

Prologue

“So this royal ball we’re going to... you’re sure it’s safe, right?”

“Safe? Well, I wouldn’t say “safe” but we were invited! Dear, it’d be rude to decline!”

The disgruntled woman beside her in the limousine rubbed her shoulder and pushed the brown bangs out of her face. She seemed to notice her hesitance and dug into her purse to fish out the ball invitation. “It is only full of the most distinguished guests from Valaya! Now is your chance to be seen!”

“I don’t think you get it... Do you realize that we are the most wanted criminals in Valaya right now...?”

“Oh please, criminal, wanted, it’s just a label, Dear!” Under her breath, she began to mutter now with a sudden burst of energy, “Oh! Are you alright back there Liv’?”

“Fine! I just wish there was more space.”

“Well, when you’re traveling under the radar you take what you can get!” After a moment of silence her Dear announced, soft-spoken, that the only reason they are under the radar and not executed is because of her inherent cautiousness. Which the other brushed off with, “Chalet, are we almost there? I would like to get there as soon as possible!”

30 Minutes Later

“Ah, you three look stunning, and what are your names?”

Through a thick black veil, the tallest woman announced, “My name is Eilen, this is my Dear, Veronica, and the youngest is Olive.”

The man scanned the list in front of him, flipping through page after page of influential figures across the Milky Way Galaxy. “Oh, I can’t seem to find your names.” He scratched his head in frustration until Eilen put a finger in front of his nose.

“We have special invites from the host of the party, don’t waste your breath trying to find us on there.” She slid the pamphlet across his clipboard, and his eyes widened before looking at their masked faces.

“I- of course, the Gala is just down the hallway and it will be the first door on your left. Enjoy your night.”

Eilen led the other two down the long corridor that was adorned with gold-plated columns, and a fresco mural covered the entirety of the ceiling. “This place is so lavish..” Liv looked around the hallway, stunned.

“Oh, you think this is cool? Take a look.” Eilen approached a massive door, pure varnished ebony with carved designs to represent every planet in the galaxy. Let’s head in. Don’t be a stranger now.” The door was pushed open to reveal a wonderful ballroom, the ceiling opening into the massive starry sky as sculptures of the Fates hung from the columns that lined each corner of the room. In the center was an intricately made fountain that sent various small

rivers throughout the room. Near the columns, the sculptures drank from these rivers of life. Throughout, people in dresses that likely cost more than their house danced with their lovers as if they had been preparing for this event for the eons that they were able to live.

Eilen gently touched V's shoulder before she took a step into the ball. After a few scans around the room, she saw Olive chatting with some other teenagers in a corner near one of the rivers and the Fate of Death, "typical teenagers and their y2k emo stuff. All their dresses are black! Come on, you can dance with me." V blushed before tenderly taking Eilen's hand, and confidently walking to the fountain.

"Welcome to the Fifth inaugural ball, where tonight, after unforeseen circumstances, we will celebrate the marriage of the Prince and Princess of Valaya. Thank you all for coming today despite the Princess' sudden disappearance. Without further ado, we will have some words from our royalty, Prince Ezkar." The announcer was standing on top of a balcony near the other end of the ballroom, staring over the massive glittering audience. He stepped aside briefly and bowed before retreating to the far end of the balcony. A man with a hardened look stepped forward in his place. What resembled him wiping a tear off his cheek was then followed up by him adjusting his golden and white suit. As he took the microphone his exquisite crown gleamed off the disco light.

Clearing his throat, he began to speak. "I, personally, would like to thank everyone who came here tonight. This will be a long list so please listen for your name as it means a lot to me." Amidst the chatter of the audience, the prince's voice could be heard droning on about how much he is thankful for the guests and then every single one of their names; first, middle, and last. Whenever someone's name was called the crowd let out a little cheer before listening to see if their name was called next, leaning into the Prince's presence.

Olive, from the corner, remained talking with her newfound friends. "Are they really just going to do this all night? I want it to be over, it's super hot in this."

"Girl, you look like your dress was stuffed for the winter!"

Olive rolled her eyes and proceeded to take off her black sweater, throwing it on the ground where it landed in the river. "Come on, let's go find some drinks around here, this water sucks." The group then departed, leaving behind their safe corner and moving deep into the bustling crowd. As they pushed, several groups gave them eerie and unpleasant glances as if they were bugs underneath their shoes that were inferior. At the same time, Eilen noticed a few strange glances from nearby guests through their masks. V, catching on, tightly squeezed Eilen's hand.

"Now, without further ado. Let's dance! But first..." He stared daggers at a single girl in the crowd, Olive, and her exposed Valayan royalty tattoo that her sweater once covered. "We have a few pests to take care of, see? I knew they would show up."

Veronica, her face buried deep in Eilen's chest, sobbed as guards surrounded the two with their firearms pointed directly at them. "Olive!" Eilen screamed as she saw, through the crowd,

the Prince roughly taking her by the arm as tears streamed down all of their faces. A single shot was fired amidst the crowd, and chaos ensued as the ballroom went dark, the power killed.

To be continued...