

# THE KING'S LOVER

## Chapter 17: One Job

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Rose stood in front of what she could only assume was the crown prince's chambers. There were a handful of guards around the hallway and two stationed in front. They stared at her oddly, their eyes sharp beneath the glow of the torches lining the hallway. Rose held her breath as she waited for them to open the door.

Rose stepped forward hesitantly. She was alone; the maids had left her as soon as they had readied her. One of them had revealed they weren't allowed in the crown prince's wing except when given permission, so she had made most of the journey here alone. However, it didn't take her long to find the prince's chambers—the row of guards was enough indication.

Rose gasped as she stepped into the room. It felt wrong for her to call it a room. It was big—big enough to be a hall. The ceiling was just as tall. There was a huge bed with a canopy over it; the drapes of the four-poster bed were drawn, and Rose couldn't see it, but she could figure out the size. She turned her gaze away from the bed. Thinking it was a good thing she couldn't see it.

Rose couldn't help but run her eyes across the room. If she wasn't so scared, she would have moved closer to inspect it. The most obvious thing was the family emblem on the wall, which held the mountain, but instead of clouds around the top, there was the sun shining just over it. It was the same crest she had seen in the carriage, and she was sure the prince's ring carried this.

The room was a mix of different colors but mostly gold, white, and blue. The drapes for the bed were blue and gold. The curtains were the same, but the curtains were so tall they reached all the way to the ceiling. Rose frowned as her gaze rested on a set of doors. She could only guess it was a door; there was a huge curtain in front of it, but it was different and separated from the rest.

She found her feet moving before she could stop herself. This didn't look like it led to the bathroom. She swung the curtains and saw a set of doors. She could see the moon peeking through the small glass pane. It was a wooden double door, and Rose could tell it was sturdy.

She moved closer, trying to peek out some more. She couldn't see much, but she could guess this door led to a balcony. Rose winced at the thought, but she wouldn't hit the ground without injury. It was at least thirty meters between this floor and the ground. She turned away from the door. Now was not the time to think of how to escape. Maybe it was, but mentally preparing herself was far more important.

There were chairs in the room—a little too many, if Rose was asked. She could count no less than five: two long chairs and three smaller ones. They were closer to the fireplace, which was burning a little. It was a major source of light in the room, as barely any candles were lit.

Rose walked away from the balcony doors, but she didn't take a seat. Instead, she just stood and held her arms around herself. Any minute now, the crown prince would walk through the doors. Rose caught a whiff of the perfumes the maids had sprayed on her. She couldn't remember the names if she tried.

They had bathed her in warm, scented water, washed her hair thoroughly, clipped her nails, and rubbed lotion and oils all over her. Rose didn't think she had ever felt this refreshed and soft in her life. However, the maids hadn't done this willingly. They had complained the whole time and gossiped too. This was usual for the crown prince, but according to the maids, his tastes were usually court ladies and courtesans.

"This is the first time His Royal Highness would bring a backwater peasant with a dialect so thick it is impossible to understand her," a maid had said.

Rose rubbed herself. If she wasn't his usual type, then why did he pick her? She wanted to go home. Rose looked at the window again. It was suicide to jump out, but right now, it looked very tempting. She took a deep breath. She could do this.

Rose heard voices, and her eyes widened. She instinctively backed herself against the wall. She thought she'd have more time, but it was clear she did not. He was here, and he would take what she had promised him.

The door opened slowly. Rose stood with her arms wrapped around her body, the robe tightly tied. She was away from the bed and right next to the fireplace. The first person who walked into the room wasn't the crown prince; it was the steward, Henry. She could have assumed it was any servant, but Rose knew immediately this was the steward, and he was in charge of affairs concerning the castle and the crown prince.

"She is here as you asked, Your Highness," Henry was saying.

"Good," Caius said as he walked in with no less than three servants behind him but didn't look in her direction. "Let up the drapes."

A servant moved quickly, tying each drape to its nearby pole. The bed was sparkling with white sheets and pillows that covered the top part. The bed had been laid to perfection, not a wrinkle in sight.

"Prepare my robes and be gone. I will go wash up. You," he said, finally looking at her. "Be on it by the time I return."

Rose swallowed, but it felt like she was trying to fit a ball down her throat. She didn't need him to explicitly say what "it" was; she already knew. Caius didn't wait for a response before he made his way to the washroom.

As soon as the door closed, the steward lifted his head, as did the rest of the servants, and turned to Rose. "What is your name?"

"Rose," she softly said.

"I am Henry, the steward of the House of Ravenor. You will call me Mister Henry."

Rose nodded and curtsied.

He narrowed his eyes at her, but there didn't seem to be any malice in them—more like he was studying her. "Get on the bed," he commanded.

Rose hesitated, looking around in fear.

Henry suddenly looked impatient. "It would do you well to do exactly as His Highness asks of you. For both our sakes. You only have one job here; make sure you do it right."

## Chapter 18: Completely Different Things

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Rose slowly walked forward. She was scared to touch the bed, but knowing Henry was staring at her made her put her hands on it. Her eyes widened in shock. Even in this situation, she couldn't help but notice how soft the bed was. It would be very nice to sleep in—if only that was what was about to happen. She lifted herself onto the bed with her legs sticking out the side.

"Lie on your back," Henry said.

Rose jerked. She hadn't heard him come closer. He narrowed his eyes at her reaction and didn't stop staring until she did as he asked. Only then did he nod and slowly turn away. He headed for the door, taking the servants with him and leaving Rose all alone—but she wasn't alone.

Rose stared at the balcony again. It would only take a few moments, and she would be leaping over the edge. Rose shut her eyes tightly as she tried to make time move faster. It

would only take a moment, and everything would be fine. This would be over soon enough.

Rose lay as stiff as a statue, with her hands on her stomach and her eyes shut. They flew open the instant she heard movements. However, he was already too close. Dressed in nothing but a bathrobe, he approached the bed.

Rose paled, and she pulled upward, bending her knees. Caius didn't like that, and his neutral expression turned darker. He walked closer, and the light from the fireplace stretched out his shadow on the wall, giving the room an even more eerie look. Rose was sitting upright with her arms around her legs as she curled into a ball.

The robe was tied around his waist, but Rose knew he was completely naked. She knew what she came here for, but she didn't know if she could go through with it. It was to save her father, but the thought of his skin on hers made her want to throw up.

Caius stood in front of her. "You're not only still dressed but in this position. I don't have the patience nor the time for this."

He leaned forward and grabbed a leg, his grip on her ankle tight. Rose's eyes watered, but she couldn't meet his gaze. She wanted to plead her case, but her mouth wouldn't open. He pulled, undoing her defense. Rose didn't have the chance to fight back; he had taken a little too long, so when he eventually pulled, she didn't expect it.

Her grip around her knees came undone and she hit the bed with her head bouncing a bit. Rose ignored the pain in her head as she tried to regain control. She knew she couldn't lose it now, she didn't know what the crown prince was capable of, and she didn't want to find out.

She pulled her legs to her chest once again and kicked out. Suddenly, everything stopped. Caius knelt on the bed with a hand on the side of his mouth, and blood dripped out. Rose's heart sank. She wasn't trying to hit him; she was just hoping it would stop.

She jumped out of the bed and ran to the fireplace, curling into a ball. What was she doing? What could she do? She was dead. He'd have her executed in the morning. She had struck the crown prince until he bled.

"Come here!"

It was a simple sentence, but Rose felt all the hair at the back of her neck stand on end. She slowly stood up but found that she couldn't move; she was too scared.

"If I have to say it again..."

Rose didn't wait for him to finish the sentence before she started moving. He hadn't called the guards to throw her out. It was a good sign. However, she knew the good sign wouldn't last for long.

Rose got in front of him and dropped to her knees. "I am so sorry, yer highness. I didn't mean to..."

"Stand up," he commanded, his tone dark.

She slowly stood up, trying to put some distance between them, but Caius closed it quickly. He stretched out his hand and grabbed her neck, almost lifting her off the ground. His brown eyes gleamed in the dark. Rose shut her eyes tightly as fear made her legs turn to water, but Caius didn't squeeze.

"I will assume your reaction is simply jitters from the long journey. Should this happen again..." he paused and licked the blood off the right corner of his lips. "Best be ready for the consequences!"

He let go of her, and Rose dropped to the floor with a loud thud. "Get out!" he ordered.

Rose scrambled to her feet and rushed for the door. She pulled vigorously at it, and the guards opened it up. They all stared at her oddly, but Rose didn't care. She fled down the hallway and down the stairs. She didn't stop running until she was completely out of the wing. Her flimsy clothes were still intact, and so was her head. Just to be sure it was still around her neck, Rose touched her neck.

However, trouble wasn't over yet, and she knew she wouldn't get away with it next time. She had even gone as far as to hit the crown prince. She just couldn't let him touch her. It had made her skin crawl. She thought she could do anything to save her father, and she couldn't.

Rose's eyes widened, and she fell to the ground. What if he decided to take it out on her father? She needed to get a grip, but thinking about it and actually doing it were two completely different things. At least, she had bought herself some time. He didn't say anything about her father, so that was good.



Rose pushed herself off the ground. She would have to prepare mentally. She couldn't risk angering the prince. This was for a just cause. Her father's life was far more important than anything else. Even if the prince disgusted her, she would do what she had to do.