

## Everlasting promise - Endless love

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# Everlasting promise - Endless love

by [LegereAdAstra](#)

## Summary

The Burgess kingdom, ruled by the great and mighty Magus, wishes to enter a bloody war in order to destroy the Endless forever. Destiny signs a marriage treaty between her brothers and Prince Gadling to form an alliance that will save her kingdom.

## Notes

\*☆.\*☆.\*☆

Hey, I know I already have a project in progress, but I finished this series today and I already have an idea for 2-3 fanfics, so I hope you like it?

English is not even close to being my language, I accept corrections and suggestions

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# Mistress of Destiny

## Chapter Notes

\*☆.\*☆.\*☆

Hey, I hope you're enjoying the fic, we have news!

We won an amazing beta to watch the antagonist, she is correcting and reviewing this work with great affection and I can only thank her for that.

I am very grateful for all your commitment, appreciation and help <3

\*☆.\*☆.\*☆

The table was set with the most diverse abundance, displaying the wealth of the kingdom. Breads, endless portions of food, sauces, and jams adorned golden utensils and fine plates. Riches that Destiny had long forsaken when joining the Creditors of Wisdom, now returning only out of necessity for the kingdom after the death of his parents. In his core, he knew that above all, his duty to the people prevailed, and that was what relieved him of the guilt weighing on his shoulders. The matter to be discussed with his siblings would not be taken lightly; if he didn't act soon, a bloody war could bring his kingdom to ruin.

Destiny sighed at the dining table, occupying the seat that had once belonged to the late king, his father. He awaited the arrival of his family with great anticipation, but even though considered the most patient member of the royal family, he couldn't help but be irritated by his siblings' lateness. After all, he had warned about the importance of that dinner, and for much of the night, all he received was an empty table and cooling food. This gave him time to contemplate; since his arrival, he had been surprised by the fact that his brothers lacked any class, their parents were too lenient in their upbringing.

Destiny's thoughts were interrupted as the hall door opened. Death, the second eldest, had skin as dark as her mother Night, and her exuberant curls sparkled over the hall candles. There was not a single trace of remorse on her face for the delay. Destiny gave her a look of disgust at the blood-stained silk dress, but at least this time, Death had the decency to clean her hands. Since joining the Healer Sisters, not a day went by that she didn't return exhausted or stained with plebeian blood, a disgrace to the respected royalty that once ruled Endless.

"My sister, how many times must I beg you not to attend the family dinner stained with filthy blood?" the exasperated king dictated.

Death smiled, "Brother, forgive me. I swear I tried this time. I was ready to leave immaculate, but they brought a wounded child who needed my help, and if I changed into another dress, I would never arrive on time," she shrugged gracefully.

Death had not been happy with her gift for a long time. There was great merit in helping people pass on, but she longed to help people live as well. When she joined the healers, she felt fulfilled, having assisted so many, and nothing could diminish that sense of accomplishment.

"I believe it didn't make a difference then, as you are still late and once again stained. Honestly, Death, I—" Before Destiny could start his usual lecture with his sister, the door opened again. Delirium, the youngest of the seven, ran to her seat and almost knocked over the dishes in the process. The king felt a sense of disbelief when he saw the girl's hair, which had been long and blond but now was carelessly cut and stained with pink.

"Delirium, my love," called Destiny as the twins Desire and Despair arrived, arguing about some new game that made sense only to them. "What happened to your hair?"

Soon after, Dream entered with his face buried in an old book. He didn't bother to greet his sisters or even look at them. If Death hadn't pushed his chair, he would probably have fallen when sitting or bumped into the table. His black hair was more unruly than usual, indicating that he had spent the entire day reading, again.

Delirium laughed loudly, joyful. She jumped into the chair and shook her head. "Desty Desty, I painted, painted, look how pretty it is, it's like the butterfly and the flower, but not the grumpy flower that grows tall, very tall, so the butterfly can fly." The girl began to ramble on, quickly forgetting her brother's question. Destiny wondered if his mother dropped the girl when she was a baby; nothing she said made sense. He sighed before nodding for his sister's servant to try to get her back in her seat.

There was no sign of Destruction, and when the king questioned one of the servants he received the usual reply. "I'm sorry your Majesty, lord Despair hasn't returned yet, he said he was going to train beyond the valley."

The eldest of the brothers looked with disdain at the mess that the salon had become. Death was playing with Delirium about her hair and the girl was trying to convince her that she should dye it too. Despair tried to stop Desire from flirting with one of the guards, and Dream continued to read as if he were alone in the library. They barely looked like princes and princesses, they acted like barbarians without manners, and their parents spoiled them too much while they were here.

"Desire, please don't do that again, please, " pleaded Despair, scratching his fist anxiously.

"It's not my fault that I am so desirable, sister, everyone wants a piece," said Desire, winking and blowing a kiss to the guard.

"The butterfly flies, but it's small like me and so it flies around like the goldfish in the lake, so if you made it gold it would be like the little fish that are friends with butterflies, then it would be like me colored," Delirium spoke quickly while playing with your juice.

Death laughed loudly at her little sister's ideas, while her brother remained by her side reading. Even though he tried to appear uninterested, he couldn't hide a brief smile at the sound of the little one's joy.

"**Silence**" ordered the king with a hard voice, the room immediately fell silent and seemed to get colder and colder with the passing seconds, even Dream looked up from the book in fright. "As I told everyone when I summoned you, I have something urgent to announce."

"I had a meeting with the queen of the Gadling kingdom a few days ago, as you know," the siblings looked at each other, not understanding where the eldest was going with this. "We agreed that a formal alliance between our kingdoms is necessary for mutual protection."

Destiny took a sip from his wine glass, foreseeing the chaos his next words would cause. "A marriage alliance."

While guards and servants whispered in astonishment at the news, Desire was the one who recovered from the shock most quickly. He smiled broadly and commented maliciously, "Brother, I didn't know you wanted to get married so soon. I can hardly imagine what a naive on the wedding night wou—"

Despair widened his eyes and put his hand on his twin's mouth to try to stop her from irritating the king even more, who was not as benevolent as their parents had been.

"Oh, no, dear, it's not me who will be getting married. I believe that burden suits better the one who destroyed the last alliance so that it can be remedied, don't you think, dear Dream?" The king mocked as he finished his glass in a long sip. He never tried to hide his displeasure at being tasked with taking care of the awkward siblings, but Dream, after the break of the last alliance, was the one he hated the most.

Dream's eyes widened at the words, the air seemed to get harder and harder into his lungs, all eyes were fixed on him, and it was suffocating, his eyes watered, as they did every time everything seemed too much for him. He clasped his hands on his now forgotten book, couldn't believe that after what had happened in the past he would be forced into such a situation again, but it left his face blank again. He wouldn't give Destiny the satisfaction of seeing him suffer for it.

"What?" Death's voice cut through the silence, it sounded so cold that even Dream managed to snap out of his stupor to face her. "How dare you do that to our little brother? After all he's been through?" Death was staring at his older brother with a deadly hatred. She hadn't been on Dream's side last time, and she wasn't going to make that mistake again.

Little Delirium had just started crying and babbling things that no one else could understand, too scared by the bad feelings emanating throughout the room.

Desire lost their smile, in disbelief, as if they didn't believe the words they heard. They had long ago had their intrigues with Dream, but they had learned from the consequences of seeing her sweet Dream become a husk of what he once was.

Despair had started biting her nails in agony as he stared at the beige wallpaper with gold accents. She was trying not to spiral into bad, unpleasant places in her own mind. Memories haunted her, her reclusive brother, barely speaking or eating, holed up in his room as he withered away and she could feel with her gift him slipping into deep anguish without allowing himself to ask his siblings' for help.

"I don't remember our dear Dream bestowing us with the details of what led him to decide to submit our kingdom to ruins, and I don't care." The king looked venomous, not failing to smile as he saw his brother cringe slightly. In his belief, Dream had created the path that tends to lead his kingdom to the worst of fates and that would never be forgiven or forgotten. "If we don't agree, fine, maybe we can marry young Delirium then?"

"No." Dream stood up abruptly, slamming the book on the table, speaking for the first time in a long time. "I will marry and undertake my duties as a prince if you wish." His voice was husky whether, from disuse or fear, none of them could imagine.

He started to head for the door when he was interrupted by Destiny. "We haven't had dinner yet, brother. You should enjoy it, soon you won't be attending family dinners anymore." His voice sounded loving, but you could feel it when he was reveling in his little brother's pain.

Lowering his eyes slightly towards the dining table, nausea seized him. Dream only wished he could hide in the library and at least try to process that he would be taken from his freedom again. He needed to get out before he broke down in front of his family and added to the humiliation he felt.

"I'm sorry, my brother, but I believe I need a moment alone to consider my new position. And as far as I know, a family doesn't sell one of their own as a decoration horse. I believe you should also rethink your concepts, and rethink that you are considered the sage of the family," Answered Dream calmly, he might not be the strongest of the brothers, but he always had a gift for words.

He turned toward the door when he felt wires grip his arm tightly. Fate threads. Those present gasped in shock, it was not common for brothers to use their gifts against each other, there were few rules in the royal family and this was the most respected.

"It wasn't a request, it's an order from your king. You seem to forget your roles here. If you act as you please and do not obey such a simple order then you seem more simple-minded than the servants of this palace. You are lucky that someone still wanted to make an alliance with our kingdom." Destiny pulled his strings, forcing his brother to sit down again, ignoring his death glare.

"This week, the Gadling family will come for dinner. They will stay for a few days to definitively establish our bond, and they will leave with Dream for the wedding. Everyone must act with class, according to their position. I don't want to see another kingdom thinking we don't have proper etiquette."

By the end of dinner, Dream hadn't touched any of the dishes. He concentrated on reading to avoid Death's pitying glances and Desire's harsh comments. Dream was angry, and his parents promised they would never force him to marry again. However, he finds himself just as oppressed as the first time, but he cannot claim Destiny wasn't right. He had destroyed the previous alliance and summoned the Burgess' wrath. He would accept without complaining or causing trouble for the good of his people.

When the king finally released him from his gift, Dream left quickly. When the door closed behind him, he could still hear Death calling to him and Despair screaming at his older

brother. He walked hastily towards the library, he needed to calm down and accept that there was nothing he could do. He didn't even know the name of his fiancée or groom.

"Sir, please wait a minute, what happened? Come on, tell me Lucienne asked me to take care of the master, please" Matthew had been chasing him from the exit of the hall confused, he knew that something had happened to his master, but he couldn't imagine what would make him so shaken. The servants were gossiping wildly all over the place, the castle and Dream looked like he was about to have a panic attack.

The prince stopped and turned to his faithful guard. He remembered how his predecessor Jessamy acted in the same way, concerned about his well-being. With a sigh, he confessed "I'm getting married" and went on his way again.

# Walking on clouds

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Lucienne was taken aback when Dream stormed into the Dreaming like a violent tempest, abruptly slamming the door with such force that the shelves shook. Her lord had always possessed a melancholic temperament, but he rarely exploded with such ferocity. It was more common to see him retreat into apathy or solitude in a remote corner until whatever troubled him either faded away or consumed him.

"Lucienne," Matthew burst into the room shortly after, agitated. His black hair was disheveled, and his beige skin was too pale, as if he had seen a ghost and rushed in panic to get there.

"Matthew, what happened? Why are you so agitated, and why does Dream look like he's about to flood the whole place?" Lucienne asked, visibly concerned. She saw the Dreaming becoming increasingly dark and cold, the starry sky that once adorned the ceiling now covered with dark, heavy clouds.

The Dreaming library was created by Dream himself a few years ago, and Lucienne vividly remembered how enchanted she was when she first entered. The walls of pristine white marble, adorned with details in pure gold, the ceiling was stunningly decorated like the night sky, boasting stars and galaxies so distant and wonderful. On clearer and sunnier days with a blue sky, the floor was so soft and delicate that it felt like walking on clouds, covered by an expanse of shelves filled with books upon books. There wasn't a written work that had ever been penned that didn't have at least one copy in the library.

However, she soon discovered that the Dreaming was not simply a magical library; it was an extension of Dream himself and, therefore, reacted proportionally to his feelings. That's how she began to understand her lord more deeply. When he was happy, the Dreaming became bright and enchanting, with points of light adorning the scenery. However, when he was devastated like this, the glow faded, replaced by a cold mist and storms. Something terrible must have happened during the family dinner to cause such a drastic effect.

"I don't know how it happened, but it's chaos out there," confessed Matthew, sounding worried. He was a newcomer to the royal guard job and had no idea what was happening, but he was immensely fearful for his master. When the librarian appeared in the castle dungeon and offered him a job, he thought it would be easy. Taking care of a royal brat and not being in a filthy and disgusting cell, he could do that. However, in these few months he had served his master, he couldn't help but grow attached. He had never met someone so sad and yet so kind at the same time; Dream inspired his protective side. "Dream, the master, he said he was... I didn't quite understand, it was so sudden."

"Matthew, focus. What did Dream tell you?"

"I think he's getting married?"



The elf dropped the large book she held in shock. "Not again," she whispered in disbelief, her voice bordering on despair.

"What do you mean, again? Did the master already get married? Does this have to do with—" "Matthew," Lucienne interrupted, distressed, "I need you to inform Corinthian, Gault, and bring Gilbert here as soon as possible."

"What? No! I want to help; I can't just leave the master alone facing whatever it is."

"I know, but now it's of utmost importance that you inform the others. Right now, Dream needs all the support he can get." She fell silent when the sound of thunder roared loudly, so harsh that it made her ears ache. "Now go."

The elf watched Matthew turn into a beautiful opal raven and swiftly depart. The faster he fulfilled his task, the better it would be for everyone. Meanwhile, she made her way to the depths of the Dreaming, in search of the prince of dreams. Her beautiful boots were getting increasingly soaked, and she hoped the books wouldn't be too damaged by the water from the storm.

She found Dream after a few attempts, and the sight broke her heart. Her lord, her master, her dear friend, was sitting on the floor, hunched and trembling. His head lifted slightly, revealing his pale face and reddened eyes. "Oh, lord," she knelt by his side in the slowly rising cold and shadowy waters.

"Lucienne," he murmured with a broken voice, tinged with pain and sorrow.

Since he arrived at the library and secluded himself, he felt dissociated, shivers ran uncontrollably across his skin, and the air entered his lungs like knives. His head ached and resonated loudly, so deafening that he could barely think.

"Matthew told me a bit, about Destiny—" she didn't hide the disgust in her voice; ever since the last game, she felt a great dislike for the twins. Dream might have forgiven them, but she never would, and frankly, she had no intention to. "No, just Destiny," Dream replied lowly, still in the same position, trying to calm his breathing and thoughts. He knew he was affecting the Dreaming, but he couldn't control it; it felt like he was drowning in the darkness, and nothing he did would save him from his fate.

Both remained sitting in silence. She patiently waited for him to gradually compose himself. Occasionally, she retrieved a book that surfaced, smiling each time the water became more translucent and warm. He appreciated that, having someone by his side to anchor him, knowing that he wasn't alone again.

"He's right," Dream confessed, breaking the silence. "We're too weakened after my parents' death. If we're attacked now, we'll be crushed, and it's my fault." If he were stronger, he could have prevented everything that was happening. His fingers slowly traced the thin scars etched on his wrist, now mere dull reminders with no power. Burgess might be human, but he had ties to the oldest and most powerful magic Dream would never wish to face again. He wasn't sure if they would survive an attack.

"A marriage with the Gaddlings wouldn't be so bad; the kingdom would benefit greatly." A lone tear escaped. As a prince, it was his duty to care for the people. He had dedicated so much of himself, but it seemed it was never enough. He didn't understand why he was so affected by this; he had always been able to think rationally and keep his feelings contained. However, since his return, he felt on a thin line between collapse and sadness. He should be better by now; he should be able to control himself.

"Take us with you, then. It wasn't your fault, Burgess is a lunatic. If we were with you there, we could have helped," replied the librarian, holding his cold hand, preventing him from hurting himself. He looked at her with anger, but she didn't flinch, used to her master after so long. "No."

"Dream, please, listen to me this time."

"I took Jessamy with me, and she was killed trying to help me. I learned my lesson." Dream trembled, the memories hurt. The image of Jessamy lying there, her blood dripping, never left him. He knew it was his fault, and he wouldn't bear it again, losing them as he lost her would kill him inside.

"Jessamy wasn't your fault."

"You weren't there, Lucienne. Don't state things you don't know."

"Yes, I wasn't there, and you never gave us details about what happened. Still, I never forced and blamed you. Dream, I've known you for a long time. You're good at heart. You didn't hurt Jessamy, and if she sacrificed herself so that you could be with us today, I know she wouldn't regret it." She didn't understand why her lord couldn't see what they saw in him. Dream saved them without asking for anything in return, protected them and the kingdom without ever complaining. She had never seen such a kind soul in all her life, so ready to protect others but never himself.

"If you go with me, you'll tread the same path as Jessamy."

Lucienne snorted, "You're not going alone, Lord. We're going too, and this is not up for discussion." Stubborn and impetuous, the prince believed he should bear everything on his shoulders without complaining or begging for help. But she saw him leave once and believed, for a few moments, that she would never see him again in her life. She won't let that happen again.

"Shall we go out? Finally, I need a tan. By the way, Dream darling, ease up on the flood, yes? The shoes are new; it would be awful to have to buy another pair." The two were surprised by Corinthian's interruption; he was leaning against one of the shelves, gallant. Beside him were Gault, sitting on one of the tables flipping through a huge and damp book, and Gilbert, protecting the raven from the drizzle with his green cloak.

"I'm sorry," Dream said, embarrassed by the scene he was causing, for not being able to control his powers or for the imminent fight he would have with his loyal companion. None of them dared to question. However, the clouds finally calmed down, and he relaxed a bit,

leaning his head against the shelf. His neck hurt from being bent for so long, but his whole body ached, so it didn't make a difference.

"Ugh, all right, you paid anyway. Here, I brought cookies. The crow said you haven't eaten anything." Dream took the tray gratefully, while smiling weakly, watching Matthew fly up to the cook and pull his hair, cawing about being a raven and not a damn crow.

Dream bit into one of the cookies. "They're raw."

Gault stopped Corinthian before he threw a knife at the raven. The Dreaming took on a serene tone and was almost dry again. His lord continued to eat as if he hadn't declared anything seconds before and pulled the container away when the elf tried to stop him from eating any more of the questionable cookies.

"Ah? How can it be raw? I left it for twice the time. Eat properly." Corinthian was, in fact, the worst cook the castle had ever seen. Still, his lord always ate any dish he made with confidence and a small smile.

Gilbert frowned and questioned. Even though he might be a clumsy violinist, he was almost certain that wasn't how it should be done. "By the heavens, why would you leave it for twice the time? It would burn."

The blonde seemed shocked to be questioned by the older man. "Firstly, old man, as a royal cook, I know exactly how to prepare simple cookies. Do you know what I do every day while you play that off-key nonsense? I cook, and I guarantee that Dream has never tasted better food, and furthermore..." He began an exaggerated monologue about his qualities as a royal cook and the reasons why he was right and everyone else was automatically wrong.

Dream felt warmed. He knew they were acting that way just to relax him. Everyone gave him worried looks, but now that he could finally breathe and think without feeling like he would shatter, he couldn't be more grateful to have them by his side. He could even forget that he would soon marry a complete stranger and that his life would never be the same.

Gault jumped off the table and hurried into the library in search of a solution to Dream's situation. She and the prince were in the middle of a great impasse before all this happened. However, when she heard the news, she was more than willing to forget any petty disagreements and leave with him.

"Maybe..." He started weakly, awkwardly, feeling the tiredness closing his eyes. "Lucienne might be right. It would be less... unbearable if you were with me there. But I don't want you to take risks for me, and..." He closed his eyes, his reddened face was finally free from stress and more relaxed than it had been the whole night since dinner.

The librarian smiled affectionately. Deep down, Dream was kind and affectionate, desiring to be loved faithfully as he loved everyone, just hiding it all in his calm and introverted personality. She hoped this marriage would be good for him; he truly deserved to be happy.

The small group stayed in the library for the rest of the night, planning and researching as much as they could in silence. Dream fell asleep on his guard's shoulder, who remained quiet

not to disturb his master's well-deserved sleep. There wasn't much about the Gadling realm in the books that was really useful, but they had sworn to protect their master this time.

They would do whatever it took to protect him, in whatever realm it may be.

When Mervyn, the oldest caretaker of the castle, arrived at dawn, he wasn't surprised to find the violinist, the cook, the librarian, the lady-in-waiting, and the royal guard all sleeping. Half thrown, half piled among slightly wet shelves and surrounded by books. Protectively wrapped around a pale prince with wild black hair and a small trail of tears on his face, he lay peacefully. He seemed to be suffering so much; Mervyn felt sorry for his master.

It hadn't even been a year since he returned, and he was leaving again.

After all, the king was already moving all the servants to arrange things for the arrival of royalty. He was on the verge of losing it over his brother's disappearance, who had blocked the doors of the library without even realizing it. Mervyn just grumbled about not being paid enough and continued dusting as if nothing had happened. It wouldn't hurt to let them rest a little longer; Destiny could whine all she wanted, but his loyalty would always be to his little master.

## Chapter End Notes

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Here we are again, I loved writing this poor Dream. Enjoy my early morning writing spree.

Quite hurt with your proper comfort, I suppose

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# Family Ties

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The next afternoon, the king announced that the royal family would arrive in three days. He and the queen had been corresponding by letters for a few months, and Queen Gadling wished to solidify the alliance urgently, as she would be stepping into the line of fire between the Endless and the Burgess.

These days were filled with frantic organization and the enthusiasm of the people, the air in the kingdom was filled with joy. Ornaments in pure gold and rich spices were acquired to be given as engagement gifts, and dresses made of the finest and brightest fabrics were ordered for the princesses. Servants tended to the gardens, cleaned, and adorned every hall, cooks prepared the most exquisite dishes for the event. Meanwhile, royal ladies instructed the princes and princesses on proper etiquette at the king's orders.

The castle was bustling, there wasn't a corridor free from the rush of employees or Destiny's shouted orders. The king was extremely demanding, insisting that everything be impeccable and as presentable as possible. Time seemed to be against them, and it appeared to be a sign of disapproval from the late father, Time, with the current arrangements.

On the other hand, the newly announced groom was often seen by the employees wandering with a bowed head, desolate and silent, his figure shrouded in garments so dark that it seemed like he was in mourning. He did not share the people's sentiment, always followed by a small black raven. Rumors spread like a plague, and whispers accompanied the prince everywhere.

"How can someone so handsome have such a personality? No one can endure it; I feel sorry for his bride."

"It's his punishment for running away; he dug his own grave."

"The king wasn't strict enough; that's the problem! The prince is bringing bad luck to the kingdom."

"They say the previous groom couldn't stand the marriage."

"Oh, don't tell me! I heard she's from the Gadling family; everyone is worried about what might happen this time."

"Let's just hope this marriage story doesn't bring more misfortune to all of us. The kingdom has had enough problems."

"Back to work, ladies, there's still much to be done." Lucienne coldly interrupted the gossip, as she had been doing for days. She couldn't believe the audacity of the servants towards their lord. In her opinion, Dream was being too lenient. He pretended not to hear or care, but, of

course, all the malicious comments were affecting him. He blamed himself enough without hearing the nonsense running through the castle.

The maids ran away frightened, not wanting to be fired or something worse. The elf was frightening when she wished. While watching them leave, she observed Dream; he wasn't well. His control over his power was still impaired by the forces of his conflicting feelings.

The library was closed indefinitely. Mervyn grumbled worriedly about dark stains in the Dreaming yesterday, and that afternoon a young man was nearly swallowed by a wolf when he tried to read a book about a girl in a red cape and her grandmother. Since then, the prince insisted that only he should retrieve the books from the library. He blamed himself immensely for all those he wetted in his collapse of suffering, carrying some stacks of books to the gardens and delicately opening them to the sun. It comforted him, better than thinking about the upcoming marriage.

But it wasn't just Dream who worried her. King Destiny had been showing himself as a tyrant since the moment he ascended the throne, but he had never been as cruel as he was currently, not only with the servants but with his own siblings.

Little Delirium was forced into severe etiquette lessons. Her tiny hands, which once conjured marvelous illusions, now had to be bandaged and cared for by Death every day due to the punishments she received for any mistakes. As much as Death wanted to question Destiny about the unjust mistreatment, she didn't dare.

Not after Desire. After all the chaos at dinner, they continued to pressure the king to change his mind. Desire ended up confined to the room, his mouth sealed by threads of fate throughout the night and the end of that afternoon. They didn't regret defending their brother; the time when they enjoyed seeing him suffer had passed. At least his twin sister was allowed to keep him company.

Dream tried to take care of his sisters as much as he could. He didn't dare to imagine what would happen to his family at the hands of Destiny when he left again. Guilt filled him, and he only longed for them to be well. At the moment, he was the only one who could dare to face the king. He didn't cross the limits, but even if he did, Destiny wouldn't dare to physically harm him so close to the arrival of the Gadling.

When he finally felt composed enough that morning, he went straight to the throne room to ask, or rather, beg, for his brother to be benevolent and let him take some servants with him on his departure.

"My brother, I believe it would be of great value if I were allowed to take my servants this time, after all, I am going to a distant kingdom whose customs we do not know."

"Do as you please, little Dream, I don't need your useless servants when I have so many ready to serve me with the greatest pleasure," the king scorned.

"With all due respect, Destiny, but my servants are loyal and skilled. Their presence could be beneficial to me, as I am unlikely to return this time," argued Dream calmly.

"You are so sentimental, Dream. Servants are dispensable, and you should learn to leave them behind when necessary. It will be an opportunity for you to mature," added the king, displaying a subtle smile. "Besides, my wish is that you never return; I hope you don't cause more havoc. Our kingdom suffers greatly from your mistakes."

The king sighed, impatient. "Alright, take your servants. But remember, any trouble caused by them will be your responsibility. And, Dream, don't test my patience," he warned before walking away, leaving Dream to reflect on the implications of this concession.

The prince couldn't understand what had happened to his older brother. Before leaving to join the Creditors of Wisdom, where he sought to free himself from worldly riches and discover the truth of life, he was calm and gentle. Destiny always smiled and was polite, treating every life, from his parents and siblings to the flowers in the garden, as precious. The servants revered him, and there was not one who didn't stop to admire him as he passed. Destiny had an angelic aura, with snow-white hair braided by his golden threads of fate, dressed in delicate clothes, and often seen carrying his thick book of destiny.

Dream was too young at the time and never understood why he left. The twins were even younger, and Delirium hadn't even been born yet. The only one mature enough to understand was Death. However, at that time, she was so trapped in her own loneliness that she couldn't do anything. And when Destiny returned, after the sudden death of their parents and Dream's return, he was no longer the same. His sweet brother had become dark and bitter, as if his soul had been poisoned so cruelly that nothing remained but a broken reflection of what he once was.

By the king's orders, they were not to be present at the arrival of the royal family. They would be properly introduced at the engagement dinner, as part of the "oldest and purest tradition of the Endless," explained Destiny.

But Dream felt that he only wanted to prolong his suffering, especially since he had no idea whom he would marry. There were two Gadling princes, whom he had never met since his kingdom rose shortly after he moved to the Burgess realm. Some years passed before he returned home, but there were still no portraits or anything more than vague accounts of them in the Dreaming books.

So, when he heard the murmurs and the commotion in front of the castle in the early afternoon, he didn't bother trying to peek over the walls. The royal family had arrived. However, that didn't stop Matthew from gliding to the entrance to observe; it wouldn't hurt to have some information beforehand.

A dozen voluminous and adorned carriages entered the realm that afternoon, and the peasants celebrated the prince's wedding, which would be the salvation of the land. Children played as music echoed loudly, and joy filled the atmosphere. Soldiers marched, escorting the royalty, while men and women offered their specialties to please. The excitement reached the gates of the Endless castle.

As established, only the king stood imposing at the gates, waiting, along with his strongest soldiers and the most beautiful noble ladies and knights of his court.

"Queen Ethel, it is with immense pleasure that I receive your majesty and your family to our home," greeted the king with elegance.

"Destiny," the queen smiled as she handed him her hand to kiss, her deep white eyes meeting his icy blue ones. She felt as if he were watching her soul, ready to steal it. But she didn't let it bother her, just smiling gracefully as she and her children were escorted into the grand castle.

Ethel was the most charming of queens, the jewel of the crown. Her slender body was covered by a long pearly dress with layers of fabric and adorned with fine silver threads. Her shoulders were bare, and the sleeves flowed lightly over her arms. She was adorned with jewels as bright as the crown that adorned her long blonde hair.

It would be a brief visit since her kingdom was left under the command of the royal advisor until her return. It was rare, especially in times like these, for all royalty to leave their realm to visit another. Still, it was a tradition of good faith, to convey the message that they completely trusted the Endless and wished for an alliance as prosperous as it was enduring. With her protection necklace, she was at no risk, but she wasn't concerned. The plan was simple: they would arrive, rest in the offered quarters until the engagement dinner, and then a small celebratory dance. Early the next afternoon, they would return to their kingdom with the newlyweds.

The children followed a few steps behind. Crown Prince John was as blond as his mother, but his blue eyes shone with the madness that had taken hold of him for years. He looked around with disdain, but for some reason, all the ladies felt immediately attracted to him. There was no one like him in the royal family, and they felt a twinge of envy for the Dream prince, having the chance to marry someone so beautiful. After all, Ethel's daughter would surely be as lovely as they were.

The people murmured in shock. There was no princess among the Gadlings. Then, who would be the real suitor? Were they facing another marriage between princes? The first marriage, after all, proved to be a mistake. What was King Destiny thinking?

Speculations spread like smoke, penetrating the hearts of the curious who gathered to witness the unfolding of this royal encounter. Some whispered about the possibility of a strategic alliance between these realms, while others pondered the hypothesis of a marriage doomed to failure.

Destiny remained impassive in the face of the people's restlessness. His cold eyes swept the crowd, maintaining the air of mystery surrounding his intentions. Meanwhile, Matthew watched the scene with a mix of nervousness and anticipation, trying to decipher the signs that would indicate his master's fate.

Queen Ethel, alongside her children, remained serene amid the commotion. Her keen gaze captured the anxiety in the air, but she did not let it affect her. She knew that behind the curtains of uncertainty, political games were unfolding, and it was necessary to act with caution at that moment. In her letters, the king exposed the doubts of his people and his possible displeasure; she was prepared.



On the other hand, the second prince stood out from the typical image of the royal family. His dark brown hair and charming gaze absorbed every detail of the surroundings. Unable to visit many realms, he was excited to explore the Endless, fueling his adventurous soul that yearned to know the various creations of humanity. Each culture and peculiarity of the people fascinated him deeply.

Elegant in his steps through the corridors, the prince pretended to ignore the whispers and curious glances of the maids who crossed his path. His desire to explore led him to the gardens, where a myriad of colorful flowers surrounded him. However, his exploration was unexpectedly interrupted.

As he walked among the flowers, colliding with another person, his instincts led him to delicately hold the other's waist to prevent an imminent fall. When the other's eyes met his, the prince was mesmerized by the beauty of their black eyes, similar to the universe filled with stars.

Dream, on the other hand, was disoriented. Just moments before, he was carrying a stack of books to dry in the sun in the garden. Suddenly, his body collided with someone else, the books scattered on the ground, and his mind went blank as he felt the firm hand on his waist.

"Oh, sorry, it was my fault; I wasn't looking where I was going," exclaimed Prince Hob, slowly releasing his hand as he noticed the tension in his body.

"I mean, I was looking everywhere, actually. I believe that was the problem, but there are so many plants here that I've never seen in my travels. They're very beautiful, really, even some medicinal ones, if I'm not mistaken. But anyway, I'm really sorry for this..." He began picking up the books, rambling about how he got distracted by the beauty of the garden and flowers he had never seen before.

The man sitting on one of the benches remained with his eyes closed, probably still recovering from the shock caused by the impact. Hob offered the stack of books, noticing that they were strangely wetter than expected.

"Here," he offered, handing the strangely wet stack of books. "Forgive me; I just arrived in the realm and am already scaring the servants, honestly! By the way, you can call me Hob," he laughed awkwardly, a trace of embarrassment on his face.

Dream took the books, incredulous. Did this nobleman think he was a servant? Part of him was offended by the audacity, but he thought, maybe it wasn't so bad. Matthew hadn't returned yet, and who better to give information about such a secluded realm than a chatty noble who came from this exact realm? He smiled briefly, unable to forget him and Death sneaking out in the middle of the night to the taverns, always having a new character to play. Their games and bets were based on how much they could deceive others.

"No problem," he replied as the nobleman sat beside him, still talking non-stop.

"- and I swear, I tried to have a plant once, it died, Jô gave me a cactus after that, but I don't know if it will last long. Okay, completely changing the subject, not that I wanted to judge

the literary system here or anything, but is there any reason for it to be so humid?" He pointed to the stack.

He can chatter more than Matthew, but it's a bit cute how he seems excited about everything. "There was a flood in the library," Dream replied, hiding the details about his significant involvement in the incident. "I'm putting them out in the sun."

Hob observed the servant with interest; he seemed different and more mysterious than all the others. He decided to help the man; after all, it was his fault for disrupting the path and making a mess. He didn't want to stir up trouble on the short trip. He picked up one of them and chuckled sarcastically while reading the title 'Tales of Shakespeare - Volume II'. "At least it wasn't the good ones that got wet."

"I like Shakespeare," pointed out Dream as he delicately opened some books where there was sunlight.

The second prince snorted, "I don't understand the reason for so much adoration, I mean, I met him when I was young, and I can say he had no talent." Despite his slight bad mood, he made an effort to open the books as carefully as his strange companion.

The other smiled, "I met him too; he just needed a bit of... inspiration, yes." He seemed nostalgic, and Hob didn't think he really understood what those words meant.

"You know, you should try some more exciting books. Stories full of action, unexpected twists, and maybe a touch of romance. Oh, classics are great, but sometimes it's good to have a dose of literary adrenaline!" Hob commented excitedly.

Dream was surprised by the question; of course, he had read all kinds of books in the Dreaming, but that never changed his preference. "Well, I really like classics. Shakespeare, for example, has a depth and a unique complexity in his works. Each word seems to carry a broader and more melancholic meaning."

The other snorted exasperated. "Oh, I get it. But have you ever read something that made your heart race with excitement? A story that took your breath away? Now, that's an experience!"

"Well, I like books that make me reflect. I think there's beauty in the quietness of words, in contemplating the emotions conveyed by writing." Dream was waiting for an opening, as much as the conversation interested him, he needed to ask the right questions to get the information he wanted.

They spent a few minutes talking about books; at some point, Hob monopolized the conversation, telling about some of his adventures around the world and things he had encountered. And Dream was fascinated by both the things he heard and the man who told them with passion. In the end, he finally got the opening to ask, "So, did you come for the royal wedding?"

"Oh, yes, yes, I couldn't miss it, right?" Hob winked, laughing, happy about the new friendship he was building. His new friend, although not so talkative, proved to be a great

listener.

"But tell me, friend, just between us," Hob whispered. "I'm kind of worried, actually. I heard some rumors around the castle, and I don't want to offend your lord or anything, but you know how servants can be sometimes. They say the prince is a spoiled, bad-tempered brat who ran away without thinking about the consequences. Is it true?" He asked anxiously, avoiding thinking about the wedding because he didn't even know the prince he would marry, and hearing so many rumors was nauseating.

His eyes welled up slightly, making Dream turn his face so that the noble wouldn't notice. How could the castle servants think so little of him? Did they have so little faith? It hurt him more than he could imagine. "No, he's not like that," he said simply, managing to control his voice from the tremors he felt.

Before Hob had a chance to apologize for his rudeness, they were interrupted by a black raven swooping down from the sky in their direction. Matthew didn't want to question why his master seemed so shaken next to the visitor, but he would certainly inform the librarian about it. The raven cawed sharply, his lord had been clear about not speaking in front of the visitors for now.

"Do we really have to go?" His master asked with regret; it seemed that even with the progress of the conversation, he would like to stay a little longer. But Matthew waved, his mission was to take Dream to his quarters before the king noticed he wasn't there, or worse, found out that he was talking to the other prince.

The prince of dreams sighed; the books weren't dry yet, so he would have to ask Lucienne to pick them up later. "I have to leave now," he mused to the noble.

"Okay, I've taken up too much time, you must have a lot to do," Hob said his goodbyes. He was ready to go on his way when he remembered, "Hey, I don't think I asked your... name?" When he looked back, the stranger was no longer in the garden. He sighed, maybe tomorrow then. He went in the opposite direction of the servant, hoping they would meet again the next day to apologize.

Meanwhile, Dream was escorted to his room by his loyal raven guard. He couldn't help but think about the man in the garden; in another life, perhaps, they could have been something, but now he didn't want to have hope about anything until he met his future husband.

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At dinner time, Dream felt nauseous. Grateful that Corinthian had sent some snacks to the room, he recalled how he was surprised upon entering his quarters. Instead of the gloomy solitude he had been trying to avoid all day, he found a bright environment filled with laughter and permeated by an atmosphere of joy. Dream was shocked to see his sisters present, clearly ignoring the king's orders.

Desire immediately noticed her brother's arrival and hurried to pull him inside, slamming the door shut. "Sweet Dream, finally! I don't know why it took you so long," said Desire, pushing her brother, clearly confused, onto the bed. He watched as Death fixed her hair in the mirror, Delirium painted golden fish on the wall with paint, and Despair adjusted her dress. His attention was captured when Desire practically threw a long black dress onto his face.

"What do you think, brother? I'm sure it enhances your eyes," Desire smiled mischievously. They were making progress, trying to rebuild the bridges that had broken between them.

Dream looked at the dress with a small smile, knowing it was the work of the twins, who loved creating beautiful pieces for the family. Destruction and Destiny were rarely present, so he always tried to be there for the sisters in everything they needed, whether it was trying on their clothes or participating in their games. As he grew older, he distanced himself more than he imagined, and the consequences were devastating. "You know, I wouldn't mind wearing a more casual outfit, but I believe our brother would decapitate me if I showed up to dinner with something other than what he chose."

The sisters hid their surprise; Dream rarely spoke since he returned, despite Destiny's attempts and teasing, which would definitely rain down today. Delirium broke the silence with a laugh, whether it was due to Dream's attempted joke or something only she understood, who could say?

"I'm not complaining, but what brought you here?" Dream asked, somewhat awkwardly.

Death sat beside her brother. "We haven't been present in the past with you, and—"

"Sister, that's not necessary," Dream interrupted.

Death held her brother's hands, smiling and looking deeply into his eyes, trying to convey all the love she felt. "It is necessary, little brother. Let me. We haven't been there for you before, but never again. Do you hear, little brother? We will never disappoint you again. We are with you now; we'll be at your wedding and visit whenever we can. And when we can't, we'll send letters. You won't be alone again." She spoke seriously; the years she spent separated from her brother hurt her deeply. He had always supported her wholeheartedly; now it was her turn.

Dream could feel it. His gift allowed him to feel people's feelings when they were strong in their dreams, and they didn't necessarily have to be asleep for that. In this room, he could feel his sisters' love so palpably that it warmed him inside, so comforting that he couldn't hold back the tear that glistened on his face.

Despair wanted to see her brothers happy. Dream had always been there for her, even when she couldn't bear the despair that her gift brought. She didn't want to see him cry; if he were to leave, he should leave with a smile. "Oh, Death made little Dream cry," she joked, pretending to be surprised.

Smiling at his twin and understanding where she was going with that, Desire continued, "Death, Death, I didn't know you had it in you, and then I'm the cruel one."

The younger sister had already abandoned her wall art and stood, gently petting her brother's head. "Does it hurt? It doesn't hurt; it'll pass," she said with kindness. "What?" Death exclaimed, a bit distressed. "Brother, no, don't cry. I just want you to feel welcomed, that we're here for you."

The prince chuckled, picking up his sister. "It doesn't hurt; I'm not sad; I'm happy. And you two, stop bothering Death, let's go."

Death, with a warm expression, placed a hand on Dream's shoulder.

"I appreciate the intention, but this will only make things worse. Destiny is already furious with me, and if he finds out that you disobeyed his orders..." Dream ran his hand through his hair, visibly worried.

"Don't worry about Destiny. He's already furious with the whole world, anyway. It's not news," Despair surprised by revealing.

"Besides, we're not here to talk about Destiny. We're here to talk about you and your future marriage." Desire winked at Dream, suggesting a change of focus.

"Yes, we want to know everything about this Prince Gadling. Did you see him?" Delirium asked.

"Not yet. It seems fate wanted to keep everything a secret until the last moment." Dream, with an intrigued smile, reflected bitterly on the mysterious situation.

The family stayed there for the rest of the afternoon, the twins stylized the dresses for dinner, mainly to annoy the king when the time came. Delirium took it upon herself to show her brother and sister every magical and bright illusory creature she could create with her gift. It was the most peaceful moment they had in years, even before everything went awry. The family hardly managed to be very united. The parents were distant, too focused on their jobs, and the children struggled to understand their gifts and who they really were. Dream paid attention to every gesture and detail of that day; he would cherish that memory and turn it into the most beautiful dream he ever created.

His joyful reminiscence was interrupted when the king announced the entrance of the Gadling family. He realized he missed all of Destiny's speech in his musings. He was surprised to see the nobleman he had met in the gardens entering with the royal family, but he relished in the confusion taking over his face when he saw him there with his sisters, not truly understanding that he had been subtly deceived. He also felt a bit disoriented; he couldn't find the second Gadling prince anywhere in the hall, leading him to believe he would marry Prince John. That didn't sound good; he seemed handsome and charming, of course, but something in his eyes reminded him of the madness of the Burgess.

When everyone was seated at the large dinner table in the ballroom, King Destiny raised the wine glass and declared, "We are here today united by fate, I dare say, for the union of our kingdoms. We must bless the union of two princes who are now engaged, not only for the alliance but also for the secret love they shared until now." Dream discreetly rolled his eyes;

the story the king was selling would be good if it were true. "So, let's toast to the betrothed, Prince Dream Endless and Robert Gadling!"

The nobles and servants applauded vigorously, while Hob and Dream exchanged shocked glances.

## Chapter End Notes

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Sorry for the long delay, the beginning took a while to flow for me!

Hob is here ladies and gents, finally! I loved this chapter ^^

Thanking our beta for leaving this incredible chapter and supporting me so much! <3

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# Time doesn't stop

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The night proceeded without much ado. The guests toasted to the engagement, and soon the betrothed couple sat side by side at the long table. Music permeated the hall as they observed the nobles relishing the ball with ecstasy and enthusiasm—dancing, gossiping, and indulging in food, adorned in clothes as dazzlingly expensive as the hall itself.

Prince Hob smiled serenely behind the golden chalice, discreetly whispering, "You said you were a servant," without directing his gaze towards his future husband, so as not to show his discontent, after all, appearances had to be maintained.

Dream maintained a stoic expression, focusing his attention on the musicians. Gilbert was the lead violinist that night, playing each melody with mastery. He couldn't help but glance briefly at the man beside him and respond with a hint of anger, "I recall you saying your name was Hob." He felt a sense of disgust, his little game had backfired drastically, and the thought of being deceived so easily infuriated him.

Rolling his eyes, the second prince couldn't believe the audacity of the man. "It's a nickname! And at least I wasn't pretending to be a damn servant," he huffed. He couldn't believe he had been so foolish. With regret, he replayed the moments in the gardens in his mind, wondering how much of it was real and how much was part of the other's petty plan.

"It's you who assumed that without even questioning me," replied the prince of dreams, narrowing his eyes, offended by the accusation. Shame spread through Hob's body, the other's words weren't a fallacy. He recalled being so enchanted by the ethereal and profound gaze of his companion and then erroneously assuming he was a servant simply because he was carrying a few books.

He had never considered himself arrogant and presumptuous, but given the circumstances, perhaps he was becoming as detestable as the nobles he had once hated. No, he pondered, there were dozens of rumors he had heard, rumors he threw in the prince's face without any tact. Oh, heavens, he wanted to throw himself into a well and disappear.

He ran his hands through his brown hair, frustrated. They had dared to fantasize that, even though it was an arranged marriage, he could at least develop a friendship with the prince. However, there was no way the man could like him even a bit now. What a disaster.

"Gentlemen." A voice interrupted Hob before he could even think of a way to apologize. "I would recommend lowering our voices. We don't want to take away the splendor of the old violinist's performance, do we?" Corinthian smiled, extending a tray between the two. He placed a sweet tray in Dream's hands and a wine glass in front of him.

Dream smiled and nodded gratefully as he took the tray of pastries, and Hob couldn't help but notice that it was the first time he had seen the prince eat anything since dinner. He hadn't

even touched the wine served, his glass remained untouched. He didn't want to be more impolite than he had already been, however, he would be more attentive to the details: every subtle expression, the way it seemed like the world offended him just by existing—everything about the man intrigued him like a puzzle to be solved.

The blond servant left with a light stroke of the prince's hair, somehow leaving them more disheveled than one would imagine possible. "He's right, we should discuss our grievances in a more private room," Dream declared while savoring a pastry, feeling comforted by Corinthian's gesture. Despite being apprehensive about the actions of the second prince, he had also erroneously assumed the other's class. Perhaps it was a standoff in which both were at fault, after all.

He noticed the man watching him while he tasted the pastries and extended the tray, offering them as a gesture of goodwill. "Please, help yourself," he suppressed a smile as he saw the man eagerly take one. Hob was too naive for his own good.

"Very kind of you. You know, I'm sorry we started off on the wrong foot, but I have a feeling this could work," Hob smiled at his companion while trying the sweet. The sensation that invaded his palate was indescribable. He believed he would never forget that deplorable taste. How could something sweet be so bitter was beyond his understanding, at some point, he wondered if those sweets could be poisoned.

While discreetly spitting out what they dared to call food into a napkin. Because he didn't believe that could be called food at all. He saw Dream with an impassive face, as if he had no idea what was happening. However, the gleam of petty satisfaction in his eyes betrayed the truth. Even though he was enjoying the dish as if it were the eighth wonder of the world, Hob thought: that little sneaky fellow. However, instead of feeling anger at the insolence, deep down, he felt increasingly curious and drawn to the man. He wouldn't give up easily on winning his companion's friendship.

"The flavor is quite exotic. I can say with absolute certainty that I've never eaten anything like this in my entire life. Is it a typical dish?" Hob tried to say, without choking. He had downed the wine glass, but the taste lingered in his mouth like an infestation. Dream really smiled, enjoying the misfortune, and at that moment, the second prince was willing to intoxicate himself with the rest of the tray if he could keep that beautiful smile to himself. Unfortunately, it was fleeting, and soon Dream returned to his expressionless demeanor.

Dream was satisfied. The way the prince's face closed up was an priceless experience. Although it was sweet how he tried to hide the disgust, maybe this arrangement was better than the last one. He would give this a chance for now. He didn't fail to offer another candy, only to be politely refused by Hob.

"Corinthian is my personal chef. Don't worry, I trust my life to him. It's not poisoned," he commented, sounding uninterested, as he offered the candy.

The second prince laughed, slightly affected by the amount of wine he had consumed in such a short time. "Companion, I don't want to be rude, but if I eat another one, you'll become the earliest widower in history."



"It's not that bad," Dream rolled his eyes, amused by the drama.

Hob couldn't tell if he was talking about being a widower or the taste of the food. For peaceful nights of sleep, he would assume that his future husband didn't have a good culinary taste. He just raised his eyebrows, skeptical.

"Moreover, technically, I wouldn't be a widower yet."

A brief silence settled. Dream took a nervous sip from the wine glass, feeling the need to keep a friendly conversation. It was crucial, at least this time, to establish a good relationship with his fiancé.

"He's a Wendigo," Dream felt light, he shouldn't have accepted the wine that night. He was weak for alcohol and hadn't eaten much since the previous day. In Matthew's words, he was as open a talker as a normal person.

"I beg your pardon?" Hob exclaimed in shock.

Frowning in confusion, Dream tried to explain in the best way his alcohol-slowed brain could. "A Wendigo, he consumed a lot before, so he doesn't taste normal food anymore."

He was incredulous at Dream's words. "You keep a Wendigo in the castle?" How could he declare such a thing so naturally, as if he were talking about the weather, was unbelievable. He had never heard of a kingdom that kept Wendigos in their lands so casually.

Dream snorted with disgust, "We don't keep anything." He slouched slightly in the chair, feeling the sleepy effect of the second glass. "And if you haven't noticed, the kingdom is full of creatures, we don't exclude anyone for what they are." He gestured slowly toward the hall.

Feeling embarrassed again for how he expressed his words, Hob hurried to justify his surprise. He didn't want to offend the prince in any way.

"Forgive me, I wasn't criticizing, you see, companion. In my kingdom, there aren't many creatures, actually, almost no magic at all. The closest I got to all this is Jô, she's the royal sorceress. But we compensate very well. You'll see, we have very creative inventions like... like light, we can make light without fire, or keep food preserved for days, and one day I saw something amazing..." He rambled more and more excited about every fantastic thing created in his kingdom.

"Interesting... I never imagined that a kingdom could thrive so much without relying so much on magic. It's admirable." Bewildered by the flood of information, Dream felt amazed at everything that was being said. His kingdom, even with magic, didn't have so many majestic inventions. And yet they were considered a prosperous kingdom, so how could the Gadlings, such a new kingdom, be so advanced? Dream felt excited, he wanted to find out how they achieved such feats. "How do you preserve food without magic?"

Hob rejoiced at the prince's interest, they apparently had something in common, curiosity. "We have cold rooms that use a mechanical cooling system. It's a recent technology in our kingdom, but it's been incredibly useful to keep our food fresh for much longer."

"Interesting, I never imagined that something like this could exist. And that incredible invention you mentioned?"

"Oh, that was something extraordinary! It was a kind of carriage, but without horses. It moved on its own, powered by a contraption called an engine. I saw some of them." Hob recounted with a gleam in his eyes, that experience was a true magic for him.

"A carriage without horses?" Dream had never seen anything like that, not even with his gift.

While the two talked in their own bubble, the ball continued without major interruptions. Death was playing with Delirium, watching affectionately.

He smiled cheerfully to see his brother so excited with his new companion, she felt tenderness seeing that moment between the two. Dream seemed comfortable with the company. His attention shifted to the youngest, who was busy dancing a mixture of ballet with magic, surrounded by sparkling roses and gold.

Both the king and queen were surrounded by nobles eager for details about the imminent wedding. Ethel, in the prime of her youth, radiated splendor, becoming the central focus of attention. Next to her, King Destiny, between sips of wine, distributed fake smiles and masked kindness.

At some point in the night, when most were more drunk than sober, Desire and Despair tried to seduce Prince John, but soon gave up in search of something more fun. Currently, they were involved in a bet to see which of them could stack more chestnuts in the goblets without knocking them over. Prince Gadling, on the other hand, seemed indifferent to the party, dedicating most of his attention to the main table, fixating his gaze obsessively on a black-haired prince.

With the dawn of the next day, the ballroom was hastily arranged by the servants, while the exhausted nobles reflected on the party that had lasted all night. The treaty was promptly finalized and signed that morning. In a matter of hours, Prince Dream would depart with the royal family for the Gadling kingdom, officially sealing the union of the two realms.

Prince Dream woke up more irritated than usual, not remembering many details of the ball itself. At breakfast, his head throbbed painfully. He cursed Corinthian for offering him wine in the first place, but also noticed that most at the table were not in a better situation. Robert frowned whenever the sunlight dared to reflect on his face. Death and Delirium had glitter in their hair, and the twins were on punishment after knocking over two dozen goblets in the middle of the ball.

"I see the young ones had quite a bit of fun last night," Queen Ethel said with amusement. She and Prince John were immaculate, remaining elegant as if they had done nothing out of the ordinary the night before.

The king laughed dryly, "All thanks to your majesty's kindness in accepting this beautiful union." He was stiff, pretending not to see the degrading state his family was in before the honored guests.

Putting aside all discomfort, Dream straightened his posture and seized his chance. "Yes, I thank your majesty for allowing me to bring some servants in my company, your grace has been a blessing to our kingdom." He greeted with composure, not missing the moment when the king shot him a deadly look. The prince imagined that even if agreed with disdain, it would be difficult for the king to keep his word or at least bring the proposal to the queen's ears.

Ethel showed no surprise, she wouldn't have reached where she was if she let herself be shaken by trivial matters. "Oh, of course, dear, you are part of the family now, no problem at all," she said with her melodious voice, everything was going according to her plans, and she wouldn't dare to put the treaty at risk for something so trivial.

"That is, if they're not creatures, of course, it would be a shame to stain our kingdom with such impurity." The prince hadn't spoken much since he arrived, abstaining only from observing the unfolding events, so when John's voice penetrated the room, it was like a quick and cold blade leaving tension in the hearts of all present.

A tense moment of silence settled.

"Do you dare?" Dream felt angry, but he restrained himself. They were in this situation because of him, he wouldn't cause another disagreement that could put his home at risk.

The servants looked at each other incredulously. Not even King Destiny, who always wore a kind and wise mask, could dispel the disbelief on his face, after all, the Endless were not human. They were creatures like any of theirs, ancient magic ran through their veins and fueled their existence. How could a mere human dare to offend any race when his was the most useless among all others, he wondered with disgust.

The queen took a deep breath, knowing that bringing her son to the kingdom was risky. She needed to act cautiously at that moment, one wrong step, and the fury of the Endless would fall on her kingdom. The Gaddlings had more soldiers and brute force, but only a madman like Burgess would be foolish enough to start a battle against Destiny and Death. Her son was the light of her life, but it was undeniable that his ego and beliefs were going beyond all acceptable limits.

Death was ready to retort John's horrible words, but hesitated when she felt Dream poke her ankle with the tip of his foot, his look begged her not to say anything, and she arched an eyebrow. She was a healer, learned to love all beings until their last breath, and it deeply annoyed her how much disdain the prince had for life and especially the offense to her family. For now, she would respect her brother's wish, it wouldn't be good to create a commotion just before he left, although if the man proved to be a danger to her little brother, well, accidents happen.

The second prince was aware of the consequences that could come, saying something like that so casually could be their end. He laughed awkwardly, "Good thing my blood isn't pure either, so our guests can't stain something that's already dirty, right? And let's not even talk about you and Bette," he cynically concluded, feeling satisfaction at seeing his brother falter. They had never really understood each other since he arrived at the castle, and he wouldn't let him offend his fiancé so cruelly.

"Darlings," Ethel began affectionately before he had a chance to retort, things were getting too far. "I think you overdid it with the drinks last night, didn't you? Apologies, majesty, I ask you to ignore the nonsense my boys said."

Sitting at the head of the table, the king took a few seconds before nodding. "I know how to deal with young ones, my lady, there is no resentment between us. I believe we should end breakfast here," as usual, he left the room, and everyone was allowed to get up.

Dream was fascinated by Hob's actions, for standing up to his brother for him, he had never met a human like him in all his existence. "It wasn't necessary for you to come to my defense," he spoke calmly, sounding a bit hoarse due to the pain that returned with force, making his head throb.

He sighed, running his hand through his brown hair. "I imagine not, but I don't intend to be alone at the altar because of the nonsense my brother insists on saying." He winked gracefully at the other, contrary to his words, he could feel that he was grateful for the little help.

Hob was apprehensive, "But you might want to reconsider bringing your servants," he said in a low tone. "Not that I agree with John," he hurried to add, sensing the confusion of the prince. "It's just that hunting creatures is allowed in our kingdom, they might be in real danger there." He didn't agree with such archaic laws, but as the second prince and a bastard, he had little power to try to change something in his kingdom.

Dream merely glanced at him and chuckled confidently, "I'd like to see them try."

Soon, the servants were clearing the meadows and dishes from the table. The queen delicately held her son's arm, guiding him out of the room. "Not another word," she whispered only for him to hear. The second prince was right ahead with them, hoping to resolve the situation with his mother, he wouldn't go unpunished for facing the crown prince like that. Before leaving, he confidently smiled at his companion so he wouldn't worry.

After the departure of most guests, Princess Death grabbed a roll from the table and angrily threw it towards her brother.

Dream scoffed irritably, "Seriously, my sister?"

"You deserved it," complained Death with her arms crossed over her dress. "I am your older sister, you should have let me defend you at that moment. What he said was horrible."

"Yes, but what's the use of causing a commotion when we're so close to forging lasting and advantageous bonds?" He questioned tiredly.

She sighed and hugged him. "Little brother, please, if something happens there, you call us at the right time? No matter if there's going to be a war or worse, trust us this time."

"I trust," he awkwardly hugged her back before leaving to find Lucienne and his companions, they needed to sort everything out for their departure. His sister watched him leave with a

heavy heart. If she felt for even a second that he wasn't well, she would invade that kingdom without a second thought, she might even take Destruction with her.

"Delirium," called Death, kneeling, "Don't mind what Prince John said, okay?" She was worried that her sister would be upset. She was, her illusions that she nurtured during the ball were harshly crushed, and she began to question if she should end the whole arrangement. For Dream, she wouldn't mind going to war.

The little one looked at her confused, her eyes reflecting light like a kaleidoscope. "He's nice, sister," she simply affirmed before happily chasing one of her illusions playing in the hallway. Death smiled, grateful that her sister was not affected by the cruel reality of the world due to her innocence.

It's a pity that Delirium was so lost in her gift, otherwise, she could have been clearer in expressing herself to her older sister. If she could convey that she found the prince nice because it was the first time she felt a human so affected by her gift as she was, maybe Death could have prevented what would happen.

A few hours passed, Dream bid farewell to all his siblings briefly, with regret, saddened by the fact that Destruction had not yet returned, and therefore, he wouldn't have a chance to see his brother again before the wedding.

The siblings hugged him more than they ever did in his life, making him promise that he would call them if needed. Desire gave him a wish diary as a gift. "When you want, just write here and think about which of us you want to talk to, brother. We will receive your message and answer the call," she explained with teary eyes. Now that they were reconciling, her brother would leave once again.

The prince carefully stored the notebook, even about to leave, he felt all the love his siblings felt for him. It was immensely different from the last time he left, mainly because he currently had Lucienne and Corinthian waiting for him in his carriage.

They agreed that Matthew would remain a raven for a while while they explored the unknown kingdom. Gault had already left a few days ago to gather information, the shapeshifter was skilled in this area. Gilbert and Mervyn would stay in the castle to take care of the Dreaming and keep an eye on the king's actions.

Watching the departure of the carriages from the window of his room, the king let out a relieved sigh, feeling the tension that had suffocated him for months partially alleviated. He tightly squeezed the old Book of Destiny in his hands until his fingers turned white, hoping it would be enough to keep Dream as far away from his domain as possible.

Time does not stop for anyone, much less for his children. He could also feel the sands of time falling unrestrained, burying the future of his kingdom. He longed to have done enough to alter the written history, no matter the cost, he was determined to change what would come. Destiny didn't even need to open the book anymore to glimpse the fate that awaited them in the future, the images were engraved in his mind, sculpted like commandments on a rock, since the first time he saw them.

Closing his eyes, he could clearly see the scenes in front of him. It began with the death of his parents, the vision of them dead would haunt him for the rest of his life. His father, Time, held his beloved protectively, in one hand was his sacred hourglass destroyed, and in the other was the aged and battle-marked spear of Night. Night lay in her husband's arms, her dark skin and clothes stained with blood, her long black hair that once shone like hundreds of stars extinguished without a trace of her mother's power.

Destiny knelt, cried, and shouted for his parents, he couldn't understand how this could happen to his family. He didn't believe that it would become real, even though until then, everything his book showed was the raw truth. Amidst his disbelief and pain, the vision of his parents dissipated into dust, it wasn't ending as it should. In fact, he found himself transported to his home. He saw the reddish sky reflected by the ruins engulfing his home in flames and fear, the people he loved so much driven mad by pain attacking each other mercilessly, chaos spread like a plague.

One by one, his siblings disappeared before his eyes without being able to reach them, he could only watch them being consumed until they turned to dust like his parents, and in the center of all chaos was the man, with the crown of dreams adorning his hair, and on his chest, the ruby of nightmares glowed ardently. Admiring his kingdom being torn apart until nothing remained, beneath the cloak that hid his face, he saw the perpetual madness-filled gaze shimmering with satisfaction.

## Chapter End Notes

\*☆.\*☆.\*☆

Sorry for the delay >w<

Here it is, hope you like this chapter it was really fun writing it ^^

Special thanks to our beta WatchTheAntagonist, which ran with animation and great care for all of us <3

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# The Bridge of Whispers

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

All he could see was darkness, but no, it wasn't just darkness. He was already accustomed to it, with memories of a past where darkness embraced him, a gentle and warm smile that promised he would never be alone in its realms. However, that was before being taken to unknown lands for so long.

No matter where he directed his starry gaze, this was different from the darkness he knew. It resembled more the absence of everything, he observed, intrigued. It was the absence of light and darkness, neither life nor hope, just an expanse of endless nothings.

*But I am here*, thought Dream. He had wandered aimlessly for so long, never reaching anywhere or even leaving where he had been. It seemed he was prevented from moving forward. That's when a small beam of light shone, temporarily blinding his eyes. But what could it be?

He could feel a bright red pulse expanding and immediately transforming the void, undoing it. The power was familiar, but it wasn't the same as it had been so long ago.

He saw himself reflected in the glass before noticing anything else. He dared not look away into the room; he would never forget that place, even though through the glass, he could catch some reflections. His own reflection stared back at him intensely, as if trapped on the inside. Lost in the gaze, he felt himself being drawn into his reflection, a suffocating sensation more powerful than it had ever been.

"Enough," ordered Dream, feeling panic overtake him. "This dream is over."

His reflection smiled, amused. "This is not a simple dream, Dream." His eyes turned bright scarlet as he pulled Dream more forcefully through the glass, which trembled under his hands, cracking to form rays on its surface.

Since his return, his control over nightmares had been increasingly scarce. He believed his power would normalize soon, but after almost a year, it seemed to be getting worse. "This dream is over," he shouted angrily, trembling with effort. Dream invoked his gift with all his strength.

Dream abruptly opens his eyes, feeling his heart pounding in his chest and adrenaline rushing through his body. His breath comes in short gasps as he orients himself. For a moment, he doesn't remember where he is, and the boundary between nightmare and reality becomes blurred in his mind. The only anchor connecting him to reality is the sight of his librarian's concerned face beside him.

"Lucienne," he whispers, smiling. Dream is no longer trapped in that melancholic place; after all, Lucienne is here with him. His gift wouldn't be cruel enough to make him dream of such

hope amid so much pain—she is real.

"Highness, you fell asleep," the elf observes, giving him a moment to collect himself before asking, "Is everything okay?" Her pointed ears droop, and her voice overflows with concern.

Dream had closed himself off since they left the Endless realm. It had been a few hours since he could no longer hear the festivities of the realm. She knew leaving him behind again was very hard for her prince. It was a small blessing to see him relax as he watched the landscape go by, enough for him to finally get some sleep. However, looking at the state he's in now, she wonders if allowing it was wise—after all, even the prince of dreams can't escape his nightmares.

Turning his gaze to the carriage window, he swallowed hard before answering, "It was just a dream."

He could see Matthew gliding alongside the carriage; the raven was embarrassed for not telling Dream about Prince Hob's identity in the gardens. No matter how much Dream said he shouldn't blame himself, the guard kept grumbling about failing in his solemn duty.

"It seemed more like a nightmare," said the blonde. While Dream and Lucienne were sitting side by side at one end of the carriage, Corinthian was sprawled on his seat, taking up all the space with his legs stretched out, leaning against the wall, playing with one of his knives. He intended to question his prince, but the elf's look silenced him; he knew better than to irritate Lucienne, especially when it came to her beloved master. "Or not, how would I know? I'm just a simple cook. What do I know about dreams? They're just figments of our imagination."

"Our dreams are a vital part of who we are. Sometimes, it's hard to distinguish where our dreams end and reality begins," Dream focused on the landscape with deep thoughts, disregarding the silent war between the two servants.

He chose to abstain from the discussion, after all, he hadn't yet revealed his recent issues with his own gift. Not that he didn't trust his servants; he knew how loyal they were to him, willing to kill and die for him in the blink of an eye. Therefore, Dream didn't want them to worry even more about him; he had already been troublesome enough.

The sky, once shining under the sun, was being taken over by heavy clouds approaching like violent waves from the east, darkening everything they touched. The wind blew strongly, making the trees bow. He could hear the rustling of the leaves, loud and melancholic like mournful whispers. The windows whitened from the icy air.

The prince stepped away from the window in alarm. "Matthew." His whisper was followed by a gust of air, and the carriage was getting colder. Urgently, he stood up, startling both Corinthian and Lucienne.

"Highness?" the elf asked confusedly before noticing the storm through the window; they were very close to their first destination.

Thus, forcefully opening the small door and slamming it without even caring, Dream leaned a bit outside. The storm had come very quickly, and his face was met with a violent onslaught



of water. "Matthew?" the prince called, and the mist was making it difficult to see much beyond.

"Matthew." He tried again.

Searching incessantly for his guard, Matthew could be a powerful raven, but flying in weather like that could easily hurt the small bird. Dream was becoming desperate; thinking about what could happen to Matthew in those lands conjured an image of Jessamy burning in his mind with the worst of scenarios. He was about to invoke his sand, even knowing it would be of little use in contact with the violent water when he finally glimpsed a black feather through the rain.

"Hey, prince, that's a terrible idea, what the hell are you doing?" the raven grumbled, facing the scene of his soaked prince, perched on the edge of a moving carriage in the middle of a storm, with confusion.

Dream squinted, exasperated; the guard had no sense of self-preservation but tended to care for him devotedly. "Matthew, come inside now; it's not safe," he ordered, his hands becoming paler in contact with the cold.

"Oh, this is nothing, sir; I can handle it," the raven assured, despite flying with some difficulty but holding on.

"Ah, he can't handle it, I mean, maybe he can, who knows," Corinthian commented, smiling slyly, earning a glare from the librarian and Dream. He liked his prince; the hatred he recognized in his eyes the day they met made it clear that his place was by his side. The four-eyed elf wasn't entirely bad either; she had earned his respect. But the raven was not one of his favorite servants, too chatty for his taste, too much heart and too little brain. However, his prince insisted on keeping him close, so it was inevitable that he would be a little concerned about the raven.

Lucienne sighed irritably. "Obviously, he can't handle it," she replied, hurrying to stand behind her lord. "Matthew, your prince gave you an order; I hope he doesn't have to repeat it for your own good." Lucienne shouted, hoping her voice wouldn't be drowned out by the storm.

Soon, the raven pondered; he had already failed his lord, he wouldn't show weakness at this moment. However, the elf was right; disobeying and worrying Dream would only make things worse, besides, he already felt the air freezing the tips of his feathers. He cawed before sharply changing direction toward the carriage.

So, it all happened in a whirlwind, too fast for them to process. Just as the carriage wheel collided with a rock on the ground, jolting the carriage violently, Dream was thrown out, feeling his hand slip as Lucienne tried to hold onto him, inevitably being dragged by gravity.

The rain fell in fury, mixing with the wind that howled like a distressing lament. The darkness outside was only broken by lightning illuminating the chaotic landscape. The despair reflected in Dream's eyes contrasted with Lucienne's determination, who clung to the edge of the carriage, trying to resist the storm's force.

In a decisive moment, the raven, Matthew, acted instinctively. His black bird form materialized, spreading its wings to provide a barrier against the storm's fury. The transformation's momentum pushed them back into the carriage, and with a deafening thud, the door slammed shut violently. The sound of rain beating against the vehicle became a threatening drumming.

Dream's heavy breath of relief echoed in the carriage as everyone steadied themselves in the face of imminent danger. The flickering light inside the carriage revealed tense expressions and wide-eyed stares, each processing the fine line between safety and the relentless storm outside.

"Nice landing, buzzard," Corinthian commented, laughing at the sight of the three wet and thrown on the carriage floor. The journey was proving much more entertaining than he could have imagined. And they were nowhere near reaching the Gadling realm yet.

"It's not his fault," Dream said, reaching out to help Lucienne up from the shaky carriage floor. "I didn't realize we were so close to the Sunless Lands. If I had been more careful, none of this would have happened." He returned to his seat, accompanied by the semi-soaked elf who was adjusting her glasses.

The guard, who was shaking his hair, intentionally splashing drops of water on the blond next to him, stopped bewildered. "Sir, come on, if you hadn't come to get me, I'd probably be a frozen raven, and... wait, Sunless Lands, like in the tales?"

Confusion took over Dream's face. "Tales?"

"Yes, I heard tales about the Sunless Lands when I was little. It was said that wicked people, upon death, were led by the angel of death to the Whispering Bridge, then wandered in eternal suffering through the Sunless Lands. A good story to keep kids in line." Matthew shared his memories with a touch of nostalgia, originating from a very humble village. However, as they grew up, the children came to fear hunger and the dangers of the streets more than the fanciful Sunless Lands.

Dream just shrugged, appreciating the patterns the ice created on the window. "Oh, well, Death was still trying to figure out its purpose back then, I believe." His casual response was met with shocked looks from the two men. Corinthian could better disguise his surprise, but the guard, on the other hand, had his jaw almost on the floor. The mystery surrounding Death was a revelation that challenged conventional stories about death, leaving Matthew and Corinthian intrigued and curious about the true role of the angel of death.

"Lady Death?" Matthew questioned. He couldn't believe that such a tale could be true, especially considering the healer was as cheerful as a ray of sunshine. The princess had always been so kind to him. Well, it would make sense, an angel of death after all.

Ignoring the confusion on Lucienne's face, she inquired with a raised eyebrow, indicating skepticism. "If you believed that the Sunless Lands were just a fantasy, where did you think we were heading? I remember informing you in the library about the route long before we began our journey." Honestly, she shouldn't be surprised by the guard's embarrassed expression. Matthew, although kind, rarely paid attention to formalities.

Sighing, Lucienne adjusted her glasses once again, missing the serenity of the Dreaming Library with its books. "As I mentioned before, our route will not lead us directly to the Gadling Realm. For protocol and to maintain a cordial relationship, we have the royal obligation to make a brief stop at the Archduchy of the Duchess of Hell, Lady Lucifer Morningstar. This, of course, includes Prince Robert."

Lucienne's explanation echoed through the carriage, filling the tense silence with a bittersweet understanding of the planned detour in their journey. The name "Lady Lucifer Morningstar" hung in the air like a faint foreboding, and the imminent presence of the archduchy added a touch of intrigue to the already complex path that lay ahead of them.

The elf straightened up before continuing, preventing the guard from interrupting. She preferred to let her prince rest a bit before addressing such matters, but she could no longer postpone it. "We will spend a few days in the archduchy, ideally only three days, but we cannot predict the Grand Duchess's reaction. At the latest, we will depart for the Gadling realm. Gault hasn't sent any news yet, which is concerning. Prince Robert's alert, along with Prince John's behavior, is a sign that we must double our precautions until the marriage is official."

"Oh, yes, I knew that," Matthew said, trying to ease the atmosphere that had become slightly tense.

"I'm not doubting your ability, but Gault should have given some sign by now," Corinthian commented, showing disinterest in hearing the same speech for the second time. "As skilled as she may be, it doesn't make her invincible. If the rumors about the Gadling Realm are true, there's nothing preventing her from being in danger or even de-"

"That's enough," Lucienne interrupted. "Gault is a strong woman and can take care of herself. If she hasn't sent news yet, there's a valid reason for it," casting a sharp look toward Corinthian, she expressed concern about what the comment might cause the prince.

The conversation inevitably came to an end, replaced only by the thunder that rumbled in the threatening sky, cutting through the silence. The journey through the forest, with trees tall enough to hide any beam of light, turned the rain into something so dark that it resembled blood. The carriages continued their journey through the Sunless Lands, and the fog became denser with each passing second.

Despite this, Dream could catch glimpses of the castle's silhouette in some moments from afar. It had been a long time since his last visit to these lands, and Lucifer remained an enigma. Their last encounter had been pleasant and respectful on both sides. However, the Grand Duchess was known for easily changing allegiance, leaning towards whichever side was most convenient.

The journey continued its course when, suddenly, an unexpected stop interrupted their progress. Although they were still a distance from the archduchy, mysterious murmurs and whispers permeated the air, muffled by the falling rain, making it difficult for Lucienne to fully discern their origins. However, it was evident that footsteps were approaching their carriage. With urgency, the elf issued the necessary orders, aware that it was too early to abandon their disguises.

Dream adjusted his posture, feigning disinterest, but his eyes were alert, attentively surveying the surroundings through the reflection in the window. Three knocks echoed on the door, and Matthew, the raven, perched on his prince's shoulder, noting that the cloak was still damp and cold. Faced with uncertainty about the reason for the stop, from a simple obstacle in the path to a possible threat, it was crucial to be prepared.

The task of opening the door fell to Corinthian, the most agile among them. With his hand slowly reaching towards the golden door and the other ready to draw the knife at the slightest sign of danger, he held his breath before opening the door. To his surprise, he was met with a smiling face protected by a cloak.

"Um, hi," greeted Hob, visibly embarrassed. "Our carriage had a little mishap, and since we're heading to the same destination, I thought there wouldn't be a problem if we traveled together?" The cloak shielded him almost entirely from the rain, and he felt the blonde's analytical gaze on him. Although Prince Dream assured that he trusted his life to the servant, Hob couldn't help but feel a slight tension in the air.

Hob quickly glanced inside the cabin, receiving affirmative nods from Dream and Lucienne. Corinthian responded with a sarcastic nod. "Feel free, Your Highness."

Thus, Hob found himself settled in the cabin, slightly uncomfortable next to Corinthian, facing the elf who stared at him with fullness but emitted a somber aura. What really bothered the newcomer was the black raven on the prince's shoulder, staring at him intently, as if ready to jump at his neck, which was indeed quite unsettling.

Deciding to ignore the tensions, Hob focused his attention on Dream. The prince was fixated on the window, and the only time he glanced at him was when he entered the cabin. Hob noticed that the prince was wet, as was the upholstery, now dark, and the floor. He couldn't fathom how that had happened or what the strange connection was between the prince and water. After all, for some reason, something was always wet when Dream was around. Could it be one of his powers? Water magic was indeed an intriguing possibility, Hob thought, intrigued.

"Here, it's quite cold. Take this to warm up a bit, friend," Hob said, smiling, taking off the beige fur coat and extending it to the prince. The air was chilly, even with the windows closed, and Hob didn't want his newly engaged to fall ill before even reaching the wedding.

Dream stared at him, astonished by the unexpected gesture. It was evident that Robert was entirely different from his first fiancé, something that was already quite clear. However, the man had a tendency to surprise him in ways that defied expectations. The prince didn't know how to react; his social interactions were scarce, and it worsened after the marriage and everything that followed. He felt hesitation hanging in the air, uncertain about the prudence of accepting the gesture, but, at the same time, it seemed rude to deny it when Hob looked at him with such anticipation.

So, Dream finally reached out and took the coat, feeling the warmth emanating from it, both from the fabric and the kind gesture. Hob's eyes sparkled with a mix of concern and sincerity. It was a simple moment but filled with meaning, and the prince found himself touched by the man who was about to become his partner's careful attention.

Tired of the endless exchange of glances, Matthew pecked his lord's head gently. He might not like the Gadling prince; the man seemed too good to be true, all smiles and kindness. However, as much as Dream tried to disguise it, he could feel his prince trembling slightly beneath the cloak. Disregarding the deadly look he received, the raven squawked toward the coat.

This seemed to work, Dream chuckled slightly at the raven before accepting. "If you insist, I will gladly accept it." He ran his hand absentmindedly before putting on the coat; the fur was incredibly soft to the touch and warm, a blessing compared to the state of his own cloak.

Hob smiled broadly; it was strange to see the prince in something other than black, but he felt satisfied. Unlike the indifferent-sounding words, he was amazed at how Dream's eyes seemed to shine like the starry sky he directed while holding the fur as if it were a precious thing.

"That makes me content, my companion. It's the least I can offer since I practically invaded your carriage," he commented, laughing. He could have joined nobles from his kingdom or even requisitioned an entire carriage for himself, but this was the perfect opportunity to have more contact with the man he was going to marry.

After this moment, an uncomfortable silence settled in the cabin; none of them knew exactly what to say, and Hob was starting to wonder if it was a good idea.

"So..." Prince Hob began. "Your Highness, are you enjoying the journey?" he asked as an attempt to break the ice between them.

"Yes," Dream answered simply.

"Oh, that's good. A shame about all this rain; the day was really beautiful. Who would have thought that the Lands Without Sun was such a literal name?" The prince commented, observing the storm.

"Sim." Dream concordou.

The prince waited for a few seconds before realizing that the other wouldn't say anything more than that. No problem, Hob thought, I can keep this conversation going. Talking is my strong suit here. "Cool, cool. Ahh... have you ever been to the archduchy? I've never been, but they say it's an unforgettable experience."

"The last time I was here was many years ago, during my first marriage." Dream returned his gaze to the icy patterns on the window, avoiding the bad memories that threatened to return just with the mention of the past. It hadn't been a good experience; the archduke had shown disagreement with the arrangement at that time. He hoped this time would be a more friendly visit.

Sulking, Prince Hob realized he might have touched on a sensitive point; he believed it was better to give the prince some time. However, he could still have a pleasant conversation with his servants. What could go wrong?

He turned to the blond man, attempting to get to know him better and perhaps dispel his initial bias against the Wendigos. "Corinthian, isn't it? Dream, I mean, the prince, mentioned that you're his personal cook. What did you do before that?"

Robert realized his mistake the moment the man stopped staring disinterestedly at the golden window frame and looked at him maliciously.

Corinthian had promised to try to behave, and he really tried. He was quiet in his corner, not seeking or causing trouble. However, there was a golden opportunity in his hands that he wouldn't let slip away; the prince was to blame for not knowing when to stay quiet. "I killed people and ate their eyes."

"Oh, dear." Lucienne groaned, burying her head in her hands incredulously.

"I beg your pardon?" Hob was flabbergasted. He didn't want to judge; on one hand, he realized he had kind of asked for it. But he didn't expect such a direct and succinct response.

Surprisingly, it was Dream who saved the situation from turning into complete chaos, which until then had been busy trying to prevent Matthew from tucking himself into the coat pocket. "That's in the past. For your comfort, Corinthian isn't allowed to eat your eyes."

"Oh, yes, very reassuring to hear that, I'm not remotely worried." Robert said, thinking about asking Jô for one or two new protective amulets, just to be sure.

He had a silent exchange of glances with Lucienne before she offered, "If you wish, Your Highness, I'm willing to switch places if that makes you more comfortable."

Prince Gadling accepted without hesitation; he estimated that they were close to reaching their first destination and preferred to spend this time with his future husband and as far away as possible from the cook, who was still laughing at his astonishment. He hid the satisfaction when the elf silenced the blond man with a stern look and the promise of a conversation later.

Dream was annoyed with Corinthian's behavior; he didn't need another ruined marriage, and Hob seemed much kinder than Alex.

"Hob, could you tell me a bit more about your kingdom?" Dream asked, feeling sorry for seeing the other's downcast state.

Almost jumping on the enthusiastic brunette, he began to pour out information, happy that Dream was interested in his kingdom. "Of course! Well, I told you about some inventions at the ball, but I haven't even scratched the surface. Our kingdom is vast. I hope you get used to the tower; it's like our 'castle,' but it's different from what you're used to. I'll warn you that it's quite tall. Won't be a problem for you, will it?"

"No." Dream answered, keeping his gaze focused while absorbing Hob's information. "In fact, I'm intrigued. What is life like in your kingdom?" Dream was genuinely curious, seeking to understand more deeply the culture and life of the kingdom he hoped to call home one day.

"It's a bustling city, always pulsating with new innovations and technologies. We have vast markets, and people are always going from one place to another. The population grows every passing day. We live in a world full of turning gears, with innovations and discoveries around every corner. People are inventive, constantly creating something new to make their lives easier. The markets are busy, showcasing the latest creations, and the competition for the best invention is intense."

The servants exchanged questioning glances; it seemed too good to be true, from their experience, there is always a shadow hidden behind the shining facade of progress, and not everyone equally benefits from the wonders.

Dream didn't understand why he found himself so fascinated by the prince; he seemed to be a man like any other, but at the same time, unique to him. Every word that came out of the man's mouth impressed him; he had already seen glimpses of those things in fleeting dreams, and he was secretly excited about the opportunity to see them in person.

To the dismay of the princes, the journey was shorter than they secretly wished, all because they were engrossed in a pleasant conversation. Despite Hob getting excited and talking too much, Dream was more than happy to listen with delight and briefly comment on some things if necessary.

As they approached the grand castle of the Archduchess, the grandeur of the towers rose before them, touching the skies with an oppressive presence. The darkness that enveloped the dark marble and black iron of the castle seemed to contain secrets whispered by the winds echoing through its corridors. It was as if the very stones held ancient stories, waiting to be unearthed.

The path to the gate was shrouded in a dense and mysterious atmosphere. Although the rain had ceased, the distant echoes of thunder persisted, creating a dark soundtrack for the entry into the realm of the Archduchess. The wet ground beneath their feet seemed to absorb not only the moisture but also hidden secrets, as each step led them deeper into the intricate plot of the castle.

The castle was adorned and mostly built upon dark marble and black iron, emanating a haunted atmosphere. Although the rain had finally relented, distant thunder could still be heard, creating a tense and mysterious setting.

At the entrance, Lady Morningstar awaited, her delicate silhouette against the majestic backdrop. The white dress, now slightly stained by the earlier rain, created a haunting contrast with the gloomy surroundings. However, it was the shimmering wings that captured everyone's attention, emitting an ethereal glow that seemed to suggest both celestial beauty and something more sinister behind the angelic façade. Suspense hung in the air, waiting to unveil the secrets buried in the depths of the Archduchess's castle.

"Dream, my dear, I have been eagerly anticipating your visit," Lucifer greeted sweetly as the prince descended from the carriage.

## Chapter End Notes

\*☆.\*☆.\*☆

Omg, sorry for the long, long delay. There were many things at the same time that delayed the writing.

Hope you like it <3

Not forgetting special thanks to WatchTheAntagonist, with awesome fixes and support! <3

The next chapter is already underway. It won't take that long, I hope. ^^

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