

*Sneak Peak*

*Of*

*Destined To Be Royal*

***By***

***A.K. Barr***



When I returned from my break thirty minutes later, the sun had set, and the candles on the tables were already lit. The soft music gave the room a peaceful, romantic feel.

My mind drifted to an evening with Quinn—his dark-brown hair slicked to the side, his strong build filling out his button-down shirt. I imagined us at the corner table, holding hands as I gazed into his chestnut eyes. He leaned in and whispered in my ear. When he sat back, I found myself staring into Xavier’s chocolate eyes, and a shiver ran through me.

Something brushed my hand, and I flinched. I blinked as Quinn tried to hand me a basket of bread.

“Zaria, where have you been? Give the bread to the table at the end and fill their water glasses. Oh, and the man in the blue suit asked for coffee.”

I tilted my head to the side. A group of people I didn’t recognize was seated in the far corner. I gave Quinn a shy nod and headed to the back table. I refilled their water glasses, trying my best to smile even though my lip was still a little swollen.

When I reached the man in the dark blue suit—which likely cost more than a few months’ rent—I scanned his face, noting how handsome and familiar he looked. He had to be in his late thirties or early forties. His short, curly, dark hair looked as soft as his eyes, yet I couldn’t place him.

He regarded me as I poured his coffee. His gaze dropped, and he pointed at my necklace.

“Excuse me, miss.”

He had an accent I couldn’t place. He could have been from anywhere, given his tanned skin, though I got a Mediterranean vibe. I really needed to learn more about other cultures.

“Yes, sir?”

“May I ask—” He hesitated. “Where did you get that lovely pendant?” Even though his voice was calm and his lips bore a smile, his eyes showed pain.

I touched my necklace and smiled. “It belonged to my mother.”

“Y-your mother?” he repeated. Something flashed in his eyes. “Well, it is lovely.” He stared at me.

A bit confused, I smiled at the man as Quinn approached me with a tray of drinks.

“Zaria, I’ll be back. Can you cover my tables, please?”

“Sure,” I replied, hoping he didn’t notice my eagerness.

“Your name is Zaria?” the man asked.

“Yes, sir.”

The color in his face vanished.

My heart raced as I reached over the table, picked up a pitcher of water, and poured a glass.

“Here, drink this.” I watched him drink half the glass.

“Are you all right?”

“Yes.” He cleared his throat. “Thank you.” He tugged at his collar, undoing his top button.

I glanced around the table, noticing the spotless tableware and unused silverware.

“Maybe you should eat something. We have a wonderful house salad.” I looked over at his ashen skin. “Or perhaps the soup is a better choice.”

I pulled out my order pad as a woman in an elegant, long blue dress, with a sheer cape covering her arms and head, approached the table. The man stood and pulled out a chair for her. As she sat, her wavy hair fell perfectly over her shoulders. Her necklace featured a rose charm set with diamonds—definitely costing more than our rent and probably everything we owned.

“Excuse me, I asked for sliced lemons and a cup of tea.”

I froze, unable to stop staring into her stunning eyes.

“Miss?”

“Oh! Yes—sorry. Lemons. Right away. I’ll be right back to take your dinner order.”

Frank strolled up to me as I filled a small crystal bowl with lemon wedges.

“Zaria, did I see you talking with His Royal Highness?” he asked with a twinkle in his light eyes and a grin on his face.

“Royal what?”

Frank shook his head. “Sometimes, I wonder about you, Zaria. The man in the blue suit is the Crown Prince of *Avarion*.”

My brow furrowed. “*Avarion*? Is that in Europe or Africa?” I needed a map in my life.

He waved his hand. “Who cares! What was he like? The prince?”

I shrugged and caressed my chain between my fingers as I thought about what he had said about my necklace. It was exquisite—a heart-shaped design with diamonds along the sides. In its center were a diamond, a rose-gold star, and a crescent. It was the most expensive thing I owned. One time, I had offered it to Aliza to pawn it for rent, but she said she would never ask me to do that—it was all I had from my mother.

“He seemed nice.”

Frank rolled his eyes and took the bowl of lemons from my hands.

“I got this.” He glanced at my mouth. His nose wrinkled as his upper lip lifted. “And go put something on that lip!” he said as Quinn walked into the kitchen.

I met Quinn’s gaze, and humiliation surged through me. Yep, tonight was going to be a long one.



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