

K Lover 209

Chapter 209: The Queen's Call

"What are you trying to do?" Rylen asked, staring disapprovingly at Caius after Lord Charles walked away. The blonde had left at some point, but the crown prince had been completely oblivious to that.

"That's my line," Caius replied as he took the goblet filled with wine out of Rylen's grip. The latter didn't argue or try to stop him, as this had been the routine of the night, and Rylen had brought the wine specifically for the crown prince.

Occasionally, Rylen would find Caius and try to pacify him with a goblet or two. So far, it seemed to be working, but he could tell that Caius was getting increasingly impatient, as his attention was clearly elsewhere—especially since he had so deliberately ridiculed the lord. Rylen knew if he hadn't stepped in in time, it would have surely escalated.

"You should know better than to harass Lord Charles."

Caius pulled the cup from his lips. "Only you would call that harassment. Besides, he should know better than to try to taunt me—especially in that manner. Mother didn't throw a ball to discuss such matters. It's precisely for the opposite. You'd think he would have some decency."

"You're the last person to talk about decency, Your Grace," Rylen said in the same tone.

Caius glared at Rylen, clearly unimpressed. "Where were you?" he asked, remembering he couldn't find him earlier.

"Well, since you refused to answer the Queen's call, I had to do that for you," Rylen replied, looking past Caius, but he quickly returned his gaze to the crown prince's face.

Caius frowned. "I didn't see you with her."

"Perhaps you didn't look hard enough," Rylen curtly replied.

Caius's frown deepened. "Are you perhaps angry?" Caius queried.

"I'm shocked. I didn't think the crown prince could be so perceptive," Rylen replied.

"What? You are? You have nothing to be angry about. If you'd let loose a little, you might actually enjoy the ball."

Rylen took a deep breath. How was he supposed to enjoy the ball when, the instant he took his eyes off the crown prince, he was off dancing with the redhead? Rylen pinched the bridge of his nose.

He knew Caius wasn't stupid—he wasn't riling up trouble for nothing. Or at least, he hoped that was the case. It was hard to predict with the crown prince. It had been three years, and Rylen still didn't truly know Caius's limits.

"Your mother is asking about the identity of the lady you danced with," he mumbled.

Caius smirked, looking pleased about this information. "What did you tell her?"

Rylen's brow twitched. "Nothing. She asked that I make inquiries and let her know—or better still, call you to come tell her yourself."

"You know I'm not doing that. And you best keep your mouth shut."

"Do you actually think the Queen won't find out?" Rylen asked.

"Of course not. But the longer it takes for her to find out, the better."

"Whether she finds out tomorrow or next week, her reaction won't change—and neither will the consequences." Rylen stepped closer. "Don't put her right in front of unnecessary risks."

"What risks?" Caius asked and handed the goblet to Rylen. "If my mother asks, tell her you don't know where I've gone. I've had enough of the ball."

"Absolutely not," Rylen said and took a step back. "You'll have to tell her yourself that you're leaving."

Caius's eyes darkened. "I've let her drag me about for more than a week now—mostly because of you. I don't have to tell her I'm leaving."

"That means you don't mind if I do."

"Do what?" Caius asked with a frown.

"Tell her the reason you aren't at the hall is because you left."

"Fine," Caius said and slammed the goblet on the tray of a passing servant. The poor young man almost dropped the tray in fright. "I'll do that myself."

Rylen didn't care either way. Whether the crown prince stayed or left, he would have to remain at the ball. He didn't hate his duties. No rule said he had to—but Rylen wanted to.

He followed behind the crown prince. The crown prince had been chatty and didn't even mind that he would have to speak to his mother. Rylen knew wine wasn't strong enough to put him in such a good mood. It helped, but it only made the crown prince less intolerable—not amicable.

Rylen knew he was listening and agreeing to speak to his mother himself because he had every intention of seeing the redhead right after.

Rylen had been a part of the Queen's plan to keep the crown prince away, and Rylen had agreed with it simply because he knew it would be good. He had hoped that the distance might fix his obsession, and soon enough the crown prince would find something or someone else to mess with. But that was clearly not the case.

"Your Majesty," Caius bowed to his mother.

His voice pulled Rylen out of his thoughts, and he equally paid his respects.

"Finally," she replied. "You come to see me."

"I had to keep your guests busy," he replied, lifting his head to reveal a smirk on his lips. "However, I am exhausted from the past week and tonight. I would like to retire early."

Caius didn't even wait for his mother to reply before he started to walk away.

"Wait, son," Queen Violeta said and stood up from her seat.

Caius swore. He could have avoided this if Rylen had just been a little bit more helpful. "Yes, Mother," he said stiffly, his smile frozen in place.

"A dance," she said and stretched out her hand.

Caius froze. Was that why she had been seeking him all this time? For a dance? It wasn't wrong, as there was no one else here she could dance with—but Caius knew his mother. The simpler it seemed, the more likely there was a plot behind it. However, this was the one time he couldn't say no.

"As you wish, Mother," he said with a bow and took her hand.