

THE KING'S LOVER

Chapter 8: Death Row

Chapter 8: Death Row

Rose stood in front of the hearth, stirring the pot. She was making some porridge, just enough for her mother and herself. Her father had already left for work as soon as it was bright enough to leave. He said he needed to start on her wedding present, and if he didn't start now, there was no way he would finish it in time, so he was going to set out early to find the perfect tree trunk.

Rose smiled to herself as she wondered what her father would carve for them. Imagine if it was a sculpture of the two of them. Of course not, that would take more than a week, and her father didn't sculpt humans—he preferred animals, especially birds. It was also the only thing she was a little good at.

Any minute now, it would be time for lunch. It was almost noon. She had to hurry; she always made sure food was ready by noon for her mother. The old woman didn't eat much, but at least she ate, even if it was a little. Her mother was getting sicker, and every now and then, she worried she might wake up and her mother wouldn't.

Rose smacked both sides of her face with her palms. What was she thinking? She had more important things to worry about and a wedding to plan for. She had to snap out of the bad thoughts. This was a happy time for all of them. Rose frowned as she recalled what had happened at the marketplace. Hopefully, he would be gone from Edenville, and she would never hear from him again. After all, royals rarely came to this backwater town.

Suddenly, she heard her name. Rose chalked it up to her hearing things and continued what she was doing.

"Rosie!" A gut-wrenching scream reached her ears. It was Ander; there was no doubt about it.

Rose rushed out the front door, her heart in her throat as she feared the worst. Was he injured? What could possibly be the situation?

She saw him standing in front of the house, his hands on his knees as he gasped for breath. Rose walked to him. "What happened?" she asked.

"Y-ye fat'er,"—when Ander looked up, there were tears in his eyes—"he is about to be beheaded in the town square."

At first, Rose was sure she had misheard him. She was certain what he said was nothing along the lines of what she thought she heard. There was no reason her father would be on death row. The baron liked him too; he wouldn't let him be...

"They said he went to the forest when the crown prince closed it off."

"Ah," she said just as the spoon fell from her hand. She had completely forgotten she was holding it. This made more sense—that the crown prince had something to do with it. This was her fault.

"Rosie, I just said your fat'er is about to be killed."

Rose had never been the type to panic. It was a bit ironic. She was loud, rambunctious, and couldn't help but make lewd jokes, but when things turned serious, she went numb and even cold.

"I heard ye," she replied. "Could ye watch mi mot'er for me?" she asked.

"Yes. What are ye going to do?"

"I will be right back," she said and lightly touched his face. "Don't tell mi mot'er anything."

"Rosie, where are ye going?"

"Mi fat'er," she whispered and started walking away. But she didn't head for the town square. Instead, she headed in the opposite direction—toward the baron's manor.

She knew exactly how to stop this, and what was a little sale on her body for her father's life? What she was worried about was that it might be a little too late. It took some time to get to the baron's manor and even running at full speed didn't help.

Her father would most likely be executed at noon. More than anything, she was hoping the crown prince was waiting, giving her time to stop this. She stopped in front of the manor gates, panting hard, but it didn't feel like enough air was getting to her lungs.

There were three guards at the gates, and they stared at her with pity in their eyes. The news had gone around, but somehow, she was the last to hear. "I-I want to see the crown prince. Please tell him I'm 'ere. He'd want to see me, I promise."

"The crown prince already left Edenville. He left a while ago. Even if ye ran, ye could never catch up with him."

Rose tasted bile. Her mother was going to die, and there was absolutely nothing she could do about it except watch it slowly happen. Her father, on the other hand—his death would be sudden, and it would be every bit her fault. She could stop it but failed to do so.

"What's going on here?" A guard on a horse strutted toward them.

Rose's eyes widened immediately. She knew the guard in question. He was highly ranked in the baron's manor and was one of the ones who had tried to hit on her—and she had kicked him in the nuts. He didn't like her anymore, and she felt the exact same way about him.

"It's Rose," a guard started to explain.

"Oh, yer father is getting executed." He giggled. "I heard ye said yer too special for a prince. Serves you right."

It took only the speed of a raindrop falling to the ground for Rose to make her decision. As soon as she did, her hand moved, she grabbed the reins and pulled. The horse panicked, the rider panicked, losing his balance, and he fell off—exactly what she wanted.

Rose moved quickly, lifting herself off the ground and onto the back of the horse. She was glad she let Ander teach her how to ride, and this was possible because he worked in the baron's stables. Though this had angered the baron when he found out, the only reason he let her go without any consequences was because of her father. But it didn't matter, as she had learned enough to be able to ride any horse.

"Hiya!" she yelled and shook the reins. The horse set off, and she could hear the guard curse behind her, but his voice soon faded as she galloped away.

Chapter 9: To Trap Her

Chapter 9: To Trap Her

"I thought you did this to trap her," Rylen asked Caius. "You're just going to kill her father?"

"Don't look at me like that," Caius said. "If she had done what I wanted, this wouldn't happen." Caius shrugged as he casually held onto the reins of his horse.

"You didn't give her a chance to correct this. You even made us leave earlier than scheduled," Rylen scolded. He rode closer to Caius.

"Yes, so we can get to the capital on time. Even on horseback, it will take us no less than two days. If we leave early, we can get to the capital by dusk on the second day."

Rylen didn't reply to this; he just rode past and left Caius alone. There was no point in trying to speak more on the matter. He wouldn't listen, and he knew better than to anger Caius. At least, he was amused, but Rylen couldn't help but worry about the girl's father.

Caius watched Rylen ride off, and an odd thought popped into his head. He frowned and turned back, refusing to let his thoughts stray to places he'd rather not think about. Right now, the redhead that got his loins in a frenzy was far more important. Caius frowned as he was met with an empty path. He was riding as slowly as possible, yet she wasn't here yet. If she wanted to rescue her father, she had to work hard for it. Refusing his offer had consequences.

From here, he could no longer see Edenville again, just a path lined with huge trees on each side. Caius turned his head to the front, then shrugged and picked up the pace. They had a lot of riding to do. It was her loss at the end of the day.

Caius heard it before he saw it. The gallops of an incoming horse—it didn't sound like it came from his men. It sounded faster. Caius would recognize that anywhere, but he didn't even flinch, didn't turn around. Instead, he picked up the pace some more, forcing his men to increase their pace too.

They were a band of fifty men, and Caius knew all of them by name. They had fought with him in several battles. He also went with them everywhere. He trusted them, and he knew they would easily lay down their lives for him. Right now, he was leading them as they flanked him on both sides and covered up the rear.

Suddenly, Rylen was by his side again. He bounced with every movement of the horse. "Did you know she would do this?"

"Do what?" Caius asked, pretending to be oblivious. "Wait, who?"

Actually, Caius didn't expect this at all. He had thought she would stop him at the gate. He had completely given up on trying to get her, maybe not completely. He was just as shocked as Rylen. However, it didn't mean he had to make it easy for her.

"Rose," he said. When Caius still frowned, he added, "the redhead."

"Oh, I had forgotten about her. What about her?" Rose, he echoed in his head—that's her name.

"She just joined the men in the rear, and she is clearly trying to ride to meet you, but the men won't let her through. She already came here; don't make it too difficult for her. Her father's life is on the line."

Caius lifted his gaze to look at him. "Aren't you the righteous one? She already made it this far; I'm sure she can handle even more. She should reach me before noon, else how would she save her father?" Caius laughed.

Caius didn't need to look at Rylen to know what expression he had on. The air hummed with it, but all Caius could think about was that she was willing to do this for her father, and she couldn't adhere to his request—the crown prince's request.

Rose had water in her eyes, and her rear was also bruised. The saddle wasn't her size, and with how fast she was going, it was only going to get worse. She couldn't help the relief she felt when she saw the prince's group. She sped up immediately.

She didn't have a lot of time left; she didn't even think he would leave with her father's life on the line. She should have asked more questions. How would he save him from here? The thoughts that churned in her mind were enough to make her lose balance, but she held on.

Rose tried to pass them to get to the crown prince, but they wouldn't let her. She tried the other end, but the guards suddenly appeared in her way. "Let me pass," she cried, but no one spoke to her. No one even looked at her.

The tears were already falling. Rose didn't know when, but she could feel her face was wet. Was she a joke to him? Was this how minimal a life was to him? Her father! He was aware of her presence, she could tell, but he wasn't calling his guards off.

Rose's face hardened, and she wiped at her tears with one hand. Taking a hard left, she rushed into the trees. She would like to see them stop her now. The terrain of the forest

was different, and the cluster of trees made it a bit hard to ride, but she had to ride even faster than before. She needed to overtake them and get to the front.

The first branch almost sent her flying off the horse. She had seen it a little too late. She cursed at the pain, but that didn't matter. The second, she was able to brace herself for it. Unfortunately, there was no way to avoid it.

A fallen tree caught her eyes; it was blocking the already clustered path, but Rose didn't slow the horse down, afraid that it might lose momentum and wouldn't be able to jump. She pulled the reins, urging it to leap. The horse jumped, and Rose had to hold on for her life. It landed, and she almost slipped off. She leaned forward to support herself, grabbing tightly onto the reins.

After securing her balance, she led the horse out of the forest, bringing it to the middle of the path. She got off the horse immediately, making it stand sideways so it would block the path, and she kowtowed in front of it. Her head to the floor, her palms face down on the ground in front of her head.

"What's the meaning of this?"

Chapter 10: Get On Your Knees

Chapter 10: Get On Your Knees

Trigger Warning: The latter part of this Chapter includes a scene of coerced sexual activity. Please proceed with caution or skip if needed.

"What's the meaning of this?" Caius asked darkly. "You dare block my path, peasant!"

Caius adjusted on the horse. His erection was discomforting, and the reason why he was hard was even more disturbing. The culprit was right in front of him, her head bowed to the dirt, but it wasn't her appearance that made him want to splay her on the streets—it was her actions. To ride through the trees was not only dangerous but unexpected, and she had done three unexpected things now. There was no way he would be satisfied with just one go. Caius had a better idea.

"Speak!" he thundered, moving his horse closer.

"Yer majesty, 'ave mercy. Mi father 'as nothin' to do wit' this. It's mi fault alone. Please punish me instead."

"What are you talking about?" Caius asked. "I have nothing to do with your father."

"Mi father is about to be killed. 'E trespassed, disobeyin' yer orders."

"A just cause, wouldn't you agree? Trespassers should be punished, shouldn't they?"

"Not 'im, it was mi fault 'e set out this mornin'. Mine! 'Ave me 'ead instead."

"Lift your head," Caius said.

Rose slowly raised her head. Her hair was windblown, and strands stuck out awkwardly. Leaves and sticks were tangled in her frizzy hair. Her face was red and splattered with tears. Bloody scratches marked both sides of her cheeks. Snot ran down her nose, but Rose didn't bother to wipe it away.

"Stand up," Caius ordered.

Rose moved with the stiffness of a wooden puppet. Her body obeyed, but it didn't feel like it belonged to her. Her father's life hung on this prince's whim, and she couldn't risk angering him. She had to follow his every command.

"Come closer."

Rose did as he requested, walking forward until she stood in front of his stallion. The white horse had a mane long enough to rival her hair. The horse wore leather armor around its face and neck. It was taller than she was, intimidating, but the man atop it was even more fearsome.

Rose watched him glide off the horse and land in front of her. Instinctively, she took a step back, her head bowed. She had almost dropped to the ground but then remembered he ordered her to stand.

"I don't want your head," he said, his voice deeper. "I might consider if..." Caius let his words trail off.

"Yes, I'll spread mi legs for ye," Rose blurted without hesitation. Her father's life was on the line. If she had to spread her legs for a thousand men to save him, she would do so without a second thought. Thankfully, it was just one shameless prince.

Caius threw his head back and laughed as though she had said something hilarious. "But I'm afraid it's no longer a one-time deal. That offer is off the table. I want something else."

Rose's eyes widened in horror. What could this prince want? She could already tell it would be to her detriment. "Please tell me, yer majesty. I'll do everythin' in me power to fulfill it."

Caius smiled. "That's what I like to hear. You will go to the capital with me, and you will spread your legs any time I want. You won't leave until I decide you can."

Rose clenched her jaw as she listened to the prince. He truly was shameless. He didn't care about her father; he was willing to kill an innocent man over something like this. He could have anyone he wanted—why was he so determined to make her life miserable? Was it because she had said no?

"I-if I agree, would ye pardon mi father?" That was all that mattered.

"As quickly as this," Caius said, snapping his fingers.

Rose found it hard to believe his words. "We're far from Edenville, yer majesty. Mi father's about to be beheaded. Even if ye head back now, ye couldn't possibly stop it in time."

Caius's eyes narrowed. "Do you doubt me? I keep my word," he said simply. "If you agree to my terms, not a hair on your father's head will be harmed."

"How would I know this?"

"I'll get you whatever proof you want," he said with a smile.

Rose was surprised he was willing to let her make demands, but she knew there was no way to avoid this. She would have to agree to his terms. She grabbed the necklace around her neck, thinking of her fiancé.

"Would ye at least let me say goodbye?"

"Absolutely not! I've been lenient enough, wouldn't you agree?"

"Aye, I agree to yer terms," Rose nodded. "In exchange for mi father's life, I'll be yer whore."

Caius grinned. "Get on your knees," he ordered.

Rose tasted bile. Right here, right now. In front of all his men. He was going to make her... Rose couldn't complete the thought.

"Or would you rather spread your legs here and now? I don't mind. I've always liked to fuck outdoors," Caius sneered.

Rose dropped to her knees slowly. Her legs felt heavier than ever, and they hit the ground like stones dropped into water. Suddenly, she felt pressure on the top of her head as he pushed her face against his groin. Something hard pressed against her face. She shut her eyes tightly as he slowly released her head.

"Take it out yourself."

Rose's throat went dry as she opened her eyes. She glanced around, catching glimpses of his men on all sides.

"Don't worry, they wouldn't dare look," Caius said with a smile.

She lifted her hands to his waist. They were shaking. Rose bit the inside of her cheeks to steady herself. She felt the skin tear but didn't feel the pain.

"Tch!" she heard the prince say as he smacked her hands away. He undid his pants himself, just enough for the largest member she had ever seen to spring free.

It bumped against her forehead, and Rose couldn't hide her shock. Caius seemed to take delight in her expression, smiling as she recoiled. She instinctively moved her head back, but it didn't shrink with distance—it was still as enormous as ever.

"Open up," he said.

Rose was horrified. He intended to put that in her mouth. There was no way it would fit. This couldn't be normal, could it? It was an illness, surely. It certainly explained why the prince was acting the way he was. Walking around with the equivalent of her arm between his legs—no wonder he was so insufferable.

"Don't waste my time," he said, his voice darkening. "Staring at it isn't what I asked for."

Rose nodded and slowly opened her mouth. She didn't even get to open it fully before he shoved it right to the entrance. "If I feel teeth," he said, his cock at the edge of her lips, "your father will lose a few."