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<The King>

by <Growing Desires>



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-Growing Desires

Chapter One

Maeve was a skilled thief, she had spent years roughing it in the far-off eastern kingdoms and after a few jobs that went sideways, she found herself needing to leave her homeland and travel westward. The ship she stowed herself in was headed to the port of Porthaven, an aptly named town that saw most of the ship trade come through the giant harbour. The ships were very rare from where Maeve was from, it was incredible to see the absolute scale of some of these boats. The port had long called to Maeve, a place of opportunities, a place to skip the continent and lose herself in another culture, another world and start anew. Looking down at her thin hands, her fingers were delicate and dainty, but certainly not soft. The years spent breaking into places and swiping things, she had working hands, albeit a bit of a sinister and dark level of work.

Looking around she saw ships of all shapes and sizes, Port Haven was not the destination, not with so many large trading ships. It was time for one more choice, another stow away to get her as far from her home as possible.

“Which one... Which one...” She asked herself under her breath, her voice getting caught in the wrap around her mouth, her black hair wasn’t that long, it hung down her face somewhat, obscuring most of her face and she peered through her fringe at the largest ship in the port.

“That one.” She muttered.

Looking at the size of the ship, it rivalled the largest trade ships there, but it was so much more than that, it was a gigantic vessel with lots of flags and a crest that screamed royalty.

Thinking about it, she was sure that it looked vaguely familiar.

It wasn’t difficult to get on the ship, for someone of her skill that is. Sneaking her way onto the large vessel she made her way down into the lower deck and amongst the cargo, she found a small area to tuck herself into. It was quiet, out the way and it was very comfy actually, there were some sacks of something that cushioned her from the hardwood floor.

She settled in and moved the cargo around to hide herself better so she could relax and sleep for the journey. On the way in she had heard they were headed back to the castle; it was only meant to take a day.

That was perfect for her, she spent the time looking around the cargo for valuable goods, mostly though it was food, wine and fine cloth. She drank her fill and ate enough to get her by. When the ship arrived in the port, she could hear the commotion above deck. Slipping out off the ship was just about as easy as it was to get on but when she made land again she looked around and saw a thick layer of white on the floor.

“Is this... Snow?” Maeve had never seen it, she had heard of it, the frigid chill of the air made the small woman start to shiver, even with the fabric she had swiped from the ship draped around her, it was not enough to keep the cold out.

The port was very small, a private one would have been her guess, the tall castle rising high above her was very enticing.

“I am in a new land... I’m going to need some coins to get me by...”

Relying on her skills, she decided to make her way into the castle to see what might be there to steal and what could she sell to get this life started in this new land.

“First thing I’m buying... Something warmer...” Maeve wrapped the cloth around her a bit tighter; it didn’t help much.

The castle was the biggest she had ever seen, she felt like she should’ve heard of a castle this big existing in the world but for some reason if she knew, it was escaping her right now. Looking down the large corridors there were lots of paintings on the walls, they were of a large man, a very large man. It was hard to tell that he was large other than the fact he was painted next to other people, mostly naked women it seemed, some of them were hard to describe as women as Maeve knew them, their figures were extreme to say the least. Some were fat, huge balls of lard, some were massively busty, some tall, some tiny, there was just an extreme look about all of them.

Maeve had known a nobleman in the east who had a preference for the rotund and another who was a slave to his lust of bust but not like this.

She shivered and continued her way through the castle, amazed that she was able to see so few guards. It was a bit eerie, but Maeve was used to the uncomfortable silences, she worked primarily in them as she made her way through buildings to steal the highly prized possessions of rich folk.

A large door was coming up, it had multiple locks on it, the first door of its kind and so deep into the castle, it could only mean there was something expensive behind the thick wooden door. Checking around quickly scanning the area, Maeve took out her lock picks and quickly got to work. The door was quickly dispatched, and she tucked herself around the other side of the door.

“By the gods...” She murmured under her breath, looking at the display cases around the room.

The room appeared to be a trophy room of sorts, it was priceless, if she found the right fence maybe she could get rid of most of it but in this new land she needed to be careful about what she took.

Maeve spotted a crown; it looked very lavish and adorned with many shiny stones. Emeralds, Rubys, Diamonds, Topaz, she couldn't even really notice them all in the quick glance and she didn't have time to inspect the whole thing.

The crown was small, filled with expensive stones and the gold could probably be melted down and sold.

Quick and easy.

Maeve swiped it from the case, putting it into her satchel, she made a speedy exit towards the door. That is when she heard a noise from the other

side of the door.

Shit.

Maeve ducked down and quickly hid behind some boxes, hoping that she might evade detection. A large man came into the room, a royal guard, his sword drawn. He slowly walked around trying to find the intruder.

Thankfully for Maeve, she wore a black suit over her body, it made her almost disappear into the shadows, where the windowless room had no light to reveal her. Pulling the mask she had on up to cover her face, she could just about see through the thinned material where her eyes were.

Controlling her breathing, she was silent and patient.

“Come out... I know you’re in here...” The guard said timidly, clearly he didn’t deal with these issues often, despite his large demeanour he took his time looking around the room. The room was large and long, shuffling slowly Maeve made her way to the side of the room with the still open door.

Now’s my chance.

She plucked a stone from her satchel and threw it into the farthest corner of the room, making the guard jump, the clanging sound made for a good auditory cover for her quickly dashing to the door. Slipping out, she was now in the corridor, surprised to see it was still empty.

This place is very poorly guarded...

She rushed towards where she had made her way in, her nimble footsteps were silent enough that she was not detected from the adjacent rooms.

As she was about to round the last corner, she came colliding with a brick wall of a man. The impact was so hard that she thought she broke something, recoiling back onto the floor, she looked up at the giant man.

He wore no uniform, he was shirtless and in leather bottoms, a large sword clasped to his belt. He was far bigger than the guard she had just seen. Panic set in, being caught already and by such a huge foe, she needed to get out.

Run.

Flipping over with acrobatic speed, she started to dash but only made it five paces before she felt a huge hand grab her shoulder, it held her in place, she flailed and kicked and thrashed but it was no use, the hand covered one side of her chest. The mountainous man spun her round and with a firm grip on her neck he lifted her off the floor.

Maeve was small, slight and just about five and a half feet tall, this man was close to seven feet tall. He looked massive, his muscles were big and bulging and he looked more than capable of fighting a lion with his bare hands.

“Well... What do we have here... I must say, it’s been a long time since I’ve found someone stupid enough to break into my castle.” His voice boomed and pierced her soul.

Shit.

Maeve quickly reached into her pouch to get something to make the giant release her but as quick as her movements were, somehow this massive

man was just about as quick.

His hand wrapped around her arm, almost crushing it in the process.

“Not so fast, if you think you're going to get out of my grasp, you're mistaken.” The man opened her satchel and noticed the crown. “Oh, it seems you are far better than I was going to give you credit for.” His smile was sinister. “That was a gift from the queen of the Heath.” A small movement and the satchel was torn from Maeve's arm and cast to the floor.

“Let me go.” Maeve's voice was firm, strong and confident. Although it did little to help her chances of freedom.

There was clanging coming from behind her and she saw the guard that had tried to spot her in the trophy room.

“Sire!” He was shocked at the display before him.

“How did you let her get the crown of Lady Milwe?” The man's voice boomed as he showed his frustration from his tone alone.

“I'm sorry sire, I saw the door and I we-”

As if Maeve was nothing, the large man took a few long strides to the soldier, a large man in his own right and despite the armour he had on, the king threw a wild fist at the smaller man and sent him flying.

Immediately he coughed up blood, and his armour was dented in, making it difficult for him to draw breath.

“Get out of my sight. If I see you again, I will kill you.” He then turned his attention to Maeve. “As for you thief. I've got some big plans for you.” He laughed.

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