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## Chapter 12

James pouted helplessly.

“Get me the dress from my closet,” Thea said, ignoring him. “There’s an important banquet tonight.”

James stood and walked toward the closet. “Which one, dearest?” he asked, opening the closet door.

“The white one, with the V-neck.”

“That won’t do. You can’t expose yourself in public like that. This one looks good.” James grabbed a black, high-neck dress and handed it to Thea. “Oh, right. What’s the banquet for?”

“Rowena Xavier- of the Xaviers- is hosting an auction banquet. There’ll be lots of great items there, so almost everyone that is attending will be famous in one way or another. I’m going to expand my network while I’m there.”

James paused when he heard that, but recovered immediately. “Need me to give you a ride?” he asked.

“I’ll take the cab.”

“Oh, okay then.”

Thea left after changing into her dress.

James left soon after, giving her family a random excuse as he did.

In the Xaviers’ villa.

The Xaviers had one remaining villa left. All their other assets had been liquidated, including real estate.

The Xaviers were gathered inside the building.

Sat at the helm was a middle-aged man clad in military uniform.

He was Trent Xavier, Warren Xavier’s fourth son.

Trent was a soldier on the western border, which meant he was on a mission when Warren died and had not been able to leave. When he finally managed to rush back home, it was already too late.

However, the murderer left a clue. They were a remnant of the Cadens that had fallen ten years ago. So, he rushed to the Capital overnight in search of the man in power that had ordered the extermination of the Cadens and the retrieval of Moonlit Flowers on Cliffside’s Edge, in hopes of having his questions answered.

Alas, his efforts were fruitless, save for one piece of news: The reason why Thea Callahan became disfigured was because ten years ago, she was afflicted with burns while saving someone from the Cadens’ villa!

The man in power ordered an investigation into who Thea Callahan had saved.

With that news in hand, Trent left the Capital and returned to Cansington.

When he finally got home, however, he discovered that the Xaviers had been bankrupted. Thea Callahan, too, had played a big part in this.

A beautiful woman sat at his side. Her skin was virtually flawless, and she seemed to be ageless. This was Rowena Xavier.

“Trent, father’s killer may be a mystery, but Thea Callahan was the one that bankrupted us. Joel told us Alex Yates only tore us down because of that woman’s call!”

Trent’s expression darkened as he clenched his fists. “No one gets away with making enemies of us, not even Alex Yates,” he growled. “I’ll show the world that our family aren’t pushovers. No. Tonight, the Callahans fall!”

The Xaviers' banquet auction was held in Cansington Hotel.

Outside, luxury cars lined the entire road, and celebrities milled about the building.

These were all people Rowena had invited.

Although the Xaviers had been bankrupted and people were reluctant to attend this banquet auction, the news that Trent Xavier had returned convinced them otherwise.

Trent had contributed greatly to the Xaviers’ rise in Cansington, since he was a soldier on the western border and was quite high up on the ranks.

Two men in black trench coats approached the Cansington Hotel.

Henry paused for a moment at the military presence outside the building. “Hey, James, these are western soldiers. Does that mean Trent Xavier is back? I’m pretty sure he’s the Blithe King’s confidant. His rank’s pretty high, too, as the deputy commander.”

“The Blithe King?” James scoffed. “Even if he were here tonight, I’ll have him kneel before me if he dared get in my way.”

The Five Commanders were famous in Sol.

The Black Dragon of the Southern Plains, the Centurion of the North, the Blithe King of the West, the Barbarian King of the East, and the Emperor of the Capital.

In terms of influence, the Emperor was the strongest.

Yet even though the Black Dragon had been General for the shortest amount of time, he was the strongest in terms of raw power. Even if the other commanders all came at him at once, they might not be his match.

Besides, the Black Dragon had another title: Asclepius, god of medicine!

His medical skills were unparalleled, able to revive even the dead!

He could even stop Death's scythe in mid-swing. As long as someone had even half a breath left in them, he was able to save them!

That was why James saw no threat in the other four commanders, let alone a mere confidant of the Blithe King.

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“Will we be getting rid of anyone tonight, James?”

“The priority tonight is getting the Moonlit Flowers on Cliffside's Edge back. As for whether anyone ends up dying... we'll see.”

“When do we enter?”

“There's no rush. We'll go in when the event starts.”

“Understood!”

Thus they lingered outside the hotel.

The celebrities attending the banquet were apprehensive at the sight of the soldiers standing guard in the hotel.

Trent Xavier really was back!

His father was dead, his family bankrupted... now that Trent was back, it was as if a storm had rolled into Cansington.

The celebrities had all gathered on the top floor of the hotel.

Even Thea had arrived. The black dress she wore accentuated her slender figure, and her tied-back hair lent a graceful and elegant air about her. She mingled with the star-studded crowd, expanding her personal network like she had wanted.

At that moment, two workers suddenly dropped the painting they had been carrying just as they walked past Thea.

Crash!

The painting fell to the ground, shattering the crystal case it had been transported in. A shard cut into the painting as the damaged part landed by Thea's feet.

“What... What the hell was that?”

A worker stared at the shattered glass and sliced painting on the ground, then glared up at Thea. “Why'd you bump into me?!”

“What? I didn’t!” Thea said, confused.

She hadn’t even touched him.

“I really didn’t. Did you mistake me for someone else?”

“No way. I only dropped it because you bumped into my arms. Do you even know what this is? It’s Moonlit Flowers on Cliffside's Edge! It’s over two thousand years old! It’s been valued at one-point-eight billion dollars!”

The other worker joined in, pointing at Thea. “This was your fault, Thea Callahan. You did this!”

A crowd started gathering at the commotion.

“What’s going on here?” a middle-aged man clad in military uniform barked. “What’s with all the yelling? Have you forgotten how you’re supposed to act in front of guests?”

“Boss, we were transporting the Moonlit Flowers on Cliffside's Edge when Thea Callahan knocked it over. It... it’s been ruined.”

Trent knelt down and frowned at the slash on the painting. “Moonlit Flowers on Cliffside's Edge... It really is ruined. This costs one-point-eight-billion dollars!”

“No, it wasn’t me!” Thea said frantically as she backed away, balking at the hefty price.

There was no way she would be able to afford that, not even if she liquidated everything her family owned!

Trent stood up and glanced indifferently at her. “I won’t falsely accuse anyone. This place is fitted with surveillance cameras. We’ll know the truth once we review the footage. Bring it here!”

A few minutes later, someone brought the footage over. Trent played it for everyone present.

In the video, the workers walked past Thea, but dropped the painting when Thea bumped into one of them.

With that, Trent looked coldly at Thea. “One-point-eight billion, Thea Callahan,” he said, then turned to his men. “Take her away. Have someone visit the Callahans for the money. If they can’t cough it up, bring them all here.”

Thea held back tears at the soldiers approaching her. “It really wasn’t me! It wasn’t me, General Xavier! I didn’t do it! I didn’t knock it over!”

The crowd had grown considerably by now, but no one spoke up, content to merely feel pity for Thea.

“What a pity. They just started rising up, too. They’re doomed now though.”

“Yeah. One-point-eight billion! They’re definitely going bankrupt. Would they even be able to get that much after selling everything?”

“Thea was unlucky, I guess. That was careless of her.”

The color drained from Thea’s face as she heard the chatter and watched as the soldiers approached her. She stumbled backward but stopped as she stared down the pitch-black barrels of their guns.

“Take her to the back room!” Trent commanded.

In desperation and helplessness, Thea struggled vainly as the soldiers dragged her away.

The crowd watched on in shock, but none of them sympathized with her. In fact, some were secretly entertained by the entire scene.

This incident had no effect on the event. At that moment, Rowena Xavier appeared to announce the start of the auction.



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