



The Red Queen's Private Journal

*Entries from the Reign of Eternal Order
For My Eyes Only—Lest Heads Roll
The Eve of the Grand Ball*

I write this as the sun dips behind the painted roses, casting long shadows that know their place.

The palace hums with preparation, and I find myself reflecting on the price of such elegance. It is not paid in gold, but in certainty.

The party was already correct when I arrived this evening. That is the advantage of preparation, things behave before you ask them to. I walked through the ballroom slowly, because speed implies urgency, and urgency invites questions I have no patience for. The violins lifted where they should, their melodies weaving through the air like golden threads, each note precise and unerring. Not because they were commanded—because they knew. The courtiers parted with smiles that did not strain, their silks rustling in deference, eyes gleaming with the reflection of my crown.

Gold behaves differently when it belongs to you. It does not flash garishly; it settles, warm and heavy, like a lover's hand that knows its boundaries. A young courtier leaned in too close, his breath scented with approved wine. I allowed it, if only to observe how his admiration bordered on fear.

"Your Majesty," he murmured, eyes bright as polished coins, "this is the finest gathering of the season. The chandeliers alone outshine the stars."



I laughed lightly, because he needed encouragement, not confirmation—encouragement keeps them loyal without breeding entitlement. “It would be strange if it weren’t,” I replied, my voice carrying just enough to draw envious glances from the edges of the room.

Coins spilled somewhere behind me—a deliberate show from the jester’s overflowing pouch, timed to punctuate my presence. Laughter followed, rippling outward in controlled waves, like echoes in a well-ordered hall. No one bent to collect them; why would they? That is how you know a system is healthy no one panics over abundance, for I have decreed scarcity obsolete.

This is what stability feels like, I thought as I sipped from a goblet that refilled itself. Comfortable. Unquestioned. If it shines, it belongs here. And tonight, everything shines.

The Balcony, After Midnight

The air grows cooler, and with it, a faint whisper of ash from the eternal torches. I step out here to remind myself of my crown’s weight—not as a burden, but as a promise.

I stepped outside because even perfection needs air to breathe. The doors closed softly behind me, sealing in the warmth like a secret. The music did not stop—it softened, fading to a respectful murmur, which is how sound should behave when it honors you. The night air cooled my face, carrying the faint, acrid tang of ash from the torches below, where flames flickered in iron braziers like obedient subjects. I brushed a speck from my sleeve, watching it dissolve into the wind.

The crown felt heavier here, out of the crowd’s gaze. Not burdensome—present, a constant reminder that authority weighs more when unobserved, unshared. The Hound stood a respectful distance back,



his posture perfect, silhouette sharp against the palace glow. His loyalty is a comfort, though I sometimes wonder if it's too absolute, like a mirror that reflects without judgment.

"Report," I said without turning, my voice slicing the hush.

"All borders secure," he replied, his tone as steadfast as stone. "No irregularities, Your Majesty."

I nodded, letting the silence test itself. "Good. Then this is simply maintenance."

He hesitated—a mere fraction, a breath held too long. It irked me, that pause. "Your Majesty... do you require anything further?"

I considered the question carefully, turning just enough to meet his eyes in the torchlight—eyes that held no questions, only readiness. "No," I said. "I just needed to remember what quiet sounds like."

The ash settled again on my hem. This time, I left it. If the crown burns, it burns for me. Let it remind me of what I've forged.

The Following Dawn, Minor Amusements

Sleep evades me, as it should—queens do not slumber like common folk. Instead, I note the trifles that amuse and annoy.

The Dormouse was mentioned three times before midnight in the reports that pile on my desk like fallen leaves. Each account contradicted the last spotted on the north road, then darting through the south corridor, lurking behind one patrol and scampering ahead of another. Always that infernal laughing, high and tinkling, like shattered teacups mocking my order.

"Did he damage anything?" I asked the Captain, who stood rigid before me, his uniform starched to hide any tremor.



"No, Majesty," he admitted, eyes fixed on the floor. "He just... rearranged things. Hats perched on statues' heads, clocks nudged forward by a whisker, teapots balanced precariously on guards' helmets. Harmless pranks, surely."

I waved a hand dismissively, though a flicker of irritation stirred within. "Then he's bored. Boredom is not rebellion. Watch him, but do not pursue—chases imply he warrants the effort."

They seemed relieved by my verdict, as always, clinging to it like a decree from on high. The Twins proved more tedious still. Whispers of candy changing hands in shadowed alcoves, illicit sweetness where only discipline should linger—sticky wrappers discarded under rose bushes, leaving trails of temptation. I listened impassively as my advisors debated in the council chamber, their voices a drone against the ticking clock.

"It dulls attention spans," one argued, brow furrowed.

"It lifts morale, perhaps," another countered, though his eyes betrayed doubt.

"It makes people forget why they're here," a third interjected, glancing at me warily.

That notion lingered, unsettling. Forget In my realm "Contain it," I commanded calmly, my tone final. "Do not dramatize it. Drama feeds itself, turning sweets into symbols."

Sugar laws, I mused later, alone with my quill. They stick where they shouldn't, warping what was straight. But for now, it's mere amusement. No cracks yet.

Mid-Afternoon, The Mirrors

A quiet corridor, away from prying eyes. Mirrors should be allies, not enigmas.



I noticed the mirrors misbehaving before anyone dared whisper of it—reflections lagging by a breath, angles disagreeing in subtle shifts of light. Nothing overt, nothing I could behead for treason. Just... inconsistency, like a heartbeat skipping in the glass, or a clockwork silence broken by an errant tick.

I stopped before the oldest mirror, the one etched with faded crests of queens long forgotten, its frame cold under my fingers. “You don’t invent,” I reminded it sternly, my voice echoing back a fraction too late. “You reflect. Precisely.”

The image obeyed. Almost. My lips in the glass moved after I spoke, a silent mockery. And the crown—it sat straighter there than on my head, as if the reflection knew a secret poise I lacked. I adjusted it firmly, pressing the gold until it aligned reality with the ideal. That is how correction works bend the world, not the mirror.

Glass doesn’t lie, or so I’ve always believed. But today, it hesitated. I turned away, refusing to give it more attention. Attention breeds ideas, and ideas breed disorder.

Evening Orders, Send the Scouts

Patterns do not fracture without cause. I sense the deviation, like a rose blooming red when white was commanded.

Patterns do not break without reason—roads feeling longer, orders obeyed with an extra breath’s delay, silence lingering too intentionally. Roses bloomed out of season in the garden this morn, petals unfurling defiantly. I summoned the generals to the war room, where maps sprawled like conquered territories.

“Double patrols,” I instructed, tracing borders with a gloved finger. “Quietly. No fanfare.”



One cleared his throat, foolhardy. “Your Majesty, there has been no direct threat. Merely... whispers.”

“I am not responding to threat,” I replied coolly, meeting his gaze until he looked away. “I am responding to deviation. Scouts don’t sleep until it’s rectified.”

Armor replaced silk in the halls; boots thudded heavier than slippers. The palace’s sound shifted—more deliberate, a necessary weight. The Hound received his orders privately, in the dim antechamber.

“Find her,” I said, the name unspoken but understood.

He did not ask which Alice I meant. Good. His eyes gleamed with purpose as he bowed. Paranoia. No. Preparation.

Under Pressure, Hold the Line

The days blur, but my resolve does not. Pressure reveals truths, like squeezing a fruit to test its ripeness.

Pressure is information, and lately, it presses from all sides. Whispers of a name returned—Alice, uttered carefully in corridors, like a curse wrapped in silk. Hearts fall in line, or so they should cards marching in perfect ranks, roses blooming obediently. But today, a scout reported inconsistencies—mirrors cracking further, reflections shifting like water.

“Hold the line,” I commanded the assembly, my voice echoing in the throne room. They repeated it, voices unified. Again. Again. I spoke more than usual, not from doubt, but because clarity demands



reinforcement when systems strain. This is not anger, I assured myself as I paced later. This is articulation. Velvet law, enforced with a smile.

The Hound's report was colder "She is almost here. Wonderland reacts inconsistently—clocks ticking backward, sweets spreading like weeds." Ivory doubt stirs in me, memories of past disruptions. I hate this feeling, this fracture. But I will mend it.

Midnight Solitude, Composure

Alone at last. The court dismissed, gloves removed. Vulnerability is a luxury I afford only here. By midnight, I dismissed the court, their bows a symphony of obedience. Alone in my chambers, I removed my gloves, smoothed my dress, adjusted my crown before the great mirror. It greeted me properly now—aligned, obedient, no stutters. "There," I whispered softly. "Better."

For a moment, everything agreed, the candle's flame steady, the ticking clock in sync. Then—a flicker. Just a stutter in the glass, a fragment of timing out of place. Almost Alice, I thought unbidden. If this is her... then everything remembers.

I turned away sharply. Attention gives things ideas. Release the hound tomorrow, I decided. Not in rage, but in control. This is preparation, not war.

The Record No One Hears, As I Arrange Myself

The candle burns low, wax pooling like unshed tears. I speak aloud to the shadows, justifying what needs no defense.

I don't understand why they resist—I truly don't. Not in anger, not in doubt, but in genuine confusion. They are safe under my reign, fed from bountiful tables, spared the chaos of choice. Why tamper with



perfection My voice rose as I paced, echoing off the walls when I spoke of certainty. It dropped to a murmur when rebellion crossed my mind, settling uneasily at the thought of wrongness.

“That Alice,” I muttered, fingers tracing the mirror’s edge. “Not the right one. She misaligns things—clocks, mirrors, loyalties. That’s worse than opposition.” Dubstep pulses in my head, a glitchy rhythm when I name the resistance, like the palace itself protesting. But composure restores itself. Publicly, at least.

“I know what’s best,” I said firmly, smoothing my collar, meeting my own unyielding gaze. “Someone has to.”

The candle guttered, flame dancing one last defiance. I blew it out. The embers glowed hot in the dark. I did not look away. They remain, as do I.

Closing Note (Unwritten, But Etched in My Mind)

Everything I did was necessary. If they cannot see that, it is because clarity is heavier than they expect. History will agree with me—it always does, for I write it. The embers fade, but my reign endures.

