**Chapter 8: Unwanted transformation**

The dawn broke swiftly after the grand descent ceremony, and it felt as if the night had been far too brief to savor the performance. According to Darwen, the blessing I had bestowed upon King Marvos was not meant to symbolize trust and intimacy but merely served as a grand display of honor, contributing little more than vanity to the onlookers below.

Their expectations of me must be modest indeed for them to deem such a gesture impressive. It occurred to me that the blessing had been deliberately left ambiguous in its description. I couldn't help but ponder the effects of the considerable quantity of angel's blood that now coursed through Marvos's veins. This was a matter I wished to discuss with Uriel; surely she possessed knowledge on the subject.

However, before I could contemplate this further, a knock at the door disrupted my thoughts. It wasn't Darwen, as I might have expected. Instead, a common messenger had come at this early hour with a summons for me. I quickly set aside the ethereal robe I had been wearing, inquiring about the urgency of this unexpected visit.

I reached for the clothing that Darwen had prepared, an ensemble tailored to ensure I wouldn't appear out of place at the royal court. As I carefully withdrew the garments from their ornate wardrobe, a sense of curiosity gripped me. The attire before me was a testament to the authority it conveyed, intricately crafted to exude divine elegance.

The smooth silk formed the base of the attire, adorned with intricate golden embroidery that seemed to shimmer with an inner light. The garment's radiant motifs were a work of art, boasting a level of opulence that left me in awe. Some adjustments were needed to accommodate the freedom of my wings, including the cuffs of the back cloak and the height of the boots.

Examining my reflection in the mirror, I couldn't help but appreciate the divine elegance of the ensemble. Examining myself in the mirror one last time, I inquired of the messenger, "Was there a matter that required my presence?" My tone was calm and composed, soothing the guard's evident anxiety.

"The king requests your audience in the chamber, your holiness. He has declined to see anyone but you and I come on behalf of Sir Gaucher," the guard explained, shedding light on Marvos's peculiar request. It seemed the king was deeply affected by the rejuvenating properties of the angelic blood.

I acknowledged the message and dismissed the guard, proceeding on my way. The throne room was in a state of controlled chaos, bustling with people attending to various tasks and responsibilities, now without the presence of the king.

After a lengthy walk, I reached the designated chamber, which was equally crowded. Male and female stewards bustled about, their faces etched with worry. This was undoubtedly the king's chamber.

"I have arrived, your majesty. Might you emerge from your refuge?" I addressed the king, my voice cutting through the room. Recognizable by my voice, some among the stewards bowed, while others looked puzzled.

"Enter, your holiness. I shall entertain no one but you and your knight," came the muffled response from within. With a polite knock, I entered the chamber to find Darwen stifling his laughter, barely managing to contain himself. Marvos still cocooned in his blanket, bore the weight of jesting sorrow beneath.

"Darwen, it seems you weren't there for my first day, much to my disappointment," I remarked, attempting to initiate a conversation while the shy king remained concealed beneath his protective cover.

"The fault lies with me, your holiness. I couldn't refuse the demands of my king," Darwen responded with a chuckle, on the verge of laughter once again. His infectious mirth threatened to embarrass the king further.

"Please, just open up the blanket, Your Majesty. There's no need to hide away after experiencing rejuvenation. You're in the prime of your physical condition; there's nothing to be ashamed of," I insisted, attempting to ease Marvos's reluctance. I made a move to pull the blanket away, but two muscular hands resisted my efforts.

"No, please don't! Let me do it myself," Marvos pleaded from beneath the blanket, and I relented, letting go of my attempt to unveil him.

Marvos, emerging from his blanket cocoon, unveiled a transformation that was both remarkable and subtle. Instead of appearing markedly younger, he seemed to have regressed to a mature age, his physique exuding the peak of vitality.

His once dull moss-colored eyes had rekindled into a vibrant green, reflecting the vigorous mana coursing within him. The previously gray hair had transformed into a rich hazelnut hue, trimmed to a more manageable length while retaining its majestic appeal.

Though his muscles had tightened, certain scars stubbornly refused to fade, etched into his being as indelible marks. I studied these scars closely, their origins remaining a mystery. Marvos, overcome with embarrassment, implored me to speak, his plea punctuated by discomfort.

"Your holiness, may I?" Darwen, on the brink of laughter, inquired as well. Faced with the choice between enduring Marvos's pouting or enduring Darwen's raucous laughter, I opted for the former.

"You may not, Darwen. Tease the sovereign to your heart's content, but let us not repeat last night's fiasco," I declared, advancing towards Marvos.

"Is this what you've been hiding? It appears that my blood did not provide the perfect rejuvenation, as these scars remain," I remarked, scrutinizing the patterns of stubborn blemishes that marred his newly restored physique.

"No, your holiness. These scars represent my true strength, though I confess I was somewhat embarrassed by them. None of the clothing I tried on this morning seemed to fit properly, which led me to consider seeking your assistance," Marvos admitted, still clutching his blanket.

"These scars cannot be erased, Marvos. I apologize for any misjudgment in offering you this gift, as it seems to have caused you undue discomfort," I replied, offering my condolences for his unintended transformation.

Marvos, bowing before me with an air of penance, spoke sincerely, "Please forgive this unwarranted request, and know that you granted this power with the utmost wisdom."

"In that case, as part of your atonement, I shall request that you address me as 'Lord Mikhail' instead of 'your holiness.' The latter title is rather cumbersome," I proposed, hoping to ease the tension between us.

"The sinner accepts this punishment. I shall adhere to your decree, Lord Mikhail," Marvos acquiesced before retreating back under his blanket, bringing our discussion to a close for the time being.

"Your duty for today shall be undertaken as my instruction," I asserted with authoritative resolve.

"I have an audience scheduled for those who wish to discuss the descent of the archangel, along with numerous items of paperwork. However, I do not believe you will—" Marvos began to enumerate the day's responsibilities, focusing on three main objectives: an audience with the nobility, reviewing judgment documents, and an afternoon visit to the Knighthood.

The first two tasks could be accomplished independently, but the final required a meeting with the Knight Commander. To bridge this communication, I would need Darwen's assistance.

"Do not doubt my authority as the Archangel of Wisdom. All shall be accomplished," I declared, dispelling any lingering doubts.

"Then please accept this humble one's gratitude," Marvos bowed once more before fully enveloping himself in his blanket.

Turning my attention to Darwen, I issued a new directive, my tone carrying the weight of authority. "Darwen, remain here until the king has regained his composure."

"Are you certain, Lord Mikhail? You do not require my presence for your duties?" Darwen inquired, his tone more serious now.

"I believe it would be in the king's best interest to have you attend to his needs while he is in such a state. However, I shall require your presence before dusk falls. Can you manage that?" I queried, securing Darwen's commitment with a single nod.

Asserting my presence upon the throne, I confronted the man standing beside it, whom I presumed to be the chancellor. I distinctly recalled him as the individual clad in yellow attire during the recent descent ceremony.

"Your holiness? Where is his majesty?" inquired the supposed chancellor.

"His majesty is indisposed today, and I shall be fulfilling his duties in his stead," I declared, initiating the audience proceedings. The assembly began smoothly, marked by a quiet solemnity as the attendees were cautious not to misspeak, their inquiries adhering closely to protocol.

The audience concluded within a concise two-hour span, and the lunchtime bell chimed. I continued onward with the chancellor in tow, committed to carrying out the monarch's obligations. The king's office bore the hallmark of diligent stewardship, impeccably cleaned and well-organized.

The stack of orders awaiting attention was modest, primarily consisting of approval letters and dispute resolutions between citizens. I provided responses that sought to balance the interests of both parties involved, leaving the chancellor responsible for delivering them to Marvos's chambers for final review before dispatching them through pigeon or magical means.

With only the knighthood meeting remaining on the day's agenda, I proceeded with a sense of purpose and efficiency.

**The end**

Oh, sovereign, why dread these traits so fair?

Aren't they the source of boundless pride, I swear?

Though history's songs may sing of weary plight,

May your burdens find solace in hymns of light.