”

Gina laughed gracefully at Ordo’s offer.

I wonder if her voice was more energetic now because she had finally been offered some proper witchlike hospitality after all this time. By returning the choice for the wine back to him, it is most likely because she wants him to set the degree of hospitality with his choice of wine.

Ordo gave a bitter smile as he realized the trouble he was in. If he put out a cheap wine that does not match the mansion or his position within it, it will damage the witches’ moods. But if he puts out one of his most expensive wines, that is as good as a declaration that he will do whatever necessary to keep us happy.

“I see. Offering a witch hospitality is difficult just as the rumors said.”

“Do not think too deeply on the subject and please use your own instincts. In some cases, there are witches who find favor in receiving just a cup of water. Monette, what kind of wine will Ordo serve us witches? Please look forward to the answer.”

“But I can’t drink wine in the first place.....”

I answered with a half-joking reply, but Ordo used it as an escaped and beckoned for one of his maids to bring over some juice from the corner of the room. He probably only thought of offering wine as an option due to its symbol of wealth, but with my words, he could use juice to pass the hurdle..... although even I could tell he was feeling embarrassed about going this route.

Preparations must be made in case a witch ever visits him again in the future..... he was clearly thinking such things.

“We will prepare some juice for Monette. What kind is good?”

“Whatever Sir Ordo offers me will be fine.”

“Please have mercy on me, Miss Monette.”

“Orange.”

He was sweating more than I thought possible, so when I saw the despair in his eyes, I decided to obediently put in a request. Ordo gave a relieved nod followed by a particularly bitter smile. Then he clapped his hands twice, and the maids got to work.

After waiting for awhile, the drinks and some cakes were carried into the room.

Ordo apologized looking ashamed while saying, “I try to avoid living too luxuriously at night,” while gesturing to the cookies and tarts lining the trays. I wonder if we were looking at the same food. I obediently went to work and accepted his hospitality.

The cookies were moderately sweet and fragrant while the tarts were rich with plenty of fruit. If he was seriously apologizing saying that this was a frugal snack, then the pastries around the world would cry right now.

Then, relaxing both my body and mind with the combination of the soft sofa and the delicious drinks and confectionery, the tense air that had dogged us all this time began to drift. That was probably why it came up,

“Could you explain what is going on?”

Ordo asked.

With a glass of poured red wine, his thick brown hair was combed out to make him look like a lion. He had the air of royalty even when driven to this remote place, yet the intimidation I felt from him before had drifted. Plus right now I did not feel like hiding anything or telling lies right now anyway.

With this atmosphere, I slowly opened my mouth after taking a sip of my juice.

“.....Everything has been caused by a single witch..... my sister Emilia has caused all of this.

# Chapter 43

## Armored Girl and the Sparkling Princess 1

Ordo was the only person who looked surprised at my sudden declaration.

Alexis's eyes narrowed palpably, and the heartache was clear on Percival's face. I guess they had already guessed the correct answer as well. No, when Alexis first escaped from the palace and declared, 'even if it was all the effect of a witch's curse,' I'm sure he had already arrived at the truth.

Gina was the only one not affected by the reveal, continuing to elegantly sip on her glass of wine, but she most likely thought it was best not to say anything in this situation.

"Emilia Idira..... she is also a witch?"

".....Yes, but I'm not sure she is even aware of the fact."

The Idira family has witch blood in our veins, but we tossed aside our identities as witches long ago.

Parents stopped passing their magic down to their children, and the spellbooks containing knowledge and history were abandoned in the old castle.

With nobody to teach anything, there is no source of knowledge. There was no opportunity for Emilia to ever learn how to use magic.

"Would it still be possible to use magic?"

Ordo's question was a reasonable one, and the answer was yes.

The way I use magic is by using my art to channel my expression and form a spell through that. There are many ways to use magic though, so it is possible that I might unintentionally cast something through other means when my emotions are unstable.

Even if you are able to use magic, it is not like you would be able to master it though.

As I told him this, I looked up to Gina to confirm who gave me a definitive nod. It was impossible.

Saying, 'I can use magic,' and 'I have mastered magic' are two completely different things.

"There is a possibility that you might get caught up in your own magic if used unknowingly."

".....Magic?"

"Indeed. Strong magic can sometimes affect other witches, so if you unconsciously use a strong spell, the odds of the spell affecting the witch who cast it as well is quite high."

Gina's words caused me to murmur Emilia's name inside my helmet.

Even without the knowledge of magic, I knew that I had the qualities to perform it. But I never imagined that it might have the power to affect another witch. But Gina is my senior witch from the long line of Avalkin family witches. There is no reason to doubt her.

While stroking Concetta on her knee,

"It was my mistake. I thought that Alexis was the only one to be cursed, so I was careless."

Gina made as if she were talking to herself. Someone besides Alexis..... I do not have to ask who she is talking about to understand.

It was a scar I myself felt the moment we fled from the royal palace. I properly buried the pain, but the hurt I felt during that scene was real. A sharp, almost numb pain when Emilia called my name as we left.

However, right now I regret nothing, so there is nothing else for me than to look forward.

"It was definitely Emilia that cursed Alexis, and Emilia probably....."

In the end, it was too difficult for me to put it into words, but Ordo ignored that fact and called to me.

“Monette, I understand the feelings of thinking about your sister, but please continue.”

“That’s surprising. Ordo, you know about Monette’s feelings for her sister?”

“Once, I said it on a formal basis. Honestly, I have nothing like positive feelings for my family, but I thought if I said that, I could understand the current situation a little quicker.”

“It seems that’s the situation, Monette.”

In this lighthearted conversation between Gina and Ordo, I couldn’t help but smile underneath my helmet. Alexis and Percival were smiling as well off to the side although theirs were a tad more bitter, and I could hear Alexis grumble to himself, “That’s just the type of person Uncle is.”

My complexion was a little pale, but it seems that their jokes have brought me to a more temperate manner. Gina looking down at Concetta resting on her lap, asking him if he wanted some bread really helped me to relax even more.

Now that some of the tension in the air had been released, Alexis took the opportunity to call my name. When my line of sight turned to where he was sitting, I saw his deep brown eyes staring right at me.

“Monette, may I be direct?”

“.....yes.”

“I have a lot of questions for you, but right now, I must ask you to please tell my uncle everything.”

Alexis shrugged his shoulders afterwards as if it couldn’t be helped that his uncle took priority, but I still nodded my head.

When I think about where his head is at right now, then I can imagine all kinds of questions he would want to ask. But that is the very reason he is putting those questions to the side so he can hear things from the beginning.

Still, if his desperate struggle to give a smirk and a small laugh were not obvious enough, then his knuckles turning bone white from clutching the cushions so tightly would clue you in to how he was feeling at the moment. If he did not do this, I am sure

that his heart would break.

Understanding that, I shrugged my own shoulders as well,

“I suppose we should get on with it. If things go too late, then some people will end up getting sleeping and progress will slow down,”

and I told my own joke. When Percival heard me, he burst into a coughing fit as if something had gotten stuck in his throat, but when I told them I was of course talking about Concetta, I made sure to stick my tongue out at him from underneath my helmet.

Percival’s bright blue eyes curled up for a moment, but after collecting himself, he turned his face away and said, “Of course I knew that.” Alexis and I both had the same wry smiles as we watched him try to play it off.

However, those wry smiles of ours were a little unnatural, and as we started exchanging words and jokes, things started to get a little warmer. It was a pleasant fight.

As if we knew things were going to be rocky from now on, at least right now the three of us could insult each other just as he had done on our journey. Lamenting this fact, I took a small breath as Alexis once again called my name.

“Monette, tell me if you understand. What did Emilia want by cursing me? I..... was I being resented for what I did by her as well?”

Alexis was clearly trying to hold back the pain in his voice. But it was useless.

Although it was a substitute engagement made after the older sister Monette’s engagement was broken off, Alexis still cherished Emilia. She was to be his future who would stand by his side leading the country together. It would be impossible for him to not be saddened by this fact.

Although the process leading up to the engagement was complicated, the two of them were well-suited for each other, and I had heard the citizenry pass an endless number of rumors about it through the wind.

To find out that all that happiness was a lie would naturally bring despair to Alexis’s expression. Far from being a good fiancée, to find out that she hated him so much as to manifest into a curse, how could that not hurt?

Anyway, even the engagement with Emilia.....

I shook my helmet once towards Alexis whose eyes had continued to grow more downcast. Alexis was cursed by Emilia. However, that is.....

“Alexis was certainly cursed by Emilia, but it wasn’t due to any kind of grudge.”

“.....There was no grudge?”

“Cursing Alexis was never the goal in the first place. The curse was for another purpose, and it was cast a long time ago.....”

Saying this much, I took in a deep breathe.

I can see that everyone’s eyes are focused in on me. I want to quickly give them an answer, but even now the truth of the matter is acting as an iron ball rolling around in the pit of my stomach..... Everyone’s gazes combined together, and the heavy atmosphere stabbed into me like sharp knives. Despite that, I have the contradictory feeling as if there were nothing there, and everything: this room, this suit of armor, my heart were completely empty.

Still, I slowly forced open my mouth, and a completely miserable voice escaped my lips.

Alexis’s bad luck, the rumors..... no, everything that has happened was caused by one strong wish.

“I want to become a sparkling princess.”

Muttering the words that I had heard so many times, the memory so far in the past resurfaced in my mind. Glittering memories of Emilia and I resting our heads on Mother’s knees as if it were a pillow and competing to see who could spin up the most story-like fantasy.

But now, the “who did it, to whom, from when, and how the curse came to be,’ were all coming together.

# Chapter 44

## Armored Girl and the Sparkling Princess 2

I became sure of myself when Emilia said, “Stay by my side,” at the royal palace.

I felt something wrong with Emilia’s outspoken voice and presence as if she were praying, and I started to tremble as if I were submerged in snow. That feeling of unease and discomfort growing from the pit of my stomach was something I remember vividly.

The cause was..... I took something out from my pouch and lightly set it on the table. It was the necklace that Emilia had given me as a talisman. The stone shined beautifully when receiving the light, would you not be sucked in just by looking at it?

“Emilia gave this to me right before we left on our journey.”

“Emilia did, she gave this to Monette?”

“Yes, I have had it on me ever since.”

“Such an expensive stone necklace, how did she get something like this.....”

To Alexis’s mutterings, even Ordo mused, “It’s not something easy to come by.” Because two members of royalty were going so far, then this really must be quite the impressive jewel.

But it was because Emilia’s wish had soaked into this gem that I was able to notice that Emilia was a witch. It was definitely a spell affecting me that made me think that it was ‘unavoidable’ for me to stay by Emilia’s side in the castle. What would have happened if Robertson hadn’t jumped in when he did...

In reverse though, it was because of this necklace that I did not notice Emilia was a witch until that moment. No, it might be more accurate to say that it changed my mind every time I doubted her.

“When Emilia gave this to me, I thought it might be a cursed item, so I tried testing it

in the carriage.....”

“Oh, so when you were drinking the water at that time?”

I nodded my head towards Alexis’s surprised voice.

In the carriage immediately after leaving the capitol the first time, I immersed the necklace I received from Emilia inside the curse sensitive water.

If Emilia was the witch who cursed Alexis, the possibility that she was sending a cursed item to continuously apply the curse could not be overlooked..... But the water did not respond. At that point any doubts I held for Emilia were erased in that moment.

Emilia is not involved in anything.

That girl is pure, she is waiting for my return..... and so on.

But when we were in the royal palace, the necklace responded to Emilia’s honest wish, making me understand everything.

Certainly Emilia never meant to curse me. I was her important older sister.

.....But that is exactly why.

Emilia’s curse caused me to lock myself away in the tower.

Never leaving, never making my way back to the royal palace. Her favorite older sister is left in a place where she can reach until no one can interfere, until there would not be a problem even if I were to return.....

I thought I was living a comfortable life on my own inside the royal castle, but in actuality, I was no different than a dead pet buried close to home.

“Emilia still loves me even now. But I was in the way of her dream of becoming a ‘glittering princess’”

“.....that’s.....”

“Alexis was constantly sending me apology gifts. I’m sure Emilia felt anxious watching that. If I were to forgive Alexis and return to society, then there was a possibility of me

becoming Alexis's fiancée again.....”

Human engagement isn't as light as a relationship between animals where 'if this one is useless, then the next one will be fine.'

But political marriages are another breed all together. And above all, Emilia was originally, 'the next one.'

Monette Emilia  
If this one is useless, then that one will be fine. That is how marriage between nobles works. But with that being the case, if this one will work out, then that one is unneeded..... it would not be wrong to think this way.

Because that idea probably wedged itself in her head, things spiraled out of control the way they did..... Emilia became flustered, and anxiety took hold. She didn't know she was a witch. She didn't know about the curse she had already created.....

There was someone who came along and wiped out all the anxiety and negative thoughts sticking themselves to her every thought.

It was the second prince Rodel Radoll.<sup>1</sup>

Even if her older sister were to take off her armor and return to the royal palace, he would not be affected. Since it was his brother's sin, Rodel might make some concessions and apologize for the life I lived, but that would never go as far as him having to change fiancées.

How much must have Emilia thought about that?

And surely Rodel gave Emilia a beautiful present to mark the occasion.

An expensive necklace paid with high-end gold plated bills. Whether it be in the royal palace or meeting me on the streets, Emilia was wearing a gorgeous dress, and if you assume that Rodel was the one who gave that to her, then he was certainly treating her like the glittering princess she wanted to be.

Nevertheless, getting rid of Alexis would be impossible. Alexis was a fine example of a nobleman, but because of that, there were probably many times that Emilia held herself back from trying to get something that she wanted in order to not appear spoiled.

If Alexis's fiancée was anyone other than Emilia, they would have felt blessed more than anything. At the same time, they would have been worshipped as a reverent queen. Alexis, a good prince honorable amongst all other nobles, yet he also strove for the benefit and growth of the country without any wasteful government spending.

.....Any woman would have loved to be that venerable queen, with the exception of the 'glittering princess' Emilia.

"The good honor student routine bit you in the butt this time."

Everyone heard Ordo's words. There was someone who wanted to make an objection, but in the end, there was nothing anybody could say.

As Ordo said, Emilia's choice was between the 'prince who thought of his country' and the 'prince who would spare no expenses on her.'

Even if Alexis did not feel guilty about what he had done and was trying to apologize to me, Emilia still would have dumped him because he was too good of a prince and didn't shower her with expensive gifts. How ironic.

It would have been a year ago that such an important decision was made.

I do not know exactly what caused the cup to spill over..... the second I said that, Percival chimed in saying, "It was probably because of inheritance."

"His Majesty was thinking about giving the throne to Prince Alexis while he was young..... or so the rumor goes."

"No, I never heard such a thing."

"It was a rumor told through the knight orders. We were told to refrain from spreading because of fear of confusion spreading."

Surely, those rumors of the succession to the throne reached Emilia's ears.

Therefore Emilia..... her feelings surged forth, and she cursed Alexis. To be suspicious of his affairs, to take away trust, to deprive him of the throne. And so Rodel took Alexis's spot, and Emilia truly became a wonderful 'sparkling princess.'

With all that happening, it will no longer be a problem if her lovable sister returns.

Finished explaining everything, I slowly breathed out.

There was a heavy feeling in the air. As no one could bare to even look at each other, none of us were willing to try and cut through the tension with a joke.

Meanwhile, Gina was still drinking from her cup of wine.

“Emilia Idira really has a nice story going, doesn’t she?”

I shrugged my shoulders.

Everyone else’s gazes fell on her. While receiving such looks, Gina let out her elegant laugh while stroking Concetta on her knee.

The girl who was in poor condition recovered physically after extensive medical treatment and headed towards the kingdom to be with her family. She received an engagement afterwards as a substitute for her sister after the prince rejected her and she hid herself away in the old castle.

Although she lived peacefully for several years, the prince’s true colors were revealed to the world right before he succeeded the throne. He was a tyrant who was unfaithful to her. Emilia was a pitiful girl who had been deceived, and the person who saved her..... was the second prince.

Emilia took the outstretched hand of the second prince who truly loved her, and he took care of her and drove out the unfaithful prince. Then the older sister who had been wounded, hiding in the old abandoned castle came back to Emilia once again.....

It is not a conclusion where the words, “Happy ending, Happy ending,” could be displayed in bold words.

But it was the truth for Emilia and everyone who believed those rumors about Alexis’s infidelity. Everything was going along perfectly with this storybook farce. And surely the people who heard these stories would be so moved that they would close their eyes to any of the problems with Emilia and Rodel.

“It’s better than that unfaithful prince,” the people will say.

Gina recited the entire story as if it were the plotline of some farce of a play looking quite bored, but when she finished it a smile broke and a mischievous look spread

across her face. Then her gaze moved..... onto Percival.

“It really was just like a play, every person playing their role like a puppet..... other than you.”

“I.....”

“Emilia Idira’s story was completely set in stone thanks to her magic. It should have been perfect, but a clown onstage ruined the whole act.”

The only thing witch’s magic doesn’t work on, a <sup>Percival</sup>witch slayer.

He took Alexis, who was cast into the role of being chased out of the country as the prince of infidelity, off the stage.

And me..... he knocked away the control string of, ‘the older sister waiting inside the old castle,’ which had been stored away in the old castle until my turn came up.

“It is annoying that magic doesn’t work on you, but at least you are useful.”

Percival gave a serious nod towards Gina who was still petting Concetta—completely ignoring the derision in her words.

But right now was not the time to be pleased over idle praise. His blue eyes focused in right on Gina.

In spite of such attentiveness, Gina said nothing more to him instead directing her gaze over to me.

“That should do with the explanations for now. Monette, would you mind heading to our room and checking the luggage?”

“.....the luggage. Right, now?”

“Yes, it should have already been brought to our room from the carriage, but I would be troubled if anything was left behind.”

So take a look for me, was what Gina was crisply saying as if there had never been a heavy air present here in the first place.

Besides that, "Please prepare some fluffy cushions for Concetta to rest on," was something else she asked me to do. I did not fully understand her intentions, but I decided to obediently nod my head and stood up with Robertson in one hand.

"Percival, you should go too."

And then Ordo summoned a maid to guide us both.

Hearing his words, Percival's eyes showed a small bit of hesitation in them. But in the next moment, his blue eyes narrowed, and he graciously answered, "I serve," and stood from his seat as well.

After the door quietly closed behind them, Alexis was left idly staring at the door that his two companions had just walked out of. Ordo and Gina who were the last two people in the room along with him had gone silent and were doing the same as him.

There were no reverberations from the previous story at all; now was a time for leisurely drinking wine.

Even though it allowed him to organize his feelings for a bit..... as he was thinking that, Concetta jumped over onto his lap with a small \*plop\*.

Having come without his name being said, Concetta put his forefoot on Alexis's shoulder and brought his face within inches of Alexis's.

It was the same position he takes whenever eating hung out bread from Alexis's mouth. But of course naturally there was no bread there now.

Even though he was staring looking like he was looking for something, what on earth did he want to do? At the moment that he was about to ask, Concetta licked his tongue at the corner of Alexis's eye.

Alexis's deep brown eyes went round from surprise at how rough his tongue felt.

"Concetta....."

'What's the matter,' those were the words that got caught in Alexis's throat. No words would come out, but his trembling throat that could barely draw in a breath and the tears running down his cheek said more than words ever could.

It was like Concetta's tongue was a knife cutting through the thread of tension holding him up.

The question was solved. He knew why he was cursed. That is why the tears were overflowing now.

He wanted to know why someone held a grudge against him so that he could apologize, even if he was not going to be forgiven. That was why he had run away from the royal palace in the first place.

But there was nothing. There was no grudge against anyone. He did everything right, and because of that, he was cursed and lost everything.

Is there a more terrible story? If it is like this, then there is no emotion, feeling, or resentment from the person who completely ruined his life.

Alexis was silently trembling, a bitter taste soaking in his mouth.

There was none of his usual dignity in this crying appearance of his as he took the handkerchief that Gina held out to him. But Alexis could not afford to wipe away the overflowing tears, and all he could do was tightly clutch it to his chest like it was something truly important.

"Gina, I am..... for what reason..... how do I....."

"Don't worry, Alexis. It is a witch's whim, but I will make that capitol roll over. I will accompany you to the end. Even if you tell me you want to burn it all down."

Saying so in a calm voice, Gina gently patted his head to calm him down. Stroking him with her small, supple fingers, she would sometimes scoop up his hair. Concetta was still standing on his lap, and he also tried to provide some small relief by stroking his head against the hand Alexis was holding the handkerchief.

Ordo watched all of this with a sideways glance and took a small breath,

"You should thank me for not allowing <sup>subordinate</sup> Percival and <sup>former fiancée</sup> Monette to see you crying like this."

and said such an incomprehensible thing.

Gina's gentle, quiet voice and Ordo's ridiculous yet caring words; they just made Alexis's vision blur all the more as the tears continued to overflow.

# Chapter 45

## Armored Girl and the Sparkling Princess 3

The rooms prepared for each of us could only be described as splendid with their large beds, fine furnishings, and decorated paintings that told anyone how expensive they were at a glance. If this were peacetime, I would have sighed in admiration for the pure luxury of it all.

However, even though I would be staying in this gorgeous room for the time being, no emotions sprung up, and all I could do was vaguely look around me.

On top of a desk all of my and Gina's luggage was gathered together in one large pile. The servants in the mansion could not have known specifically what belonged to whom, so for now all they did was separate what would belong to the women and the men.

"I should separate Gina's and my baggage....."

Understanding the situation, I reached out to the baggage on the table.

However, even though in my head I understand that I should divide our things, my body doesn't really want to do what my mind is telling it to, so rather than dividing it all up, I end up just blankly staring at it all instead.

Meanwhile the sound of a light knocking on the door echoed inside the room. My line of sight changed from the bags towards the door, and I slowly rose up from the chair. My movements towards the door were sluggish and slow, and it seemed like soon I would move forward, but my body would be left behind.

I'm awake, but my body and heart and everything else feel wrong.

".....Percival."

When I opened the door, it was the figure of Percival who should have been guided to a separate room standing there.

The effects of the previous story were clearly a drain on him, yet when I opened the door, he still managed to make a gentlemanly smile and shook the box he was holding in his hand. The white colored box had the words, 'First-aid kit' scrawled across the front.

"Miss Monette, let me treat you."

"Treat.....?"

"Mmm, you hurt your hand using magic in the royal palace right?"

I nodded my head slightly now that Percival mentioned it.

I certainly did hurt my hand using magic in the royal palace. After that I did received some light first aid at the time. Although, I'm sure a doctor would argue that wiping away the blood with a handkerchief and blowing on the wound would not necessarily count as first aid.

Because of that, pain was still pulsing through my hand. However, I am not worried about such a paltry excuse for hand pain. My heart aches far more.

But there is no way I can say such a thing, so I put my hand out to take the kit from him..... and my eyes go round when he instead asks for permission to come in.

"I want to treat you..... is it no good?"

"It's no good."

"An immediate reply."

"Even if you did come in to treat me, you would have to remove part of my armor."

I diverted my eyes away from him as I muttered my excuse.

Even though it is just my hands, I am still afraid to expose my skin. I am like this even though I now know it was all caused by a witch's curse. My sister's curse. I'm my own cage now.

However, going completely against what I said, Percival narrowed his eyes slightly and gently grabbed my hand.

“We can darken the room, and I will try not to see as much as possible.”

“But.....”

“I won’t call you ugly. I promise.”

Percival’s voice was deep and resolute enough that I was almost about to believe him. It almost felt like he was rubbing my hand and whispering in my ear without an iron shell obstructing him. My gaze inevitable fell towards my hand.

It was the back of the hand that was spilling out pain as if it were pain that was pumping through my veins instead of blood. Through the iron, I could not know the depth of the cut, and no matter how hard Percival held me, I would be unable to feel the warmth from his hand on my skin. Looking back at the backpacks littering the table, I felt slightly lost..... and invited him into the room.

Crossing the room together, we each took a seat on a chair facing each other.

Percival extended his hand outwards, and I replied in kind by reaching my hand out as well..... towards my shoulder.

With a little hesitation, I heard, “Miss Monette,” being called after my hand stopped completely when I heard the \*conk\* of my finger hitting iron.

“.....I, I know. My heart needs time to prepare though.”

“Alright, then I’ll wait.”

At Percival’s words, my thoughts returned to the armor covering my chest once again.

I oftentimes hear the sound of metal scraping against metal as I move around, but this time the noises were coming from my flesh, from the echoes created by my heartbeat. I feel restless; I can’t calm down.

Still, I pull back the leather clasps, and the color of skin begins to peek out through a gap.

It is not a face, it is not a body, it is only a hand. Even so, a paralyzing tension spread up and dominated my body. Cold sweat traveled down my back causing my skin to stick to the inner parts of my armor, and it took everything I had to resist the urge to

immediately reattach it. Alexis's former words, "ugly," run through my mind. But that word..... I shake my head and slowly remove my gauntlet.

My arm is a slightly pale flesh color with not a speck of silver in sight.

.....ah, my manicure is peeling off.

It's because of this heavy air that I'm so fixated on such a tiny mistake.

While mentally trying to repress my heart from beating right outside of my chest, I stroke my exposed arm once before extending my hand to Percival without covering it back up.

Slightly trembling, I hesitate to allow him to actually touch my exposed skin, so my movements are slow and dull. But Percival must have sensed my unease, and he waited to take my without hurrying or forcefully moving.

After a moment, my hand lightly touch his large, robust ones.

The tension and worry running through me ebbed away slightly, and I was able to relax to an extent despite my still trembling hands.

Percival picked up on my still lingering nervousness, and as he used the first aid kit to start treating my cut, he made sure to continue with a light touch without any sudden movements.

On the contrary, he even tried telling me a joke saying, "Just don't curse me if it ends up stinging a little." This was of course to try and calm me down even more.

"Sa-Saying such a thing..... Even if I tried to cast a curse on Percival, i-it would not work would it.....?"

"Oh yeah. So I guess it will be fine to not hesitate and tighten up this bandage."

"If you do that, I'll hit you with a brick....."

I countered him with a voice to overturn Percival's joke.

Tightening bandages, what a terrible treatment this is! However..... I gazed down on my hand. His hand was holding mine quite tenderly despite my own still slightly

trembling.

Contrary to his words, he really was handling my treatment very gently.....

His way of holding my hand as if he was holding a first-class artifact caused my eyes to narrow inside my helmet.

I could feel through my skin that the temperature of his hands was just a little higher than mine. That warmth of his hand felt like it was enveloping mine despite my hand only resting on his palm; is it because Percival's hand is so big?

.....Ah, it's warm when you touch someone else.

I remembered something from such a long time ago.

At the same time, I was overcome with a tremendous amount of self-pity that I had forgotten such a thing. I was afraid to go out in public during the day, hid myself away, and in the end I locked myself up in a huge full set of armor. It was a pathetic life, the feeling of warmth and touching another person's skin were just memories of a distant past.

Resentment that could not be put into words started to swell up in my chest, so much so that I had to shut my eyes tight. I'm glad that I'm wearing a helmet right now because I cannot even imagine what I must look like right now.

Then the treatment was finished, and Percival slowly took his hands away from mine.

At first glance, it looked like a carefully wrapped bandage done by a professional doctor, but at the same time, it felt strangely cold.

"Let's change the bandages at night."

".....yes."

I returned Percival's concern with a nod of my helmet, and Percival nodded in turn..... then he took a deep sigh and muttered, "All a witch's curse," underneath his breath.

"..... yes. That was all."

“Really.”

Percival did not specify what he was talking about, and I did not give a clear answer.

Because the answer really was all of it.

Everything was because of Emilia’s magic, to make her wish come true.

The curse of Alexis’s bad luck, me secluding myself inside the old castle.....

And why I always wear a full suit of armor.

Even those words Alexis said that day.....

“As if I’d marry an ugly woman like you!”

Once I heard those words, I was fated to confine myself to a heavy suit of armor until today.

A vivid scene with Alexis would come up, his appearance at that time, the words he said echoing crystal clear, everything was still up there crowding around in my memory.

It was all caused by magic.

It was the first step in Emilia’s road of becoming a ‘sparkling princess.’

Then what is the life of the heavily armored noble girl who spent most of her life wearing a full suit of armor.....?

Lost in my own thoughts, I started to stroke my own armor.

I heard the iron rubbing against itself. A single hand made dyed silver..... I stared at it for awhile and smiled underneath my helmet despite myself, for the arm dyed silver so long now had the color of flesh and blood instead.

It was then that the large hand that had wrapped me up in bandages this time reached out and held the back of my hand. It was, of course, Percival.

I raised my helmet to look at him and saw his blue eyes staring directly back at me.

“Even if everything is a witch’s curse, my feelings will never change. I want to be cursed by you.”

“Percival, but..... there is no reason for me to curse you.”

The feelings of guilt Percival held towards me boiled down to, ‘I involved Monette who was living peacefully in a bothersome affair and forced her out of the old castle.’

However, that ‘peaceful life in the old castle,’ itself was just me being stored away like a pet by Emilia. Percival had actually saved me from ending up as just a puppet with a role to play.

In other words, there is no reason for me to curse him, but when I told him this, Percival made a soft and bitter smile.

“Still my feelings won’t change. Please curse me.”

“.....In the first place, <sup>Witch Slayer</sup> Percival can’t be cursed by a witch.”

“Then beat me with something similar to a brick.”

“What’s similar to a brick.....?”

“What on earth should I beat you with,” I laughed bitterly from inside my helmet, but then Percival slowly moved forward.....

And with arms wide open, he pulled me in for a tight embrace.

“.....Percival?”

“Miss Monette, I, you..... that, you are a good witch.”

“.....huh?”

“Terribly, that..... you are a cute, wonderful witch. I want to be cursed by you..... if it were to come true, forever.”

I twisted around in his arms and looked up at Percival’s persistent words.

A gaze that cannot his red cheeks and embarrassment. He said I am a good witch and

continued to praise me by calling me cute and wonderful shamelessly. Even so, he continued to hold me in his arms and started to slowly stroke the armor's back.

It was just like when we were in bed..... oh. I tried to call his name, but before that, "Miss Monette," he called mine.

"Miss Monette, I am sleepy right now."

".....Percival."

"This is only an 'annoying act of the bedridden,' so you don't have to think about any of this too deeply."

So, with Percival talking in a deep, calm voice, I diverted my eyes away inside my helmet.

So, what am I supposed to say?

If I say a word, then I feel like the thing that I have been desperately trying to endure up until this point will give way in an instant. An unrelenting feeling inside my chest was getting stronger, and I thought to relieve some of this pressure building up inside me with a light joke and some small jabs.

He doesn't want to be exposed in public, or so I tell myself, but when I move to try and say something, his arms just tighten around me all the more.

"Percival, let me....."

"I am sleepy. Please wait for fifteen minutes."

"Such a thing, if you are actually sleepy then....."

"I won't tell you to not cry, but don't cry alone in that armor. Miss Monette, go ahead and cry now. I'm sleepy, so I will never let you get away."

His words were like a flash of lightning, and my eyes opened wide in surprise. "Please cry." His words easily pierced iron and melted into my ears and chest.

It all slowly melted away. The intentions and walls I'd built that were sturdier than any suit of armor. His arms hugged me all the more tightly as if he were trying to hold up

the resolve that was melting away from me.

Ah, it's useless..... Feeling my emotions overflowing from within my heart, I grabbed hold of Percival's clothes with my silver fingers.

And for the first time since that day that everything began long ago, I took the time to say the words that I had never told anyone—only allowing them a slight whisper from within my heart.

“It hurts.....”

Just that.

My voice was severely blurred, weak, miserable, and it disappeared inside my iron helmet.

But still Percival hugged me even more tightly, and I felt a sense of comfort from his arms.

Still, the sense of the hug could not be transmitted through the armor. The movement of his hand stroking my back, and the heat from his body, it was all obstructed by a welded wall of iron.

I thought it was painful, but even though I think that it hurts I will not take off this armor making me feel all the more miserable creating a lump in my throat, and a stream of tears cascading down my cheeks.

## Chapter 46

# The Troublesome Royal Brother and the Prince who Turned the World Over 2

Why have things become like this?

What should I do?

While clinging to Percival with an unspeakable appearance, I was bawling my eyes out—gasping for breath inbetween the moans and sobs.

“.....Me too.”

.....

The words that followed were strained, but even then I could hear Percival softly say to me, “I see.”

One hand of his continued to rub the back of my armor while the other was gently holding my exposed hand. His fingers wrapped around mine tighter than those iron fingers ever had before. It might be because he had already seen everything underneath these bandages during the treatment that I didn't mind.

I had a pink manicure on my fingertips underneath that iron armor. By now, he has already figured out my closest guarded secret that I have not told anyone, the fact that I like to try and look pretty, even though this iron armor covers it all up.

As a matter of course, I like not wearing this armor.

Alexis called me ugly, but I could never figure out why I was so. Since I did not know, I had no choice but to cover up my entire body.

The word ‘ugly’ is not just limited to one's face. Your face, body, skin, hair, voice, or even hand shape could all be seen as ‘ugly.’ Even the way you move might make you look disgusting to others.

That's why I had to cover every inch of my being although I was never able to figure out how to disguise the way my body moves.

I even covered up my dream.

My dream..... it is not too different from Emilia wanting to be a 'sparkling princess.'

I have always wanted to wear beautiful things like cute clothes. It was a wish that any young girl would have.

But what would look good overtop a suit of iron armor? Nothing.

Or at least nothing I could think of. Thinking so, I endured the thoughts of envy I felt towards others. Inside the old castle, I have a room I can never show anyone as it is decorated with a large number of cute and pretty accessories. Occasionally, I would allow myself to buy a gorgeous color of nail polish and decorate my fingertips, staring at the end result for hours.

And while I was doing this, Emilia was paving the road towards her dream of being a 'sparkling princess'.....

With all that in mind, gloom continued to spill from my heart, right alongside my overflowing tears.

I complained about incoherent things while swallowing down all my grudges and regrets in a hoarse voice, all the while clinging to Percival as I continued to cry my eyes out.

Time rolled on, and after 15 minutes passes, I had regained my calm. Inbetween the hiccups, I slowly pulled myself off of Percival's body while still slightly shaking inside my helmet and armor. Percival's hand which was still rubbing the back of my armor slowly left me although it looked like it was still poised to hug me again in case I crumbled down again.

I vaguely gazed at it until eventually my gaze sunk down below so that the only thing I could see was the inside of my helmet. The back of my nose hurts.

Then taking a deep breath in order to calm my still trembling throat, I took a big sniff

of air through my nose and turned my helmet away.

“.....W-Well, Percival’s sleeping habit is really annoying, isn’t it?”

I gave him a complaint with my now hoarse voice.

Of course I was trying to hide my embarrassment. This is the story, I am obviously embarrassed that I cried in his arms. That’s why I had to take the initiative and shift the blame onto him.

Although, I’m pretty sure Percival knew exactly what was going on in my heart, and that was why he just shrugged his shoulders.

He gave me a gentle, bitter smile to show that he wouldn’t say anything about it, but it only made me feel even more uncomfortable.

“That’s right. It would be a problem if you were to cling to any other witch.”

“.....Even for me it’d be a big problem. Well, if someone were to see me, they would only see a guy who gets excited by suits of armor.”

“That’s a huge problem!”

That should be avoided as much as possible! At Percival’s words, my still moist eyes blinked a couple times while my cheeks burst into a blush.

Is it a problem that someone gets excited by a suit of armor.....? No, it most certainly is a big problem.

I took a few steps away from Percival as those thoughts started swirling in my head.

“L-let’s go back soon. I’m sure Alexis will eventually start to get worried about us.”

“I suppose so. Over there will surely be finished by now.”

“.....Over there?”

Was there something that Alexis was doing over there? I looked at Percival curiously, but the man in question just sighed a little and shrugged his shoulders again.

On the contrary, he just straight up and headed for the door while saying, "Let's go." Apparently he did not want to go into details which made me create a scraping noise when I tilted my helmet, but I quickly followed after him.

"All the gloomy talk should be over by now. So, let's talk about the fun stuff while I eat my rice."

This was Ordo's remark as dinner was prepared for us.

His eyes and curled up smile showed just how excited he was for the following talk, but that only made me and everyone else who had to listen to him feel tired.

A map was sitting on the center of the table. The royal palace sat in the center of the map marked in red along with a few knife marks.

So worn out..... it was awkward looking at this map that had clearly gone through so much use, and I could definitely say that any type of, "So much fun!" feeling did not come up when looking at it.

Everyone picked up their silver plated tableware with a tired expression. As expected of a royal residence, all the dishes were delicious, but I would never give the satisfaction of me saying so to this laughing old man.

"Uncle, talking about fun..... I really don't want to ask, but I'll do it anyway. What are we discussing at this moment?"

"That should be obvious. It is how we shall proceed from this point forward. To be specific, how are we going to put me on the throne."

"As I thought."

"But before that, there is something I need to check with you."

Altogether different from the amusing and loud tone he had been using until now, Ordo suddenly started speaking in a low voice while seriously staring at Alexis.

The tension in the room quickly changed along with him, and everyone stopped eating to turn their eyes towards him. Eyes of the same color with deep brown hair, the color

and faces they bore were so similar, yet the atmosphere surrounding them was completely different.

The two of them stared at each other, sizing the other up, and Ordo slightly sharpened his gaze.

“Alexis, do you wish to sit on the throne?”

Ordo’s voice not only lacked any depth of the cheer he had shown seconds before, but it also gave off a sense of intimidation and possibly even a hint of hostility.

Depending on Alexis’s answer, it was clear that things could take a dangerous turn, and the people around us could suddenly become our enemies. The silver knife held in Ordo’s hand looked strangely sharper when I was hit with that hostility. It is just a kitchen knife, yet it looks like a deadly weapon when held by Ordo.

In response to Ordo’s question, Alexis stared back to reply..... that was

“Nope.”

an answer that seemed like it was given little thought and answered with no hesitation.

“Wonderful, but you seem so sure of yourself.”

“From my father, I have learned that it is a king’s duty to lead and protect the people, but right now I don’t think I want to them.”

There was no intonation or biting emotion in Alexis’s voice; it was almost disturbingly settled.

It was clear that he had made up his mind before Ordo had brought up his question. Was this a decision he had suddenly come to during the incident at the royal palace, or was this something gradually brought about while listening to the people’s words while affected by the curse?

In any case, Alexis was clearly stating he wanted nothing to do with the succession of the throne.

I did not know what to say to him, so I remained silent and gazed at him. There was

no anxiety or worry in his appearance, and he was scooping up a bit of his soup with the gracefulness you would expect from a prince.

“In the first place, my succession to the throne should already have been revoked, so I have already lost my rights to become the king..... but”

“But?”

“I have no desire to be led by Rodel.”

Alexis’s tone of voice was as usual, yet it felt somewhat chilly as well.

Whether he was actually able of sounding like this..... During our journey, he had always sounded calm—although at times he sounded miserable and others kind.

That’s why when I heard him, my eyes locked squarely on him, and a slight pain was born in my heart when I noticed a few slight differences in his demeanor.

It was because of a witch.

This witch’s curse has changed him.

If I had realized about Emilia earlier, no, in the first place, if I had not locked myself away in the old castle and talked to Emilia about the magic of the Idira family, she may have figured it out herself.....

I am a witch, but I am an inexperienced witch.

As I am thinking about these things too late to do anything about, it suddenly dawned on me that Alexis was looking at me.

His deep brown eyes were slightly round. I could not understand the meaning of that gaze being poured on me, so I ended up lowering my eyesight a bit feeling like I had just gotten myself in trouble.

“Monette, you should not feel responsible.”

“.....that is, but it’s all due to the Idira family.”

“This incident certainly had a witch involved. But, the country is also at fault for being

so easily swayed and going with the flow.”

There is a coldness in Alexis’s eyes as he tells me this, but there is also something similar to determination in there as well.

Ordo, who saw this fighting spirit, lit up again, and his enjoyable smile returned once again.

“In other words, the king is replaced by his driven brother..... the fact that a witch is involved is just a minor detail.”

“.....yes, I suppose it is better than Rodel.”

“Alexis, I just thought you looked cute for the first time ever. I’m thinking about hugging you, but would you mind if I kissed you on the cheek as well?”

Ordo spread his arms wide with an even wider smile and told Alexis, “Come,” to which Alexis responded with an ice cold look..... before picking up a loaf of bread and shredding it to pieces.

He was completely ignored.

Or maybe Ordo wasn’t ignored and the loaf of bread was serving as a substitute for Ordo. That’s it. I can almost hear the bread’s ear-splitting screams.

However, Alexis’s expression after taking a deep breath was a mix of determination and hostility—an expression that I thought to greatly resemble Ordo’s.

# Chapter 47

## Armored Girl and Cursed Prince's Decision

Rather than thinking up an entirely new plan, we would just use Ordo's original plan while throwing two witches and a witch slayer at them..... was what the idea that Ordo proposed. And while he was calling it a proposal, his tone was assertive, and you could tell by his expression that he'd stubbornly stand by his decision.

It was Ordo who was in command of this house while the two witches, the witch slayer, and even the first prince Alexis were just guests in that house. He was quite clear about his decision of not just barreling through with Gina or my magic, so I just quietly sharpened my shoulders and nodded my head.

For Ordo, this was a battle over who would sit on the throne between him and Rodel. It would lose meaning if he were to win just because he had some witches and a witch slayer on his side.

I know that. However, we cannot just leave everything to Ordo either.

At this point, Rodel is one step away from being the king, and Emilia was right next to him.

If he were to get too close, Ordo would be hit by the witch's curse. If he is trying to drag down both the king and Rodel, that would mean he is trying to directly interfere with Emilia's 'glittering princess' status. It is impossible for her magic to not sink its fangs into Ordo.

And it's not just witch magic that we have to be vigilant of.

This is the throne room of a large country. There will be more guards there than any other place in the country, and as soon as we show up there, each and every single one of them will draw their swords. Above all, Ordo had already repeatedly tried to assassinate the king in his sleep. If the guards so much as smell him anywhere near the capitol they will be put on high alert. The walls standing before us are looking more and more like a mountain.

So as Ordo continued to talk while comparing the map to a sketch he had of the royal palace, Percival mumbled, “The movement of the knights.....”

“I know the movements of the knights. The actions they’ll take in case of an emergency, guard placement, everything.”

Percival was originally a knight that protected this country.

Therefore, in the event of an emergency, for example–the known traitor Ordo orchestrated an attack–he would have had to know what to do. His knowledge was something born from repeated practice exercises and the discussions he would have had when talking to his comrades who had also dedicated their sword and shield to the protection of the country.

How information should be transmitted in case of an emergency, how many people are placed where, how the knights would move to best protect the king and prince...

Percival holds all that information, and he is going to give that to Ordo.

That was the ultimate betrayal to his country and the knights he once knew as his friends.

I watched Percival give information while pointing to different parts of the royal palace sketch with worried eyes..... and pulled his sleeve just once.

His blue eyes opened wide and turned towards me. But I did not know how to respond to those eyes of his, so I redirected my gaze towards the map that he had just been looking at before.

“Miss Monette?”

“.....separately, no, it’s nothing. Please keep going.”

“Well, that’s fine, but... Thanks for worrying, but I’m fine.”

“You’re wrong. There was just a bug on your sleeve, and I was trying to grab it.”

“Then you should give that bug you caught to Robertson.”

“No, Robertson is a genuine man who only eats things he caught himself.”

“So strong.”

Percival smiled at the end of our ill-suited conversation, but his eyes inevitably turned back to the drawing of the royal palace.

There was no sense of guilt for betraying his country, and there was no sense of guilt for betraying his comrades in the expression he now wore. There was only the determination to live in those blue eyes of his, and when I saw it, a small breath got caught in my, and a tinge of fear stained my expression underneath my helmet.

He has also made his decision. No, he had made his decision the second he took Alexis from the palace, before any of us had even thought about it. At least, before I had.....

Thinking that much, I picked myself up. As Gina was, I diverted my gaze to the sketch and joined in with Ordo’s discussion about our strength.

“Although Emilia’s magic should no longer be able to affect Monette or I, it will still cause problems if it spreads to excessively. It would be best if we were to take as few people as possible to avoid Monette and I from having to protect too many.”

Too many people will get in the way, or so Gina was arguing while embracing Concetta in her lap. At the same time, “I shouldn’t expect any decent hospitality this time either I suppose,” was something she said to no one in particular.

However, as Gina said, attacking with a large number of people, would most certainly make sense unless there was magic present on the field. The more men there are, the more certain it will be that they will end up growing distant from Gina or myself. Even Ordo’s subordinates can be subjected to Emilia’s magic, turning them into enemies..... anything could happen.

That is why the soldiers must remain close by to remain immune to the witch’s magic. That being the case, their movements will become inherently restricted.

“However, if we restrict our men, then the possibility for them to escape increases. In order for them to escape... there are escape routes they can take that not even the minister or I know about.”

“If we were to ever need to escape, my father taught me different ways to do it. There are at least ten..... no, there are probably twice that many.”

The escape routes established in the royal palace are for the sake of emergencies, so the king naturally would not yet have told his son Alexis everything. Even when he was considered a good son and a good prince, there was always a possibility of something unexpected happening, so it is natural that he would hold some information back.

In other words, a king is a creature driven by suspicion, and this king most likely planned for even the event that Alexis would start a rebellion. This is the ideology that drives a royal family in control of a country.

“To prepare for emergencies is to suspect everything. Perhaps, Rodel is also different from Alexis and has learned of a different escape path that not even Alexis knows about.”

“Well, in case something does happen, Rodel would surely escape through a route that I do not know of.”

There is no way to block an escape route when you don't know where it is, so we have no choice but to surround the royal palace.

However, if we did do that, then people would inevitably become distant from me and Gina, and then Emilia would appear.....

Worried about that, Ordo mixed in an, “It's troublesome,” into a long sigh. There are numerous escape routes out of the palace, but we cannot just surround it. If we try to just forcibly push through with numbers, then magic would almost certainly turn some of our own men against us. Is there a more troublesome problem?

“And I really want to catch them alive if possible.”

“Uncle?”

“Stop that, of course I don't have those kinds of emotions. It's just better for us if we catch them than having them killed. That would be more convenient for me..... however”

Pausing for a moment, Ordo raised his line of sight off of the sketch. His deep brown eyes were placed squarely on me and Alexis.

“My big brother of course, but it would also be best if we were to capture Rodel and

Emilia alive as well. If that happens, what will you two do?”

Ordo’s straightforward question caught me completely off guard, and once more I took a short breath inside my helmet.

Obviously he is not so sentimental as to take our feelings into account for his plan. He wants to know our intentions in advance because he is worried. Worried that Alexis or I might lose our nerve and side with our family in the last minute.

I am a witch, and in the worst case, I could probably easily push Emilia away from Ordo in case of an emergency. Alexis himself cannot use magic and has no fighting power, but he does have <sup>witch</sup> Gina and <sup>witch slayer</sup> Percival backing him.

“After all, I cannot expect you both to do something awful to your own family. As its king, I would like to return this country to the peaceful state it was in once all this is over!”

Going that far, Ordo would not be able to butt his head in next time.

He was aware of that. Ordo’s sharp gaze and wide open arms were shouting that that he had nothing hidden and spoke no falsehoods. Recognizing this, I took a small breath in my helmet..... ,

“I..... I will judge Emilia with my own hands.”

Yes, I answered while looking directly back into his eyes.

Listening to my reply, Alexis slowly closed his eyes and continued,

“I will not judge them..... if they live and we catch father and Rodel, I will leave them to uncle at that time.”

Putting an end to things and leaving the clean-up in his uncle’s hands. In these replies of two extremes, Gina looked towards me with a bitter, yet relaxed smile while Ordo scrunched his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders while gazing at Alexis.

Aren’t these both two completely opposite reactions as well? However, only Percival was wearing a complex expression, silently looking between me and Alexis alternately.

“It’s good, Monette seems to be alright now. She has come to a proper decision.”

“That Alexis is useless; he hasn’t broken through his doubts yet.”

Afterwards, Monette and Alexis had ended up leaving the room soon after, and these were the words shared by Gina and Ordo while sipping on their wine. –By the way, Monette had gone for a walk with Robertson to help him find some bait, and Alexis had gotten caught up with Concetta and headed towards the bathroom.–

Of course it goes without saying that their words were due to the extreme replies from the earlier discussion.

Monette had said she would take care of Emilia herself while Alexis had said he was unable to and would leave it all to Ordo. The degree of resolve is higher for Monette..... and so on. Anyone would feel that way as soon as they heard the answers from the two.

On the other hand, it was only Percival who was diverting his eyes in thought,

“I think the opposite is true,”

and said this.

“Opposite..... Alexis said he would not judge his family, so he would leave them to me.”

“Yes.”

“So he still has sentimental feelings for my brother and Rodel. That’s the way it is.”

“.....no, surely, because he has no more information left to give, he is just trusting Lord Ordo.”

Alexis is irrelevant in the fight for the throne because he has already lost his right to succeed, and because he has become irrelevant, he has no grounds to judge his brother or father.

That’s why he is leaving everything to Ordo. Ordo is someone who is willing to scratch out his blood brother in order to sit on the throne. To capture them alive if necessary, and if it is unnecessary, to dispose of them immediately. Plus the punishment and treatment which Ordo would give would be much more esoteric than anything Alexis,

who grew up in a greenhouse called royalty, could ever come up with.

If it was a decision based on that, there is no way that there was any kind of emotion in his decision to, 'trust Ordo to take care of it.'

"I see. Surely, there is no way for him to object if I end up deeming a course of action necessary. That bastard Alexis, did he learn something from big bro after all....."

Listening to Percival's story, Ordo cracked a smile and started to laugh.

Perhaps Alexis's decision was more cunning than he thought. His distorted eyes had grown grim, but they were still severely fun.

On the other hand, the feeling of relief that Gina had had faded.

Monette cut off the regrets she felt towards Emilia and the Idira family, and so she decided to judge Emilia as a fellow witch..... That's what Gina thought, but Percival's face was clouded.

".....there was a picture in the old castle where Miss Monette lived."

"A picture?"

"Yes..... It was a picture she drew with Emilia when they were both young."

A picture of a 'sparkling princess' painted in a child's hand. Lines that could not be drawn straight and colors that bled through the lines, it was something would only be called good as baseless flattery.

Monette had bothered to bring such a picture with her from the Idira home to the old castle. At that time, she moved to the old castle in order to escape from the weight of the royal palace and from her family. There would have been little that she would have wanted to carry with her.

What was necessary for her were the minimum number of books about witches and magic. She brought that picture with her to the old castle despite her arms being already full with those alone.

And she kept it for all those years, without decorating it or tossing it away.

Every time she saw it, she would have remembered the admiration for the ‘sparkling princess,’ and every time she held it in her hands, memories of her journey from the dissolution of her engagement to her current state inside a suit of armor would have popped up. Alexis’s words would continue to surface, a knife still lodged in her heart.

Still, Monette kept those memories with her sister on hand.

What can be said for this type of attachment?

And most of all, even though it is now known that everything was due to Emilia’s magic, Monette still wears her armor and is afraid to take it off.

Unlike Alexis who had decided to trust everything to Ordo, even if that meant the disposal of his family, Monette was still a prisoner held captive.

“.....That’s why Miss Monette wishes to judge Emilia herself. As a witch belonging to the same Idira family, and as an older sister, she has not yet come to a decision.”

“I understand. So it was Monette who needs to blow her doubts away?”

“Well, if that girl doesn’t make that decision herself, then she will be stuck in that armor forever.”

Ordo and Gina looked at each other with a serious look on their faces after Percival had finished speaking.

At about the same time that Ordo was muttering to himself, “Can I talk once?” the sound of knocking sounded in the room.

“.....I don’t know what’s going on.”

Alexis’s mind returned to the room after a knock.

Concetta swimming around in the large bath inside Ordo’s mansion was truly a sweet sight, and afterwards, Alexis returned to his room wrapped up in a wet towel..... to find Ordo sitting on his knees reaching out.

Besides that, for some time now this uncle has been patting Alexis’s head since earlier. In spite of this show of affection, Alexis’s face distorted into an irregular fashion and spoke in a lower tone of voice.

“Uncle, what do you want?”

“No, it’s just that you have grown more <sup>twisted</sup> stronger than I thought. It’s the first time in my life I’ve ever felt this type of pride well up in my chest.”

“..... that’s good?”

“It’s incomprehensible. Now, how about you call me Uncle Ordo just like you used to when you were a kid. Well, I was exiled from the royal palace the day after you called me that for the first time after that though.”

“Stop, old man, release me.”

Alexis had no idea what Ordo was thinking and just released some verbal abuse on instinct.

But for Ordo, such verbal abuse was–“A sign that Alexis is an even better student than I had imagined!”–favorably taken, even more so than if Alexis had called him ‘Uncle Ordo’ like he had been originally asked.

Speaking of Monette, who had come back to her room at almost that same time that the uncle and nephew were getting to know each other better.....

“Miss Monette, I will always stay by your side no matter where you are!”

Percival had sleepily barged into her room without her noticing,

“Just a little, I shall embrace Monette and heal her! Witch slayers should just go to bed quietly!”

and Monette was officially tired out from being sandwiched between Gina and Percival who were both trying to push the other one away.

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## Bonus

### Armored Girl Monette ☒ An extra story that didn't fit earlier part 3☒

“Actually, Concetta used to not weigh much at all during the old days.”

These were the words Gina issued while stroking Concetta who was riding on her knee. Alexis listened to this gentle voice fondly reminiscing about the past with round eyes and a wide open mouth that no words came out of.

The current Concetta was far from thin, it would be more apt to call her thick. Of course, it was not a type of fat that would endanger his health, but a body made from a large amount of fluffy hair. Still, Alexis's expression clearly showed he was unable to imagine a thinner Concetta..... and so the cat withdrew from Gina's knee and stamped his paw down onto Alexis's foot.

Was this a protest?

“I first met Concetta inside a forest. I found him on my way to the city, but no matter how much I called, he refused to leave the grass. He'd scratch the grass looking scared while weakly crowing.”

“Huh, I can imagine it with his present figure..... no, never mind. Nothing is coming up. Please continue Gina, and stop hitting me with your tail Concetta.”

“At first he was intimidated watching me from the grass, but he eventually came out, and I petted him for a long time. But his fur was really stiff, and it felt awful to the touch.”

“Concetta.....”

Wondering whether he remembered those days, wrinkles formed between Gina's eyebrows as she continued to talk about Concetta's fur.

Concetta is a long hair variety type of cat. It seems that he was abandoned by his lord, and became desperate while living in the woods where he was thrown out. You cannot

keep a clean coat in such an environment.

The hair was tangled and stiff, and Gina's hands became dirty after petting him.....  
From Gina's point of view, Concetta was the spitting image of misery.

"So, I decided to take Concetta to my mansion. I told him that 'Cats are meant to be fluffy.'"

"You told him?"

"I told him. He was convinced pretty easily with just that, and he diligently followed me to my mansion where he took a bath. I gave him some delicious rice, we started living together, and soon we started going out shopping together. I went out often, and because Concetta glows, it made it easy to walk..... and after awhile I noticed he glowed."

That's right, this child is capable of glowing.

.....Were cats meant to be able to glow?

"Gina, you should have noticed Concetta could glow the second he started glowing!"

"I think it was about three months of him glowing before I realized that the light was coming from him. Concetta absorbed some of my magic from my witchcraft."

If Gina were to call him, Concetta would happily come with a loud 'nya'. He would rub his fluffy body up against her feet and bring his nose up to her outstretched finger.

This is what comfort looks like. Besides, if he was blinking brightly, that would mean he was feeling good.

"When I was watching Concetta having so much fun and purring so loudly whenever I petted him, I became so enraptured with how cute he was that I never noticed he was glowing."

"Is this also because of a witch's whim?"

"Well, maybe."

Gina laughed while stroking Concetta's soft hair. Alexis watched her for awhile, and

then his gaze moved towards something in the corner of his eye.

Towards Monette, Percival, and Robertson to be specific.

“Miss Monette, you are a good witch..... because I will sing you a lullaby, please feel free to sleep soundly.”

Percival was singing a lullaby while giving Monette a lap pillow,

“I wonder if I could drink something from this position..... but I don’t want to risk spilling something in my helmet,”

and Monette thinking about taking a drink having felt the futility of resisting at this point, and Robertson who was blinking light while standing atop Monette’s helmet.

Needless to say, Percival had gotten drowsy a couple of minutes ago. Alexis sighed at such a sight and stood up from his chair.

“Monette, there is a straw here, so don’t try and drink like that.”

“I will not. Thank you.”

“Miss Monette, are you thirsty? Then I will help you drink.”

Trying to help, Percival stabbed a straw into a cup and held it in front of Monette.

In response to this, Monette looked dissatisfied and groaned, “I’d rather have it spray on my face,” from within her helmet. Alexis shrugged his shoulders and got to work on convincing the sleepy Percival that it would be better if he allowed Monette to drink herself.

Meanwhile, Robertson was still blinking but had moved down and was skittering across Monette’s chest plate.

Watching all of this from over her shoulder without saying anything, Gina laughed and said, “This is also part of a witch’s whim,” while holding Concetta close.

# Chapter 48

## Witch's Magic and Two Armors

If we were going to head to the royal palace with a small group, it would be necessary to build up a specialized unit of troops.

Everyone agreed with Ordo's point, so it was decided that we would spend the next few days inside the mansion.

I took lessons on magic from Gina while Percival and Alexis worked alongside Ordo and his knights. We would gather together and confirm the state of the preparations over dinner..... every day.

Although we had come to the decision to effectively stage a coup, it could be said that this was the first calm time we had had since we started this journey.

A few days passed with this calm time.

I was wearing my armor sitting on a sofa in my room. Gina, who was sitting across from me, was watching me very closely. The view in front of me was different from the usual, some of my vision was obstructed in a strange way, and there was more darkness around me than the usual as well.

It is hard to see..... so I scrunched my brow and narrowed my vision from within my helmet.

A shiny silver sight different from the color I am used to and a cacophony of sounds I do not recognize ringing out every time I move causes a wave of uneasiness to wash over me. It seems that I have gotten so used to the suit of armor I have worn for so long that anything else causes me to feel obstructed and a weird sense of stuffiness.

The thought causes an amount of self-pity to overcome me. But now is not the time to lament, so I reached out towards the armor sitting upright in front of me. It was the armor that I had grown so accustomed to.

On the other hand, the outstretched hand before me was something completely unfamiliar to me. What was worn was a beautifully polished suit of armor with a refined design. It was one of the suits lined up in the mansion's corridors.

I had to concentrate even harder due to the sense of incongruity from wearing this new armor, but soon the familiar suit of armor in front of me started to move. An empty armor moving even though nobody was touching it, isn't this a horror story?

"Good job Monette, that's the way. Is it too hot in there?"

"It's alright. I'm getting used to it."

"Even a skilled witch has a hard time manipulating things if the right conditions are not met. And even then, it will be a huge drain on their physical stamina as well. It is easier if you have a knack for it though."

I continued watching the suit of armor sitting in front of me while listening to Gina's explanation.

Using magic from inside a suit of unfamiliar armor, the familiar armor moved with slow, jerky movements. When I ordered it to pet Concetta on top of Gina's lap, the fingertips of silver steadily and gently brushed the soft hair. Concetta sniffed the iron fingers as they were brought away—feeling strange towards the awkward movements that could not be described as having belonged to a person.

"You cannot move the fingers, but it seems that you have gotten used to it rather quickly."

"It's thanks to Gina. If Gina were not here to tell me what to do, I would never have figured out how to do this myself."

I showed my appreciation and expressed my thanks from inside this new helmet, and Gina returned a smile to me in turn. Her pride as my senior witch was showing.

Meanwhile, a light knock on the door echoed inside the room.

When I called out to them, the door began to slowly open.

The person who revealed themselves in the doorway was Percival. He took one step into the room before he stopped and his eyes opened wide in surprise. He took one

look at Gina before his eyes focused in on the two suits of armor.

“.....Miss Monette?”

His vision continued to alternate between me and my usual suit of armor.

It was funny to watch, so I started speaking from inside this helmet with a grin spreading across my face. Then a, “Percival, what’s wrong?” came out in my voice.

.....from both sets of armor. In addition, I when both sets of armor tilted their heads in confusion, I could see the question marks swirling overtop Percival’s head.

Watching both sets of armor that were making fun of him.....

“It’s this one!

he vigorously pointed to one of the armors.

The carefully polished suit of armor. It was the armor that had originally decorated the mansion’s hallway.

However the armor stopped moving once Percival pointed at it, until, “You did well,” a voice came from the armor and the clanking of iron hitting armor rang from the armor clapping its hands together.

Of course, I was included in with the armor as well.

“That was amazing, Percival. How were you able to figure it out?”

“Even if they move in the same way, that armor’s movements were clearly less natural.”

“I see.”

“Besides, surely because of my love”

“As expected Percival! As I thought I cannot underestimate the skills of a witch slayer!”

Gina raised a loud voice overtop of Percival and pulled me in to a tight embrace.

At that moment I thought Percival was groaning, but while being stroked and held by

Gina, I was unable to see his current state. I feel like he had said something, but I could not hear him because of Gina and it seems like I won't be able to ask him about it.

"Hey Monette, as expected of a witch slayer's strength right?"

"I feel like it is less to do with him being a witch slayer and more him having dynamic eyesight and observant eyes."

"That's true huh. Dynamic visual acuity and observational eyes, I cannot think of any other reason he would be able to pick you apart."

In Gina's affirmation, I had to tilt my helmet to see the subject of our conversation.

Then, when my gaze fell on Percival, he narrowed his blue eyes for a moment before shaking his head and taking a seat next to the empty suit of armor.

".....Inside?"

"Robertson is inside the helmet."

Hearing my explanation, Percival once again started looking between the two suits of armor.

Then he narrowed his eyes as if he were deep in thought..... ,

"When she grows, a new armor.....?"

he murmured.

"Please do not talk like I have the same ecology as a hermit crab."

"I know, it's just a joke. So, what are you going to do with the leftovers?"

"I haven't molted either!"

As I cried out my complaints to him, Percival responded with a jovial laugh.

As he did so, he gave me a 'so then' expression as if he had just finished a ceremony before turning his gaze back towards the other set of armor. I glared at him for a second before taking a small breath and turning my gaze as well.

It was the armor I usually wear. I concentrated my mind before sending out an order, and it reacted with a slow creak as it raised one hand.

“I am moving the armor with my magic. I can only do it for a short time, but the field of vision and the sounds heard by it while I am manipulating it are all transmitted to me.”

“I was surprised. Can you do that whenever you want because you are a witch?”

“I can only do it if Robertson enters inside, but the further the armor is away from me the more it drains my physical strength, and the connection is immediately broken if it receives a strong shock.”

Listening to my explanation, Percival breathed out as if he were impressed and knocked on the armor’s chest, making a hollow \*gong\* \*gong\* echoed out.

On the other hand, I complained because it was noisy. The sounds heard from inside this new armor and the sounds transmitted through the armor with Robertson inside were both coming into my ears.

In the first place, this magic is only possible for me because I had been wearing that suit of armor for many years, and because Robertson was inside. By continuously wearing it for many years, the armor had become soaked in my magic power, and Robertson allowed me to manipulate that magical energy by acting as my familiar.

And with the efficient method of using magic that Gina had taught me, I was capable of utilizing both. Without any of these three things, the empty armor in front of me would not be able to make fun of Percival like it was. Controlling things with magic is a difficult thing to do.

Of course, I cannot afford to relax just because I can use it.

Whether I become woozy due to the double voices or because my physical strength runs out, it is a magic that cannot be used for a long period of time.

But, if I were to put in some stronger magic.....

Thinking so, I let out a short breath.

However Percival suddenly called my name, bringing my thoughts back to reality and

drawing my gaze towards him.

“.....Miss Monette, what’s the matter?”

With Percival’s words, my polished helmet gave out a creak as I tilted my head.

‘What’s the matter’, what does he mean? There was no mockery in Percival’s eyes, and he looked almost a little worried.

Seeing his eyes like that, my only reaction was a resounding, “What?”

“What’s wrong with what?”

“No, somehow you looked hot is all.”

Percival was looking straight at my helmet. No, he was looking through my helmet, right in the space where my eyes would be.

Is that not a little too weird? Whether I look hot or not, I am wearing a full suit of armor. Naturally my face is completely blocked off by iron as well, so it should be impossible for him to see my face.

“How can you tell if I’m hot or not without being able to see anything other than my helmet?”

“No, that’s..... but you still looked like you were hot.”

Looking like he thought it was strange himself, Percival gave an answer that couldn’t really be considered an answer. Yet he continued to look right at my helmet with confidence in his thoughts.

His blue eyes were looking directly into my own. It was as if he were staring right into my own..... thinking that far, my breath stopped for a second when I realized I was staring into his eyes as well.

Feeling extremely self-conscious for a moment, I quickly turned my face away.

I wear armor everyday that is able to hide my entire physical structure, and while it would be difficult for someone to see my eyes through the visor in my helm, I use witchcraft to make it impossible for anyone to peek in. I applied the same spells to this

armor as well. I can see out, but nobody can see in. I've done it this way since I first donned my armor.

It has allowed me to relax.....

"They will not be able to see my eyes even in this armor," with this thought, I became careless.

Percival is a witch slayer.

No magic will work on him. This of course also includes the magic I use to hide my eyes.

In other words, for him this armor I am wearing is just an ordinary suit of armor. And this armor was something made as a decoration, so of course, it lacks much in the way of protection in favor of a more artistic look.

So looking directly at the helmet, you would be able to naturally see the wearer's pupils.....

"S-Sorry.....!"

Percival's reaction was one that screamed, 'I saw it.'

Meanwhile, my eyes had started to swim inside my helmet, and I was too busy cursing myself for my own idiocy to give him any kind of follow-up.

An awkward air spread in the room.

But even in a time like this, while laughing graciously, Gina stepped forward while while saying, "So witch slayers are peepers too." Robertson appeared from the empty helmet and started to do a little dance on the surface, and with Concetta meowing and making noise, the awkward air quickly turned into something more normal.

.....Even though I wasn't feeling normal at all!

My heart was beating like an early morning school bell. The echoes resonated through my body, and it felt like I could hear the noise coming out of every single one of my pores adding on to my uneasiness every second that passed. My insides were hot.

It's not good for me to be seen by other people.

But now my eyes have been seen making my heart tighten, and a cold sweat passed over me even though I knew that nobody could see any part of me now.

A constriction and fear, emotions welled up even though such a small part of me had been seen. Both my body and my mind were completely occupied by these thoughts.

But curiously, for some reason I felt that this discomfort, was just a little different than what I remember it to be.

While thinking that, I looked up and watched Percival's back as he ran out the door with Gina calling him a peeping demon as he left.

# Chapter 49

## The Night Before

The calmer the rest time is, the quicker it passes.

And all too soon, the eve of our decision greeted us.

I looked up at the night sky alone from the mansion's garden. The manor provided a moderate amount of light, yet the area still felt isolated as if they were in completely different worlds from each other. It is the perfect place to calm one's nerves. Besides, this corner of the garden was hidden behind a complex arrangement of plants, so no one would stop by unless they had reason.

Inside the mansion there are people constantly coming and going—even at night. There are few places where a person can go to be alone.

This place was somewhere that Ordo had recommended to me. I still remember the restless tone he used when he murmured, “the ideal place to think up new plans,” at the time.

The wind blew across my iron shoulders while I enjoyed the silence of this place.....

“Miss Monette?”

I heard my name called and looked around to see who else was here.

Percival was watching me from a second floor terrace overlooking this section of the garden. Realizing that the gaze from my helmet had locked on to him, he lightly waved at me..... before melodramatically tilting his head to the side.

“.....Wait a moment, perhaps the armor is moving by itself without permission. Is there a proper Monette in there?”

“I'm in here. You're quite rude aren't you?”

I turned my head away in a huff at Percival's teasing words. Probably thinking he was

funny, I could feel him smiling above me. I guess this is his way of having fun.

“Miss Monette, what are you doing there?”

“Just as it looks. It’s an intricate place, so why don’t you.....”

I forcefully swallowed the words I was about to say down my throat.

A looming shadow dimmed visibility, and a calm breeze swept through the area. Raising my helmet up in astonishment, I saw a picture of golden hair standing out against the backdrop of inky darkness.

Percival’s body passed through the sky, heading straight for me. But rather than just describing him as having ‘gotten off’, it was more like he ‘flew off.’

And when he landed near me, he took a moment to correct the wrinkles that had formed in his outerwear as he flew. His landing was light as if such a leap were natural, and there was no tension or worry in him.

I cannot believe that he jumped off the top of the first floor at such a height. It would be to the extent of having jumped down to the bottom of a stairway.

Although I was stunned with his nonchalant landing, I still managed to move my lips,

“Th..... That’s dangerous,”

and chide him.

“Is that so?”

“What would you do if you got hurt before tomorrow? If you fractured something then we would have to take you by dragging you in the dirt!”

Or so I cried, but I could tell by Percival’s face that he thought my worries needless. Instead, he changed the subject with a simple and easy to understand, ‘By the way,’

“By the way..... what was Miss Monette doing here?”

“I was *safely* bathing in the moonlight. *Safely, as in without causing injuries to myself.*”

“Oh, yes, being safe really is for the best.”

Perhaps he was finally feeling some of the pressure in my words, but Percival responded with a dry laugh and a bead of sweat flowing down his forehead.

Then Percival slowly breathed out, and with a wistful look on his face, muttered, “It’s tomorrow.” At his words, I stopped chiding him and creakily nodded my helmet.

It’s tomorrow.

We head towards the royal palace under Ordo’s command tomorrow.

It is because Emilia does not handle mornings well that we are aiming to strike at dawn. No matter how many times I told her against it, she would always stay up late making a funny prayer that things would go well for her and her dream, so the next morning she would trudge out of bed sleepily scratching her eyes and looking like her brain was made of mud.

It was a warm memory. However, all it did was make my chest tighten now.

But tonight would be the last time my heart would tighten like this.

Tomorrow everything will end. No, I will end it.

Thinking that way, I took a deep breath, and then I looked up towards Percival.

“Percival, what are you going to do once all this is over?”

“I’ll spend my days being repeatedly beat upside the head with something resembling a brick.”

“.....that’s right huh.”

In his matter-of-fact reply, I could do nothing else besides shrug my shoulders.

Even in this place, at this time he is talking about, ‘something similar to bricks’. What a tensionless person..... I was so amazed I unintentionally released a large sigh..... and took a breath.

Percival’s eyes narrowed, staring at me as if he were loving my frustration.

Even though normally when someone stares at me my heartbeat quickens and a cold sweat would break out, for some reason I wasn't feeling like that now.

My heartbeat still quickened, but my heart was getting warmer.....

".....Percival."

"Every day, I will be beaten by something similar to a brick."

"W-Well, that's right....."

"Then I can see Miss Monette every day."

Percival's eyes shined like a torch in the light as my eyes went wide from his words.

It was completely different from the serious look he has when acting as an escort knight or the light tone he takes whenever he is up to his usual mischief. And of course, it was very different from the first time I saw him where all you could see on his face was a mixture of despair, fear, and hostility.

Right now he looked truly happy, almost like a child.

I was hit straight on by such a smile and panickedly turned my helmet away.

"E-every day..... I am a very busy witch! I will have to use a spell to remotely hit Percival with something similar to a brick every day!"

"Sure, you could do it with magic. So then, Miss Monette....."

So then..... enunciating his words and taking a breath, Percival pulled out a small box.

It was a tiny thing that fit snugly in the palm of his hand. I was immediately curious as to what could be inside. The box itself was well made and looked sturdy, so the contents were surely something important.

But when Percival put his hand forward as if to offer it to me, my eyes darted between it and Percival's face.

"This is?"

“.....Something similar to a brick.”

“Something similar to a brick!? It actually exists!?”

My gaze quickly focused in on the box.

It certainly never gave me the impression that it was ‘brick-like.’ In contrary to my reaction, Percival was looking a little restless.

He refused to answer me when I asked him what was inside instead just urging me to accept it.

Does he want me to open it up and check the contents for myself no matter what? I tilted my helmet curiously at this, but I decided to accept the box as he prompted me to.

It was tied up in a beautiful ribbon. It was surprisingly light in my hand and was become less and less ‘brick-like’ in my opinion.

However, even by weighing the box I am unable to guess what could be inside, so there was nothing else for me to do other than unwinding the ribbon and opening the lid.....

“This.....”

My voice cracked.

Inside the box, a single flower presented itself. It was not a fresh flower, but its beauty was a fine work of art with a beauty and nobility that would not lose to a fresh cut flower.

The silver petals were adorned with scattered lightly colored gems, and it shimmered with light before the box had been fully opened. Truly wondrous. I gently took hold of it and watched as the light changed shades every time I tilted it a different direction.

Still the light was dim enough to not be a burden when worn in your hair.

I remember this flower.

I saw it in the town at the border, but I gave up on it because it did not suit me..... this, it was that flower hair accessory.

“Percival, this.....”

“.....It looks like a brick.”

Percival unexpectedly turned away.

His words shocked me and my eyes naturally fell to the hair ornament in my hand.

Of course, it does not look like a brick at all. Although he continued to insist that it was certainly, ‘brick-like’.

I watched puzzled as Percival’s face continued to die in deeper shades of embarrassment, and most likely understanding my gaze from underneath my helmet was on him, he coughed into his hand.

“That is something similar to a brick. So.....”

“So?”

“.....So please accept it and hit me with it when everything is done.”

Percival’s voice told me that something was nagging him, and it was easy to see how tense he was at a glance.

But I cannot afford to say anything against him, let alone make fun of him. Catching sight of his vibrant blue eyes causes my back to shiver, and his words, “Of course I mean the Monette in the armor,” echo in my heart.

Seriously, feverishly, his unsettled look caused my heart to tighten.

The walls are closing in on me.

Someone had hit a bell and my cheeks had suddenly started on fire while my heart beat so hard that it hurt.

It seems like my brain is going to melt from the heat.

I had lived almost my whole life inside the old castle, and as I looked at this flower in my hand, I had no idea what to call this emotion surging forth from my heart.

A hair decoration that I gave up on because it did not suit me. I would feel no pleasure in crowing it upon my silver helmeted head, but it would be a waste to have such a beautiful ornament worn underneath where no one's eyes could lay upon it.

Either way, I thought that it would be like throwing pearls before a swine, and I even thought it would be rude of me to purchase such a treasure.

But, there was one alternative that I had never thought of.

If I were to not wear my helmet and not cover myself, if I were to wear the ornament normally on top of my head.....

Such unusual thoughts sprung to mind as I looked at treasure I held, but then I noticed Percival was still watching me and ripped my gaze away towards him.

He looked completely embarrassed, but he kept giving me an unsettled look with the implied question, "Will you accept it?" Compared to his usual expression and the pure smile he wore earlier, he looked kind of miserable now.

In spite of this, I found myself smiling slightly underneath my helmet before putting the hair ornament back in its box. I put it back carefully so as to avoid putting a scratch on it before slowly closing the lid and rewrapping the ribbon.

"Yes, it certainly seems like a brick now that you mention it."

"I see..... um, yes. It's similar."

"It can't be helped. When everything is over, I'll hit Percival with this every day."

Hearing my reply, Percival broke out into a large smile and excitedly nodded his head.

# Chapter 50

## Time for a Decision 1

Just by grasping how the royal castle will move in the event of an emergency, the success rate of our surprise attack had dramatically improved.

Besides, the domestic impression of Alexis could not be any lower, and it was the same for Percival who had gone with him. Although they had the help of a witch, there is no way that the royal castle would suspect us making a move so soon after we had just fled it.

And to be bringing Ordo with us. Even if more time had gone by, they would never assume a combined rebellion.

Even if Percival and Alexis were to arrive at the royal castle, a battalion of knights would not come running, and there was no sign that security had been strengthened.

There would be a warning call, but even then there was a deep-rooted mockery against Alexis embedded in the hearts of the knights. They would never think that, 'the unfaithful prince who misused government expenses and ran away from the royal castle,' would ever come bearing down on them with Ordo's forces.

The curse was too strong, and it caused our enemies to grow careless.

"There will be minimal contact. People in the urban area will avoid us, and you can think of the outfielders as not even being there."

It was Gina who was laughing so graciously.

She held a sleeping Concetta in her arms while elegantly walking as if she were attending a ball. However, contrary to the lightness of her behavior, she was currently casting a wide-ranging spell.

So that people in the city would not notice this march, they would avoid going near the royal palace.

It was a spell developed as it was passed down the Avelkin family.

The citizens would all comfortably oversleep, and if they were already awake, they would end up forgetting or even completely ignoring any business they had near the castle. The person themselves would not think much about the incident, would see the mass-oversleeping as just a rare incident brought about by the change of the season..... and would naturally turn their feet away from the castle.

I watched her deftly using her magic with a warm look in my eyes, but my gaze was drawn elsewhere when I heard another voice.

Percival had returned with several knights following him.

He stopped in front of Ordo saying, "It's done." The tone of his voice sank a bit, and the expression he wore was going past serious and had gone a little stiff.

But that should be natural. When he reached the royal palace with those few accompanying knights, he immediately headed towards a watch point in the vicinity. And sealed their movements.

According to Percival, the watchmen guards shift at equal intervals, and they regular communicate their status even if nothing is going on. Because he is familiar with the system, he knocked out a guard who was once his friend, and he sent out the message, 'There is no problem.'

His treachery has begun, and although he was determined, there is no way he would be in a good mood.

"They won't notice what has happened for awhile. I also sabotaged their communication relay, so even if they do realize what is going on, it will take time for reinforcements to arrive."

"I see. How many are there in house?"

"At this time there should be no knights inside to speak of."

"Right. Then we should only have to worry about the regular guards and the few knights they can summon from outside right away. Alright men, don't move out of the witch's protection."

Ordo addressed his men.

He had hand-picked elite knights from his retinue. The number of people was small, but their strength was considerable.

But no matter how skilled with a sword a knight is, they cannot stand before magic. Rather, if they are enthralled by Emilia's magic, then the more elite they are, the greater the risk is as having them be our enemies.

These personal were selected with this in consideration. Can you say that this is Ordo's trust in them?

"For today, any complaints or objections are strictly forbidden. Anyone who shows any frustration with me will be dealt with immediately."

Ordo was forced to go with extreme measures as a countermeasure against Emilia's magic.

Any dissatisfaction or complaints made could be a sign they had been infected by magic. The plan was to reap the consciousness of anyone who showed even the slightest sign of being affected.

The men might not care now, but the magic could bring up lingering dissatisfaction with Ordo or bring out resentment for the current situation in their chests, and it would grow without their notice from there.

Hearing all of this, the knights shared a look between each other. Not just an insult, but even a small complaint would lead to such treatment, it would be natural to wonder if a witch's curse could really be that powerful.....

I watched those knights ruminating among themselves before turning my gaze to towards Ordo.

"No questioning might be a little much."

"That's it. Knights who have been trained this much should be able to do this much."

"I've gotten paid to leave early, long holidays, and sick days. Ordo would kill me if I skimped out here."

“It’s good to be healthy. Right, are we going?”

Through all the knights’ appeals, Ordo spread out the sketch of the royal castle he was holding in his hand.

Of course, I know that their answers are jokes. Rather than speaking vows of loyalty, jokes are better for relieving tension while simultaneously displaying one’s commitment. This was a service to help everyone involved.

However, they were somewhat awkward, and I could still see the anxiety on their faces. Still, they continued to tell jokes while forcing a smile.

Were they refusing to buckle running off of a man’s pride alone? I nodded my head once without mentioning anything so as to avoid distracting them.

The royal castle was acting as usual with no indication that their were intruders on the premises.

Our small group moved quickly yet carefully. Even though not a single person had breathed a word about our presence, this was the royal castle where the king of a nation lived. There are people constantly coming and going.

Not just the guards patrolling the interior, but maids as well. Ordo’s response to running across people was always the same, “You’ve earned yourself a good nap.” That meant a lot of unconscious bodies. There was no difference in treatment between men or women, and even the young servant girls were brought down. Girls..... it is a mistake to expect this man to treat you differently just because you are a girl.

But of course we do not have the time nor the means to stop and try to convince every single person we walk across, but the sight was still enough to make even the bitter Alexis divert his eyes away as much as possible.

As for Ordo, he looked perfectly normal as if he were just taking a stroll in his own mansion, and Gina,

“Oh my Concetta, you bit someone again.

she was praising Concetta who had bit a patrolling knight’s ankle causing him to

release a loud groan.

No matter how thick, and adorable, and fluffy he is, Concetta is still a cat. He is also a familiar. He jumps forward with a roaring voice and a wild look in his eyes faster than most people can comprehend, sinking his razor sharp fangs and claws imbued with magic into the feet of his prey. Of course, the ankle was targeted to prevent the target from moving.

The caught knight would always collapse with a groan, blood flowing from his ankle forming a puddle next to him. As expected of Gina's familiar.

Robertson was surprisingly fiercely competitive after seeing Concetta's successes.

Using swift, eye-catching movements, he approached a maid from behind. In order to avoid having her scream, he jumped right onto her hand and bit her. His quickness could only be described as splendid, and his movements as he bounced off the walls and ceilings were something that would be impossible to predict even if you saw him coming.

The little bite left the maid woozy on her feet, causing her to lean against the wall for support until inevitably collapsing. It was a method that completely prevented her from calling for help, let alone warning any nearby people.

"I've been worried about this since awhile ago, but why do people collapse whenever Robertson bites them?..... huh, poison? You're poisonous?"

The word 'poison' got stuck on my lips.

Apparently Robertson has a poison that is capable of numbing people. I guess his bite became more powerful after becoming my familiar. What a reliable familiar I have.

And so we continued through the intricate royal castle dealing with everyone we came across..... until suddenly I had to stop.

Something bone chilling had come over me. The source of that coldness was..... the pouch hanging at my waist. It should be the necklace resting inside.

".....Monette, so you also noticed."

"Yes, Emilia has gotten up."

“Apparently she didn’t feel like staying up late last night.”

Gina’s voice was lower than it had been before, but she did not look worried as her magical protections had not been disturbed. Concetta had also purred slightly, and his fluffy tail had risen slightly.

Surmising the situation from our remarks, the knights became reinvigorated, and an alertness returned to their figures once again. Ordo turned to face them.

“Okay, here we shall divide in two. You men are to leave the castle as soon as you are finished.”

“Yes.”

“You know the rendezvous point. Wait there, but if you start to embrace any suspicions towards me, abandon me and return home.”

“.....Yes.”

The expressions of the knights went rigid at the word, “abandon.”

But they reluctantly nodded their heads in agreement when Ordo told them he would be safe.

“Please be careful.....”

Those, were the words I used for this separation.

Noticing my uneasiness, Percival placed his hand on the shoulder of my armor in some small way to comfort me.

“It’s alright, we’ll bring him back safely.”

“.....Yes.”

Even though there was no time to spare, before separating, the surrounding knights offered me some encouraging words and confident smiles. They did not move until I nodded my approval, and then they rushed off quickly.

The silver color of their armor shined after receiving the light from the mansion.

Those of us left behind watched that glow slowly disappear..... and then we headed towards a different place than them.

“What’s going on.....?”

These were Emilia’s words as she was shaken awake.

The maid who had woken her up ignored those words, handing over a coat and urging her out of the room.

Normally acting gently, this was a maid who had always looked towards her with loving eyes as Emilia slowly rose out of bed slovenly scratching the sleep out of her eyes.

Emilia had gotten used to hearing the words, “Well, it’s already noon,” accompanied with a bitter laugh when she woke up, but this time the voice she heard was harsh accompanied by words of, “Quickly, we must hurry.”

The maid’s expression was grim, and Emilia quickly realized it would be better to listen rather than going back to sleep.

“Quietly. To avoid anyone nearby from noticing..... Prince Rodel will be coming as well.”

“Rodel? Hey, what happened.....?”

Leaving the room while being pulled along by the maid’s hand, they walked down the hall while holding their breaths.

The inside of the royal palace was just as it usually was despite the maid’s urgent attitude. It was quiet, and there were less people coming and going than there were during the afternoon. Emilia was weak to mornings and had never roamed the halls at this time before, although something similar to now had happened several times before.

But for some reason, there was a strange unrest this time. Emilia reflexively placed her hand to her chest, and she wrapped her hand around the amulet necklace she wore. No matter what, she had worn this necklace underneath her clothes no matter

how fine of jewelry she received.....

Emilia thought it strange to only worry about it this morning. Was there a reason why it felt like it was hurting her skin? This thought was dully running in her subconsciously.

In one room they eventually passed through, Rodel's figure was standing tall.

His expression looked grim as well, but it relaxed a little upon noticing that Emilia had arrived.

"Emilia, I'm glad you're safe."

"Rodel, what is.....?"

"My uncle has attacked with his knights..... And there are reports that he has my brother and a witch with him as well."

"That's, Alexis. Then the witch is probably....."

Emilia's face turned pale in an instant as a story too outrageous for her to comprehend was brought before her. But before Emilia could ask any of her building questions, Rodel took her hand as there was no time to explain.

"Emilia, we must escape to a safe place for now."

"Escape.....?"

"Yes that's right. It seems we cannot contact the knights stationed outside right now, so we cannot ask for any reinforcements. It is best for us to find a safe place to hide, and wait for our knights to deal with things. Even if they have brought a witch with them, they cannot defeat a royal family who isn't here. I we have to do is escape, and our enemy will not have time to come search for us."

Emilia nodded her head without knowing what Rodel was really urging her to do..... but then she reflexively looked back when she heard a sound on the other side of the room.

\*Creak\* It was a high-pitched, drawn out noise from the door slowly swinging open.

Emilia cuddled up to Rodel, but her eyes remained glued to who had walked through the now open door.....

“..... Sister Monette.”

and then called the name of the full body suit of armor that stood there.

# Chapter 51

## Time for a Decision 2

“Emilia, please calmly listen to me.”

Emilia stared at the suit of armor that walked into the room with a bit of embarrassment in her as she realized that just hearing her sister Monette’s voice was enough to calm down so much of the anxiety that had been building up inside her. If it were not for the heavy air pervading through the room, she would have been jumping for joy with heartfelt cheer.

But when Emilia peeked over Monette’s shoulder as the door closed behind her, she saw a guard lying on the ground. He was probably intended to guard this room. Who had defeated him? Did someone come there along with Monette, or.....?

Either way, it meant that Monette was somehow involved in this mess, and she had somehow interfered with the security of this room. Realizing that, Emilia called out to her beloved sister.

“Sister Monette, why.....”

“Emilia, are you aware that you are a witch?”

“Witch? I am?”

Who is? Doubt started to spread across Emilia’s face.

There was no trace of falsehoods or deceit in Monette’s tone, so for Emilia that doubt was more steered towards why a question like that would be asked under these circumstances.

But more than anything Emilia doubted the fact that she could be a witch.

Certainly the Idira family was a family of witches, but they had thrown away their magic and their name as witches long ago. Now the family was an aristocratic one who lived in society, and not a single one of them had something like a familiar. It was so

long ago that none of their relatives ever really even talked about it.

The first Emilia had even heard about their heritage was when she found out that all Monette had taken with her to the old castle was the collection of magical books that her family still had.

In the first place, Emilia found it hard to imagine what magic was. She had never seen a witch before until her beloved sister had shown up before her once again claiming to be one—although even then she had not ‘seen’ her. Descriptions of witches were absent in their house, and there were even those who would shut down conversations with a, “That’s how they are,” leaving any information to hearsay and idle gossip.

For Emilia that was all magic was.

And even if she had been given an opportunity to learn magic, she would have much preferred to spend her time learning more about the proper mannerisms and beautiful behavior for a princess.

With these circumstances, why on earth would anyone think she could be a witch?

So Emilia appealed.

She tried to hold back her trembling voice, but all that did was make her hands shiver instead.

When he noticed, Rodel stretched out his arms before Emilia as if to protect her. It was to support Emilia, and it seemed like he believed he could protect her from anything. There was a strong alertness in his eyes.

Even though her sister would not hurt her..... no, even though it seemed like she wouldn’t, Rodel’s presence was still comforting to her, and she unconsciously called out his name. His eyes were sharp with vigilance, but he still made sure to give her a sideways look and a comforting smile.

“Monette, why are you trying to deceive Emilia?”

“I am not misleading her.”

“Then what is your purpose? You have come here with my hated older brother and an enemy of the royal family, so why are you.....”

Alexis, who once threw out nothing but insults towards Monette and abandoned their engagement, and Ordo, who was kicked out of the royal family due to the high risk factor of him starting a rebellion. It was a personal selection that should be unthinkable for Monette.

Monette's response to that was a flat, "Ordo is just doing what comes naturally to him."  
-At that moment Ordo, who was inside a luxurious mansion not far from them, released a violent sneeze and glared at the person standing next to Gina.-

However, following this was a very serious voice saying, "As for Alexis....."

"Those words were never his true nature in the first place."

".....Sister Monette, what does that mean?"

"Everything was caused by Emilia's magic..... It was all your doing."

Hearing Monette's sudden accusation, Emilia gasped.

However Rodel looked like he wasn't believing any of it. With hatred in his eyes, he looked as if he were about to blame Monette of some unspeakable crime.

No, he really was blaming her. In the momentum of this attack, here she was trying to pass the blame onto Emilia for all the misdeeds Alexis had perpetrated over the past year. It was impossible for him not to get angry, and even though he was unable to see inside the helmet, he did his best to meet her gaze with an intimidating glare.

Towards such a Rodel, Monette provided little thought and did her best to describe every terrible, indescribable thing that had happened.

Just like she was trying to only state the facts. As if she were forcibly repressing her own emotions.

From the beginning, right to this moment. Monette recanted everything that 'Emilia Idira's magic' had caused.

To call the story shocking would do it a disservice, and Emilia felt the blood drain from her face. Her heart was writhing in pain, and her limbs felt cold and numb.

"That's, I..... because instead of my sister, I....."

Monette was abused as an ugly wretch because of her.

Monette was tossed away and her engagement canceled because of her.

Because of her wishes, Alexis had tossed away Monette in favor of her, and now she had tossed away Alexis in favor of Rodel.

Emilia's voice came out in short croaks.

Then she looked down because she realized she was wearing fine quality sleepwear. Obviously it was not decadently adorned with jewels, but they were pajamas made from the finest quality fabrics and a design so intricate that it was a waste to only wear them for bedtime.

Originally, when she woke up, she had already taken out a gorgeous dress that she had been planning to wear. She was going to match that gorgeous dress with some flower embroidery and a necklace laden with a large jewel, or so she thought.

What was today's schedule..... that's right, she was supposed to meet up with some well known designers to make up the dress she was to wear for a party she was attending next month. After sharing a cup of tea, she was to change into another dress for the planned evening party Rodel had invited her to.

Changing from a high quality nightdress to a gorgeous dress, and then an extravagant party dress.....

Certainly you would say a person living like this was living lavishly.

Just like a 'sparkling princess'.

"But then, Alexis said sister....."

"Alexis swore I was far too ugly, but Emilia, was I really ugly?"

".....Huh?"

"We were closer to each other than anyone else could ever dream to be, but do you remember what I look like Emilia?"

When she was asked, Emilia wondered what her sister could possibly be talking

about..... and then her expression distorted in confusion.

“.....Why, I cannot remember my sister’s face..... I can’t remember something I spent so much time with.”

Even though she tried to remember, the only face for Monette she could remember was something hazy as if someone had taken a pencil eraser to her memories.

She used to be with her from morning to end. When she went to bed, they would face each other under the covers and say, “Good night,” and whenever she woke up late in the morning, Monette’s bitter smile would always be there to welcome her.

Monette’s face was there at the beginning of the day, and it was there at the end of the day.

Even though she had seen her face more often than she had looked at her own in the mirror,

she couldn’t remember.

Her voice, the time they spent together, she could remember every single painting that they had drawn together.

Even though Monette’s face was famous for being hideously ugly, there was not a single memory that Emilia could dredge up where Monette’s face appeared.

“Sister, I.....”

“Emilia, you were so worried about me, but not once did you ever say, ‘You are not ugly,’ or ‘Who could think you are ugly?’”

“.....That is, no, I”

“It’s all because of a witch’s magic.”

“Everything was to make Emilia Idira a sparkling princess.

Everything was to keep Emilia Idira as a sparkling princess.”

With a clouded gaze, Emilia heard Monette's final conclusion and felt as if someone had locked her in a cage. It hurt. All she could manage was a few shallow breaths, and it felt like her heart was about to tear itself in two it was tightening so much.

The question of 'what on earth' had evolved into 'perhaps'. The memory of so many past events ran through her mind, appearing in new light with every doubt in herself that had been built up, and with each new doubt that accumulated in her, her heart continued to tighten until she had gone completely numb from the pain.

Certainly, she had never once told her beloved older sister, 'You are not ugly,' as far as she could remember. Encouraging or supporting Monette, the most she had done was feel a little anxious about her being alone in the old castle, and even then all she had done was send her a few insignificant letters. Even Alexis, the person who had supposedly driven her there, had tried to get in contact with her and sent her presents.

Why? She couldn't understand. She had loved her older sister from the bottom of her heart, and she thought she wanted to spend time together with her again more than anything else in the world.

It wasn't just Emilia. Nobody else had so much as sent word to Monette. Their family had not even attempted to bring her back out of the castle.

If she is hurting, then it is better to let her slowly heal on her own—was the thought process they had used.

But isn't that too strange? Their parents were not people who were harsh or lacked in love. On the contrary, the two sisters had practically bathed in it.

Originally, would they not have tried to comfort and bring Monette back? Even if they were to remain silent on the matter, something as absurd as leaving her to stew all alone in the old castle without so much as an escort or a chaperone isn't funny!

It was the same with Alexis.

Had he ever acted the way the rumors described him as?

He was always a kind person. He was always a respectable person.

He was diligent, and even though there was that act against her sister, Emilia had always held respect for him and longed to help him. She had always wanted to become a fine lady who could support him before those supposed transgressions of his were revealed.

But, when she thought about it, why would someone as gentle as Alexis ever use such a violent attack against Monette?

And she should have never believed that someone who loved his country and his citizens so much would ever act unfaithfully and steal from the national treasury.

When she thought about it once again, everything was strained and distorted.

And then the biggest distortion of all came to Emilia's mind. Why had she never felt uncomfortable or sad that all this was happening to people she loved?

And the answer was,

"I am..... to become a sparkling princess I....."

Bit by bit, Emilia started to piece things together, and then the suit of armor in front of her nodded its helmet with a creak.

".....I prayed for a long time. I thought about you every night. That is, my magic. I am your sister, and Alexis....."

"Emilia, let's go to Ordo's place together. You won't be able to live the life of luxury you have been until now, but I'll talk to Ordo about making sure you are taken care of."

"To Sir Ordo....."

Emilia's voice had some hesitation mixed into it.

There was a regret about the part of her that could still not accept the truth—mixed in the with the insurmountable guilt she felt over what she had done to Monette and her own inability to recognize what was happening because of her own arrogant wish. And then there was the fear about what the future held and the fear of her own identity as a witch.

Everything was getting meshed together, and she was feeling overwhelmed. Then, she

raised her face and saw a silver-colored hand presenting itself forward with a crisp sound.

“Sister Monette.....”

“It’s okay Emilia. Together,”

Monette’s words suddenly stopped.

It was Rodel who had interrupted her. He grabbed hold of Emilia’s rising hand and restrained her after she took her first step.

Rodel’s expression had never lost the vigilance he held in his eyes, but it had transformed into something holding hostility as if he were about to attack any moment now. When Emilia turned her gaze away from Monette to look at him, she recoiled after seeing the aggression in his expression.

“Rodel, with my sister I am.....”

“What’s wrong with you Emilia!? Why are you believing all her lies?”

“My sister would not lie to me. And I have already understood..... this is all my fault.”

So I have to go, Emilia appealed. She then tried to push herself out from Rodel’s grasp and reached out towards Monette. A silver and slightly shaking hand reached out to meet her.

Then, at the moment when the beautiful white hand like porcelain overlapped with the silver-plated carapace..... ,

“Everything being because of a witch, there is no way something that convenient could be true!!!”

Shouting out in an infuriated voice, Rodel grabbed Emilia’s arm and tore her away with brute force.

A high-pitched scream escaped Emilia's lips at that moment. She was torn away from her elder sister and looked on to her fiancée in astonishment. But in the next moment, her eyes went round because his expression, the one that usually carried a calm and gentlemanly smile, was distorted into one of rage and hatred.

She had never seen him have such a cold expression before. Fear began to gush up inside her, and the arm he was gripping started to ache.

"Rodel, please let me go....."

Emilia called out to Rodel in a hesitant voice. Following afterward was Monette's voice who was asking him the same thing.

However, neither of their pleas reached Rodel's ears as his crazed eyes turned towards Monette as if she were a bug in his way. In a flurry of movement, he rushed forward and swung his fist as if he meant to hit her, only for a sharp short knife to be pulled out in his hand.

It was probably something originally meant for self-defense. He probably thought that either he could not defeat a fully armored opponent without a bladed weapon or maybe he was just rational enough to realize it would hurt to punch a suit of iron armor.

A high-pitched screech echoed out as the blade of the knife collided with iron, the resulting resonance caused the armor to take a step back and shake. Did he mean to push the armor down and sink his blade into one of the armor's gaps.....?

Everything was eerily quiet for a second before the sound of collapsing armor meshed together with Emilia's screams.

"Sister Monette!"

"Emilia, get over here. You're coming with me!"

Rodel jumped out of the room without even offering so much as a sideways glance to the suit of armor he had just stabbed while forcibly dragging Emilia by her arm. Emilia tried to shake herself free while continuously calling out Monette's name, but there was no response to her cries and Rodel's grip was too tight for her to slip away.

Even so, she continued to call out to Monette with tears in her eyes towards the

collapsed body she had been talking to just a moment before.

The last thing she saw of the silver-colored armor that had fallen to the floor..... was a large spider rolling out of the helmet.

# Chapter 52

## Time for a Decision 3

Feeling the fact that my spell had lost all its power, I took a deep breath inside my helmet.

This place was outside the royal castle. His Majesty had already been caught and control of the castle had more or less been accomplished. Emilia's magic was a problem, but we also had to figure out how to deal with the reinforcement knights that would certainly be coming. We solved that problem by controlling the flow of information and selectively dealing with them as they came.

When one of the city lords had noticed the unusual state of the castle, he was naturally confused, but since he was captured shortly after arriving, there was nothing that any of his men could do. For the knights as well, by the time they noticed anything was amiss, they were already in checkmate.

Most of the credit for this was due to Ordo's subordinates who were able to carry out his orders to the letter using swift and effective methods.

The movement of the outfield had been equally advantageous as Gina's magic had successfully kept any curious onlookers away, and anyone trying to send word out to the crowds had been completely stifled by Percival. We had made our move in the early morning and attacked. We had gone to action with only the best possible conditions for us, but it was still a miracle that we were finishing with a result of almost zero damage to our side.

.....However the biggest problem with this assault has always been the threat of a witch's curse. That's why no one could rest easily until Emilia had been secured.

That's why everything was supposed to be finished with me, but with the collapse of my spell, there was nothing for me to do but pick up my parchment and put it back in my pouch.

Percival who was overlooking the situation noticed my movement and asked, "Are you finished?" There was a small bit of worry dyed into his voice, but I was currently only

capable of looking up at him and giving a small nod in reply.

I had to make sure to look at him from the side of my helmet in order to block the sight of my eyes from his view, but I was still able to see him narrow his eyes slightly.

“It must be tiring to use magic with an unfamiliar helmet.”

“.....I agree.”

I halfheartedly responded to Percival’s musings.

Indeed I am currently wearing a suit of armor that I am all around unfamiliar with, and I have been using magic to remotely manipulate the armor I usually wear—fatigue has naturally been building up. Of course, it was not physical, but mental fatigue which was wearing me down.

But I cannot complain about that right now, and Percival must have understood my feelings because he said no more on the subject. As I picked myself up from my seat on the floor, I tried to return to a more joking mood saying, “More than anything this new armor gives me extremely stiff shoulders,” and he gave me a bitter smile in return.

I wonder if my voice had sounded a little brighter, but as expected it is impossible for me to hide the shadow in my facial expression... even if I am wearing a helmet that covers my face.

While thinking about that, Gina, who was watching over me the whole time I was controlling my armor, spoke to the familiar resting in her arms.

“Please go pick up Robertson, Concetta.”

Please, and after listening to Gina’s request and jumping out of her arms with a small \*plop\*, he sang out a “Nya” before walking off.

I was a little uneasy to see Concetta walk off alone in all this confusion, but his back as he moved forward exuded dignity. Red blotches marked his fur and cute little feet, leaving behind red footprints as he left. How dependable he is.

I decided to entrust Robertson to such a Concetta.

I held down my chest with the back of my hand. An unpleasant feeling like a whirlpool

barreling around in my chest remained no matter how much I tried to joke things off. Emilia's voice heard through my magic was as if she were right in front of me, and the pained look on her face continued to etch itself in my mind causing my heart to burst.

I took a deep breath out as if to expel some of these worries while Ordo, who had finished giving out follow up instructions to his subordinates, walked up to us.

"Difficulties Monette. What happened to your armor?"

"It was knocked down, and the helmet probably fell off."

"How did that happen?"

".....Rodel. Emilia tried to come with me, but Rodel found it hard to accept the situation."

"Ah, so now both of my nephews have caused you undue difficulties. I am sorry."

"No, I do not mind."

I responded with a smile hidden underneath my helmet as Ordo exaggeratedly shrugged his shoulders and berated Alexis. It was a wonderful apology on his part, and presented in typical Ordo fashion.

However, he did not seem too keen on the joke as it was not long before he returned to a sour mood and spat out a small, "Idiot," underneath his breath. I narrowed my eyes slightly inside my helmet, and even Alexis and Percival who overheard him raised an eyebrow at the serious frustration inside that one word.

But there was nothing that could be done. Even after listening to me explain everything, Rodel escaped with Emilia without acknowledging anything. He pushed over the suit of armor that was reaching out towards him.....

Without knowing that it was moving due to a witch's spell.

"The armor collapsed, the helmet fell away, and the magic the armor was basking in faded away. Right now Rodel is being manipulated by a witch's curse....."

Hearing my mutterings, Ordo nodded his head as he had a clear understanding of the situation.

Prior to this expedition starting, I put a curse on the armor I normally wear.

I put on a suit of armor that was normally lined up in the hallways of Ordo's mansion, and from this place I moved my normal armor away as if there was someone inside. Both Emilia and Rodel's voices were clearly transmitted to me through Robertson who was inside the armor.

But I never tried to indiscriminately curse them.

If Emilia had taken my hand and Rodel followed suit, I planned to guide them to where Ordo was waiting without resorting to magic. At the time I would have even apologized for talking to them through an empty suit of armor.

However, the end result was Rodel giving in to anger and knocking down that armor.

The helmet was detached from the impact along with Robertson who was mediating the magic from inside..... and the curse that was basking in there was released.

"But what are you going to do about the cursed Rodel? Why are we waiting here?"

Or so Ordo asked.

We have already captured His Majesty, and we can say that we had been victorious in our original rebellion. But, as Emilia was with Rodel, you cannot say that things are finished.

No matter in what way Rodel is cursed, saying, "Let's finish up with this," would be out of the question. Still, Ordo was being more impatient than I would have thought. Of course considering the strength of Emilia's magic, I suppose it is natural that he would be worried until things had completely ended.

In response to such an Ordo, I tried to calm him down by saying, "It's all right."

"If we wait here, the two of them will come to us."

"Yes, they will try to escape here."

"There are a countless number of escape routes in the royal palace."

There was on way to be sure, was what Ordo was trying to argue, but his gaze still

turned towards the door of the decayed hut we were stationed in.

There were a countless number of escape routes in the royal palace, and there was a different exit for each one of them. There were also various roads that lead to houses and shelters for them to rest in.

There was one worn-out path that had received minimal care which went underground and connected to a road that led to this old cabin. It was just one of the many escape routes Alexis had learned from his father.

Rodel should choose the safest path among the escape routes that he knows. Choosing a random one or whichever one leads to a cozier shelter..... it is nothing like that.

So Ordo argued, but I responded by shaking my head.

Indeed *normally* it would be impossible to know if he would come here. But Rodel and Emilia would appear here.

I spoke with certainty, and everyone's gazes fell on me.

"Rodel and Emilia will definitely come here. They will choose to come here..... they have no other choice."

"What do you mean?"

"Rodel's curse is not part of the magic that makes him want to turn Emilia into a 'sparkling princess'. It is a curse that a witch purposely threw on him. Rodel has been cursed with some bad luck, and now no matter what he does, he will be moving to his own ruin."

Rodel cannot help but to choose this escape path because of the curse I placed on him. Perhaps he will unconsciously choose it, maybe he will think he is going one way and choose this one by mistake, perhaps he will choose a different escape route and then run to this hut, perhaps he will be joined by a guard and the guard will rush him here, perhaps Emilia will make a choice and have him come this way.....

Now that he has been cursed, bad luck will chase him, and his final destination will be his ruin.

"That is the witch's curse."

So I told all of them with a deep breath.

Emilia's secret desires had accidentally brought about a curse, but I had used the same curse on purpose to put an end to everything.

It was ironic..... and a painful smile spread underneath my helmet as I suddenly heard a loud noise a little ways away.

The door shook. It opened slowly with a loud creak from its rusted hinges, and the face that appeared once it was fully open.....

# Chapter 53

## Time for a Decision 4

“Why.....?”

Who muttered such?

Emilia and Rodel had a startled look on their faces when they opened the doors and saw everyone waiting for them. Above all, it was probably most shocking to see a suit of armor among the crowd, making them realize that the armor they had talked with and that Rodel had stabbed was empty from the very beginning.

Both of them realizing they had been deceived, Rodel’s expression had become clouded while relief washed over Emilia’s face at seeing that her sister was fine and well.

The two walked in showing completely opposite expressions, but when Ordo took a step forward and greeted them, “Yo, you two,” their faces twisted into the same frightened expression. Was he using a light tone in celebration due to his victory, or was he going for intimidation by showing how much leeway he had in the current situation? Realizing that either option would have been typical Ordo behavior, Monette took a deep sigh inside her helmet.

Looking at such an Ordo and then eyeing Alexis standing next to him, Emilia and Rodel’s faces were both pale.

“Isn’t the two of you arriving together like this nice?”

Ordo focused his eyes on the two of them while laughing heartily.

He looked like he was having fun, but he also had a great interest in how the plan had gone on so flawlessly until the end. Although he was smiling, for a single second his eyes became sharp as he lowly muttered, “So this is a curse,” in a deep voice. It was only for that second, so nobody noticed the change before he switched back to his usual smile.

Rodel glared at that obnoxious while being simultaneously confused by the words said with that smile. Alexis too was watching Ordo curiously.

“Brother, do you know what it is that you have done?”

“Ah, I know.”

“This is a betrayal against the people. Mother, Father!”

Alexis looked down on his brother as Rodel riddled him with complaints of betrayal,..... and he simply returned them with an, “I know.” There was no tremble in his voice that showed any regret, nor was there any signs of hesitation. His voice was not heated by anger, nor was it chilled with hatred. He spoke as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world.

Hearing him, Rodel’s eyes went wide in disbelief.

Then a scowl spread formed and his eyebrows creased as he turned his gaze away. Most likely, he was remembering every fight and painful memory of Alexis he had made over the past year.

Next to him, Emilia’s face was pointed down as if the weight of what she had caused was so heavy that she was unable to lift her head to look at Alexis.

“So brother, all of it being a witch.....”

“I know it was. It was certainly all due to a witch’s curse. But witches have been around since long ago. A rebellion caused by a witch, it’s nothing new.”

“That’s, brother.....”

“There was also a struggle for inheritance within the royal family, the denial of the oldest son his right to take the throne–when compared to the larger world, this isn’t an uncommon story. The only detail was that a witch’s curse was involved in this incident. It’s not an unbelievable story..... as evidenced by being what has happened.”

Talking simply, Alexis then looked up towards Ordo.

His eyes showed that he wanted his uncle to confess something, and knowing exactly

what that something was, Ordo made a wicked smile before exaggeratedly shrugging his shoulders. "It was only a last resort though," was the inexplicable reply he gave while his deep brown eyes were locked with Alexis's.

In other words, Ordo had been thinking about drawing a witch to his side long before this incident had started to take root. That was why he had taken considerations and knew that, "Hospitality for a witch is a troublesome thing," when there was no real witch family in this country.

But witches are not easy to handle, and if you are not careful you can end up wrapped around their finger. And if a witch did not care enough about him, then there is a chance they will just flat out refuse to meet him. For Ordo asking a witch for help was a last resort, something to only be used when his back was completely against the wall.

"Originally I was keeping an eye on Monette, but her aptitude as a witch was unknown. I was digging for information to see if I could count on her, or if I should seek the help of a different witch."

".....and then you picked up a servant who came with a witch attached."

"Yeah, it was a very lucky find. I got everything I ever wanted."

Ordo broke out into another fit of jubilant laughter, but all Alexis did was shrug his shoulders, shake his head, and marvel at how large his uncle's ambition was.

Towards this Monette found herself sighing once again before turning to look at Gina who had a bit of irritation on her face, and even Percival, who had yet to drop his guard since Rodel had entered the room, was looking plenty amazed. He had been keeping an eye on potential witch's to help him, and then in one turn he obtained two witches and a witch slayer on his team and stole the throne.....

What kind of luck is that? If Ordo had the added benefit of someone like Emilia's magic..... Monette shuddered to think about it, and having had the same thoughts, Gina placed her hand on the younger witch's shoulder and shook her head.

"Sometimes you get people with strong luck like Ordo. When you have witches, curses, and even the goddess of victory's blessing, there is little that can be done."

Ordo enjoyed Gina's words with an even larger, boastful smile and completely ignored the tired sigh she had made afterwards.

In an extremely disgusting tone he laughed, "I'm not that amazing!" in a way that would make anyone who had even an ounce of humility immediately die of embarrassment.

Alexis shook his head at such an Ordo before turning his eyes back on Rodel.

"Rodel, we should have been thinking like this as well."

"About what?"

"We were born to a royal family in a world where witches exist, yet we took no measures against them. We decided they had nothing to do with us and put no thought to those witches in foreign countries out of our sight."

"But the witches....."

"That way of thinking is useless."

While witches were just people, there was a line there that made them seem as if they existed in a completely foreign world. They sound like beings straight from a fictional story even though you know they exist, and as long as you do not see any signs of their magic, you are left thinking that they have nothing to do with you.

In fact, witches from other countries were always immersed in their magic inside their territories. That is why there is little recognition or acknowledgment for witches which is why some such as the Idira family abandoned their craft for more noticeable power.

Not only that, it could be said that the two princes had the same mentality when it came to Ordo.

They knew he had not given up on taking the throne for himself, but he had already been expelled from the royal palace. They thought he would surely be rounded up and dealt with someday. That was why they had always thought of him as someone else's problem and moved their thoughts towards more pleasant thoughts that wouldn't hurt their heads.

In the meantime Ordo ruled the frontier, gaining strength, and was even considering pulling a witch to his side.

If he had started a rebellion at this time, what could that be called other than a disaster?

So Alexis thought at least. That voice of his had not changed, and his eyes as he looked down on Rodel were seriously lacking in emotion.

“This situation was certainly all due to a witch. But if witches were only to blame, then this country would not fall into chaos. Because of how peaceful this country is, the story would have ended with the royal family kicking out the oldest son and passing it down to the younger brother. It is not an uncommon story. I thought that way..... but apart from that,”

Alexis stopped there and took a deep breath.

Then he closed his eyes. Everyone watched as he slowly gathered his thoughts. Receiving those gazes, he opened his eyes once again..... ,

“Apart from that, I realized that such a country would perish. Not because of affairs of royalty or anything like that, but because of the grudge the people would hold against you when it became clear you relied on the whims of a witch to meet your goals.”

So, he was abandoned.

Alexis removed his line of sight from Rodel and walked back to confirm the arrangement of security with Percival. It was as if he were to say that he no longer held any interest in the present situation.

Rodel watched him go with stifled breath and then turned his attention to Emilia. His already firm grip on Emilia’s hand tightened even more until she started to tremble.

“.....Emilia, use magic.”

“Rodel.....”

“You are the only one who can save this country. Now protect the country with your magic!”

Rodel’s voice rose to a hysterical roar, and his iron-tight grip refused to release Emilia’s hand.

'Protect me,' this should be what Rodel's true intentions were. Underestimating a witch's power, he went along with the situation to toss out his brother, and took the throne all due to a witch's silent wishes. And still, he would put the role of saving the country to a witch.

It was said that Alexis was a good prince who loved his countrymen, but Rodel had thought of his country just as his older brother did. Therefore he truly thought it was best for a witch to protect the country by using her powers to put an end to the rebellion.

But Emilia was no great spell-weaver, she was an ordinary girl whose face only showed fear towards his sudden outbursts. Seeing that look, Rodel lowered his head slightly and took a step back.

"..... Rodel, but I,"

"Emilia, I'm begging you. Use your magic!"

The loud clamor of Rodel's voice reached new heights, and all the strength he had went into the grip he had on her. The area around his hand was turning pale, and Emilia's frightened expression was starting to go blue from pain.

Seeing the growing situation between the two, Monette jumped forward to try and stop Rodel from hurting Emilia any more, but she was stopped when Alexis was one step faster than her.

Alexis wore an extremely cold and dark look in his eyes and a painfully distorted scowl on his lips, yet he still rushed straight forward and unleashed a full-powered swing with a tightly closed fist..... and a dull noise echoed in the room.

"Rodel!"

Emilia's high-pitched scream echoed louder than the hit as Rodel collapsed after being beaten by Alexis's fist. Emilia's face turned pale after watching such an act of violence in front of her, and she quickly knelt down and started slapping Rodel's cheeks to see if she could wake him up.

Next, Emilia directed her frightened gaze towards Alexis, but Alexis assured her there would be no more violence while taking a deep breath. After relaxing a bit, Alexis then turned towards one of Ordo's guards and told him to restrain Rodel.

“I doubt he will try any other troublesome moves, but just in case.....”

Alexis spoke in a low voice, as if to control his breathing and help calm himself down even further. However, when he noticed the surrounding gazes still fixed on him, he lightly waved his hand, “I’m not used to stuff like this,” and shrugged his shoulders as if he were trying to show off.

The truth was clear to anyone though. Although he had made the resolve to not forgive anyone, he was still kind to his core. His younger brother, who had the resolve to protect his country even if he had to rely on a witch, there was no way that he wasn’t hurting deep down after being forced to hit him.

That’s why Monette looked after him with narrowed eyes and motioned towards his hand as he desperately tried to force a smile.

“What if you hurt your hand?”

“Well, then the next time I hit someone, I will be sure to borrow Monette’s gauntlet.

Haha..... Alexis scratched his cheek with a simpler smile on his face.

Towards him, Ordo released a fearless laugh and asked, “So you helped him?” in a loud voice. Then, he motioned towards his men and gave them a signal by lightly lowering his hand.

Monette tilted her helmet to the side curiously as she did not know what the gesture meant, but Alexis seemed to understand as he made a strong bitter smile and shrugged.

“Yes it was impossible for me to go that far. Percival, it’s alright, so you can put your sword away.”

“.....certainly.”

Monette hurriedly turned her gaze towards Percival as Alexis said something extremely concerning in a very calm voice. What she saw was his hand at the handle of his sword strapped to his waist, and the blade slightly peeking out from its sheath.

Similarly, all of Ordo’s men returned their swords from their slightly drawn positions and even Ordo was laughing about how, “I didn’t have to use it after all,” concerning

the small dagger he was fingering near his chest.

It goes without saying that every blade there had been for the sake of cutting Emilia and Rodel down. At that moment, everyone became wary of a witch's magic and grabbed their weapons.

But Alexis raised his fist before a blade could be pointed at Rodel. It could most certainly be said that he had 'helped' him, and Alexis's bitter smile showed that he couldn't deny it.

Even if he wouldn't forgive his brother, watching him get needlessly killed right in front of you would be something entirely different.

Then Alexis turned his gaze towards Monette as if he were handing the stage over to her. Now that Rodel has been taken care of, next is..... was the meaning held within those eyes.

Knowing that, I walked over to Emilia with my iron covered legs.

"Emilia, please get caught here quietly."

".....Sister Monette."

"I have also decided to side with Ordo, so if Emilia resists I will fight you as a fellow witch..... but I would like to avoid that if possible."

So was my appeal. And as short as it was, it was still enough for tears to gather in Emilia's eyes when she heard it and turn as pale as if she had just learned that the world was ending.

Still she worked up the courage to take a deep breath, and with a trembling voice responded, "I understand."

"I hurt my sister and Alexis and got Rodel involved and this country..... I know I can't be forgiven."

"Emilia....."

I had to take a breath in my helmet and hold myself back after seeing my younger sister look so defeated.

But with this, things would be fine. Emilia understood.....

So a modicum of relief entered my heart.

By choosing to become Ordo's captive, it would give him all the reason he would need to not treat her harshly. Ordo shouldn't have any resentment built up against Emilia in the first place. –Since it's him, he might even appreciate all the work she has done which led to him taking the throne.–

Surely he would find that Emilia has some utility value. At the very least, since Emilia's safety would be his best card against me, he would not do something like <sup>letting her</sup> killing her go.

Thinking so, I took a deep breath of relief into the air and allowed my shoulders to relax.....

“It would be best if I were to manage such a young witch personally. Come Emilia, come celebrate my victory with me.”

Ordo extended his hand out to Emilia saying those words, and the deep breath I was taking got caught in my throat and echoed inside my helmet.

“Eh.....” was all I could squeeze out.

However the next moment a question bubbled up distorting my thinking, and an uncomfortable feeling swept through me as if my body were being crushed. The blood flowing through my veins was pulsating, and my chest was being squeezed until air was unable to escape my lungs.

However, it was only that way for a moment. All the questions that were plaguing my mind were washed away, and a feeling of relief came over me as I realized that this was good. The voice inside my head was telling me there was nothing to worry about, and from now on, everything was going to be okay.

.....That's right, this was good. Ordo was looking over Emilia.

Wouldn't it be enough for her to just be a concubine? As a concubine, he would surely take excellent care of her versus her being some simple prisoner.

Since it was Ordo, he would surely hire numerous maids to take care of her.

Emilia's safety was guaranteed.

If Emilia stayed near Ordo, then the two of us would be together from now on. This was good, everything would be just fine from now on.

I could see the realization that everything would be good from now on floating from one person to the next. It's a perfect storybook ending, even such a thought sprung forward in my heart.

In the corner of my vision, I saw Gina holding her hand to her throat, making as if she were trying to make some form of appeal, but her voice wasn't making any noise even though her mouth was moving. I hope she hasn't hurt her throat.

But I could worry about that later I thought as I turned my gaze back towards Emilia.

Emilia looked at the hand Ordo had presented towards her looking puzzled. I wish she would quickly take it, so I tried rushing her in my mind.

"What..... Sir Ordo, why?"

"What reason is there to hesitate? Now take my hand, be mine, Emilia."

"No..... no more..... Sister Monette....."

Emilia called out my name in a trembling voice. My chest started grow slightly warm, and as I watched her, Emilia started rifling through her clothes with a pale and frantic look on her face.

I watched as Emilia continued to move in fear and wondered what she was doing.

Instead of so frantically pulling out her prized necklace, she should be hurrying up and taking Ordo's hand.....

I feel sleepy, but I still open my mouth to try and hurry Emilia.....

“.....break it..... Percival!”

With my last shred of sanity, I fight off the overwhelming drowsiness coming over me and shout out as loud as I can to the witch slayer at my back.

At that moment, a shadow passed just beside me moving so fast, all I could see was its swaying golden hair.

It passed me by, then Alexis who had been watching everything happen with a nonchalant look on his face, and even passed Ordo whose hand was still outstretched towards Emilia.

Without any hesitation it headed straight for Emilia, moving its hands towards the sword at its waste and swinging with a loud, heartfelt shout.

The shriek of something shattering echoed around us.

At that moment, I saw the iron blocking my view as nothing more than an obstacle. If there was anything I wanted, it would be to burn this sight into my brain without anything obstructing me, and the shame I felt at still hiding my face inside a helmet had become overwhelming.

# Chapter 54

## Time for a Decision 5

With the shrill shriek of something shattering fading away, the overwhelming thought, 'this is good' was immediately scratched out of my mind.

What remained was a growing frustration in the pit of my stomach, blood that ran through my veins like frozen water, and the numbing realization that I had been so easily brought under a spell. Why had I thought that it was a 'good' thing for Ordo to put his hands on Emilia..... No, I have no idea why. That's why not just me, but the entire room felt chilled.

"Hold that woman down! Remove all the accessories she's wearing!"

And then Gina's raised voice cut through the silence and shattered the cold tension plaguing us.

This attitude was unlike her as she raised her voice up and shouted out directions to all the knights around her. Upon receiving those orders, everyone's senses finally returned to them, and the knights moved to restrain Emilia. Although it was quite the sight seeing so many large knights surround a small girl, when I looked towards Gina I saw that her eyes were cold and empty—completely different from the usual gentle look she carried. Those eyes scared me, but I was much more frightened for Emilia.

Every button Emilia wore shined, and the men were thorough enough to take even them. Emilia was trembling, looking down at her tearing clothes as the buttons fell to the ground at the tip of a sword with a palpitating complexion.

Buttons make for fine decorations, but they are beautifully unnecessary for some pajamas. Still, some simple ones would have been much more preferred over the torn fabric and shiny baubles that now casually lay on the ground.

".....What just happened?"

Ordo finally muttered something out while staring down on Emilia. Obviously he was unable to smile right now, and his eyes were sharp with a deep wrinkle between his

brows.

At that moment, Ordo had made the decision to, 'make Emilia mine,' and have her as a concubine. The curse had even affected him. Now he was unable to believe how he had acted, and when I turned my gaze on him, I realized I did so with some aversion in my heart rather than puzzlement.

"Emilia's magic activated. You and I were swallowed up in an instant."

"But Emilia herself was rejecting my advances. Was this because of her original curse?"

"Yes, Emilia's wish was too strong. It tried to activate even though she herself didn't want it to."

At that moment, Emilia had realized the seriousness of what she had inadvertently done, and she showed no resistance. She must have been preparing herself to receive any type of punishment, and at the same time, I could tell she had understood that she would never be a 'sparkling princess' ever again.

But Emilia's magic was too strong, and the wish that had turned into a curse would not allow such a development to take place. Even in this place, the curse had gotten Ordo involved and convinced him that as the new king, Emilia deserved to be made a 'sparkling princess' once again.

If <sup>witch slayer</sup> Percival was not here, then Emilia would have been taken in as Ordo's concubine. It was an ending that she did not want, and it would have been the same as a brutal king kidnapping a young girl.

Emilia would have been forced to sit next to him and received all that unwanted hospitality.

When considering the gorgeous mansion Ordo had even when he wasn't a king, Emilia would have lived an extravagant life as a concubine. Since she was capable of producing a spell that overcame not only me, but Gina as well, she would have been treasured all the more.

Beginning with Alexis, and then coming to Ordo via Rodel. Every time the situation changes, the target changes with it, and the story of the 'sparkling princess' would continue with it.

What a strong curse. Every ounce of Emilia's magic is being used to keep fueling her dream of being a 'sparkling princess.'

It does not consider the consequences or circumstances; even the will of the person in question is meaningless.....

"I see, so I would have abandoned even my own dream for it? That means I was made into a character of Emilia's neverending princess story. Hey Alexis, that means I'm better than you!"

Whether he fully understood the situation or not, Ordo was laughing happily. That bad smile he wore was just like usual. Alexis, who was being made fun of before everyone else, faced Ordo with a tired expression..... before turning away. It was negligible.

On the contrary, he lifted up Concetta who had just returned from the royal palace carrying Robertson on his head, and Alexis started petting Concetta's bristling hair. Wasn't he completely ignoring Ordo's barb?

However, that attitude itself meant that Alexis had somewhat returned to how he had been before, and Ordo made a small smirk while murmuring, "What a naughty nephew.

It was both behavior that was just like them, but it was too incompatible of an interaction in this place. I was incredulously watching them both from inside my helmet..... when a sudden cough took my gaze away.

Emilia was being led away by some of the knights, and she was coughing while holding her clothes down over her chest.

Ah, after all.....

I narrowed my eyes when I saw the tears on Emilia's cheeks.

I tried holding down the ache in my chest through the iron when I heard someone call, "Miss Monette," from behind me. Looking, it was Percival who was walking towards me while sheathing his sword.

"Miss Monette, are you alright?"

".....h-huh?"

Hurriedly adjusting my helmet so that he wouldn't be able to see my eyes, I soon returned to myself and nodded my head.

"Percival, thank you for helping me."

"No, it goes without saying. I was the only one who was able to move in that situation, so my actions were the obvious result."

".....No, it's not just that. You could have cut Emilia down too then, but you didn't."

Saying that much, Percival bashfully nodded his head.

In that moment, Percival could have easily cut down Emilia as well. If it was a blow from a witch slayer, there would have been no way for a witch like Emilia to avoid it. Even if she were to use strong magic to mislead her surroundings, nobody here had the reflexes to intercept him.

Especially not Emilia, who was kneeling on the ground trembling in fear. It would have been easy for the former knight Percival to cut her down. Rather, it would have been easier as it would have meant that he had a larger target.

However, he didn't do it; he only cut away the necklace hanging at Emilia's chest. How hard would that have been?

That's why I had to show him my gratitude which he received with a shrug and a bitter smile..... and then slowly put out one of his hands. His large hand was closed, so it seemed that he had something to give me.

I felt the urge to immediately accept whatever was in that hand, but I held myself back and switched my gaze between his face and that hand alternately. Then I finally gave up and tilted my helmet in confusion before Percival slowly open his grasp. I looked at what was resting inside his palm, and my breath got caught in my throat.

".....At that time, Miss Emilia was wearing it."

"That is....."

In Percival's open palm was a glass ball that had been split in two. It was oddly lacking in blemishes or cracks even though it was struck with a single blow that had completely broken it.

It was a pretty pink glass ball. However, it did not look like something expensive, and it wasn't stylized in a special way. Even an amateur like me could tell it held no great value. No, rather than something expensive, it should be obvious to anyone that this would be considered a children's toy.

Indeed, it was not something that the prince's fiancée should be wearing. No, when considering Emilia's age, it was something that she wouldn't wear even if she were a peasant as it was clearly made for a young child.

Looking at that split ball, I thought my heart was going to tear apart as I muttered Emilia's name.

I remember this necklace.

When we were young, it was the necklace Emilia always wore whenever she was receiving medical treatment.

Back then, I had one with a similar design. We had bought them ourselves with the pocket money our parents had given us, and we wore them every day.

But that was years ago. I do not remember where the necklace that I had worn could possibly be or even what it had really looked like. Did I bring it with me when I moved back to the kingdom after Emilia's recuperation was finished, or did I throw it away.....?

It was such a long time ago that whatever memories I managed to pull out were fragmentary and broken.

Was Emilia still wearing this necklace from so long ago?

She was wearing it from the time she first became sickly, wearing it during her recuperation, becoming healthy, visiting the royal palace, becoming a glittering princess: she had never let it go.

Without knowing that it was cursed.

And now, Emilia was finally released from her curse.

Emilia, who was currently surrounded and being led away by knights while coughing as she had been before. The sight took me aback. The form of her coughing and

suffering like that was much too similar to how she had been when we were children and she was sick.

“.....that, can I take that?”

“Is it okay?”

“I cannot feel magic from it anymore. Emilia’s curse has already ended, so yes, it’s okay.”

Deciding to take it, I held out my hands..... and after thinking for only a little bit, I slowly removed my gauntlet and held the glass bead in my exposed hand. A cool air wrapped around my hot skin, but as expected I cannot feel comfortable like this.

When I exposed my hand, Percival’s eyes went round as the moon. Monette, the girl who dislikes exposing her skin more than anything else, had readily exposed her hand where other people would be able to see. It is no wonder he is surprised.

But, at least for this necklace, I want to be able to feel it with my own hands. I will not rush over to the captured Emilia to protect her, nor will I beg Ordo to show her mercy. Even if I know she was unaware of what was going on, I was still holding her accountable.

I waited for a moment, but the glass beads were soon placed in the palm of my hand.

They were strangely heavier than I expected, and for some reason it caused my heart to squeeze. I quickly took a deep breath to calm myself and hold back the sudden cry I was about to let out, and then I looked up at Percival once again.

I stared straight at him, wondering what was going on in those blue eyes of his.

“.....Percival, hands.”

“What about my hands?”

“.....hand, Why are you holding mine? Your hand is, really big..... it’s touching, feels comfortable.”

My thoughts came out jumbled and in short spurts. Percival ignored all of my

complaints, observations, words, and he silently reached out his other hand. His large hand slowly touched mine and slowly covered mine up.

There was a slight difference in body temperature that I could feel through our skin. It felt like the glass bead was melting inside my grip. I took another deep breath inside my helmet..... and then the tears came alongside it.

“Who, to whom, from when, and how the curse started.”

How all the screws bent, every distortion and anomalous happening, everything was finally over.

## Chapter 55

# The Troublesome King and the No Longer Cursed Prince

Before the full-length mirror with a jewel encrusted border, Alexis tightened up the chest area of the clothes he was slipping on. His dark brown hair went well with dark black clothing, but he felt that the same same colored buttons fastening the collar covering his neck and his cuffs was a little heavy.

He understood that both the design and the fabric were of fine quality, but they were made on the plainer side so as to avoid drawing eyes.

Finished buttoning everything up, Alexis showed his dissatisfaction with the outfit through his tired expression, and he let out a sigh while messing around with his cufflinks some more.

“Uncle, is this how it’s supposed to look? It’s hot.”

“Hot? When the audience is finished, you can soak in a bath. I know how much you think that cold water baths are better than hot ones.”

“That’s because of the curse!”

“Liar, even if it was because of the curse, you have yet to take a warm bath sixth months later. You expect me to believe that being cursed for a year would be enough to make you obsessed with cold baths?”

“.....That’s because of my high adaptability, but it really was because of the curse..... Anyway, anybody who would be wearing these clothes would end up hot.”

Alexis looked at himself in the mirror once again while grumbling.

The clothes he was currently wearing were tailored made with a thicker black cloth, and it was tight around the neck and wrists. The pants were also black in color, sporting a monochrome appearance all the way down, until you finished off with some black leather boots. It’s no wonder he was hot this early in the morning.

Alexis continued to show off his dissatisfaction, but Ordo was taking his time sweeping from the left to the right to see Alexis from every angle. By the way, Ordo was wearing a gorgeous ensemble that was very dignified, yet cool at the same time.

Alexis may have hated the clothes he was wearing, but after he was done observing, Ordo gave Alexis a smile through the mirror.

“Isn’t it fine, you look nice. Besides, those clothes are popular right now.”

“Popular huh.....”

Alexis gave out another sigh, but he figured objecting any more after this was pointless. With a small droop in his shoulders, Alexis walked over and took a seat on the sofa while facing Ordo. Then he picked up a piece of paper lying on a nearby end table and read the what was written down.

It turned out to be a petition from the people. A written request concerning the taxes that had risen since Ordo took the throne and a direct appeal. Soon a person representing the citizenry would visit the palace for an audience, and he would talk with Ordo about the requests in this petition..... however it would end up the same as every other time they did this, and it made Alexis squeeze his eyes shut tight.

Every time. As in, this situation has become a common thing, and a representative is sent out about once a month.

“Since you’ll be standing behind me, your outfit can’t be so flashy as to draw the eye away from me.”

“Tyrant.”

Ordo’s smile strengthened all the more as Alexis waved off his words.

However, as Ordo said, the citizens who come to the palace to appeal tax increases and other policy changes all have to do so in front of Alexis as well. They had believed in the baseless rumors that had dogged the prince and had even shunned him for them, to come in and ask for things to stay the same for them while looking their sin in the face would be an incredibly difficult thing to do.

This feeling was only exacerbated by the fact that Alexis was always wearing heavy clothes during those audiences. The inky black color was a given, but it did have a dash

of color to it—a blood red crest embroidered on the chest. This crest was the one that the Radoll family had originally used, but it now had a sword shoved into it. It was a terrible design with an on-the-nose meaning that was obviously designed by Ordo.

Alexis's appearance of wearing all black with the new crest embroidered on his chest would probably have looked like he was in mourning to whoever saw him.

As a matter of fact, this was what Ordo was aiming for.

Alexis wearing all black while standing behind Ordo who would be doing business, moving around, and acting all jitter.

Face down, not saying anything, not meeting anyone's gaze. Its an appearance that really can't be described as anything besides someone mourning, and it gave him a thin presence as if he were a ghost.

Alexis, the good prince, was no longer there.

An unbelievable rumor had started when the curse was lifted, and it has continued to be whispered even now. That the good <sup>Alexis</sup> prince was actually killed during the uprising.

What was left behind was the mourning prince that could feel nothing but pain.....

“The stories these people come up with. It's like they can't help themselves.”

“People don't like feeling guilty, so they find whatever excuse they can to make a problem not their fault.”

“That's why I'm going to screw with them as much as I can. After all, I am a thick uncle who protected his foolish nephew even during a witch's curse.”

Alexis shook his head and called his uncle a tyrant once more. What is today's number.....? Since the day he took the throne, Ordo has made it a habit to remind Alexis of how he beat the odds and claimed victory despite a witch's curse at least four times a day.

Nevertheless, Alexis wanted to take his clothes off and started fanning himself with some nearby cloth to try and cool himself off if only a little.

That figure lazing on the couch did not appear to be mourning, and obviously it was nothing like a ghost. Anyone who saw him would agree that what was sitting there was a young man who was getting tired of constantly being made to wear black.

In the first place, Alexis never said a single word whenever he was in the meeting room. So the mourning prince aside, he wanted to know how the 'him who could feel nothing but pain', portion of the rumor ended up getting started.

But truthfully, it did not matter.

On occasion while everyone else was conducting business Alexis would watch Concetta rolling around at his feet while playing with Robertson. Every once in awhile taking the opportunity to pet him with his feet.

.....And sometimes falling asleep.

"I always feel so embarrassed when I wake up and realized that I'm sleeping through these discussions, but does nobody notice?"

"Ah, that. 'Just being in our presence causes him harm, and it is all he can do to just be here', was what the people had to say about their sleeping mourning prince."

"Everyone sure does have a rich imagination."

Even the man responsible for creating the rumors Ordo couldn't help but shake his head at the citizen's non-existent short-term memory about the dangers of unsubstantiated rumors, and he and Alexis both shrugged their shoulders.

The reason why Alexis held no interest in correcting these numerous misunderstandings had by the people was because, honestly, he felt sick whenever he saw the guilty looks on their faces whenever he saw them.

They knew that all of the problems over that year that they believed were caused by him was in fact a misunderstanding due to the effects of a witch's curse. And now they were fighting tooth and nail for additional tax cuts. If he were to see their frowning faces when they entered the room, he would feel a little better.

In the first place, the tax imposed by Ordo was not something heavy to the point that it needed to be denounced. As long as you worked properly, then the slight tax increase was something easily payable, and the citizens could still go about their lives with no

changes.

Then, this petition was actually just a grand demonstration for the citizens to show off their power to the new king. There would be no rebellions or riots so long as Ordo did nothing wrong.

In a way, actions like these just went to show off how peaceful this country is and the citizen's cozy attitude. There is no way that seeing something like this would make Alexis happy.

"I hate it. I wonder if I've turned into a person similar to....."

"Yeah, you've become just like me. There, there Alexis."

Leaving the materials he had on hand at his desk, Ordo called out to Alexis.

In any case, his dark brown eyes locked together with Alexis's. Unlike the playful atmosphere that had persisted until now, the seriousness of the current situation would have been felt to anyone who would have been in that room.

Looking back at him and wondering what he was thinking, Alexis mewed over it for awhile before he was asked,.....

"You, would you let me adopt you?"

Alexis had to take a second to make sure he heard Ordo's words right before his eyes inevitably went wide in surprise.

"Adopted by Uncle.....?"

"Yes, you already take track of me."

".....What are you planning this time?"

"I like that personality."

Alexis expressed some extreme doubt towards what he was hearing, and Ordo started laughing as soon as he had voiced it.

Ordo talked about how until now he had yet to gain an heir to the throne. There was

the possibility that his urge to acquire the throne would have been replaced by fatherly love if he had a child..... and,

“Besides, having a son while I am trying to overthrow my family, who is to say he wouldn’t do the same? Blood is often washed with blood.”

“That’s surely..... maybe. Surely if it’s Uncle’s son they would be dream big.”

“In order to not be scratched out by my son, and to avoid having to scratch him out; my options are limited if I wish to avoid conflict.”

Ordo was speaking in a light-hearted tone, but it was a fact that he had taken no companions and fathered no children. It’s natural for someone in his position to have one or two women, but he had yet to choose an official partner.

He thought that it was completely unnecessary for his ambition. Or maybe he thought that it would be wrong of him to get someone wrapped up in his ambition?

In any case, the current Ordo had no successor. He would either have to work on making one, or choose to adopt..... and he was now calling on Alexis for that very reason.

“However there would be some conditions to the adoption.”

“Conditions?”

“Yes, there are just two. The first is that you must wait to take the throne until I decide to hand it down. No visiting me in my sleep.”

Alexis shrugged his shoulders and shook his head as Ordo started talking as if he were dealing with himself. Alexis had never even thought about being adopted in the first place, so even if he were to tell him to wait a moment, he had no idea what he should say. Even if he had, visiting someone while they were sleeping like that was something he could barely comprehend, let alone have the stomach to go through with.

Even so, Ordo continued listing off his second condition as if the first one wasn’t a joke.

“Be more selfish. If you go back to being that good prince honor student, I will prevent you from taking the throne even if it means crushing this country.”

Once again, Alexis was left speechless at Ordo's unexpected condition and could do little more than stare at him in mute amazement.

He had always tried to be a good prince until now because he thought that doing so would make him a good king. He was hoping for that, and he had also felt those expectations from his surroundings. That is why he was unsure of how to react when he was told to do the exact opposite of that.

But Ordo showed little concern for Alexis's dilemma and proceeded to tell him his own invented theory.

"As long as you provide the people with food, clothing, and shelter, a person who wants to be happy will be able to make themselves happy. No matter if you are a king, you have no responsibility to look after every small thing for the people. Postponing your own happiness to make everyone else happy, that type of idea will just burn you out."

".....As usual I'm not sure what you mean."

"In the first place, even with this current situation you were led along by your nose, suffered, and no good for the citizenry came out of it. If there is no noticeable negative feelings, then fight back against all who would seek to do you harm. Find the person who is spreading all those nasty rumors about you and kill them. That's what I'd do with no hesitation."

Ordo was looking a little unhappy as he reminisced about something in the past.

But didn't he have a point? Alexis was a little surprised, but he started to think about it seriously.

Certainly, while nothing but evil had been tossed at him, all he had done was desperately beg for his surroundings to understand him. He despaired when he realized that such a hope was impossible, and he eventually escaped the royal palace with Percival's help.

However, if Ordo was in the same position, he would have discovered the source of the rumors and punished them. If you believe that those around you will not support you, then retreat and return waving a different flag. Even if it was a witch behind the incident, this man would have done and accomplished much more.

That was why Ordo made Alexis being more selfish as a requirement for handing over

the throne.

Following that, Alexis put that matter to the side for now..... ,

“Tentatively, on hold,”

and answered like that.

With this reply, it was now Ordo’s turn to open his eyes wide in surprise. It was a rare expression for a guy who usually spends his time talking down on others while wearing a mischievous smile.

“On hold?”

“Yes, on hold. Succeeding Uncle doesn’t sound bad, but there is something I still need to do.”

“What could possibly hold priority over the throne? What must you do?”

“A variety of things. I want to go meet other witches, but I want to spend some time searching for other witch slayers as well.”

“How would you find witch slayers?”

“Gina and Monette will cast a spell to make everyone sneeze. Then Percival and I, wearing Robertson on my head, will run around and try to find someone who isn’t sneezing.”

“What a terrible carpet bombing method. Give me more details, I want to come too.”

“You have a job Uncle.”

Ordo became excited at the interesting sounding task Alexis had given himself, but he was instantly shut down when he expressed his urge to attend.

The trip would be a long one as they had already decided to procure a fine carriage and take things slowly. Of course, they would stay at only the very best rooms of the very best rooms, and obviously they would be ordering room service. That time they had all drawn cats together was fun, so it might be interesting to take the time to learn how to properly draw something praiseworthy up.

As a test Alexis jokingly said, "Perhaps it would be fine to go ahead and become a familiar for Gina and Monette." Ordo coldly replied with, "A man your size following them around like that would just be annoying." It would be. Alexis was convinced of this with little argument.

However whatever the future held there would be plenty to do, but there would be plenty of time to be the prince heir afterwards. If he was going to live for himself, then it's only natural that he should postpone his decision. And the tyrant sitting in front of him would surely sit on the throne for a long time, so there would be plenty of time for decision making.

So Alexis argued, and Ordo was left with a small nod and a bitter smile.

"I see, try living as you like. Finish doing what you must, and your future will be waiting for you here."

"I will do just that."

The two men both shared a bitter smile before simultaneously turning to look at the clock.

It was about time for the audience to begin. Alexis started massaging his cheeks since it was going to be necessary for him to stick with the same facial expression for awhile now. Pretending to be sad all the time was painful on the cheeks.

"After we finish up with this audience we'll be meeting with a representative from a neighboring country, so I'd like Gina and Monette to attend if possible."

Ordo had had several meetings with neighboring countries since his rise to the throne. Part of it could be said to be casual greetings between kings, but it was far more likely them trying to gauge the ability of the king who had taken the throne with the help of two witches. Ordo was aware of that fact even now, but as he opened the door and left into the hallway, Alexis overheard him call out, "Speak of the devil."

Alexis got up off his seat on the couch and peered at the end of the hallway over Ordo's shoulder. As if she had been summoned, there was the witch Ordo had just asked for.

"Gina, what are you doing in a place like this?"

"Oh Alexis, good day."

When Alexis walked forward and called out to her, Gina replied with an elegant smile and a greeting. In front of his eyes..... Concetta was sleeping with a very fluffy hairstyle while floating in mid-air.

Alexis blinked a couple times to get himself used to the sight. However, the realization that Concetta was actually sleeping on a floating cushion did little to abate his surprise. The same could be said for Ordo who was standing right next to his nephew with equally rounded eyes. This fact did not go unnoticed by Gina who started laughing at the two while saying, “you look exactly the same!” In her hands, a fine lace fan was pulled out and covered her jubilant laughing face.

“Since I found Concetta sleeping in the corridor, I decided to carry him along on a cushion.”

“Carrying..... with the fan?”

“That’s right. I am carrying the fluffy Concetta on top of a fluffy cushion by fanning him.”

While Gina explained what she was doing as if it were the most obvious thing in the world, she started waving her fan towards Concetta. Concetta’s cushion was hit by the incoming wind, and the sleeping Concetta started moving through the air. However, the movement speed was so slow that saying he was flying would seem inaccurate, and it was unknown just how long it would take them to reach the next room over.

But Gina seemed to be having fun with that slowness as she continued to fan Concetta with a smile on her face. That’s when Ordo called out her name.

“Gina, sorry to bother you, but this afternoon there is a dinner with a representative from one of the neighboring countries.”

“I don’t want to be bothered with that, and I am busy watching Concetta sleep as well.”

“Don’t say that.”

“Gina, let me just say that we will be having some delicious wine during the meal to celebrate the occasion.”

How about that? When Alexis forced his way into the conversation and came out with his own suggestion, Gina’s face lit up at the mention of wine. It was clear proof that

whenever she heard the words, “delicious wine,” her heart would tremble.

She then looked at Concetta with a bit of a worried look on her face. Guessing that she would need another push, Alexis came in close and whispered into her ear, “Cheese and crackers will be served as well.”

“I guess it can’t be helped. Concetta, let’s switch directions here.”

Nodding her head, Concetta turned around and started fanning Concetta the way they came.

She had apparently accepted the invitation, but she had not changed the way she would move there. Still, so long as she was heading straight for the dining room she would be there in time, so Alexis and Ordo said nothing else to her besides a, “Then we will see you later.”

While walking away like that, the only thing the two of them heard from her was a, “The headwind is making this tough Concetta.”

“Do you really think she will make it in time?”

“Probably, but she will definitely come in her own way. Everyone will surely be surprised if a witch comes in while carrying a cat in mid-air.”

“Well regardless of whether you are a witch or not, something that could beat a ride like that is beyond human knowledge.”

Ordo nodded his head while thinking about what it must feel like to float in the air. And then he started muttering, “I wonder if Monette would.....” while a sinister smile played across his lips. Seeing that smile, Alexis grabbed his uncle by the shoulder and started to drag him further down the hall saying, “Let’s just leave that alone.”

Then when they had both made it to the audience room, Alexis started to slap both his cheeks with his hands. The purpose of this was of course to tighten his facial muscles so that he could better play the ‘prince with no emotions other than pain’ during the meeting.

At Alexis’s feet, three balls of fluff were rolling around. A large smile spread across Alexis’s face upon seeing it, but Ordo watched them move with a strange look on his face.

“What is that?”

“Concetta’s hairballs. Gina sometimes controls them remotely with her magic. Perhaps she sent them here for me to play with during the audience.”

“During the people’s desperate appeal, the prince of tragedy is secretly playing with some hairballs.”

“I’ll still hear about half of what they’re..... No, about half of half of what they’re saying.”

Alexis made a small apology for his future lack of attention, but all it did was make Ordo laugh once again.

Then when Alexis tried pushing one of the balls with his toe, it ended up moving away from him unexpectedly. The movement brought an even larger smile to Alexis’s face as he murmured, “These ones are quite fiery.” He tried nudging another one with his foot, but that one ended up jumping over his foot and landing on the opposite side of him. Alexis was starting to think that he might not be able to listen to anything the representative said if the hairball’s game was going to be this challenging.

“The people are counting on you to reel me in. They really have some bad luck.”

So Ordo mused, and Alexis responded with his own grin.

It was a malevolent smile that the good prince would have never made before. Then he delightfully narrowed his eyes,

“So? They have a little bad luck, but that doesn’t matter.”

and then tightened his collar around his neck.

# Chapter 56

## Monette and Percival

I was reading a book while drinking some tea when I heard the faint cry of a horse in the distance making me raise my helmet.

Closing the book and laying it on my desk, I hear a pitter-patter..... along with the clank of metal rapping against my door. When I got out of my seat to open the door in response to the knocking, there was Percival wearing a suit of armor waiting for me.

It was as if he were visiting the old castle for the first time all over again. At that time, the sound of him knocking on my door echoed in the old castle just as it did now. And then when I opened the door and saw Percival and Alexis standing behind it, I had immediately slammed the door closed in front of their eyes.

Oh how nostalgic it all is. As the memories came back to me, I tried closing the door again now with a mischievous little laugh, but Percival bitterly held the door open before I could. He smiled and said, "There might be wolves out here, so please let me in," telling a joke to show he remembered the old days as well.

Both of us laughed at the small bit of fun, and once we were done I opened my door and welcomed him inside.

I invited him inside the room I was reading in earlier, and we sat in opposite chairs facing each other.

I stuck out my hand to him when we got seated, and understanding what I meant, Percival nodded his head and placed a bag of sugar confections into the palm of my hand.

The sugar confections all looked sweet and delicious while wrapped up in a lovely ribbon. Looking at them for only a second, my helmet quickly snapped back up in attention.

".....This isn't it."

“I know. Please enjoy them while waiting for a second.”

The bitter smile Percival mixed into his light laughter annoyed me for a second, but knowing that there was nothing for it, I shrugged my shoulders and undid the ribbon wrapped around the bag.

A sweet aroma melted in my mouth after popping the first one in. It was so deliciously sweet. While enjoying that sweetness, Percival took a look around the room.

“Robertson, is Robertson here?”

Not seeing him anywhere, Percival absentmindedly called his name, but I did not answer his question and continued to silently taste these sugared confections for ten seconds when.....

\*tsu tsu\*

a spider came crawling down from the ceiling.

It was the aforementioned Robertson. Today too he was looking particularly plump, and as he stopped crawling down his web right in front of Percival’s face, I marveled at just how dreamlike and handsome he was looking today before greeting him.

Towards such a Robertson Percival presented a letter. Then he said just the one word, “Please.” He spoke in quite the serious voice.

Robertson heard that voice and received the letter..... or not because of his size, so he instead jumped on top of it. He crawled around the letter as if wary of what it could contain, creating a small rustling sound as he stuck his forefoot into the gaps of the envelope.

After investigating the letter for awhile, Robertson jumped back onto his thread as if to declare that he was finished, and then began twinkling in a light slightly brighter than usual. What is with that dazzling light?

“Yosh, then it’s alright?”

“You’re worrying me.”

I smiled bitterly from inside my helmet as I watched the common sight of these two

interacting as such.

Then I decided to move my hands and received an envelope from Percival.

The name of the sender written there..... Emilia Idira.

Emilia once lived inside the royal palace as the Prince's fiancée, but after this case was resolved, she was moved away from the kingdom by Ordo's will. She now resided in the remote area of the country that Ordo had been banished to, an area still almost quarantined by the rest of the country.

But now all the might Ordo had built up to control the country was now being focused inward to hold the power of a single witch. Would that be irony?

Emilia resides in a small mansion that is isolated even in that place, living with a few servants to take care of her needs.

Quietly, frugally, free from glamour. It can be said that she was truly living a life the complete opposite of what she had lived inside the palace.

Of course, even in that quiet life she was being extensively monitored. Ordo, his men, and even some of his knights were constantly watching Emilia and taking countermeasures so that they could respond immediately if ever something were to happen.

It was the witch slayer Percival who took command. Emilia's surveillance and reporting, Alexis's escort..... he was much busier than before.

Everyone was still very much wary of Emilia.

If she were to ask, they would not allow her to have any gems or decorations, and it was even forbidden for her to eat from silver dining ware.

As they knew that her magic had previously used glittering decorations as a medium, it seems that even shiny glass fragments have been forbidden to her.

Amid such thoroughness, it would be natural for Emilia to feel cramped from Ordo, Percival, and even the watchful eye of Gina's magic..... always living knowing that at least one other person would be watching how she moved. It's so different from her life up until now I'm sure she wants to scream at the top of her lungs.

Still, it should be better than being tried as the root of all evil. In this regard, I am thankful for Ordo's poor nature who longed for the long-term cease-firing based off of the people's guilt which allowed Emilia to live.

"How is Emilia?"

"Her condition has improved a lot. I was touched the morning she got up early to see me off."

Percival laughed while remembering Emilia's state at that time. There was no deceit in that expression, so surely Emilia really was showing signs of recovery.

The wish, 'I want to be a sparkling princess' had been felt so strongly that it became a curse, changing everything to make Emilia capable of being that princess. Now that everything has melted away, Emilia has returned to being a sickly girl once again.

I had an inkling when they took her away that day, but she got worse than I would have thought. At times it being difficult for her to walk, she spent many days coughing in her bed.

Still, the condition described in the sent letter described a remarkable improvement, and it is said that she is able to freely cook and paint without depending on anyone else's help. Sometimes she sends me one of her pictures along with the letter. – Although the first time she did I overheard Percival muttering, "The drawing power of two sisters is genetic....." before he had quickly left in a panic when he realized I was looking towards him at the time.–

"Emilia seems to be doing well and good."

I let out a sigh of relief as I slowly opened the envelope.

Then moving one of my hands outwards, Percival gave me a bitter smile and wrapped my hand up in both of his. They were large, manly hands, and they made my expression relax underneath this helmet.

Although a year has already passed, my heart still hurts whenever I read a letter from Emilia. I had decided not to forgive her, to judge her; but the letters of apology and regret that pour forth from the pages my sister sends me while isolated in a distant land pierce my armor and cling to my heart.

That's why whenever I read a letter from her I try to have Percival's hand in my own. The body temperature from his skin transmitted onto my own, the feeling of his skin rubbing against mine, warms my chest and makes me melt.

Enraptured by such warmth, I carefully unfolded the stationary.

Her current situation with family and things. What kind of days she has, the visits from the occasional witches, and sometimes letters from Rodel.

Such things were scrawled across the simple paper letter.

"She seems to like the brooch Miss Monette gave her quite a bit, and I always see her wearing it."

"Really? I'm happy, I tried my best when making it..... Well, at the time I was designing it I had received quite a few strange looks."

I started grumbling my resentment towards everyone I could think of one by one with Percival still holding my hand, smiling bitterly knowing that he was one of the people on my list.

The brooch Percival was talking about was something that I had made for Emilia. It was natural for Emilia who had used an accessory to work her magic to not be allowed to keep an accessory, but this was something that I hand-made for her.

I prepared a plain brooch using wood and carefully engraved the handle. It was a job that required perseverance and dexterity. At the starting line of the design stage, I decided to make a cute kitty-cat brooch..... when I was finished, everyone had something to say.

"Miss Monette, something like this is far too fashionable to give as a gift....."

and,

"Is this a curse?"

and,

"That's some good wood. Hey Concetta, quit picking a fight with it!"

and,

“Wow, what is that? It looks so bad!”

It ended with everyone saying they really liked it. –There is no need to explain certain things, like who said what, in detail. Especially that last one was way too severe. Just remembering the look on his pompous face as he laughed makes me want to scream inside this helmet.–

Alexis was still thinking seriously about the design though even in that strange situation.

Even though he knew it would be given to Emilia when it was completed, he still drew up a beautiful kitty-cat and flower drawing.

I carved the brooch based off that, took the time to paint the whole thing, and then gave it to Emilia. I cannot put any glittering jewels on it, but I still think that it was a pretty brooch.

Emilia said in the next letter she sent that she loved it, and she apparently wears it every day.

I cannot see the figure of her wearing that brooch, but I can still smile happily at how easily it is to imagine Emilia’s shining appearance while wearing it.

Putting the letter down on my desk when I had finished reading it, Percival held one of his hands out to me again.

He wanted to hold both my hands in his. I allowed it, and had my other hand slowly overlapped by his.

“I will make another brooch by the day I see Emilia again.....”

“Matching, I’m sure she will be pleased.”

“I will wear it and go see Emilia..... will you go with me at that time?”

“Of course.”

I didn’t realize I was holding my breath until I let it all out when Percival resolutely

nodded his head.

Since that one event, I had not met with Emilia..... rather, I couldn't meet with her. Ordo had forbidden it under his name as king.

Until we find a way to completely seal away the magic Emilia is constantly leaking out, only a <sup>Percival</sup> witch slayer or a <sup>Robertson</sup> familiar are allowed to meet with her to exchange letters that have been checked beforehand.

Of course, this was out of concern since I had been driven by Emilia's magic in the past, and at the same time it is Ordo's idea for trying to gain a technique to seal witchcraft away. Although it is true that he is a greedy man any way you cut it, it is a fact that this incident would not have been solved if it were not for his desire.

Incidentally, Alexis and Rodel are in the same situation. Ordo has also forbade Alexis from going to see his brother, but he is allowing them to exchange letters. I remember the first time they were sent. The figure of Ordo laughing while saying, "It's a fight between my two cute nephews," is something that will forever be burned into my mind.

As for the technique to seal a person's witchcraft, the research done by Gina's Avalkin family along with a few acquaintances of hers had brought forth a few ideas.

Actually, recently the group of witches has been split in two as one group tries to discover the method to seal a witches magic while another seeks to find a way to block magic using magic. It seems that Emilia's circumstances have already been forgotten, and the two sides are now just arguing about the best way to continue with their research.

Witches are beings who live apart from others where they can perform research on magic by themselves for a reason after all. In the meantime, the subject was dropped after Gina simply said, "It's fine as long as results are made."

"With that momentum, surely Miss Emilia's magic can be sealed before too long."

"I suppose. Until then the letters....."

"Even with the letters, Miss Emilia always cries out in joy, 'Sister Monette has sent a reply!' whenever she receives one."

A grin floated across Percival's face.

Surely he was remembering the first time I had written her, when I was unsure about what to write so I just wrote whatever came to my head. When I tried to justify myself and told him that, 'Witches are busy,' he surely misunderstood and tried to comfort me with a smile while rubbing my hands.

How awful..... I muttered in my heart, but at the same time Percival called out, "Miss Monette," as his mind had drifted to something else. His bright blue eyes looked more serious than usual and they were planted squarely on me. His hands felt hotter as well, most likely because of whatever was on his mind.

"What's wrong?"

"Miss Monette, recently you've started exposing your hands outside....."

"Well, I'm fine if it's my hands or feet."

Unlike before where I refused to expose even a millimeter of my skin, I had started exposing myself little by little over this past year.

If it is only my limbs, I can show them as long as a reliable person such as Percival is nearby. But I get nervous if attention is drawn on me, and if there are many people, I shrink back and retreat to my shell.

Still, I recently started to be able to expose my hands and feet by myself. Like right now, I feel comfortable touching another person.

"I think that it is a good thing. I know that you are trying hard to peel back your armor, but....."

"But?"

"When I watch your back as you remove your armor and try to touch someone, I..... that is..... I-I get jealous."

Percival's face got progressively redder as he spoke, but I was barely able notice when the words he spoke left me completely dumbfounded.

The hands I was touching were hot. The words he used penetrated my armor and

caused my chest to tighten. If I could see it right now, I'm sure my face would be as red as his.

"Whether it be a gauntlet or a hand, I want to be the one holding it. I want to be the one holding this connection with you."

"Such a thing, why....."

".....because I love you."

While being stared at by that serious look, he said those words to me, and I felt a jolt pierce right into my chest.

His words blended into my heart, creating a rhythm at which it beat.

I could hear the sounds of my heart as if it were a song, and a heat traveled through my body. I felt comfortable as if I were laying on a fluffy cloud, and for a second I wondered if I was dreaming.

Love, I never thought someone would direct those words towards me.

Love, never.....

"Is it the armor!?"

I found some unexpected words passing through my lips as a response.

"Hm? Ah, you are in armor."

"I am wearing armor, so you can't see my face!"

"True, I cannot see it."

"Yet you love..... No way, Percival, you have an armor fetish."

"No that is an extreme misunderstanding."

Percival powerfully denied my idea, but a cloud of embarrassment was filling up my helmet, and I was unsure if I believed him.

I am almost completely covered in armor. From the top of my head to the tips of my toes. Although I have finally been able to work my way up to showing my hands and feet, he should not even be sure what color my hair is let alone what my face looks like.

Yes he is making some grand appeal that he loves me. To what extent..... or so I tried to ask him, but he was sharply smiling back at me.

“What for..... you are extremely kind, and I find you very cute as well.”

“So you’re sleepy.”

“I’m not sleepy.”

“Because I’m cute..... You know, sometimes my spirit enters some armor from the side.”

Perhaps I was misunderstanding something, so my gaze fell on the suit of armor standing at the corner of the room. It was the suit I wore inside the royal palace.

I thought about returning it to Ordo, but I had gained a strange attachment to it. Besides, it would be nice to have it if my main armor ever had to be put out to dry. It is a so-called spare.

But the designs of the two are completely different. Finding both armors cute would be unreasonable, but when I turned my gaze towards it, Percival’s eyes followed mine to the corner,

“At that time, that armor is cute.”

and declared such.

“What is with, do you just like empty suits of armor.....?”

“I love Miss Monette. Whatever armor you wear is the cutest in the world so long as you’re in it.”

Speaking ever so gently, Percival slowly released my hands from his. Then he spread

out both his arms in front of me.

When he hugged me just like that, I felt like I was being silently told not to run away, and a small grunt escaped my lips underneath my helmet. If he hadn't embraced me and pulled me close, even I have to admit there was a chance I would have just run away, but like this, I learned a long time ago I can't escape out of this.

I sat there silently while cursing his arms from inside my heart.

It is because I think to myself what a shame it is that I can't feel how tightly he is embracing me through the armor, or what a waste it is that I can't feel the warmth of his hand rubbing my back that I realize just how much I am drawn to him. Soon such a wish like me wanting him to embrace me even more tightly will rise up in me.

"If you take off your armor someday, will you come to see me first? I wish..... No, I want you to remove your armor and hug me just like this."

".....Percival."

"Witches, curses, or even armor mean nothing to me. I love the Miss Monette before me just the way you are. Please marry me."

Towards the heartfelt words Percival spoke out, a small sigh escaped my helmet.

"Perhaps, I will end up living my entire life just like this."

"Even your armor is cute, so it'll be fine."

".....Even if I take it off, I'll be completely different from Percival's preference..... I might really be ugly, so what will you do?"

I understand that the words Alexis said at that time was because of the curse.

But what if I really am ugly?

There is a possibility that the curse took the shortest method for getting me out of my marriage which was to make Alexis vocal to my already hideous face.

That possibility still clung to my heart, and it was why I still wore a helmet even now. Whether I'm a witch or not, I can't be confident in myself as just an ordinary girl.

My point only caused Percival to narrow his blue eyes towards me.

“I have only ever seen you with a helmet on, there is nothing that could top that.”

Or so he said with a laugh.

There was a little embarrassment in that laugh of his, and I found myself sighing once again. It is because he thinks in that sort of way that I.....

That I also want to take my helmet off and face you.

That I want to be hugged by him, without some lump of iron getting in the way.

Such a numbing feeling sprung forth from deep inside me, and I bumped the crown of my helmet against his wide chest.

My helmet rattled a little as it pressed into him, but it was overshadowed by Percival's laugh as he started to call me an 'amenable cat'. As part of the joke he started to stroke the back of my armor as if I really were a cat, but rather than be offended, I could only think once more about what a waste it was that I couldn't feel his touch.

“.....strange person.”

I put up some small act of resistance until wrapping my arms around his back in turn. Slowly, my embrace strengthened, and this time it was me pulling him in close.

The end result was him strengthening his smile all the more.

“I am strange indeed. However, I think something like that would work perfectly for a heavily armored noble girl.”

His softly spoken words caused a small smile to form on my face. Then I closed my eyes, and the tears I had been enduring until now started to flow.

The heavily armored noble girl. It had protected me, walling everything away from me, but now it was just a form of frustration.

I made a promise in my heart that the day I would remove it would someday come,

but for now, I settled for tightly hugging Percival to me and quietly telling him, “I feel the same way about you.....”

Even those all-important words came to him through a helmet. How frustrating this is.

# Chapter 57

## The Noble Girl Who Left the Heavy Armor

If you ask someone if they'd like a tailor made dress, anyone who isn't the daughter of a cow would have their eyes light up. Call up both familiar and popular designers through your social circles, and talk with them about how an ordinary piece of cloth would be transformed into something beautiful. Precious preparations and a gorgeous shine must be put into the dress, and it allows the person wearing it to feel as if they are temporarily inside a dream.

The same can be said for even a noble girl and witch who usually wears nothing besides a full body suit of armor. I held my chest high as I looked towards the door or a room inside the royal palace.

Today my wedding dress was being tailored. Of course, it was meant for my wedding with Percival.

Though, it's not a gorgeous, luxurious event that is held inside some social circles. There are very few people coming, including Alexis and the others and a few witches I had become acquainted with. It is something with an attendance that could be counted on one hand so to speak. The venue as well is my old castle. It is not certain whether this can be called an extravagant event anymore, but at the very least it is safe to call it a gorgeous tea party.

It is certainly still going by the title of a 'wedding ceremony' for the moment, and thanks to Ordo who put out some money for the occasion, I was able to provide some wonderful invitation cards.

The wedding dress I would wear for such a ceremony..... just thinking about it my chest started to warm up, and the feelings bouncing around my heart became even more violent.

Today, I would be taking off my helmet in this place.

I would 'properly' wear a wedding dress that suits me for my wedding with Percival.

Even now I repeat this to myself.

Because Percival told me, “I am cute even inside armor,” I was able to move forward and love myself even when I was encased in iron. That’s why I strongly want to marry him as ‘Monette’ and not the ‘Heavily Armored Noble Girl’. This is why I must take off my armor.

Take off my armor and appear in front of him wearing the best dress I can. It’s okay, he will surely praise me.

With that determination in mind, I took a deep breath in front of the door. Inside there was Percival and Gina who had brought the preparations for the dress. Inside also were a few craftsmen who had tailored such dresses before, but they were handpicked by Alexis and Ordo, so I’m sure they can be trusted.

Certainly I cannot wipe away my anxiety entirely. When I think about what people might say when they see me vulnerable, fear inevitably takes hold of me.

But even more than that, I want to look at him with my eyes, not through some holes in a helmet. If he can, I want him to watch me take off this armor and still call me ‘cute.’

With that thought, I took hold of the door knob with an unwavering determination.

.....Yes, I am going to take off Monette.

Even though I am Monette.

“Alright Monette, let’s measure around your stomach. You’ll be wearing a corset on the big day, so make sure you’re not too hungry right now.”

Well, Gina was trying to measure around the abdomen of the armor.

Even as she did that, I murmured, “I won’t suck in,” from inside my helmet. The measuring tool seemed to be something that would measure around my waist and abdomen, but of course it would not feel anything through a case of iron. On the contrary, even if I were to take a deep breath in to try and dent my stomach, it wouldn’t change anything.

Naturally. It’s a suit of armor. There is no way it would change.

Even so, Gina has been taking measurements from the top of my armor, brought it down to my chest, and then, "Some people like it a little flat....." tried to comfort me. She said so, about the chest of a full suit of armor she had been measuring.

"Hey, Gina....."

"Be at ease Monette. Even if I'm a little off, it can be covered up by the dress itself."

"No, you're wrong, listen."

Hey, even though I'm trying to stop her, a white cloth suddenly wrapped around the eyes of my helmet, blocking my sight. It was a beautiful white cloth though, and it shined finely while glittering as the light bounced off it.

When I diverted my eyes to see where the fabric had come from, my eyes suddenly matched up with Percival's, who was making an extremely serious expression. He was holding several such cloths, replacing one piece for another, constantly hanging them off either my helmet or my shoulder. After comparing them several times, he eventually presented one beautifully shining piece to me.

"I think that this cloth becomes you most Lady Monette, but what do you think?"

"Percival, you see, today I"

"Wait Percival, if you are picking out a veil then you should wait and see what color goes with it."

"Even Alexis..... or am I wearing a helmet along with my veil?"

All of the measurements for the suit of armor were being taken by Gina while Percival and Alexis compared to see what fabric would look best with it. And I was left standing there sighing by myself.

Apparently they thought I would be wearing my armor just as I had been until now, so they were doing their best to make my armor look as pretty as possible. Wondering which design looks best, what kinds of trends are most popular right now, and I'm sure they've probably seen more than a few surprising things as they did all their research for this moment. The samples of prepared cloth was stacked like a mountain, and it showed that not just this country, but even countries outside our borders had been subjects for their search.

I am thankful to see them so very enthused about this and appreciative of all the work they are doing on my behalf.

.....Although as they looked, I'm sure that the image of a walking suit of armor wearing those veils never popped up into the merchants' minds. –Even if it did, I'm sure that it would be something from their nightmares. Even as I try to picture it, I see a walking suit of armor wearing a wedding dress with a horror backdrop framing it.–

I imagined such an image and now a bit of weakness had gotten into my knees, but then Percival muttered, “That is,” underneath his breath as he had noticed something.

His eyes were pointed towards my things, but apart from my usual pouch was a small box attached to it. Having seen it, Percival's face suddenly lit up as he realized it was the hair ornament he had gotten me.

“Please wear it.”

“Th-that's..... it's something you gave me.”

Percival's eyes shined with a light so bright I had to look away from him.

At that moment, the words I was about to say were interrupted by Gina, “Oh no Monette. I can't measure your chest like this when you're talking,” who was still measuring right below my chest. Why on earth would my talking change the circumference of of a full body suit of armor? Even if I shout at the top of my lungs, the thickness of this iron won't change.

However, as I wanted to point this out, I instead stretched out my armored arm towards the hair ornament, and seeing my intention, Percival quickly grabbed it and approached me with it in hand.

Then he gently stretched out his hand and added the hair ornament to the top of my helmet. I heard the faint \*ting\* of it touching iron. Then as he looked down at me with a satisfied look on his face, I raised my face towards his,

“It suits you after all,”

and had this said to me.

There were still no color of falsehoods in his voice or deception. He had a truly joyful

expression on his face, and I knew that his words were a true heartfelt compliment. Afterwards, he shifted the hair ornament slightly and moved it to the other side of my helmet adding, "It looks better here." I guess he really was considering my appearance.

While Percival and was doing that, Gina had finished up doing my measurements while muttering, "There should be almost no constrictions with this." Alexis was still sorting through veil fabric with a serious look in his eye..... and I was still left with nothing to do other than sigh inside my helmet.

It was somewhere deep inside my heart where I questioned whether I was fortunate to have accepted my presence inside this armor, or lament that I have become too accepting of it.

The tailoring of the dress was finished, and the day of the ceremony came.

Because the venue is the old castle where I live, there is naturally not a tense atmosphere in the air. The witches that were invited all spread out on their own, and there were many who had brought along stacks of books with them saying, "This one is interesting," and "I'd like you to read this one too."

Isn't it quite the free and relaxed atmosphere you would never expect from a ceremony? Moreover, since the area was littered with familiars running about and playing, anybody who did not know what was going on would never have guessed that a wedding was about to take place.

It could be said that this unusual air was slightly affecting me as with the usual ceremony, I should be standing with my back straight waiting patiently for things to begin. Instead, I was rarely off on my own wandering around. Was this natural because of all the witches that had gathered, or was I just moving based on my own nervousness?

"Concetta, let's wear a bow tie today. Heeere we go."

I walked by Gina who was holding up a bow tie towards a fluffy cat. The ornate dress she was wearing was something newly prepared for today that made her look stunning, but her tone was as gentle as ever when she spoke creating a gap between her explosive beauty and humble demeanor. Sitting on Gina's knees, Concetta was sitting upright wearing a tail coat made for cats.

Raising his face and showing his neck, a bow tie was wrapped around him which made

his tail swing once in pride. Concetta had also gotten in the bath the previous night and had his hair washed and brushed creating no need for any hair care today. Even a familiar can be concerned about their personal appearance.

Watching as Gina commended Concetta for his naturally good looks, I heard Alexis suddenly cry out.

He was wearing a formal black tuxedo. The embroidery had been adjusted to match his shining hair, and he looked handsome enough to have just about any woman swoon upon seeing him. Though, if they were to see the large spider clinging to his chest, those swoons would inevitably turn into screams.

Of course, that spider was Robertson. Spiders cannot be fashionable..... whoever would say that obviously has never seen one with their eight feet painted white before. He seemed to have had them colored today, and as Alexis approached, Gina immediately started praising him saying, "White gloves, so gentlemanly."

"Gina, how is Monette?"

"Excellent. The pure white veil and dress are finished and beautiful enough on their own to make anyone marvel. Alexis, what about things with you?"

"Everything's perfect on my side too. No matter what he says, he looks like a prince."

While saying so, Alexis sat down next to Gina. At that time Concetta moved from Gina's lap to Alexis's. As if to show off, he did a full turnabout on his knees, and with a bitter smile, Alexis started petting his head while praising him.

While the two of them were chatting for awhile, they started loosely playing some music after seeing what the time had become.

The witches who had been doing things on their own until now were able to read the mood bringing their familiars with them as they sat down and placing them on their laps.

In such an atmosphere, who came walking down the isle was Ordo dressed up in a set of decadent robes. I could feel the dignity of a king from his upright walk, and when he stood before the prepared podium, he took a deep breath..... ,

\*Kuu\* ..... and while groaning slightly, he unexpectedly turned his face away from the

crowd.

“My, what a rude priest.”

“How did Uncle become the priest in the first place? Who thought that would work? Having such a lump of insincerity of an old man up there.”

And then Gina and Alexis both made while comments from the crowd about Ordo’s attitude.

Ordo looked at them both with disgusted eyes, but even I felt like I could hear the stone podium laughing when he took his position. It must be unpleasant for him. And so the beginning of the ceremony began with a small cough.

It wasn’t something extravagant because of its small scale, buy the ceremony was able to proceed with a warm feeling.

Ordo, who was acting as the priest, recited the words for a traditional commitment. In addition, he added, “You guys, there is no way you actually still believe that God is watching this right?”

Who asked for this domineering counterfeit? But this guy insisted on acting as the priest to acquire some connections with the visiting witches. I’m sure he felt some goodwill towards Percival and me, but he would be lying if he said that his main purpose here was not to draw in another country’s witches as well. For such a greedy man to act as someone completely devoted to God is too funny of a story.

Nevertheless, the expression of our fake priest smoothed out and urged us to seal the oath with a kiss. Percival listened to him and slowly turned towards me with a small laugh. He looked happy and somewhat embarrassed, a shy look that made him look like a young boy. But his eyes were focused entirely on me, and so I turned towards him..... ,

and narrowed my eyes through my helmet.

Yes, from inside the helmet. I am wearing a full body suit of armor. No, today I was wearing a beautiful wedding dress and veil... ovetop a full body suit of armor.

The cloth the dress was made out of shined finely when it received the light, and the hem gave off a fantastic fluffy feeling whenever I moved. Good lace was interwoven

around the chest area and silver thread embroidery was used to decorate the hems. The veil hiding the helmet was also colored to match the purity of the dress, and the hair ornament affixed to the helmet played up the whole outfit.

Speaking of its glamorous appearance, my eyes shone when I saw the finished tailored dress, and at the same time my heart had pounded with excitement while wondering if I was really going to get to wear this.

However, almost immediately after that my dreams were shattered and my eyes were cloudy when I realized the dress was too big.

Of course, the dress was too big for me because it was made to go over armor.

And as I saw that the prepared corset was also armor-sized, my eyes stagnated going from simply cloudy, to dirty and muddy.

And now, I was wearing that wedding dress over my usual suit of armor. There was a corset underneath my dress as well by the way. It was quite tightly squeezed, but it had absolutely no effect on my breathing.<sup>1</sup> I was able to comfortably take a deep breath and feel as if I were not wearing a corset at all.

Percival was looking at the me who was dressed like that. For the sake of today, he had also dressed up in a way worth seeing. A tailored suit using dark blue cloth matched with his eye-catching golden hair, and the embroidered white and silver lines matched my dress creating a glamorous look. He had the demeanor of a brave knight, yet his beauty was like a prince from a storybook.

When I saw him for the first time, I fell in love all over again, but my mouth took on a will of its own saying, "I wonder if it will match?" I immediately panicked when I realized what my mouth had done and had started swinging my helmet to the left and right to see if it was a trick and someone was just trying to make me believe that I had said that.

Contrary to my anxious reaction, there was no tightening on Percival's expression. Despite my words, he clearly looked happy standing before me.

"So embarrassing."

But Percival was completely oblivious to those thoughts, and after my attention was drawn back to the current moment, I noticed his hand slowly moving forward and

drawing back the veil covering my helmet.

An oath sealed by a kiss. My heart began beating fast as the fact that this was really happening hit me along with the sight of Percival lifting my veil. Even if I am wearing a full body suit of armor, I am still a young girl, and there is no way I wouldn't be unperturbed at a promise kiss to show off my love.

.....However, I cannot get drunk off of my happiness like this.

“Um, Percival”

“.....It's alright. I'm nervous too.”

“No, it's something different. You see”

This armor..... I tried saying something, but only air would come out of my mouth. Percival narrowed his blue eyes and brought his face close. I saw that he was trying to kiss me, so I hurriedly closed my eyes because it felt like his lips would really touch me.

During my wedding, we seal our love with a promised kiss until death do us part..... I fell into such an illusion.

Well, of course our lips weren't going to touch.

Eventually overcoming the anxiety that had gripped my heart, I slowly opened my eyes again, and I saw Percival's face slightly further away than when I had saw it last with rosy cheeks. His hands were outstretched towards my helmet and stroking it as if he were stroking a woman's cheeks. He is practically petting me with the tips of his fingers, I think after seeing the way his hand moves from the corner of my vision.

I hear a feverish breath rise up from my surroundings, and Gina leads them with an exaggerated sigh, “Beautiful.....” Alexis was sitting beside her, nodding his head in agreement with a calm expression. There was exactly one person who was holding his hand over his mouth and looking away while trembling from trying to hold back his laughter, but I decided to ignore this specific individual.

Such a warm air, and with this atmosphere prevailing, I back up towards Percival's loving eyes.....

“It’s the armor!”

and gave voice to my thoughts.

“Huh, what’s wrong Monette?”

“It’s armor! Percival kissed my helmet!”

“Well yes, but please don’t shout it out like that, you’ll..... you’re making me shy.”

“You shouldn’t be shy about that!”

Towards my desperate appeals, Percival just tilted his head to the side in confusion. That expression showed he was feeling truly oblivious to my point, but it wasn’t just him, everyone in the room was looking at me with a giant question mark over their heads. There was one person who was holding his stomach, keeled over from laughing so hard, but if God really is here, then that guy will burst into flames any second now. I’m getting off topic.

I ignore my surroundings, take a deep breath, and plead with Percival.

“My helmet is a helmet, it’s not me. So..... that is, properly..... I want you to properly kiss me.”

“.....Lady Monette, that is”

“W-Whatever kind of face I have, like you said before..... can you still kiss me?”

My questions stunned Percival, and for a couple seconds, he just stared at me with wide eyes..... and then gave me a gentle smile and nodded deeply. That expression immediately drove away my lingering anxiety, and as he whispered the words, “If it’s what you want, I’ll do it however many times I can,” washed away any tension swirling around my chest. My heart began to rhythmically beat at a comfortable rate as his arms began to move forward once again.

Slowly, steadily, his hands made their way to the back of my helmet. The moment I heard the metallic clank of iron moving against iron, some small amount of tension resurfaced in the back of my mind, but seeing Percival’s peaceful smile made it all melt away.

I want to look into those eyes not through the holes of a helmet; I want to feel those lips on mine. There is no small part of me that is jealous of this helmet having received a kiss before me.

With those thoughts abound, my helmet was removed, and I slowly raised my face to meet his.

Percival was there in my sight. And I, without some helmet shielding me, was in his.

The people surrounding me were speechless. Was it because of the surprise that the heavily armored noble girl had taken off her helmet, or was it out of shock at my true appearance? I was afraid to confirm the truth, but above all that silence was something painful. Was I ugly? If you think that you are disappointed, if you think such a thing..... what do you think..... the hands holding my helmet were trembling.

However, my helmet has already been taken off. It is meaningless to get scared and run away. With that in mind, I pushed down the fear bubbling in my chest and waited for Percival to say something.

His blue eyes were round and wide-eyed, completely stunned by what he saw.....

“L-Lady of the Lake!”

and shouted out something unexpected.

To that voice, towards those words, my head tilted to the side in curiosity. This time not inside a helmet.

“Lady of the Lake?”

“Why are you here!? Lady Monette? Where did you go?”

“Percival, calm down..... Um, why are you suddenly shouting something about a Lady of the Lake?”

“Why, when, how, huh.....?”

Where had that bravery and dignity gone, Percival was wide-eyed and his mouth flapping open then shut while looking at me..... then something must have connected because he suddenly hit his hands together

The 'Lady of the Lake' was a nameless woman who Percival had encountered some time during our journey.

First at the lakeside and then once again near Gina's mansion. Strangely, nobody else had seen her other than Percival, and I, who had been near the area at the same time, had felt no sign of her. From her ethereal beauty to glowing mysteriousness, Percival had claimed she was clearly a 'foreign princess who is in actuality a water fairy that is traveling abroad while keeping her identity secret to protect herself.'

Why was he bringing up that woman now..... unless he was saying that I was the Lady of the Lake.

"That's, my spell to keep people away wouldn't have worked on a witch slayer like Percival..... in other words you watched me strip off my armor!"

"Lady Monette is my fabled 'Lady of the Lake!'"

So we exclaimed at the same time.

Then we both turned to see Gina and Alexis who would also know what we were talking about..... but Gina's was narrowly looking at us as if she was amazed by something, and Concetta was nowhere to be seen. Meanwhile Alexis's mouth had been filled with a loaf of bread that appeared out of nowhere.

I saw their mild reactions and was taken aback, "Did they already know.....?" but then my gaze was inevitably drawn back to Percival. Whether he had the same idea as me, he was making a face as if someone had just pulled on his cheeks.

But when he noticed my eyes on him, he quickly cleared his throat and began to scratch his head.

"There's no way Lady Monette is really the Lady of the Lake....."

"Heh, I also never noticed..... but, I do feel relieved in a way."

".....relieved?"

".....because, this..... if it's true, kiss me properly....."

Hurry up and kiss me, was what I was trying to mutter. My voice had become small

from the embarrassment that was filling my brain, but since I wasn't wearing my helmet, even that small voice of mine could reach Percival's ears perfectly.

In fact, the second he heard my words, his face went as red as mine probably is.

"I-I, kiss you....."

".....Yes, not the helmet, properly."

"T-that's, I understand that..... but, that.....!"

I looked up towards Percival whose eyes were darting around wildly. When I looked, I could see my face reflected in those blue eyes. It's not a helmet; it's my own face.

Then I call out his name, "Percival?" but rather than making him more apt to kiss me, I just made his face redder. But then the next moment he looked at something surprised, and his body went rigid with a sudden jerk.

When I looked, somehow Alexis had unknowingly come up from behind Percival.

He said nothing, but his eyebrows were slightly lowered. He had his hand firmly placed on the back of Percival's head and took a single step forward. Along with him, Robertson had somehow placed himself on top of Percival's head and was currently bouncing up and down like a loaded spring. Following that, Percival's face slowly came closer to my own. The height difference which had separated us shortened, and soon our lips were at the same level.

Is this the brute force measure? I was stunned at the unexpected appearance of Alexis, and when he noticed my gaze on him, his expression changed into an expressively cheerful one.

"Monette is quite beautiful you know?"

There falsehoods in his voice, nor were there any other secrets hidden in those words. Just the pure and sunny feeling of appreciating a beautiful friend, and then praising them.

Isn't this too kind? That's why I couldn't help myself and started laughing before thanking him. There were no falsehoods or secrets in my disposition either. I was pleased by the compliments given to me by my friend, and I wanted to return those

good feelings.

Then Alexis's smiling eyes turned towards Percival. After looking at him for a few seconds, Alexis look back at me and shrugged his shoulders. "He's completely useless," he said with a bitter smile.

"Do as you like."

"Thank you very much."

I extended my arms through the dress's hem and attached my hands to Percival's cheeks. His cheeks were hot, and a smile broke out across my face when I felt that heat.

Alexis gave a small giggle and finally let go of Percival's head, instead settling for a few pats on the back. Robertson jumped off his head with a \*whoosh\* and landed on Alexis's shoulder. Then as the two of them returned to their seats, I overheard Gina praise them both with a, "Well done," that was probably louder than it needed to be.

Wouldn't this brute force measure be something unthinkable for the Alexis of the past? I gave Percival an unexpectedly bitter smile, slowly narrowed my eyes, and brought my face close to his.

I was planning on having him kiss me, but doing it to him isn't so bad either.

Besides, he kissed my helmet, so if you think about it, it's my turn to give a kiss instead.

Thinking that, the corners of my mouth rose slightly. But that smile was soon replaced by my eyes widening in surprise as a pair of fingers moved to cover my lips.

They were Percival's. He was holding down my lips so as to hold down my kiss.

When I looked at him, his face was still red, but his eyes were still focused on me. Then he slowly lifted his hand and guided it to my removed helmet.

He removed the hair ornament adorning it and softly added it to my hair.

I accidentally laughed a little because it tickled, and then Percival's hand moved to caress my cheek. Large, masculine hands, a warmth that I was now free to feel, my eyes narrowed in comfort. I could finally feel his touch, and so a wave of relief washed over my heart.

“You look beautiful.”

“Really? I, if I take off my armor, I won’t be silver all over anymore.”

“Ah, you certainly won’t be silver. Beautiful dark blue hair, bright purple eyes that are focused on me without a helmet in the way..... I never thought someone so cute and beautiful could exist.”

“.....Percival.”

“I thought my feelings would never change no matter what you looked like underneath that armor, but apparently I was wrong.”

His words washed over me and entered my ears without a helmet muffling them.

I closed my eyes as if I had been asked to do so, and a hand continued to gently stroke my cheeks. Then, that warm feeling touched my lips.

Instead of a helmet, not over iron, properly on the lips.

This kiss was something awarded to me, not to an armored noble girl or a with.

.....END.....

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*A word from the author: ‘The Heavily Armoured Noble Girl Monette: How To Break a Curse You Don’t Remember Casting’ is complete with this! Thank you very much for seeing it through to the end!*

*Below is a funny addition I added at a later date.*

A few months after Monette had taken off her helmet herself.....

“Oh, so it’s armor today?”

So Alexis asked, and I responded by nodding my helmet.

Yes, helmet. I am wearing a helmet today. And in addition, as Alexis handed over some documents to me, I accepted them with silver arms from a full body suit of armor.

I exposed myself during my wedding ceremony, but once it was over, I adorned my helmet once again. I have been wearing my heavy clothes as I had been before.

Although determined, when I take off my armor I get tense, and I can't calm down if I'm exposed for a long period of time. I have been called the 'heavily armored noble girl' for a long time now, and there would be many who would be befuddled by seeing my true face knowing my nickname, and my familiarity with other witches would make things even messier. Everyone would want to take a look at the bizarre sight, and all of those attention-oriented lines of sight focused on a single point is still far too much for me to handle.

When Percival noticed that, he personally put the helmet on my head saying, "You should gradually get used to it," and now here we are. There is no longer a fear in me at being exposed, so it is only necessary for me to open up more to other people. Nevertheless, I feel comfortable wearing a suit of armor like this.

"It's more deeply ingrained than my baths. Truly, the times are wrong."

"Don't praise that. It's fine, and Percival also said it's fine for me to wait."

"Wait, hey....."

"I mean, Percival always says <sup>armor</sup> this is cute. Rather..... please take a look at this."

I turned my gaze towards Percival who was reading some documents in the corner of a room.

He looked up when I called him and looked at the two of us. When I pointed towards myself wearing the iron armor, a curious look crossed his face and he asked, "What's wrong?"

"Percival, what do you think of me?"

"Cute."

It was an immediate answer.

Hearing it, I nodded my head and took off my helmet as if it was a matter of course. I have done so before, and I am no longer afraid of doing it. As a matter of fact, I had

gotten quite quick at removing my armor recently.

Then, once again looking at Percival, I asked him the same question as before,

“Beautiful.”

He used a different word and praised me.

I nodded my head and put on my helmet once again.

“Cute.”

I take it off again.

“Beautiful.”

I put it on again.

“Cute.”

I take it..... I don't take it off.

“Cute.”

We repeated such an interaction several times, and I turned back to Alexis after leaving my helmet on. And so I proudly puffed out my chest my chest and asked him, “So how about it?” I know I am floating a bit.

However, it might be a bit unreasonable for me to be on air like this. Percival praises me when I'm wearing armor as cute, and when I am not wearing it I am beautiful. As expected, I suppose my armor isn't cute; it's just that this is how much Percival loves me and nothing will change that.

Alexis took a small sigh upon seeing my magnificent mood..... but Gina promptly shut him up by shoving a piece of bread into his mouth.

.....end.....

## Extra 1

# The Witch Slayer Escort Knight and the Prince on Break

“Hey Percival, how long are you going to keep calling me ‘prince’?”

These were the words Alexis released one peaceful day. The location was his office inside the royal palace.

While signing off on a document and adding it to his pile of finished work, he grabbed another document from the overflowing pile taking claim to the majority of his desk..... and then asked in a completely dead tone.

It was probably because he had grown so weary of work. After putting together all the documents he had already signed off on, he filed them away and reached out for another document again..... and reached out towards his cup of tea instead after thinking about it for a second.

The figure of Alexis holding something that wasn't a pen in his hand made Percival's eyes go round as if it was the first time he had ever seen such a thing.

Speaking of the Alexis in the past, he would never interrupt his public service work just to partake in a pleasant chat. He was a man who would silently perform his public affairs work, taking a break only during pre-scheduled time. Truly the appearance of a humble and hard working good prince.

Yet here he was arbitrarily saying, “Let's take a short break” after a small pause. He even cleared away documents both signed and unprocessed to give himself a little extra room as he pulls out a cookie from his desk drawer. As he laid back in his chair, the ‘short’ part of his earlier statement was looking more and more unlikely.

Following his change, Percival—who was sitting on a sofa in the room sorting through his own documents released a bitter smile. Meanwhile Monette, who was sitting down across from him, smiled while telling him, “You've become quite twisted.”

Alexis pulled out two more cookies from the drawer and tossed them towards his two friends sitting away from him. This would have also been unthinkable for the previous

Alexis.

Percival raised his hand in the air and skillfully caught it. Monette watched carefully as the cookie made an arch through the sky and raised her iron arm to do the same..... and then the \*konk\* of the cookie hitting her helmet rung out.

Monette held down her helmet with the back of her hand to stop the ringing. When she turned her gaze towards Percival and Alexis, they both immediately looked away. She knew they were doing their best no not laugh at her, but that actually made her even angrier.

“.....so, what were you talking about?”

When Monette asked her question in a low voice, the intimidation and meaning of, “Don’t you say anything about that,” came across loud and clear, so despite his trembling shoulders, Alexis raised his face without saying anything.

Although the corners of his mouth were still slightly raised, he pretended to not have seen what had happened to Monette. Although he was only a few steps away, he had unfortunately missed it. If he had seen something, or admitted to seeing something, she would most certainly come over and stomp on his feet..... like she did to Percival.

“Lady Monette, that really hurts so I would like you to forgive me soon.....”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. Hey, you have two feet. Don’t you think I lost weight?”

“I was wrong to laugh! Please, your armor lightening magic doesn’t work like this!”

No magic works on the witch slayer Percival. So if Monette were to step on his feet, naturally the armor lightening magic wouldn’t work either, so not just Monette, but the entire weight of the armor was being dug into his foot. He quickly apologized with tears in his eyes as he could not handle the full weight of it all, making Monette eventually smile underneath her helmet feeling satisfied.

She then turned her attention towards Alexis who also had trouble holding back his laughter. When he realized where her sight was set on, Alexis quickly hid his smile and returned to the story about what Percival called him. Percival also took the opportunity to piggyback off the subject change and asked, “What is wrong with the way I call you?”

What a pure white master-servant relationship. Monette muttered so underneath her breath, but she decided to not interfere with those two's conversation. She finally stopped trampling on Percival's foot and returned to her seat on the sofa.

"What is wrong with calling you Prince.....?"

"I am helping Uncle with his duties, but I have not yet decided whether I will succeed him. Because whether you could actually call me royalty right now is in question, I feel like 'Prince' no longer fits me."

"Well, but calling you in some other way is....."

"Percival saved me from my cursed fate. I have no problems letting idle formalities go."

"I am honored to have you say so."

To have Alexis show such gratitude beyond their master-servant relationship, an impressive color spread across Percival's expression.

In fact, Percival had saved Alexis who had been cursed by a witch and isolated to his bad reputation and rumors of infidelity. There was the fact that the curse did not work on him because he was a witch slayer, but that was a mute point.

While the rumors of infidelity were prevalent and the evaluation of Alexis hit rock-bottom, he still wholeheartedly believed in Alexis's innocence. He did not mind throwing away his family name and his position as a royal knight and took Alexis away from the royal palace. He moved forward with a conviction, and he led Alexis to peace while receiving jeers from his associates.

Alexis was now thanking Percival for that loyalty, and he was telling him to abandon formalities as a show of appreciation and trust.

It was impossible for a knight to not be pleased by that type of praise from their master.

"I never knew you were thinking so deeply for me. Then let me respond in kind and allow me to address you as 'Akkun' from this day forward."

"So that wasn't a dream."<sup>1</sup>

“Akkun, is that no good as well? If it is something that you hate, then please tell me right away Akkun.”

“Wait Percival, I cannot grasp the sense of distance here. When you suddenly give me a nickname like this and change the way you address me, I can’t tell if we have grown closer or drifted farther apart.”

At least choose one or the other..... was what Alexis was trying to say. But hearing his reaction, Monette sighed a little in her helmet,

“It’s good isn’t it, Akkun-sama?”

and decided to jump in.

She thought it would be interesting to poke the bear here.

The Prince who wanted to throw away some level of formality and the loyal knight who wanted to become closer to his liege, it was a beautiful story of friendship..... but watching them dance around the issue was fun to watch.

That is that; this is this. Even if everything was going to end up the same, she still wanted to poke it.

“Do you hate it after all, Akkun-sama?”

“Monette, you are using two honorifics for my name now.<sup>2</sup>”

“Akkun, I apologize if I have been rude. Even though you were in line to succeed the throne, I still took a rude attitude towards you.....”

“So Percival is completely unable to gauge the distance.”

Alexis shook his head completely unable to know what he should do.

.....and, then the sound of knocking echoed in the room, silencing all three of them. Monette’s helmet creaked a little as she turned to look at the door, and Percival’s gaze followed right after hers.

Only Alexis wrinkled his brows and said, “I have a bad feeling about this,” but those words of his accidentally acted as a signal allowing their new visitor to come in.

The door opened slowly giving way to..... ,

“Hey hey guys, you sure are making a lot of noise. Have you finished your duties properly, Akkun?”

a laughing Ordo.

“So he came after all..... I figured you’d come down here to poke fun.”

“I was just passing by and heard you all talking about something interesting, and I obviously had to join in.”

“It’s that kind of personality..... I mean, whether I’m finished or not, this type of public service work is Uncle’s job. I’m doing it right now because some guy forced it all onto me.”

“And I’m grateful for it. Akkun.”

“Shut up old man.”

Alexis glared at him and spoke with a low voice, but Ordo just laughed. On the contrary, “Don’t you like your nickname, Akkun,” he fueled it.

Of course course neither Percival nor Monette wanted to be left out, and they both started calling him, “Akkun,” and “Akkun-sama” respectively.

“Everyone seems to be having fun..... alright, call me as you wish.”

“Oh my, wellllllll, then allow us to do just that. Aaaaaakkkkkkkkuuuuuuun. Have some bread, Aaaaaakkkkkkkkuuuuuuun.

“.....Fuina.”

It goes without saying that the person who brilliantly entered the room without anyone realizing it and shoved a piece of bread into Alexis’s mouth was Gina. She was looking absolutely beautiful today as well, but her allure was made that much more thanks to the smell of fresh baked bread clinging to her now..... and her voice also sounded quite bold.

Attracted to Gina’s charm, Monette stood up and ran towards her yelling, “Gina!” but

a loaf of bread was gently shoved into the mouth of her helmet. 'Surely this was a different way of greeting', thinking so, Monette gladly accepted it.

Then Monette's gaze inevitably fell towards Gina's feet where Concetta was lazing around meowing. He quickly walked over and stretched out his fluffy fur covered paw and set it on Monette's iron feet.

Does he want me to embrace him? Guessing so, Monette lifted him up. Concetta's eyes narrowed in pleasure telling her she had been right.

But then he started meowing out and crying again. His mismatched colored eyes were looking towards..... Alexis.

"Alexi- ..... Prince Akkun-sama, it looks like Concetta wants something from you."

"And so the number of honorifics on my name has tripled. Concetta, is there something you need? Do you want some bread?"

Come, putting the loaf of bread back into his mouth, Alexis extended both of his arms out. Concetta responded to the open invitation by jumping out of Monette's hug into Alexis's outstretched arms.

Watching that familiar scene and dedication, Monette thought to herself, "He is being used by a magical cat." Well, Alexis didn't seem to mind, so it was okay.

Monette was about to turn her helmet away with a smile on her face, but she suddenly stopped when she realized Concetta wasn't trying to eat the bread hanging from Alexis's mouth.

Normally he would devour into the bread without mercy, yet now he wasn't touching it even though he had not yet had a bite to eat. For some reason today he was just sitting in Alexis's arms staring at him.

"Konfeffa, huts hong?"

"Prince Akkun-sama, it seems that Concetta is trying to tell you something."

Concetta was staring up at Alexis while opening and closing his mouth.

While Monette was watching him to see what he was doing, Alexis was staring right

back into the eyes of the cat resting in his arms.

Soon the surrounding people also noticed, and they turned their eyes to see what was going on. Gina alone was watching on with a smug look on her face saying, "I worked hard in supporting Concetta up into this point!"

"Concetta?"

".....nyaa"

When Monette called out his name, it seemed to act as a signal and a small meow leaked from Concetta's mouth. However afterwards, Concetta opened his mouth again revealing his white fangs before silently closing his mouth once again.

Whenever Concetta opened her mouth, a small growl would come out, and the fur on his back would stand on end before smoothing out in conjunction with his mouth.

Then Concetta's eyes changed, and he stared at Alexis as if he had made some grand decision. He shook his fluffy tail out, and all his fur stood on end and stayed up.

All of the surrounding eyes were focused on Concetta. Among them, Alexis—the man holding the cat in his arms—was watching him with worried eyes and once again asked, "Konfeffa?" with the loaf of bread still in his mouth. Monette tilted her helmet to the side curiously while Percival and Ordo gathered behind to look over her shoulders.

Receiving everyone's attention, Concetta slowly opened his mouth once again..... ,

<sup>Akkun</sup>  
"Nyaasuuuuuun....."

and raised a cry heard by all.

The sound of a pin could be heard dropping in the distance as the room relaxed.

What eventually broke the silence was the loud applause and cheering from Gina who was shouting, "You worked hard Concetta.....!!" What followed was a loud \*Fuun\* from Concetta vigorously puffing out his chest in pride.

Monette's eyes were wide open underneath her helmet. Alexis as well was stunned..... yet he still made sure to stroke Concetta's head as the cat started eating away at the

bread hanging from his mouth.

“Thank you of course. I could feel the friendship,”

were Akkun’s words after dozen minutes or so had passed.

Ordo had gotten tired of laughing so much, so he returned to his office, and Gina had gone back to the kitchen in order to restock on bread. Sitting on Monette’s lap as she sat on the sofa was a curled up and sleeping Concetta while Monette herself felt her helmet swaying as she started to nod off.

Meanwhile, Alexis, who had returned to doing some of his public service work was muttering to himself. Percival was resting on the sofa next to Monette while looking over some of the documents himself. Then he made a small smile as he replied, “I know.”

“We were communicating our friendship.”

“To that extent, you all played quite a bit.”

“That’s just the type of relationship us friends have ..... Alexis.”

Hearing so, Alexis looked up in surprise to see Percival smiling at him. Then, after a small sigh, Alexis returned a bitter smile right back to him.

...end...

## Extra 2

# The Noble Girl who Ran to an Old Castle and Her Eight Legged Friend

Despite having run away from the kingdom and her family to find refuge in the old castle, Monette had spent the last few days feeling restless.

There was someone watching her. This feeling had been constantly overcoming her, but when she turned around to find out who it was, there was no one there, just the dirty old walls of the old castle.

Every time she would tell herself not to mind it, but she would soon feel the gaze on her back once again soon afterward turning back around. However, when she quickly spun around on the spot, there was still nobody there..... and so on and so on for days on end.

On that day as well, she once again felt someone's gaze on her. A wrinkle formed on her brow as she vigorously swung around as her eyes darted around every corner of the room she was in. She had the resolution to definitely not miss them this time, but once again she came up empty.

Was there a forest animal sleeping in the castle, or was it just a ghost?

It had been a long time since people had come or gone from this castle, so the possibility of an animal having gotten in was indeed high. And this was a building constructed inside a dense woods, so the gloomy air around it makes it seem like it is definitely haunted.

Which would be better to encounter..... thinking such a thing, Monette picked up a nearby brick that had fallen off a wall and an already lit lantern.

If it is an animal, a ferocious animal, she could use the fire from the lantern as a shield and throw the brick to drive it away. If it is a ghost..... would the brick be useful?

While venturing through the castle, Monette eventually found her stalker hanging off a spider's nest on the ceiling.

At the same time, a shrill shriek escaped her lips as the culprit was neither a vicious animal nor a ghost.

Eight long legs and a plump body with fine hairs covering it. When it noticed that Monette had found it, it began crawling down one of its hanging threads.....

It was a spider.

Rather, it was quite a large spider.

Monette took a step back, and even though she didn't know if it would have any effect or not she showed it the lantern and the brick. Were spiders scared of fire? As for the brick..... even if she was capable of hitting it, the fear completely took hold of her mental processing, and the only thing she could think of was how threatening it looked.

Eventually, Monette's sense did return to her, and moving as slowly as she could so as to not irritate it too much, she made for the door and left the room.

It was a spectacular defeat. As she left, a meek, "Do not come out too much....." was the only feeble resistance she could muster.

Such a solicitation after their first encounter was in vain, and the spider continued to appear in front of Monette after that. Rather, it had started purposefully entering Monette's vision by hanging off a window frame or running across a wall. It was like it was refreshed after having been seen once, so it wanted to be seen again.

Of course Monette screamed every time he appeared, and so he would quickly surrender and escape out of the room immediately after.

Even when she decided to become a witch and started reading magic books, it was largely with the intention of finding a spell to drive away spiders.

But no matter how giant a spider is, you gradually get used to it.

For Monette, whose heart had been wounded, feared humans more than anything, and had run away to have the old castle be her cage, especially.

She did not want to vomit when he saw her, nor would she break out into a cold sweat. Soon she was able to grow a sense of affinity with the spider and eventually had her first conversation with him. "This shall be my room, so please don't make a nest here."

Different from the prince who called her ugly or her family who did not protect her, this was a spider who took the time to meet her right before bed and when she got up. He looked like he was telling her good night and welcoming her every morning. Soon, Monette was talking with him normally with him as well.

One day, Monette called out to the spider hanging on the window sill.

"Robertson."

And just like that, the spider had a name.

The called out spider climbed up a few centimeters after being called. Was it a substitute for his reply after hearing it? There was no confirmation, but at least it did not appear he was running away.

This was why Monette was able to work up the courage to get as close as she could to the spider and sit next to him. She investigated the structure of an arthropod from close up and even drew an illustration of him, but for some reason, she feel like she didn't quite meet eye to eye with him even when she was looking into his eyes.

Even the spider in the illustration had compound eyes, but even those seemed to believe she was ugly.

Thinking such a thing made her want to cry, but she was able to continue on by continuously telling herself it was only natural that a spider's sense of beauty would be different from a human's.

Should Monette be thought of as fearless here, or was it just her running away from the truth? She wasn't able to tell this easier because the spider would not answer her when asked.

“Well, can I call you Robinson? It’s a nice name is it not?”

‘Robertson’ was a name taken from a book that was left in the castle. Whether the castle’s former owner forgot it here or just left it, it was a book filled with adventures that kids seem to like.

Robertson is a character that is prevalent in most of the stories, and he is a reliable character that appears and helps the people whenever they are in need just like a hero. It is not a spider.

“Is it rude to give a human name to a spider like this? If you don’t want it, climb down. Go up if it’s okay.”

Or so Monette asked. It was a way of communicating with a spider that is incapable of saying anything.

However, it is not certain that he is able to understand the words she is saying in the first place to be able to react properly. That’s why she stared at Robertson intently, and as his hair covered legs trembled ever so slightly.....

\*Suu Suu\* he started climbing up.

When she saw it, Monette’s face lit up.

That was an answer. There is no doubt about it. He heard her words, understood, and then he accepted being called Robertson.

When she realized it, relief and joy sprang up in Monette’s heart, and she cried out, “Robertson,” while bouncing up and down. The fear that she had felt when she first saw that figure was now a distant memory, and a feeling of love popped up in her heart when she a heart-mark like pattern in his soft and fluffy hair.

When she extended one of her fingers to try and pet him, Robertson also put one of his hands out instead resulting in a pseudo-handshake.

“Robertson, I look forward towards our future.”

When Monette started talking to him, he once again climbed up his web with a \*Suu Suu\*

What a lovely and dependable friend. Trust in him began to increase as an understanding in communication was made, and he was could give her his confirmation just by having her look at him.

It was a reply that is determined by the way he moves. There would be no direct words from him, but they were still able to communicate with each other.

Realizing that, Monette narrowed her eyes slightly. Relief sprang into her heart. At the same time, however, there was just a small sense of unease along with that relief.

‘I am going to be with him from now on.

Always in this castle, no one visiting, and never visiting anyone in turn.

I will never laugh with someone again, never touch someone.....’

What a miserable life it is.

“.....Robertson, please don’t go anywhere.”

There was only him now.

So Monette entreated him with a slightly trembling voice, and Robertson responded with a small rustling as he climbed up his web.

.....

“Robertson surely made the resolution to become a familiar at that time.”

When Gina said that to me, I was sitting in a chair opposite her and tilted my head to the side with a creak and asked, “determination to become a familiar?”

This place was one of the rooms in the old castle. In the midst of a tea party, Gina asked about how I had met Robertson, so I told her what I could remember.

“Do not witches use animals and have them become familiars?”

“Surely, but it’s not just the witch’s decision. What you need is a mutual will.”

“Mutual will?”

I thought familiars were created when an animal had been continuously bathed in a witch’s magic power, but apparently it was not just that.

As I continued to look at her curiously, Gina crouched down and lovingly kissed Concetta who was resting on her knee.

“Witches certainly choose animals to become their familiars, but at the same time animals choose the witches they wish to have as their masters.”

“The witch is also chosen?”

“That’s right. If an animal becomes a familiar it will have the same lifespan as a human. This is true whether it normally lives a shorter life or a longer life. That is why when an animal becomes a familiar, they will never be able to live with its species again. When an animal becomes a familiar, they must be willing to make that sacrifice.”

‘Right Concetta.’ When Gina looked down and called his name, Concetta abandoned his balled up position on her knees to finally lift his face up.

When his gaze met with Gina’s, he slowly began to close his mismatched colored eyes. It was an adorable figure that makes you smile when you look at it, and you can tell from a glance the confidence and love in their relationship.

My expression underneath my helmet collapsed when I saw the two of them, and Alexis who had been silently listening to the story from the side started to nod his head as if he were impressed.

My gaze turned towards the window beside all of us where Robertson was currently sticking to. Next to his was the figure of Percival. He was peeping outside, staring into the rain.

Percival should have also heard Gina's story, and slowly his face that had been stalwartly staring outside until now slowly turned to the side.....

"Brother-in-law....."

was what he called Robertson.

From this, my armor made a large and sudden clatter as I hunched over to try and prevent myself from laughing, and Alexis found his mouth stuffed with bread by Gina before he could say anything. Meanwhile I saw Concetta bat down his ears and groan a little after being put into a bad mood now that his great impression had been so suddenly cut short.

However Percival did not notice any of this. Rather, his blue eyes were shining as he looked upon Percival more than ever before.

"As a fellow man who has made the resolution to walk beside Lady Monette from now on, there is nothing else I could call that person other than brother-in-law. My brother-in-law!"

Towards Percival who was looking at him with bright and shining eyes, Robertson raised a hand slowly but surely. Whether he liked the new way of being called, or he shared in the sentiment, Robertson was glad to be called brother by Percival at any rate.

The rest of us were watching the exchange of these two—one person and one spider brother-in-law—and each of us shrugged our shoulders after sharing a look. Leave it alone, this thought synchronized between all of us without any words having to be said.

For awhile after that a persistent voice could continue being heard saying, "Brother-in-law Robertson" and the steady reply of Robertson tapping his foot.

After awhile, Alexis and I were looking at each other with slightly dead eyes,

"Alexis, your man is saying something amazing."

"Monette, your husband is saying some strange things."

And then finally, "I'll take care of it," Gina told us both before taking out a muffin

instead of a loaf of bread, and heading to where Percival was.

Gina's muffin strike was truly a wonderful thing, allowing peace and quiet to finally return to the kingdom..... not really.

Gina was playing with Concetta on her lap, graciously laughing as Concetta boldly struggled to fight back against the ribbon she was manipulating to tie off on his head. Her elegant voice continued to cheer him on, "Good job Concetta, just a little more," and his constant cries would continue for the time being.

Alexis was happily looking on before standing up to prepare his own tea. The former prince laughed to himself a bit saying, "It is nice having a cup that's handle will not break the instant you pick it up." It seems the memories of his bad luck are still deeply rooted.

Percival finished eating the muffin by tossing the last bite into his mouth, humming softly to himself as he caressed my helmet. My view through my helmet continued to shift as his hand continued to move my helmet back and forth along with his movements. Of course, I never asked him to stop.

".....It's become so much noisier compared to that time."

"Ah, it's lively. And it will continue to be lively from now on."

"And if I told you 'you are bothering me?'"

Yes I complained, but still Percival's hand showed no sign of stopping. He lovingly stroked my cheek before moving to my forehead..... That is to say, my helmet.

I shrugged my shoulders helplessly, and then my gaze fell on Robertson who had come near me.

'Even though I thought it would be just the two of us forever.'

Was what I thought he was saying through his eyes, but then Robertson made a small \*tac\* sound as he raised one of his legs.

He was happily laughing..... was what I was certain of.

.....end.....



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