

## K Lover 109

### Chapter 109: A Rude Awakening

The only person who was shocked at the revelation was Henry. Rylen didn't even blink; he knew the crown prince wouldn't accuse his mother without proof, and judging by her reaction during breakfast, he knew she was guilty.

He didn't approve of Rose being in the castle, but he also didn't approve of the way the Queen had tried to get rid of her. She could have died, and he had heard the rumors about what had happened at her arrival and how sick she was. He couldn't imagine what she had gone through at the hands of the person who kidnapped her and the auctioneers.

"Don't lie on the Queen's name," Henry barked at his niece.

Caius slowly closed his eyes, his irritation reaching its peak. He had let Henry do as he liked in the hopes that it would scare Martha into speaking—because if he had been the one to handle it, she might have ended up unable to speak forever—and it had worked, but he was sick of the steward's meddling.

"Henry, if you interrupt one more time... your niece knows better than to lie to me again, isn't that right?" he asked with a smirk.

"Yes, Your Highness. I promise I am not lying. I was asked by the Queen. She made the plans with the man who would come to take Rose. My job was to keep the door open, get rid of her clothes, and make sure to convince you that she had run away."

Caius could already guess Martha's role, so nothing she said was shocking or new to him. The information he actually wanted was the identity of the people involved. He knew his mother was the one in charge, but there was no way she could set this sort of plan in motion without a certain person's approval.

"Who was the man who kidnapped her?" Caius asked.

"I don't know," Martha said as she scrambled to her feet. "I think the Queen used a prisoner."

Martha had no reason to hold back now. The most important name she shouldn't have mentioned was already out of her mouth. Now, there was nothing to lose that hadn't already been lost.

"A prisoner?" Caius asked darkly.

Lord Maximus was in charge of the prisoners; no one could take one out without him being aware, and Lord Maximus was the King's right hand. Caius almost laughed. Of course, it would come full circle. His father was forever the root of all his problems.

"Yes, I am so sorry, Your Highness, but I don't know much else. I was only asked to make sure the plan went smoothly. I am sorry for lying, but the Queen asked me to. I wouldn't dare lie to the crown for no reason. Please have mercy, Your Highness."

He could confront Lord Maximus, but the older man had sworn his fealty to the King, and only the King could order Maximus around. Lord Maximus would just ask him to speak to his father, and that would be the equivalent of eating glass. He would also not get the answers he wanted. Caius smiled. Perhaps the plans for the masked auction weren't such a bad idea anymore.

"Let the guards in, Henry," Caius said.

Martha heard the words and almost fainted. She looked from her uncle to the crown prince, wondering to whom she might plead her case, but all she needed was the look on her uncle's face to know there was no point. He couldn't save her.

Henry dejectedly moved toward the door. He pulled it open and two guards walked in. He couldn't stop this, and it served her right. He had tried to stop his niece from going down this path several times. She just wouldn't stop picking on Rose, and now she had angered the crown prince.

"Thirty strokes, and if she survives, kick her out of the castle. The next time I see you will be the last!"

"Your Highness," Martha cried as the guards pulled her. "I told you everything. Please have mercy. I will die."

She cried and kicked as the men dragged her out of the private study. Martha tried to fight them off—kicking, grabbing, and holding onto the door. She called out to her uncle, but he wouldn't even look at her. The guards eventually forced her out of the study, locked the door, and silenced her cries.

Henry stood still during all this, his hands behind his back and his head bent. He bit his lower lip and shut his eyes tight. Thirty strokes was a lot, but compared to her offense, she likely got off easy. She would survive it, but not without injuries, and she would also be required to leave the castle.

He could not comprehend how his niece would do something like that and think there would be no consequences for her actions—working with the Queen to commit such heinous crimes against a woman who was here against her own will.

"Do you have grievances toward me, Henry?" Caius asked.

Henry couldn't hide his shock that the crown prince was speaking to him—let alone asking him such a question. "No, of course not, Your Highness."

"Do you think the punishment meted out to your niece was unreasonable?" he asked.

"Your Highness's orders can never be unreasonable," Henry said without hesitation.

"Do you think I was being cruel?" he asked.

Caius didn't care if Henry thought so or not; he just wanted to know that this was not enough to sway the old man. He trusted Henry, and that hadn't changed in the twenty-two years of his life.

"No, Your Highness. My niece deserves this. I fear I may have spoiled her a little, and hopefully, this will give her a rude awakening."

"Very well," Caius said and waved his hand. "You're dismissed."

"If you need some time off to take care of your niece, you may do so."

"No, Your Highness. Her parents will be the ones to take care of her. There is no need for the crown prince to show such benevolence towards me. I am partly to blame. Perhaps if she had been raised differently, things wouldn't have turned out like this."