

It's funny how one can feel both exhausted and useless at the same time. This was a truth that was known all too well to Sovereign Elliot Halloway. He spent his entire day sitting on a cushion having conversations, and yet on his ride home he wanted nothing more than to shut his eyes and never open them again. The life of the village around him seemed to only add fuel to that fire. Kids were heading home as the Sun hit the horizon, the savory smell of cooked meat flushed through the windows of the carriage, and there was a cool breeze that permeated through the air. He felt a twinge of guilt. Everywhere he went he saw the results of his people's efforts. The buildings, the statues, the culture. His work seemed so pointless in comparison. Elliot knew that this was his destiny though. He was born to lead the nation of Andrewsia to prosperity. The talks he had with his war leaders, architects, and religious leaders were all going to support these great things, but truly his contribution seemed to just be speaking it into existence.

He started to think about his future. Perhaps his oldest, Henry, would find more joy in the work. Yes, he was a passionate one. If he directed the same love he had for hunting into his Sovereignty, well then the Nation would be a utopia in the matter of months. He chuckled to himself. Of course, building that transition for him would be a chore, but if he succeeded, well then, then it would all come together. He and Chel could retire. They could move further out into the wilderness. He could start a garden, and they could walk through the wilderness together.

His head swung forward as the carriage came to a stop. Elliot had reached the walls. The guards opened the gates slowly releasing a loud creak. He started to feel refreshed as he saw his home. There was enough land on this lot to fill a small tribe itself, but it was home to only his family and his servants. For the most part it was just flat land with the servants' tents and fireplaces, with a stone pathway driven through them all. However at the back of the lot was his home. It was on a small cliff overhanging the others with a tent the size of about four or five times that of his servants. His carriage continued forward around the cliff and up the back path.

The guards in front of his home unveiled the tents' fabrics to let him in. "Haha, thanks guys, I don't know how I'd get in without you," Elliot said, patting one of them on the shoulder as he entered. The taller one left let out a light chuckle as he entered which was immediately cut down by a glare from the shorter one. "It wouldn't be a problem for them to respond, I should probably find a way to make that clear. Later I suppose" Elliot thought.

"Oh thank goodness you're here" he heard almost immediately. He looked up and saw Chel. She wore a bright orange dress and had daisies in her hair. She had a stack of fine plates in her left hand and grabbed his hand with her right. Her looking this nice meant some news was gonna hit him and it was gonna be either very good, or absolutely terrible. Before he could take a guess she turned around, and started to pull him towards the back patio. Only Chel could fill him with an immediate sense of adrenaline and direction. He was pulled past the patio's fireplace to its table which overlooked the whole domain. She set the plates down next to some utensils.

"I need to finish up the Roast, I need you to cover setting the table and cleaning the living room, got it?"

He chuckled "Did all the servants quit?" he replied with a small grin knowing how it would annoy her.

"We've been over this, the guests can tell when the home is prepared with love and when it isn't"

"Oh, of course how could I forget" he proclaimed with a sarcastic tone, without the grin leaving

"Oh, of course how could I forget" she repeated in a goofy voice. Mockingly missing every enunciation in the sentence

Elliot couldn't help but break out in laughter. That voice got him every time. That jerk.

"Love you" he said as she walked away

"Love you too, you nerd" she responded

So that's what it was. In all his business his plans seemed to have slipped his mind. He started to set the table, plate by plate, fork by fork, spoon by spoon, knife by knife, as the light that flowed through the jungle trees started to dim. He found the irony of his situation to be kind of funny. As a prince he didn't have any work like this. He somehow managed to gain more household chores as he got older. He knew it was for the best though. After all no one knew how to have a get together like Chel and he was excited to see Baron and Lyla again. It felt strange to be without the kids though. He knew their uncle would take great care of them, but he couldn't help but feel a little afraid that something could happen to them and recognizing that the fear was irrational didn't seem to help.

Whatever. He moved on to the living room and he grabbed a broom. It looked like a Thumper had run through it. The cushions were all thrown out of place (including the large one), there was dirt everywhere and the small wooden table had somehow turned upside down. He would have to talk to Henry and the girls about that later. "How did they even manage that?" he said under his breath as bent over to lift it over.

"Good question"

And then Thud! He lost his breath as his weight buckled under the pressure put on his back and he collapsed onto the floor. "Good now, cuff him," the voice continued. Before he could even turn his head to see his attacker, his wrists were stuck in a tight grasp, and despite his efforts, they were quickly put in chains.

"Hold him down" The voice ordered. It sounded old, rough, but strong and clear.

Almost immediately, he heard the rustle of armor as a sandal pressed against his neck. It sounded like his guards when they moved. His neck was not pressed enough to hurt him, but enough where he couldn't turn his head from facing the couch and the dust. His mind started racing with adrenaline. What could he do? Did he know about Chel? Where were the kids? Did the guards betray him? Elliot had to do something. But what? He couldn't move and he had no support. There was probably nothing he could do to escape. But Chel was outside last he saw. There was a chance that she could make it over the walls and hide in the jungle. "ASSASSINS! CHEL! GET OUT!" He screeched at the top of his lungs.

"RUN! RUN! RUN!" He continued

He was interrupted by a blow to his side. He wheezed as he felt the air leave his lungs.

"Your wife is fine. Thrown out the walls. Now pay attention." The old man decreed

A second passed as he struggled to get his breathing back.

"You will die tonight' he continued "Not because of any sin of your own. But, as a sacrifice for a better world. However, before they go, I feel an innocent man has a right to some closure on his passing and its purpose. Now tell me what do you see in front of you?"

Elliot was shaken and he was still stinging from the blow to his stomach. He didn't know what to say. He didn't know what he could say. He closed his eyes, took a deep breath, and started to think. Okay, this guy has a purpose. He wants something and that means that if Elliot were to play along maybe he could find it and use it as leverage. He coughed roughly and responded

"I'm not sure what you're referring to, there's just a mess of my living room"

"Good, that is correct. Now take a second and think. You are the supposed Sovereign. They call you the Scourge of the Jungle, Ruler of Andrewsia. How could this have happened to you?"

His eyebrows lowered with bewilderment but responded "Well, apparently being Sovereign of Andrewsia isn't enough to keep kids from being kids"

"Correct! Titles are virtually worthless. Simple organizational tools. But there is more to it. What would have happened to the children after this disrespectful bout of lunacy? Hah! You don't need to tell me. It would have been a stern talking to and a night without dessert, right? Practically nothing! If I had done that, do you know what my father would have done!?"

" No, but I am so excited to hear" He remarked sarcastically

Another blow hit him in the side leaving him choking for air.

"He would dangle me over the fence! He would leave me just low enough that my finger's were there for the beasts to get a taste."

The foot left Elliot's neck. Pain then reverberated through his skull as his head was yanked up by his hair most likely due to the guard. There in front of him he could finally see the old man. His body was mostly covered by a large dark cloak, but he saw his head and he saw his hands. He was bald. His face was darker than most, with sharp features and a freshly trimmed gray beard. And those eyes, they were filled with rage.

He was holding his hand out in front of Elliot. His tale was proven true by it. Scars from Puncture wounds filled his palms. Some of his fingers had seemed withered, others covered with boils, and his ring finger was about half the size of a normal one.

The old man must have noticed the look of horror in Elliot's face. If so, his response was certainly strange. He gave a genuine smile.

"Yes, it's not a pretty sight, but I wouldn't trade it for all of the world. Because of it I learned a very important lesson. That my actions had consequences. I would then make sure our animals were cared for, my education was covered, and our tables stood straight up where they belonged. You see, this is why you will die, Halloway. Because although you are innocent, your father is not, his father is not, and his father is even less. The consequences of their genocides did not reach them in their time, but their buildings, their world, and their seed that they worked so hard to build all remain. If that was the end of the story what kind of a lesson would that give to the nations? No, they will learn that same truth I learned all those years ago. That their actions will have consequences"

He then shifted his gaze from Elliot to the guard holding him up. "Get him on his knees"

Elliot went silent and gave a thousand yard stare. He felt his hope drain from his body as he came to one grueling realization. There was nothing he could do. Money, Power, and Control everything he could give this man were all worthless to him. He is a believer, an extremist. Today was Elliot's last day alive.

In his paralyzed state the guard lifted him up by the collar to his knees, while another one gave the old man a sword. Elliot might as well have already been dead, his mind had given up. He closed his eyes. A playlist of his happiest moments ran through his head in a desperate search for comfort. He pictured his marriage, all of the different births of his kids, they all had such beautiful and different personalities, it all seemed to merge into one portrait of a beautiful life. All of these thoughts filled him with a melancholic joy as the blade entered his heart and slowly every limb, every muscle, and every memory left him. His eyes shut, never to open again.