

K Lover 176

Chapter 176: Distraught

"That's all?" one of the ladies-in-waiting asked Welma in a condescending tone.

Of course, that was all the information she had on Rose. It had only been a day, and the woman was mostly stuck in her room. There was nothing more to report about her, and Welma had been very thorough.

"Yes, my ladies," she said with an apologetic look. "I'm afraid she doesn't do much. Yesterday, she did go out with the knight Thomas, but he simply took her around the castle."

They scoffed. "No, that's already information we are aware of. We need something new."

"If you were to poison her meal, how easy would that be?" one suddenly asked.

Welma didn't even flinch, as shocking as the question was, and despite the turmoil inside her as she heard it, her face didn't give any of it away.

"Hard," Welma said. "Mister Henry watches her food like a hawk, and then there's Lily. She acts like she doesn't care about the girl, but I think she might not turn a blind eye. Even if Lily weren't there, Mister Henry is bound to notice something. I don't think it's something that could be done easily."

"Tch!" the lady who had asked the question said.

Welma was in the Queen's room being interrogated, but she noticed there was no sign of the Queen. This wasn't surprising. It seemed her ladies-in-waiting were in charge of doing her dirty work. Still, poisoning was an extreme measure—even for the Queen. Was that how much Rose's presence terrified her?

Welma looked from one of the ladies to the other. They all had the same look—hair piled high with pins sticking in from all sides. Welma was sure it hurt. Their dresses looked too tight, and she was certain the

corsets were digging into their sides. How they walked around in such heavy clothing was something Welma couldn't figure out.

"Go, shoo," one of them said.

Welma nodded, curtsied, and left the room. She could hear the ladies-in-waiting whispering as she walked out. She shook her head. She almost felt sorry for Rose. Perhaps it wasn't as glamorous as it seemed.

However, Welma had to do her job—it was the only reason she had come this far up the ladder. The ladies could trust her, and she didn't have any relationship with Rose. She was also very dispensable—an orphan. She knew it was for these reasons she was chosen.

Welma wasn't stupid. She didn't think she was special. If the Queen was willing to kill someone the crown prince favored simply because she didn't like her, then she was likely to do worse with an insignificant servant like herself.

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"When did you become a knight, Lord Thomas?" Rose suddenly blurted out as he was escorting her back to her room.

It was too quiet not to say anything, and she noticed Thomas hated it when she spoke directly to him, and because of that, she couldn't stop doing it.

Thomas stopped abruptly and turned to look at her, a glare in his eyes. "Don't speak to me," he said.

"Okay," she said and walked ahead of him.

She had tried to speak to him on multiple occasions, but he always reacted like this. She couldn't understand what the crown prince was trying to gain by putting him in charge of taking her around. She was sure she would have been fine with anyone else.

"Slow down," Thomas scolded as she approached the stairs leading to the huge main doors.

She didn't listen. It wasn't her fault he couldn't keep up. Besides, she couldn't wait to be in her room. This was a complete waste of time. Other than getting to see the sky and smell the flowers, she would have been fine staying indoors and talking to Edna. Maybe she should have done that. However, she wasn't sure Thomas would have listened to her—he seemed hell-bent on making her miserable through this.

The doors opened as she approached, and she was about to walk through, only to hear Thomas call to her.

"What?" she called out and slightly turned around, but Rose didn't make a full turn.

Suddenly, a hand landed on her shoulder, the grip tight as it pulled her out of the doorway and to the side. More pressure was applied to push her down. Rose wanted to struggle out of the grip, but Thomas was surprisingly strong.

She opened her mouth to attack him with her words instead, but was silenced when she heard him say, "Your Majesty."

Thomas had his head down as he pushed Rose to the ground. She immediately complied, her knees going weak. They landed on the cold stairs with a loud thud. Rose winced at the pain but didn't do anything else—just held her gaze down.

"Thomas," Queen Violeta called, her voice dry as her eyes rested on Rose, kneeling next to him.

She had clearly seen the exchange. If it weren't for him, she would have had a reason to punish the whore—gallivanting through the castle. Did she actually think the guards had opened the door for her?

"Your Majesty," Thomas said and slowly rose to his feet, moving his hand away from Rose.

He was relieved when Rose didn't try to move. He knew enough not to put her in the Queen's path. He was simply a knight—he couldn't stop the Queen if she wanted to punish Rose. And considering the wench didn't seem to know her place, that was bound to happen.

However, as much as he would enjoy seeing her punished, he didn't want to deal with the crown prince when that happened. He had given his word that he would make sure she was safe, even though he hated every moment of this.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"I'm simply carrying out His Highness's order, Your Majesty. I apologize for getting in your way."

Queen Violeta glanced down, her ladies-in-waiting scoffing at Thomas's words. "I see," she said softly and continued on her way.

Thomas didn't move until she was down the stairs. Her presence wasn't completely surprising, even though they hadn't run into her the day before. The Queen had been checking that things were in place herself in preparation for the ball. However, Thomas was still surprised she was heading out of the castle.

She was most likely heading to the garden for tea and a relaxing afternoon. It didn't happen often, but it wasn't uncommon for the Queen to do that.

Thomas turned his attention to Rose, and she was slowly getting to her feet, a solemn look on her face and a hand on the shoulder he had grabbed. Thomas knew he had exerted unnecessary force. However, there was no time, and he was worried she might escape his grasp.

"Thank you," she said and dusted her dress with her free hand, even though there was no stain.

"I told you to wait!" Thomas glared at her.

"I know, and I'm sorry. I should 'ave listened to you."

Thomas opened his mouth again but couldn't speak. Rose looked a little distraught, and her hand on her shoulder was shaking. Without meaning to, his expression shifted to concern.

Rose realized this was her first encounter with the Queen since she orchestrated her kidnapping. It had not only caught her off guard, but it reminded her of the terror she had felt in the cage and while she was being sold off.

She could have bumped into the Queen, and only the heavens could have predicted what would have happened then. The last time that happened, she had nearly been stripped naked. Rose felt her stomach twist. The Queen made her sick.

"Please lead the way," she whispered when Thomas didn't say anything.

"Right," he said and started walking.

Rose trod behind him, her lips sealed and her hand on her shoulder. Thomas had pulled with enough force to break it, but it didn't feel broken—just sore. She couldn't be mad. He could have let her hit the Queen without stopping her, but he didn't, and she was grateful for that.

They finally got to her room, and Rose opened the door, but Thomas remained there.

"Would you need balm for your shoulder?"

Rose looked like lightning had struck her. Then she slowly turned her gaze to one side, then the other. She dramatically pointed at herself.

"Me? Lord Thomas is talking to me?"

Thomas almost punched the wall. He knew the reason he couldn't stand her wasn't just because she was a peasant who didn't know her place.

Without another word, he stomped off, only to hear her voice calling after him.

"Thank you, Lord Thomas! See you tomorrow!"

Thomas didn't respond, and Rose chuckled as she slipped into the room, her back dragging down against the wall. Her legs had given out. Did she look that bad that even Thomas, who hated her, took pity on her?

She gave a sad laugh and grabbed her head. She needed to get out of here as soon as she could.