Do I matter?

by lonelykitty12

Summary

Queen Oona's POV and inner dialogue starting from the "Dreamland falls". It will go into season/part 2 as close as I can predict, as season 2 is not out yet.

Contains spoilers for season 1.

Notes

I hope Oona made out alive due to her wall climbing abilities. This character needs more development on the show but I have a major soft spot for her, so I tried to imagine what she felt when the events happened. She deserves so much better!

P.S. English is not my first language, please give me a slack if I make mistakes or typos. I am a foreigner just like Oona, lol.
Chapter 1

I could not believe my eyes and ears what has been happening for the last couple of days. It all seemed just like a bad dream, the ones you are happy to wake up from, in tears but relieved that it was just a dream. Well, let's be honest, these whole 14 years of marriage have been like a long sweaty dream, just like the one where you find yourself completely alone in unknown places like empty towns and try to find someone to talk to, all in vain. I sometimes manage to tell if I am dreaming or not, just have to jump and try to fly up or suddenly question a small detail that would point out the reality-dream answer.

This time it was real. Dagmar was real! How?! As I walked out the ball room after we had been introduced to each other by clearly shocked Odval, I looked around. Not a single person can see me now. I jumped and landed on my feet looking pretty silly, I guess. Oh no, no-no! It cannot be true, she IS dead! But well, here she was, young and fresh like a daisy, with Zog's arm around her slim waist. This did hurt, to my own surprise. I passed by a wall mirror in the hallway and glanced at myself involuntarily. How come no one finds me attractive? Or do human men find Dankmirians so repulsive? Of course, frowning does not make anyone look better but come on, I have seen less attractive women than myself getting love and admiration. Am I asking too much?

I reached for my snakeroot bag, feeling ashamed, but remembered it had been stolen before. Gotta be Bean and those half-pint friends of hers! I could not even make myself to go spend some time with Derek, I could not move my body from shock and stress. I was the one feeling like a heavy stone, and she is alive and lively. What an irony, huh?

My poor chubby Derek, I hope he will forgive me for being a slightly better parent than Zog. He did not deserve it. Handling this marriage turned out harder than I initially expected. I always try to spend time with the boy in between my duties but sometimes the depression would not let me bring myself to him with a sad face or, even worse, tears. A couple of hours later I went up his bedroom asking if he does not mind if we have a bedtime story time now, in the middle of daylight. He did not mind at all, my poor neglected kid. Yes, I know, he is a bit old for that but I have to give myself and him some credit, we mostly entertain ourselves with encyclopedias and travel novels. I've always cringed at these stupid fairy tales about evil stepmothers, or "a poor girl makes a rich beautiful prince fall in love with her". This time I asked Derek read to me instead which he did. I was listening while curled up on his bed next to him, feeling like a child who needs to be comforted and hugged. I might have fallen asleep listening to his gentle voice.

I must have napped for a couple of hours, totally not caring if I have something from my royal formal duties to do. Ah, Odval would look for me in this case. Not that anyone cares about me anyway, right? Derek was not there. I looked around and saw a paper on the nightstand, "Mommy, we are gone to the elf's funerals. Did not want to wake you. Hugs, D". Oops, funerals! Wait, that friend of Bean? Duh Oona, I told myself, there is only one elf in Dreamland. Bean must be devastated, him and that weird cat-like creature were following her everywhere. She seemed to care about that duo more than she ever did about Derek, her own brother. Half-brother, correction. I should probably go there and be there for her, not just for my representative role. Not that Bean cares about me and what I have to say though. And...She must be there now, too.

I was told the procession had left. What?! No one even bothered to ask me to go, to look for me?!
grabbed a horse from a stable and arrived promptly to cemetery.

Chapter End Notes

A note of 24-Sept-2019:

I watched part 2 and seriously do not know how to continue. I had written like 13 chapters before part 2 started. I honestly thought they would go on Bean's rescue mission together but...how can I tie what I have written and the actual story? Please PM me if you have any ideas, I am lost.
They all were there. And can you believe it - Dagmar was comfortably chilling on MY seat! Look at them, I thought, a newly reunited happy family (except for black outfits). Derek had an absent look on his face, it probably felt strange for him to see this pretty blonde woman next to his father, wondering how he even can fit into their perfect family picture. I felt invisible, no one thought about me, no one cared if I still exist. Me and this whole marriage. Like these 14 years have never happened. My inner meltdown was at about 80 per cent. All right. Dangerous but manageable.

I approached them, "The procession left without me". Zog sighed, "Oh, that's too bad. I blame myself 'cause I didn't even notice". Did I hear it right?! I tried hard to remain calm even though I felt like screaming and punching him. I told Dagmar to get off my seat which she did. I grinned for a moment just to see her sitting down on Zog's lap. I clenched my teeth. I was afraid to admit it even to myself, I would love to be held like that, too. There it was again, that painful bitter feeling as I looked at him holding her like it was a bedroom foreplay, not a funeral where their daughter looked so distraught. Bean's eyes were red, she was staring at the glass coffin with her little green dork friend in it. How bad I wanted to say something to her but could not force myself to open my mouth without risk of crying. 90 per cent to meltdown. I bit my tongue and took a long breath trying to switch my attention onto something else.

My stepdaughter said the eulogy, and we went back to the carriage. She seemed a bit more cheerful. Has she cried all of her tears out or is it just a pause with more to come after the realization of not seeing her friend again? Ever. Again. Or is it the presence of her mother that made the things easier for her? She'd been longing for Dagmar for years, now she got. Just like Zog.

Dagmar and I tried to get into the carriage at the same time. I could feel my blood boiling. She seemed so sweet, yet she really reminded me of cotton candy - a little bit is good enough but when you have too much of it it gives you nausea. So as I tried to take what is still mine, even though now it was more a matter of principle, she blurted out, "I did not mean to ruffle your feathers". What?! Feathers?!

Kaboom! 100 per cent! Everything went all black in front of my eyes. I don't remember the next couple of minutes...We were wrestling, neither of us trying to escape. I let my exploded volcano lead my actions, wow! We rolled down the hill, punching each other when possible or pulling hair. I hit my bottom over something that was on our way. The next moment we were grabbed by the giant, Tess, whatever was her name.

I did not really cared what everyone could think of me at that moment, my fists were asking for continuation. All these years I've been hearing just "oh, my lovely sweet Dagmar, the love of my life, blah blah blah", or "you are not my mother, blah blah blah". And Bean even yelled at me, calling me insane. To be honest, I was not sure already if I was that or not, I already talk to myself too much. I rushed the horse back to the castle, trying to avoid everyone. Derek will have to come with them, I do not want him to see me this vulnerable.

I sneaked into the kitchen and pantry part. Luckily, I was alone there. I haven't eaten in some time, all this Dagmar-is-back day made my stomach turn in knots. I devoured several apples, bread and cheese, basically any snacks around me. A metal kettle was still sitting on the stovetop, boiling. Tea time! Someone left cinnamon buns on the table, maybe left over from the Dagmar-is-back party. Come to momma, sweet babies! Life in Dreamland pretty much killed my appetite, as I was
constantly either sad or stressed or angry to stuff my stomach with food. It felt like stones were inside me. Some people who knew me back in Dankmire would never believe in it, that old Oona was often seen pinching sweets from the kitchen or stealing bush berries from the nearby gardens.
On my way to Derek's bedroom I passed by Zog's quarters where the Council usually takes place. I pricked up my ears. "Have to choose...if we disgrace Oona, it could mean war with Dankmire...I don't think anyone would care if she were to vanish", the words echoed. My fins flared. We will see who will vanish! I refused to accept what I've just heard! Are they serious?! How could they?! Are they so willing to risk the peace of the Kingdom so easily?! Are not there other ways?!

It was almost night. I had to rest if I hardly can relax for a moment! I had to pass the bedroom that I would normally call ours. I heard Zog's voice really close and ran up the stairs. I must not be caught! But my damn long hair and trailing dress gave me away. "Oona, sweetie, let's talk!", I heard while running away. Sweetie?! How dare you, you bastard?! Your Council wanted to assassinate me, you did not say a word against it! If hell exists, I hope you burn there!

I managed to sneak to Derek's trying to behave calmly. My heart was racing. He could not be happier for another night of my company, I smiled sadly. He is as lonely as I am, my boy. I tried to concentrate on what he was reading to me as I was shaking under a warm blanket. I can't still get used to the Dreamland chilly weather sometimes, Dankmirian blood doesn't keep me warm. Or was I shaking for other reasons?

I could not return to the master bedroom, as I could be attacked any time. Speaking of bedrooms, both of them, Zog and Dagmar, could be there, doing...Ah, I don't even want to think of it, even though my imagination was gladly sending me images of them naked on the bed. I suddenly thought what she might think of him getting so out of shape that it is sad to look at him. And I giggled. Then again and again. I covered my mouth trying not to wake my son. The hysterical laughter turned into tears. Then I think I fell asleep for a little just to wake up to the worse reality episodes.

The next day started so peacefully, with a sunlight and chirping birds - quite the contrast with what was going on inside my mind. I could not stay long with Derek, they can easily find me here. I told him I have things to do which he naively believed in. My heart was breaking when I was leaving him. What if it would be our last time seeing each other? I could not go past the quarters door, so I had to hide all over the castle. I managed to slide a hand-written note under Odval's office door. He was the one standing for peace yesterday at the Council, but unfortunately his vote was the only one.

My heart was beating so loudly that I wondered how far one can hear it. I was at the kitchen again. How come it was so unusually empty today? How come no one is cooking anything? Oh, right! Zog must be not as hungry as usual, since the love of his life is back. Yesterday's buns were almost gone, so I grabbed more to get a sugar fix. I heard the steps and hid behind the sideboard. Odval sneaked in and took a bun. I called him in wisper. Odval choked on the bun, "My Queen! You are safe!"

He crossed the kitchen in one jump and opened the pantry door, inviting me. I sighed, "I fear my days are numbered".

Odval looked concerned, too. "We will send a message to Dankmire, of the utmost urgency. Not a word of this to anyone. The royal family would not approve".

"Bah! To hell with them! Zog will pay. Dagmar will pay! Tiabeanie will pay! They will all pay", I exclaimed in utter fury. I was not still sure how they will pay though.

He wrote a brief note and attached it to a turkey. "Make sure you hide well, my Queen", Odval wispered and nodded slightly as if wishing me good luck. Then he took another bun from the table and carefully walked away.
I must buy some time if my people arrive! I was unable to go look for Derek but ultimately decided to let him stay where he is now. First, they would suspect that I know their plans if I get him. Second, it's harder to find hiding places for two. I can slither walls if needed. Being almost invisible for years is now as useful as never. I had a lot of time to myself to wander around the castle and finding places to hide to avoid conversations and curious looks. And third, I don't think Zog is that awful and cruel to kill his only heir. I hope. Even if Dagmar decides to give him more children, it is still some time. And who knows if they turn out to be boys? Derek was lucky to be born male, and I was lucky to get done with my duty of bringing children. Not that I wanted more of them with Zog!

I noticed it became quiet. Even for this late hour. I carefully stepped out from my shelter and walked farther. How nice it was from Bean to steal my snakeroot, I don't need it on me now. I must not give myself away with any sign or a sound. I would be hard with my little bag of this... hmm...natural remedy. Then I saw something eerie, a guard was not moving in a strange pose. I took my shoes off to move quietly and looked at him from a different angle! He was a statue! A stone statue, just like Dagmar before! I came closer and poked him. Yeah, all petrified. But...who did it? And why?

I crossed a couple more hallways, and I saw several servants the same way. What in the world is going on?! I pinched my wrist. Am I dreaming? Nope. Suddenly I heard a noise, like I was standing next to a river. Next moment I saw something that looked like a purple wave. It was coming towards me! In an instant, I jumped onto the nearest wall thanking nature for making me Dankmirian. I can climb, I can stay under water. I will not swap these natural abilities for any beige human skin and "normal" looks. Feed me to the swamp monster if I ever feel self-conscious of my blue skin and three fingers!

Chapter End Notes

Well, season 2 is not out yet but I will try to speculate just a little, just to stay more or less within the plotline. Maybe I will just write one more chapter, I don't want anyone to seem totally out of character. I also hope they will give us Oona's backstory. Cheers.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The slimy wave seemed to have subsided, so I slid down the floor trying not to step onto the leftover purple stains, who knows what it is. I kept walking facing many familiar folks in strange poses, looking frightened and surprised. Did the wave turn them into stone? It all seemed like a sick joke. I touched one of the guards. Yep, it felt as stone as the castle. Well, ha, even more of stone, as the castle is made of some lousy composed stone dust or something. There are not enough funds in Dreamland to do repairs, too many parties and wars and crusades are mostly to blame. And Zog is too stupid to realize it. I couldn't have been bothered repeating this to him all over and over. No one wants to listen to the sensible Oona!

I ran into one of the rooms and looked into the window. It was too dark to see much but I could not hear regular night sounds like pub music and laughter from far away or neighing horses from the police department stable. Just an owl hooting. And the sea. Did the wave freeze people in the town, too? If so, where did it come from? And who did it? And why?!

Derek! My heart sank. I darted upstairs with all my speed not worrying much about my own safety. Whoever did it, most likely they were already on the run thinking the job is done. Derek was not in his bedroom! His teddy bear was on his bed, there were two toy soldiers on the carpet. He was not in the throne room, or in the bathrooms, or in the kitchen. Was he kidnapped? Or did he hide? I ran back to the kitchen to grab a heavy wooden rolling pin or a knife just in case. I barely stepped in when I suddenly bumped into...Zog! I screamed and jumped up the wall past him. I was so frightened and angry that my fins popped up again.

He recoiled from me first too, but recovered from surprise promptly. "Oona", he exclaimed, "oh, honey...I- " Honey?! I grabbed a plate from the nearby shelf and threw it into my husband in fury. Missed! Another one! Close one! And another one! I jumped on the floor next to the table so that he would be just on the opposite side. Here is another cup for you! Zog groaned and grabbed a metal tray using it as a shield, repelling my throws. He was surprisingly agile when needed, that fatass! How come I've never noticed this energy in bedroom? "You pathetic piece of shit! Don't you "honey" me! Traitor! Did you think you can just toss me and Derek aside when she appeared?! You wanted me killed! I will twist your neck!", I screamed, mixing the common language unprintables with specific Dankmirian curses. I did not stop throwing plates and mugs into Zog who was dodging my attack pretty well, I had to admit. I threw a metal beer mug and hit his forehead. Bull's eye!

"Oh, ouch, damn! Oona! Wait! Listen! Dagmar's..."

"...Dagmar?! Dagmar's favorite cups?!!" In an instant, I jumped to other shelves with clear wine glasses and fancy tea cups. There were they, a set of six, white dainty cups of fine porcelain with blue flowers painted on them. A perfect example of Dagmar's fine taste. I remembered how years ago, practically after the wedding Bean told me, "And don't you touch the blue flower cups, they were mommy's favorite". I ensured her no one will ever touch them. Sorry, Bean! Sorry, cups! One swing of an arm, and the cups are lying on the floor in front of Zog, shattered into pieces. I laughed aloud mockingly, "Ooh, what a pity! Oona is such a klutz! You and your Dagmar can go to hell together, you ungrateful bastard!"

"Oona! Please shut up for a second", he muttered, catching up his breath. I threw a wine glass. The shards flew to all the corners. I found throwing dished amazingly relieving my rage and satisfying. I looked at him attentively. Zog seemed exhausted and not angry at all. And it did not look like he
would be trying to kill me. This was strange. "Oona!", he pleaded apologetically lifting his hand as if asking me to pause. "Dagmar is the one who turned everyone to stone! She took Bean somewhere! She tried to poison me..."

I froze with a cup in my hand in disbelief, "Dagmar? You gotta be kidding! Tried to poison you? Are you delirious?! The love of your life tried to kill you?", I smirked sarcastically stressing the last phrase. He tried to go around the table to get close to me but I jumped back to keep the distance. This man cannot be trusted!

Zog sighed and leaned his bottom against the table. He gave me a guilty look, "I thought you were the one turning people into statues, you were so angry! I locked Derek in the tower just in case". 

"You - WHAT?!", I yelled. In a blink of an eye I jumped the distance between us and grabbed Zog by the collar. "Did you think I would hurt my own son even if I wanted to poison everyone?! It is not his fault you are his father! No wonder Dagmar wanted you dead, she saw what kind of scum you are! You know what, you deserve everything what has happened to you!", I screamed in anger shaking him.

Zog was not even resisting. I've never seen this expression on his face: a shock of a loss, bitterness and lack of energy. I pushed him away and turned around, "Derek better be safe there in the tower or I will make your life a living hell".

"Wait for me", I heard as I ran to the tower. I did not bother to stop or look back at him.

Chapter End Notes

There will be one more chapter I guess. After chapter 5, I have some speculations about where they might end up but we still don't know what will happen in season 2...unless you folks want me to write it anyway?
I jumped the stairs to the tower in several leaps in panic. There was a key in the door lock, I sighed with relief. My hands were shaking while turning the key. There he was, my Derek! He was sleeping curled on an old chest, covered with a ratty blanket last washed who knows when. Someone thoughtfully left him a glass of water and a couple of apples. I gently shook him: "Derek, baby, I am here!". He rubbed his eyes and smiled: "Mommy! Oh, I'm so happy someone came for me, it was cold and a bit scary! I was so lonely and bored, I did not get any toys or books with me. Mommy, father ordered to lock me here. He said either you or him will get me, whoever survives. What did he mean anyway? And where have YOU been all day?"

I hugged him in relief squeezing as tight as I could. "Aaah! Easy, mommy, I can't breathe!". My son already knew there was no point to resist. THIS was an indication of my love and affection, I've never been good at expressing love with words. "Let's get out of here, I will tell you everything when we are certainly safe", I promised. Should I omit the fact that his father did not impede my assassination? Should I tell him I feared for my life? Or the fact that everyone in this kingdom thinks I was so dangerous so they had decided to lock him here?

We heard panting and heavy steps. Zog entered the room with a foolish guilty smile and caught my fierce stare. Derek ran to him happily, and Zog patted him on the head. I gently pulled the boy from his father, "You and I should be leaving soon, Derek, go to your room to have some sleep".

Zog followed us downstairs, "Leaving?! Where to? Are you just gonna leave me here alone?!" I nodded with a smirk, "M-hm, all alone. Not that you really needed both of us in your life before. Odval and I have sent a letter to Dankmire, hopefully my people will come get us soon enough so we don't have to be stuck here with each other for longer. I've done what I could with my duties, and I do not consider any of it to be my fault".

Zog shook his head and tried to catch my elbow, "Oona, please! You cannot just leave! I gotta show something to you! I don't know what to do!"

As the three of us entered a hallway full of statues, Derek shuddered and pressed himself closer to my arm as he saw some familiar faces, "Mommy? Father?! What is going on? Why are all of them turned into stone? Who did this?!"

I sighed and bent to him but looking straight into Zog's eyes trying to sound as bitter as I could, "Your father's love of his life and Bean's mother, Dagmar, did this. I still don't know why she killed so many innocent people. This is why you and mommy are moving to Dankmire. That will be our home from now on, son. You, me, and your grandparents. It will be different but trust me, you will get more love and attention than ever. So after you rest please pack up your things".

Derek shook his head, "It does not feel right to leave father here by himself. Cannot he come with us?"

I sighed as we approached his bedroom, still looking angrily at Zog. "I don't think he should. He had more than ten years to love and appreciate us which he never did. Now, try to sleep. Lock yourself from inside if you are afraid". I kissed him on a cheek. "Do not worry about anything for
now".

Derek nodded and closed the door behind him with tears in his eyes. I abruptly turned to Zog, "Fine! You have two minutes to start talking or I am going to go rest!". He hesitated for a moment and pulled me by the sleeve, "Then let’s go to the quarters. I gotta show something to you".
I could not believe I was still doing things for him! Zog did not even deserved to be listened to, yet here I was, walking down to the quarters with him. I must draw a line on doing favors for this man! With all the exhaustion from the recent events I could not last for too long. I desperately needed a meal, and a bath and some decent sleep. But my curiosity had to be satisfied before I go back to Dankmire! Besides, I could not help being sarcastic to him. Every my remark about Dagmar and what she's done hurt Zog like a tiny needle, one after another, and I could not be more spiteful. They say revenge does not bring relief but I found strange pleasure in his pain, so why not I just take full a joy of tormenting this man a bit longer before I leave? He's hurt my feelings enough, I needed a payback!

"It seems to me you are so desperate that you really do not want me to go away. Even Reptilicus is a desirable company now, huh?", I said with a snide squint.

Zog swallowed nervously, "You...heard?".

"I did! And do not expect I will forget it! Apparently, you thought I would just happily run back to you like a loyal dog?! Bha, some people actually care about their dogs and horses more than you will ever care for me!", I frowned. I was an inch close to bursting into tears. I shook it off before I show a tear, "But we've deviated from the topic. So?"

He sighed and sat down at the table with the decorative glass ball in the middle. He nearly pressed his nose against the ball, "Show us the last thing again". I chuckled sarcastically, "Does it have a tongue to answ... - Woo-wow, what's the shit?!".

There were ghostly blue images around us: Dagmar with two glasses of wine, younger fit Zog, and Bean, younger than I even remember her. I gasped as I saw Dagmar putting a drop of poison into a glass without hesitation, "What a bitch! And look at her, she tried to kill you and showed no remorse!". And here is the young Bean twisting the tray and thus switching glasses. And Dagmar turning into stone the next moment. I was speechless for a moment, overwhelmed by the ball. Goosebumps covered my arms. I looked at Zog and shook my head slightly smiling, "I did not know it could do that! It's been sitting around for ages just to fill the gap! Do you realize how precious and...large-scale this thing is?! What can it potentially do? How did you discover it?".

Zog nodded, "Bean's weird talking cat discovered it by accident and then rewinded it to 15 years ago. He was the one who showed me the truth about Dagmar. I am probably alive thanks to that little bastard. And this thing gives answers, too! Not always straightforward ones, though. When we...uhh..suspected you in the poisoning, we asked it if you still were at the castle. And then it told us the danger was near. Who knew it meant Dagmar! She tried to frame you for the poisoning! Oh, Oona! What a fool I was!"

"Couldn't agree more", I agreed willingly with a content grin.

Zog pretended he did not hear my irony, "So, when I confronted Dagmar she was saying something...let me remember..that it was beyond us, some sort of ancient battle, and that Bean's destiny is there! It sounds bizarre, I wish I knew what it meant".

I shook my head and frowned, "Are you sure it was not beer or wine speaking in her? Did you say she had fled with Bean? What's the point to turn everyone into stone? People would not try to resist her, and Bean could have just left at her will because she wants her mother's company? I am sorry, Zog, I feel like something does not add up here. Or we are missing on too many facts".

Zog shrugged, "Who knows. I saw them leaving on a ship, and the sail had eyes painted on it.
There also were...creatures on the deck. But I can't say for sure, it was dark, and my eyes could have played a trick on me”.

My brain was trying to process all this insane information, and I snarled, "I don't think I can fall asleep, no matter how exhausted I am, thanks to you and your sweet-talking angel wife! Anything else?"

Zog kept patiently ignoring my sarcasm. "Well, check this out! I did not know one more thing. I am not sure how SHE figured it out”. He stood up and came to the stone wall, then pressed one of the stones, and the shelves slid down opening a hidden passage.

My jaw dropped for a moment but then I looked into the doorway and shrugged imperturbably, "It looks just like a lot of staircases to me". Zog chuckled, "Damn right it is! My ribs lost count of it when Dagmar pushed me down from the very top!".

I gasped. Strangely, I felt slightly nauseous thinking he could have been lying there with a broken neck. Poor bastard! That was a heck of a fall! Maybe his fat body softened the landing? I looked above, "Why did your loving wife push you? And what's upstairs? An attic or something? Let's look at it?"

"Oh, woman! So many questions! Well, I wanted to prevent her from taking Bean, that's why she pushed me”. Zog fearfully glanced at me, "Let's check it out if you want but only if I go first. Just don't push me down like Dagmar did". I scornfully looked at him and ran up the stairs, "Compare me to her one more time, and I surely will".
Chapter 7

Zog slowly followed me upstairs, muttering and panting, "Just an attic with cowebs and dust... nothing outstanding here...moving further...dead mice...shelves with bottles on it...hey, Oona! Look! Can it be her poison lab?". He pointed at the tiny bottles, "Looks like it. Infernal amplifier...hmm".

I took the bottle from him and examined it. "It was touched recently. Look, Zog, the rest of the tiny bottles are covered in dust. This one is quite clean. How was she able to create the purple wave? It does the same petrifying effect as the thing she put into your glass 15 years ago. It gotta be the same poison! But how can you create tons of goo? With this amplifier?"

Zog scratched his forehead. A small bruise appeared from the mug I had throwed into him. "Well, seems right! You know, your head works fine with logical stuff".

I chuckled and grimaced, "And you've waited for 14 years to make me a compliment? Ha! Anything else I am good at?"

He growled, "Also you're so damn sarcastic and sassy that I feel like embrasing this long pretty neck of yours with my fingers and squeezing it damn well!"

I pressed my nose to his closely and looked straight into his eyes and whispered, "So what's stopping you?! Cannot do it by yourself?! Do you need Pendergast or just Vip and Vap to do it for you?"

Zog suddenly grabbed me by the arms and pressed me tightly between himself and the dusty wall. I tried to release myself and could not move an inch. Is he going to hit me? To kill me? Then he kissed me! Not too gently, it was an angry kiss, but it was somehow more interesting than any of the rare pathetic ones we had during the marriage. Embarrassed with my own reaction, I panicked for an instant and pushed him away with all my strength.

"Stop!", I yelled, "What's wrong with you?! Did not have enough fun with your lovely Dagmar?!"

My heart was beating insanely.

Zog confusedly looked at me and stepped back, "Oona! I'm sorry, I didn't want to scary you! I don't know what's got into me".

I snorted with laughter, "We only come to each other when we're too desperate, in a pinch, so to say. So what, you received nada from her?". He sighed and scratched his head again, "She engaged herself into spending all the time with Bean, practically paying no attention to me. And Bean also acted like a guard dog not letting me get close to her mother. Gosh, she barely kissed me at all! Here! Are you happy enough to keep mocking me?!"

I sat on the floor and started laughing loudly, looking straight into his eyes. I was aware I was deliberately testing this man's patience. He folded his arms across the chest and looked at me viciously. "Are you done laughing? Mind if I continue, Your Majesty?"

I giggled and jokingly put my hand on the chest as if apologizing seriously, "Please, dear sire, continue with your intriguing story! So wait, how exactly was your perfect and gentle Dagmar revived?"

Zog cringed at my remark and looked at me grumpily, "Remember that vial that Bean brought with the griffin? The one that was meant to be used with an elf's blood? The elf turned out to be half-blood, his blood did not work. Bean and her little idiots managed to find elves and got a bit of blood by accident. So Bean chose her mother over that green elf...half-elf".

I started pacing angrily around the attic feeling like I need another session of dish smashing to calm down, "And you've spent years on finding the goddamn vial?! You've wasted tons of state funds on
crusades just to get her back?! Do you know how much prosperity we could have achieved in the kingdom if it was not for your crusades?! Hundreds of people must have died because of it, all just to revive one person! And why bother marrying me and having an heir if you counted on bringing her back to life?!

Zog looked so crushed as if I smacked him across the face. "I...I...I don't know what I was thinking of! I guess it was more like a legend that you could revive people with an elf's blood. It seemed like the moon: so close yet so far away. I had to move on..."

"Which you never did! I knew how hard it was for you to lose her, I'm not blind! But what about all of us? We all have been deprived of your attention and care! The kingdom is struggling, you turned into a moron who only thinks of himself, Bean drinks more than you do, Derek is just a legal heir to you, and I even...", I close my mouth in the middle of the angry rant. Zog crossed his eyes at me, "What?".

I pricked my ears, "Was it a horn sound? Did you hear anything?". The tower arric window was at the sea side, so we darted downstairs to the quaters. My heart started racing from what I saw. An army. My people have arrived! Zog leaned out from the window and nervously swallowed. He took a deep breath and turned pale, "That's it! I am dead! One wife couldn't kill me, so the second one will!

I smiled victoriously before proceeding to the exit to meet my people, "Just wait, maybe not. I have a plan. And if it works it will cost you!".
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

They never said if the King and the Queen of Dankmire were related to Oona. Wikia suggests they are likely to be her parents or uncle and aunt. The Queen has the same shape of eyes and nose as Oona, so let's assume they are her parents. And I don't think she has siblings.

It feels like the writers bailed on the Dankmirian part of Zog's family and gave them next to none scenes. When Bean and Co. visited Dankmire, neither of the Queen or the King talked or introduced themselves, just the Chancellor. And why could not they show Oona and her old folks being happy to see each other? No interaction whatsoever, like strangers! Like, they could show Oona impatiently pacing around on the boat when they approached. Who would not be happy to see their family when living abroad?

It took me several minutes to come to the gate. Zog took my advice and stayed behind the castle doors for his own safety. The gate was open, and the courtyard was full of soldiers turned to stone. The petrified Odval was at the very front, like he leading the army. I looked at him feeling sorry and grateful at the same time. He was probably the only one who preferred peace with my homeland over the hot blond woman.

Here they were, my parents, and the Chancellor, and probably a bigger half of Dankmirian population as an army. Finally! I saw my parents breathing a sigh of relief. Without saying a word, we embraced, then I squeezed each of them separately. "My ribs, sweetie!", groaned my father. My mother courageously withstood my hug with a short squeak. She grabbed me by the arm and started turning me from one side to another, as if checking for physical damage or torn clothes like years ago, "Ah! Oona, are you all right, my precious? We were worried sick! Oh! Where is Derek?!". I pointed at the castle, "He is all right, should be asleep".

I turned to the Chancellor and we bowed, "I did not mean to be rude by not greeting you first, Chancellor, but could we leave formalities for today?". He grabbed my hand and squeezed it slightly, "I understand, my Queen, of course! Your parents nearly passed out from fear on the way. The turkey came to some citizens with a message at sunset, they'd spreaded the message around. We actually had commoners with pitchforks and fishing spears gathered at the palace, they demanded they wanted to come with the army to revenge the ungrateful Dreamlanders! We barely managed to force them to stay back!".

I felt a tide of pride for my people and smiled looking at the soldiers. Some looked indifferent, some were visibly curious about the statues around. My parents were whispering between each other pointing at them, too.

I took a breath, "Please everyone, do not touch them! These were living innocent people who turned to stone! Come inside the yard and have a seat. Do not drink or eat anything, we don't know yet if it's safe! Well, water was not suitable for drinking even before, it's Dreamland after all!". I heard some soldiers chuckling and giggling. We've always made fun of water quality in Dreamland but it somehow stopped being funny after I had moved here. Then I turned to my parents and the
Chancellor and lowered my voice. "Come inside, I will explain you what has happened. Just promise me not to kill my husband, or whatever he is to me now. I have a plan that would benefit us greatly!".

They followed me to the door. Zog was there with a guilty smile. He awkwardly tried to bow in greeting. My parents' gills popped up at the same time at seeing him. "Cut the crap!", barked my old man who's always been the most patient person I've seen. He grabbed Zog by the tunic and tried to punch him. Zog dodged trying to break free. My mother cornered him from the other side and slapped him across the face with all her strength. The Chancellor and I gasped, as you don't get to see fights in Dankmire too often. Fights among my people are like methane in mines, exploding with long supressed anger and a minor event just like accumulated gas and a trigger ignition.

Zog roared in desperation, "Would everyone just stop hitting me?! I am still the king! You don't have a right...".

I slithered onto the wall and landed inbetween Zog and my parents trying to break them up. "Stop it, I told you not to hurt him yet! Wait at least until I propose something", I shouted. The Chancellor looked at my husband and chuckled: "The king, you say? Where is your crown, Your Majesty?"

The crown! Right! Zog waved his hand in unclear direction, "Aah, it fell into the sea". Then he looked at me, "So Oona, what's the proposal?".

I took a breath. "I don't think taking your life is a sensible decision for us. We don't want international community to think that Dankmire attempted a coup and killed the King. Besides, if we kill you I don't want Derek to think bad of me. He loves you even though I don't think you've noticed. We will spare your life but Dankmire will keep the second half of the canal and the territory of Dreamland. You can wander off anywhere you want. You and I will get divorced, and Derek will be a future heir to Dankmire. You will be allowed to visit him if you want, I can be kind, too. Our marriage was meant to stop the war, so my reputation as a divorcee won't worry me much as long as there is no war. Any objections? Corretions?Suggestions?".

I looked at everyone waiting for reaction. Zog frowned and crossed his arms on the chest. The Chancellor sighed and shook his head, "I wish everything was so easy, My Queen. By recognized international rules, if you marry a king you are supposed to divorce a king. A king is defined as someone with a land, a formal crown, and at least a hundred living people accepting him as such. We can find any crown, we have the land but the lattest is a problem, as you can see".

I felt like ground spinned under me. So I won't be able to get rid of this man?! I felt light headed and sat on the floor. Zog angrily looked me and chuckled, "Nicely played, genius! What stops me from forming an alliance and take my property back?!".

My father grinned, "The fact that even if you do it your allies will see no point in helping you. They might just make you a puppet or kill you. We won't kill you since Oona asked for it. And your land will belong to Derek in any case, it would be a hit against Dankmire if they wish to take it".

Zog groaned, "But I need my kingdom back! So all I gotta do is to revive my people? Get the Eternity vial, get an elf's blood and create the amplifier? I think it will be easier for me to fly to the moon!". My mother crossed her eyes on his belly and chuckled, "I doubt so!". Then she frowned and looked at me, "Mind explaining us what all this nonsense means, my dear?".

I had no physical strength left after the past couple of days. Zog also looked exhausted and weak. I shook my head, "Can we please eat and rest first? The three of you too, it will be quite a story. And then we'll decide what to do".
Chapter 9

We came to the kitchen with my parents and the Chancellor walking behind us, they would constantly stop at the petrified people and looking at them like they were some sort of ancient statues from a museum.

The kitchen floor was covered in glass and ceramic shards from my rage outburst. My mother oohed, "What happened here?". Zog glanced at all the mess and chuckled, "Your daughter. Happened here". I ignored the remarks and went straight to the cupboards. The cooked food was gone in the afternoon before that horrible night, so we only had to rely on snacks and drinks though they had to be checked for poison. But I was starving and at the point where a possible poison in food does not stop me. I sniffed a tomato, then bit it. Zog looked at me, horrified. For a moment, I naughtily thought of falling down on the floor with my tongue out and playing seizures and scaring all of them but the tomato distracted me with its taste and smell. Besides, I am a lousy actress and a lousy liar.

I kept on devouring tomatoes while Zog was struggling with a wine cork. I froze with a tomato in my mouth - will he risk his life trying wine?! He looked at me and chuckled, "This one is sealed. I don't think she poisoned food or drinks. What do they say - a thunder does not hit into the same tree twice?". One gulp, two, three...He seemed fine. My father sighed with relief and gladly joined Zog. "There, I expected some drinks after the planned wedding of the Princess but you ordered to close the bar!". The Chancellor grabbed a glass and squeezed into that wine tasting company.

Zog timidly looked at me, "Ooh, now I have to do everything my myself, how I miss the servants! Ohh... I might heat the stove. But you want some hot tea, don't you wifey?". I retorted with a fake flirting smile, "Why, dear hubby, please! I'd love some! And how nice it feels to finally have you do small favors for me! All it took is a fallen kingdom and 14 wasted years". Zog grinded his teeth. You won't get to call me wifey for long, you pathetic man, I thought to myself, I've longed for your attention and admiration before but it's time to get my spirit back.

My mother sliced some bread and cheese for us while Zog was fixing fire. Meanwhile we kept on emptying storage jars with nuts and dry fruit. I shrugged and got myself a bit of wine, too. The stove was warming up the kitchen, and I finally felt warm and relaxed. My eyes got heavy, and I curled on the hard wooden bench next to the stove. My head was foggy, that's what wine does to me. "Oona, kiddo", I heard my mother's voice like it was far away. "Just let me sleep. Ask Zog what's happened", I murmured before I passed out.
I opened my eyes not recognizing the surroundings I remember seeing last. Where is the stove? Why is the bench so soft? Is it a blanket on me? My eyes lazily wandered on the ceiling and walls. Wait, here is the beam I usually sleep on! I am in the royal bedroom, why am I not sleeping upside down? Why am I not at the kitchen? I don't remember walking here!

I heard some light familiar steps nearby. My son! "Derek!". My chubby kid ran into the room and landed on the bed next to me. "Mommy, mommy, finally you're awake! Grandma did not let me around the room so you don't hear any noise. So are we going to Dankmire? I've packed most of my things like you'd asked! Mommy, is it all right if I take all my books? And I told them how we'd escaped the swamp monster and the skillet! Oh my, it was enormous! The skillet, I mean". My sleepy brain could not cope with so many questions and chatter, so I hugged Derek with a tight squeeze to shut him up. "Have mercy, mommy!".

"Where's my hug, wifey?". Zog was there at the entrance leaning the door frame. "Why would I hug you?", I said through my teeth, "My hugs are the privilege". Then he came in and sat onto the bed next to us. I looked at Derek, "Go ask your grandparents or the Chancellor if they want any help". He left reluctantly, frowning and grumping quietly. Zog looked at the closed door with a strange smirk, "I had to carry you here all the way from the kitchen, you're normally a light sleeper but this time you were like dead". He put his hand onto the blanket my thigh was and stroked it slightly. I moved back from him feeling the bed-head with my shoulders. And I was sitting on my long hair, damn it! There is nowhere to run, I cannot jump to the sides. The blanket twisted around my legs, I felt like a mermaid from the tapestry. I can't free myself fast!

Zog moved closer to me still petting my thigh. He looked like a happy ginger cat waiting to attack a bird, "You seem so different...so emotional, so witty. And you got a dimple on you cheek when you smile". "Thank you for finally noticing, it took you a few moments", I joked and frowned trying to move my hips away but Zog put his hand onto the blanket blocking me from further moves. Then he threw his arms around me holding tightly. I was unable to move my legs or arms abruptly to hit him. I was pressed tightly to his chest. Zog's lips already were on my cheek. "I did not get a reward for carrying you here, my Queen, so I'm taking it by force". What?! I tried to joke it off and faked a feared voice, "Please, my noble sire, don't! Take my jewelry box!".

He fell on me shaking with quiet laughter but did not release me. "You nearly as funny as the jester...oh my god, Oona!". I giggled as well, "Maybe you should have invited him into your bed instead!". Zog started shaking and snorting with laughter even more. I tried to release myself but got caught in the blanket and my own dress. My husband pulled me back by the waist. "Can't we start all over together?!", he whispered into my ear. I got angry, "No! Do you think you'll just forget your Dagmar and stop loving her? None of it has happened during 14 years of marriage, why do you think something will change in 14 days?".

"She tried to kill me! And she poisoned all the kingdom!", he exclaimed. I coldly looked at him feeling like I was stabbed, "And you tried to get rid of ME but expect me to give you a second chance! How is it different?!". He looked down and eased the grip. I stood up and adjusted my hair, "I hope you've told everything to my parents". Zog nodded sadly, "They nearly killed me again. And guess what, your father told me the whole kingdom of Cremorrah had been poisoned
years ago in the same way, petrified!".

I felt sickness coming up. I've heard the story. "They say it was Maru. Does it mean your sweet Dagmar is linked to them? Or is she from Maru? She gotta be! Din't you know where she was from when you married her?!".

Zog massaged his forehead, "She was a daughter of a noble from faraway, that's what she told me!". My gills went up from anger, "Unbelievable! A faraway land! You never questioned her love or her origin! So you married a person without knowing anything about her! It's like with me but our case was a political marriage. I sensed something was off about it, nobody knew or wanted to tell me where she was from!".

Zog looked at me in surprise, "Why did you want to know?". I took a moment before I could find right words, "I was just... curious, I tried to imagine what she was like to do, who her family were, where she was from. I tried to understand if I was so horrible that both you and Bean din't even like me, or was it just because I was not her!". Zog was all ears listening to me.

I continued catching a right moment, "You know, years ago I had...a fight with Bean. She did not want to go to her class. The teacher was waiting. I tried to explain her it was for her own good. She yelled she was not interested, and that I should not even try to lecture her, as I was not her mother, and that no one even liked me. Then I dragged her to a map and asked to show me where her mother was from. She did not know, of course. So I yelled back in anger that I would never lecture or nag her again if she could just go to the class and learn something. She stayed at the class, and you know the rest - I've never tried to interfere with her life. Just like with yours. Bean was drinking, you were eating. Neither of you would listen to me, I just gave up after some time. I just wanted to help. I let both of you do whatever the heck you wanted with your lives. I had myself and Derek to care about. I just showed up for my formal duties that had no relation to actually running the kingdom or these parties that I hate so much. Now I don't care how you will react to anything I tell you, my blunt words won't cost anyone a life because of your mood swings. Everyone is poisoned. I understand why you yelled at Bean though. How many times I wanted to come to her and spank her with a slipper!".

Zog was sitting on the bed with such a dreamful face that I thought he would not mind if someone offered him a death penalty. He started slowly, "I can't even explain how I let everything go downhill. I guess I've never been good at being a king. Only now I started realizing how much I was blinded by Dagmar. She was so outgoing, always life of the party, sweet-talking. I think she'd always told me what I wanted to hear. But c'mon, no one likes to be criticized!".

I nodded, "I know. Yet you have to listen sometimes. So what are you going to do next? Go to Maru, look for Dagmar and demand answers? But what about the vial, and an elf's blood, and the amplifier?".

Zog shrugged, "I gotta wing it, I guess. I have to sail to Maru but there is no one here to take a ship over there. I've talked to your oldies and the Chancellor, they said some Dankmirian ships can take me across the sea. But they will come back to Dankmire in about three days, I will meanwhile hang out with you guys in Dankmire. I have no choice but to let your people watch over the kingdom. Everything will be inherited by Derek anyway. Here is what the Chancellor suggested, if I manage to bring back everyone to life you people will just leave. No one wants a war. The chance of success is tiny after all. But here is something about us. We can't get divorced if I don't have the kingdom back. I will give you the rest of the canal for the divorce if we find everything".

I crossed my eyes at Zog, "What do you mean by WE?". He seemed content when I heard his
answer, "You're coming with me!".

Chapter End Notes

I am not including Luci on purpose for now. I think Big Joe got him (there was a bottle sound at the end) but we still don't know how exactly Maru works with demons. So for now I would suppose Big Joe is somewhere else with Luci.
Chapter 11

I laughed aloud in disbelief, "Hah, that's a good joke! Me! Coming with you to Maru! Tell me you're simply pulling a prank on me!". My husband did not laugh but had that sly and happy cat expression on his face. The bird is caught, I thought. Damn! Are not there other ways to get the canal back to Dankmire?!

Zog shrugged, "You're the most fit for this role. Your parents got nothing to do with it, and Derek is too young and naive. Besides, you want the canal, don't you?".

"Do I want the canal? Damn, you probably wanted your Dagmar back more than I want the canal! Dankmire paid for it, so we should have it in full! Do you think it was as easy as digging a grave? It took years of labor and funds that could have been allocated to public use! Dankmire has just started to recover from the war and this canal building".

I thought about this future trip, it will probably last a couple of weeks for sure. Derek can meanwhile enjoy his grandparents' company and the local children's library. I sighed and nodded, "Fine! What would not one do for their homeland?". Zog gladly smiled. "So we should pack up then?".

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A couple of hours later we departed. It was still several hours before sunset. The soldiers helped us load boxes and bags onto the boat. We showed them around the castle and food storages. I shoved the crystal ball into a pillow case with towels around for safety. Zog grabbed the spyglass from Sorcerio's.

Dreamland was slowly disappearing from the view. Zog was sitting on a bench at the boat rear next to me looking at the same direction. I timidly crossed his eyes at him, "Do you feel anything? This is your home. Who knows when you see it next if at all".

"Hmm...I don't know, mostly sadness. Anger with myself and with Dagmar. Some good memories. You?".

"Surprisingly, I'm relieved and only slightly sad. I guess it was never my home. A home is where you're loved. Mine perhaps is still in Dankmire, even though I've always wanted the best for Dreamland, too".

Zog nodded, "Yeah, I noticed how proudly you talk about your home. I wish I could turn the time around and fix it for you there". He nodded into the castle direction. I did not say anything, just was admiring the sun-lit trees and bushes along the canal. The light was of this lovely pink and orange color, the color you get from peach-and-cherry liqueurs.

The Chancellor was napping after a day so saturated with events. My father was lovingly stroking a bag with bottles of Dreamland wines in it. Derek was on the front of the boat chatting to my parents. He was still holding his teddy bear. It's time he should stop doing it, I thought.

"Why the hell is he still carrying this stupid bear around?", Zog shook his head with a hint of reproach. Was he reading my mind? I lifted an eyebrow. "You gave it to him years ago for a birthday! Since he gets almost no attention from you he carries it around".

I went to to the front to my parents and put my head onto her shoulder to my mother. My father looked at us and smiled naughtily, "There are still some blackberries left. And I think it grew to the
old banker's side. But since he is dead no one is really watching over his garden. I promise this
time I won't make you paint his fence as a punishment if you get caught!". I giggled. My mother
sighed, "The branches need trimming though. The heat is too intense lately, so the gardener took a
couple of days off. If you do it tomorrow in the morning and leave some berries outside your
mouth I will bake you all a sponge cake before the heat hits".

Derek loudly cheered when the cake was mentioned and ran to Zog asking if he heard about the
cake. My husband chuckled sadly and looked at me timidly. "This fatass is probably wondering if
he can have some, too", I quietly whispered to my parents with a wide smile.

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Zog was keeping unusually quiet. He seemed upset. Picking on him now would be too cruel even
by my standards. I decided to distract him so that he does not get used to my sarcasm and
reproaches, or worse, start developing defense for it. I will get to him later. A bit of cheering up, or
a chit-chat and flirty smile, let's see if I can be charming enough so he lets his guard down. Let the
cat believe the bird is caught. And then at the right moment it will fly away. I am not a bird type
but it's an accurate comparison.

I came to him and lowered my voice, "We are almost here. I suggest we rest tonight. We all need a
good sleep. Can we please just not talk about the trip for this couple of days? We can think about it
on the way. I haven't spent enough time home over these years, so I just want to enjoy it as much
as I can. Last time we...we didn't stay as long as it was planned, sadly".

He sighed, "Sure, sure. You'd better relax as much as you can. I can't. I...I just keep on thinking
about Bean. What is she doing now? Why does Dagmar need from her? And where is her weird
cat? I haven't seen him since the purple tide".
I was about to touch his hand in compassion but remembered to stay away from showing it.
Cheering him up would be tricky right now, I thought.

We arrived when it was nearly dark. There were not many people on the streets which I was happy
about. The last thing we need now is nosy citizens snooping around.

The palace butler was meeting us at the dock. A new guy, I noted. Time flies by, I might not meet
the old familiar workers. My mother asked him to organize hot water for us all to bathe. I jokingly
poked my father into ribs, "Hey papa, smell me. Do I reek like a Dreamlander to you?". My old
man sniffed me around the neck and chuckled, "Not yet, Cocoa. Give it a couple of days".

My mother was still talking to the new butler, then she turned to me, "Three bedrooms, sweetie, is
it? I don't think you and your husband--".

Zog was looking at me with bated breath. What did he hope for?! Are they insane even to suggest
it?!

"Mama! Shame on you! Well, of course three!". I passed a canvas bag to Zog and smacked him on
the belly."Make yourself useful, Muscles!"

"And what's the reward?". Zog seemingly ignored the nickname but I sensed I would have to pay
for my words later.

"The Queen of Dankmire herself will bake a cake tomorrow. With everything you've done, we are
still treating you rather as a guest, not a prisoner. Aren't we nice?".

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About midnight, we finally bathed and settled in rooms with clean beds. Poor Derek was so tired that he even turned down a meal. Zog finished leftovers of roasted veggies. It was strange to hear him readily consenting for a hot bath. This civilized behaviour would probably be...rewarded in a certain way if we had a good marriage, I thought with regret.

I fished up a light old nightgown from the chest. A silly childish white cotton gown with even sillier flowers my mother had embroidered on it. Still from my teen years! I haven't worn it in Dreamland. Then I went to show Zog the bedroom that was next to my old room. He looked around. "Wheew, I did not expect to see that you got both beams and normal beds!". I inserted the frame with fabric in it into the window. A simple invention against bugs and mosquitoes.

I smiled politely, "Don't worry, we won't make you climb up to the ceiling. I hope the bed is soft enough for His Majesty though. Keep the window open with this thing in, it's probably too warm for you. Nighty-night, don't let mosquitoes bite!".

"Oh, it will be hard to sleep, I'm hungry. Aren't you?"
"A little, but I better not stuff my face, this night I will be finally sleeping upside down like a normal human being!"
"A normal Dankmirian, you mean?". Zog chuckled. I giggled and bit my lip. I noticed he kept on glancing at me. I turned around on my way out, "And if you are starving you've seen where the kitchen is, raid the pantry quietly".
He grinned. "Roger that. Loving your nightgown, by the way!".
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

I will try hard to keep my chapters shorter but sometimes there are scenes or details that just pops up in my head, and I feel like dropping a couple of paragraphs on them.

I usually try to focus on what's in between the scenes or the characters' reaction to events.

I've been tossing and turning all night, if it is possible to say it about Dankmirian way of sleeping. There was a long forgotten sweet feeling of waking up in your old bedroom, all by yourself. I've always enjoyed this peaceful solitude of early mornings when there were no servants around, my parents were still in bed, and even the guards were seen half-awake outside. I got hungry within minutes after waking up.

The stoves are usually used outside next to adjacent kitchenettes to keep the houses less heated, even though it makes sense to keep stoves inside in Dreamland. The guards thoughtfully lit the stove to prepare for morning coffee and tea.

I got into the kitchenette and boiled some coffee from my father's supply. Try to restrict coffee for me now, old man! I got bread and cheese from Dreamland and got to boiled eggs. God, I will certainly miss those cinnamon buns! I remembered about my mother's promise of the cake and hurried to the blackberry bushes at the end of the garden. The guards don't usually come there, it means more enjoyable privacy for me.

It was one of the least swampy areas, and thorny blackberry grew like weed. I promptly got down to business to fill up the jar for the cake. Of course, the ripest berries went straight to my mouth. I felt slightly guilty of not putting some aside for Derek but really, my son can have more in a couple of days when red berries turn black. I will be away who knows for how long dealing with Zog and looking for Bean and Dagmar, I deserve a treat for the upcoming stress!

What a nice feeling it is not to think and stress about your drunk stepdaughter, and your always insensitive husband, and yourself never being considered a decent substitute for Dagmar! They all will be my past soon. I will perhaps meet them somewhere at a formal event like an inter-kingdom wedding or a funeral, probably just nodding to each other in greeting like neighbors, like these 14 years never existed. Zog might still come to see his son though. I thought about what my future would be like if this mission with Zog were successful. My parents are old, I am sure they will need my help and attention. We have a lot of catching up to do. I will get myself to spend more time with Derek, it is time he starts taking his title and duties seriously. I will walk with him around Dankmire showing him places his mommy used to steal fruit from, or where it's better to get fried frogs, or the favorite books from the library. Hopefully Dankmire treasury will benefit from finally owning the canal and charging other kingdoms to pass through. And...will I ever find love and respect? Or would I have to follow a path of some women just having a man around for their needs?

I went farther inside the bushes moving carefully, I've had enough thorn pokes and scratches on my fingers and arms. I gently moved a large thorny branch aside and fitted myself deeper into the
bushes. The berries worth this suffering! The sun was already grilling but I could not leave the berries alone. Suddenly I realized I got my hair tangled up between many other thorny branches. Damn, maybe it's really time for a haircut! I made an effort of freeing myself but it did not work.

"Hello?", I heard my husband's voice. Oh crap, Zog is here! Stupid Oona, I thought to myself, why you did not cut the branches first? Now what, do I have to ask him for help?! I hate asking for help! There he is, at the bushes, already dressed and brushed.

"It's me. Just picking berries for the cake. And for myself. Mostly for myself", I sighed and tiptoed inside my trap to wave at him.
"I've been calling you for ages. Didn't you hear?". I heard a slight reproach in his voice. "I am terribly sorry, Your Majesty!", I smiled to hide my sarcasm, "I guess I was too busy daydreaming about my promising future away from Dreamland with the rest of the canal, and about my chances of finding a lover".

Zog frowned and crossed his arms on the chest. Then he picked a couple of berries I've missed. "Did you think of leaving some for me, wifey? They're quite tasty, I gotta admit! I am going in, I hope you did not devour all of them!".
"Fine! Watch the thorns!". I will have to bear the humiliation of him seeing me trapped by my hair. I hope he gets his face scratched by a branch!
He went through the bushes stopping occasionally to get a missed berry. "Seriously, are there things or...maybe PEOPLE from Dreamland you're going to miss?", he asked, "Or...certain activities?".

I pretended I did not get his hints and I picked a berry. "Well, maybe the herald. The guy has the finest sarcasm! And I will miss Odval a little. It was nice to have someone who cares about the state. Then maybe Derek's swan. The apple trees and flowers in the garden, the smell is divine when they bloom. The sea view. And the food of course! Cherry pies, cinnamon buns! Potatoes! They are hard to grow here due to swampy soils, and I love roasted chicken and potato!". I dreamily rolled my eyes thinking about the damn roast. I smiled at Zog standing a couple of feet away. He never heard what he expected to hear from me. Haha! Touché!

He smiled back sneakily, "See, you should really consider not getting a divorce! If we get Dreamland back I will ask the cooks to make your damn potato or cherry pies every single day!". "Nah, it's all right, we'll go ahead with divorce but you can always send a sack of potatoes for my birthday!", I giggled.

I suddenly felt light-headed. Zog jumped to me instantly and grabbed me by the waist. "Oona? What's wrong?"
"Gotta be the damn heat, I've got distracted by the berries and forgot about time... And I got my hair around branches, I couldn't free myself", I muttered trying not to pay attention to his hands around me.

He looked at my hair and chuckled. Then he started gently removing branches from my hair cussing at the thorns getting into his fingers.
"Wow, Zog, I've never seen you so concentrated on anything else but a fried chicken!", I tried to joke even though I felt like I was about to faint. This love for treats will kill me one day.

"That's it, ready!". Zog pulled the last branch out.
"Thanks! Now you can put your hands away, too. I think I'm done with berries for today", I tried to free myself from him. He was too close. It was hard to resist when you nearly lose balance. Zog grabbed me by the back of the head and started kissing. It was very comforting to be held with
way, tightly but gently at the same time. To my surprise, I found myself responding to his kisses with passion, like a thirsty traveller finally getting water after a trip through a desert. I don't ever remember kissing like that! There was a bit of novelty in it, a bit of excitement as if we were lovers in the beginning of an affair. Or is it the sun stroke speaking?

Zog sighed, "Oh Oona, what are you...". He moved one hand down my buttock and slightly squeezed it. I felt his lips on my neck. Oops, not the neck! Too late, the gills opened giving me away. Oh, this damn man! Is it how it felt to her, too?

Zog looked at gills smiling with interest and a hint of admiration. "Don't tell me it's the angry ones!". I made an effort and pulled away from him, then sprinted through the thorny bushes. "It's always the angry one for you!".

There us one thing I know about myself - I am a lousy liar.
Chapter 13

I locked the door behind myself and landed onto the bed in shock. My heart was racing and my knees were shaking. Was I hallucinating, or did the kiss really happen? Why did he decide to kiss me? And more important, why did I enjoy it?! This is Zog I am talking about, why is he acting like a caring husband and like a gentle human being? How am I going to look at him now? Would he be grinning and giving me the we-both-know-we-liked-it look? Can I try to act normal? Acting has never been my strong feature though.

I picked tiny thorns out of my arms and hands. Probably, I did not feel any of them when I panicked and ran away. Adrenaline rush, is it? My dignity has suffered more than my skin. I was utterly angry with myself, I was not supposed to let myself get too close to him and get played with! A thought about snakeroot crossed my mind but I remembered it had been gone, so I tried to calm down by myself. God forbid using it here in front of my parents! Hopefully when everything settles down in my life I won't need it any more. I got some water from a jar and wetted a towel to put onto my head. I felt irritation with myself, was not I supposed to spend time with my family instead of being here with a wet rag on me? Goddamn heat was intense, how is my mother going to bake the cake?

Someone knocked at the door. Is he even serious, trying to get into my room?! "Get out!", I barked.
"Oona, kiddo, it's me!". Oh, it was my mother. I better let her in. Besides, she sounded agitated enough, I did not want to stress her.
"Sorry, mamá, I thought Zog decided to impose his company just when I need it the least. Damn idiot!", I muttered in relief.
"Oh, luckily he came to me and asked me to check on you. It was quite considerate if him! He told me what happened there in the garden!".

Damn, what?! It felt as if my heart stopped beating for a moment giving me a memory of childhood moments when you hear this phrase, "We know what happened". What an audacity it was of him! What do my parents have to do with the fact the two of us were about to make out right in the bushes like some horny youngsters?! I am not supposed to let anyone, especially my parents, know I showed this sort of weakness to this man! Would not they question my self-control and devotion to get the canal back? I will have a mission to go to soon, after all!

"Oona! Where was your brain?! How many times I told you to put a hat on?! Have you forgot how horrible the heat can be?!", my mother tried not to talk loudly but I knew her long enough to stay quiet and let her lecture me like years ago. So Zog did not tell her about the kiss! I felt slightly ashamed about thinking ill about him.

"Ma, please do not exaggerate! I am almost fine!", I cheerfully smiled at her re-assuring there was nothing to worry about. "I had to get you berries for the cake like I promised!".

"You should care about your health, not the cake, young lady! Your husband brought me the berries when he alerted me about you. He seemed panicked, you know!"

"Panicked? Not about me, trust me. Probably he just wanted to make sure I dropped dead so he could become a widower and he won't have to give the canal back as a part of the deal!", I smirked.

My mother shook her head, "I think you're being overly critical of him. He's not the smartest one for sure but is able to show feelings -"
"Zog?! Feelings?! Only when it's about him! Or his perfect Dagmar! Not even Bean received enough care and attention, let alone Derek and myself!".

My mother sighed and gently pushed my head down the pillow, "Have rest, child. I don't want to anger you. I don't think you should go outside until it cools down. I will make the cake later".

I probably had spent another several minutes on the bed after she left. I only have today and tomorrow to spend with my parents and Derek before the ship leaves. I cannot waste time chilling out like a pansy!

I went to Derek's room leaning on the hallway wall just in case. My head was still spinning. "Here I am, munchkin!", I waltzed into the room with a silly smile and lost it the next moment. Derek and Zog were there with some books and a plate of berries next to them. "Oh, fu... feed me to the swamp monster, you again!", I frowned at my husband. It felt awkward to even look at him now, since I have not got over the kiss reaction yet. Zog had that silly guilty look on his face, like a dog who chewed on your shoe and looks timidly at you as you tell it off.

"Mommy! Language!", Derek shook his head in reproach just like my mother used to do. Oh, now he is reprimanding me! Does it mean he is at the age when I can expect to be told to stop embarrassing him?

"You should be used to it by now, son!", I sighed, "Look, your father is holding a book! Boy, remember this miracle for the rest of your life as you might never see it again!". I looked right into Zog's eyes and grinned. He was frowning but the eyes expression was different, "Keep playing with me, bird, it entertains my Ginger Feline Majesty". Why can't I help teasing him even though I knew his small revenge would be coming?

Zog crossed his eyes at Derek, "Son, better have some berries! Or I will eat them, I didn't have enough. Did you have enough, wifey?". He had a naughty grin across his face. He was not talking about the berries, was he?

"Ohh, I had so much I can't even look at them now!", I grumbled and felt my cheeks blushing. I looked at the plate of berries. Zog carefully picking them for his son was something I could swear he would not bother doing. Look at him acting like a loving father! Is he trying to be nice to Derek while he has a chance to enjoy his company or is it just to rub it into my face that I was the one who devoured the treat singlehandedly, without sharing with my son?

Naturally, Derek did not read between the lines due to his naivety. He was calmly turning pages of a book not paying much attention to us. "Mommy, look! Here is a picture of that swamp monster that tried to attack us!". There it was, a piece of paper with the drawing of the monster! I looked at my husband, "Derek told me about the swamp monster and the skillet part. You know, the monster was more of a legend during the war. There were victims on both sides, so it had plenty of dead meat and kept a low profile. Only several people who saw it managed to escape. I was sceptical about the stories when I was young. Then after the war was over the attacks became more frequent. Someone drew it for me years ago, and I must have slid it into between the pages and forgot about it!

Zog glanced at the drawing and cringed, "Pretty accurate. Damn, that thing was scary! It's strange to know someone or something is having a hard time after the peace treaty!"

"Yeah, like weapons manufacturers". I shook my head with a bitter chuckle. My husband nodded
without saying anything. Our eyes met for a moment, and I bit my lip. Somehow I had a feeling he was mentally still there in the garden surrounded by berry bushes. Or did I have this illusion because I was the one still there desiring more pleasure? I tried to shake this dreamy mood off and stood up.

"Well, Derek, enjoy your father's company while it lasts. Would you like to walk around the town with me tonight? We'll get some fried frogs for you to try!". Derek smiled and nodded. Of course, using food to convince him was enough.

"What if I wanna tag along, too?", Zog cheekily stared at us. "Last time we did not see much at all!".

"Thank your daughter for it!", I responded coldly. Zog lowered his eyes. Wait, is he going to use the sad face trick on me? Or is he trying to make me feel guilty for not biting my tongue? Derek pulled me by the sleeve impatiently, "Come on, mommy, let him go with us, we can get him a fried frog, too!".

I squinted at Zog, "Feeling adventurous enough for foreign delicatessen? Fine, you are coming, too, but you'll have to eat a whole frog all by yourself! ".

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