

**(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)**

**A/N: Moving rather quickly~**

**-x-X-x-**

Frankly, Thomas doesn't fully internalize how badly Anna wants to make this idea of hers work until after he's explained everything about being an Otherworlder to her... and she just takes it in stride. Like it's no big deal that he's not even the original Thomas Marlow, or that he has something as ridiculous as a 'Gift of Potential' that allows him to do anything he really puts his mind to.

In the end, all she really does... is factor his revelations into her plans, along with his ideas for how they can potentially begin preparing for Synestra's attack. Because it is coming... that's undeniable. Whatever Graelo was to the First Princess, she isn't going to just leave them by or cut her losses.

Which of course means they need to get to work right away. In that regard though, Synestra's actions are actually quite... helpful. It's ironic given all the damage that the Dark Elf had done to them, but in a way, both Thomas and Anna have the First Princess to thank for how easy it is to push everything through.

Like Anna had said, if not for the existential threat of the Dark Elves, House Ashwood would probably already be deposed and the nobility would already be at each other's throat. A civil war, to put it succinctly. However, because there had been survivors from the massacre in the throne room, both Royal Guards and a handful of knights managing to make it through and hearing every word that Synestra said... there was no disputing that they were all in grave danger.

And those were just the survivors who had been there the entire time. That was to say nothing of the nobility who had fled before the fighting even began, evacuated ahead of time. They were even more likely to make up stories about the vile Dark Elves summoned by the evil Solomon Godman.

It was tribalism, plain and simple. The human tendency to Other their enemies, to make it all about Us vs Them. What might have began as House Godman and their allies versus House Marlow or even the Royal House of Ashwood, had subsequently become something far simpler... humans versus elves. Humanity versus the Dark Elf threat.

Nobody was willing to stand with House Godman after Solomon Godman had turned out to be a traitor to his entire species. Nobody was going to stick their heads up and ask if everything had been 'above board' with his death when the man had literally brought foreign operators into the throne room right before his demise.

One could probably call Thomas' killing of Solomon Godman a murder, especially given the other man was technically unarmed, but Thomas didn't see it that way. After all, the Godman Lord's last words were ordering the Dark Elves to kill him... in a way, they were his weapons. Killing him had very nearly prevented the hostilities in the first place.

The end result though is pretty damn valuable to both Anna and Thomas. Nobody in the Kingdom wants to be the ones who appear to be siding with the Dark Elves, so nobody in the Kingdom is willing to stand against the Princess and her plans.

While there are certainly some rumblings at the news that her coronation is being pushed back specifically so that it can be turned into a joint ceremony where they're wedded and crowned at the same time... nobody is willing to actually object.

Of course, that doesn't mean there aren't still... incidents. That's where Spymaster Qyvern and to a lesser extent Sevvī come into play. Both of them are still beating themselves up for their 'failings' in the throne room.

The Royal Spymaster obviously blamed himself for failing to stop the assassination of Anna's father and even offered her his own life at one point in recompense. Instead, she'd ordered him to spend his life in service to her, as he had her father.

Sevvi, meanwhile, felt no small amount of guilt for what her confession had led to. Her guilt over making Graelo end his own life for daring to raise arms against her hadn't gone away upon finding out she wasn't ever actually disowned, after all. Now, she had even more guilt over unthinkingly bringing her sister and an army to their doorstep.

And so, upon hearing whispers of certain noble houses with past ties to House Godman conspiring in the shadows... Anna and Thomas had convened with Qyvern and Sevvi and made a call. Whether it was the right call or not, they wouldn't know for some time... but Thomas couldn't help feeling it was necessary.

Over the days leading up to Anna and Thomas' joint wedding and coronation, several noblemen lost their heads, depriving their Houses of their leadership. Each of these noblemen was found dead with a curved elven blade in their chests, evidence that they had seemingly been killed by a Dark Elf assassin.

At a few of the murders, eyewitnesses even claim to see a Dark Elf that they swear is dressed in the same black, elven armor of those who were part of the throne room massacre.

Word spreads fast... the Dark Elves are not all gone. There are still some lurking somewhere in the Capital. And they are angry at House Godman and their allies for failing them so. Clearly, the only safe Dark Elf is the tamed one that serves as Thomas Marlow's maid.

This, more even than the throne room massacre where no nobility save for the King himself had died, galvanizes the Noble Houses of the Kingdom into action. They were already paying lip service to the idea of course, but once it seems like the Dark Elf Assassins are coming for them in their homes night after night, they stop just talking about how important unity is and actually start acting upon it.

With a couple of 'assassination attempts' at the Palace thwarted entirely by the Royal Guards with Thomas and Anna managing to escape unscathed... the entire fiction is accepted as fact.

Bringing the idea of false flag operations into a fantasy world so that he could more securely become King definitely wasn't something Thomas had ever intended to do with his life... but to be fair, it wasn't entirely his idea in the first place.

It was Qyvern who suggested they take the chance to remove some of their enemies before they could become real problems, while Sevi offered to help. Thomas had merely come up with the plan to make it look like early attacks from Synestra and frame the First Princess as already striking at the heart of their Kingdom.

Didn't necessarily make him feel any better... but as he stands there in the now-cleaned throne room, in front of an audience of visibly exuberant courtiers (whether they really felt their exuberance or not) he has to admit... he doesn't feel all that worse about it either.

"Princess Anna. Lord Thomas. You stand before me today with the intent to be wed. Is that correct?"

This world didn't have a concept of religion. There'd been no churches in Last Hope and no great cathedrals in the Capital either. There was no God that they prayed to, despite the entire concept of Gifts seeming to imply the existence of some sort of higher power.

Thomas had always found that strange on the face of it, but it had also made him question momentarily just who the hell would be marrying them today. The answer, of course, was that someone would always show up to fill a gap like this.

Standing in front of him and Anna, resplendent in glistening silver armor, is a man named Alfred Carlile, Lord Commander of the Citadel and Grand Master of the Order of the Saints. Basically, the top dog of Camilla's entire organization.

The Grand Master looks between them both as he waits for their answer. Thomas glances to Anna, not for the first time admiring her beauty on this fine day. She looks downright exquisite, her jewelry perfectly framing her face and her dress flowing down her body. By comparison, he feels positively plain, though he's been assured by his women that he's as handsome as ever.

Smiling softly, Anna nods.

"It is correct, Grand Master. I would take this man as my husband... and he would take me as his wife."

When Alfred looks to Thomas, Thomas nods as well.

"It is so."

"Very well then... let us begin."

Words are spoken. Vows are said. They are wed. It's a lot less fanfare than it would have been in his previous world, Thomas reflects. At least at your average wedding anyways. From what he remembered, there were all sorts of weddings back on Earth. Everything from a short two minute ceremony in a courthouse to celebrations that could take days and days.

Of course, they didn't have time for that sort of thing. They needed to be wedded and crowned *yesterday* at this point.

Fortunately, Grand Master Carlile is also the man who will crown them both King and Queen. As soon as the wedding ceremony is over, as soon as they exchange a kiss and become husband and wife... the aged knight switches over practically seamlessly, moving things along.

Pillows are brought forth, upon which rest two crowns. The Grand Master says some more words, speaking about things such as sincerity, humility, and honor. He speaks briefly on the life and death of Anna's father, a short eulogy that brings a glistening wetness to Anna's eyes.

Finally, they are instructed to kneel. The crowns are placed upon their heads one after the other, starting with the Princess and then moving to him. Thomas isn't sure what he's expecting... he knows to anticipate it being heavy, but the weight still surprises him just a little bit.

“Rise, Queen Anna Ashwood-Marlow. Rise, King Thomas Ashwood-Marlow.”

The two of them rise, their crowning complete. They are, as of that point, the rulers of this nation... a nation imperiled by a foreign force.

Anna's fingers find his and Thomas happily accepts her hand into his own. Then, he lets her turn them both around, the Grand Master stepping to the side. Together, they make their way down the length of the hall hand in hand, towards the pair of thrones that rest at the head of the room.

Where there had been one throne previously, with a smaller chair beside it, now there were two ornately carved seats, each one just as beautiful as the other. They were equally impressive thrones... for a pair of equal rulers. There was no King or Queen Consort here... merely a King and Queen, to rule together.

That said, Thomas stays quiet as they arrive in front of their thrones and Anna stares down at hers for a moment, no doubt imagining her father sitting there. He also remains quiet when she turns back around, facing the crowded throne room.

Before she sits down, Anna looks out at everyone, her gaze measured and solemn. Absolute silence falls as everyone looks back, expecting a speech. Perhaps they're even expecting two speeches... but Thomas and Anna had already agreed that she would be the one to speak here.

She was the one with the Gift of Leadership after all, and a quite advanced Gift of Leadership at that. By comparison, Thomas had a handful of lessons with Mayor Harper and that was about it.

“My people... I stand before you now as your Queen. But I acknowledge that I was more than content to remain your Princess for a lot longer. My father’s death weighs heavily on me even now... but not so heavily as the warning that came with it.”

Nobody says a word. Nobody dares to so much as breath.

“We are at war. We have been at war for half a century and we didn’t even know it. My father, without even knowing his true enemies, spent his entire reign fighting them. When the Dark Elves created the Rotlands, he fought. When they afflicted me with Rot Lung, he fought. And when they came here to our home, to the heart of our kingdom... he died.”

Looking to Thomas for a moment, Anna purses her lips together before looking back to the crowd of enraptured nobility.

“But he did not die in vain. Because my husband, your new King, has also fought. He saved my life that day, when a Dark Elf Princess throwing a temper tantrum would have seen me killed. And he uncovered the corruption of House Godman, traitors one and all, as well as the part they played in everything our Kingdom has suffered over the years.”

Sweeping her gaze back and forth across them all, Anna smiles grimly.

“Much like my father did, your new King fought before he even knew his enemy. He fought when the rest of us were ignorant of what we were up against. And he kept fighting, even when the odds looked insurmountable.”

Gripping his hand, Anna raises it into the air along with her own, her tone also rising as her voice gets stronger, more emotional, and more powerful by the moment.

“He will continue to fight for you! As will I! But we cannot do it alone! As much as the odds might look insurmountable even now, we must stand together. The Dark Elves are coming. Let them come, I say! Let them come and learn just how tenacious the best of us truly are! They have only ever seen us through the lens

of rats like House Godman. They think of us as pests because they believe us to all be like that despicable, treacherous family. But I say nay! I say we show them what humanity is truly capable of! We will fight! And we will WIN! ARE YOU WITH US?!”

The response as she finally finishes her speech is that of a deafening roar as every single human being in the throne room, from one end to the other, raises their voices to join the answering call. From the nobility to the knights to even the guards... all respond with unwavering, incredibly vocal agreement.

In the midst of this deluge of support, Anna and Thomas take their seats and Thomas can't help but smile a little bit. Not only is he moved by Anna's words, but he's moved by the reaction as well. They can do this. They can really do this.

He's feeling quite confident in himself right up until Anna leans over and whispers in his ear.

“I hope you don't mind, but I have spoken with the others and they agreed to let me have you all to myself tonight, my King. They sing such high praises of your prowess in the bedroom. I must admit, I'm quite intrigued to see if you can live up to expectations.”

Ah hell... what had those girls been telling her? But of course, Anna is right... tonight will be their wedding night, won't it? And from the sound of things, she was expecting him to be capable of taking her mind off of everything weighing on it at the moment.

No pressure or anything.

**-x-X-x-**

**A/N: NSFW wedding night fun times next chapter~**

**Please let me know what you think either on Patreon or Discord! Your feedback, suggestions, and ideas for this story are keeping the inspiration flowing in a big way!**