# Children of the embers

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## Summary

The new iron order is the playground of the cruel and regular, with few witches and fewer people willing to help the few.

After a planned fire outbreak, Blue(a princess), has to get her hands on enough power before she gets assassinated. Lea(a healer) has to save the life of the sick prince and some happy-go-lucky kids have to save their enslaved and endangered family.
However, there are new rules in town, and anyone suspected of sorcery gets burnt at a stake.
So, as long as nobody gets killed, nobody gets arrested, and no one falls in love everything should be fine...
Or
The royalty au that legitimately no one asked for
Please read this i worked really hard ;_; its has funky witchcraft magic
This story also takes itself seriously idk why
And uh like wattpad it's OG characters I imagined as real people hence the tags

Notes
See the end of the work for notes.
Prologue

It was hot.

A thin layer of perspiration had formed on Hydrangea's skin, coating her and acting as an unwanted adhesive to her clothes and hair. Opening her crystal blue eyes, she was met with colour. Orange, blue, red and purple hues dancing carelessly around her as if unaware of the destruction they brought; narcissism overflowing as they wrapped themselves around any object that dare be in their way consuming it within seconds. Smouldering, the flames licked the bottom of the wooden post of her bed like a hungry kitten with a saucer of milk; crackling, playful, gentle at first, as if wondering if it would succumb to its warmth.

The fire flickered, flared, leapt and spat shower of sparks like a fountain, plumes of grey smoke, wound itself around the post like a great hungry serpent, devouring everything in it's path, choking clouds of noxious smoke, inferno, blazing, ash floating to the ground like great dirty flakes of snow, showering onto everything, sprinkling onto the ground.

Hydrangea finally screamed (a dry distorted sound at best) when the fire wove itself around her sheets, inching towards her slowly and purposefully like a predator eyeing its prey with large hungry eyes.

Dry heaving and coughing as she ran away from her bed and towards what she hoped was an escape, the smoke acting as an unwanted lover passionately covering every inch of her vision and permeating her nostrils as it made home in her lungs burning and squeezing as it ate up all the oxygen available.

However, she did not stop moving away from the spiteful colours.
And almost seemingly aware of her presence, the flames did not stop chasing her.

The raging fire played amid the furniture like a child with a new toy, it's flames leaping in excitement, it's quiet crackling like giggling in the woods.
“Princess!” she heard a gruff voice call out to her amongst all the catastrophe.
Turning back, she saw a guard she was familiar with running towards her with a great mix of emotion swimming in his eyes, smelling of soot and panic.
“There’s been an attack to the crown and I need to get you to safety your highness”

She didn’t have time to think, to comprehend or even reply to the horrific information as her tiny slender frame was scooped up in the large arms of the guard away from the only place she knew to be home now a vengeful inferno.

And in those ocean eyes, you could still see the flames dancing around in her eyes, burning in light of a promise.

Apparently, expensive furniture, sturdy walls and blue blood wasn’t enough for the fire. In the citadel below, the rampaging fire continued to consume like a great famished beast devouring everything in it's path and belching out black smoke. In the distance, thick grey smoke billowed into the skies. The once pale blue sky is now shielded by a veil of darkness as the smoke swallows up the whole sky. Fierce fire could be seen sneaking their way out from the rows of trees.

Men with bulky silver outfits and masks, assisting in terrorizing the people as shrieks rang through the hot night air. Mothers calling for their children, fathers fighting for their family and little kids calling out to whoever cared but the only responses to their painful cries were a fist or a gunshot. The glowing embers continued to leap and twirl in a fiery dance, twinkling like stars in the hot swirling air before cascading to earth like gleeful fire fiends, setting alight the tinder dry forest of high August.
It was pure, unadulterated chaos. The pandemonium sweeping across the town as a young aster flower tearfully watched from under a fallen tree as the fire (insatiable) persistently consumed and consumed until it eventually devoured itself as well amongst the bed of ashes and struggling embers and a group of friends much like a bouquet of a strange mix with basil, lily, hawthorn, ivy and an orchid; holding hands in a firm grip under a bed as the smell of wood smoke drifted through the house like incense.

Later they would describe the fire as a wall of intense heat that threatened to burn their very lungs, cooking them from the inside.
Later they would describe the fire as a blazing inferno that destroyed everything in its path.
But for now only the glimmering embers were left, shrouded in ash and the flowers blooming within.
Clockwork

Chapter Summary

We get to meet our first character and some of the people of the castle.

This occurs a couple of months after the prologue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

What’s your favourite colour?”
“What whatever yours might be your highness”
Violet.

“What’s your favourite song?”
“Whichever pleases the ears of the Prince”
Supermarket flowers.

“What’s your favourite food?”
“Whichever you find most appetizing your highness”
Fairy cakes.

“What can I do to get you to actually say something different?”
“What do you want me to say?”
Get better soon.

“Look at me at least, please“

The borderline pitiful plea Lea heard in his voice made her finally stop and sigh. Lea finally looked up from the foot of the crown Prince she was currently cleaning, her thin hazel eyes met large grey ones. The Prince’s face was riddled with pity and exhaustion like he was the one on his knees everyday trying to rehabilitate what seemed to be a lost cause to this lame duck.

Like he was the one whose life was based on fear and blind faith; constantly on the line.

Like he was the one who fetched all sorts of herbs everyday to try and heal him.

Like he was the one who had to deal with the politics of the palace and the pompous prats that called themselves nobles.

Like he was the one who had to go days without food(praying and chanting, body begging for rest) to whichever god heard that he would not wake up dead the next.

Like he was the one who had to deal with the constant pain of loss, betrayal and spells; the burden of her actions constantly weighing down upon her, showing in her slumped shoulder, subtle limp and dark under eyes.

Like he was the one whose life ran on a pitiful clockwork.
Like he was the one with the miserable life.

Noticing she wasn’t really looking at him, rather looking through him, he patted her head and gave her a small smile; plump pink lips stretching around pearly whites framed by deep dimples.

“Knock Knock”

“Who’s there?”

“Ice cream”

“Ice cream who”

“Ice cream if you don’t let me in”

Lea didn’t laugh.

**That was a little funny.**

“Come on, it was better than the chicken one you said” the Prince said grumbling, murmuring in between words like a baby deprived of its favourite toy.

**Oh**

“It wasn’t intended as a joke your highness”

“It was supposed to ground you to reality, a reality you refuse to accept”

“Keeper” she gestured to herself.

“Prince” she pointed to him.

“It wasn’t supposed to be funny cause this situation isn’t”

There was stretched out pause, in which the only thing that filled the deafening silence was the bustle of the townsfolk below.

“Your highness”

She half-expected the Prince to *finally* lash out and have her beaten by his men for her disrespect but he only gave her another dazzling smile.

His smile was one of happiness growing, much as a spring flower opens. She could see how it came from deep inside to light his pearly eyes and spread into every part of him. A person smiles with more than their mouth, and Lea saw it in the crinkles underneath his eyes, the dimples blooming in his cheeks and the way he relaxed.

It was beautiful.

Like Lea didn’t just disrespect him.

Like she had just given him the best news.

Like he wasn’t fighting death everyday due to the crimes of his father.

Like he wasn’t struggling to do something as simple as breathe or even just exist sometimes when
the hex had its grip too tight.
Like the kingdom still saw him as a valid candidate for the crown.
Like he wasn’t going through great affliction.
Like he didn’t fear the end.

**Like he cares about her.**

Lea immediately pulled the breaks on her straying train of thoughts.

“Yesterday, I got a joke even though it was rather awful” he teased, taking on what he believed was a scolding tone but came off as tentative.

“Today, I got a mini speech about classism!”
He sounded so accomplished.

“Who knows what tomorrow will give me” he shrugged, as he finally stood up and gave her head another pat.

“Maybe an actual answer to my questions”

“or dare I say...”

A smile!” he gasped; over exaggerating as he made a horror stricken face.

“I don’t know about you but I am winning at life here” he clapped and waddled towards his bed; a shiny large brown structure with a soft mattress and luscious red sheets.

**Overdramatic much.**

Lea sighed and resisted the overwhelming urge to roll her eyes as she watched the Prince struggle to get into bed properly. Dropping the wet cloth that smelt of oils and roses on a mahogany stool, she approached him to properly tuck him in, ignoring his gaze and gratitude only to get back on her knees at the foot of his enormous bed to wait for any more instructions.

It was the Prince’s turn to sigh and roll his eyes.
He despised it. The fear.

You were privileged enough to have a title and no one dared look you in the eye.

You had ties to the throne and people quivered when they walked by you.

You had to depreciate yourself in some preposterous guise of respect.

Noblemen and women being treated like living gods.

And even though he hated it, he understood it. The law was strict and if the amount of people in confinements, beaten daily, tortured or burnt were anything to go by, he knew why no one wanted to make the deadly mistake of irking an imperial.

And even though he understood it, he wanted it gone. Not necessarily just from some place of generous self-righteousness but a kingdom built on fear is like one of a house built of cards; any little disruption to the order and it all comes crashing down.
And that disruption is hope. Because though hope is nothing but a frail thread; it is hard to destroy. and all it would take for this fickle empire to crumble would be a bunch of people who had that (no matter how minute) which would eventually lead to bravery and soon the iron fist used to terrorize would go to rack and ruin.

What the kingdom needed was respect and love. However, it was hard to respect a usurper and harder to love a murderer who took away your freedom. He couldn’t help but understand where his father was coming from half the time but the end does not always justify the means.

The Prince fixed his gaze back to Lea.

“Why you insist on belittling yourself is just outlandish. You don’t need to do that like you’re some puppy or a slave” the Prince said distaste bitter on his tongue, lacing his voice.

“Yet I am Your highness”

“Not to me Lea”

His tone was as unexpected as his response. It was low, with an agreeable trace of kindness and a hint of more power than his frail body would suggest - not a foist voice, but one on which time had imposed a discipline which hadn’t quite obliterated the soft accent of care.

She reckoned if someone was keeping you from death’s cold grip you’d have kindness to spare.

Nevertheless, Lea didn’t move. The last time he had convinced her to break protocol in which his excuse to get her to sit on his bed was that he was just too overwhelmingly exhausted to move to the chair and she would get a better angle if she did so.

Conveniently, that was when a chambermaid barged in with their cleaning equipment completely misreading the situation as their mouth fell open in shock. The servant turned beet red letting out strings of apologies and excuses before leaving the room.

Quite a taboo situation.

Lea had to face the next few weeks with dirty looks, condescending remarks, death stares and voices constantly chattering behind her back about the cheap and nasty rumour that got spread around. Apparently, she was trying to seduce the Prince and while she was sure the Prince meant no harm by coming to her defence when he confronted two servants gossiping, it did make matters worse and now the new found narrative was that the Prince was in love with her and expectedly everyone gave her the cold shoulder due to either disgust or jealousy.

It was quite often the latter.

The Prince might be fighting off the grim reaper with a leaner frame than most, sunken eyes and cheeks with strong fevers that racked his body and threatened to shake his core but anyone with functioning eyes could see he was striking.

With a strong jaw and defined features that set up the rest of his face just right; such as his doe grey eyes like the soft grey of a signet on the Thames, but with the lustrous sheen of polished opals (sometimes nearing either a blinding silver or the cloudy skies) with long eyelashes, thick eyebrows, a sharp straight nose and plump rosy lips, with warm skin and broad shoulders alongside an intimidating height of five foot eleven. To make matters worse, his personality was as bright and stunning as his blonde hair attracting both women and men with his effortless and effective charms.
No one needed to be this charming.

Lea had definitely not been eyeing him up though.

Just a casual observation, humans observe.

“Fine” the prince let out his nth frustrated gust of air noticing she wasn’t budging.

“I guess I’ll just have to let you go if it means you’ll get off your knees”

Finally standing up, she gave the Prince a small nod and a quick your highness before she arranged her things the silence between them stretching uncomfortably.

“These are two herbs to help with your energy, you should take it at once by noon your high-”

Sitting up abruptly, ignoring the sharp pain in his sides he held Lea’s face in his hands and squished it.

“On God, I will kill myself before this damn sickness kills me if you say your highness in that forever monotone voice of yours again. I’m Roman say it” he looked at her expectantly, eyes glimmering with hope.

Ignoring the touch from his thin fingers; how despite their delicate appearance, they were so soft and comforting, how it would be rather easy to lean on them and embrace their warmth, as well as ignoring his request, she gave him a deadpan look while looking pointedly to his hands.

He dropped them immediately, as if her face was afire.

“I’ll see you later”

“Your highness”

The door shut silently behind her.

Lea let go of the breath she was holding as she placed her hand above her chest where her heart was beating in betrayal of the vacant emotions she always radiated.

Stupid prince
Stupid
Stupid
Stupid
Just stupid!
I’m just trying to do my job but nooooo.
Arghhhhh.

Stomping away from his door to head to her space( a compact dark room beneath the palace where she did almost everything) she couldn’t help but be frustrated. Why didn’t he understand things? Everyone else did besides this beryl blonde boy. She knew it was just kindness, something people didn’t have enough of much less to spare but she didn’t want it.

She didn’t want to call him Roman or laugh at his poor jokes or tell him about her day for what was the use of all the informalities only to have him dead, only to be disappoint him.

She didn’t want to disappoint him.
Now, let's get this straight, Lea loathed the royal family with everything that was within her. Hated their rules, their ways, their looks yet here she was treating one of them. The person who shared the blood with a stone cold murderous thief, and as much as she tried, she couldn’t for the life of her channel that hatred towards him. Maybe it was because she had come to hate the idea of them without actually ever knowing them, just what they stood for, what they’ve done and continued to do but sometimes a little voice in the back of her head told her it was as simple as the fact that he was just a good person.

That was because of the way he actually seemed to care, to appreciate, to be; a person with death for a shadow seemingly more alive than anyone else in the countless walls of the castle.

Maybe it was the way he smiled, and the way his entire face followed, or the way he spoke without much spite or anger or pride, just in the moment.

Maybe it was the numerous times she’d catch him staring a little too long, too many emotions swimming in steely eyes or the way he was too gentle whenever he touched her, uncomfortably gentle like she was a rare and expensive porcelain sculpture.

She often ignored the voice.

Then proceeded to conclude she didn’t have a single clue why she didn’t want to disappoint him.

While Lea was too focused on her haphazard thoughts, she wasn’t aware of the two figures trailing behind her engrossed in their own discussion.

“Send one of the newer ones to my chamber later” the young blue-blooded aristocrat commanded, not sparing a glance at the quivering form besides him.

“Yes your highness” the scared servant replied in an automated manner, keeping his eyes on his feet.

Meanwhile, the young royal from his line of vision he could make out the bulky frame of the young woman who had been the sole cause of all his problems.

“You know what” the noble chirped, pausing his strides.

“I’ve changed my mind, send one of it to the unwell prince make sure it’s fresh and terrified” he chuckled slightly; a dry sound that did not reach his heart.

“The crown prince? But your highness-” the servant questioned, so utterly confused that he had forgotten who he was speaking too.

Getting cut off with a firm hand grabbing the back of his neck, he held a shriek at the back of his throat, tears already threatening to spill.

“Did I stutter you abominable halfwit?”

The prince threatened as calm as a leaf in the wind, voice nothing but a harsh whisper as he squeezed tighter, his cold metal rings piercing the servants skin, enjoying as the petite boy squirmed silently and thick crimson fluid begun to flow, as his hand left another mark amongst the sea of scars already there.

The servant couldn’t find his voice; throat choked up with tears so he just shook his head.

The prince let the tiny slave go with a snicker.
“I'm just playing, jeez look at you getting so worked up”

“You’re so adorable” the prince cooed, giving a sweet but venomous smile, one that reminded the petrified boy of a cupcake laced in poison.

The prince rubbed the servant's neck soothingly, before proceeding to clean the blood on his rings on his face.

“Leave and kindly make sure I don’t see your ugly self for the rest of the day” he commanded, attitude doing another 180⁰.

The valet did not respond only doing a full bow and scurried tears spilling from his eyes.

Focusing his attention on his new target, he smirked.

“Wench!”

Lea froze as the condescending voice broke her train of thought.

There was always this split second of gut-wrenching fear that shuts her body down, limbs refusing to move as if suspended in time, her heart skipping at least three beats then proceeding to leap out her chest, adrenaline hitting the roof and she nearly collapses but then a tiny voice reminds herself that it was just an insult and that he didn’t know.

No one did.

And no one needed to.

Calming down like she wasn’t seconds away from a heart attack a millisecond ago, she turned around.

“Prince” came her stoic reply.

“It’s been a long time”

Not long enough.

“Are you done with your daily tomfoolery with my brother? I don’t even knows what he sees in a frump like you” he suddenly began with resentment from literally nowhere, disgust evinced in his features and clear in his voice.

It’s not today.

“I suppose that was a rhetorical question seeing as you of all people who puts that larg- uh, mighty nose of yours in other people’s business should know what I do with the crown prince” Lea replied cool as a cucumber; making sure he could hear the mockery while coming off seemingly innocent.

His smirk was nowhere to be found.

On God, he abhorred her. From the way she looked, spoke, walked, to even the way she breathed. She walked into their lives like a tornado and swept everything off its feet with that constant cunning look in her eyes like she had something to hide. Just looking at her set him off and had his blood boiling.

“You treacherous harpy-"
“Also, if you’ll so kindly allow me throw that question back at you.” Lea said firmly, cutting short whatever nonsense the prince was about to spew.

“Have you ever wondered what the kingdom sees in you or lack of thereof that they would choose your ailing brother over you. It’s a little sad don’t you think”

“Of course, silly frumpy me. You don’t think, you just do, quite an action man” she simpered innocently.

The second prince was seething silently, nearly foaming at the mouth like a rabid dog. His mouth contorted in a wicked leer.

“For someone that has absolutely nothing to them, you sure do enjoy running your large mouth like that” the ocean-eyed prince replied, speaking calmly through clenched teeth.

“And for someone who is supposed to be intelligent, you haven’t answered my simple question yet Ravi” she tsked.

“Silence is true wisdom in the presence of a fool”

“I wonder why people still talk to you then”

“Simply because I am not a fool”

“And yet time and time again, you act one”

The implications of what she did hung heavy in the air, as their little quip seemed to have ended.

“If you’ll excuse me, I’ll be going on my way” she gave him a tight grin and began to walk away from his furious figure.

Was it disrespectful? Absolutely.

Did she really care? Absolutely not.

She heard a faint chuckle as she sauntered away from him.

**That boy has got issues, maybe its him I should be treating.**

She admittedly found herself a little bit ironic when a few minutes ago she was adamant on respect and all that brouhaha but didn’t care much for it when it came to the second prince. For respect was earned in as much as it was reciprocal. She respected the prince because he deserved it without even seeking it, because he was affirmative yet kind in his ways, because he wasn’t a contemptuous prat throwing his title at everything.

Ravi through and through was toxic and entitled and his only language was abuse.

She tried to get rid of the cancerous thoughts the second prince planted in her mind that soured her mood as she went down the several flights of stairs that led to her little chamber.

The stairs ahead were twisted in a perfect spiral, like a child’s slinky toy pulled from each end. Each stair was likely a deep walnut, but with the thick layer of undisturbed dust it was hard to tell. The inner edge was painted antique cream, and when she had disturbed the dust layer the paint was quite perfect underneath; no dirt and no flaking or dents. It was as if it was perfect one day and abandoned the next, just like the rest of the world. So where were the burn marks? She let her hand
fall on to the black iron rail, rough in it's rustic charm and placed her weight on the following steps. There was no creak or sign of damage, they were as solid as the day they were made. She walked swiftly to the bottom leaving some of her shoe prints behind.

Reaching her destination, she took the silver key and opened the solid wooden door, shutting it silently behind her, locking it and finally letting a breath she'd been holding all day go.

Another day and Aster had lived long enough to keep her secret.

“Lumina” she spoke softly into the air, and immediately her lamps lit up with tiny bright flames that brightened up the dark space.

The flame burnt neatly amid the dusty wax, the tasteful coffee hues dull beneath the layers of years.

At first it smelt odd, as if the fire were digesting the dirt, then it was just the same as any other candle - orange flame, blackening wick and pooling wax.

Looking around her room to make sure no one had been snooping around, she saw the regular arrangement with nothing out of place. Potions, a small dark bed in the corner, scrolls, books, herbs and atypical drawings on a table and littered on the granite floor. Precisely as she left it.

Living in fear was a funny thing. Constantly looking over your own shoulder, illusions of your secret being the subject of conversation when you see people talking, fearing every corner and bend for the people who will put you in shackles, permanent clammy hands, cold sweats down your spine, shaky limbs and eyes, alongside the regular skip in the heartbeat and without question crippling anxiety.

Fear were her shackles, a knife in her gut slowly twisted, fear is a constant hammer on the head. She consoled herself with something someone old had told her a long time ago “Fear is wisdom in the face of danger”

It’s not even the predictable anger or pain that’s the worst, it’s the "randoms" stuff you know is coming, just never when. The randoms work on the mind as a torture, elevating primal fear, decreasing logic and self-control.

But here, here among all the strange artefacts, there was no fear only belonging, she wasn’t a strange natural phenomenon, wasn’t a criminal, wasn’t a slave to the court, wasn’t demonized or degraded, wasn’t Lea. Just herself. Just Aster. Just a sorceress.

She plopped herself on the only chair in the room, letting out a groan and stretching like a cat(her bones cracking loudly like a popcorn in the oven), she let her overactive mind run a million miles per second as she cast a nonchalant glance across the room.

It was miles different from the princes room, while the prince’s room was posh and grandeur with mostly red accents with a generally minimalistic feel, her room was a messy minuscule space where she put everything where it could fit, the princes room also had large windows with had the prettiest views, sometimes she was tempted to just go there and enjoy the view of the garden below or the gorgeous glimmering moon above, the prince-

Wait wait wait

Why am I thinking about the prince?
“Well his room but” she soliloquies.

This was her safe space, no negative thoughts allowed; and that included Roman.

“Let’s try again"

Grumbling, she let herself sink even more into the chair relaxing a bit.

Ah yes, she’d have to head out recently for some fresh herbs, maybe go take a walk in the forest and clear her head and decipher what the next move was on the princes situation, she was sure the forest creatures would have something for her to help the princ-

“OKAY” she yelled frustrated.

“I’ll just focus on the prince since that’s what the universe wants”

“Prince this, prince that” she mumbled angrily to herself.

This is what happens when your life revolves around someone else.

Removing her multiple layers of heavy drab clothes that doubled her very lean frame(half caused by malnutrition the other half stress) plus it held so many emergency herbs and potions she couldn’t even keep count of at this point but knew she needed.

She hoped a day that she needed to run wouldn’t come cause she’s as good as dead.

Maybe I’ll learn teleportation one of these days.

Casting aside the clothes, she took the little glass tube which held the crown prince’s blood(surprisingly easy to obtain with the help of her little friend camomile) she looked at it with mild cognitive curiosity.

“What will you give me today?” she said in a sing song voice as she quickly got on her knees and drew a common symbol in the occultic universe; a star in a circle.

Grabbing a blooming daisy from a flower pot, she poured the dark fluid on the daisy and placed it in the middle of the circle.

“Oh sanguis emanavit in animam sanguinis euoluam” She chanted three times nothing but authority in her voice. Slowly, the blood started to creep away from the flower and flow through the lines.

“Ignis” suddenly the symbol was on fire, the blood acting as a fuel as the faint smell of copper and nightshade filled the air.

Aster watched; frustrated and despondent, as the fire burned low, and the daisy wilted slowly, petals shrinking and turning pitch black, following was the fire turning a deep unsettling purple before dying out.

The cursed poison hadn’t even cleared halfway from his system if this was still happening. Picking up the destroyed flower, she poked her thumb with a needle, a deep rouge colour flowing out before she rubbed it at the flowers base watching as it blossomed back to life.

More blood rituals it is then.
Contemplating which day would be perfect, the loud clanging sound of the infamous bells rang piercing through her thoughts.

_Not this again._

Despite just wanting to ignore the seven rings of the bells and everything it signified in exchange for her warm bed and maybe a bath she still found herself donning all her garments back, clearing up the signs of a ritual with the wave of a hand before proceeding to lock her door and cross-checking if the door was air tight.

After walking all the way back and beyond, past stairs and doors, maids and guards, she found herself just another petrified face amongst the hundreds gathered in similar clothing, plain, poor, and rugged.

In the middle of it all was a stake, with a young girl not older than eight by the looks of her soft features and wide innocent eyes pleading for her life by the seconds, by her side an anonymous masked man with a flaming torch.

“Behold, a wicked creature of the night, a cursed creature, a heathen”

_Ah shit, here we go again._

Aster almost rolled her eyes, as she spared a glance to the poor, hopeless girl who had fat droplets of tears rolling down her chin. Aster's bland expression telling nothing of her internal turmoil, face impressively neutral betraying how she was clenching down on her own teeth and her hand forming a fist so tight under her tunic that her nails broke the skin below.

“This young beast is nothing but an evil witch! And her and her kind must be destroyed in the new iron order, one of equality and justice!”

_There is nothing just about a system that doesn’t allow you be who you are._

There was nothing just nor equal about the new order. An order that thrived on subjugation was no order. An order that made people be fear freedom and hate themselves is no order. An order that changed your identity and turned you into a slave was no order. It was chaos.

“Let her receive the iron punishment for her crimes against the crown”

Like magic(ironically), the fire began to spread from beneath her, as people in the crowd struggled to watch.

Some had signs of tears pooling in their eyes, empathy or sympathy she’d never know.

Some looked thrilled letting out little hoots of approval or a nod or two, a callous smile on empty faces.

And some looked indifferent. Face stoic and calm, like the screams of the children did not affect them, like the smell of burning flesh did not haunt them at night, like the gluttonous fire did not remind them of the beginning of the end. People like Aster.

Pretending had become her forte, but it did nothing to quell the pain inside her. It was times like this she truly realised that her hatred was deserved. It was well deserved when she wanted nothing more than to poison the entire castle, noblemen and servant alike.

It was times like this her heart hardens against the prince and passive or active he condones this
behaviour. It was times like this she remembers why she was actually here, none of it of true
volition. It was times like this she remembers just how pitiful she really is living on someone else’s
name, a family name she spat on.

Waking up, picking herbs, going to the prince, entertaining a problematic royal, before proceeding
to the another ritual so she could wake up, pick herbs, go to the prince, entertain a problematic
royal before proceeding to do another ritual which would let her gave yet another day of picking
herbs, going to the prince, entertaining a problematic royal and eventually doing a ritual. Rinse and
repeat.

What a life, if she could even call it that.

*What’s a life anyway?*

*We’re born.*

*We live a little while.*

*And then we die.*

Should she be *grateful?*

*Furious?*

*Confused?*

It didn’t matter cause she chose this. They were multiple choices and she made hers.

And while she was free to make whatever choices she wanted, she was not free of the
consequences of those choices.

A little voice in her head sometimes went off.

*You shouldn’t have to do this, you deserve happiness without sacrifice. The world is unfair.*

But these were the cards she had, this is the hand she’s been dealt.

*And Aster plays to survive.*

Aster looked through the burnt skin of the girl, and the ashes the fire had spat out, a life of so much
promise now no more, letting her heart bleed for the last time as before turning her head away.

The bell rang and the people moved away, clearing out from the setting like it was just another day
because in truth it was. *This* had become their normal. The bell rang and Lea resumes her job.

The bell rang and dazed, Lea stumbles through the crowd as she’s greeted with the palace gates,
the echoes of the bells burn deeply into her memory, with heavy steps she turns and heads to her
room heavy eyes focused on only the next turns of the corridors that pass in rows.

Throat *dry*; words stuck in them.

Heart *heavy*; tears begging to spill.

However, Lea's lips remain shut; **like they always are**, and life continues to snowball.

Like clockwork.
So where do I begin...
Oh this is heavily influenced by Game of thrones, the hunchback of notre dame, avatar the last aribender and the prince of Egypt
This isn't beta read
I updated literally weeks after due to laziness, confusion about my characters cause I only learnt how to write narratives not characters back in school and being busy with home stuff but after days of editing I'm somewhat okay with what I've written.
Please leave kudos and comments it really helps me and don't be afraid to ask questions.
This isn't perfect but I really did try.
If you see phrases repeated too much I'm sorry
Also sorry if some parts are cringe
Thank you for reading.
P.S- this was so hard to edit on here bruh

End Notes

Please leave kudos and a comment. It really helps creators 😊

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