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Chapter Seven

*Who built the bomb that blew Oklahoma City down?
"Not I," said the Washington lobbyist, checking the names off on his list.
"We give money to candidates who vote exactly like we tell them to:
to preserve all our basic rights to own a rifle with a scope sight
or an assault weapon to clear a street or a militia if we want to beat
down on anyone in our way until the revolution comes one day.
Okay, so one got out of line, you can't say the blame is mine."*

*Who bought the bomb that blew Oklahoma City down?
"Not I," said the leader of Congress, busily beating on his chest,
celebrating the victory of his political party.
He rode his white horse to Washington, set up his targets and mowed 'em down.
"The biggest need today," he said, "is eliminating the government.
Boom the environment, boom health care, it's a revolution, boom welfare.
As for some guy with a bomb on a bus, he's totally unimportant to us."*

- Who Built The Bomb? (That Blew Oklahoma City Down), by Rod MacDonald

"Today Peel Regional Police arrested 18 year old Sharon Burgess for a capital offense under Imperial law. She is accused of having poisoned a 16 year old student at her high school. Police wouldn't release other details. In sports..."

I looked over to Mike, "I'm sorry, Mike. I never meant to hurt you. But at least the culprit was arrested."

Mike, Peter, and Susan had come over, and we were all hanging out in the family room. We had the news on. After an in-depth investigation lead by Ryan Huntington, Mike's father and the head of the Royal Guard, was carried out, Sharon was discovered to be the culprit. But the report said that they didn't know who had supplied the poison, and if others were involved.

The investigation was ongoing.

Sharon was charged with one count of high treason, one count of attempted murder, and one count of attempting to subvert an Imperial investigation. The last charge would get her 10 years of hard labour, attempted murder is 25 years of hard labour, and she would probably be executed for the high treason.

After all the hubbub cleared, my Father had to leave. He had important business in another region of the Empire that demanded his immediate presence. It would only take him a few days to get there.

Sophia came into the family room, and took a seat in a random chair. She didn't usually hang out with me and my friends, but we tried hard not to make her feel unwelcome.

"That's okay, Alexander. I understand. My Dad had to do his job, and you have a good keen sense. To be honest, I respect you for it. Besides, I'd rather not date someone who would try to kill people. Might make it hard for me to become a Deputy of the Assembly by age 30." Mike gave a big shit-eating grin.

Sophia smirked. "Start kissing up to Alexander, when he becomes the Pharaoh, he can appoint you to a number of bodies including but not limited to the Imperial High Court of Justice, the Leffe, the Imperial Board of Interplanetary Jurisprudence, and if necessary, he can appoint you to Earth's Assembly."

The upper house of the Earth government was called the Assembly of the People, commonly referred to as 'the Assembly'. The lower house was called the Republic Chamber, referred to as 'the Chamber'. Both together were referred to as the Supreme Republic Council, or in some countries of the British Commonwealth, it was referred to as Parliament. Members of the upper house were referred to commonly as Deputies. Members of the lower house were referred to as Representatives, taking after the American's House of Representatives. Both could add the short form M.R. to the end of their names, standing for Mitglied des Rates, the English translation being Member of the Council. I have no idea why they chose German terminology for that one title. I think it was to avoid confusion with Earth's many nations.

Mike scratched his head. "Huh? How can he appoint me to an elected body?"

Sophia grinned now. "Absolute monarchy. While local institutions are generally honoured, exceptions can always be made."

Mike looked over to me now. I cringed a little at the look in his eye. "Oh Alexander, my new best buddy..."

But Peter didn't like that too much, and he put his arm around me, and proceeded to plant a long, lustful kiss on me. Of course my arms wrapped around him as I returned it.

"Jealous much?" Mike asked as we continued to kiss.

When we both came up for air, I caressed Peter's face. "You don't have anything to worry about, sweetheart. Mike may want to 'suck up', but you'll always have my heart. I'm so very madly in love with you."

Sophia stood up from her seat. "Okay now! I don't need to see my older brother sucking face with his boyfriend." She looked over to Mike now, "But you know, I'm single." She winked.

Mike blushed and moved to retake his seat while Susan stood up and walked over to Sophia. She brought up her hand, and slapped Sophia's face. "How dare you! He's going to date me!"

I just groaned and rolled my eyes. "Relax, both of you. Mike will need some time before he chooses to date again. He did just lose his girlfriend to the judicial system. Seeing as she tried to poison a minor, I'm sure she'll have a joyous time at the hard labour colony."

Mike just fidgeted a little. "Actually Alexander, before your big speech, I was thinking of asking you out. But you're right, you're taken. I'm sure I'll find someone."

Both my sister and Susan looked each other in the eyes, and it was a light bulb went off in both of their heads. They turned and looked at Mike. "Alexander, do you remember that guard at the hospital? The blue one?"

I blinked and replied, "Yeah. You tried to jump him, remember Susan?"

Susan shot back, "Not now, Alexander! We have to help Mike find his soul mate! We are going to introduce him to that HOT guard!"

"Um... but..." Mike started to say, "he works for my Dad. I know who you're talking about. His name is Shepard."

"SHEPARD!" both girls shouted at the same time. I simply put my hands over my ears in a vain attempt to protect them.

Susan looked over to me, "Alexander, he works for you. Mike's Dad is just the manager. But you could invite Shepard over to discuss... security matters? And of course Mike would be here as part of your normal friends."

I just shook my head. "Susan, I have no desire to play matchmaker, or to use my new role as Crown Prince to try to set Mike up with someone he is perfectly capable of meeting himself. I'm sure if he wanted to, he could find out from his Dad where Shepard hangs out after work."

Sophia re-took her seat, and so did Susan after a few moments. Both looked beaten down. "Yeah, you're right. You shouldn't abuse your position to set him up. We'll have to find another

way” Sophia said in an apologetic manner.

“Sweetheart,” Peter decided it was his turn to speak. “Sweetheart, you're the Crown Prince. Are you sure we should just be sitting around watching TV, and shooting the breeze? Don't you have things to be doing?”

I looked at Peter. “I am doing something, Peter. I'm growing up, and I'm going to graduate from High School. That's all I need to focus on for the moment. When either of those items change, we can have this conversation again. Besides, are you trying to get rid of me?”

Peter hugged me quite tight. “Not at all. I only hope you don't leave me behind. I'm sorry if I'm not royal material.”

I looked at Peter again. “Does my Dad look like royal material? Or my Father? Or my Aunt Lizley?”

Peter paused to think for a few moments. “Yes, they seem very regal.”

“Peter, they've had years to work on that. My Dad came from Earth, and had almost an exact childhood that you and I have. But my Father did hurt my Dad a few years into their marriage. He cheated on him. It almost destroyed the Empire. While he forgave him by lip service early, in his heart it took years, and my Father spends every day trying to make it up to him.” I explained.

After the events with my parents, they told me most of their story. It added to the credibility of what they had said. I suppose I'm like my Dad in this regard. I moved on, while still being angry at the lies. Now they have to try to make up for it, and I'm not sure when I'll ever feel whole again.

The room went quiet as everyone thought about what I said. “You don't have to be or feel royal for me, Peter. I don't feel royal, and I'm the fucking Crown Prince. Hell if it were up to me, I'd abdicate and leave the throne to Sophia, or Aunt Cathy.”

“You can do that?” Peter asked, scratching his head.

I nodded. “Yes, I can. Shortly after his or her inauguration, the Pharaoh must name a successor to the throne. It doesn't have to be a member of the royal family. The successor can be changed at any time, but there always has to be one. If the Pharaoh dies, then it can't be changed and the Queen may remain on the throne for as long as they like. If something happens to the successor before they ascend to the throne, or if they violate the rules of succession, the Queen may then name a new successor, as it is presumed they are acting in the spirit of the Pharaoh.”

I sat back in the couch, and took a breath. Things got complicated on the day my parents told me the truth. Perhaps they really were protecting me.

We turned the channel on the TV, and happened upon an episode of *The Simpsons*. It was in

something like its 40th season or something. The longest running show on television. The only other thing on was *Star Trek: Sisko's Revenge*. It was like the 9th *Star Trek* series.

Peter put his arm around me, and we all just relaxed as we watched. Tomorrow there would be more school.