

K Lover 291

Chapter 291: She Didn't Regret it

Rose couldn't sleep, no matter how hard she tried. It didn't help that she had been alone for quite some time now. It was not hard to realize that. After Lady Deana left, no one else had been in her room.

Thomas hadn't returned and neither had any servants. It was a long time ago, before sunset and it had been nighttime for quite some time now.

Rose was left alone in bed with nothing but her thoughts. And they weren't good thoughts. All she could think about were horrible things—especially after what Lady Deana had said.

She also didn't know the current state of the crown prince. Thomas had told her he was still unconscious, and that was it. She didn't like the gnawing feeling on her stomach.

Rose was getting out of bed before she could even think about it. She couldn't remain lying down. She lightly held her arm—the one with the injured shoulder. Thankfully, it wasn't more than a sprain, and she would be fine in a few days.

The worst of the pain was centered around her abdomen and sides. Ryder had been relentless when he kicked her. She froze mid-rise as she remembered that she had killed him.

She hadn't thought about it in the moment, nor did she get a chance to dwell on it while riding the crown prince to safety but now the weight of it came crashing down on her.

Rose sat back down on the bed. She didn't regret it. She would probably do the same thing again if the circumstances repeated themselves. If she hadn't stopped him, something told her he would have killed the crown prince and her too.

Rose winced at the image of Ryder's bloodied head and the final moment when she had dropped the stone onto it. Rose took a deep breath and pushed the memory aside. The dead man was the least of her worries. She was just glad they had gotten out of the situation alive. She hoped the crown prince was fine. She was gravely worried.

Rose glanced at the door and pushed herself out of bed, heading straight for it. She opened it and looked around. She had half expected to see guards standing right outside, but surprisingly, the hallway was empty.

She had tried to escape, and she was likely to try again—yet no guard had been assigned to watch her. Perhaps Lord Leopold's mansion operated differently, or perhaps the crown prince was in such a critical state that they couldn't afford to pay her any attention.

That couldn't be good.

Rose slowly stepped out of the room. She recognized this part of the estate—it was closer to the dining hall, and she could easily find her way to the room she had shared with the crown prince. Rose hoped that was where he was.

She didn't think she should go there. A large part of her wanted to turn around and try to sleep again—but she had already tried, and it hadn't worked. She simply couldn't sleep.

She took a step forward. The halls had torches hanging on the walls, and they gave off enough light to guide her path as she made her way toward the guest wing.

Rose wrapped her arms around herself. It was cold. She should have brought something warm, but she had stepped out of her room on impulse, not thinking much about what she would do once she got out.

Her shoes barely made a sound as she walked, and she was surprised not to run into a single soul. She passed through a vast hallway, then up the stairs, and took a left. At the top of the stairs, she felt different—a part of her wanted to turn back and flee.

"What are you doing here?" a harsh voice said as she neared the crown prince's chambers, and a hand reached out from the shadows to grab her.

Rose yelped, clamping her lips shut to avoid making too much noise. It was late. She hadn't even seen the guard until he spoke—he had blended into the wall perfectly.

"I said, what are you—"

"What is going on there?" a voice said from the door of the crown prince's room.

Rose couldn't see clearly, but a figure sat just in front of the door, and another stood beside him. It was the second one who had spoken—and Rose would recognize that voice anywhere.

"Lord Thomas," she whispered.

"Rose," he replied, but his voice was just as harsh as the guard's.

Thomas didn't say anything else. Instead, he turned to look at Prince Rylen, who was sitting silently. When Thomas moved, Rose caught a glimpse of his hair—and even in the dim hallway light, she would recognize that bright color anywhere.

"Let her through," Prince Rylen said with a loud enough sigh.

The guard in question stepped back, and Rose realized the walls were lined with guards all the way to where Prince Rylen sat.

"Thank you," Rose mumbled, clutching her arms—partly to keep warm, partly because she was anxious.

"Prince Rylen," she curtsied as she approached. "Lord Thomas."

"What are you doing here?" Thomas barked as she curtsied in front of them, and Rose visibly shrank.

"Lord Thomas is right," Prince Rylen said, not looking at her. "You should be resting."

"I apologize for coming," Rose whispered, her voice shakier than she had expected. "But I just couldn't sleep, and I needed to inquire about the crown prince. He is in such a state because of m—"

"Shut up!" Thomas snapped.

His eyes blazed as he stared down at her, and Rose couldn't figure out what was wrong—no, she knew exactly what was wrong. She had endangered the heir to the throne. This kind of treatment was to be expected.

But it still hurt.

"Go back to your room," Thomas said coldly, taking a step forward.

Prince Rylen held out a hand to stop him. Thomas hesitated but eventually stepped back.

"Thomas is right—you should be in bed. Your injuries are also a reason to worry. You've been favoring your arm since you got here. I'm sure it must still hurt," Rylen said, finally lifting his face to look at her.

Chapter 292: Not Her Fault

Rose kept her head down as he spoke. There was no way she could look Prince Rylen in the eye. She was surprised he was even addressing her directly. He was also speaking so softly. Rose didn't expect to be spoken to in such a manner. He was also showing consideration for her injuries.

"The crown prince is still unconscious, and the physicians from the castle are locked in the room with him. No one else is allowed in. They've been in there since they arrived, and I don't think they'll be stepping out anytime soon. There is no point being here, you should try to get some rest, instead." It is the only thing you can do.

Rylen didn't add this last part aloud. He knew exactly what Thomas was trying to prevent Rose from saying, the same way he also knew that a harsh approach was not the way to go.

Rose was visibly distressed, and judging by the dark circles under her eyes, she hadn't gotten any sleep at all. It was clear to anyone that she was exhausted and in pain, yet she had made her way here to inquire about His Highness' health.

It was truly an unfortunate situation.

Prince Rylen feared for her. The castle would not be so lenient. If only the crown prince could wake up soon.

Rylen sighed. He hadn't slept a wink. Didn't even want to. Until he heard good news, he didn't plan to move from this spot. Paul hadn't stepped out of the room since he went in. A few physicians had run past on errands, but not one of them had stopped to tell him anything.

"Thank you, Prince Rylen," Rose said with another curtsy.

"Thomas," Prince Rylen called softly. "Make sure she gets to her room."

Rose didn't like the finality in his tone. She suddenly felt an overwhelming urge to apologize. She had done something incredibly wrong, hadn't she?

But not once had Prince Rylen asked her why she had tried to escape. Not even when she had told him what had transpired when she woke up. She did mention that her mother was sick but he neither scolded nor judged her about her actions.

The crown prince's cousin was really kind. He didn't have to treat her so well, but he had never treated or even spoken to her harshly. Rose lifted her head to look at him. She didn't apologize. Instead, she thanked him.

"Thank you, Prince Rylen," she said with a sad smile.

Prince Rylen moved his head slightly so their gaze would meet, and Rose hurriedly turned around and started walking away. She didn't understand what she had seen in his gaze, but she knew it made her gravely uncomfortable.

It wasn't anger—he didn't glare at her or anything like that. He had looked at her with what she would describe as pity, but this felt different.

"Eyes on the road," a stern voice said behind her as she reached the stairs—and that was when she remembered Lord Thomas was supposed to take her to her room.

Rose nodded but didn't turn around to look at him. Holding the railing, she slowly headed down the stairs. She reached the bottom and kept walking, noticing that Thomas remained behind her, keeping the same distance with each step.

Thomas didn't say a word. She could feel his stare on her back, and it wasn't comfortable. Everyone was tense. The crown prince was likely dying. Rose couldn't fault his actions.

He was still quietly behind her when she got to her room. She placed her hand on the door, a little hesitant to go in.

"Go in!" Thomas said coldly. "And you best not come out tonight. Don't even think about trying to escape again. There aren't guards in front of the room, but there are guards in the compound!"

Rose nodded. "I won't. Thank you, Lord Thomas," she said and walked into the room, closing the door behind her.

Thomas nearly punched the wall. It had taken everything in him not to spill the orders from the castle or ramble about how he would make sure that didn't happen.

This wasn't her fault.

He had read the letter, and he had seen Rose cry. He had also heard her account of the incident, and she had mentioned she just wanted to go see her sick mother. She had said it in passing, but Thomas knew how much that meant to her.

He couldn't tell her about the decree to have her charged with high treason, but he could certainly give her other warnings. Trying to escape right now was a terrible idea—it would only give them a reason to throw her in the dungeons here and then take her to the castle.

She also shouldn't think she wasn't under surveillance. There were guards outside to make sure no mishap happened. Thomas didn't know exactly what the Lord and Lady of Futherfield's plans were, but he was certain they would stand with the crown.

If the crown prince wasn't conscious by the end of the day, they needed to come up with a plan. But right now, Rose absolutely couldn't draw attention to herself.

Thomas didn't think the crown prince would die. He couldn't even imagine it. To him, the crown prince was the toughest person there was, and no one else was fit for the throne.

He had seen the crown prince fight in Redhill and push the enemy back with nothing but brute strength. He found it hard to believe that those pathetic bandits had gotten the better of His Highness—but of course, they had to use such a barbaric method as poison. That was the only way they could have won.

Unfortunately, the rest of the bandits had managed to escape, and even the men he had sent out came back empty. But they did return with dead bodies that matched Rose's narrative.

Still, he knew that wasn't going to mean anything to the council when they held a trial on the matter. They had to make sure it never got that far.

Chapter 293: Futile

Morning soon came, and perhaps it was because Rose was emotionally and physically exhausted. After returning to her room, she did manage to fall asleep and didn't wake up until the servants arrived.

They cleaned her up and served her breakfast, and then the physician returned to examine her bruises. The servants politely excused themselves, taking her dirty dishes and leaving her alone with the older man.

Rose sat upright in bed as he approached. "Good morning..." she paused, unsure how to address him since she didn't know his name or title, but decided to leave it at that.

The physician didn't respond. Instead, he lifted her injured hand a little too roughly. Rose winced, but other than that, she gave no other indication that she was in pain.

He brought her hand down and touched her face, poking at her bruise. Then he stepped away. "You're healing decently. Take the herbs thrice a day, and you should be fine in no time."

"Thank you," Rose said with a smile.

He scoffed and turned around. "Never thought the day would come when I would attend to a peas—"

He stopped speaking as the door opened and Lady Deana walked in with her servants.

"Your Ladyship," he started to say and bowed.

Lady Deana didn't even glance in his direction. Instead, she walked straight to Rose.

"Lady Deana," Rose called and instinctively moved her body to pay respects, but Lady Deana stopped her.

"No, Rose," she said and got to the bed, sitting on it. "How do you feel?"

Rose nodded. She did feel better physically—sleeping helped—but mentally, she felt battered. "Good," she weakly replied.

"Wonderful," Lady Deana replied. "I miss you playing the flute. I can't wait for you to get better so you can play for me again."

Rose nodded and absentmindedly said, "Yes."

Lady Deana turned to the physician. "How many days more before she is completely healed?" she asked him.

"W-well," he stuttered, surprised Lady Deana was speaking to him. "A few weeks."

"Weeks?" Lady Deana yelled in horror.

"T-to be completely healed. But she shouldn't feel as much pain in about five days—as long as she takes the herbs regularly."

Lady Deana turned to Rose. "You hear that? Don't miss any."

"I won't," Rose said.

Lady Deana nodded and lightly touched Rose's hand. "It's a pity you can't come to the market with me today. Your company was lovely the last time," Lady Deana said and stood to her feet. "Who knows, maybe I might see something your father made."

Rose nodded. It didn't feel like she was supposed to add anything, so she simply nodded to Lady Deana's words and agreed until the Lady left the room.

Not long after that, the physician also left. The appearance of Lady Deana must have startled him, as he didn't say or do anything wrong again.

Rose was stuck in her room for most of the day, and the only time she had company was when servants brought her meals. She also couldn't leave the room after last night. However, the lack of information was more depressing than not being able to step out.

The room was getting darker. With how cold it was, the windows were all closed, but enough light seeped in through the cracks, and it was enough for her to know that dusk was fast approaching.

Rose glanced at the door. The last thing she had heard about the crown prince was what Prince Rylen had told her. That wasn't the only problem—she clearly couldn't leave now, and her mother was terribly sick.

Rose paced her room. There was nothing else she could do. She was tired of sleeping, and with every moment she spent here, the more her anxiety worsened.

Suddenly, a knock drew her attention to the door, Rose stopped pacing and slowly made her way to it. She opened it and was shocked at who was behind it.

"Prince Rylen," Rose said, and bent her knees. She scooted to the side to let him into her room. "W-what do I owe the honor?" she asked.

Suddenly she jerked her head upward. "Is the crown prince awake?"

Prince Rylen shook his head. "I'm afraid not," he replied.

Rose noticed Thomas was behind Prince Rylen, and Thomas didn't meet her gaze; rather, he turned his head to the side.

"I see," Rose said with a solemn expression.

"May I come in?" Prince Rylen asked.

Rose nodded. "Yes, please," she replied. It was winter, but her palms suddenly felt sweaty.

She gently closed the door as the two of them walked into her room. Rose twisted her fingers as she wondered what this was about. They both seemed serious. Prince Rylen had tried to seem casual, but Rose could immediately tell that whatever this was about was crucial.

Prince Rylen didn't look like he had gotten much sleep last night, but not a single hair was out of place. He was also dressed impeccably. The only odd thing about his appearance was the bags under his eyes.

Rose gestured toward the only chair in the room, but Prince Rylen didn't even turn to see what she was pointing at. Rather, he faced her.

Rose immediately felt uncomfortable. She was a few feet away from the door, and the urge to turn and rush out was strong.

"The crown prince is still unconscious," Rylen began, speaking slowly and watching Rose's expression as he spoke each word.

Rose nodded. He had already said that, and she doubted he had come all the way by himself just to tell her that. She kept quiet, waiting for him to say why he was here.

"Lord Paul spent most of last night trying his best, along with all the other physicians, to get the crown prince to wake up. He was able to get out as much poison as possible from the wounds. However, the crown prince is still unconscious, and Lord Paul fears the damage has been done. He did try to make the crown prince drink a few antidotes he hoped would work, but those have proven to be futile."

Chapter 294: Her Verdict

Rose listened attentively, not wanting to interrupt Prince Rylen as he explained. The longer he spoke, the more dread she felt. Essentially, what she understood was that there was a chance the crown prince would never wake up.

Rose felt the pain in her abdomen intensify. This wasn't good, and with how grim Prince Rylen's expression was getting, something told her she wouldn't like what he was about to say next.

She wanted to ask if other methods could be applied, if there was some other solution, but something told her that if there were any, Lord Paul would not hesitate to try them.

"Lord Paul has remained with the crown prince, barely getting any sleep, and left him to come speak to you. I understand that you must be at a loss, and I also realize I haven't thanked you for saving His Grace and bringing him back here. Your plan was to go home to your mother—you must have known that would be a little harder to do if you returned with His Grace."

"I wouldn't leave His Majesty to die out in the woods, no matter the circumstances, especially since he was poisoned because of me," Rose replied. She was surprised she actually meant this. The crown prince was the only heir to the throne, it would be a disaster if he died.

Thomas eventually lifted his head to look at her, but he didn't smile. There was a glare in his eyes, but Rose didn't think it was directed at her.

Prince Rylen closed his eyes at her words. "That's why it pains me to bring you such terrible news after your sacrifice."

Rose tore her gaze from Thomas and met Prince Rylen's face again. She felt cold at his expression. She could clearly see dejection—and a hint of helplessness.

"What news?" Rose asked, unable to take the suspense any longer.

Her mind was spinning in different directions—at first about the crown prince, then she thought maybe it was her mother, as he had mentioned her. But Prince Rylen didn't owe her anything to personally come to tell her. This only made her confusion worse.

Prince Rylen reached into the inner pocket of his coat and brought out a letter. It looked fancier than the one she had received from her father; the paper was also thicker and she could see a familiar design.

Rose frowned as she stared at it. She couldn't read, so it would be a waste if Prince Rylen handed it to her. She glanced at Thomas—he knew she couldn't read. If Prince Rylen didn't know, surely Thomas could easily inform him. However, Thomas didn't meet her gaze, and she noticed his palms were now fists at his sides.

Rose turned her gaze back to Prince Rylen, ready to tell him that she couldn't read, but he wasn't handing it to her. He just held it up, and his expression became even more intense.

"This is from the Royal Castle. It has the king's seal on it, and it brings the worst news..." Prince Rylen sighed. "This arrived with the physicians. I had hoped the crown prince would be awake by now, as only he can go against the order here, but that's not the case—and I fear it will remain so."

Rose shuffled on her feet. "What does the letter say?" she asked and swallowed, a lump lodged in her throat.

"That you will be charged with high treason. You will appear before the council in a few days, where you will be tried and sentenced."

Rose blinked. She knew what treason meant—at least enough to know it was a severe crime. Therefore, high treason must be even worse. She knew people who committed treason were mostly sentenced to death.

Rose took a deep breath as she tried to understand what Prince Rylen had just told her. She couldn't panic until she fully understood.

"Why am I being charged with high treason?" Rose asked softly.

Prince Rylen shoved the letter back into his inner pocket. "For leading His Grace to the bandits," he explained. "They seem to think you must have been working with them to lead His Grace to them."

Rose's eyes nearly popped out of their sockets. That was preposterous. She didn't even know the crown prince would come after her—she had hoped he wouldn't.

"That's impossible. I was just trying to get home. I didn't even know they would be there. I put myself in danger too. If the crown prince hadn't shown up when he did, I would have been in danger too."

"We know," Prince Rylen said. "But unfortunately, that won't mean anything to the council, as the conclusion will remain that His Grace was put in danger because of you."

Rose closed her eyes as she listened. She knew Prince Rylen was speaking the truth, but it was hard to accept it. And now she was wishing she had left the crown prince to die—but even as she thought it, Rose knew she didn't have the heart to be so cruel, even though she could find more than two reasons why he deserved it.

"What can I do?" Rose asked dejectedly.

"Unfortunately, nothing for now. I was supposed to send you to the castle as soon as I received the letter, but I have tried to stall for about a day, hoping His Grace would wake up. However, that hasn't

happened, and it will only worsen the situation if I keep you here any longer. So by morning, you will head back to the capital with Thomas."

"I truly don't think we should send her to the castle!" Thomas finally spoke for the first time.

"I know, but the last thing we want to do is to refuse a direct order. You can try to stall the trial and give her some time before she is sentenced, and hopefully His Grace would be awake by then."

"She can be executed on the spot, Prince Rylen. She is a mere peasant," Thomas scoffed. "No one would hold a trial for her. Her verdict has already been made."

Chapter 295: Perhaps

Prince Rylen knew this, but he wanted to be a little hopeful that the Royal Family would do what was right and Rose would be treated properly. That she would be given a fair trial and hopefully be acquitted of all the charges. And even if she weren't, there would still be enough time for the crown prince to wake up and end this.

However, this plan was fully dependent on the crown prince waking up. Rylen didn't even want to think about what would happen if the crown prince didn't wake up.

Thomas, however, was bringing something even far more important to his attention—Rose wouldn't go to trial. She would be killed as soon as she reached the capital.

As soon as the young knight said this, Prince Rylen couldn't refute it, not with the Queen's hatred for the young woman. She would be killed, and there was nothing he could do to stop it.

Unfortunately, he couldn't keep her here either. Something told him the Queen would send guards to come get her herself. Prince Rylen felt his stomach knot. He didn't want to throw her to the wolves. That would be a very cruel thing to do. And aside from his morals, Caius would be furious if he found out about this—this was on the hope that Caius would awaken.

Prince Rylen adjusted his coat out of a need for something to do rather than it needing to be adjusted. He didn't miss that Rose looked from him to Thomas with a scared expression.

She had every right to be scared. He had just brought news that she would be executed and was also telling her to go to the place where she would be killed. It was heartless.

"Prince Rylen," Thomas said, his voice still harsh. "There has to be something we can—"

"There isn't," Rylen replied and couldn't even look at Rose.

Rose didn't know what to think. She kept looking from one of them to the other, hoping they would say something, but the look on Prince Rylen's face told her he had decided to send her to the castle. Thomas seemed to be against that.

However, Rose knew Prince Rylen's decision wasn't without reason, especially since he had stalled this long before telling her in hopes that a better solution would emerge. But that wasn't going to happen. The crown prince was still unconscious.

Rose didn't want to think about it, but a part of her worried if the crown prince might actually save her—but she tried to convince herself that he would. There was no reason why he would not.

"I have to go to the castle?" Rose asked.

"I am sorry, but yes, you have to," Prince Rylen said. "Thomas will go with you. He has decent influence, and I believe he should be able to buy you some time. I cannot leave His Grace's side, I would have come along with you myself."

Rose sighed. There was no escaping this—it was pretty clear. And neither of the men here could help her out of this.

"Tomorrow?" she asked.

Prince Rylen nodded, his eyes a lot wider at her question. "Will you go?"

Rose gave a sad laugh. "You say it like I have a choice," she replied.

"I am sorry. But I promise, we won't let you die."

Rose nodded. They were already breaking a rule by telling her. All Prince Rylen had to do was tell her to go to the castle—he didn't have to speak truthfully to her, but at least he did that.

Thomas paced behind Prince Rylen, then completely stopped walking. "Are you sure about this, Prince Rylen?" Thomas asked.

"Yes. I will craft a letter that will hopefully appeal to the King on the matter. Regardless of how Her Majesty feels, His Majesty still has the final say."

Thomas sighed and unclenched his palms. "I will come to get you first thing tomorrow morning," he said.

Rose nodded and gave him a soft smile. "I will be ready," she replied.

Prince Rylen stared hard at her face. Rose was unsure what he was staring so intensely at, but then he shook his head and turned away. He walked to the door without saying another word.

Thomas followed after him, and before shutting the door, he turned around to look at her. Rose smiled tightly at him, and his eyes saddened as he stared at her—then the door slowly closed.

Rose closed her eyes. That was another time Thomas had looked at her with pity, and every time that happened, she was in the worst situation yet.

Rose didn't move from her position immediately. She wrapped her arms around herself. She already knew what she was going to do. It was surprisingly easy to find the courage to do it.

Prince Rylen had literally come in here to tell her to prepare for her death. He seemed to think he could convince at least the King, but Rose was as sure as Thomas was that she would be killed upon arrival.

Rose dug the heels of her palms into her closed eyes. She couldn't seem to get away from tragedy. She had even more reason to hate the crown prince.

Perhaps if she had never gotten water from the well on the outskirts of town on that fateful day, this would have never happened. Or if she had never run into him in the marketplace with the love mark on her neck, things might be different.

She would have married Ander and been close enough to take care of her mother until her dying days. Perhaps, she might even be pregnant with Ander's child, and perhaps her mother might see a grandchild before...

Rose shook her head as she forced herself to stop thinking about what could have been. She pulled her hands away from her face and climbed onto the bed. She knew she was not going to get much sleep tonight.

When morning came, Rose's eyes were still wide open. She had spent the night deciding what she would do. It was a bit unfortunate that she lost the map in the woods, but she remembered enough. If she was going to be killed anyway, Rose was determined to see her mother one last time.

The servants dressed her, wearing her thick clothes and a scarf around her neck. She also wore boots, and her dress wasn't as heavy. Rose wondered if she was going to be riding. She hoped so—that would make her plan much easier.

The servants had just finished dressing her when she heard a knock. Rose took a deep breath as she braced herself to embark on the journey. It was time to go.

However, she was surprised when the door opened and it was neither Thomas nor Prince Rylen—rather, Lady Deana rushed into the room with tears in her eyes.

"You're going back to the capital," she cried as she rushed in. "Prince Rylen just told me."

"Isn't it too early?" She continued speaking before Rose had a chance to respond. "You are still unwell and the crown prince hasn't woken up either."

"Lady Deana," Rose exclaimed, curtsying. "I have to go."

"I don't see why," the lady whined.

It was clear Prince Rylen hadn't told Lady Deana why she had to go to the castle, and Rose intended to keep it that way.

"I am sorry, Lady Deana, but I think it's best if I return to the castle," she replied, praying the lady wouldn't ask further questions.

"Will you return some other time?" she asked.

Rose nodded. Her voice sounded nice, and the lady had been nothing but kind to her—even when she had betrayed her trust and run off.

"I will try," Rose said, not promising.

She didn't know if she would survive this. This might even be the last time she would see Lady Deana, considering she intended to commit even more crime.

"I can't wait for you to return. You're welcome anytime."

"Thank you," Rose said and curtsied again.

"You don't have to than—" Lady Deana was saying, but the rest of her words were drowned out by the knock.

It was time.

Rose lifted her head, and she didn't feel fear or horror or anxiety. Her mind was surprisingly clear, and her thoughts were even clearer.

She smiled softly at Lady Deana and walked toward the door. She opened it and Thomas stood outside. His brown hair had been combed and styled, and his amber eyes glinted as they stared at her.

"Lor—"

Thomas cut her off. "Are you ready?" he asked.

Rose nodded. "I am."

He looked at her closely as though he didn't believe her words, then nodded and turned his back to her as he started walking away.

"Lady Deana," Rose turned and looked at the older woman.

"Yes?" she said, closer than Rose realized.

"I know it's not a great gift, but would you like to have my flute? You might find someone pretty good at playing it," Rose asked softly.

Lady Deana's tone sounded pleasantly surprised. "You want me to keep it?"

"And the swallow you bought for me. As you found, I have a very similar one."

"I don't think I should keep either of them. You said the flute was a gift from your father," Lady Deana said. "I couldn't possibly take it."

"I insist," she said. "It should be in the drawer of the dresser in the room I shared with the crown prince. Please," Rose whispered. "I truly want you to have it."

Rose didn't think she would ever be able to play the flute again, and it would be a pity if it were just tossed aside. She had had it since she was a little child. Her father maintained it well enough for her that it didn't look as old as it really was.

"Okay," Lady Deana said with a grin. "But I don't think I will ever want to hear anyone else but you play."

"Thank you," Rose said softly as she turned around.

Surprisingly, Thomas hadn't gone far, and she was able to catch up with him. She couldn't believe she had just given the flute away, but she couldn't help but feel it was the right thing to do.

Chapter 296: She'd Never See Again

Rose winced as the cold air hit her face. She instinctively pulled the scarf up to her chin to protect some of her face from the cold. Her cheeks were still exposed, but at least it was bearable.

The first thing Rose noticed as she walked towards the open doors leading outside the mansion was men sitting on horses. There weren't many of them. She counted fewer than ten as she followed behind Thomas. The men bowed as Thomas approached.

Snowflakes fell lightly as she stepped out of the mansion. The already fallen snow littered the front yard, covering every exposed surface—the leaves, the men standing outside, the horses, and of course the ground—but it wasn't falling hard enough for the ground to be completely covered.

Rose doubted it would take much longer before the roads would become impassable due to the snow. She could tell from the weather that it would only get colder.

As she walked towards the horses, Rose wondered if she should have requested a hat. It was a long journey, and her face was bound to take the full brunt of the cold.

However, since she couldn't head back in, she improvised by pulling the scarf around her neck upwards so it partially covered her head too.

"Safe travels," a voice said behind her, and Rose nearly jumped out of her skin.

She turned around to see Prince Rylen. She hadn't heard him approach, and if he hadn't spoken, she would have remained oblivious to his presence.

"Prince Rylen," Rose said, bending her knees and bowing a little as she paid her respects.

Prince Rylen lightly lifted his hand. He had a stiff smile on his face, almost as though it was frozen. "Rose," he whispered.

Rose stood to her full height but didn't look him in the eyes. Instead, she kept her gaze on the ground.

"Fear not," he started to say. "Thomas will do everything in his power to keep you safe, and as soon as I can leave here, I will head to the castle immediately."

Rose nodded. "Thank you," she mumbled. "How is His Majesty?" she asked.

Prince Rylen was quite aware that Rose addressed the crown prince incorrectly. However, Caius had never corrected her, and he didn't see the need to do so now.

"Still unconscious, but Lord Paul says he isn't getting worse, so I'll take that as a good sign."

Rose nodded and turned to look at the horses. The men were already mounted, and Thomas rode his horse closer to them.

"Shouldn't we wait for a little while? Perhaps until noon?" Thomas asked, his grip on the reins tight as he towered over them.

"I don't think it's advisable to travel at night—not with the bandits that we couldn't capture at large. If you leave now, there will still be sunlight when you arrive in Hearthgale."

Thomas narrowed his eyes. "As you wish, Prince Rylen," he said coldly and turned his horse toward the gate.

"I should let you go," Prince Rylen said, turning his attention back to Rose.

She curtsied again, then stepped toward the only empty horse. Slipping her foot into the stirrup, she straddled the horse. She balanced quickly and pulled on the reins just as Thomas set off.

Rose rode after him without looking back. She hadn't taken more than the clothes on her back. They wanted to get to Hearthgale as soon as possible, which meant she left a lot of things behind. Things she would never see again.

The gates were thrown open, and they rushed into the streets. It was pretty early, just a little past dawn, but the streets were already busy as people went about their business.

This was different from when she first arrived. Perhaps, news of the bandits being captured must have reached the public—at least some of the bandits.

Rose rode with a troubled mind. She knew they would be out of Futherfield soon, and if they took the same path that brought them from the castle, they were likely to reach Hearthgale, as Prince Rylen had said, long before dusk.

However, Rose didn't have to worry about that. Her plan would start as soon as they were out of the gates of Futherfield. It was a terrible gamble, but one she was willing to take.

It would be a little hard to lose the men in the nearby forest, but Rose was determined to do it. She didn't mind losing the horse in the process. She wondered if she should have spoken to either Prince Rylen or Lord Thomas about her idea, but they were both loyal to the crown, and she didn't want to drag anyone into her own problem.

"Rose," Thomas called to her, riding closer, but Rose was too lost in thought to notice.

"Rose," he called again.

This time his words reached her ears, and she snapped her head upward to look at him. "Lord Thomas," she said, a little frightened as she realized he was closer than she had expected.

It was ridiculous, but for a moment, she was worried her plans might be revealed by her expression.

"Are you okay with riding? It's a long journey." He asked with a frown on his face.

His voice sounded harsh, and even his expression could cause a small child to cry, but it still didn't hide the concern on his face.

Rose smiled a little. She thought it was too late for the question, but at least he asked. Caius hadn't cared the first time they embarked on a journey—she had ridden until she was unconscious.

"Yes," Rose replied.

Thomas's eyes narrowed. "We are almost at the gate." Rose didn't think there was a need for any explanation; she could see the gates up ahead.

She simply nodded, and Thomas rode away from her. Rose felt her stomach knot. The moment was here. After they went out the gates, she would ride toward the opposite path—leading away from the capital. Rose expected pursuit, and frankly, she was prepared for it.

She looked toward the huge gates. It was nowhere near as big as the capital's and as they drew closer, the huge gates started to open. Rose closed her eyes briefly, then urged her horse to go on—outside the town.

Chapter 297: A Voice

Thomas led the way, speeding through the open gates. She was right behind and also urged her horse on. However, as she was about to pass through the gates suddenly stopped.

She heard it before anyone else—loud yelling from behind. She stopped her horse before she even thought about it, halting right in the middle of the open gates, blocking the path of the rest of the men.

Loud grunts and complaints could be heard as the men tried hard not to bump into her at her abrupt stop. She heard a few curses but Rose didn't care, she had heard something.

Thomas noticed she stopped and turned his head toward her. At first, he only slowed his horse, but when he noticed she was indeed not moving, he turned his horse around; he had rode some distance away from them.

"What are you doing?" he asked, but he didn't sound angry—rather, he sounded worried.

"I heard a voice," she said, turning back, but all she could see were the men she was stopping from going through the gates and the impatient guards who wanted to close the gates after they had gone through.

"A voice?" Thomas asked, his voice even softer.

"Yes," Rose said and tried to stare behind the men, but she couldn't see a thing. It didn't help that they weren't even stepping backwards so she could confirm.

She turned to see Thomas looking at her with a sympathetic expression. "If you've changed your mind, I understand," he said.

Rose frowned, annoyed that he didn't seem to believe her, but even as she felt herself get angry, the feeling dissipated.

Did she really hear a voice, or was it her mind playing tricks on her?

Outside these gates, she would have to make the ultimate decision. Since she hadn't passed through them yet, she still had time to change her plan. Had she subconsciously stopped to reconsider, or did she really hear a voice?

"I haven't," Rose said, her voice dejected. She really did hear a voice but by everyone's reaction and the whispers, it seemed she had been the only one to hear.

If she had indeed heard a voice, she should have heard it again—and even if she couldn't see behind her, the men should be able to tell if someone was approaching.

I must have lost my mind—Rose thought.

Suddenly, a loud trumpet echoed through the space. It wasn't deafening, but Rose could tell that wherever it was coming from, it was urgent.

Without another word, the gates started to close. Rose was mostly out of it, but she instinctively moved backward—and so did the rest of the men.

"What are you doing?" Thomas yelled upward towards the man turning on the lever to close the gates.

"I'm sorry, Your Lordship, but that's the signal to close the gates and keep them closed until we hear a different signal. So, Your Lordship, please either step outside the gates or inside," a guard yelled toward Thomas over the loud noise of the gates closing.

The guard was dressed in full armor. He had a helmet, and he held a spear. However, he bent his head as he spoke to Thomas and kept his spear pointed to the ground.

Rose looked at Thomas, worried he might speak in anger, but he did none of that. He didn't even ask the guard what this was about. Rather, he quietly stepped back through the gates, just as they slammed shut.

"How long until we can leave?" Thomas asked the guard.

"Usually, not long," the guard responded immediately. "Someone should be coming up the path with a message. Aha—there they are!" The guard said in relief, pointing past them, and everyone turned their attention to the path.

Rose frowned. The person the guard had pointed to was just a speck in the distance, so far away they barely looked like anything—but it was clear they were riding toward them as fast as they could.

Rose's stomach tightened, but somewhere in the recesses of her mind, a flicker of hope began to grow. Perhaps it was the news they wanted to hear—that the crown prince was awake—but Rose didn't want to believe that just yet. She feared she might jinx it.

The rider in question was still far off, and Rose could see Thomas growing impatient. He grunted and rode his horse toward the lone rider.

Rose's first thought was to go after him, but she decided against it and just waited by the gates. For some reason, she felt like it was bad news and if she stalled it could change to good news.

They were drawing attention as they gathered around the gates and people who wanted to go out through the gates had to stop awkwardly to the side.

She also noticed a carriage stopped nearby, and the owner stepped out of it. Rose thought he looked more like a merchant than a lord. He called out to a nearby guard, who quickly acknowledged him, and Rose could only guess he was explaining the situation to him.

It was suddenly colder, and when she lifted her head, she saw that Thomas had reached the rider. They exchanged words, and then suddenly Thomas turned toward her, gesturing for her to come.

When Rose didn't understand immediately, he started riding back toward her. She urged her horse to move, meeting him halfway.

"What news did you receive, Lord Thomas?" Rose asked, her eyes bright.

"The crown prince woke up!" he said excitedly, then his voice dropped. "Only briefly, but Lord Paul said if His Highness woke up once, he's very likely to wake up again. And Prince Rylen said that's enough. We don't have to leave anymore."

"Are you sure about that?" Rose asked, still afraid to believe it. Things never went right. She couldn't help but doubt.

"Yes," Thomas replied. "I would expect you to be happier."

"I am," Rose said. She truly was—but she feared expressing how relieved and happy she was would somehow ruin it.

Thomas studied her expression as though he didn't quite believe her. "Shall we return to the estate then?" he asked.

"Yes, please," Rose replied. "I would like that very much."

Chapter 298:

Needs Editing

The ride back to the estate was just as quiet. Rose didn't have anything to say and a part of her was still in disbelief. Last night she had made up her mind about what she was going to do and today there was news that the crown prince has woken up. Well, not exactly but at least Prince Rylen thought it was enough for him.

She gripped the reins tighter as they stopped in front of the main entrance of the mansion she had only left a few moments ago. The doors opened immediately and Prince Rylen walked right out. Lord Leopold and Lady Deana were right beside him. Rose was surprised they would come to receive them.

Thomas jumped off his horse quickly, glancing towards her to see if she needed any help but Rose didn't need any. She freed one leg from the stirrup and uncrossed it over the horse. While, still holding on the horse, she dropped the freed foot to the ground and freed her other foot.

Rose rushed towards them as she got off the horse, curtsying before she started to speak. "Prince Rylen, Your Lordship and Ladyship."

"I was worried, we might not be able to stop you in time," Rylen was saying with a smile on his lips.

Rose lifted her head. "Is His Majesty awake?" She asked.

"Not right now but Lord Paul says, he is only sleeping and perhaps soon he should be awake to stay away more than a few moment."

Rose nodded. This was pretty relieving to hear but at the same time, she didn't feel the joy she thought she would feel at not having to go to trial but she was basically still stuck here on the crown prince's wing.

She smiled tightly at Rylen, she was sure it didn't reach her eyes. "I am grateful," she said but her voice sounded empty.

"Welcome back," Lady Deana said with a smile. "I was surprised when I heard you had to go to the castle so suddenly but now that the crown prince is awake, there is no need for that and you both can return together."

Rose glanced at Prince Rylen, wondering what he had told the Lord and Lady. Rose wasn't sure they knew she was going to the castle for putting the crown prince in danger.

"Yes," Rose said absentmindedly.

"You should get some rest," Prince Rylen said. "I am sure this morning must have been chaotic."

"Can I see His Majesty?" Rose asked before she could stop herself.

"No," it was Lord Leopold who spoke and that was the first and only thing he said.

Rose lifted her head to him, she was unsure if the Lord disliked her or not. He wasn't particularly hostile but he wasn't very friendly either.

"The physicians say it is best to leave him to rest," Prince Rylen further explained.

Rose nodded. "That is best," she replied. "Thank you, Prince Rylen." She curtsied again.

Rylen shrugged. He didn't think she should thank him so much. Thomas had been willing to break the rules, he had actually sent her off even though he knew it was dangerous. He was just like the crown prince, putting her in unnecessary danger.

Rose stood awkwardly as they blocked the path. She was sure conversation had ended but there was no way she could go past them. She was also worried that Lord Leopold and his wife came out to welcome them. It should be time for breakfast now. Something bothered her.

"Walk with me, Rose," Prince Rylen said and turned around.

"As you wish Prince Rylen," Rose said and quickly walked up after him.

"Thomas see to it that the men are attended to, disperse them accordingly," Prince Rylen said without looking back.

Thomas grunted in response and turned around. He didn't tear his gaze away until the door closed behind them. He couldn't help but notice that Lord Leopold and Lady Deana had also gone with them.

Rose felt even more awkward as she walked in their midst. Rylen was on one side while Lady Deana and her husband was on the other side. Rose walked behind them as she couldn't walk on the same level with them.

"I have informed Lord Leopold of the situation," Prince Rylen said.

Rose didn't miss the stare Lord Leopold sent her way, almost like he was judging her. Rose was a little uncomfortable.

"They agree that sending you to the castle is the right thing to do. However, since His Grace is awake, at least fairly they are willing to overlook the order for His Grace. In the meantime, please..." Prince Rylen stopped walking turn around to look at her.

Rose stopped abruptly, noticing all attention was on her. She stiffened. It didn't feel harsh rather it felt like she was on display in the market place where but could decide what do with her.

"Don't do anything dangerous," Prince Rylen said.

"Don't try to run off," Lord Leopold stated.

"Darling!" Lady Deana scolded.

She pulled away from her husband and walked to Rose. "I am sure you're tired, upset and hungry too. Come with me, we will get you all changed and ready for breakfast."

Rose nodded and let Lady Deana pulled her away. However, there was one thing that was clear in her mind. She was sick of nobles. She would want nothing more than to never deal with their kind again.

"Thank you," she said to Prince Rylen as she was being pulled away.

Sorry really tired. Editing this right now.

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"How long until we can leave?" Thomas asked the guard.

Chapter 299: His Highness Is Awake

"His Highness is awake and is requesting you," a petite servant said as soon as Rose opened the door.

Rose recognized her—she was one of the maids who had come along to the market with them. She had also attended to Rose a few times, so she was familiar with her.

"He is awake?" she asked, even though she clearly heard what the maid had said.

"Yes, ma'am," the maid politely confirmed.

Rose nodded, suddenly feeling antsy. The crown prince was awake. This was good news. The decree would be withdrawn, and she didn't have to worry about being executed.

But could she go home, even briefly? Rose wasn't so sure about that.

"Thank you," she said to the maid.

The maid nodded, realizing she had been dismissed, and walked away from the door.

Rose didn't head out immediately, but she didn't waste much time either. She paused to think for a few moments, however, no matter how long and had she thought it wouldn't change the crown princess mind. She would have to go to see what he would decide on.

Rose walked through the familiar path as she briskly made her way to the crown prince. Not surprisingly, the walk to his chambers felt even shorter than normal and she was lost in thought the entire time.

Guards lined the front of the room, but no one stopped her as she approached the doors. Rose knocked once, then twice—and before her hand could land a third time, someone pulled open the door.

It wasn't anyone she recognized, and Rose had to assume he was one of the physicians attending to the crown prince. She curtsied and looked to the floor almost immediately.

The man didn't step away from the door, nor did he speak to her. Rose didn't like how the silence dragged, so she spoke quickly.

"I am Rose," she said. "His Majesty called for me."

"Let her in!" Prince Rylen's voice cut through the air before the physician could even reply.

He stepped out of the way quickly, and Rose stepped into the room cautiously. The room was familiar; not much had changed except for the strong smell of herbs. It was pungent—enough to make her stomach twist.

She wondered just how many concoctions Lord Paul had to make before he found the perfect antidote. However, the shrunken figure upright on the bed drew her attention and made her forget the smell of the herbs.

Caius looked completely different, and if she weren't so sure it was him—because only the crown prince would have this many physicians in one room—Rose would have doubted her eyes. Even as she moved closer, she still doubted her eyes.

His eyes were sunken, almost like his eyeballs had fallen a few centimeters deep into his skull. His hair had lost its black color and now it appeared almost grayish. He had also lost a considerable amount of weight, so much so that his cheekbones stood out.

Rose had seen him two days ago—this was a drastic change. Prince Rylen had downplayed just how bad the crown prince was. If the King or Queen saw him now, no word from Caius could change their minds. She would be killed on the spot.

"Your Majesty," Rose rushed forward, dropping to her knees beside the bed. "I am glad you're awake," she whispered.

"Rose," he peered at her. His voice was steady, and if she didn't see him, she would have said nothing had changed.

"Yes," she mumbled.

Caius looked around the room. "Leave us," he said.

"Your Highness," Lord Paul protested, moving forward, but Caius shot him a glare, stopping him in his tracks. He bowed his head and stepped back. "As you wish, Your Highness."

Prince Rylen didn't even argue—he was already walking to the door. The rest of the physicians followed suit, and soon enough Rose was alone with Caius.

"Sit," Caius said.

Rose was hesitant to lift her off the ground but she couldn't anger him. She lifted herself as though she was being pulled by an unseen force and sat on the empty seat next to the bed.

"Move closer," Caius said.

Rose moved the chair, her heart in her throat. The chair made a squeaky sound as she pulled it across the floor. Rose didn't know what the crown prince would say to her, and she couldn't help the gnawing feeling that he was in this state because of her.

When she was close enough, he lifted his hand, and Rose flinched, closing her eyes. Caius's eyes narrowed, but he didn't stop his movement. His hand landed on her bruised cheek, caressing it lightly.

"There's a bruise," he whispered, then his hand moved to her lip. "And another."

When Rose opened her eyes again, Caius had already pulled his hand away. He placed it over the covers that across his legs—even his hands were skinny.

"I am curious about one thing," Caius said. "How did you know how to get to the woods?"

Rose blinked. She didn't know what the crown prince was going to say, but this completely caught her off guard.

"To leave Futherfield?" she asked, even though she knew that was exactly what he was talking about.

"Yes," Caius said, studying her. His face was different, but he stared at her just the same.

Rose shuffled in her seat. Was she here to be interrogated? At least it was better than getting scolded.

"A man in the marketplace mentioned it," Rose replied.

"Hmm," Caius said and looked away briefly. "I don't think that's enough."

Rose was quiet. She couldn't dare mention the map—Lady Delphine would be implicated, and she didn't want that. Besides, she didn't know what to make of the crown prince.

His behavior was... strange.

"Prince Rylen," Caius started to say when Rose didn't reply, "filled me in on all that happened. I did tell you to leave me, but somehow you got me out of the woods."

"It was the least I could do, Your Majesty," Rose whispered. "You are in this state because of me."

Rose twisted her hands in her lap. She felt anxious that any moment now, the crown prince would do exactly what he called her for—which was to enact punishment. Even if he wasn't going to send her to the gallows, there were other ways to punish her for the numerous crimes she had committed.

"We both know that's not completely true," Caius said.

Rose lifted her head and stared at Caius in shock. Did Ryder hit him on the head too hard? Did the crown prince just admit to some wrongdoing—or was she reading too much into what he had just said?

Chapter 300: Negligible

"How do you feel?" Caius asked, changing the subject once again before Rose could even recover from the last one.

Rose nodded hard enough to make herself dizzy. "I am fine. Your Majesty should be more worried about his health."

Caius chuckled. "Don't worry, it's not the first time I've been poisoned. As always, Wresthal makes nasty poisons. This is negligible."

Rose didn't think there was anything negligible about this. She had never seen the crown prince look like this—ever. It was troubling, but what was even more disconcerting was that it didn't seem as though he was blaming her. She should feel relieved, but it only made her more antsy.

"You've been poisoned before?" Rose asked in horror as his words registered.

There were many things she didn't know about the crown prince, and she had already seen enough evidence that things weren't easy for him—the unexplainable scars, and now, casually saying he had been poisoned before.

"I know you want to see your mother," Caius replied, easily changing the subject to something Rose couldn't resist. The fact that Caius had been poisoned before was already forgotten.

"Yes, Your Majesty," Rose replied, feeling her eyes well up with tears. "The letter said she is gravely ill, and I just wanted to see her before the worst. I apologize for going behind His Majesty's back and trying to leave, putting us both in danger in the process, but..." Rose dropped to her knees again. "Please understand, Your Majesty."

Caius stared at Rose for a bit. "Sit," he said.

Rose nodded and moved to sit again. She looked around, feeling very confused. She was unsure what his decision was, and his sickly look made it even harder to read his expression.

"How are your injuries? Any others I can't see?" Caius asked.

"No," Rose lied, thoroughly confused now. The crown prince kept moving from one topic to the other.

Caius looked at her as though he didn't believe her, then he slowly said, "Very well." He turned away from her to look at a space in the room.

Very well what? Rose internally questioned. What was going on here? Was he going to let her go? Was she jumping to conclusions? She didn't understand half of the conversation.

"Your Majesty," Rose whispered when Caius didn't speak again.

It was uncomfortable to be seated. She would feel much better if she were on her knees. Surely, he must want to punish her, but all he did was make small talk and that made her uncomfortable.

Caius turned to look at Rose. "Are you well enough to travel?" he asked.

Rose felt her heart skip a beat. "Your Majesty, yes!"

Rose tried her best not to seem too excited. She didn't even know what he was asking this question for—he could be sending her to the castle, for all she knew—but she couldn't help it.

"Very well," Caius said.

It was those two words again, and once more, he wasn't adding anything. Rose didn't have the stomach for suspense.

"Your Majesty," she started softly, not wanting to anger him, "are you letting me go see my mother?"

Caius narrowed his eyes, and Rose instinctively flinched, which only caused Caius's expression to darken even more.

"As long as you promise to return," Caius said, eyeing her oddly.

Rose blinked at this. She understood the implications of his words, but right now that didn't matter. He was going to let her see her mother—that was all she heard. Returning didn't seem so bad.

"Yes, I will. Thank you, Your Majesty!" Rose cried and was about to drop to the ground again, but the look from Caius stopped her.

Caius tilted his head, then leaned back to rest it against the headboard. He closed his eyes briefly.

"Prince Rylen told me about the decree. It's preposterous. You have nothing to worry about," Caius said, opening his eyes to look at Rose.

She nodded as she listened attentively. "Thank you," she whispered again.

Everything went silent, and Caius just stared at her.

"Your Majesty," Rose softly called. "When shall I return?"

Caius raised a brow. "I will send for you," he replied.

Rose nodded. She didn't know if she liked this. An estimated date would have been better. Now she would spend every moment thinking the crown prince could call her back at any time. However, at least he was letting her see her mother.

"You may go," Caius said.

Rose jerked her head to look up at him. That was it? She was genuinely confused. "Is that all, Your Majesty?" she softly asked.

"Yes," Caius said and looked like he was in pain, but he immediately suppressed it. "You may leave as soon as you're well enough to travel."

Rose blinked once and then nodded. She had gotten exactly what she wanted, but it felt a little unreal to celebrate properly.

"Thank you, Your Majesty, and I wish you a speedy recovery," she said and got to her feet.

Caius closed his palms briefly, then turned away, and Rose knew she had been dismissed. She curtsied and slipped out of the room just as the physicians and Prince Rylen returned.

"Your Highness!" Lord Paul cried as soon as he entered the room.

He rushed to Caius and quickly adjusted him so he was lying on his back, then pulled the cover until it reached his chest.

"Please, Your Highness, do not exert yourself. You have only just woken up," Lord Paul said with concern on his face.

Caius didn't look very impressed by the comment. He turned to Prince Rylen. "Send Thomas with her. She's going home."

Prince Rylen actually smiled at this. "For good?" he asked.

Caius's gaze darkened at Rylen's question.

"I guess not," Prince Rylen muttered.

"Don't even bother sending a letter to the castle," Caius said instead.

"Okay, Your Grace, but His Majesty and Her Majesty would like you to return, at the very least. There is better treatment in the castle," Prince Rylen said.

"No," Caius said.

"Your Gra—"

Caius cut Prince Rylen off as he turned to his physician. "Paul, I have a task for you."