The Lying King

by Libelli

Summary

Shuichi, the greatest detective in the land, has been summoned to the court of King Kokichi to solve a great crime. The theft of the king’s heart.

Notes

THIS IS A GIFT FOR MY FRIEND. HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!

“You have the honor of being in the presence of King Kokichi the Twentieth of the House Ouma. King of the Kingdom of Hope’s Peak. The Ultimate Supreme Leader. Master of Dice. And King of Lies.”

The king sat atop his throne, one leg throne over the armrest and his back leaning against the other. The crown must have proven too heavy for his head, because the crown, covered in purple velvet, ermine, and absolutely encrusted in jewels, rested on the floor beside the throne. The second his eyes landed on Shuichi, they gleamed like a cat spotting a mouse.

Shuichi glanced at the young man that had just announced the king to him. He shot him a look as if to say, “shut up and just go with it”.

“And who do we have here?” the king asked.
“Your majesty, may I present Shuichi Saihara. The greatest detective this land has to offer.”

The young man in the place of a herald smacked Shuichi on the back to push him forward. Except Shuichi stumbled. The members of the court and the king’s advisors and peoples of high places of honor snickered. Shuichgu glared back at the young man, he only shrugged and looked away as if he saw nothing. His fuschia cloak was littered in a sparkles that gleamed under the chandeliers of the throne room making it look like he was covered in tiny stars. Shuichi turned his attention back to the king, swept off his cap, and bowed low in front of the king.

“Y-your majesty…” he said.

The king smirked. “Rise, great detective.” Shuichi stood to his full height and placed his hat back on his head. “Do you know why I personally had you summoned?” the king asked, his voice light like sing-song.

“No, your majesty.” Shuichi said.

“Oh? And then why did you come?”

“Pardon?”

The king slid off of his throne and stepped closer to Shuichi. He was a good deal shorter. “If you did not know what it was you were here for then why did you come?” the king asked.

“Because I am your majesty’s subject. I will always be there when you call.”

“Always?” The king asked raising his eyebrows.

“Of course, your majesty.”

“Good!” The king declared. He swept his cape up and it created a breeze. “Because it appears that my heart has been stolen!”

“You... heart?” Shuichi asked.

“Yes, my heart. And I would like it back.”

The throne room was silent, there was not even whispers among the courtiers.

*You were summoned for this; treat it like any normal case.* The great detective thought. “Where was the last place you saw your...heart?” Shuichi asked.

“At the last ball that I hosted. Someone there had to have stolen it. There were so many people!” The king plopped back onto his throne and crossed his arms. “I have some guesses...but I’m not so sure.”

“Well, your majesty, if you would allow me to investigate I’m sure I will find this heart thief in a timely manner.” Shuichi said with a deep bow.

The king smiled. “Very good.” He looked up. “My royal astronomer shall show you to your lodgings for the duration of this case.”

The young man in the starry cloak stepped up to Shuichi. “This way please,” he said, holding out and arm.

They both bowed to the king one last time and then backed out of the throne room. When the heavy doors clanged shut and the usual hum of chatter could be heard from behind the doors, Shuichi let
“I knew our king was a bit...extravagant, but this is a bit ridiculous.” the royal astronomer sighed, shaking his head.

“I don’t know,” Shuichi said as they began to walk down the wide corridors of the palace, he turned to the astronomer, “How may I address you my lord…”

“Kaito.” The astronomer said.

“Well, Lord Kaito, I’m not so sure the king is crazy. Could he mean anything literal?” Shuichi asked.

Lord Kaito shrugged. “Your guess is as good as mine, my lord detective.”

Shuichi nearly jumped out of his skin. “Oh! I’m not a lord!” he said quickly.

“You’re not?! You know, I did think it was odd when you had no title attached to your name. I thought it might have been a personal decision or that my note makers were lazy this morning…” Lord Kaito said. Shuichi shook his head. “I wonder why the king summoned you then, no offense.”

“None taken. I didn’t know myself until the king told me why in front of everyone. I’ve only solved mysteries of minor lords up until now.”

“Strange...is this your first time in the capita then, Mr. Saihara?” Lord Kaito asked.

“No. I was here a few weeks ago at the very ball in question.” Shuichi said. “And my friend has been sending letters asking me to come to court almost weekly after that, saying that I may find good fortune at court.” They stopped in front of a door and as Lord Kaito dug for the key in his pocket, Shuichi continued. “But how much fortune can one detective have in a place?”

Shuichi stood in the courtyard of the royal palace. His suit was dark, his mask was heavy, and he was sweating absolutely everywhere from his shoes to his under his mandatory mask. He had chosen a dark green mask in the shape of a hound, so dark it was nearly black. Sparklers danced spun in fiery orange pinwheels against the dark navy sky and every window was illuminated casting light on the tan stones. Candles and chandeliers were well lit along the path from the stables to the palace hall and were further reflected on the jewels and sparkly fabrics worn by the party goers.

“You ready to go in?”

Shuichi jumped as an elbow was jammed into his side.

“Please, don’t sneak up on me like that, Kaede.” He grumbled.

“Oh, stop being such a drama queen.” Kaede said. “And that’s Lady Kaede to you.”

“I forgot. My apologies, my lady.” Shuichi said laying on a pompous voice for effect. Kaede jokingly aired herself with her fan. “Are you really sure it’s okay that I am your date tonight?” he asked as he straightened up.

“Oh course!” Kaede exclaimed. “I was allowed to bring anyone so why not bring my friend from my hometown. Besides I’m the court musician. I think I can do what I want.”

Kaede winked at Shuichi and then grabbed his arm pulling him into the throng of masquerade goers.
The ballroom was filled with heat from people milling around and bits and bobs of their costumes brushed against one another. Waiters and waitresses narrowly avoided spilling their silver trays as they sidestepped ballgoers. The music floated throughout the ballroom and in the center of everything, couples danced together. They spun and their capes and skirts melded together in a rainbow flurry.

Shuichi gaped at all the people of the court. He was glad his mask covered most of his face so that people would not be able to read the shock on it. Kaede, with her porcelain pink and gold butterfly mask, perfectly flitted from circle to circle, taking Shuichi along with her. Shuichi was introduced to all of Kaede’s friends and acquaintances from court, and of course, she introduced Shuichi as the greatest detective in the land to every single one.

“Why would you say that?” Shuichi asked as they turned away from the Duchess of Shirogane with her bear mask (covered in fur and everything, the duchess had been quite proud of that fact).

“Why wouldn’t I? It’s true! You’ve been solving crimes since you were a kid. Besides, I didn’t get to be a court musician without people introducing me to other people.” Kaede said.

“What would I be? The court detective? That’s not even a position!”

Kaede shrugged. “You never know.” the last notes of the music wavered out and the crowd applauded the band. “Oh, that’s my cue! I have to go perform!”

“And leave me here?!” Shuichi cried.

“Relax. You’ll be fine. Dance with somebody. Make a friend. I don’t know do something.” Kaede said and before Shuichi could stop her she disappeared among the crowd.

And so, Shuichi stood among the ever moving circles of courtiers. Their poofy costumes brushed against him and all he could do was offer a small apology as they passed him without a single glance. Shuichi rocked back and forth on his heels, wringing his hands together and studying the marvelous architecture of the ballroom. Waiters offered him drinks and hors d’oeuvres. He refused. His stomach was roiling too much.

The music picked up again and the crowd hummed with excitement. Shuichi wanted to sink in the floor and leave nothing but his black cloak and mask behind in a puddle. It was a romantic, dancing duet. Shuichi looked up at the platform. Kaede sat at her piano, commanding the crowd as she played; a violinist stood next to her for accompaniment.

One by one, the crowd split off into partners and took to the dance floor. Shuichi watched as dashing young men bowed to ladies in beautiful masks and dresses and then take each other gently by the hand and glide onto the floor.

Shuichi melded into the crowd until his back was pressed against the cool marble. He took a deep breath and let his head lean back. He just wanted this to be over so that the one person who knew at the party would come back.

“Is this spot taken?”

Shuichi’s head snapped up and in front of him was a short man in a purple and white fox mask with a matching doublet.

“Excuse me?” Shuichi asked. “Were you talking to me?”

“Of course I was!” The fox said. “Now is the spot next to you taken?”
Shuichi looked at the empty space next to him along the wall and shook his head. The fox leaned against the wall and hummed.

“So, have you seen the king around, Mr. Dog?” He asked

“The king is here?!” Shuichi asked.

“He should be! It’s his party after all!” The fox replied. “So, you haven’t seen him?”

Shuichi laughed a little. “If I have, I don’t think I’d be able to tell. I’m not from around here.”

“Then how did a non-courtier get access to such an exclusive party?”

Shuichi explained and gestured to Kaede, still playing, and by now had more than half of the party guests dancing.

“The Lady Kaede although fairly new to court is still quite exceptional.” the fox mused. “And she has a kind heart.”

Shuichi smiled as Kaede hit a note and effortlessly transitioned the song into a new part. “She does.”

“Do you want to dance, Mr. Dog?”

It was like electricity shot through his spine. “You want to dance? With me?”

The Fox held out his hand and took a step to the dance floor. “Of course. I find you charming.”

Shuichi blinked, and before he could talk his way out of it, he took the Fox’s hand.

The Fox and Shuichi walked onto the dance floor and bowed to one another. Shuichi glanced from side to side and was hyper aware of the other pairs that had stepped out of the way to make room for them.

“I trust that you know how to dance,” the Fox said.

“Oh, sorry.”

“No, you’re fine. You just have to look up at me.” Shuichi said.

And the Fox did look up. His dark purple eyes wide in the eye sockets of his mask. And he met Shuichi’s gaze. Then he smiled.

Then Shuichi, for the first time that night, smiled back.

“Let’s dance?” he asked.

Shuichi nodded. “Let’s dance.”
Shuichi knocked on the door. There was a sudden stillness from behind the door and then and equally quiet: “You may enter.”

Shuichi opened the door and standing across the room from him, as if waiting, was the king. He no longer wore his cape or had his crown with him. He looked like any normal person his or Shuichi’s age.

“Your majesty,” Shuichi said with a bow.

“Is there a reason you have come at such an hour? Would you like to rest before conducting your investigation?” King Kokichi asked.

The king’s chambers were fairly plain, but covered from floor to ceiling in the royal colors, black and white, and the king’s own personal color of purple. In the corner was a game board with various pieces and dice scattered on it.

“I would like to ask you about any suspects you might have. The sooner, the better in my opinion.” Shuichi said.

“Okay,” the king sighed as he lowered himself into a chair and then he gestured for Shuichi to sit in the one across from him. “Ask away, Mr. Detective.”

“For starters, were you at the ball that night?” Shuichi asked.

“May have been, but then again it was a masquerade. Who knows if I was?” the king smiled as if what they were discussing was game.

Shuichi wanted to ask King Kokichi to take his questions seriously, but he bit his tongue. “Did you dance with anyone? And may I have their descriptions?”

The king tapped a finger to his chin. “I did dance with one guy, all night long it seemed.” Shuichi nodded and pulled out his quill and scroll. “He was taller than me and a little shy, but confident.”

“Was he?”

The king nodded, a small smile on his face. “Very.” he confirmed. “A good dancer too. The way we moved together, it was like we were the only two people on the dance floor. In the world.” The king sighed wistfully. “And he smiled kindly at me. Even though I was the king. He had to have known, and he still treated me like anyone else. Like a friend. And even though the whole world was spinning he was in focus.”

Shuichi’s mouth went dry. He looked up at the king and met his gaze. “And you’ve lost your heart to him?” Shuichi managed to say.

“Hopelessly,”

“What kind of mask did this young man wear?” Shuichi asked, clearing his throat.

“A dog. Similar to the color of your hair, Mr. Detective.”

Shuichi let out a breath and rested his notes on the arm of the chair he sat in. “Your majesty, I believe I may have already solved the mystery of who has stolen your heart.”

The king nodded. “Oh, I’ve already known. I just wanted to see if you could figure it out.”
Shuichi allowed himself a small smile. “Well, it appears I now have a lot of time on my hands while I’m in the capitol.” he said. “Would you like to dance again while I am here?”

The king smiled and stood. He approached Shuichi, his kingly facade disappearing, and he was back to the Fox that did not know how to dance. He reached out and wrapped his hand around Shuichi’s. “I would love to.”

Shuichi squeezed Kokichi’s hand back. “And if I may be so bold- it was a hound, your majesty.”

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