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Chapter Five

*Joyful, Joyful
Lord, we adore Thee
God of glory
Lord of love
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee
Hail Thee as the sun above
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness
Drive the dark of doubt away
Giver of immortal gladness
Fill us with the light
Fill us with the light
Oh, fill us with the light of day.....*

I shifted in my seat a little. "Dad, I didn't know the Order of the Yellow Rose sang gospel music. This is more boring than watching that really old movie *Sister Act*. You know, the one you watch every Sunday morning you visit? You have it on blu-ray. You keep it in the cabinet under grandma's TV."

"When in Rome" my Dad simply whispered in reply. I wasn't really sure what he meant by that, I could only surmise that the Order adopted some local customs. I got up out of my seat, and went out to the rotunda. I sat on a bench, and watched the fire. It was a beautiful fire.

For the past few days, I had gone back to school and did my new routine. At lunch Sharon and Mike would join us, so we were all careful what we said. Peter and Susan had decided it was a good idea. Not much had changed otherwise at school.

As I was focused on the flame, someone came over and sat next to me on the bench. I guessed it was just Brother Josh, but if it was someone else, it didn't matter. I really just had to get away from the service. Services at the Temple always start with a song or two, then silent prayer for half an hour. After that, anyone can talk about anything that they wish, religious or not. Then the service is ended with another song or two, and we go home. The whole thing usually takes an hour to an hour and a half.

“Alexander?” said the voice. Why was this person bothering me today. I looked over and it was Mike, the Captain of the Football team.

“I didn't realize you went to this temple, Mike.” I said quietly. We had to speak quietly when in the rotunda during service, as the hall would echo otherwise.

Mike nodded a little. “My parents and little brother are inside. Listen, I was wondering if you could give me some help with math. I'm getting C's, and the teacher suggested I talk to you to see if you can tutor me.”

I took a breath for a moment. So he was a dumb jock. But he didn't seem like a dumb jock, so it's possible he was simply bad at math. “I'll have to ask my Dad, can I let you know at school on Monday?”

Mike nodded. “Yeah, thanks Alexander. I really appreciate your help. If we could start after school on Monday, it would be really great.” Mike took out a piece of paper, wrote something on it, and handed it to me. “My phone number and e-mail. I can get yours from you at school.”

“What are your parents names? My Dad will want to know.” I could tell that Dad would want to run a security check on their entire family. It is his way now. Well, it may have been that way for a while, but I wouldn't have known it.

Frackin' secrets. How can a true relationship with someone be built on a foundation of lies?

“Ryan and Judy Huntington. Your Dad is welcome to call them if he needs, they know I'm asking you for help.” Mike explained, standing from the bench. “I need to get back, but I'll see you tomorrow. And thank you.”

I just nodded, “No problem, Mike. See you then.” After Mike had gone back in, I refocused on the flame. I didn't feel like going back in, and figured I'd wait out here until it was over. I was alone maybe two or three minutes when someone else decided to sit next to me.

I looked over and my younger sister Sophia sat next to me. While I was turning 18 soon, she had just turned 16 last week. Dad even let her get her drivers license, though I imagine she won't be driving herself anywhere for the next decade or five. “Hey” I said to her.

“Hi” was the only response my sister gave back.

“How are you feeling?”

“Better.” Sophia seemed to focus on the flames for a few moments. “What do you think about all this stuff Father and Dad told us?”

I looked over at my sister now. “I broke a glass, and part of grandma's kitchen wall. I was so angry. I'm still angry, Soph. I feel like I've been lied to by them for my entire life, and how can I trust them if they just lie?”

She nodded. “I know, I didn't know what to say either. I was lucky that I could just go to sleep, I was in the hospital. So what do we do about it? What do we do now?”

I looked back at the fire. “I don't know, Soph. I just don't know.”

I arrived at Mike's house with him after school. He lived in a complex of townhouses, not far from a very busy main road. We had taken the bus from school I normally just walk because I live pretty close. Or I did until my parents told me the “truth”, and since then I get driven every day. State security, it's such bullshit.

After we put our backpack's down, Mike brought me into the kitchen. It was a fair size, with a large table to eat at. Near the stove was a tall woman with red hair, that stopped just below her shoulders. I'd say she was about 5'7”, but she may have been a bit taller.

“Alexander, this is my Mom, Judy. Mom, this is Alexander.” Mike introduced us.

Judy turned around, and I offered her my hand. “It's nice to meet you Mrs. Huntington.”

She returned the handshake. “It's nice to meet you too, Alexander. Thank you so much for helping Mike with his math. Would you boys like a snack before you start?”

I shook my head, I wasn't hungry. Apparently Mike wasn't either, so we went up to his bedroom. It was a large bedroom, he wasn't hurting for space. We both sat at a large desk where he had a laptop, and opened his math text book. For the next two hours, we worked on the stuff we had been given for assigned homework for the past week, and then we reviewed other parts he was unclear on.

Just before we finished, we heard Mike's dad come home. Mike decided it was a good time to go back downstairs. I looked at the clock and thought I should get home soon anyway for supper.

Mike lead us both back to his kitchen, where his father was talking to his mother. Mike being the big football type he is got his looks from his Dad, because his Dad looked... well... great, and buff. Wow. Mike had told me he was in the military.

“Hey Dad!” Mike said after a moment.

His Dad turned around, "Hey Mike." His eyes settled on me, and for a moment, he didn't say anything. He just stared. Then he blinked. Then he scratched his head. All while standing there in the middle of the room. I could tell Judy and Mike were wondering what had come over him.

"Dad, are you okay? You look like you've seen a ghost or something." Mike said.

"Ye... ye..." was all he replied. "Your highness, I am honoured that you would visit our humble home." He gave a deep bow.

Now it was my turn to blink. "What?" I asked while giving him one of those 'wtf?' faces having no idea what he was talking about. I knew who I was, but I didn't know who he was, and I wasn't about to tell him. "Who are you talking about?"

Ryan, Mike's father, starred at me again. "You, your highness. I'm sorry, you may not have been told. I'm Ryan," he extended a hand, "I'm the head of the Royal Guard. You don't remember seeing me at yours and Mike's school?"

"No Mr. Huntington, I don't but I'm betting Susan or Peter noticed. They seem to notice y'all." This was too strange a conversation, even for me.

"Please your highness, you don't need to call me Mr. Huntington. I know you far too well for that, call me Ryan. I insist." He said, looking more relaxed finally.

"Uh, okay but...." I had no idea how to do this royal thing. It's not like they had training for it at the local community college. "then you have to call me Alexander, and least in private. I'm still getting used to the whole royalty thing."

Ryan nodded politely, "As you wish, Alexander."

I looked over at Mike for a moment, who's jaw I swore was on the floor. "You're worse than Peter after I told him."

"I'm... I'm sorry, your h.. Alexander. It's not every day you meet royalty." I guess the 'your highness' part gave it away.

I looked at Mike, "I'm still the same Alexander I was last week, except apparently I have really hot bodyguards, or so everyone tells me. If I weren't already dating someone, I'm not sure if I'd be really lucky, or hurting to find someone."

"You're seeing someone?" Mike cocked his head a little, and the two of us went to sit in the living room. I had a few minutes before I had to get home.

I nodded. "Peter, you met him at lunch when you came to our table that first day. By the way, what possessed you to do that? I was starting to think you're a security risk."

Ryan and Judy came into the room as well, sitting down to join us in conversation. I'm sure

Ryan had filled Judy in before they came in. I didn't mind, Ryan's blubbering when I met him didn't help me keep the secret.

Mike shifted in his seat a little. "Sharon said she met you in detention, and wanted to get to know you and your friends better. She insisted we sit with you. Lately I've been complaining about my lack of quality friends. Well she thought this would be a good way for me to develop some deeper friendships."

I looked over to Ryan for a moment, and sat in thought. "How long have you two been dating? I told Peter and Susan we should be careful of you and Sharon. No offense, but I just found out I'm the Crown Prince, and the next day you and her sit at our table during lunch. I don't believe in coincidence."

Ryan looked over at me now, in return. He could see where my train of thought was going, it was written on his face, and in his eyes. Ryan was an easy person for me to read, but I'm not sure if everyone could do that or not. I doubted it, given his job.

"About a month to a month and half, I think." Mike said. "She's a cheerleader. Just started at our school this year, she moved here from Vancouver."

"Have you met her parents, Mike?" Ryan's deep voice spoke up.

Mike just shook his head. "She only lives with her Mom, and she was never home when I'd visit. She was either out shopping, or on a business trip, etc."

Ryan stood up, "Excuse me, please." He disappeared going up the stairs.

I stood myself. "I need to get home. I'll see you tomorrow at school, Mike."

Mike stood and smiled. "Thank you for your help today, Alexander. Prince or not, I really did need your help."

I gave him a hug. I don't know why, I just did. "If things don't work out with you and Sharon, you can still sit with us. I like you as a friend for the moment. You might want to ask Susan out, I think she likes you."

Mike just blushed, and I headed to their front door. "Good night Mrs. Huntington."

"Good night, Alexander"

I headed home.