

Xerxes was awoken by the commotion outside his room. He grumpily got up, wondering what the commotion was about. As he got up, he could feel his muscles and joints aching. He got even more grumpy. He never liked this sick body of his. He never wanted a sick body like this. He hated his poor miserable life. He felt as if the heavens or death was teasing him.

Death. He was not afraid of it as his physician always told him that death could come at any day. It loomed over him, watching him. When he was younger, he was afraid but after a while, that fear disappeared. Every single day, death always threatened him but never took him. It was simply teasing him. After a while, he wished death would come silently in his sleep to end his agony. But it never did come. Death and the heavens must be just be having fun at his expense. He was their joke.

He held his desk tightly as he steadied himself on the ground. The cold must have made his joints worse. He let out a soft annoyed grumble, cursing himself. Then, he took in a deep breath, calming himself. He reminded himself that despite being teased by death, he was not going to let them have the pleasure of seeing him weak. Nobody would.

He opened the door and saw his servants running in the corridor, frantically. It looked completely chaotic. He could hear their desperate chatters.

*What had happened?* He wondered.

Then, he saw a servant carrying his younger sister in his arms, rushing across the corridor. She was bleeding and there was an arrow that penetrated one of her limbs. Her injury looked severe. The blood dripped to the floor, leaving an ugly trail. He frowned. He was worried about his little sister but he felt that the heavens and death were unfair.

If there was anyone that should die, it was him. Not his sister or anyone. So, he listed one more reason why he hated death and the heavens. He closed his door and sat back on his bed. He tried to guess what had happened.

*An ambush?*

*An Assassination?*

*A coup d'etat?*

It could be anything, really.

Suddenly, he noticed a rain of arrows headed towards his house. Quickly, he rolled out of his bed and hid under desk. He watched as the rain of arrows pierced his windows, breaking it into pieces and landing violently on his floor and furniture. He stuck his head out a little to see the damage. There were arrows everywhere in his room. It was suddenly clear to him that this is an ambush. An assassination.

But who would want to do this? That was a tough question. It could be anyone, really. His father is the Marquis D'Arya who is a powerful man. He had quite a few enemies. It could be their Northern Enemy, the king or the other lords that wanted him dead.

He waited to see if there was another attack coming. After half an hour, a general entered his room. He was sweating and he wore a worried expression, "Lord Xerxes???!!" He looked around the room.

"I'm fine." Xerxes came out of his hiding spot.

“Thank god, you’re fine!!” The man looked so grateful.

“What happened?”

“An ambush, my lord.”

“I can see that. Do you know why this happened and who caused this.”

The general shook his head and it made Xerxes sigh.

The general, Lord Howard looked down, frowning. Xerxes could see that the general wanted to inform him something but then, restrained himself.

“What is it?”

Before Lord Howard could speak, the door opened and it was Howard’s son that entered. It was Brandon, a good friend of Xerxes or rather his only friend.

“You’re fine!!” Brandon wore a big smile of relief as he hugged him.

Xerxes rolled his eyes. “Of course. Now, let go of me.”

Howard smacked his son on his head, whispering in a stern voice, “That’s not how you treat your lord!”

“We are friends~!” Brandon said in sing song manner.

Howard shook his head, sighing at his son’s innocence and naiveness. You don’t become friends with your lord. He is your master and you serve him, faithfully. That is a duty of a general. But then, his son was young. What did he know?

Xerxes shook his head, “I never said we were friends. It was you who decided to barge into my room, suddenly.”

Brandon smiled playfully, “Well, I’m sorry. *My lord.*”

Xerxes ignored Brandon and looked at Howard, “What is it that you want to tell me?”

The man eyes shiftily heavily. He looked at his son, shooting him a glance to leave the room. Brandon could see that it was something serious so he obeyed his father and left the room.

“It’s about your father.”

Xerxes raised his eyebrow. “What about my father?” He was never closed to his father. In fact, he never even liked his father.

“He has passed on, my lord.”

The news slowly settled into Xerxes head. He didn’t feel particularly sad. Nor was he happy about it. But for some reason, there was a sense of relief. He no longer had to stand his father. He always hated the way his father looked at him. His father always looked at him with sad dissappointed eyes. He was always gave the look that said that Xerxes was an sad incompetent sick weakling and he hated it. He could see that his father was disappointed in him.

Most times, his father couldn’t even bare to look at him. That must be how revolting he was to his father. He hated that. He was the weak son that his father never wanted.

“How did he die?”

Howard looked down, frowning. “He was out in the gardens, with your sister. He was going to train her on swordfighting and then, a rain of arrows came and struck them both. He died, protecting your sister.”

Xerxes tightened his fist. Of course, his father was with his sister. Of course, he died protecting her. She was after all, his preferred heir to the title of Marquis D’Arya. He has been training his sister ever since she was born. She was the healthy one. Not him. She was the child he always wanted. Not him.

“My sister, is she alive?”

“Yes but she’s very afraid.”

Xerxes nodded his head.

“Who is the new marquis now?” Xerxes looked at Howard. He bet it was his sister because his father has been training her. He thought to himself, Lady Lynette Luna Millefiore, the Marquise D’Arya. Would she make a good Marquise? Of course, she would. She’s been trained but then again, she was still far too young.

Howard bowed down in front of Xerxes, surprising him. “It is you, my lord. You are the new marquis.”

Xerxes raised his eyebrow. “How about my sister?”

“Don’t be silly, my lord. You are the oldest son of Lord Gaston. You are the rightful heir of the title.”

Howard kissed his hand, “Lord Xerxes Lloyd Millefiore, Marquis D’Arya. Long live the lord.”

Xerxes wondered if his father’s general would accept him as their new lord. After all, he was young and sick. It didn’t help that he was hidden from public view. He wondered.