

Angel of Deception

The carriage bounced as we traveled down the dirt road. The dirt lingered in the air and filled my nostrils. Cows were calling out to one another and a rooster crowed as we rode down the path. A church bell sounded in the east.

"Amateurs," I said.

"What did you just say?" asked my captor.

"You are all fools. What was the point in blindfolding me? Did you know that Saint Paul's Church rings that bell every day at 6pm?"

"Did you know that with one punch from my fist you'll be hearing bells of your own?" asked my captor.

I knew I should keep my mouth shut. I shouldn't antagonize him any further. Where's the fun in that though?

"Fool. That will be the last word you hear me say as I watch your life slowly fade from your pathetic body," I said to him.

His fist came crashing down on top of my head with such a force that Thor himself would envy. A throbbing sensation began to set in and my ears started ringing. I knew it would only be a moment before I passed out from the pain. I had to get one smart ass remark out first.

"Wow, a man true to his word," I managed to say, "These bells sound lovely."

The ringing slowly faded as the throbbing pain took away my consciousness.

Sunlight blared into the room making my head pound with a dull aching reminder of the events that led me into my current situation. Pressing passed the pain, I took a moment to assess the current situation. I had a job to do.

My hands and legs were bound. There was a rope around my waist that attached me to the chair I was sitting in. I could move my hands up enough to feel my dagger was still attached to my hip.

"Fools," I said.

It took a little wiggling but I was able to unsheathe the dagger just enough to be able to work at the bonds on my wrist.

What morons, they assumed because of my gender that I wasn't a threat. If only they knew who they were dealing with. I crafted my dress to be able to conceal the dagger under the fabric in a small pocket like hole in case I found myself in situations like this.

I continued my assessment of the room. The walls were stone with one small window and an oak door. There was a fireplace to the left and a chamber pot in the corner. Near the door sat a

small drawing room table. Above the fireplace hung a beautifully mounted sword. Jewels glistened from the sword's hilt. I now had another weapon at my disposal. This was just another sign that my captors had no idea who I was or that I allowed them to capture me. My hands began to loosen as one of the ropes began to snap.

A heavy-footed person approached outside the door. The damned oak prevented me from hearing the exchange of words. At least I now knew they were smart enough to put a guard outside my door. The oak door creaked as it began to open. My hands were almost free. I quickly grabbed at the rope and held the loose end to make it appear as if it were still tightly bound.

The man that entered the room wore a muddy pair of riding boots. His complexion showed he spent most days' outdoors. A sword was sheathed to his side. His hair was jet black and his eyes looked just the same from this distance. His eyes wandered over every inch of my body.

"Yes, you'll do nicely," he said, "my men have done well."

It was time to play damsel in distress.

"What," I began, "What will you do with me? Who are you? Where am I?"

"Where are my manners? I am Victor and I am Lord of this manor. What is your name my dear?"

Victor was circling me like a vulture would its next meal.

"My name is Anastasia. Please, my Lord, what do you plan to do with me?"

He grabbed a strand of my curly brown hair and leaned in to smell it. His breath was hot against my neck and he reeked of wine.

"We will sell you to the highest bidder. You will fetch a fine price."

He took out a dagger and cut off a small lock of my hair. I would make sure he paid for that. As any good actress would do, I made sure to let the water works begin. He made his way back toward the door and paused before exiting.

"One of the guards will be in every so often to allow you to eat or use the chamber pot," he said, "it was lovely meeting you Anastasia."

He knocked twice on the door and the guard outside opened it. The door closed behind him and I was thankful to be alone again. It was time to get to work. I had a small window of opportunity to get free of these ropes and prepare my attack on the guard when he entered.

I worked as swiftly as possible. Once my hands were free it was easy to remove the rest of the bonds. I grabbed the dagger and with a few quick sawing motions the rope around my waist fell off. I then bent down and cut through the ones wrapped around my legs.

Walking quieter than any mouse in the manor, I went to the window. My captors were a bit smarter than I gave them credit for. They had placed me on the third floor. Most women would feel helpless this high up. I, on the other hand, lived for challenges like this.

The remains of the rope were on the ground. It would come in handy in the event of fleeing from this height. I tied the pieces together, wound up the rope and tossed it over my shoulder. Then it was onto the fireplace to retrieve the sword.

It was a bit heavier than I'd liked but it would do the job. I did a few practice swings to get a feel for the blade. Spinning while thrusting it at my imaginary victims. I had been trained to use many weapons and some had been far heavier than this. Yes, this blade would do nicely. Once I was confident with handling the blade I sat back in the chair and waited.

The door opened and an ugly looking brute walked in. He was tall, muscular and had scars across his face that showed he had been in many battles before.

I sat perfectly still in my chair. My hands behind my back holding the sword, ready to swing into action. The man didn't even notice the ropes were no longer around my waist or legs. Once the door clicked into place I sprung my attack like a tiger that had been stalking its prey. I had the element of surprise

on my side. He was quick to react and our blades met with a thunderous clatter.

"Stupid girl," he said.

It was the man from the carriage. The man who had captured me in the alleyway and brought me here.

"Fool," I said to him.

He let his rage take hold swinging harder and faster at me. It was easy for me to predict his next move. I began ducking, bending and leaping when needed. My entire upbringing had been nothing more than training for moments like this. The amount of noise we were making should have alerted any other guards outside. No one came to assist which meant he was the only guard on this floor. This would make my task a breeze.

I watched his footwork closely while our swords clattered. If he had a flaw, I'd find it and use it to my advantage. He swung again. I ducked and sidestepped in the opposite direction. He hadn't expected me to turn that way. In one swift motion, I drove the blade home into his chest. I leaned in closely to his ear.

"Fool."

He dropped his sword to the ground. His face pale and filled with shock. It was clear that he hadn't expected a girl to beat him or his life to end. With a swift kick to his chest the blade slid out and his body collapsed to the floor. I wiped

the blade off on my skirt and then searched his now lifeless body for any other weapons that could be of use to me. I took the set of keys he had and his dagger. Then I slowly opened the door and scanned over the outside corridor.

It was just as I had thought. There wasn't anyone else in the area. There were multiple doors though. With my sword in one hand and the keys in the other I unlocked each door and entered killing anyone in my path. I took whatever items I thought could be useful such as a satchel, weapons and a couple coin pouches. I was on a mission to find a young girl, Claudette, who had been taken a few days ago.

I reached the end of the hall. She wasn't on this floor. The next floor was empty. It appeared all of its occupants were out enjoying the warm spring weather. One of the rooms I entered belonged to Lord Victor. His desk held journals and ledgers of his dealings. The top ledger was opened and had Claudette's name scrawled across the page along with a lock of her hair. The word sold was beside her name. I tossed the ledger and the journal into my satchel. I had what I needed. It was time to leave.

A familiar sound caught my attention. Heavy footsteps approached the door. I hid behind the desk and waited. Lord Victor entered the room and closed the door behind him. He removed his belt along with his sword and placed them on the

chest at the foot of his bed. He walked toward the desk and I sprang into action. His expression was similar to an antelope that knew the tiger had already won.

My blade was at his throat.

"Anastasia, there is more to you that meets the eye."

"If you tell me who you sold Claudette too then I will be nice and kill you quickly."

"Claudette? Oh yes, she was a pretty one," he motioned toward his desk, "everything you need is there."

"Aren't you a peach for writing it all down for me," I pushed the blade hard into his neck, "If so much as a hair is missing from her head, I will gut your entire family since you won't be around for me to punish."

With one swift motion his throat slit open. Lord Victor collapsed to the floor and a pool of blood flowed out onto the Persian rug. It was time to leave.

I cracked open the door and heard voices down the hall. People were beginning to return to the manor. The front door wasn't an option for leaving. Quietly closing the door, I crept back to the window. Below there were two guards near the stable. Their backs were facing the wall that I'd be shimmying down. I would need to be quick.

I removed the rope from my shoulder and tied it off to the bed. It would be long enough to get me half way down. I'd have to jump the rest of the way. I eased myself out onto the ledge and began my descent. Once I was at the end of the rope I pushed off the wall and landed in front of the two guards.

"What the hell," said a guard as my blade pierced his heart.

My dress was covered in blood. The second guard was a young boy. The sight of his companion's lifeless body and my own appearance was enough for him to flee. Unfortunately, in my line of work it's kill or be killed. I could not allow him to escape. He had seen my face and knew what I was capable of. I threw my dagger. It made its mark in the back of his skull. The boy collapsed to the ground. I dragged his body out of sight and removed the dagger. There were no other witnesses around so I made my way into the stable. A beautiful black stallion greeted me as I entered.

"Looks like you and I will be travel companions my friend," I said to him.

I tossed a saddle onto him and mounted. A light squeeze of my legs was enough to get the horse moving. Once we were out of the stables I cued him to run as fast as he could. We were off before anyone had a clue what happened. There was a creek nearby

and this was the path I decided we would use. The water would conceal his hoof prints in the event that someone followed us.

The creek eventually led us to a small village. I waited on the outskirts until nightfall since people wouldn't take kindly to a stranger covered in blood. Once it was dark enough I stole a change of clothes that had been hanging outside to dry. I rode the stallion into the town and left it with the stable boy. The boy informed me there was an Inn available to any outsiders. The room was clouded with smoke and smelled of ale. I approached the counter and rang a small bell.

"Evening madam," said the innkeeper, "what can I do for you?"

"I need a room for the night," I said.

I paid him the money, took my key and pushed my way through the drunken crowd. One man grabbed at my ass as I passed by. I unsheathed my dagger and held it to his neck. The room went silent.

"Touch me again and it will be the last thing that you do."

He backed away slowly and the room filled with chatter again.

I found my room and locked the door behind me. I placed my dagger beneath my pillow and sat at the writing desk in the corner of the room. I pulled out the ledger and journal from my

satchel. Lord Victor might have been foolish in many ways but his journal was extremely thorough. Claudette had been sold to Duke Pennington. Tomorrow I would seek him out, rescue Claudette and return her to her father. Then I would assassinate everyone else who was in Lord Victor's scum filled ring of human trafficking. Tonight however, I looked forward to a much-deserved night of sleep. Enough blood had been shed for one day.