

“What seems to be the problem brother?”

Edda lounged in the chair opposite her brother, holding a black rook between a gloved finger and thumb. He glanced up from the letter he was reading.

“Latest reports from the man I assigned to Wulf.” He replied, placing the document on a nearby stack. “Seems he’s slipped his leash.”

“Again?” Edda tutted. “You’re losing your touch. If you can’t keep one man under control...”

“Shut it.” He snapped back. “It’s not him that’s the issue. It’s those who shield him from me. His so-called family. The Fates.”

“Oh so *that’s* the issue here?” Edda placed down the rook, removing one of Xavier’ pawns. “I thought it was something, *or someone*, else entirely. Does a certain bodyguard ring a bell?”

“Novak? He is merely a puppet. Nothing more. But he has his uses.” Xavier moved his bishop to a blank place, meeting his sister’s gaze. “Besides, why do you care? Last I checked you let one of your knights fly the castle. One you can’t seem to retrieve either.”

Edda rolled her eyes, pushing a pawn to threaten his bishop. “The white knight will come home eventually. Especially after she discovers the fate of her squire. But if she’s causing *you* problems... after all she *is* one of those so-called Fates... maybe I should help my darling brother out.”

“She is of little interest to me.” After a moment’s deliberation the bishop took the pawn, the piece joining the others at the edge of the board, a silent audience to the monochrome battle playing out before them. “And she will die soon anyway.”

“You mean Wulf will kill her?” Edda’s smile widened as she picked up her knight. “I’ll believe that when I see it. Sure he has her name inked on his arm, but does that really mean anything?” She placed it down in an empty space, Xavier watching closely, annoyed. “*Check*. Besides, as you so aptly pointed out earlier, your Wulf is missing.”

Xavier snorted derisively, claiming the knight with his rook. “Sloppy move. And I fail to see your point. Wulf knows he can’t run. I’ll find him.”

“In five years time.”

“In five days time.”

“You seem sure of yourself.” Pawn moved forwards. “Got another hidden ace?”

“Azrael.” Pawn forwards two.

“Your latest convert?” Bishop took the pawn.

“Mhm.” Rook moved to threaten the bishop.

“Are you going to share the news oh exalted one?” Edda’s voice was dripping with sarcasm as she moved her bishop.

“I already know where Wulf’s safehouses are. And I can guess why he ran off.” Xavier picked up his Queen, a piece he had neglected all game until now, rolling it between his fingers and palm.

“See, Wulf has a weakness. A glaring flaw in the shape of a woman.”

“Gwenevire.”

“Exactly. He would do anything to ensure her safety.” The smile on Xavier’ face is anything but friendly, a purely predatory grin of satisfaction. “He’s already proven it once. By bending the knee and-”

“Are you going to make your move or are you going to monologue all day?” Edda interrupted, her expression cold. “I have other things to do today than just play chess with you.”

“Liar.” Xavier’ eyes flashed, leaning forwards until his face was inches from hers. “Your sole purpose is to serve me, Edda. Just like everyone else here.”

He placed down his queen, hiding his anger. “You are lesser than me *and don’t you forget it.*”

“Hmm.” Edda moved her bishop again. “Check.”

Xavier moved his king and Edda moved her rook.

“Check.”

Xavier went to move a piece but there was a knock at the door. The twins glanced at each other before slipping on their masks. The door opened a few moments later to reveal a young child, masked and dressed in black.

“Why do you disturb us?” Xavier’ voice was low, professional.

“I bear a letter from The spymaster sir. It’s about Wulf. The guard told me to-”

“Give it here and get out.”

The child darted in, passing him the paper before hightailing out of there as fast as she could, door slamming shut behind her.

Edda looked at Xavier, unable to read his expression now the mask was on, instead studying his body language. What she saw was... not good. Xavier’ body was still, yet his hand trembled as he gripped the paper tight. He was angry. No, more than that. He was *furios*.

*Perfect.*

“Ahem.” Edda cleared her throat, getting her brother’s attention. “Your move.”

“Yes yes.” He snapped back, moving his king again, no longer paying attention to the game.

Edda moved her rook once more, her pulse quickening.

“Checkmate brother. You lose.”

Xavier waved a hand dismissively. “That is irrelevant.”

“*Irrelevant?*” Edda stood up. “Xavier, I *won*. Give me what is owed.”

“Later.”

“Now.”

“*I said.*” Xavier turned to face his twin, ice blue eyes glinting from under his mask. “*Later.*”

Edda swallowed, refusing to meet that oh so familiar glare.

“As you wish... my lord.”