

## His Highness's Second Wife Chapter 8 - Tips

Raena closed the door behind her, letting out a heavy sigh. Her eyes stopped on Kara, who was staring at her with a nervous expression. Her face was red, and she seemed even more uncomfortable than before.

“Can we leave now?” the maid hissed, her eyes darting around. Raena nodded and the two of them headed toward the stairs, leaving the brothel under the red-haired woman’s piercing gaze. Her legs were showing again, and it seemed that even more of her bosom was fighting to escape her dress.

“Come again, ladies,” she chuckled as they passed her.

Kara strode quickly toward the front door of the restaurant, but Raena took her time looking up to where she calculated Marden’s room was. The thin curtains danced under the caress of the wind coming through the window and for a moment she thought she saw a figure standing there, but then the silhouette disappeared.

Raena smiled and followed Kara into the restaurant. This might work after all.

A few of the workers that were carrying something up the stairs gave them a quick glance, but continued on their way. Kara led her to one of the back rooms on the first floor, helping her slip back into her pale blue dress from earlier.

“We should hurry or we’ll be late for the meeting with your brother,” Kara said, running the comb through Raena’s hair. When she was satisfied with the result, they bid goodbye to Erkan and left the restaurant in his hands. Ruby Street was just as deserted as they crossed it to return to the busy main road. Kara was uncharacteristically quiet, pursing her lips.

“Spill,” Raena laughed, poking Kara in the side. The latter jumped, muffling a scream. “What did you think?”

“Modern women, whatever that means, surely have an iron self-control.” Kara shook her head, her cheeks flushing again. “I can’t believe you stared at them while they were doing it! You even gave that girl advice. I would have run out of there if I were in your place.”

“He did it to intimidate us,” Raena explained as they joined the stream of people and headed toward the restaurant her brother had mentioned in his note. “He wanted to have the upper hand by making us uncomfortable. Keeping your cool in a tense and uncomfortable setting is the only way to control the situation. If you show any weakness, they’ll eat you alive. I learned that while working in customer service.”

“I have no idea what that means.” Kara frowned, stopping in front of the building they had just reached and checking Raena’s hair and outfit. “This is it. Are you ready?”

“Always,” Raena replied, plastering the biggest smile she could muster on her face.

“It’s worrisome how easily you can switch between personalities,” Kara muttered, pushing the door open. A man in black pants and a brown tunic came to greet them with a polite smile, leading them to their table. Raena’s brother, Ramor, was already waiting for them, nursing a glass of wine. As he saw them approach, he got to his feet, smiling from ear to ear.

“Raena!”

“Brother!” Raena laughed, throwing her hands around his neck. Ramor froze for a second, then hugged her back, pushing her away a moment later. He smiled awkwardly, obviously unnerved by all the looks they were getting, and turned to Kara. “You look well, Kara. Has Raena been good?”

“Yes, sir,” Kara answered politely, lowering her head. “She has been on her best behavior.”

Ramor smiled, dropping back in his chair and pointing at the empty ones across from him. Raena immediately sat down while Kara hesitated before following.

“So, how have you been, Raena? Is everything alright? I was a bit surprised to receive your letter. We saw each other just a week ago. Are you already homesick?”

“Yes, brother, I miss you so much!” Raena whined, leaning her hands on the table. “There is nothing to do at the prince’s palace.” She pouted for a moment, reaching out and taking one of the napkins to play with. “My husband doesn’t visit, my sister-wife is busy and the servants are old and boring. And I am tired of hearing Kara’s voice all day. I miss playing with brother!”

“We’ve talked about this,” Ramor said in a patronizing tone. “You’ll come to play from time to time, but you have to be good. And you have to listen to Kara and His Highness! You’ll do that, won’t you, Rae?”

“Yes, brother.”

“Good girl.” He smiled, raising his hand and calling for the waiter. While he was ordering for all of them, Raena used the time to look around. The Golden Deer restaurant was supposed to be the best place in the capital, but on the inside, it didn’t look like anything special. It felt cramped and there wasn’t enough staff, so they had to wait over twenty minutes for their order. Raena chatted cheerfully the whole time, answering her brother’s questions with relentless enthusiasm.

After they finished their meal, which Raena was ready to rank three stars at best, she decided it was time to proceed with her actual plan. Ramor’s sister might have missed her family, but the new Raena didn’t insist on seeing her brother for something so trivial

and not at all true. As the heir of a duke holding the most powerful position after the Imperial family, he had the funds and the necessary affection for Raena to be tricked into helping them with even more money.

“Brother,” Raena said, slumping in her chair and giving herself a sad expression, “there is actually something I want to ask of you.” Ramor raised his eyebrows, motioning for her to continue. “Can you please give me some money?”

Ramor choked on his drink, setting the glass on the table and looking around frantically. His gaze returned to Raena, full of shock, and he cleared his throat before bending forward.

“Raena, is everything alright in the prince’s house? As His Highness’s legal wife, you should be taken care of and given enough money to live comfortably!” He lowered his voice even further, eyes darting around. “Do you have enough to eat? Tell me what is going on! Kara?”

“You misunderstand, Your Grace,” Kara said, smiling awkwardly. “Mistress is well taken care of. She wants to make her husband a big surprise present, but if she uses his money, she’d have to explain what she bought.”

“Yes!” Raena exclaimed, slapping the table. “Exactly! And then it won’t be a surprise! Please, brother! If I give His Highness a nice present, he will be happy and he’ll visit me! He never visits me. He didn’t even come to play with me on our wedding night.”

Ramor’s eyes widened, and a slight blush spread over his cheeks. He covered his face with his hand, sighing.

“Raena, you shouldn’t be saying such things in public! Or at all!” he murmured. He looked at Kara, a wrinkle forming on his forehead. “He didn’t...?”

“No, Your Grace,” Kara shook her head, looking down at the table. Raena barely held her laughter — Kara was surprisingly good at lying and pretending too, even though she denied it. Ramor rubbed his forehead as if trying to decide what to do.

“Fine, fine,” he said, running a hand through his lush blonde hair. His features were similar to Raena’s, but he lacked her doll-like fragileness. He wasn’t particularly tall or well-built, but he moved with a certain grace that she had noticed only in other nobles.

Raena grinned, genuinely this time. Having a supportive family was nice — it almost made her feel bad for tricking him. Still, he had enough money to live well, even if he never worked a day in his life, so helping her could be considered a charity case.

“But what happened with the other money I gave you?”

“It’s all gone,” Raena murmured, looking at her feet.

"You spent it?" She heard him gasp. "Raena, you could have bought half the market outside with that much money!"

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry!" she squirmed, covering her face. "I was sad because of the wedding, and I bought pretty things to make me happy! I'll return them! I'm sorry!"

Ramor sighed again, leaning his elbows on the table and dropping his face in his hands. When he finally lifted his head, he straightened in his seat and forced a smile on his face.

"It's fine, Rae, you don't have to return them," he said with a controlled voice. "I'll give you more money for a present, but you have to be careful! You can't spend it all so carelessly." Raena nodded excitedly, and he looked at Kara. "Please control her better. I don't mind the money that much, but next thing you know, she may squander a large sum of the prince's money and he might get angry."

"Yes, Your Grace. I'll make sure that never happens."

He nodded, pulling his purse out of his pocket and taking out a few papers from there. He pushed them toward Kara, and she quickly gathered them in her bag. Raena noticed at least twenty of them, which meant he had given her about two hundred tharas. It was way more than she expected, but she didn't plan to return any of it.

"Mistress, we should be going before it gets late. We have to be back before sunset," Kara said, glancing toward Raena.

"Do you want me to call a carriage for you?" Ramor offered. "Where are your guards by the way? Don't tell me you went out without guards!"

"Of course not, sir," Kara replied right away, and Ramor's shoulders relaxed a bit. "They are waiting for us further down the street."

"I want to walk!" Raena said, straightening up in her chair. "I want to see the jugglers!"

"Yes, Mistress." Kara got to her feet first, pushing the chair toward the table. "Please excuse us, sir."

"Take care of her, Kara. We are counting on you," Ramor said with a sad smile, still looking at Raena, who was waiting impatiently by the table. "See you soon, Rae."

"Yes, brother!" Raena grinned, hurrying toward the door. Kara followed her after giving Ramor a swift bow, and the two of them stepped out of The Golden Deer, sighing.

"This was exhausting!" they both said at the same time, looking at each other. Kara continued. "I don't know how you could keep that up."

“My face hurts from smiling so much,” Raena complained, massaging her cheeks. “I swear, I’m not going to smile for the next two days! Not even once!”

“At least we got the money,” Kara pointed out, adjusting her purse in front of her and pressing her elbow to it as if to protect it from being stolen. “Let’s go back. You must be tired.”

“Yeah, acting is hard work.”

The two stepped into the street, moving past the restaurant and the bakery next to it. The number of people out and about seemed to have increased with the advancing of the day, so they hurried down the road.

The third prince’s mansion was at the edge of the capital on the opposite side of the Imperial Palace, so getting there from the center was going to take them at least an hour. Soon enough, Raena regretted not taking Ramor up on his offer.

“This is the best of the best!” a man hollered, and Raena jumped at the sudden sound. “They are young, they are strong, and some are even pretty! You won’t find such great goods anywhere in the capital! Look, look!”