

The Future King

The door to the castle library creaked open and around it peeked a small pretty face framed with long, tumbling curls of soft, blond hair. Pointed ears poked out from behind the mass of hair, and the tiny lips curled with the success of her mission. She had made it out of her bedroom and to the library without anyone noticing, holding a folded piece of parchment in one hand. The figure slipped past the door and cast her luminous green eyes around the room. Finally spotting what she was looking for, she darted forward, towards a table where a body was slumped over.

When she was closer, the little elf saw that the desk was scattered with scrolls, parchment, quills, and ink bottles. She sighed and shook her head at the mess her older brother had made. Even when sitting, his long legs were curled under him in his standard cross-legged position, a habit their royal father tried to beat out of him. His head was pillowed on his arms, eyes closed and lips slightly apart. His pale blond hair fell into his eyes, which were closed in the deep sleep of someone who had stayed up one too many nights, partying and who-knows-what else. The candle burning on his wooden desk was getting low, the wax dripping onto the table and onto of the many sheets of notes. The flickering flame cast shadows on the elf's handsome face, and turned his usual mischievous expression into one of innocence. His rich fur robe was thrown haphazardly over his shoulders to keep warm, his silken tunic rumpled, soft leather boots kicked off and lying under the table.

She sighed again. Eight years younger, she always thought that she was the more mature of the two, and she was probably correct. She was smart, lovable, obedient, and the perfect example of an Elvish princess. He was the reckless one, brave and unafraid to try anything, no matter what the consequences were. He was mischievous, and often pulled pranks with his buddies when his parents, ruling monarchs of Elandail, weren't looking. Because he was always fooling around, he never tried hard on his studies, and left his homework for the night before it was due every time. Playful and troublesome, the rightful heir to the throne of Elandail, Prince Edmond, handsome and charming and always with a girl on each arm, was a bagful of trouble.

Not at all surprised at the state he was in, she lifted a dainty hand and tapped the sleeping elf until he woke up. Green eyes a shade darker than hers blinked back disorientedly, then flickered to the notes scattered in front of him. With a yelp, the older elf was suddenly wide awake. He grabbed a quill, shuffled some papers around, and distractedly ran a long-fingered hand through his blond hair. His elegantly-wrought silver crown was askew in his hair, and his little sister giggled. Climbing onto his lap, she slipped the folded parchment she had been holding on the desk and primly straightened his crown for him.

"Edmond, what did Daddy say about doing your homework? Seventeen years old and still not able to follow a simple command," she said teasingly, sitting down on her older brother's lap.

The tall elf sighed and smiled at her. "No procrastinating, but, of course, being me, that's exactly what I did." He paused and glanced at the ornate grandfather clock in front of him. "Elise, it's one o'clock in the morning. Why aren't you in bed?"

Elise gave a big grin, showing tiny, milk white teeth. "Because I knew you had an

essay on Elvish history due tomorrow, and you hadn't started yet." She jabbed a finger at Edmond's chest. "You're the bad boy of Elandail, Edmond. How are the elves supposed to follow such an irresponsible leader when you become King?"

Edmond leaned in close and lightly pinched Elise's nose, watching her delicate features scrunch up. "Then you're going to help me out, aren't you, Elise?"

The little girl squirmed in Edmond's lap. "You need my help?" she asked, cocking her head to the side and seeming quite pleased with the idea.

"Mmhm"

"Woooooow!" she exclaimed, dragging out the word into three syllables.

"Is it really so surprising, Elise?"

She giggled, and she looked so cute that Edmond just couldn't resist. He leaned forward and pressed a light kiss to her forehead, then suddenly, dropped the brotherly love facade and started to tickle her mercilessly. Elise yelped, then started laughing uncontrollably.

"Edmond! Edmond! Stop!" She gasped out. "Don't forget...that paper that's.. .due tomorrow...!"

All movements stopped, and Elise was finally able to breathe again. Edmond lifted Elise off his lap and set her gently on her feet. "Go to bed now."

"But Edmond

"Shhh, you'll be tired in the morning if you don't go to sleep now."

Elise looked up at him with pleading eyes. "Will you tuck me in, Edmond?"

Edmond pretended to consider her request for a moment. In truth, he would never say no to anything his little sister asked him. He could start fights, talk back, and disobey, but he couldn't deny Elise anything. "Alright," he finally said.

Edmond stood up, rising to his full six foot four height and not bothering to put his boots back on. He took Elise's hand into his own and led her out of the library, following the stone hallways to Elise's room, the paintings of past Elven Kings glaring down at them. Perhaps he could somehow incorporate them into his essay, he mused. He opened the door and lifted Elise into his arms, then set her gently on the cool, silken bedsheets. He tucked the royal purple blankets tightly around her chin and smoothed the curls from her forehead. Elise yawned and snuggled into the warmth and strength of his hand, drawing a chuckle out of him.

"Goodnight, my sweet princess," he whispered. "Sleep tight." Quietly, he left the room and closed the door behind him.

He sighed as he walked back to his desk in the library. He still had an essay to finish, and an eighty grade was the lowest his parents wanted from him. In a very un-princely fashion, Edmond threw himself down in the chair and picked up his quill. He looked down, and saw a folded piece of parchment. Frowning slightly, he unfolded it, and read out a whole timeline of Elvish history laid out. At the very bottom, it said, *Now all you have to do is put it in paragraphs. This is the last time I am helping you, Edmond.*

Edmond grinned. He would have to thank Elise for that later.