

Prince Of My Dreams
A Mercynaries Story from SinComics.com

Prince Liam looked up from his book as the royal courier ran into the room and over to the king. As they talked, the king grew more boisterous, loudly waving his arms in the air in celebration and unleashing deep belly laughs at the innocent worker. After heartily slapping the courier on the back, the king triumphantly strode over to his son.

"It's here, my boy, it's here!"

"Yes... Father?" Liam said, peeking out over his book.

"The invitation, young Prince! Oh I remember when I was coming of age and received mine. Good times! Made a real royal out of me. Why when I was a prince, my father..."

Liam knew he had to end the reminiscing quickly or they'd be there all day. "What invitation?"

The king waved the gilded card back and forth at his son. "For prince's training! It's only the most prestigious training for the selected sons that are kings to be! Every king has gone through it and now it's YOUR time! It makes you wise, stately, handsome, and will teach you the skills to woo your future queen!"

Liam closed his book and settled in. He loved his father as much as his father loved a stately ramble. Liam's mother was the only one able to politely and firmly interject to quiet him down, but after the Queen's passing, any worker unlucky enough to cross his path on a verbose day was caught in the crosshairs.

"- And that's why the dragons fear our lands, Boy! Back before ruling made me soft, I was a strapping lad. And your mother! Even to her last days she was as beautiful as the day we wed. Why that night, oh, we-"

"Father!" Liam bolted upright in his chair. "Dad, I think. I think I get it. Invitation, training, kingsmanship. When exactly does this training-"

"You're going tomorrow! I wouldn't have you wait another day!"

As promised, the royal carriage appeared at the crack of dawn to collect the prince. After some hearty back slaps to wake his son up, the king and the royal staff waved good-bye to the prince as the carriage entered the portal and they disappeared in a puff of magic.

The portal reopened in a pristine world under a bright blue sky, grass so green it was practically glowing, and with blue birds that sung a jaunty tune. The carriage rolled to a stop and the driver knocked to Liam. The prince thanked the man, grabbed his bag from the top of the cart, and hopped down onto the lush path leading to a radiant, opalescent castle. Liam and the driver waved good-bye as the carriage once more vanished through the portal home.

Liam smoothed his overcoat and fixed his hair before knocking on the bright red doors leading

inside the institute. The doors opened by themselves and Liam walked into a beautiful entrance hall complete with red carpets leading down every hall, floors so shiny they were almost mirrored, and a grand staircase under an enormous chandelier. After he finished gawking, Liam noticed the silence all around him. He lowered his head and noticed that every person inside was gawking at him as well. And they were all dressed in exquisite ballgowns. As Liam's head darted from person to person, without exception, every soul in the room as female.

Liam turned to see if there was a mistake, he had gotten off at the wrong portal, entered the wrong doorway, when a woman came bustling down the stairs and held her arms open wide. Her hair was done up in an elegant rococo updo and she wore the kind of pristine gown of a queen of great wealth, standing, and power. Liam immediately shrank back and bowed.

"I'm deeply sorry, Madame, I seem to have-"

"Liam, my dear, how wonderful you made it!" She embraced him tightly and spun him to her side.

"You... You know my name?"

"Of course, dear! Why we were just thrilled to see you accept our invitation! It's quite an honor."

"Madame, you- You run the prince's training?"

"Princess training, my dear. Enunciate! We can include some speech in your lessons."

Liam chuckled and shrank back, stopping the woman in her tracks. "I- I see the problem here. My father, the king, he's getting on in years and his eyes- You can see how he'd read your invitation incorrectly if he was expecting another. I'm so very sorry to be a bother, but if you could just summon a carriage, I'll be on-"

The Headmaster pulled him back in a continued their walk forward, bringing the prince along as he shuffled his feet. "No, the invitation was quite clear and it was signed and accepted. It would be a scandalous horror and would tarnish this great institute if we were to send a charge back out into the wild untrained."

"Ma'am, you see the issue here. I- I am clearly not a princess."

She tutted and pulled him in tightly, with Liam bent between the curve of her skirt and puffy sleeves of her gown. "And that's why it's such an honor to have you. We try to expand our reach, but so many kingdoms turn us away or balk at our offer. But your fine king and I'm quite sure all the people of your kingdom will be pleased with our results."

She let Liam go and clapped her hands. The red doors at the entryway slammed shut, the women in the hall returned to their tasks, and a maid appeared behind them to take Liam's travel bag and scurry off down a hallway. Liam tried to follow, but the headmaster grabbed him by the shoulder and spun him away from the maid to face three women in green dresses that were approaching.

A beautiful brunette with the fairest skin curtsied and and nodded to the headmaster. "Yes,

M'lady?"

"Dear Liam, these are the fellow members of your house. They will help you settle in, teach you the layout of our fine institute, and help you excel in your studies. Listen to them well and head their advice!"

The three curtsied once more and surrounded Liam. Their gowns bounced him forward and they shepherded him up the stairs and towards the heart of the castle.

Once their group was away from the rest of the students, the women stopped and circled around Liam. He instinctively peddled back, but bumped up against the gown of the black-haired one. Combat training was a part of his royal studies, but without a weapon and three against one, he wasn't sure how far he'd get. If there even was a way out of the castle. The brunette advanced forward and then Liam was hugged on all sides.

"Ooooh! We're so proud of you!"

Liam reeled and struggled against their surprisingly tight grips. It was a cage of shiny hair, frills, and silk.

"We know this is probably going to be really scary for you, but you're making a big step! And as your guides, we're going to be here with you every step of the way!"

Liam stopped struggling and tried another route. "I'm sure this is extremely awkward for you. Having a man forced into your group, and all. So the sooner we get rid of me, the sooner you princesses can get on with your... training?"

The redhead ruffled his hair. "Oh shush. Why would a silly little thing like that bother us? You'll do great! We know all the ins and outs of being princesses, so you couldn't get a better team. I'm Rose!"

His captors finally let him go and the three bowed to him. The brunette took his hand and led him down the hallway and up another staircase. "Clover, at your service. We are all soon to be queens of our respective kingdoms. We're at the end of the program but our dear mothers haven't started the process of succession yet or the kingdom isn't ready for a transfer of power."

The black-haired woman nodded. "Dahlia, dear. My land is just leaving a protracted war against the denizens of the deeps, so my coronation has to wait until repairs are underway. That's why the headmaster lets us stay, continue our studies, and help the new members."

They arrived at a golden door and shoved Liam through. It was some kind of living quarters decked out in hundreds of ribbons and frilly banners. A plush pink carpet covered every inch of the floor. Mirrored desks and storage cabinets were stationed in every corner and huge plush pillows stood in for chairs that the princesses in their gowns could use.

"This! Is our joint living quarters and the common area. Each of our rooms are through those doors. The freshen up rooms are over there. And all the cooking facilities are in the castle proper. Your room is all ready for you!"

Liam tried to dig his heels into the carpet, but he was pushed forward by the gaggle of surprisingly strong princesses. "Please don't-"

The ladies motioned to the room, awash in pastel greens. A canopy bed sat in the middle with the rest of the room lined with closets.

Rose waved to the bed. "Take a seat, love! This is your space! We usually do our studying and primping in the common area, but you can make this place home. It's fully stocked just for you!" She skipped over to a closet and pulled out a pale green dress. It was a simple ankle length affair made of a soft, shimmering material with a white ribbon drawstring around the waist. She laid it out on the bed and gestured to it.

The brunette grinned ear to ear. "All the new members start simple, but you'll work your way up to something nicer once you settle in. It lets everybody know that you're starting out and they'll cut you some slack."

The three women stared at Liam. Politely keeping quiet but darting their eyes between him and the dress. He stifled a chortle and stared back.

"You can't possibly think... This is ridiculous."

Dahlia expressed her concern. "Everybody wears the same starter dress."

Liam grumbled. "I have tried to be polite and explain about the misunderstanding but I'll be thanking you and having my leave. Good day, ladies."

The redhead blocked the door and the trio clucked their tongues in the kind of disapproval saved for a small child or a puppy.

"We were tasked with preparing you and we shall not be derelict in our duties."

Liam mockingly clucked back. "And I shall be free of this lunacy. Now move or I shall-"

Clover cut him off. "We will be courteous and kind as princesses are, but if you cannot follow the most basic of rules, we shall be forced to commune with the headmaster."

That cut through Liam and gave him pause. There was something cold and powerful behind that woman's cheery exterior. Just the threat of angering her sent a shiver down his spine. Before he could think much more, the princesses surrounded him and worked in a flurry. Within seconds, his overcoat was unbuttoned, striped off, and thrown out of the room. As they moved to his buttons and belt, Liam shrugged them off and tried to compose himself.

"All right! All- All right. If that is the rule of your kingdom, I will- abide... until I can contact my people and arrange transport home."

The three nodded with one forceful bob and fluttered out of the room. The door slammed shut and tightly braced, signaling there was only one way out. Liam plopped down on the bed and grimly assessed the surroundings. He would be having a very serious conversation with his father very shortly. And possibly looking into having some caretakers assembled for the old man.

Liam folded his clothing and placed it on the bed before slipping on the dress. It was even softer than it looked and had a fresh, invigorating, almost citrusy perfume to it. After a hesitant knock on his door, it swung wide open and the trio poured in. The brunette grabbed his old clothes and handed them off to a maid that disappeared out the door before Liam could even get a word out as the other two pulled him into the common area and plopped him onto one of the cushions.

Dahlia sat down next to him while Rose moved to the back of the room. "Your classes will start tomorrow. But they're ever so much fun. Everything a good and proper queen needs to rule rightly."

"I- I have been preparing to take over as king already. I've been studying the laws, procedures, and-"

"Great! Sounds like you're a natural princess then. There's lots of activities too. You'll have such a good time!"

Rose returned with a dark green rectangular box and pulled out a white ankle-length boot. She expertly slipped it onto Liam's foot despite his attempts to pull away. It slipped on with a crack and a snap.

Liam recoiled. "What are you- Ow!"

"It's fine, dear. I just noticed... Your posture, it needed work."



His feet were forced to point down in the new heels. Liam tugged at them and ripped at the snap, but they gave no signs of loosening in the slightest. Dahlia and Rose propped him up and guided him over to one of the desk with a mirror. Clover rifled through the cabinet beside it and placed an array of bottles and tubes on the desk.

Without a word, the three went to work in a flurry of creams and lotions and powders and paints. If Liam so much as twitched, one of them was there to hold his head still and prop him up as the others continued their task. They soon stepped back and presented their handiwork to the mirror.

Liam felt like they had slathered him with bottles worth of gunk, but upon seeing his reflection, it was a tasteful and expertly applied job. The contouring made him question if that was even really his own face. The makeup tingled and his lips felt tight under the paint, but when Liam went to wipe it away, a green gloved hand caught his and forced it back to his side.

"Don't smudge it, love."

As the trio admired their work, a bell rang out in the hall. Clover clapped her hands. "Oh! Dinner time! I was so wrapped up, I lost all track of time."

The princesses gathered their new charge and formed a circle around him as he took his awkward, short steps in the new boots. They finally made their way to a dining hall lined with

princesses grouped by colored dresses. Liam hid his face in embarrassment, but they paid him no special mind as the food was served.

The headmaster made her way up and down the table, silently watching over her princesses. She worked her way down to Liam's end of the table and stopped to watch him. Seemingly pleased with his regal manners and proper use of the silverware, she nodded politely and continued her patrol. Liam shuddered to think what would have happened if he was less cultured.

After the meal, the group returned to their wing and had the freedom to relax for the evening. Liam spent his time sitting on the edge of his bed telling himself that soon a courier would come and a carriage would be sent. As the lights dimmed, the princesses wished him a good night's rest but stayed adamant in their order that he wear his boots at night to help him acclimate faster.

The next morning, Liam awoke groggy and weak. He felt as if he hadn't slept at all and his whole body was worn down. He pushed away the plush sheets and swung his legs off the side of the bed before tottering forward on the heels and catching the wall to support himself. He grumbled inwardly but lifted a leg to rub his ankles. The girls were right, he was getting used to the boots quickly and the discomfort was practically gone.

Out in the common area, the trio were already primping for the day at their stations. Clover gave him a joyous wave as she finished her mascara. "Hello, Princess Sleepyhead! Why don't you freshen up while we finish here. Then we can help you get ready for the day!"

Liam shuffled off to the bathroom without a word. The room was tiled floor to ceiling with pastel pink and a brilliantly shining silver shower. Liam stepped inside and had to admit that the stream of hot water felt wonderful. It too was perfumed and had a pinkish hue, but it was an invigorating scent. Liam grabbed at the unlabeled bottles, trying to find a simple soap, but had to settle with experimenting with several lotions that bubbled up under the hot water.

The prince returned to the common area wearing the over-sized fluffy green bathrobe they had left for him and his watchers gave him a pleased nod. Dahlia was still brushing her hair and pointed gracefully back to his room. "We laid out the day's outfit for you. Let us know if you need any help, dear."

Liam silently trod back to his room to find silken underwear gently spread out, a new green dress hanging up, and some of frilly underskirt waiting for him. He thought briefly of tossing them back in the closets but accepted he had nothing else and he was sure his captors would check for any missing parts of the outfit. The skirt bobbed and swished against his legs as he tied it on. After slipping on the dress, the combination now had the dress puff out and gave him a feminine silhouette. Liam forcefully mashed the dress down, but it immediately puffed back out.

Rose let out a coo when she saw her charge in his dress before plopping him down at his station and getting to work with the day's makeup and paints. The process still left Liam a little disoriented and the ever-present sweet fruity perfumes clouded his nose. With the breakfast bell ringing, the trio finally stopped their pampering and led him back into the castle.

When the meal was over, Clover collected him while the others swished off to other parts of the institute. "It's time for your first class! Don't worry about any little thing, I'm sure you'll do just fine

and have lots of fun!" She locked her arm around his and led him through the twisting halls of the castle. With a kiss of the cheek, the brunette gently shoved Liam into the class.

There was a smattering of other ladies in similar outfits of different colors and at the front of the room stood a gorgeous woman in a full ornate ballgown. She curtsied to the class, distributed books, and started her lesson without even the slightest hint that Liam's presence was out of the ordinary. He had hoped to find some sense among the staff, but it looked increasingly more difficult.

The course was nothing more than basic teachings of royalty and governance, things Prince Liam had been tutored on since he was old enough to speak. While looking over a short quiz the class was given, his teacher beamed and stroked his hair. "Well aren't you a treasure! I'll recommend you for the advanced placement. You keep this up and you'll be the star pupil in no time."

Rather than malice or jealousy, the rest of class turned to Liam and gently clapped and grinned in most princess-ly fashions. Liam sunk into the chair, causing the dress to poof up around him. The only thing hiding his bright red face was the generous application of makeup.

After class, Liam checked down the halls for his monitors. They were nowhere in sight, so he scurried down the halls, making short hopping strides in his heels. He tried his best to remember the route back to the entrance, but the castle was enormous and seemed to twist and fold back on itself. Between the ridiculous boots and the dress, he quickly tired and had to change strategies. Catching one of the institute's maids walking by, Liam rushed over to her and begged for a chance to send a message home. The maid politely listened to his ravings and then gave him a smiling assurance that such contact would simply not be possible and sauntered away. Liam slumped against the wall in despair but bolted to his feet when he saw the headmaster cross down the hall. She stopped briefly and nodded in his direction. The prince felt a chill once more, gathered himself up, and headed back to his room.

The subsequent days followed much the same schedule. Each morning, Liam was presented with an ever-increasingly frilly outfit. The dresses seemed to constantly be getting larger and poofier, with new frills and layers added each day. By the end of the week, getting dressed was a complicated affair of bodices, petticoats, gloves, stockings, and expanding skirts. His minders moved him to applying his own makeup and one painful morning involved ear piercings and the application of dainty pearl studs. Even freed of the makeup and dresses at night, Liam could hardly recognize himself. His hair grew longer and started to curl under the constant assault of lotions and sprays. The frivolous and frilly lifestyle left him looking soft and effeminate. Hours trapped in corsets, shapers, and boots had changed his posture and stance, sticking his chest and rear out, and leaving walking around without heels to be more uncomfortable than wearing them.

The only thing keeping Liam from sinking into depression was the constant flow of cheer and positivity forced his way every hour of the day. He excelled in the courses about ruling and royalty and was thus heaped with praise and shuffled off to more esoteric classes where he struggled, but was bolstered by the cooing praise of an endless flow of princesses and teachers. His time shifted away from books to tea parties, singing lessons, manners, and even time in the woods trying to master communication with the woodland creatures. The birds and deer seemed to be the only ones that recognized there was something different about the new student. The school even managed to twist the more frivolous teachings he had back home, a lesson he learned after receiving a swat in the bustle from his teacher when he tried to lead in the waltz. Princesses follow. Leading soothes the ego of the

prince, so that's why they are allowed to do so.

Liam stared up at the frilly cover to his canopy bed that night and decided he couldn't take this anymore or let the charade continue. He flew through the closets to find a jacket to put over his nightgown, but upon finding nothing more substantial than a gauzy nightie with fur trim he gave up and would rather lather himself in mud to keep warm if he had to. Tottering forward in his heels even more, he slinked out of his room and through the door to the shared space. A quick survey of the hall revealed nothing lurking in the dim light. The plush carpeting hushed the clacking of his heels as he swiftly made his way down the halls, checking every corner and only moving when he was assured the route was empty. As he approached the grand staircase, his pace quickened and he scrambled for the door. Liam pulled at the door with all his might, kicking a leg up against the wall for more leverage, but it wouldn't budge in the slightest. Dejected, he steadied himself, leaning forward into the door. There would be back exits he could find or a window to leap out of, no matter how high up it was. As Liam turned around, he startled and pressed himself against the wall in horror and the stairs and doorways were now filled with the castle's maids. They stood unblinking and staring at him, three to five maids deep, blocking every potential exit.

The grouping on the stairs parted ways, as a blonde updo and grand ballgown split the blockade. The headmaster descended, slowly shaking her head side to side. She spoke slowly and stressed each word. "My. Dear. Princess."

Liam pressed himself against the wall as tightly as he could, but there was nowhere to hide as she daintily made her closer.

"You make us sad. And Miss Daisy will not be pleased." She reached out and gently gripped the back of his neck, but Liam was unable to shake her hold. She possessed an unearthly strength and led him towards a hallway. As the sea of maids parted for the two, the headmaster turned to one of them. "Fetch the Fairy Godmother."

Liam was plopped down into a plush chair in a small room. The walls and floor were thickly covered in a lush fabric. It seemed to absorb all sound in the room and gave the tiny space an intimidating, almost menacing air. After he had enough time to concoct visions and horrors in his mind, the door opened and a woman seemed to practically float in, her gown barely rustling or moving as she approached Liam. She reached into a small leather pouch at her hip, grabbed a handful of something inside, and sprinkled the dust through the air. With one breath, Liam was out.

The prince awoke an indeterminate amount of time later, groggy and his mind fuzzy. He was seated, but unable to stand or move. Something rigid but soft held his hand and feet to the throne he was held in. He shook his head to clear his mind and felt puffs on both sides of him bounce back and brush against his face. Liam looked down and saw nothing but the expanse of an enormous green dress covering his entire vision. It undulated and heaved with each movement, like a water balloon on the verge of bursting. Underneath, Liam could feel the ruffles and pressure of the frills that packed the dress to capacity. He wasn't even sure where his feet were in the giant ball of silk and satin. His hands barely popped out of the puffed sleeves and his face was framed by the ballooned shoulders. Even the slight movements he could manage sent waves of fluttering and bouncing through the prison of glamour.

A door behind him creaked open and the same woman silently floated around to his front. Liam was too afraid to speak and the woman moved quickly. With the flick of her wrist, she produced a thin wand with a star on the top and waved it back and forth in front of his face. Liam couldn't help but follow it with his eyes, entranced. He could just barely make out the thin smile on the woman's face before his mind burst with images of flowers and thoughts of bunnies and rainbows.



Liam awoke once more in another room. He startled this time, but was still stuck to a throne. As he wobbled, strands of long, wavy hair floated past his face. Seated in the chair, he felt a more pillowy plumpness under him. Even the rise of the dress's bust swayed differently now, with more heft and a tug on him as it wobbled back and forth.

"You finally up?" A feminine voice sounded off to his side and Liam startled again. "Geez, you studied hard with her. Am I right, Nerd?" Despite her lilting tone, there was a gruffness and jocularly to her voice.

"Who's there?!" Liam shouted back.

"Violet. Stuck here in detention, same as you." Liam thrashed in his seat, getting the dress to bounce and wobble away from his face long enough to just barely make out a blue puff ball of a dress across the room. "You know, a princess would have the manners to introduce herself."

Liam felt a shudder of shame come over him. "S-Sorry. I'm Lilly. Lil-ly. Liiilly." The words

tumbled out of his mouth as if he couldn't control himself fully. "Lilllllia. Lillliam. L-Liam!"

"Sounds like you've been under for awhile, love. Don't study up so hard, especially from the Godmother. What are you in for?"

"I tried to escape. Got caught at the front door."

Violet chuckled. "Not bad, Nerd. But an amateur mistake. They also catch you at the gates."

Liam was annoyed but also intrigued by this lady. "And you?"

"Started a fire in baking class. They didn't buy my story about it being a mistake. I flew too close to the sun." Liam laughed, despite the situation. "I like you, Nerd. Let's meet up when we're out of here. I'm feeling generous too. When the Godmother comes back, you need to switch your mind to something else to block our her magic. Pain will do it. Dig your nails into your palms, jam a toe, something."

"Th-Thanks. I'm tied down though, I don't know if I can-" He heard the door creak open and stopped immediately. In the few seconds before the woman approached, he jerked his head to the side and his shoulder up, ramming his pearl studs into himself. The pain coursed through his ear and face as the Godmother waved her wand once more.

Liam found himself propped up on one of the plush cushions of his quarters. He gasped and heard it as a delicate, breathy sound. His advisers surrounded him.

Rose leaned forward. "Oh, you look much better, dear. And are you feeling well?" The trio leaned in, intent but with a hint of monitoring, judging, in their gaze.

Liam nodded. "Y-Yes, I had a bit of a start. If you could just excuse me one-" He rose and tottered in a hurry to his room and over to the mirror. Staring back was a gorgeous young woman. The makeup alone had disguised him before, but now Liam barely recognized the woman in the green dress looking back at him. His hair had tripled in length, now down to his shoulders and with a pampered wave to it. Smooth feminine features graced his face with a plump, puckered set of lips in ruby paint. He patted the bust of the dress and was assured that the swell was not just the padding of the dress, but unnatural curves of his own.

"You do look ever so lovely." Liam inhaled deeply and swung around to see Clover at the door. She gracefully walked behind him, fluffed out his skirt and swept the strands of hair from his eyes. "Beautiful, no?"

Liam sheepishly nodded. "The dress is... very pretty."

Clover giggled and hugged Liam from behind, her dress pressing up against his own. "No, dear, you! Quite the princess you've become."

Liam knew he had to play along for his own safety. Adopting the role of Lilly, he did his best to blend in, politely agreed to any activity or outfit that came his way, and flashed vapid smiles to

anybody that might report him back to the headmaster. It crushed his spirits and he spent his nights when alone desperately assuring himself that the nightmare would end soon. The headmaster seemed like she could appear anywhere and any break in the facade had to be played off as an accident or loss of thoughts, so Lilly gained the reputation of being a bit of a ditz.

He kept his eyes out for Violet, desperate to find a friend and confidant in the madness, but wasn't able to find her through her disguise. Violet was also playing the game and trying to blend in, but Liam knew nothing about how she looked outside of her being in the blue dress group. Having somebody to talk honestly to would have helped, but Liam soldiered on.

As the weeks passed, Liam was able to pass his courses and drag around dresses that weighed more than he did. Bearing a skirt that was wider than his arm span with a low cut bodice that put his bountiful cleavage on display for all, Liam curtsied and giggled his way through the graduation ceremony. The headmaster pulled him aside in front of the gaggle of princesses and waxed poetic about how Lilly's progress ushered in a new era for the institute and a return to an age of proper princesses. Liam was sure this was a final assault to get him to crack, so each giggle he returned was an attack on the system itself.

After the ceremony, Liam was overwhelmed by the flood of shrieks and hugs that came from his minders. The trio hugged and laughed and sang his praises. They exchanged good-byes and promises to meet up again in a few years for reunions. If Liam wasn't somewhat afraid of seeing them again, he'd look into what it would take to invade their kingdoms and burn them to the ground.

The portal opened and the institute's pink carriage pulled to a stop outside the castle grounds. The collected royal staff watched as the door opened by itself and a voluminous skirt rustled and fought its way through the narrow opening. Out popped a gorgeous woman just vaguely reminiscent of the former Prince Liam. Murmurs spread through the crowd and the King stepped forward.

"...Prince..." He stopped, threw his arms out, and rushed towards the woman. "My boy, you look divine! Training is a bit different than I remember, but if this is your choice, well then who is this old-"

Liam shuddered and months of tamped down anger flooded back. "Father, you doddering old fool! Choice!? Did you even read that invitation, you- Raaaurgh!"

The king just hugged his once-son harder and slapped him on the back. "There's plenty of time to tell me all about it!" He tugged his son's hand and pulled him back towards the castle as the staff applauded. The king motioned to the head maid and asked her to clean things up for the new princess and their eyes sparkled in frightening ways.

One maid delicately stroked Liam's shining hair and another pat his dress in wonder. "Oh, yes, my liege! We haven't had... ever since the dear Queen.... Oh it's a blessing to have a maiden in the castle once more!"

Liam felt cold as his father dragged him away from the giggling maids.

The following days saw Liam desperately fighting a losing battle as his room was cleared of his

old belongings, snuck away from him every time he was grabbed for a fitting or royal pampering. His father's blithering acceptance and good cheer towards his new daughter infuriated the prince, but the king was too doddering and loving to lash out at. No matter how many reprimands were laid out to the royal staff, they continued to praise the new princesses. Liam crept out of the castle one day, only to be greeted by a throng of cheering townspeople that adored their princess as well. Liam spent that day being hugged by the people and lavished with praise on his beauty and being reassured at every step that the Queen would have been proud and joyed to see a daughter grow up this way. After that, Liam vowed to never leave the castle.

One day, after freeing himself from a tailor trying to add extra ribbons to a new gown for walks in the royal gardens, the castle was a flurry of activity. Liam approached the king as he sent a line of soldiers out to the courtyard.

"Father, what's going on? The commotion..."

The king beamed and opened his arms wide. "Ah, my dear child! A wonderful choice in outfits for this prestigious day. Your prince will be arriving any moment now."

Liam was taken aback. "W-What?"

"Now that you've finished your training and are a full adult, it's time to plan for the future. Other kingdoms have been thrilled to send their princes and-"

"How dare you! How could you-?!" Liam stopped his feet and shook his fist, knowing how little of a gesture that is when the stomp made a happy clack of heels on the tile floor and the fist was covered in silk gloves.

The king just grinned further. "A reluctant princess! Oh the fairy tales are always right. She fights against the candidates until her dream prince comes and sweeps her off her feet!" The king chuckled to himself as he made his way across the hall. "You be as picky as you want! I'll keep the candidates coming!"

Liam stood there, mouth agape.

The visiting prince arrived in his carriage and Liam was made to wait to receive him. Liam's mind immediately wandered to protect him as the prince got down on one knee to kiss the princess's hand and woo her with loving adoration. He was a rich, powerful prince. She was a rich, curvaceous princess. They were clearly made for each other. The royal maidens leaned in and assured Liam he should marry the prince immediately.

Liam was shoved off to give the prince a tour, so the former-prince gave the visiting one a begrudging walkthrough. As the prince extolled his virtues, Liam stuck out a dainty foot when the prince drew in close, sending him sprawling into the garden's mud. Liam was pleased to finally have a use for his dress and keeping his feet hidden for subterfuge.

The prince pushed himself off the ground, sputtering mud and grass in shock. He looked up at Liam in horror and Liam pounced on the opportunity to storm off in a huff, ranting about the prince's

undignified ways and how they clearly weren't a match.

Liam was pleased with himself for the rest of the night, until he overheard talks of the next candidate. A new flurry of complaints and protests did little to persuade the king to stop his plan. With a hearty chuckle, Liam was sent to bed to rest up for the next day's courtship.

Day after day, Liam was presented with suitors from kingdoms across the worlds. Most just fawned over the princess, with more than enough moving right into ogling, and a few shifting their hands a bit too low in their hugs. Liam worked hard to sabotage the dates as best he could. He quickly found a hot cup of tea "accidentally" spilled across some laps did wonders for sending the princes running. The king grew more despondent with each suitor that ran away or stormed off. It just looked bad for the kingdom to have an undesirable princess.

One morning, the king returned to his daughter with a heavy heart and claimed he was unable to find a new suitor. Liam beamed inside, but did feel a little sad about letting his father down. A little. A very small little. The royal father said there was another candidate and their kingdom had been the one to reach out, a rarity after word spread about the plague of scalded laps in the castle. Liam was forced back out into the courtyard as another portal opened.

To his surprise, a beautiful young woman flicked back a flowing mane of radiant blonde hair and smoothed out her silver dress. She looked Liam up and down with a smirk. "Hey, Nerd."

Liam was aghast. "Violet!" The two princesses hugged as the collected staff murmured. The turn of events was unexpected, but it was the first guest his dear daughter hadn't met with hate in her eyes, so the kingdom could use a little friendly PR.

Liam and Violet hid away to the garden where they could speak in private. Liam all but forgot his feminine affliction at Violet's side. "What are you doing here!? I looked for you all the time but could never spot you around the castle."

She nodded. "The headmaster and I had our issues and she wasn't a big fan. If she saw us hanging out, she'd only drive you harder. But, man, seeing you break out. It got me to power through, complete the damned courses, and get out of there myself. Once back home, I had the seers keep an eye out for your kingdom and I got word of your marriage fix." Liam shrunk back into his seat in a huff. "Look, Lil-ly, there's a reason I was stuck at that dumb institute."

Liam's brow furrowed. "What do you mean?"

"The royal parents didn't take too kindly to a daughter that wasn't interested in princes. They felt that shipping me off would 'clear my head' and get me into the traditional storybook mode. That's why I stuck around so long. May as well hang out and mess with the place when there's no point returning home. But I sensed something in you. Maybe we can... help each other out."

Liam blushed. "W-What do you mean? A-Again."

"You need somebody to marry to get your king off your back. I need somebody to marry to get away from home. Our kingdoms get peace for the ages. We can hang out, maybe get to know each other a bit better, and see if something develops. I think you might be fun. Sound like a deal?"

The king was overjoyed and ran off shouting proclamations of wonder and good tidings before he remembered to congratulate the couple and hoisted his daughter off the ground in a series of bear hugs. Liam was pleased to find another use for his dress and all the padding that protected him from crushed ribs. Violet was thrilled to be able to break the news to her parents' faces and the princesses parted with a kiss.

Liam braced himself for the days to come as the kingdom celebrated, the castle was awash in decorations and splendor, and he couldn't go more than five minutes without somebody trying to take his measurements or try on some accessory. The royal maids were at their ear-splitting shrillest with their shrieks of joy every time they saw the former prince in a new gown. Liam was sure that not even a fraction of this care would have gone into the wedding if he was getting married as his real self, but the maids flocked to him and pushed the limits of how much he could smile and bide his time.

On the morning of the big day, Liam was dragged from bed at first light and was swarmed by every staff member in the castle trying to get him to add something to his costume, try his hair this way or that, or paint himself in some new color. Before the sleep had even cleared from his eyes, he felt like he was covered by twice his own weight in jewelry, frills, and poof of every imaginable variety.

The time came and the trumpets blared as the doorways opened for the former-prince. The collected crowd was aghast with oohs and ahhs and no less than three maidens were overcome and needed to sit down at the sight of Liam's wedding gown. A spectacle of silken finery that was all but blinding in its radiance when the sunlight had the pleasure to grace it. It sealed the end of Prince Liam in the history books and only the tale of Princess Lilly would pass through the lips of scholars and schoolchildren when reciting the names of their most beloved royalty. A fare number of bawdy songs were no doubt sung in bars after many drinks, but those people were roundly beaten until they respected their princess.



Liam flounced his way down the aisle, hiding his struggle to heft the gown behind a smile. Violet waited for him at the front of the church, dressed in a far more simple affair to Liam's chagrin. As he approached and stood at her side, she leaned in and whispered to her bride-to-be.

"You look like you're being devoured by a giant marshmallow."

"Oh shut up."

The ceremony continued without a hitch, pausing only twice to shush the king's bouts of joyous weeping and cheers of pride for his daughter. During the reception afterwards, Violet took great joy in watching her new father-in-law torment her own parents with hugs and slaps on the back.

Liam waddled up, having broken free of the weeping royal maids that needed to make sure he knew that his wedding was just as divine as his own mother's and what a lovely bride he made. Violet gave him a kiss on the cheek.

"I'm not sure what's going to be more fun: getting you out of that dress or leaving you in that monstrosity."

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