

## His Highness's Second Wife Chapter 4 - Tips

"What are you doing?" Kara frowned as she entered Raena's room with a tray in her hands and found her lying on the ground next to the bed, looking under it. Raena grinned at her, then got up, dusting her dress.

"I think I saw a dead rat under the bed, so I decided to check," she said, barely holding back her laughter as she saw Kara's horrified expression. "I was right."

Kara closed her eyes, muttering something under her breath, then strode to the decorative table by the window and set the tray on it. She looked around the bedroom with an angry expression, and Raena followed her gaze.

The paint on the walls had paled to dirty yellow and there were two places where one could tell pictures used to hang because the color was lighter. There were cobwebs running over the ceiling and the chandelier, and the floor was so dirty that clouds of dust swirled around their feet as they walked. The only clean thing was the bedcovers, but even they seemed to be old and overused.

"I'll get the little girl to come and clean all of this," Kara sighed, running a hand over her face. "Although considering how clumsy she is, she'll probably break something and then she would have to clean that too."

"There is enough work to go around, don't send her here," Raena grimaced. "Have them clean the first floor from all the old or broken furniture, then scrub it clean. We'll start from there and make our way up."

"How can you stand this place?" Kara shook her head. "What kind of dump were you living in back in your world?"

"Just bring a broom and some cleaning supplies. Tell them you'll be cleaning my room and we'll do it together," Raena said, rolling up the sleeves of her dress. For a moment she stared at her smooth, unblemished hands, wondering if that's how hands would look if one had never done a day of labor in their life.

"You plan to help me... clean?" Kara asked, eyes widening. "With your own hands?"

"I have plenty of experience cleaning, believe me!" Raena laughed, thinking of how much scrubbing the fryer in her mother's restaurant required. Sweeping and cleaning the floor or a few windows was nothing in comparison. She couldn't leave Kara to do all the work when she had two good hands and nothing else to do. "Besides, my brain works best while I'm doing chores or cooking, so helping you is helping me. And I can't be doing that in front of the others, so I'll help here."

“You really are from another world,” Kara muttered, her eyes studying me as if she was seeing me for the first time. “No lady in this world would volunteer to clean a rat’s corpse.”

“I’ve cleaned worse.” Raena shrugged.

As they stared at each other, the table behind Kara tumbled after one of the legs broke and the tray with the tea crashed onto the floor, the teapot and the cup shattering into pieces. Kara closed her eyes and let out a drawn breath.

“I’ll get that broom,” she mumbled, storming out the door.

She made two trips back to bring all the necessary supplies and both of them got to work. The time passed quickly as they focused on their tasks, barely talking in between. While keeping her hands busy scrubbing the floor, Raena tried to put her thoughts in order and recall more details from the book that could help her with her plan now that she was already married to the prince.

Judging by the time she woke up in this world, she had about half a year before the main story began. After the second wife’s wedding, she started living quietly in the North Palace, and there were only a few details about her in the book. There were a lot of details about that time, though.

A lot of changes were coming to the capital, and she was just in time to reap the benefits from them. While trying to gain more power or favor, the actions of many nobles — and even the Imperial family — were going to force many businesses into the ground and raise the same amount up to the highest standing. The fashion trends were going to change in about two months, the style of social gatherings in the high society was going to go through reform, and all three princes’ factions were going to clash numerous times, resulting in multiple assassination attempts and lots of tension. The crown prince was going to be the only one that gets poisoned though — the others would get their own grisly deaths.

All those stupid details that had made her yawn and skim over countless paragraphs were now going to make her rich. She had to put them in a timeline so she could adjust her endeavors accordingly. Lydia might have spent her life eating the cheapest pre-packaged food or the returned orders at the restaurant, but Raena was going to make sure she had all the luxury in the world. And then some.

In less than a year, her new husband was going to divorce her so he could marry the beautiful Elene, the main character of the novel. Raena’s memories were fuzzy about Elene’s appearance since she never liked her as a character, but she remembered Elene was blonde, medium height, with a slim body and beautiful face — like any other female protagonist ever created.

Raena had to quickly make her business a tremendous success and become rich, so that once she was divorced, she could just live comfortably on her own. She had no intention of returning to the Prime Minister's mansion only to get remarried to some nameless nobody from another noble house. Even if high society shunned her for remaining single and handling a business alone, she didn't care. She'd be filthy rich. Besides, soon after her divorce, the revolt of the Craidal kingdom was supposed to start, so by then, most of the Imperial family would be dead, and the entire empire would be in shambles.

"I've brought more tea."

Raena flinched, looking around. She was still sitting on the floor with a rag in her hand, but she had grown distracted by her thoughts and forgot she was cleaning. She looked up at Kara, who had returned, carrying steaming tea and small, triangular sandwiches. The maid looked around in search of a place to put the tray, but the only furniture in the room was the bed and one of the chairs, which looked ready to fall apart at the slightest pressure.

Kara knelt on the floor, setting the tray between them.

"Even the servants in the Prime Minister's mansion have better accommodations," she sighed, leaning on the bed. Raena joined her, picking up a sandwich and stuffing her mouth, suddenly realizing how hungry she was. They only had a light breakfast in the morning, and now the sun was already setting. "Don't eat so fast, you'll get indigestion!"

"No, I won't," Raena replied with her mouth full. Kara made a disgusted face.

"I think I know your body better than you do. Miss Raena didn't eat much, so every time she had a big meal or ate very quickly, she'd get indigestion. You'll spend the evening squirming in bed or squatting over the chamber pot if you don't slow down."

Raena sighed.

Beauty was pain, and Raena's beauty was torture. Her stamina was a joke, and her muscle mass was basically non-existent. Just climbing the stairs to the second floor left her breathless.

The sandwich tasted horrible, but she finished it with the help of the tea. The bread was hard and too thick, which made it difficult to swallow and when she checked, there was only one piece of meat inside, along with a row of tomatoes and cucumbers. Raena wiped her mouth, pouring herself more tea and gulping it down. When she was done eating, she leaned her head on the side of the bed, looking at the window. The sun was setting on the horizon, drowning the room in a beautiful orange light.

"Why did you trust me?" she asked, shooting Kara a glance while the maid was picking at her half-finished sandwich. "Not only did you believe me when I said I'm from another

world, but you trust me to deliver on my promises when other people would have called me crazy.”

Kara put the rest of her sandwich down, then continued staring at her hands. Hers looked nothing like Raena’s. Her nails were chipped and her fingers were dark at the tips and covered with callused skin and numerous scars. An old burn mark stood out on the top of her hand and a few fresh blisters adorned her dirty palms.

“My parents are servants in the Prime Minister’s mansion. So were my grandparents,” she finally said. “I was going to be a servant all my life too. It’s not a bad job, there are many who are much worse off.” Her hands balled into fists for a moment, then relaxed again. “If you fail, I could probably go back to being a servant. I am good at that. Unless you get me killed.” Raena scoffed, but Kara didn’t even look at her. “But if you do realize those crazy plans of yours... I’ll be more. I’ll never be a noble, but having my own business, having my freedom and enough money to keep it — it’s enough for someone like me.”

Raena nodded. She was really, really happy Kara was with her. She could never achieve any of her plans alone, and she’d have to stay low and quiet just to survive this place. There were hints in the book that Raena was being bullied by the other concubines, but the third prince never cared enough to confirm it. She had never cared what people said about her, not in the real world nor in this place, but there was no chance in hell she’d sit still and let herself be bullied just because they thought she was weak.

“...and it’s kind of interesting waiting to see what kind of crazy idea you’ll cook up next,” Kara added, grinning. When she smiled like that, she really did look like a regular young girl instead of an old, strict woman trapped in the body of one. But more often, Kara would wear a serious face showing no emotion, too busy with her work or trying to hide her thoughts. Lydia used to do that too, and people would often tell her she was too young to look that burdened. “A new type of restaurant that serves food no one has ever tasted before? I haven’t even seen you cook! What if you are bad at it?”

“I am not.” Raena grinned. “Once we clean this sh!thole, I’ll cook something for you and blow your mind!”

“You better,” Kara scoffed, getting to her feet. “Get up. I’ll bring the old man to help draw a bath for you. We can’t have our Mistress sleep with cobwebs in her hair and rat droppings stuck to her dress.”