

My Husband Chose Her Over Me Novel

Chapter 9

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Standing before us, his crown gleaming in the hall's torchlight, was the king himself. His imposing figure cast a long shadow across the marble floor, his eyes sharp with suspicion.

"Your Majesty," I curtsied deeply, heart pounding against my ribs. "We were just—"

"I heard exactly what you were discussing, Lady Elara," he interrupted, his voice unnervingly calm. "What I wish to know is why my son's wife has suddenly developed an interest in the sovereign of Verdana."

Marcus bowed stiffly beside me. "It was merely an academic discussion, Your Majesty. I was explaining the historical allegiances between our kingdoms."

The king's penetrating gaze never left my face. "Is that so? Then you wouldn't mind continuing this... academic discussion in my chambers, Lady Elara."

It wasn't a request.

"Of course, Your Majesty," I replied, my mouth suddenly dry.

The king turned without another word, clearly expecting me to follow. As I moved to obey, Marcus caught my arm.

"Be careful," he whispered.

The walk to the royal chambers seemed endless. Guards and courtiers bowed as we passed, their curious eyes following our unlikely procession. The king's private chambers were as imposing as the man himself—dark wood paneling, massive tapestries depicting battle victories, and furniture built for intimidation rather than comfort. He gestured toward a high-backed chair.

"Sit."

I perched on the edge of the seat, back straight, hands folded in my lap, the perfect picture of a well-trained royal wife. The king remained standing, studying me with unsettling intensity.

Before he could speak, the door burst open. Queen Arinelle swept in, her eyes wild with fury, not even bothering to acknowledge my presence.

"Has she offended you too?" she demanded of her husband. "Could you believe this ingrate was kicking against Caden's second marriage? How could she be so ungrateful after we took her on as a

wife when she is nothing but a nobody?” She spat the words like venom. “Would you believe if I told you she even asked Caden for a divorce?”

At the mention of divorce, the king raised a questioning brow at me. I looked down, heat rising to my cheeks. Despite everything, I respected him. Unlike his wife and son, the king had always treated me with a basic dignity that felt almost like kindness in this cold court.

But he had also supported Caden’s second marriage. And he had hidden that letter from me. I didn’t know what to feel anymore.

“Leave us,” the king said to his wife, his tone brooking no argument.

“But—”

“Now, Arinelle.”

The queen’s mouth snapped shut. She shot me a venomous glare before sweeping out, slamming the door behind her with all the force royal dignity would allow.

Silence settled between us. The king moved to pour two glasses of wine, offering one to me. I accepted it with trembling fingers.

“Is it true?” he finally asked. “You asked my son for a divorce?”

I raised my chin. “Yes.”

“Because of Lady Isolde?”

“Because I deserve more than to be set aside like an unwanted garment,” I replied, surprising myself with my boldness. “Because I believed there was truth in our vows, even if there was no love.”

The king sighed heavily, lowering himself into the chair opposite mine. “The second marriage was necessary for stability in the northern provinces. You must understand that.”

“What I understand,” I said carefully, “is that I was never consulted. Never considered. Just expected to smile and accept my replacement.”

He studied me over the rim of his glass. “You’ve changed since you arrived here. There’s steel in you now.”

“Necessity forges many things, Your Majesty.”

His lips quirked in what might have been the ghost of a smile. Then his expression grew serious once more. He gestured toward an ornate drawer across the room—the same drawer I had discovered days ago.

“The queen mentioned you delivered some folders to my chambers recently,” he said casually. “Did you happen to take anything else while you were here? A letter, perhaps?”

My heart stuttered. I considered lying, but something in his expression told me he already knew the answer. I nodded slowly.

“May I ask who King Dorian of Verdana is?” I asked, my voice barely above a whisper. “And if what was written in that letter is true?”

The king was silent for so long I thought he might not answer. Then he set down his wine and leaned forward.

“Yes,” he said simply. “It’s true.”

The world seemed to tilt beneath me. I gripped the arms of my chair to steady myself.

“But how—why—” I couldn’t form coherent questions, my mind racing too quickly to grasp any single thought.

“You were just a baby,” the king continued, his voice gentler than I’d ever heard it. “Verdana was in chaos. Your uncle had orchestrated a coup against your father, King Dorian. Your mother died getting you to safety.”

“The couple who raised me—”

“Loyal subjects of your father. They risked everything to keep you hidden.” He sighed heavily. “The plan was always to reunite you with your father once it was safe, but years passed. The political landscape shifted. Your father regained power but at a cost—he had to pretend you were dead to protect you from those who still sought to eliminate the true heir.”

I shook my head, still struggling to absorb it all. “And my marriage to Caden?”

“A protection measure. Your father and I arranged it when intelligence suggested your identity might have been compromised. Within these walls, as a princess of Verloren, you would be safer than as a merchant’s daughter.”

“Did Caden know?” The question that had been burning inside me.

The king hesitated. “No.”

“I didn’t know how to give you that letter,” the king admitted. “Your father entrusted it to me months ago, to be delivered when the time was right. But with the tensions between our kingdoms, and Caden’s second marriage arrangement...” He shrugged. “I suppose there’s no need to worry about timing now. King Dorian of Verdana is your father, and you are the true heir to his throne.”

Before I could respond, the door burst open again. The queen rushed in, her face pale with shock.

“What?” she gasped, eyes wide. “Elara is the missing daughter of King Dorian of Verdana?”