

Chapter 50: Rhys

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“YOU CAN’T SIT BY A QUEEN’S SIDE IF YOU DON’T KNOW WHICH FORK TO use. You’ll embarrass yourself at state functions.” Andreas crossed his arms over his chest. “Did you not look at the diagram I sent you?”

“They’re. All. Forks,” I bit out. “They serve the same function.”

“I’d like to see you try to use an oyster fork to eat steak.”

A dull ache throbbed at my temple. We’d been reviewing dinner etiquette for the past hour, and I was one second away from stabbing Andreas with one of his beloved forks.

He’d officially moved out of the palace and back into his townhouse last week, after the parliamentary vote, and we were reviewing place settings in his kitchen.

I’d asked him to help me acclimate to the whole royal lifestyle thing. Diplomatic protocol, who’s who in Eldorran society, and so on.

I already regretted it, and we hadn’t even finished our first lesson.

Before I could respond, the doorbell rang, saving Andreas from death by utensil.

“Study the diagram,” he said before answering the door.

My temple throbbed harder. I should’ve asked the palace’s protocol office for help instead. They were humorless automatons, but at least I didn’t want to murder them every five minutes.

I heard faint voices, followed by the sound of footsteps.

“Rhys?”

I looked up and saw Bridget standing in the doorway with Booth. I wasn’t sure who was

more surprised, her or me.

“What are you doing here?” we asked at the same time.

“It seems I’m now the most popular person in the family.” Andreas stepped around Bridget. “Irony.”

She walked to me and gave me a quick kiss before sliding a cool glance in Andreas’s direction. “You’re not the most popular person anywhere except in your head.”

I didn’t bother hiding my smile. Snarky Bridget was one of my favorite Bridgets.

Andreas arched an eyebrow. “Care to explain why you’re here then, Your Highness? I assumed you’d be too busy to visit little ol’ me.”

Good question. Bridget was supposed to be at a coronation planning meeting.

“My meeting ended early, so I thought I’d come by to say thank you. I didn’t get a chance to say it before, but I appreciate you helping Rhys with Erhall.” It came out grudgingly. Bridget’s relationship with Andreas had warmed a few degrees since she found out he’d been trying to help her in his own fucked-up way, but they would never be best friends. They were too different and had too much history.

Andreas’s face broke out into a devious grin.

“Don’t be a dick,” I warned.

“Me? Never.” he drawled before turning to Bridget. “I appreciate the gratitude, cousin dearest. Does this mean you owe me a favor in the future?”

She narrowed her eyes. “Don’t push it.”

Andreas shrugged. “It was worth a shot. While you’re here, maybe you can explain place settings to your boyfriend. I drew a perfect diagram, but alas, it’s not enough.”

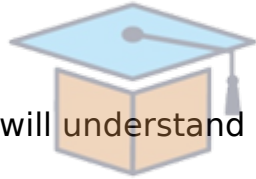
Bridget’s confusion morphed into amusement when I explained the situation, glaring at Andreas the whole time.

“He doesn’t know his forks,” Andreas said after I finished. “I’m trying to civilize him. Imagine using a salad fork to eat pasta.” He sniffed with disdain.

“I know them enough to stab you with one of them,” I said.

Booth snorted from the doorway.

“The violence is another thing we have to work on.” Andreas finished his whiskey and set it on the counter. “You’re dating a princess now. You can’t go around stabbing people.”



“Oh, I think people will understand once they find out who I’m stabbing.”

Bridget laughed. “Forget about him,” she told me. “I’ll help you.”

She turned to Booth. “I’m fine here. Rhys is with me. I believe there’s a football match you want to watch?”

Football as in soccer, not American football. It was one of the thousand small things I had to get used to.

Booth’s face lit up. “If you wouldn’t mind, Your Highness.”

Since it was getting late and Andreas had no groceries except for milk and eggs, we ordered takeout while Booth watched his game in the den and Bridget and Andreas fought to teach me about place settings. Eventually, I got the hang of it, and we moved on to nobility ranks. It wasn’t hard to remember. After the royal family, dukes and duchesses ranked highest, followed by marquesses, counts, earls, and barons. Eldorra had a similar hierarchy to Britain.

“You might make a good Prince Consort after all.” Andreas wiped his mouth with a napkin and checked the clock. “If you’ll excuse me, I have a call with an old friend from Oxford. Don’t destroy the kitchen while I’m gone.”

“Good to hear. You know how I live for your approval,” I deadpanned.

"I do." He clapped me on the shoulder on his way out, and my annoyance ratcheted up another notch.

I couldn't believe I shared DNA with that guy.

When I turned back to Bridget, she was trying, and failing, to suppress a smile.

"What's so funny?"

"You and Andreas. You bicker like Nik and I do." Her smile widened at the incomprehension on my face. "You bicker like siblings."

Siblings.

It didn't hit me until that moment. I'd known Andreas was my brother, but he was my brother. A real, albeit annoying, one I saw regularly. We argued all the time, but maybe that was just what siblings did, like Bridget said.

I wouldn't know. I'd been alone all my life...until now.

