

Chapter 72 Don't Cry

The princess held on to her. She placed her right hand under Roxanne's shoulders and raised her gently, until Roxanne was seated. The right side of her cheek was stained with grass and wet soil, while the other side of her cheek had Marilyn's handprint imprinted on it, still stinging from the painful slap.

Squatting beside her, Elizabeth helped her dust the dirt of her face, slowly and with sympathy.

"I hope you're alright? I really don't understand why she'll treat you like that."

Roxanne struggled to keep her tears at bay, they were fighting their way to her eyelids, but she wouldn't even let them gather there. Once she did, she wasn't sure she would be able to stop herself from crying. Maybe Elizabeth didn't understand, but Roxanne understood why Marilyn had hit her; it was hate. Did she understand why Marilyn hated her? Of course not! If she did, she wouldn't be seated on wet grass like a complete idiot. Even though that was what she currently felt like.

Roxanne saw Elizabeth's eyes narrow on her, with a cautious and scrutinizing gaze that examined her from top to bottom. Roxanne knew what was going to follow after Elizabeth's gaze.

"Aren't you the lady Lancelot introduced as his secretary?" Her tone was soft, even though her gaze was suspicious. Roxanne looked at herself,

wallowing in self-pity, shame and anger. She sniffed back her tears before speaking.

"Even I thought so. Turns out things are not always as they seem," Roxanne ended the statement with a dismissal. She did not want to talk about it any further, but the princess failed to get the hint.

"Why are they making you do this? Does Lancelot know? Of course he doesn't. He can't be aware, there's no way he'll let them do this to you if he knew, there's no way..."

"He knows," Roxanne cut in, with the faint ounce of strength she had within her. She did not understand why the princess was being nice to her, even though everyone else, including the one who had brought her here, seemed to want nothing to do with her.

"What?" Elizabeth exclaimed, her brows squinted in disbelief.

"That is impossible. Are you trying to say Lancelot allowed this to happen? Is this one of the packages that come with being his secretary? Did you agree to all this? What's even happening here?"

Roxanne found it funny, that Elizabeth was asking her all the questions she had asked herself time and time again. Even after hearing the questions from someone else's mouth, Roxanne couldn't bring herself to find any answers to it. Perhaps, because there were none.

The reality of how pathetic her situation was dawned on her once more. She felt tricked, duped, stabbed at the back, and alone. Her only solace was thousands of miles and oceans away from her, and Roxanne could not bring herself to cry out or reach out to her best friend. What would she even tell her?

She felt so lonely, more than she had ever been in her life. She was in a strange land, where almost everyone hated her, and....

The tears forcefully found their way out of her tear glands and freed themselves from her eyelids, flowing freely down her cheeks. She could

taste the salt of her tears as it seeped into her mouth. Even in the saltiness, she could still taste the bitterness in them.

"I...don't..d..don't.. know," Roxanne stammered.

When Elizabeth saw her cry, her eyes widened in shock. She moved closer to Roxanne and wrapped her arms around her.

"Don't cry. Please don't cry."

Roxanne had already began, it was too late to turn back. She could as well take advantage of the princess's care and empty her heart.

"I'm just so confused. I don't even know what I got myself into. I didn't plan for all of this..." Roxanne found herself mumbling in tears, against Elizabeth's shoulder. The princess's hands caressed the back of her head gently, her fingers seeping into her hair and gently massaging Roxanne's skull. Even if Roxanne wanted to stop talking, there was no way she could bring herself to do so now.

"Lancelot didn't add any of this to the plan. I had thought that coming here would bring us closer, but..." Roxanne paused to sniff in her tears. It didn't stop them from running down freely.

"I feel deserted, tricked, alone, duped...if I had known this is how it would be, I would never have come here. But...but he didn't tell me. I never imagined it like this..." The pain in her heart was evident in her shaky voice and her loud cry. Roxanne did nothing to hide it, she didn't even have the strength to.

Elizabeth held her closer and took deep breaths in, before speaking.

"Lancelot is my cousin, and I have known him for all my life. He might be a good man, but he's never liked or even loved anyone enough to show it. No one ever knows what's going on in his head. He just does his things and everyone else has to agree to it." She paused for a while, as if allowing her first series of revelations to sink into Roxanne's ears, before speaking again.

"I'm so sorry you had to fall victim to his cruelty. But, now that you are aware of who he truly is, you can help yourself by standing up and fighting for yourself. Allowing other maids kick you around is certainly not the way to last long here. You need to be strong."

The thought of forcing strength was scary. Roxanne wasn't sure she had it in her to summon courage anymore.

"I just want to go home," she whimpered, still relaxing on Elizabeth's shoulder.

The princess smiled sadly, and raised Roxanne's face to meet hers.

"I know just the thing that can cheer you up."

Her eyes glittered under the evening sun, and Roxanne was forced to acknowledge the princess's beauty once again. Now that she had been so kind to her, the princess looked even more beautiful.

"A flight back home?" Roxanne asked, and Elizabeth chuckled, even though Roxanne hadn't meant to make a joke.

"No, but a very nice place with ice cream that gives joy. Not quite far from the palace. I could take you there this evening..." She stopped when she sensed the hesitation in Roxanne's eyes. She also felt Roxanne's body grow tense and stiff. Elizabeth cast her a reassuring smile, as if saying, "I have got you, trust me and you'll be okay."

The princess has already been so nice to her, what bad would trusting her do? Roxanne asked herself. When she did not find an answer to the question, she allowed herself to relax. Elizabeth noticed this and her smile broadened.

"Normally, we would drive there. But, the evening breeze is therapeutic. And I would really want to spend more time with you. To assure you that you'll be alright. What do you say?" Even if Roxanne had thought of saying no, Elizabeth's charming and caring smile rendered her helpless against the princess's charm.

So, she smiled and nodded eagerly.

"Great!" Elizabeth cried out.

"I'll need you to take care of yourself and first, I would be waiting for you here. Is that okay?"

When Roxanne nodded weakly, Elizabeth rose slowly. When she had found her footing, she stretched her hand to Roxanne to help her up. Roxanne cast the princess one last thorough look, before taking her hands and rising up. She allowed the princess help her to her feet, and walk with her to a certain length before she carried on the journey by herself. She walked back to the servant's quarters without saying a word to anybody. The side remarks still continued, but she paid them no mind. When she finally got to her room, she went straight into the bathroom, washed herself thoroughly, before coming out. She threw on a black skirt and a cashmere cardigan, before leaving the room once more, still not saying a word to anybody.

Just as Elizabeth had promised, she was in the garden waiting for Roxanne. Roxanne realized she had never been so relieved to see anyone since she got here. Elizabeth's eyes danced over her. "You look better."

Honestly, Roxanne did feel better after the bath. At least, the cold water helped to cool the stinging effect of the slap.

"Thank you, Your Highness," Roxanne spoke up. Elizabeth smiled and took hold of Roxanne's right hand.

"It's nothing. Everyone just really needs someone to be there for them at some point in their lives."

Elizabeth was right. Roxanne was currently in that point of her life. So, she smiled sadly and allowed Elizabeth to hold her hand and chatter on about the palace, and all the amazing festivities prepared for tomorrow, just to lighten the mood. Roxanne chuckled sincerely whenever Elizabeth said something she found funny. The two ladies walked hand in hand,

from the palace garden, to the palace gate and even past it. Before Roxanne knew, they were outside the high walls of the palace. And she was walking into the typical English night life setting.

As Elizabeth went on and on about her early days in a boarding school in Switzerland, Roxanne could see the lights of the city from a far end. They were now outside the palace gates, but not fully outside the palace, there were still two high fences beside them, and no streetlights, to keep attention out of the palace.

"You would absolutely love English night life!" Elizabeth cried out with excitement and Roxanne could feel it brewing inside her too. Elizabeth's positive energy was contagious, and she loved it.

"I bet I will," Roxanne replied.

Finally, they got to the end of the fences, and were welcomed with the sound of honking vehicles, streetlights, billboard lights and lights from opened shops.

"The ice cream store is just across the road, we just have to cross and..."

Elizabeth's sentence was cut short by the sound of a screeching vehicle, coming to a halt just in front of them. Confused, the both of them stepped back. Roxanne was going to continue walking forward, but shock seemed to paralyse Elizabeth, and their hands were intertwined.

Roxanne tried to shake her, but Elizabeth wouldn't move. The door of the van in front of them slid open, and a figure in a ski mask jumped out of it.

It was then, Roxanne froze and Elizabeth found the willpower to move. But, it was too late.

Underneath the dim streetlight, the ski mask figure charged at them, and stole Roxanne's hand, pulling her away from Elizabeth.

"No! Stop!" Elizabeth cried out, shaking with fear.

Roxanne tried to wriggle free. She screamed, kicked, punched the hard chest, but nothing was enough. She was forced into the van, and her captor followed her behind.

Sweating profusely, Elizabeth continued to scream in fear. The vehicle drove away almost immediately the door closed. She was petrified, her heart hammered against her chest.

Elizabeth picked up speed and ran after the car for ten seconds, but it was no use. She slowly came to a halt, a gut wrenching feeling in her chest.

Roxanne was gone. And there was nothing she could do to bring her back.