

MAJESTY

I

Atop the palace's most prominent tower, a flag bearing the Chamberlain family crest waved wildly in the wind. Beneath the bright moonlight, King Zachary, head of the Chamberlain family, looked out from the tower over his vast kingdom. Beyond his residential palace, which stood at the center of the surrounding castle, he could see the rings of guard walls and gates that protected the castle's many baileys.

The chapel steeple stood proudly to his left, opposite the mighty keep and adjacent to the Great Hall. The tiled roofs of the knights' residences looked reverently up at him as guards stood watch from the towers evenly placed among the rings of walls throughout the property. Smoke rose from the chimneys in the village and an occasional dog bark disturbed an otherwise peaceful night.

"Your Majesty," a voice said from behind Zachary, who turned around to face the person addressing him.

The hair beneath his crown blowing in the wind, the king replied, "You."

"Yes," the hooded figure answered, a knife held in its hand. "I wanted to face you, dead on."

"Is that any way to greet your king? What is it that you want?"

"To finally bring your ruthless reign of terror to an end."

As the wind increased, Zachary laughed. "Such grandiose plans from such a small mind."

"No tears shall be shed for you," the figure predicted as it lunged forward, driving the knife violently into the king's chest.

Gasping, Zachary reached out and grabbed his assailant by the neck. Clutching tightly, he dug his fingers deep into the person's flesh. Raising his free hand to the bloody knife protruding from him, Zachary maintained eye contact with the person, whose face grew redder from lack of oxygen.

Trying to get free of the king's grasp, the person grabbed Zachary's arm with both hands, but overpowering his strength was no easy task. Their eyes connected, the assailant struggled to breathe.

As Zachary's loss of blood increased, his strength decreased. His vision blurred and he dropped to his knees, eventually letting go of the attacker and putting his hands onto the ground for support.

Choking, the person also fell to their knees, desperately trying to catch their breath as the king suffered in front of him. In one motion, the person pulled the knife from Zachary's chest, raised it up, and plunged it into the king's neck. Blood splattered everywhere as the king collapsed onto the ground.

Checking to ensure the king was dead, the murderer rolled Zachary's body onto its back. His dead eyes looking up toward the heavens, Zachary lay lifelessly on the tower floor.

Repositioning the hood over their head, the killer rushed from the tower, leaving the body of the dead ruler in the shadow of the flag that bore the Chamberlain family crest.

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As the sun rose over the kingdom heralding the start of a new day, the castle's outer drawbridge dropped allowing Prince Bryce to race into the woods on horseback. Each time a hoof dug into the damp ground, it kicked up the earth beneath it, leaving a trail behind the galloping horse.

Youngest of the four Chamberlain brothers, Bryce was perhaps the most handsome and well-built. Leaning forward on his steed so that the hood of his cape would remain over his head, Bryce frequently woke early to go riding and visit the villagers. This ride, however, had a more specific purpose than socializing with common citizens.

As the landscape blurred on both sides of him, Bryce recalled a family holiday many years before when his father Zachary had gathered all his children in front of the fireplace in the Great Hall to tell them a story. His father always insisted that they sit before him by age, in order of their possible succession to the throne: Tobias, Lucas, Colton, Bryce, and Bryce's twin sister Clara.

As the fire created shadows that danced across the faces of the five royal children, their resemblance to one another was obvious, especially among the four princes. Dark, wavy hair and strong facial contours were the hallmark of the Chamberlain family. Their deep, dark eyes

remained fixated on their father whose animated way of telling stories kept everyone engrossed from start to finish.

As the four princes matured, their features remained similar. Their father insisted on hours of physical activity, including combat training with several of the king's knights. Consequently, they grew into tall, beefy men who caused heads to turn wherever they went. Well aware of his sons' attractive physical features, the King Zachary adopted strict rules that guided their social interaction with others. He was overprotective of them and taught them to protect themselves against people whose motives for getting to know them might be less than honorable.

The king's treatment of his daughter Clara was even stricter. No matter what her age, he always viewed her as his "little princess," keeping her sheltered from the world around her, especially men.

Similarities among the five children only ran skin deep. Beyond that, they were individuals, each with their own values, goals, ambitions, and desires. As long as their father lived, he kept his family close to him, showing his children affection that their mother Beatrice did not and insisting that they demonstrate the moral code of conduct he himself espoused.

As their father aged, he grew harder, more cruel. Life in and out of the castle changed quickly. Zachary's once collaborative way of leading became more about singular authority and power. He used every possible opportunity to remind his family and his people that he was in charge, cutting off his children from the throne room as well as from having any influence on the future of the kingdom.

Enchanted by the beauty of a younger woman named Roslyn, Zachary dismissed Beatrice from the role of being his wife and forced himself upon Roslyn, whose father immediately agreed to the king's demand for marriage.

Beatrice withdrew from everyone and everything, becoming more introverted and isolated than she had ever been before. She rarely left her chambers and would have become completely forgotten if not for the attention of her few attendants as well as the daily visits she received from her beloved son Bryce until the day she died.

Having passed through the eastern edge of the woods outside the castle, Bryce directed his horse north toward the end of the village. After traveling a short distance, they arrived in a clearing where a man stood in the midst of a small herd of sheep and goats.

Shirtless and rugged, Matthew Benton heard the approaching horse and turned around to face it. He watched as Bryce arrived and dismounted.

“I’m glad I found you,” Bryce said, tying his horse to a nearby tree. “We need to talk.”

“Always good to see you, Your Royal Highness,” Matthew replied, bowing and then returning his attention to his herd.

“Drop the sarcasm,” Bryce commanded. “Do you know how much trouble you could be in? If my father finds out...”

Matthew lifted a bale of hay, causing the muscles in his chest and arms to bulge. “I suppose you’re here to proclaim that you’ll protect me from him?”

Bryce grabbed Matthew’s arm, causing him to drop the bale. “I’m serious. I care about you.”

Matthew pulled his arm from Bryce. “I can fend for myself, as you know.”

“Why do you have to be so stubborn?”

“As you can see, I’m in the middle of a project right now. I need to get this herd fed and housed, then fix the stables. I have a long day of work ahead of me. We can’t all sit around the palace all day.”

Wasting no time, Bryce removed his cape and threw it over the saddle on his horse. Then he removed his shirt, revealing his slightly hairy chest and sculpted arms.

“What are you doing?”

Bryce grabbed a pitchfork that lay on the ground nearby. “You just said there’s a lot of work to be done. Let’s get to it.”

Trying to prevent himself from smiling, Matthew rolled his eyes and lifted the bale he had previously dropped.

In his palace chambers, Prince Tobias, the eldest of the four Chamberlain princes, sat in a tub as his attendants bathed him. His head resting back on the edge of the tub, he closed his eyes and enjoyed the feel of the warm water and his chamber maids massaging him.

When Roslyn, the king’s wife, entered the chamber, she immediately drew the attention of the servants from Tobias to herself. As everyone else shifted their attention to her, so did he.

“Leave us,” the queen ordered the attendants, who finished sponging Tobias before hurrying from the room and closing the large doors behind them.

Tobias stood up in the tub, allowing the water to run off his muscular body. Water drops caused small splashes as they fell into the tub from his fingertips and penis. Without saying a word, his eyes invited her to step closer.

“Have you seen the king this morning?” she asked, scanning his naked body from top to bottom.

Tobias shook his head. “I have not.”

“That’s not a bad thing,” she said, reaching out and running her hands over his damp chest.

He stepped out of the tub and wrapped his strong arms around his brother’s wife. Kissing her deeply, he pulled her close to him, dampening her garments with his wet body. He kissed her neck and shoulders, reaching around to the back of her dress to untie it.

Falling from her, the dress crumpled on the ground at her feet, leaving her wearing only an undergarment. He grabbed her breasts, fondling them until they emerged completely from the underwear. Burying his face between them, he kissed and caressed them as she ran her fingers through his thick hair.

Working herself free of what remained of her clothing, Roslyn wrapped her naked body around his until he finally lifted her from the ground. Kissing him deeply, she dug her fingers into his bulging arms as he carried her to his bed.

In the Great Hall, Clara Chamberlain sat at the family table which stood at one end of the enormous room near a large, ornate fireplace. Her older brother Colton, the second eldest of the four Chamberlain princes, sat beside her as servants rushed to bring them their morning meal.

“You’re quiet this morning,” Colton said after taking a drink from the goblet in front of him.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t sleep well,” Clara replied, her voice sweet and soft.

“What’s on your mind? Is it the man you were telling me about the other day?”

Clara blushed. “No. I told you there’s nothing going on with him.”

“Well, maybe if you told me who he was, I could help you out a bit.”

“Colton, my personal life is my business.”

“You’re my little sister. I want you to be happy. Besides, if you didn’t want to me know about him, you should never have mentioned him.”

“You caught me in a weak moment. Try to forget about it.”

Colton reached out and put his hand on his sister’s. “You know I can’t do that. I have to look out for you.”

“I know you mean well, but you aren’t my protector. I can take care of myself.”

“You don’t have to, you have five brothers for that.”

Clara took a drink from the cup in front of her. “Girls can take care of themselves. When are you all going to understand that?”

“I didn’t mean to upset you.”

“I know you mean well, Colton. I told you, I didn’t sleep well.”

“If it wasn’t because of the guy, then what’s on your mind?”

Clara laughed. “Because I couldn’t possibly have anything on my mind, except for maybe a man, right?”

Colton smiled at his sister’s sarcasm and took a bite of the food on his plate.

“I’m worried about our father.”

“The king, why?”

“He’s more than ‘the king,’ he’s our father and I’m worried about him,” Clara stated. “Nothing specific, he just so cold lately.”

“He hasn’t been himself since he met Roslyn,” Colton clarified, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. “She went right to his head.”

“She’s not solely to blame.”

“Our father is a complex man.”

“He rules like a tyrant, without showing compassion as he used to.”

“That’s his style now...and it seems to work. The townspeople fear him so they don’t act up.”

“You can’t keep a population quiet forever.”

“What’s got you so philosophical this morning?”

“Just a lot on my mind, I guess,” Clara said. “Nothing to worry about.” Clara rose from the table. “I’ll see you later.”

Colton smiled before taking another bite of his breakfast. After watching Clara leave the room, he waved for a servant to refill his cup.

Upstairs in his chamber, Tobias held the naked queen in his arms. Kissing her as he adjusted his position in the bed, he lifted her head so he could look directly into his eyes.

“You’re far away,” he said softly. “Don’t I satisfy you anymore?”

Roslyn smiled. “Of course you do.” She kissed the prince. “I could stay right here in bed with you all my life and never need anything else.”

Tobias tightened his arms around her. “You are all I need, too.”

“I’m the king’s property. Your father wouldn’t be happy sharing, especially not with you.”

“You’re only his technically. You’re mine in every way that matters. One day, he’ll understand that.”

Roslyn sat up and put her finger on Tobias’s lips. “He must never know about us. It would be too dangerous. For both of us.”

“I can defend us against my father and anyone else who challenges my love for you.”

“He’s the king. Your allegiance is to him.”

“My allegiance is to the woman I love.” Tobias kissed Roslyn deeply.

“Promise me you’ll never say a word about us to him.”

“But I…”

“Promise me.”

“Very well, I promise,” Tobias agreed, kissing Roslyn to reassure her. “There are other ways to get what I want.”

“You already have my heart.”

Roslyn stepped out of bed and started pulling her garments back on.

“You don’t have to run off. Make his Majest wait a bit. Maybe he’ll grow to appreciate you more.”

“It’s best for both of us to not keep him waiting.”

Tobias stood up and wrapped his arms around Roslyn. “One day when I’m king…”

“I may not love him, but I don’t wish death upon him. And you shouldn’t, either.”

“I don’t,” Tobias agreed. “But he can’t live forever.”

“You make it sound like he’s ancient.”

“His attitudes and methods are ancient, even if his age is not.”

Roslyn finished dressing herself. “I need to go.”

Tobias kissed her once more. “See you soon.”

Roslyn smiled, then left the room after cautiously looking outside the door to make sure no one was around.

Naked, Tobias walked over to the stained-glass window at the other side of his chamber. “What am I going to do about you, Father...”

Made up of a series of corridors and caverns, the dungeon prison was dark and damp. A guard named Drake stood at its entrance gate, keeping the entire area secure with the other guards positioned throughout the cavernous space, even though the jail currently only housed a single prisoner, Declin Spencer.

Upon seeing a hooded figure coming toward him, Drake stood at attention. He bowed his head slightly as the person approached confidently.

“Good morning, Your Highness,” Drake said.

Without replying verbally, Prince Lucas placed a jewel in the guard’s hand.

“Thank you,” Drake replied after handing Lucas a key.

“You know what to do,” Lucas whispered.

He nodded and stepped back. Letting out a loud whistle that echoed through the space, Drake signaled for the other guards to come forward. They responded to his command by joining him at the entrance of the dungeon and then following him out of the area, leaving Lucas in privacy.

Alone at the mouth of the dungeon, Lucas looked to make sure the gate was closed and he had the privacy he sought. Lowering his hood, he revealed his handsome, chiseled face as he worked his way deeper into the cavern. Torches along the walkway created strange shadows that danced along the walls as he passed. Upon reaching the sole occupied prisoner cell, Lucas paused to look inside.

In a dark corner of his cell, Declin sat against the damp wall with his big arms wrapped around his bent legs, holding them against his bare chest. His head leaning forward against his knees, Declin appeared to be asleep; however, upon hearing the footsteps of a visitor, Declin lifted his head, throwing his long, wavy hair back to reveal his bearded face and penetrating light eyes.

Firmly grasping two of the cell bars with his strong hands, Lucas looked inside at the prisoner, who slowly stood up from his reclined position. The two men stared at each other in silence for a lingering moment, the flicking lights of the nearby torches illuminating their expressionless faces.

Lucas then used the key that the guard had given him to open the cell. Placing the key in his pocket, Lucas pulled open the heavy door and fearlessly stepped inside the cell. Turning his head, he looked back down the tunnel behind him to reassure himself that no one else was in the vicinity. With that concern assuaged, Lucas rushed forward toward the prisoner.

Beneath the flickering torchlight, the two men embraced, warmly holding each other in silence. When they pulled apart, Declin put his rough hands on each side of Lucas's face, then leaned forward to kiss him. The kiss began softly, but grew more aggressive as the men wrapped their bodies tightly around each other.

"I've missed you," Declin revealed when the kiss ended.

Lucas looked into the prisoner's eyes. "I hate the thought of you locked in here all alone. I'm going to get you out of here."

"It's too risky," the bandit insisted. "This is my fate."

"No," Lucas insisted, kissing Declin once again. "If it were just a matter of dealing with the two guards at the entry of this corridor, I'd break you out of here myself. But my father has his best knights at the dungeon entry. We'd never get past them. But I have a plan..."

The prisoner touched his forehead to the prince's forehead, their noses coming into contact as well. "Please, Lucas. I would never forgive myself if anything happened to you. I made my choices; I deserve this."

"I'm not going to let the king do this to you. I love you."

Declin didn't reply verbally; instead, he removed Lucas's cloak and tore open his loose shirt, revealing the prince's muscled chest. He kissed his neck and shoulders, then dropped to his knees in front of the prince. He pressed his mouth against Lucas's crotch and raised his hands to massage his chest and nipples.

Lucas placed his hands on Declin's head, running his fingers through the bandit's hair. He watched Declin open his pants, allowing his erect cock to pop forward into the prisoner's face. Lucas adjusted his stance, widening his legs a bit as Declin grabbed the back of his thighs and pulled him forcefully forward.

Declin wrapped his mouth around the prince's throbbing dick. His lips and tongue caressed it as Declin dug his fingers into Lucas's chest and abs. The prince's soft moans encouraged the bandit to continue, which he did.

Suddenly, Lucas dropped to his knees in front of Declin. He leaned forward and kissed him deeply as he ran his fingers over the prisoner's leather pants. He squeezed and patted Declin's ass, then moved his hands to the clasp on the front of the bandit's pants. Opening the clasp quickly, Lucas allowed Declin's swollen penis to emerge. He pressed his own hard cock against Declin's as his tongue worked its way down the bandit's throat.

Declin lay back onto the bed of straw on the floor behind him. He lifted one leg at a time so that Lucas could pull each of his boots from his feet. Then he watched as the prince peeled the pants from his muscular, hairy legs. Completely naked, Declin looked up at the prince, extending his arms as an invitation for Lucas to lie on top of him.

Instead, Lucas licked his way up the insides of Declin's legs to his hairy balls. He then lifted Declin's legs and leaned forward, resting them on his shoulders. Leaning in to kiss Declin, Lucas forced himself into the prisoner. His kisses prevented Declin from yelling out as he pushed himself as far into the bandit as possible.

Declin ran his fingers down Lucas's back and cupped his butt as it flexed with each one of the prince's thrusts. Declin's cock grew harder and harder against the prince's abs.

Lucas looked deeply into Declin's eyes as he prepared to release inside of him. He reached down and took Declin's penis into his hand, stroking it aggressively so they would cum at the same time. Kissing Declin passionately, Lucas released inside of him, forcing ropes of cum into the bandit.

Within seconds, Declin came as well, coating both men's stomachs with his thick, sticky mess. He clutched Lucas's ass as the prince forced every last royal drop into him. Then he wrapped his arms around Lucas, holding him tightly as the two men lay beside one another in the hay.

"I'm sorry it was so rushed," Lucas whispered into Declin's ear. "The guards will be back momentarily."

Declin kissed his prince. "I love you, Lucas."

Lucas reached over and grabbed his shirt from the ground nearby. He used it to wipe off his chest and stomach, then Declin's. The two men lay silently in each other's arms for a moment, before Lucas stood up.

Declin took the shirt from Lucas's hand. "Let me keep it."

"Of course," the prince replied. He pulled his pants back up and then wrapped his cloak around his bare torso.

Declin tucked the shirt into the corner of his cage and covered it with straw so the guards wouldn't notice it when they returned. "Thank you for visiting me."

"I'm going to get you out of here," Lucas said, repeating his declaration from earlier. "You'll know when it's time."

"Don't do anything that puts yourself at risk. You know what your father is capable of."

Lucas kissed Declin. "I can handle the king, don't you worry." Lucas stepped toward the gate as Declin pulled his pants and boots back on. "I'll be in touch, I promise." He stepped through the gate and used the key to re-lock it. "Next time you see me, you'll be free."

Declin stood at the bars of the cell and watched as the prince disappeared down the corridor.

Just outside the town, Matthew returned to his cottage after running a quick errand. He walked his horse back into the stable, then emerged to look over his property, impressed by all that he had accomplished, with the help of Prince Bryce, earlier that day.

Tired, he unlatched the door to his home and entered it. He threw another log into the fireplace to deal with the dampness he felt in the room. As the fire grew warmer, he removed his shirt, sat on the chair next to the fireplace, and closed his eyes to rest.

Moments later, the presence of another person in the room caused him to open his eyes, disrupting his impending nap. He looked toward the bedroom doorway where he saw Princess Clara standing, completely naked.

"I've been waiting for you," she whispered, smiling widely at the farmer.

Inside her dark chamber in the castle, Gretl frantically searched. Dark, heavy draperies hung covered all the windows. Candles of all shapes and sizes stood throughout the room, casting shadows throughout it. Shelves of books lined the walls and tables stood in various

places holding crystals, gems, and orbs. Plants of various kinds filled one corner of the room and racks of glass bottles and vials filled another.

Gretl's stringy, grey hair moved in every direction on her head as she desperately searched for her cards. She looked on the shelves and examined all the tables, determined to find the valuable items.

Upon finding them, she stepped over to the table covered in a red cloth at the center of the room. One by one, she lit the candles standing at various heights on the table top. As each one was lighted, the glow revealed more of her facial features: her leathery, wrinkled skin; her pronounced, curved nose; her wicked, seductive smile; and her frightening, sewn-closed eye.

Once all the candles flickered with light, she shuffled the cards. One by one, she drew a card, flipped it over, and placed it on the table. The first card featured the image of a knight. The second featured the image of a queen. The third, an image of a prince and the fourth, an image of a king. As she drew the fifth card from the deck, it flew high into the air, then tumbled toward the table, flipping end over end. All the candles on the table eerily went out as the card landed on top of the one featuring the image of the king. Gretl gasped loudly as she viewed the image on the fifth card: a dark, hooded figure representing death.

Cautiously, Queen Roslyn entered the king's chambers. She pushed open the heavy door and entered the main room, which was dark and empty.

"Your Majesty?" she called, but there was no response.

She searched the main room and then moved from side room to side room in search of her husband, the king. She called out to him repeatedly, but no response came.

When she reached his private meditation chamber, she found the doorway in the far corner ajar. Slowly, she approached it and pulled it completely open.

Peering behind it, she saw the stone, spiral staircase leading up to the tower above. Pulling up her dress with one hand so that she wouldn't trip, she carefully made her way up the staircase. One step at a time, she rose higher and higher inside the tower.

As she reached the top, she felt the cold wind blowing and saw the sun setting in the distance. She emerged from the stairwell and stepped out onto the rooftop. Almost instantly, she witnessed the bloody body of the dead king lying on the stone ground. Crying out, she rushed

over and knelt beside her king. The wind carried her cry throughout the kingdom as the flag bearing the Chamberlain family crest rippled in the gusty air high above her.