

# **Don't Leave Me**

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*This is a revised version of a one-shot I wrote a while ago. Kuzco loses his parents, and finds comfort in someone else. This fanfic is pretty dark emotionally, but there isn't a content rating for that.*

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**Chapter 1 - Don't Leave Me**

**2**

# 1 - Don't Leave Me

Disclaimer: I don't own the Emperor's New Groove, nor any of its characters. The Empress was dying. Three months ago, the Emperor Huascar had died from a poisoned drink. It had been a day of celebration, a festival for the end of summer. The assassin was never found. Since then, the palace had been under a tight security. Guards escorted the widowed Empress and her son everywhere. But that hadn't stopped the Empress from falling mysteriously ill. Now, the shell of a once quite beautiful, though never lively woman lay in a large bed, tucked under a thick layer of blankets as if that could protect her from the icy hands of death. The two guards at the door moved aside their spears to allow a young boy of nine, ushered by a woman who was beginning to show signs of elderly age, in. Undisguised horror showed on the boy's face. Where had his mother gone? What could have made her skin the color of bone, her hair so brittle and eyes so sunken? The dull eyes looked into Kuzco's bright ones, and instantly he felt a wave of grief flood through him. "Leave us, Yzma," the Empress whispered. The older woman bowed and left the two alone. With no one else watching, Kuzco allowed the held up tears out, hot salt water running down his face. "Don't look at me like that," his mother said, beckoning him forward with a bony hand. Still staring, Kuzco complied. For the first time since he could remember, Kuzco's mother took his hands into hers. But her touch was not loving. In fact, despite her weakness, it was more business-like. "Do you love me?" Kuzco didn't know the answer. Did he? How could he know what love was like, when he had never been shown it? He realized he should have felt guilt for such thoughts, but he didn't feel that either. His mother gave him a cheerless smile. "Why should I ask you that? I've never given you any reason to." When Kuzco didn't reply, she continued. "So we don't love each other. This was a mistake on both my and your father's part, but it is too late to fix. Even though you may not be a compassionate ruler, I hope you will be an able one." Kuzco tried to respond, to say he wasn't ready, but he choked on his words and all he could say was, "Don't leave me." The woman looked at him shocked, and said, "But, Kuzco, I was never with you to begin with." And then she died. Kuzco yanked his hands out of her cold and lifeless ones, and, his whole body shaking violently, he ran before anyone could follow him. He ran down the corridors, he ran blindly, and he didn't stop until his breathing was only gasps and his muscles burned. He had stopped in front of a mirror. He looked, and saw the face of a boy. A boy much too young to be handed the burden of such an expansive Empire. A boy with large, dark eyes, a regal nose, and thin, sharp features. A beautiful face. The face of his mother. With a yell of horror and rage, his fist crashed into the mirror, shards of glass exploding and nicking at his skin. Then Kuzco collapsed on the floor, sobbing. "I hate you! Why'd you both have to leave? I hate you!" A hand fell on his shoulder to placate him. Kuzco looked up, and saw the face of the family's loyal advisor, concern in her eyes. "She didn't love me," the boy whispered to her, the anger gone from his face, replaced with fresh grief. "No, she didn't," the advisor said sadly. "So why should you care for her?" Kuzco couldn't find a reason to argue with her question. "You've had no one your whole life, haven't you?" the voice soothed. It was a soft, kind voice, and Kuzco started to feel comfort in it. "But, I care about you." Kuzco, surprised, asked, "You do?" "Always. It's a shame no one else does," she lamented softly. "They don't?" But Kuzco knew the answer. "No. No one except me. But I can take care of you, and I'll love you very much as long as you do what I say." Kuzco looked into her kind, grandmotherly face, wanting her comfort, wanting the praise he was always so hungry for, but never received. "I will." "Good. You will make a fine Emperor." She took Kuzco's hand, and her grip was loving and warm and everything his mother's wasn't, and gently helped him stand up. "Let's go get you ready for your crowning, my child." Kuzco nodded. He didn't know why he never knew it before,

but even though he had lost everyone, here was someone who actually did and always had cared about him. "Yes, Yzma."