

## K Lover 231

### Chapter 231: Dessert

It was finally time for dessert. At this point, Rose was stuffed full, and even breathing was hard with our over-fed she was, but there was always going to be space for dessert—especially when it was apple pie.

A triangular piece was placed on her plate and then drizzled with honey. The honey formed lines that dripped onto the silver plate.

Rose could smell the honey and the pie; she didn't need anyone to tell her it was a very good mix. Her mouth watered even though she was full, and as soon as the servant stepped away, Rose prepared to dive in, not caring if the crown prince had been served or not.

"You're all dismissed," Caius suddenly said and Rose lifted her head as she was about to cut a piece of the pie slice. The crown prince had his gaze on her and immediately looked down.

The servant next to the crown prince bowed and placed the rest of the pie on the table. Without another word, the servants followed after each other out the doors. Rose jerked as the doors closed, turning around to look. It was annoying how jumpy she was.

"Do you not like pie?" Caius asked and took a bite.

It wasn't that she didn't like the pie, but something told her the crown prince couldn't care less about the pie—she was the one who was about to get eaten here.

Did he really... here?

Rose could hardly believe her thoughts.

"No," Rose answered and sliced into it. Taking a bite, she brought it to her lips, knowing full well that the crown prince was paying attention to nothing else but her.

Rose chewed slowly before swallowing. She kept her gaze low because she knew the instant she lifted it, she would lock eyes with the crown prince.

After swallowing, Rose realized she had forgotten to taste the pie because she had been too aware of his eyes. Her throat also felt parched, and she reached for the cup of water. Rose took a long sip—more because she wanted something to block her lips from the crown prince than from actually being thirsty.

She placed the cup down and took another piece just as Caius adjusted in his seat and leaned back. He was no longer eating, just staring at her with reckless abandon. There was some distance between them because of the table, but Caius didn't miss even the slightest movements she made.

The room suddenly felt warmer, and Rose blamed it on all the candles. They didn't even need a fireplace with how warm it was.

"I take it that it would be fitting to say you quite like the pie, little lady. You won't stop making these sounds," Caius said when she was halfway through eating the pie.

Rose blushed. She hadn't even heard herself until the crown prince mentioned it. The pie was really good—it was warm, and she could easily taste the apples. Coupled with the honey, it was heavenly. Rose couldn't stop chewing.

"Don't stop now," Caius said. He still had the teasing tone to his voice. "I quite like it."

Caius rested on his elbow, which was placed on the arm of the chair. He looked a little too content to just sit there and watch her, but now Rose was too self-conscious and warm to eat.

It didn't help that she knew exactly what he was thinking about as he stared at her. She locked and unlocked her ankles, forcing herself to think about anything else and not being taken right on the dining table. However, that was hard to do with the way the crown prince stared at her.

Rose nearly jumped out of her skin when Caius stood up. Her hand that held the pie shook as she brought it to her lips. Rose could not understand why she was so anxious.

If the crown prince intended to take her here, it would not be the first time he had done that outside the bedchambers. Hell, the first time had been under the sky, right amid his knights.

The crown prince appeared in front of her, and Rose felt her heart hammer against her chest as she looked up at him, pausing mid-chew. Caius didn't hesitate; he bent his head almost immediately, soundly kissing Rose.

Rose closed her eyes as their lips met. To say she was shocked was an understatement. Caius wasn't gentle in the slightest—he pried her lips open, kissing her deeply. His taste mixed with the honey and pie. When he eventually pulled away, Rose was breathless, and she looked at him with dazed eyes.

"I suppose your taste is right," Caius said as he wiped the corner of her lips with his thumb and licked it. "It is sweet."

Rose's throat felt dry again, even though she had just drunk enough water to quench any thirst. It was the crown prince who was affecting her this much. The way he had said it almost sounded as though he meant she tasted sweet.

"But I do not care for pie, woman," Caius said before Rose could think of a reply, and he lifted her off the chair. He placed her on the table and stood between her legs.

Rose heard the sound of dishes falling to the ground, but Caius didn't flinch. Rather, his gaze was on her as he locked her between himself and the table.

"Your Majesty," Rose called, but she was unsure what she had called his name for.

He rubbed the side of her face with the back of his palm. "Yes, little lady."

But the instant Rose opened her mouth to speak, the crown prince sealed her words with his lips. He pulled her against himself until her rear was at the very end of the table, and Rose wrapped her arms around his neck for balance.

Caius pressed her against himself, and she instinctively ground her hips and locked her legs around his waist.

She could feel his hard-on press against her warmth, and Rose suddenly felt an urgency she couldn't explain. All she could think about was that it was such a shame there were garments between them.

## Chapter 232: Dining Table

From the moment Rose walked into the dining room with a confused expression, Caius had only been thinking of one thing, and if it weren't bad table manners—not that Caius cared much about that—to invite her for dinner only to turn around and have his fill of her first, he would have sent all the servants out much earlier and taken her right by the door. It wouldn't be the first time, and he was thinking that he did like their door escapades.

Right now, she had him locked between her legs, and the way she moved her hips was enough to make him lose his sanity. Caius kissed her deeply, and Rose kissed him just as hard, tightening her grip around his waist.

Caius swore against her lips and placed a palm down on the table. Rose moaned, and Caius lost it; he broke the kiss, and Rose looked at him with a dazed expression—her eyes showed her desire.

Caius looked down. The skirt of her dress had been hitched up to her waist, revealing legs adorned in stockings tied with garters just above her knees.

Rose leaned back, and Caius stood to his full height. She untangled her arms from his neck and placed her palms behind her. This provided adequate support, and Rose slightly lifted her bum off the table, grinding on the crown prince.

Caius swore and leaned forward, his hand back on the table. He was straining against his breeches; through the uncomfortable feeling, all he could think about was penetrating her. Rose wasn't being very kind—he was on the verge of losing it, and she wouldn't stop tempting him.

Caius kissed her lips again, and Rose kissed him back. She groaned against his mouth, moving her hips. She couldn't stay still. She could feel a rush spreading from the warmth between her legs. Rose moaned as Caius pressed against her sensitive spot. It felt like it had a heart of its own—Rose could almost feel it pulse.

Caius broke the kiss, and Rose took a deep breath, her chest rising and falling hard. Caius' eyes locked on her bosom peeking above her dress, but his aim was even lower.

Caius undid her legs from around his waist, and she sat on the table once again. Rose felt a tug on her waist as though her underwear was being pulled. The fabric didn't stand a chance—it ripped, exposing her privates to him.

Caius' brown eyes blazed, and he touched her. It felt like she had been starving for so long and had finally been given something to eat. Rose trembled against Caius as he lightly caressed her folds with his fingers. He found a rhythm as he gently massaged her entrance. Her palms dug deeper into the table; it was the only thing keeping her from grabbing him.

"You're so wet," he teased, whispering right against her ear while simultaneously pushing a finger in.

Rose jerked as she felt his finger in her. Caius moved easily, rubbing the walls of her tender hole. Rose's ass lifted off the table, she moaned, and her head bent backwards.

She could tell she was speaking, but Rose had no idea what she was saying. Suddenly, Caius moved his hand, and he replaced it with something hotter that pushed against her moist entrance.

"Can't wait," Caius whispered with a strained voice.

He had barely finished speaking when he plunged in, and a cry ripped out of Rose while Caius swore. He grabbed her waist, and Rose wrapped her legs around him. This pushed him even deeper, and Rose squirmed.

"Your Majesty," Rose cried, her voice echoing in the space.

Her vision blurred, and everything concentrated on where they were joined. Rose felt extra sensitive, as though the smallest movement would have her screaming his name as she was pushed over the edge.

Caius pulled out and then pushed right in. Another cry seared out of Rose, and her legs hung off his sides while his hands gripped her waist.

Caius started to move at a steady pace, as if giving her time to adjust, but he wasn't slow for long. He slammed in, and Rose's walls contracted. Her toes curled at the pleasure she felt with each movement.

Caius pumped into her, and Rose could not stop moaning. The table creaked; a few more plates fell off the table, but neither of them cared—Rose couldn't even hear it.

All she could sense and feel was intense pleasure as Caius thrustled relentlessly into her. She could feel every movement, feel him slide against her tingling walls and slam against her sweet spot.

Rose lifted her rear off the table. She was close—very much so. In a few more thrusts, she would come apart. "Uhh," she moaned. "Your Majesty."

"Your Majesty," she called again.

"Ahh!"

"Rose," Caius said. It was a whisper right in her ear.

The vibration sent a different kind of titillation through her. Hearing the crown prince moaning her name was enough to send her over the edge. Rose climaxed with so much force, she collapsed onto the table, her head hitting the wood.

Thankfully, most of the dishes had fallen off at this point, and she didn't hit anything.

Caius slipped out of her, and she felt warm liquid drip. Rose didn't have to stay on the table for long before the crown prince lifted her off the table, carrying her across his arms.

"Your Majesty," Rose called, opening her eyes. "What are you doing?" Rose immediately started to try to get off.

"I don't have the patience to wait for you to recover your strength, and unless you quite like it here, I suggest you stay still."

Rose looked at Caius, and she could see he meant every word. She reluctantly nodded, feeling very embarrassed.

Her dress covered her legs, but her underwear was missing, and Rose hoped it was still around her waist and not on the floor where the servants could see it. Rose didn't even want to think about it.

She tried to glance at the floor quickly before Caius headed for the door, but all she could see were plates and other objects that had fallen off the table. She couldn't believe they had actually done it here, on a dining table right after eating.

### Chapter 233: Carried

Servants bowed as Caius stepped out of the dining room with Rose in his arms. If Rose had been embarrassed before, now she was hoping the ground would open and swallow her.

Not only was the crown prince carrying her like a newborn, but the servants must have all been right outside the door while they were getting busy inside. Rose was appalled. Just how much had they heard? And that wasn't all—they also had to clean the space inside. Rose hid her face against Caius's chest. They hadn't exactly been subtle about what had occurred.

Caius didn't pay the servants any mind and walked past them without looking in their direction. Rose shut her eyes tightly. It was just the floor above them; they would get there in no time.

The crown prince walked down the corridor easily, carrying Rose like she weighed nothing. They were almost at the end of it, and she could see the stairs leading to their floor. Compared to the top floor, this floor barely had any guards. Rose was grateful for that, fewer people to run into.

"Your Grace," a familiar voice said.

Rose jerked her head up from looking around and met eyes with Prince Rylen. It was unclear what he was thinking as he stared at her in Caius's arms. Of all the people to run into, Rose felt she wouldn't feel as awful if it were the Queen she ran into.

"Rylen," Caius said with glee. "How was dinner with my mother?"

"As you would expect," Rylen said dismissively. "Looks like your excuse of having dinner by yourself was not quite right," Rylen commented.

Rose could feel his gaze on her. It felt rude not to greet him, but at the same time, she didn't want to be addressed while in the crown prince's arms. And why was the crown prince stopping to converse?

"I did have dinner by myself," Caius said with a smirk, then looked down at Rose.

Don't look at me

! Rose nearly cried out.

She knew exactly how they looked—her hair was a mess, and so was the crown prince's. Her face was flushed, and her lips a little swollen from all the kissing. Her dress probably had stains from the table, and the crown prince's gold band had shifted from a little lower than its original position. Not to forget that she was being carried.

This was the state Caius chose to have a conversation in—and even went as far as to use innuendos. Prince Rylen wasn't stupid. One glance was all anyone needed to know exactly what had transpired.

"Your mother was not pleased," Rylen said.

"I am sure," Caius replied, his tone dismissive.

"Will you join us tomorrow morning?" Rylen asked.

"We will see," Caius said with another smirk and looked down at Rose.

She wanted to poke his eyes out. Why did he keep doing that?



Rylen glanced at Rose and then at the crown prince. "Don't push it," he said and started walking away. "Goodnight, Your Grace."

"Goodnight, Prince Rylen," Caius said just as Rylen passed him, heading for his room.

"Put me down," Rose said.

"What?" Caius asked, not hearing her clearly.

"Please put me down, Your Majesty. I can walk now."

"Fret not," Caius said with clear amusement in his tone.

He didn't say anything more. Rather, he started moving again, and Rose had no other option but to stay in his arms. She prayed they wouldn't run into anyone else.

It was almost like the crown prince had slowed his pace. Wasn't he carrying her because he didn't have any patience? She looked up to see him staring at her.

Rose prayed they would get to the bedchambers without any problems. However, the thought had barely formed when she heard an even more familiar voice.

"Your Highness," Henry called, bowing in front of them.

They were now on the crown prince's floor, and it seemed the steward had been waiting for him at the entrance of the crown prince's bedchambers.

"Henry," Caius said coldly. "What are you doing here?"

"Your Highness," Mister Henry said again with a puzzled expression, still keeping his head low. "I brought servants to help Your Highness prepare for the night."

"No need," Caius said.

Mister Henry nodded and met eyes with Rose, just then realizing that the crown prince carried her. Henry jerked, managed to mumble, "Yes, Your Highness," and stepped out of the way.

Rose pretended not to see the way the servants stared at her as the crown prince carried her to her room. At least the guards were more discreet.

When the door finally closed behind them, the relief Rose felt was intense—finally away from prying eyes. Caius didn't seem eager to drop her to her feet, and she had to struggle out of his arms.

Rose had her back to Caius as she stood and she felt a hand on her back as he tugged on the laces tying her dress. The ropes came undone easily.

Rose had mentioned not wanting the dress ruined and that Welma should make it easier to undo. She was partially grateful the sisters weren't with them, else she might not have been able to say that.

Welma had done exactly as she requested. The instant Caius tugged on the laces, she felt it loosen, and the shoulders of the dress slipped lower.

Rose didn't even try to stop it; she just stood still and let the dress fall to her feet. She stood in front of Caius in nothing but her chemise.

She didn't turn around immediately. Rather, she lifted her hands and slowly slipped the slip off her shoulders. She tossed the chemise. Rose heard a sharp intake of breath as she stood in front of Caius, her items of clothing at her feet.

Rose didn't turn around. Instead, she walked towards the bed. She heard the sounds of clothes coming undone and the rushing of footsteps.

Rose was stopped in her tracks as Caius wrapped her from behind. He grabbed her breast and pressed her back against him as he took a deep breath, burying his head in the cradle of her neck.

## Chapter 234: Pudding

His skin felt warmer against hers, and Rose leaned her head back as the crown prince caressed her chest. He kissed her neck, sucking hard as he grabbed her chest.

Her already hardened buds were between his fingers, and Caius squeezed his fingers together to press against them. Rose shuddered at the flash of pleasure, gasping a little. She tilted her head slightly to the side to give Caius more access to her neck.

She didn't think he would stop at just once, especially after what had happened the night before. Rose closed her eyes as Caius teased and caressed her. She must be infected with his illness—her body was already reacting to his touches and his soft kisses on her neck.

A soft moan left her lips, and Rose could feel Caius poking into her back from the moment he grabbed her. A hand moved from her chest to her neck while the other moved lower.

"Your Majesty," Rose moaned. They weren't going to make it to the bed at this rate.

He moved his lips from her neck to her earlobe, licking, sucking, and biting. Caius's hand moved lower, and Rose's eyes flew open. Here? she wondered, when the bed was only inches away. The crown prince parted her legs to give easier access.

"Your Majesty, the bed," Rose forced out.

"Hmm," Caius spoke into her ear. "You didn't seem to have a problem with the table." Rose shivered at the vibration. It didn't make any sense that whenever he touched her, she turned into pudding in his hands.

She could feel her body igniting at his touch—the familiar, pleasant feeling that pooled between her legs spreading through her body. Caius touched her, and Rose tried to bring her legs together.

"Your Majesty," Rose tried again, annoyed that she was about to give in.

Caius swore and spun her so she faced him. He reached for his forehead and took off the gold band. Rose thought it was a shame, as she really liked the way he looked with it.

Caius leaned forward and kissed her, lifting her. Rose wrapped her legs around him almost instantly, and the crown prince smiled against her lips.

Caius broke the kiss, and Rose rested her head on his shoulder. He took two steps forward and dropped her on the bed, hovering. Meeting her eyes, he smirked.

"Is this better?" he asked.

She opened her mouth to answer, but the words didn't make it out as the crown prince pushed into her. Rose grabbed the sheets, lifting slightly off the bed.

It was a little hard to describe the sensation, but she could utterly understand why people spent a significant amount of time frolicking in the sheets. Rose felt it to her toes.

The crown prince wasn't unaffected, and his strained expression sent jolts down her spine. He kissed her as he held still, locking eyes with her.

"Can't ever get enough," he whispered as he kissed her. Rose would have missed it if he weren't so close.

The instant their lips connected, Caius moved, lodging deeper inside. He pulled out and thrust in—painfully slowly. Just enough not to break the kiss.

Rose groaned against his lips, feeling her insides light up again. She squirmed as Caius picked up speed, breaking the kiss. Rose dug her nails into his bare back, feeling his scars, but she was already too far gone to notice.

Caius's hands were by her sides as he avoided putting all his weight on her. With every thrust, Rose jerked as her body shuddered. Caius rammed into her hard enough to slap their flesh together.

Rose's vision started to blur as everything concentrated on where they were joined. Caius's ecstatic grunts in her ears turned her on more than she would ever admit.

She found herself moving to match his pace, her body trembling with intense pleasure as she accepted his thrusts so easily. Rose didn't like that her body had gotten used to this, but there was no time to think when she was so close.

"Your Majesty. Ohh," she moaned, pressing her face against him.

"Your Majesty," she cried again as she came close once more.

Caius wasn't slowing down, and Rose could slowly feel herself going crazy. She dug her nails deeper into him and sank her teeth into his shoulder to keep from screaming out as the orgasm ripped through her.

She held him tight, her legs tightening around him as she climaxed. All her episodes with him were always explosive, leaving her a little drained. Rose's grip on Caius loosened, and she fell to the bed.

"Having fun without me? You always do that," he said and bit her earlobe. Then he pulled away, dislodged from her, and flipped her on her back.

"Your Majesty," Rose said, still reeling from the climax, trying to understand what was going on.

He pulled her by the waist and rammed into her one more time. She was so wet, he slid in a little too easily. Rose's cry echoed in the room as Caius swore against her back, his grip on her hips tightening.

Caius thrust even harder, and this position made him go deeper. Rose felt her whole body shake as she lay beneath him with her behind in the air.

It didn't take long for her to warm up to him again, her body accepting too easily the pleasure he gave. Caius leaned against her, grabbing her chest.

He swore, and Rose's legs tightened together. She was close again, but she could tell it wasn't just her. Caius thrust again, and her walls contracted.

He pumped some more and said, "Come now, little lady."

Like an overflowing dam bursting through the gates, Rose came apart. She felt a hot gush inside of her as the crown prince grunted, but he didn't stop. Finally, his movements slowed and then completely halted.

Caius rolled to the bed with Rose lying on his chest. Nothing but their breathing could be heard. Rose was spent—she doubted she could walk out on her own two legs.

#### Chapter 235: His Bedchambers

A fair-colored skin lay face down on the bed, and long fingers traced her spine, gently moving from her shoulders down. They slowed a little in the middle, tracing invisible lines. There were red marks on her fair skin, but her neck was even redder with love marks scattered all around.

Rose stirred as she felt something moving down and around her back. She was in a deep sleep that she didn't want to wake up from, but at the same time, it was hard to ignore the sensation on her back.

Her eyes flew open, and she met eyes with the crown prince, who was resting on his elbow while his other hand lay on her back. He was looking down at her with piercing brown eyes.

"You're awake," he commented, his eyes taking her in.

Rose blinked as she stared at him. She was having a very hard time comprehending the scene before her, but one thing that was weirdly clear in her mind was that the crown prince's voice was even more hoarse when he woke up.

"Your Majesty," she cried and quickly moved to a sitting position, but it didn't take long for her to realize that was a bad idea.

Caius's gaze moved from her face downward, and he stared right at her exposed chest without any decency. Rose followed his gaze and realized she was completely naked.

Rose immediately scrambled for the covers, which for some reason were lower than they needed to be—just around her waist—and thankfully hadn't moved when she sat up.

She tried to pull the covers upward to cover herself, but they didn't budge. Rose struggled for quite some time while Caius watched very closely, the corner of his lips lifted in amusement.

Realizing that this wasn't working, Rose opted for the pillow. She picked it from behind her and used it to cover her chest as her thoughts spun, trying to figure out why she was on his bed and still in his bedchambers.

She could clearly remember the incident from last night. Caius had not been satisfied with just the second and had gone for a third and fourth. Rose must have passed out sometime during the fourth, as that was all she remembered. It also explained why she was still in his room.

Caius chuckled and lay on his back, his hands under his head. He turned his head to the side so he could still look at her. His face looked relaxed, and Rose might go as far as to say content.

Rose looked away from his face when their eyes connected, and her gaze trailed down the rest of his body. The crown prince was less tanned, but that wasn't the only thing she noticed.

Tiny scars were on his fair skin—she had never noticed this before—and the crown prince was more muscular than she thought. His abs stood like hard bricks placed on his stomach. She had felt them, but Rose realized she had never really looked at him.

There were also red marks that looked like they were from her. Rose couldn't help but blush at this. She could really remember digging her fingers into his back last night. If his chest was this much of a mess, Rose didn't want to think about the back.

Her eyes trailed past his navel, and what she saw nearly took her eyes out. The covers rested just at the start of his pelvis, and just a little further, it was slightly raised at a pointed angle. Rose jumped back instinctively, almost at the risk of falling off the bed, and Caius laughed.

"Don't look at it like that," he smirked. "Did you not suspect this would occur if you kept looking at my body in such an intense way?"

Caius sat upright, and Rose shrank. She could still feel everything from last night. No sane person should be able to do anything related to that so early in the morning. Hard or not, Rose needed a moment—a week even—to recover from last night.

Caius leaned closer, a smirk on his face. Rose thought he would reach for her; rather, he just pointed past her. Rose looked back and saw a robe folded on one of the chairs.

"As much as the idea is tempting," Caius said and grabbed her chin so she would face him, "I have a busy day today."

He sounded irritated by this, as his eyes rested on her lips. "And as we've found, once isn't nearly enough to satiate me."

Rose didn't get a chance to reply as the crown prince kissed her. It was gentle, and his lips felt particularly soft. He crushed the pillow between them as he pressed closer to her.

Rose kissed him back before she thought about it, and when he slowly pulled away, she opened her eyes to see Caius oddly staring at her. It wasn't unpleasant—it just felt a little odd.

Suddenly, a knock echoed on the door, and Rose widened in fright. She clasped the pillow tighter and glanced at the door in panic. She was definitely not in any state to be seen by anyone.

"Don't worry, no one will come in without my permission. You should go," he said, sounding as though he didn't like it.

Rose lunged out of the bed, still holding onto the pillow. Not that it did much, as her entire body was without any clothes but it was better than nothing. Unfortunately, she had to drop the pillow to get to where the robe was—but she didn't care.



The robe was longer than hers, and she recognized it as similar to what Caius occasionally wore. Was this put out for him last night? She wondered.

Rose tied the robe around herself just as Caius started to walk towards her. She gripped the robe tightly, watching him as he approached. It was hard to look away.

His hair was tousled, and he ran a hand through it, worsening it but somehow made it him even more appealing. Caius walked without a single iota of shame as he approached her, naked as the day he was born.

#### Chapter 236: A Rumor

Rose's grip on the ropes tightened as she wondered why he was coming toward her, but Caius only spared her a glance as he walked the other way, heading for the washroom. Rose snapped out of it and rushed for the door, the ends of the robe dragging on the floor.

Rose stepped out of the room and froze in her tracks. Right outside was Prince Rylen—and he wasn't alone. Servants stood right behind him, and Rose also saw Mister Henry.

Prince Rylen was dressed impeccably as always. His platinum blonde hair was brushed and fell across his forehead, the pale color drawing attention to his face. In the right light, it would look almost white.

Deep blue eyes narrowed at Rose as she stood before the double doors. It was unclear whether he stared at her with concern or vexation.

"Prince Rylen," Rose said instinctively, curtsying in the crown prince's robe, which was also playing the role of a mop.

He didn't reply; rather, he waved his hand at her, and Rose nodded before immediately going on her way. She glanced back and could see Prince Rylen going into the crown prince's room.

Rose turned her attention back to her path and sprinted to her room, which was thankfully not far off. She got into her room, resting her back against the door.

Rose took a deep breath as the incidents from last night and this morning played in her mind. She was more bothered by the incidents that occurred this morning.

Rose couldn't decide what to make of it. Her room was literally a few feet away from the crown prince's—he didn't have to let her stay the night. Rose couldn't recall what happened after she passed out, and it slightly bothered her.

She pushed herself off the door, trying to push the thoughts away. Right now, she had to clean up before her breakfast arrived. She didn't like that the sisters tended to see her in this sort of state.

Physically, Rose felt a little worn. Mentally, she was unsure. She wrapped her arms around herself as she walked toward the bed. However, she would be lying if she said she didn't notice the crown prince treated her differently from before. The sex didn't change much, but everything else felt different.

Doing as he wanted might have something to do with it and Rose found she wasn't scared of him for the same reasons anymore. She was more worried that her body might not be able to keep up with him.

Rose glanced at the candlelight by the dresser. She was surprised it was still burning. The candles the nobles used were clearly different from the ones she had seen at the merchant's shop.

They smelled different too—almost sweet. The other candles at the merchant's shop smelled like burning fat.

Candles were expensive, and the Vallyn household couldn't afford them even if they tried. They had only gotten candles a few times, because her father was often paid in kind, and they neither lasted nor smelled this nice.

When her breakfast arrived, Rose was seated at the table waiting. She had chosen one of her old dresses to wear. It felt weird and a little too much to wear the dresses the crown prince had gotten for her when there wasn't any occasion.

"Rose," Chelsy called with a bright smile as she placed the tray on the table.

Isla also called her, but there was a giggle to her voice, and she kept staring strangely at Rose. Rose frowned but didn't think much of it. After last night, she was famished and would worry about things when she had the energy to do so.

Rose adjusted her hair so it stayed over her shoulders and covered her neck properly. Thankfully, the crown prince had limited his biting and sucking to the back of her neck, or Isla might think she was attacked by a wild beast again.

Rose chuckled to herself and picked up her cutlery to dive into her food, noticing that Isla was shuffling with impatience. Rose glanced at her, and the teenager immediately took it as a cue to speak.

"Rose," she called, her voice very soft. "There is a rumor going around the castle."

"Oh, shut it! I should have known you would want to tell Rose about the stupid rumor. Rose, please don't pay my little sister any mind. She can't seem to tell what is appropriate or not," Chelsy said, glaring at her sister.

Rose paused, looking from one sister to the other. "What is the rumor?" she asked.

"It's inconsequential," Chelsy immediately said. "And it's no different from all the other rumors."

"There are other rumors?" Rose asked.

Chelsy looked conflicted as she realized that she was trying to help the situation but seemed to be making it worse.

"Yes," Isla quickly answered. "But all the others are ridiculous. This one is making a lot of waves because a few servants said they saw it," Isla said with glee.

Rose never cared for rumors, as she knew they said all sorts of things about her, and it would be better if she didn't know the extent. However, Isla's reaction made her a little curious.

"What is the rumor?" she asked again.

"Some servants," Isla immediately started to say and moved closer to Rose, "said they saw the crown prince carrying you last night. Is that true?"

Rose blinked at Isla's words while her sister just stood to the side, looking exhausted. She didn't know how to respond to this. She had hoped no one would see her in such a manner, but to think it was a tale that was spreading through the walls of the castle—Rose didn't know how to feel. But one thing that bothered her more was the Queen's reaction to this rumor.

She had barely escaped the ball, and now this—especially since she had dinner with the crown prince last night. She could never catch a break or a moment of peace.

Rose noticed Isla was still looking at her eagerly, waiting for a response. She couldn't comprehend why the young girl was so excited about this. Was it just gossip, or...? Rose couldn't quite place her finger on it.

"Please, ignore my sister," Chelsy said and grabbed Isla's wrist, pulling her to the door.

"No," Isla cried, but Chelsy didn't give in, and they left, leaving Rose alone.

Rose sighed in relief. She didn't know what to tell Isla, but there was no way she would confirm that the rumors were true. She was grateful to Chelsy for taking the hint.

In a few days, she would leave the castle with the crown prince. Rose didn't like how she was almost looking forward to it.

## Chapter 237: Dire Matters

"Your Grace," Rylen called as the servants helped Caius get dressed. "You are late."

"I heard you the first time. And don't you mean we?"

"I would be in the dining room if I weren't trying to make sure that you will join us," Rylen said with a neutral expression.

"I never said I won't," Caius replied, adjusting the ring on his finger.

Rylen's eyes followed it, then he returned his gaze to the crown prince's face. "Maybe, but with you it is hard to know just what you'll do."

"Enough about this matter," Caius said dismissively as the servants moved away from him.

Rylen nodded and stepped in line with Caius as he walked toward the open doors, which the servants held open. Rylen didn't try to bring up the topic again—or any that might annoy the crown prince and deter him from joining them for breakfast.

When they arrived at the dining hall, the Queen was already seated. Caius walked in, staring at his mother, but he neither bowed nor said his respects as he made his way to his seat.

"Your Majesty," Rylen said with a bow as he walked through the door. "We apologize for keeping you waiting. Please forgive us."

"It is fine," Queen Violeta said with the sweetest smile ever. "Caius, I am glad you could join us."

Caius couldn't hide his surprise at his mother speaking to him in such a normal tone. He had expected her to be furious—and not just that. He was sure it must have reached her ears by now that he had dined with Rose, yet she was all smiles. This was enough to make anyone suspicious; she was most likely plotting something again.

"I suppose it is, Mother," Caius said with a grin, wondering how far she was willing to keep this act. He could play along—after all, it wouldn't be the first time but where was the fun in that?

"Don't say that, son. I am always happy when we share a meal. Did you sleep well?" she asked, sounding genuinely concerned.

"More than I expected. I should probably do it more often," Caius said.

"Do what?" Queen Violeta asked.

"Not sleep alone," Caius replied, studying his mother.

Queen Violeta's smile froze, and Caius could visibly see her fighting to control her emotions. She picked up a cup of water and brought it to her lips. She didn't even take a sip before she brought it down.

"That's great to hear," she said. Her voice sounded more shrill than normal.

Caius opened his mouth again to speak, ready to drive the dagger deeper, but Rylen cut him off.

"What about Your Majesty? Did you rest well?" he asked, ignoring the glare that Caius sent him.

"Yes," Queen Violeta responded.

Rylen was able to change the subject after that, and the tension at the dining table dispersed. After breakfast, they said their goodbyes to the Queen—and thankfully, Caius was respectful this time. He even bowed.

Rylen almost praised the goddess. He had also seen the way the Queen's face lit up. Rylen wished the crown prince would try to pacify the Queen and not anger her at every juncture. If he didn't care about himself, he should at least know Rose was a far easier target.

The crown prince led them to his private study. Rylen was glad that he didn't have to convince him, but he could always count on Caius when matters turned dire—and the issue with the bandits was indeed dire.

"We have a lot to do," Caius said as they entered the private space. Though private, it was as large as the average room in the castle. Caius sat down and stared at Rylen.

"Yes, Your Majesty. I still need you to choose the men who would accompany us on this expedition."

"I will pick five. You can decide the rest."

"You won't be taking your fifty knights?" Rylen asked.

"No need for that. It isn't a battle, nor do we intend to capture Redhill again. Just twenty men should do the trick—coupled with the other guards sent and Lord Leopold's men. At this point, the fact that the bandits have pestered us for this long is starting to irritate me."

"Alright," Rylen said, scribbling something down. "I will decide the remainder—fifteen in total. As for the training, Your Grace, it would be great for morale if Your Grace would make a couple of appearances."

Caius grinned. "Worry not, Rylen. I intend to do just that." Caius' eyes sparkled as he spoke. The crown prince was always ready for a fight.

"There is another matter I would like to bring up, Your Grace," Rylen said.

"What is it?" Caius asked, just as a knock rang out.

The two of them frowned and turned to the door, both knowing they wouldn't be interrupted unless it was important.

Mister Henry rushed into the study, gripping a letter in his hand. "Your Highness," Mister Henry said, looking apologetic.

"I apologize for the intrusion, Your Highness, Prince Rylen—but a letter just arrived from Edenville, and I knew I had to bring it to you immediately."

Caius's eyes narrowed slightly. "Who is the letter from?" he asked.

"I have reason to believe it is from t-the woodmaker," Mister Henry stuttered a little, as he sought a way to refer to Rose's father without using the term her father.

"A reply," Caius said. It was more of a statement than a question.

Henry nodded eagerly as he stared at the crown prince. "I think so. The messenger didn't give any more information other than handing me the letter."

"The contents?" he asked.

"I do not know, Your Highness. I brought it here as soon as I received the letter," Henry explained, stepping forward and stretching out the letter to the crown prince.

Caius accepted it immediately. It had the seal of the baron—it was the only way to ensure it would make it to the castle. It wasn't that Caius didn't think she would get a reply, but one could say he hadn't thought that far ahead.

"Your Highness," Henry called, still waiting for orders—wondering what the crown prince would decide.

#### Chapter 238: A Letter From Home

"Here," Caius said, handing the letter back to Henry without opening it. "Give it to Rose."

Mister Henry could barely hide his shock, but he didn't say anything. Rather, he bowed and accepted it before rushing out of the study.

Rylen watched the exchange with concerned eyes. The door shut softly, almost making no sound except the clink of the lock sliding in place.

"What was it you wanted to discuss?" Caius asked.

Rylen had half expected the crown prince to change the subject and was surprised when he didn't. "It is about the redhead," he said. "Her Majesty gave me a task."



"Ha," Caius laughed. "I knew it. Mother wouldn't act so agreeable if she didn't have some kind of plan. What did she ask you?"

"Before that, Your Grace. I fear I must bring up the topic again. Whatever the purpose was to drag the poor woman all the way here, you must have had your fill. Let her go."

Caius's gaze darkened. "This will be the last time," he said. "Leave matters that concern me alone."

Rylen grimaced, but he simply nodded. "As Your Highness pleases."

Caius's face hardened. Rylen rarely referred to him with his official title. It was a reflection of the relationship they had. It was also the same way Caius would call Rylen by name without his title of prince in private.

"What is this task the Queen gave you?" he asked, realizing he didn't want to dwell on the other matter.

"Your ring," Rylen replied and leaned back. "She wants me to steal it and hand it to her. She didn't explicitly say so, but I'm guessing the plan is to place it in Rose's room to frame her as a thief."

Caius snorted. "Has desperation made her dull-witted? Why would Rose steal my ring?"

Rylen gave him an unimpressed look. "It isn't the why that matters. Just the fact that she would be stealing from you is reason enough to send her to the gallows—especially your ring. Besides, there are enough reasons to steal it. With the ring, she could lie in your name, write letters, and..."

"She can't even write, nor can she read. None of the reasons you give make sense. But since Mother has entrusted this task to you and you're telling me, should I assume you accepted?"

"Yes, Your Grace."

Caius grabbed his forehead. "Learn to say no to my parents. They both know where your loyalty lies. Whatever, I also want to see how this plays out."

He took off his ring from his middle finger—it left a lighter mark. He stretched out his hand to Rylen. "Take it."

Rylen was hesitant. "Are you sure about this?" he asked as he accepted the ring.

"Yes. Thinking her plan is working will definitely keep her busy for the next few days. I'd rather deal with this than whatever other plan she might come up with."

Rylen held his tongue. He couldn't bring up the crown prince letting her go again, even though that was the fastest way to end all of this. But something else had his attention. The crown prince had mentioned something odd.

"Do you intend to take the redhead with you on the journey to Futherfield?" Rylen asked.

"What gave it away?" Caius asked, smirking.

"You said a few days," Rylen responded.

"I did. Hmm. Do you not approve?"

"Quite the contrary. This is the first thing I have ever approved of that involves Rose. If you won't let her go, at least keep her safe."

Caius narrowed his eyes. "I can keep her safe. You keep saying that when there has only been one mishap. An unforeseen incident."

"If it happened once, it can happen again," Rylen replied.

"Do what you are supposed to do, and try your best not to ruin my good mood."

"Very well, Your Grace. As you desire."

Rose stood up at the knock, wondering who would come calling so suddenly. The girls had already taken her dishes, and she knew she wouldn't be able to do the usual round around the castle with Thomas anymore, especially with the preparations to travel.

She opened it and was shocked to see Mister Henry standing outside her door. He smiled as their eyes met, and Rose was quick to curtsy.

"Mister Henry," she said, surprised to see him. "Is something wrong?"

"No," the older man was quick to reply. "I brought you a letter from home."

Henry handed her a brown folded envelope; a familiar seal held it down. Rose accepted it quickly—only then did she ask who it was from even though a part of her already knew and ached in anticipation.

"Edenville. I think your father sent this letter," Mister Henry said and took a step back as though to leave.

"Fat'er," Rose said with wide eyes. "Please wait, Mister Henry. I cannot read this. Would it be too much to ask for your help?"

Mister Henry immediately looked nervous as he shook his head. He had wondered why the crown prince had so easily given the letter to Rose without first checking the contents, as he had asked Henry to do when the gifts arrived. He had only just remembered that Rose couldn't read.

"Pardon me, but I cannot help you at this time. I have too many things to attend to right now."

Mister Henry withdrew before Rose could reply and left her standing in her doorway. Eventually, she stepped back into the room as she sought a way to find out the contents.

She didn't have a lot of options. At first, she had thought of asking one of the guards outside the door, but Rose decided against it.

First of all, she couldn't just show anyone the letter. Secondly, they could lie about the contents to her. Besides, there was also a high chance that the guards outside her room couldn't read.

She placed the letter on the table and stared at it. She couldn't even read the contents on the back. She recognized a few letters, but that was it. The letter she had been waiting for was finally here, and all she could do was stare.

She should have listened to Lady Delphine and asked the crown prince to get her a tutor—but that would be too many debts she would never be able to pay off. And why would he teach her to read? It was to his advantage if she couldn't read or write.

#### Chapter 239: Can You Read?

Chelsy and Isla were shocked when Rose summoned them—and it wasn't even midmorning yet. The two sisters looked very concerned as they walked into Rose's room.

"Can you read?" Rose asked with a hopeful look as soon as the sisters entered her room.

"What?" they both asked simultaneously.

Rose held up the unopened letter. The two girls studied it and then looked at each other.

"Can you read?" Rose asked again, staring back and forth between them.

"You want us to read the letter?" Isla asked.

Rose nodded, and the sisters shook their heads.

"No," Chelsy said. "I know a few words, but not enough to read it properly."

Rose sighed. "Do you know any maid who can?" she asked.

Isla looked to her sister, and they thought about it a little, but eventually they both shook their heads.

Rose sighed, feeling defeated. "Do you think you could get me Welma?" Rose didn't have much hope, but at least she could confirm.

Isla nodded and rushed for the door almost immediately, leaving Rose and Chelsy.

"Do you know who the letter is from?" Chelsy asked.

"Yes," Rose replied, purposely not saying more.

"Who brought you the letter?"

"Mister Henry."

"Did you ask him?"

"He said he was too busy," she replied.

Rose didn't like how her only option was starting to look like the crown prince. She didn't want to rely on him for a plethora of reasons, but the two major ones were that she would have to wait till late, and a tiny part of her was worried he might alter it.

Rose couldn't help but feel immense distrust toward the crown prince when it came to her parents. As much as she wanted to rely on him, he had once sent her father to the gallows without flinching—all because she had declined his offer.

Rose was torn. Was there truly no one else she could ask? And there was no doubt Mister Henry wanted nothing to do with this.

"Chelsy?" Rose suddenly called. She knew it was a bad idea, but unless she tried, she wouldn't know if it would work.

"Yes?" Chelsy said, surprised at the sudden call.

"Can you do me a favor? Can you find me Lord Thomas?"

Chelsy looked hesitant, but then she slowly nodded. "I can try to find him. What would you want me to tell him?"

Rose looked around. It was too much of a risk, but she had hope that he might answer.

"Just tell him that I need his help."

She hoped that was phrased well enough. She didn't want to say more, unsure if he would even agree in the first place.

Chelsy nodded and withdrew from the room. Not long after she left, Isla returned alone.

"What happened?" Rose asked as soon as she walked in.

"I found Welma, but she's too busy. I made sure to ask if she could read, and she laughed, saying 'how could you ask her something like that?' When she saw I was serious, she stopped laughing and said no."

Rose nodded. She hadn't expected anything less.

"Thank you, Isla. You may go."

Isla paused and looked around the room.

"Where is my sister?" she asked.

"I asked for her help. She should be back soon."

Isla nodded. "I'll return to the servants' quarters. If I find anyone who can read, I'll let you know."

"No, Isla. Don't ask. I'd rather show this letter to someone I can trust. I can't tell if they're lying or not when reading, so it absolutely has to be someone who won't lie to me."

"Oh," Isla said, considering Rose's words. "You're right."

Rose smiled at her as she left the room. She glanced back at the envelope. One of the corners was a little crinkled, and Rose tried to straighten it out.

The wax seal was still on the letter. She didn't have the heart to pull it off. There was no point—she wouldn't understand a thing.

Chelsy took a long time, and Rose started to fear that she might not find Thomas, because if he had declined, Chelsy would have come back already to tell her.

When she had almost given up hope and was thinking of calling Isla back to tell her sister to give up, Rose heard a sharp knock.

She scrambled to her feet, almost tumbling the chair as she rushed to the door. Chelsy stood in front of it, and behind her was Thomas with a scowl on his face.

"Lord Thomas," Rose said in surprise, and Thomas's scowl worsened.

"Rose," Chelsy whispered; she sounded a little frightened.

"Thank you, Chelsy. I will call on you later."

The maid looked hesitant to leave, but at the same time relieved. She curtsied to him and fled.

"What is this about?" Thomas asked.

"Please come in," she whispered and stepped aside to let him in.

If guards weren't placed in front of her door, she would have considered having him read the letter right there, but Rose didn't think that was a good idea now.

Thomas looked at her as though she had grown wings. "What?" he asked, his face a little red.

However, his face had already been red before he arrived. Rose wondered if it had to do with the reason Chelsy had taken so long to fetch him, and she could smell sweat on him. Not too strongly like he had been physically exerting himself.

"I need you to read something for me," she quickly explained, knowing he would not step into the room if she didn't state her reason.

Thomas eyed her oddly but didn't make any attempt to step inside. Rose stood there, feeling a little awkward.

"It's private," she whispered, not knowing what else to say.

Thomas narrowed his eyes, and just when she thought he would turn around and leave, he took a step into the room. Rose sighed in relief as she shut the door behind him.



She quickly rushed to the table, grabbed the letter, and returned to him. She handed it to him, and Thomas reluctantly accepted it.

#### Chapter 240: From Father

Thomas scrutinized the envelope, turning it front and back. He glanced at Rose, and she looked up at him eagerly. He took a step back, putting some more space between them.

Rose did her best not to move forward, following after Thomas. If it were up to her, she would have climbed onto his shoulders just to see. Not like that would make any difference—she couldn't read.

He pulled on the wax seal, and Rose heard a snapping sound as it broke. She instinctively held her breath as he pulled out the folded letter.

Thomas handed her the envelope, and Rose accepted it as though it were the greatest gift ever. She stretched out both hands as she collected it graciously. Thomas gave her another odd stare, but there was no anger in his eyes.

He turned his attention to the folded paper and unfolded it. His eyes did a brief scan, and Rose shuffled on her feet as she waited for him to begin reading.

"Dear Rosie,

This is your father. I know I should have written to you sooner, but I couldn't. At first, I tried to speak to the baron, but I wasn't granted any audience. It wasn't until the letter arrived that he decided to give me the grace to write one.

You shouldn't have, Rosie. Your father is but an old man. You did not have to sacrifice your future for me.

I know you have much to deal with, and I want to tell you we are fine, but I know you will never forgive me. I am fine. Your mother isn't. I fear the worst.

I love you. We love you. I will take care of her, but I don't want to lie to you.

Take care of yourself, my little Rosie. I know you will come back. Worry about yourself more. You always forget to do that."

Thomas folded the letter and looked at Rose. Her eyes were a little red, and there were tears at the corners of her eyes. He stiffened, at a loss for what to do.

"Is that all?" Rose asked when he wasn't reading again.

"Yes," Thomas said and handed her the folded letter.

Rose was hesitant to accept it. There had to be something more. Her father didn't even mention Ander and Emma, but that was inconsequential compared to the state her mother was in.

Her father said he feared the worst. He was never one to exaggerate or understate. He always said things as they were. If he was worried about her mother enough to mention it to her, it was bad.

"Rose," Thomas called when she didn't take the letter from him.

She blinked and looked up at him. It was hard not to notice he didn't call her wench or peasant rather her name. The more pathetic she seemed, the nicer he was.

Rose sobbed. It was the first genuine cry since she was forced to leave home. She couldn't even control it. It started with a little tear slipping down the side of her face. She wiped it and tried to accept the letter, but just as her shaky hand gripped it, the cries she had held in for so long erupted.

Rose cried as tears poured from her eyes, and with the folded letter in her hand, she tried to wipe them.

"I-I am sorry, Lord Thomas," she said, still crying. "To show you a state like this."

She lifted her head and tried to smile at him, but her lower lip quivered, and she started to cry again. Rose bent her head and covered her face with her palms, the letter falling to the ground. She had dropped it on purpose as she was getting it wet with her tears.

Thomas bent and picked it up, along with the envelope. He walked past her and carefully placed them on the table. He walked back, glanced at her, and then walked out the door.

As soon as the door closed, Rose fell to the ground and wailed. Eventually, her cries reduced and her shoulders stopped shaking. Her eyes were red and a little swollen, and her face was wet with tears.

She tried to wipe at them as she lay on the cold floor. She didn't want to move. She wanted to go home. She wanted to see her mother. Rose feared she might never see her again.

After it felt like she wouldn't cry at the slightest thought, Rose wiped her face and got off the ground. She had a determined look on her face as she walked to the table.

She sat down and picked up the letter. She unfolded it, recognizing the first letter that spelled her name because Lady Delphine had spelled it out for her—but that was all she understood.

Rose folded the letter and placed it back in the envelope. She brought it to her chest and held it there. The crown prince had fulfilled her request. Surely, she could ask him this. She would promise to return. She just wanted to see her mother—and as much as she didn't want to think about it, she knew it might be the last time.

It wasn't too much of a request. She would be back. She just had to see her mother and her father. He said he was fine, but she knew it couldn't have been easy to simultaneously take care of his wife and provide at the same time.

Her mother needed someone to be with her at all times, as she couldn't even clean after herself. The only thing that was still as sharp as ever was her mouth—even her sight was starting to deteriorate.

She should have escaped or done what she needed to do to get the crown prince to let her go. She shouldn't have stayed away for so long.

"Mot'er," Rose whispered, still holding onto the letter.

A soft knock roused Rose from sleep. She didn't even know she had fallen asleep. She opened her eyes, and it felt as though someone had shoved a handful of sand into them.

She rubbed at them, trying to get rid of the uncomfortable feeling, just as her door opened and Welma slipped in. Rose lifted her head, and for a moment, she forgot her own worries at how pale Welma looked.