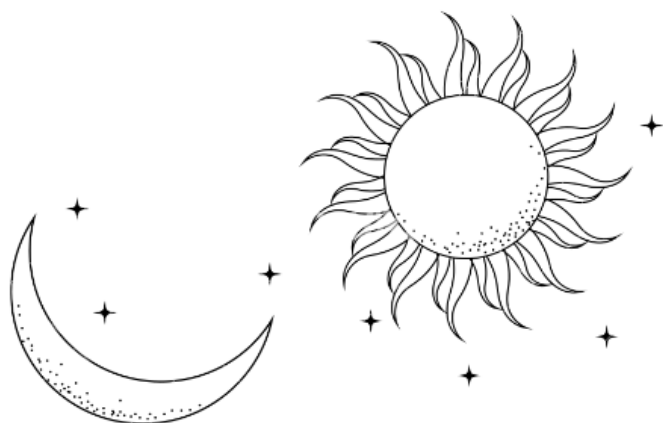


# *Princess of Chaos*

*Alice Granger*



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## Prologue



C amilla cared only about one thing. Writing. The usual bookstore was closed. Family matters. So, the quick run to the bookstore had become a 20-minute walk just to follow the GPS to the next closest one. It was part of her routine. She would wake up in the morning and go to a coffee place with her laptop to start work. Around eleven she would go for a walk in the park and then head home to make herself a salad and get back to writing.

A few months ago, she had been able to go to the gym around six p.m., but she was short on money now. On the first day of the gym membership cancelation, she had decided to put on a yoga video, but as soon as she started seeing all the strange positions, she had put on her jacket and rushed to the bookstore. She would just be there a while, to forget about her own story, her own life for a few calm moments. Sometimes she would even open a book at a random page and imagine how the story had gotten to that certain point.

After making another minimalistic dinner, she would go for a run and then write until falling asleep at the kitchen table. They were nice days that could suddenly feel like a loop and like it had been a bad idea to skip college and go straight to writing books that might not ever be read, stories that might not ever be heard. But it was what she liked to do, and it had been going fine until then. She had accumulated a little money working

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part-time in a grocery store during her high school years, and if she were to sell her T.V., she would have enough money to buy healthy groceries until the book was completed. She wanted freedom and comfort, as long as she could survive that way.

Camilla was now standing in front of the wooden door with small windows that reflected white hair, long lashes, and a snub nose. The inside was just as pretty. Wooden bookshelves surrounded the place and book covers were hanging from the ceiling. Limited, special, and first editions if she had to guess.

She leaned against the door, accidentally pushing it forwards and ringing a bell connected to it by a string. This caught the attention of the girl who was at the counter. The girl had short, black, straight hair and a fringe that hid her eyes when she looked down at her phone. She lifted her eyes in one fast movement, acknowledging Camilla's presence, and without a greeting or so, lowered her eyes down again.

The writer dragged her feet to the inside of the store, not wanting to be in the draught. She looked around carefully as if worried she might wake up a dragon if she moved too much. Surrounding her were editions of various books, different from the ones she saw every day. Surprisingly, this bookstore was much bigger than her usual one, hidden and camouflaged by all the colourful stores which surrounded it. No one was here. It was a silent, calm, and even ominous ambiance with the lack of lighting. It was an unfamiliar environment. The smell of varnish was present in the air, and Camilla wondered if someone had been polishing the stairs leading to the second floor.

She decided to look at the fantasy section – luckily, the one that was furthest away from the girl on the balcony. Perhaps it would give her some inspiration for her book - a splendid story about witches, country houses, outsiders, and heartbreak bigger than any luxurious mansion she could ever dream of. Camilla loved fantasy, loved to imagine, and dream about a whole new world that only she knew, secrets waiting to be uncovered. But

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romance? Not her style, and in reality, she was very unfamiliar with it. Although she supposed that if she ever were to write a fairytale embedded with magic and fantasy, romance would have to come along too.

The writer shook her head, banishing such thoughts. Who needed romance? She brushed her fingers along the spines of the books – a habit gained on her afternoons spent in the library after school. In front of Camilla, on the wooden bookshelves – darkened with time – were many glittery and sparkly novels to be read, to be picked up, or even just to be leafed through. Some were covered in dust, a grey layer that started on one side of the bookshelf and ended on the other – except for some books that had been *borrowed*. Camilla promised herself that after she had sold her T.V., she would come back and take one of these.

She spun on her heels, ready to go, afraid that if she kept looking, she wouldn't be the only thing leaving the bookstore. Then, a loud thud caught her attention. Camilla turned around. A book was on the floor, at her feet, and it seemed as if it had just fallen off a bookshelf.

The cover was mostly black, and the title was worn out. Curiously, she grabbed the hardcover and opened it. Stars, symbols, mysterious writing. It looked exactly like what Camilla had been imagining would be the dark magic book that her protagonist, Alfonso, had been studying secretly. In the book she was writing, Alfonso was a farm boy who had been lured by the mysticism behind witchcraft.

The pages were covered in white ink, like stripes on a black cat, and the stars, symbols and the writing were all in gold. The calligraphy was neat and not computer-like, giving the impression it was an old manuscript. Camilla's fingers wandered through the pages and her jaw fell slightly when reaching the last page. It was a 500-page volume in a language she couldn't comprehend, full of drawings and marvellous doodles which made even less sense. She needed to analyse it, and her curiosity and intrigue were consuming her. The book

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was dirty and damaged. Surely, she could get a discount – either that or they had forgotten about the book, and she could just take it for free. Moreover, Camilla believed it could be an added value to her book. These thoughts made for a good reason to take it.

She took the book to the black-haired girl. When she looked up, Camilla was finally able to see her features. A silver jewel was the first thing to pop out in view, the girl's septum was pierced, and the metallic silver-like piece was shining. Her big eyes were too far apart, and all the characteristics together made her look like a cartoonish pig. Camilla hid her disgusted face with a forced smile, but the girl didn't hide hers when looking at the book.

"You can take it," she said tautly, and her gaze went back to the phone at her hands. The writer could swear her voice had come out of her nose.

Camilla gave a quick nod, left the bookstore, and decided to head back home and take a closer look at the untitled manuscript. On her way there she wondered who would have written such a thing. And which title would it have? Would it be as arcane as the book itself?

Upon arriving home, she sat on the couch and laid the book open on her lap. After turning on a nightlamp she looked at it with more attention. She noticed it had a bookmark of its own, and a red band glued on the upper part of the book, between the cover and the pages. It marked two pages. She opened the book on the selected pages – 346 to 347 – and gasped at the sight of a circle that encompassed the whole section. A smile came over Camilla's face. It was perfect; exactly what her book needed!

Leaving the couch with one jump she hurried towards her bedroom and with a quick move, she opened the drawer on her nightstand and searched the mess that was inside, looking for something. When she found it, she returned to the kitchen.

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The space wasn't big, but it would have to work. Down on her knees, raising her hand and holding the white chalk, she began drawing a big circle. She wanted to see how it would look bigger, and the details she might have missed. Her arm started moving, the circle slowly appearing, until it was complete, similar to the one from the book. It was full of different symbols, and they reminded Camilla of Egyptian letters, but they weren't quite the same. The Egyptian letters were more literal, objects drawn down. These symbols were unique, and they would be what she would have imagined if someone had told her that they had found an ancient monument with symbols written all over it.

Camilla's feet shifted to the inside of the circle, and she sat down in the centre, trying to compare the symbols from the book with the ones that she had drawn.

Then, the book disappeared along with everything else around her, but she didn't dive into darkness. All she saw was light. A blinding blue light covered her entire vision. When it started to dim, and her sight came back, she wasn't at her house anymore. She was in this huge, round room, sitting down in front of a long table full of people. Everyone was looking at her. Her first thought was to scream, but instead, she jumped to her feet. What in heaven's name was going on? Why were these people dressed so formally so... fancy? Who were these people? Had she travelled back in time?

The man sat at the end of the table was the first to direct himself to her. "Present yourself!" His voice roared through the long hall.

He wasn't old, but definitely the oldest person at the table. A bright crown sat at the top of his head like the burning sun shone upon the earth and a majestic cloak enveloped his body. His beard and hair weren't long, looking neatly taken care of.

"Camilla, sir," her voice didn't falter, but it had come out more confident than she intended.

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She was still confused, frantically looking around, examining the place, evaluating her options, questioning, attempting to take conclusions. This was the fastest her mind had ever worked and still, it didn't feel as if it was doing much.

The man stood up, his furrowed forehead studying her, his wrinkled nose suspicious. "Do you know where you are? Who we are?"

"No, sir." Her mind was racing, and she could feel her heart thumping in her ears and her palms sweating. She needed to get out of there. Could she run away? Probably not as she would only end up more lost in this weird place. She needed to think. Think. *Think.*

He walked to her and circled her several times, examining, analysing, just like she was doing. It was hard to ignore his fierce look. When he stopped walking, his robe had made a semi-circle around her.

He finally spoke again.

"This is the Sun Kingdom. A kingdom of fairness and prosperity. And good wine," he chuckled to himself before continuing. "We're the royal family. I'm King Arthur." He paused for a moment, looking into her green eyes as if he were trying to read her soul. "You look like an outsider."

"Yes, Your Majesty." Camilla wondered how much information it would be wise to give away. She bit the interior of her cheek before proceeding. "I have no idea why I am here." It was partially true. She was quite sure the circle had some part to do with this.

His eyes lit up as if he was amused by the curious situation. Camilla wanted to take the smug look off his face, but it was no time to be having fun. It was time to run, run, *run* without looking back.

"What do you do for a living, Camilla?"



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Why was he asking these questions? Was it common for someone to appear in his dining hall out of nowhere? Was this an everyday occurrence?

"I'm a writer, Your Majesty."

His eyebrows arched and his eyes fell from her eyes to her hair. His forefinger and thumb rubbed his chin for a bit. He was thinking – or at least was looking thoughtful, Camilla supposed. "So, Camilla- "

A door burst open furiously, the sound echoed in the wide chamber, interrupting the king, and silencing the room. From it, walked a man.

"We need to talk."

His expression matched the brutality with which he had slammed the door, his body was rigid, and his mouth was wide open, yelling various things – things Camilla couldn't quite place as she was too busy looking at him to focus on what he was saying. His dark eyes emanated rage, his short brown hair was messy as if he had more important things to care about than his appearance, and he was wearing a shirt that delimited his arms. If he had come to put up a fight, he seemed to be able to do it without much trouble.

A blond figure got up from the table and all eyes shifted to him. With ease, he managed to remove the man who had just stormed into the dining hall and tried to reason with him. As the men left the room, Camilla observed that the brown-haired man was slightly taller than the blond figure – who by now she assumed was a prince.

The King sighed, his expression irritated, and he asked Camilla to wait for a few moments while he resolved the situation. Camilla could see them talking by the gap in the semi-opened door but couldn't see their expressions or decipher what they were talking about. Or whether it was a heated discussion or a civilized conversation. When he came back, he closed the door

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behind him – the prince hadn't followed. His jaw wasn't tense anymore and his gaze had softened. He looked more satisfied, and a small smile formed on his face when his eyes met Camilla's again.

"I have a deal for you."

Camilla couldn't fathom why he would want to make a deal with her. What would he offer her? What did he have that she needed? Would he offer a way out of this place or information about why she was there? In the end, it wasn't any of this. Her eyes widened as she heard the mad idea.

"You're asking me if I want to write a book inspired by this kingdom in exchange for, when I finish the book, I come back here and become this kingdom's princess?"

Even after saying it aloud, the last part remained unheard. She could feel her blood rushing in her veins, as if those were magic words were pulling her to accept. The desire to write a book about a fantastical kingdom that no one knew about or that was so lost in time to be remembered, tempted her.

"I can tell you all you need to know about the kingdom, the basics, and you can ask me all the questions you want."

Camilla didn't need to ask questions, just receive explanations, and the rest she could leave to her imagination.

"Who was that man?" She asked, nodding towards the door.

"Oh, that was just Zion."

Camilla discreetly smiled at the name and put her hands in her pockets. What did she have to lose?

"I accept your deal."

## Chapter 1

### New dresses



The pen dropped in a fast movement and Camilla's lips curved in approval. She looked at the pile of papers. Months of demanding work stood in front of her, and she vowed to protect them with her life. Only all the coffees she had drunken and the green couch she so many hours had sat at knew the time and effort it had taken her to finish the manuscript, and now that it was all done she didn't want anything to happen to it.

She could finally live life the way she wanted. Travel and drink expensive cocktails while writing all the stories her mind could make sense of. Go to beaches and enjoy the sea, publish more books, or even start another series. Or feel the salty breeze hitting against her face as she ran towards the sea, or the sun burning her cheeks as she looked up to the sky hoping for a burst of creativity. The future was a book waiting to be opened and shuffled. And in this case, Camilla would get to choose the next chapter. The book had been ripped from her hands all her life, but not anymore. Camilla had the upper hand, and she wanted to open *her* book and select the next adventure.

Unfortunately, wanting wasn't enough. She should have prayed - prayed to all the gods in which she didn't believe.

Three violent *thuds* beat against her entry door.

Camilla was overwhelmed with an ominous feeling. Her ears rang, waiting for more heavy knocks. She never had visitors, and this one didn't look amicable. She quickly rose to her feet, stepping on all the papers that covered the kitchen floor, and ran

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towards a drawer, taking the sharpest knife she could find, one with a black handle and a straight pointy blade.

More banging sounded on the door and Camilla leaned against a wall, hiding from the view of the front entry. She held her knife against her chest and tucked her hair behind her ears. She would take her intruders by surprise. The bad lighting was in her favour as she knew the layout of her minimalist apartment well, and the intruder, hopefully, didn't.

The banging stopped and for a moment all she could hear was her heart beating like a bike engine, as if the adrenaline was pushing it to escape her chest. It wasn't every day she found herself in danger in her own home.

Camilla held her breath not wanting to make a sound. Silence. Above the beats of her heart, silence was the only thing she could hear, but the tension in the room was like some bad news was waiting to be revealed. She started to wonder if it was a false alarm. A few more moments went by, and nothing stirred. She finally exhaled and almost laughed thinking how ridiculous she would have looked - a girl in a dress holding a knife like she knew how to use it! Camilla wondered if after all these years she still knew how to use one. Throwing knives with her dad used to be fun before... before...

"You made a vow, princess." The voice was deep and cold. Camilla's mouth went dry. "Open the door or we'll come in by force!"

More bangs resonated against the door.

"Hell!" Camilla let out. It was a false alarm thinking everything was okay. She had known this day would eventually arrive. She just hadn't known it would be so soon.

There weren't many options, so it didn't take her long to evaluate them. Her apartment wasn't big, so hiding wasn't an option. She could run away to heaven-knows where, by jumping out of the window onto a neighbouring balcony. She could fight whoever

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was there and just accept her destiny. But was she to have her book stolen from her again? A challenging smile crossed her face. She hadn't had fun like this in ages!

Without warning, a burly man threw himself against the door, making it crash intemperately on the living room floor.

Camilla held in a gasp and leaned closer to the wall. There wasn't much time left to make decisions. She gripped the knife with force, until her knuckles turned white, and her hand went numb.

"Where are you, princess?"

His voice wasn't friendly, although it seemed amused, and the singsong-like way he talked made Camilla's blood turn cold. The intruder's loud footsteps weren't any better as he was trying to creep her out. She heard him chuckle and she readjusted the knife in her hand.

"You can't hide forever!"

He entered the kitchen and Camilla, who had been leaning against one of its walls, advanced towards him with her knife.

The man was one of the King's knights, dressed in armour which looked to be from ancient times, and he was carrying a bright sword that emanated power. Under his protection, anyone would feel safe, but for Camilla, he screamed danger.

Camilla's strike hit his armour, and the knife fell out of her hand with the impact, slamming against the black and white mosaiced floor with a metallic sound. She looked up. The man's eyes were vivid, bright, full of mystery, and they suggested amazement when looking at her, going against what his voice had implied. His jaw was rigid, tense, locked in place, and his lips quivered.

The man grabbed Camilla by her waist and placed her on his shoulder with the same ease as he had broken down the door. The knight's training had come in useful.

"Put me down!" she demanded trying to fight against him.

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For a second, she pondered if the world was ready to see a knight, if it would be of any value to scream or shout for help. Questions that she didn't want to answer would be asked by the people in her building and things out of this world would be seen. Perhaps it wasn't such a good idea, risking her freedom.

Struggling, Camilla kicked his back, punched his head, and tried to bite the metal armour that covered his body. Nothing affected him. But what damage did she expect to do to the armour? It was a foolish try. Even if she did escape from him, there were four more knights at the entrance. Camilla didn't have much of a choice. She could still try to jump out of her window as it wasn't under guard.

With a fast movement, she grabbed his head and threw her body weight to one side. His head slammed against the wall. The dizziness made him forget about Camilla for a moment and the hand that was holding her moved to his head. He took off his helmet and his long brown hair was set free, just like the writer. Camilla rose to her feet as fast as her shaky body permitted but her legs didn't respond to her brain as she ran towards the window and jumped. Her eyes were closed, preparing for impact, but it never came. Camilla had been caught in mid-air and was now being held by the knight from whom she had broken free just a few moments earlier.

"It looks like we have a warrior princess on our hands!" he said in a sarcastic tone, his earlier amusement gone. "Quite literally." The words were muffled under his breath.

The other knights walked into her tiny apartment, their physique huge and overpowering compared to the fragile vases she had carefully placed around. One knight stepped forwards, taking up almost all the space in the small kitchen. He had brought with him white chalk. He knelt and drew a circle on the kitchen floor, the same one Camilla had drawn months before, and was quite familiar with.

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By now Camilla had stopped contorting herself on the knight's shoulder, and the sweat that had formed on her back was gluing her dress to her skin. Breathing heavily against him was uncomfortable, to say the least, and strands of her frizzy hair were stuck against her face.

The first two knights stepped into the circle and vanished as a glow of light and magic exploded from within it. Two of the others went next and now only Camilla and her captor remained behind. This was the confirmation. The day had come. She was to be taken to the Sun Kingdom to be proclaimed a princess.

"We're going to the Sun Kingdom, right? Directly to the palace, I suppose?" she managed to ask before the knight entered the circle.

She couldn't see his expression, but as he stepped forwards towards the circle, she realised that even if the knight wanted to talk, he wasn't going to engage in pleasant conversation with her.

"Hold on tight," was the only thing he said before entering the circle.

The same blue light attempted to blind Camilla, but this time she closed her eyes and only when the tingling feeling on her skin was gone, did she open them. Her kitchen had disappeared. In its place, an unfamiliar smell of immaculately polished furniture consumed her, and shortly after a golden wall popped up in her sight.

Camilla found herself in a huge hall, at least ten times bigger than her kitchen. Golden columns leaned against the walls. Gilt chandeliers hung from the ceiling and taunted people below them with their lustrous, bright lights and their immense size. The ceilings were high and painted with art, which illustrated the sky, and mimicked pictures of angels with soft white wings, mythic creatures of good and trust, and clouds. In front of her, white doors occupied one-third of the wall. The doors weren't plain; someone had drawn on them with gold, telling a story, with a brush so thin that the small, fine figures covered all the

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material from the ceiling to the floor. The floor was pink marble, divided into small even squares, and behind her was a staircase with a long red carpet that started at the top of the staircase, and finished at her own feet.

“Welcome to the palace, princess.” This voice didn’t belong to the cold, armoured knight, but to a man dressed in royal clothes who stood at the end of the staircase. He used a firm and direct tone that was so perfect it didn’t look like he had practised it. “Put her down, Stefan.”

The blond prince - whom she had recognised from the dinner she had interrupted a few months before - had a welcoming smile. But Camilla was distracted thinking that Stefan wasn’t a name for a knight. At least not a respectable one.

She had never spoken to the prince before, but she had seen him, observed him from afar. He had big eyes like a goldfish and a false, but enchanting smile he must have practised more than the elegant tone of his voice. The writer hadn’t dared describe him like this in her book, but he was surely not the ‘lovely, charming prince with beautiful golden hair, pinkish cheeks, and blue eyes’ that she had described. Those were his features – in a way –, but in an exaggerated way of saying.

The knight hesitated, but the prince tilted his head to the side, and he obeyed, reluctantly putting Camilla down. Now that she was on her feet, she could see how underdressed she was and how if she hadn’t put up a fight, she would have looked more presentable and still smelled good from her shower earlier. Curiously, the prince didn’t look down on her or look with repel at her messy frizzy wavy hair. Instead, the prince gestured his velvety-gloved hand in her direction and Camilla took the soft material, wrapping her fingers around his knuckles. He didn’t waste a second leading her up the staircase, his right arm secured against his torso. He didn’t seem to think formalities were necessary.



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"Your book is a success," he started, "it is what everyone has been talking about." He looked at her through the corner of his eye, waiting for a reaction.

Camilla raised an eyebrow. How was that possible? She had just finished the book that morning. Although the rough draft had been finished for two months now, only that day had she completed editing the book.

"Excuse me, Your Highness, but that doesn't seem rather possible," she affirmed in her most delicate tone. Her eyes drifted away from his in a gentle move, but her hand remained on his. Even if she didn't like being in this situation, she had to play her part in the act.

They reached the end of the staircase and entered a corridor. Here, there weren't any columns. The walls were still gilt, and the floors made of marble, and occasionally a set of white doors would come into view – but doors smaller than those at the entrance.

"Oh, but it is," exclaimed the prince, happy that she engaged in the conversation. The last time she had been there she had been so wrapped up in her book and talking to the King that she hadn't even been properly introduced to the prince. "You see, once you finished the novel, copies appeared all over the Sun Kingdom. People immediately loved it. And there is no need to treat me by my title, Charlie will do."

Camilla went quiet again. She didn't like the prince, and it looked like he was only trying to please her due to his huge lack of personality – which was different from the prince she had written about. A plan slowly formed in her mind. Even if she didn't want to be a princess, being nice to the prince would be wise.

Camilla followed him through the palace and as they walked, she could feel her legs tiring. The palace was huge, and its long corridors were like a maze of riches and wonder. Paintings and exquisite pieces of art were hanging on the golden walls, each one with its own frame in gold. There wasn't one wall that didn't

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portray something that would make it memorable or special. A painting with fruits in a basket got her attention. It was an oil painting, full of colour and half lines. Although she didn't know much about painting, she was familiar with the word art.

Charlie looked at her curiously, an eyebrow arched, and a half smile. "We are here, Camilla. That is your chamber on the right."

Camilla thanked him with what she hoped to be a warm smile and promptly entered her chamber, giving a small nod to the guards on either side of the door. She then closed it in the prince's face, but not so hard he would think she had done so deliberately.

As Camilla turned around, she noticed the flashiest thing about the bedroom was the round blue bed in its centre. On the right side of it, there was a white bookshelf which intrigued her – her stay would probably get prolonged, and a reading a book is always a cozy activity.

She had examined all the doors in the corridors, and they all appeared to lead to more chambers. Also, the entrance was guarded, so no escaping easily, perhaps they would leave after a few days...

The walls weren't golden, but of a beige colour, and although the floor was still marble, this time it was adorned with lush carpets. The writer opened the windows and looked outside. With a bit of skill, it wasn't too high to jump. Although running away wasn't a possibility. Even if she escaped, tireless searches would be organised to find her. Her knowledge of the kingdom ran short, she didn't know where to find portals and it was still a mystery whether they had been created by the royalty or appeared naturally – she had merely focused on the basics of the kingdom when talking to the King. She would be found and dragged to the palace before she had a chance to do anything. So, for now, it wasn't an option.

In front of the window was a dark, brown wardrobe, but Camilla was too focused on her thoughts to even look at what was inside.

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She ran her fingers over the covers of the books on the bookshelves. They were smooth and looked clean as if they were new. None of the volumes existed in the other universe or world, at least none that Camilla could recall. She sighed and lay on the bed, which at least was comfortable, and looking around she decided that the chamber was to her liking. The writer was prepared to stay there all day if she could. Now that she was alone, she could order her thoughts and think of a plan or strategy to lead her back to her universe. With only a few hours left before dinner, she had just time to think about what she should do first and prepare. Camilla realised that she had to cause a good impression, as she didn't want to alert anyone that she might run away or that she was plotting something against the royalty.

The first thing to do seemed clear. She had to go to the palace's library and start finding information about the kingdom. Although she would prefer to do research by herself, she knew that getting the information from other people was also a viable option. She didn't want to be stuck there for long.

Also, writing her plan somewhere would be a terrible idea. Anyone who didn't trust her could search her bedroom and who knows what would happen to her if they found incriminating information.

The sophisticated clock on her bedside table pointed that she had been scheming and conspiring for the last hour. Time seemed to pass differently here.

Someone knocked on her door. "Lady Camilla, may I come in? I have been chosen to be your Lady-in-Waiting."

Her voice sounded friendly like flowers blooming at the beginning of spring or like the colour of the sky during a sunset. Camilla called her to come in and the Lady-in-Waiting entered following the command.

Camilla noticed the girl's hair and eyes before anything else. Bright pink eyes were looking at her in admiration and her pink

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hair was in a tight bun on top of her head. Bangs circled her pretty face and her round cheeks. Her thin lips couldn't hide her smile, and her nose was small like a dot in the middle of her face.

"I'm Iris, my Lady, your Lady-in-Waiting." She offered her a big smile before continuing. "I'll be helping you prepare for dinner and other royal meetings, such as your coronation. Prince Charles will be coming here in a few hours to accompany you to the dining hall."

Of course, he would. Why would the prince not take every chance he could to be with his princess?

Camilla's thoughts drifted to the deal. She hadn't considered that she would have to marry Charlie. She was so excited by the idea of writing a masterpiece and ditching the contract that she hadn't even thought about what she was agreeing to. If she had thought for a bit, perhaps she wouldn't have been in this situation, but ambition and greed had had their way this time. Camilla was determined to not let it happen again.

"Thank you, Iris. And there's no need to call me Lady. I'm still not a Princess and the name Camilla is just fine." Iris's cheeks moved up as her lips curled in the same direction and she managed a light curtsy before taking her leave via another door in the chamber.

Just before exiting the bedroom area, she turned and looking at Camilla said, "I'll do as you wish, but as a Lady-in-Waiting I still must call you by your title. I'll go ahead and prepare you a bath with minerals and perfumed salts. If you don't require my help, you may choose your gown."

Camilla observed the brown wardrobe for the first time, wondering if it was a good idea to open it given how much she liked pretty clothes. As she opened the closet doors, a surprised look came over her face. There were gowns and more gowns, each one different and gorgeous in their own way. She had never seen anything like this. She took a mental note to take some gowns with her when she found a way to go back to her life.

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Iris's head popped around the open door. "If I may interfere and be bold, you should wear the prince's favourite colour, Lady Camilla."

The writer kept on looking at the gowns, taking some out of the closet and displaying them on the bed. The dresses were so big that three of them covered the entirety of the bed, so she had to start piling one on top of another.

"And which colour happens to be his favourite one?" Camilla asked brushing her fingers through the soft material of one of the silky gowns.

Her eyes quickly wandered through all the colours, shapes, and exotic features. She loved dresses, and it was probably the only thing she would ever learn to like about being a "princess."

"Purple, Lady Camilla. And not to be disrespectful, but the dress you are wearing will have to stay in your chamber from now on."

The dress Camilla was wearing was a long red bodycon dress. She used to wear it to gain confidence and feel more powerful while writing her book – along with a glass of red wine and red lipstick. But she understood it wasn't a 'princess' dress. It looked like trash when compared to the gowns displayed beneath her. They looked magical while hers looked ordinary. And due to her fighting earlier, the dress wasn't exactly in a good state. The writer walked towards the closet and eyed the remaining gowns looking for a purple one.

"Lady Camilla, are you ready for your bath?" Iris called from the bathroom.

Camilla smiled proudly, walking to the bathroom to show her the chosen dress. Iris lifted her head from the bathtub and her face lit up in approval. The dress looked like flowers during winter, covered in a white layer of snow.

"That looks phenomenal!"

## Princess of Chaos

Camilla looked around the bathroom, its walls and floor were made of pink and white mosaics, which gave the impression she was in a cube, and although the bathroom still looked princess-like, Camilla wasn't sure she liked the idea that every functional thing, like the sinks and cabinets, were made of gold. The lit candles surrounding the tub gave the bathroom a sense of calm and serenity and the dimness made for a relaxing atmosphere.

After analysing Camilla, and curiously observing the bathroom, Iris helped her undress and step into the round bathtub. As Camilla's body met the water, she could feel the warmth quickly enveloping her and the water was a shade of orange because of all the minerals and salts. She leaned against the wall of the tub - a relaxing bath was all Camilla needed after hours of thinking, getting nowhere and becoming even more lost. She still needed time to adapt to this new situation.

The writer lost the grip of reality once her thoughts started forming again, and Iris understood that straight away. She didn't want to disturb the princess, but she seemed like an interesting person, and she wanted to know what she had to offer the kingdom.

"I see you are a woman of very few words," she admitted, hoping her curiosity wouldn't upset the princess.

Camilla raised an eyebrow, intrigued. "Quite the contrary. I just keep my words for my books."

Iris rubbed Camilla's back with a yellow sponge, relieved that she hadn't offended her. Although she wanted to keep insisting on the conversion, she didn't want to step over the line and get to a point of no return. Offending or insulting the princess wasn't on her checklist.

"I meant that you're not very talkative, princess."

"Only a few conversations are worthy of my words," declared Camilla without hesitation, trying not to use an arrogant tone. She imagined that she might have come across as rude.

## Princess of Chaos

Iris traced Camilla's arms with the sponge. She was now determined to talk to her as it was clear to Iris that the princess's heart was closed and especially shut to new approaches.

"I started reading your book as soon as I had the chance. The way you talked about the prince was so beautiful! It almost had me falling in love! You will both make such a sweet couple," Iris told her in a squeaky voice.

Camilla contained the urge to roll her eyes and forced a smile. She kept thinking that she needed to gather information.

"Thank you for the kind words."

While Iris started washing her hair, she thought about the best way to question the Lady-in-Waiting. She didn't want Iris to have any suspicion.

She bit her lip before asking. "Do you know anything about this dinner?"

Iris helped her out of the bathtub and gave her a towel to dry herself.

"It will be with the royal family and if I may make presumptions, I'd say it is to greet you."

Camilla put on the dress accepting the Lady-in-Waiting's help. The dress formed a heart shape on her chest, and it hugged her waist in a way that looked like it had been crafted for her. The skirts were decorated with pearls. It was like a cloud, floating until it reached the floor.

"The gown looks lovely on you, Lady Camilla," Iris exclaimed, gesturing to her to sit at the dressing table.

Iris brushed Camilla's wavy white hair like it was her own, and when she had finished, all the waves were falling graciously down the middle of her back and her green eyes shone looking into the mirror.

## Princess of Chaos

"It looks majestic," Iris reinforced. "Only the shoes are missing now."

The Lady-in-Waiting looked in the closet, looking for the perfect heels, while Camilla sat on the bed observing her. The corset she was wearing didn't leave much space to breathe so sitting was particularly hard. When Iris turned around, she was holding high heels, the same colour as the dress's pearls. Camilla doubted they would be seen under the dress, but she would wear them anyway.

Iris sat Camilla again in front of a mirror and applied a generous amount of makeup to her face. Camilla was finally ready for the dinner.

She waited a while, walking around before Prince Charles knocked on her door. He was wearing a navy-blue suit which didn't match her dress, and as she was wearing the high heels, they were the same height. He looked at her up and down, his eyes travelling from the dress to her face and then to her hair. Surprise covered his face.

"You look stunning," he finally said, his eyes big and his lips parted.

She offered him a soft smile in return, and he gestured his arm towards her. She took it placing her hand on it. As they walked, Camilla could feel his eyes on her, they were burning her skin and inspecting every centimetre of her. They walked side by side, in silence for a while.

"Is it scary?" he asked abruptly like he had been withholding this question for a long time.

Camilla looked at him, her eyebrows raised in confusion. "Scary?"

"Scary to enter a new world and become a princess of a kingdom you know nothing about?" he asked, almost as if he was concerned.



## Princess of Chaos

"A bit yes, but mostly exciting," she lied with a sweet smile, fluttering her eyes at him.

Fear? She didn't know what that was. She couldn't feel it, never had.

Charlie returned a smile and went back to walking silently. As Camilla observed him through the corner of her eye, she could see his elegant posture and straight gaze. He was so unnervingly perfect. She couldn't bear walking around with him in silence; it only made clearer the difference between them.

"What made me, whoever chose it, become the princess?" She asked innocently as if asking this question was the same as asking what he had eaten for lunch.

"It was me actually," the prince admitted, his cheeks blushing to a darker pink. "If I may, ever since the first time I caught a glimpse of you, and your beauty, I could not stop thinking about you." His eyes melted as he looked at her.

Anger was building up and Camilla was having difficulty shutting it down. Was she in this hellhole because of him? He was on her blacklist now. Her lips twisted as she felt proud; she never thought she would have a prince included in her blacklist.

"Moron," she thought, containing a smile.

They arrived at the dining hall. Chandelier-studded ceilings were painted blue, portraying mythical creatures and fabulous stories. The floor was made of mosaics, of small dark-red ones, and each tiny separation line was golden. Each wall had many windows, but there wasn't much natural light inside the dining hall as they were covered by red and golden curtains, not that the sun could shone inside as it was nighttime. At the centre of the dining hall was a long wooden table with valuable crockery and every kind of food imaginable. Much of the food Camilla had never seen before, some of the dishes had chicken or pork, but they weren't being served as Camilla was used to.

## Princess of Chaos

The royal family was already waiting for them. At the head of the table, sat the King whom Camilla already knew. By his side, there were two ladies. His wife, the queen, and the prince's younger sister, the princess. The queen, Luna, had beautiful chocolate-coloured skin, blue eyes, and short black hair. Like her mother, Victoria had the same skin tone and blue eyes but a dark-blond hair, almost light brown. What got Camilla's attention was that Victoria's hair was enormous and floating. It was so wild, that servants had to keep holding it. Camilla wouldn't ask about it but would do some research.

They walked in, towards the golden armchairs, and the writer sat next to the prince. The King gave the order to start eating and Camilla looked around and searched for something that looked familiar.

"Let me serve you," whispered Charlie, "this is duck with the chef's sauce and some wild fruits. I believe you will enjoy it."

The writer observed the prince as he placed a few slices of meat on her plate, and then poured a greenish sauce over it, adding fruits she had never seen before. She wasn't sure if a prince was supposed to be doing this, but she took a piece of duck to her mouth and the fruit melted on her tongue mixed in with the spicy sauce. It was an explosion of flavours like she had never tasted before. If she had to guess what this was back in her universe, she would say that there were honey and pepper in this dish.

"That is a technique many of our typical dishes have: the food melts in your mouth and you feel the combination of ingredients of everything at once."

Camilla looked at him in disbelief while he placed a napkin on his lap and then on hers. "How do you know so much about food?"

Charlie smiled at her, his eyes shining, looking at her bubbly cheeks as her mouth was full of the marvellous food. "Well, I am sort of a cook myself."

## Princess of Chaos

A spoon gently hit a glass, silencing the room.

“Camilla, you will soon be the Princess of the Sun,” the King started, and she nodded her head in concordance. “The coronation will be in a few weeks, but before, you’ll be submitted to tasks to ensure you are ready for the job that is to be a princess.”

Camilla hid her smile. She had weeks to plan, scheme, and conspire. Avoiding being a princess would be like riding a bike. She could already feel the plan developing in her head.

