

Chapter 37: Bridget

Chapter 37: Bridget finds herself caught in the whirlwind of emotions following her unexpected departure from the reception with Rhys. With the evening unfolding in ways she had not anticipated, Bridget couldn't bring herself to return to the festivities. By the time Rhys had finished with her, there was no way to regain composure, so they slipped out discreetly, avoiding notice by the crowd. The decision to leave early, without informing anyone, weighed heavily on her, especially as she reflected on her bridesmaid duties. Fortunately, the reception had already started winding down, and most guests were too intoxicated to notice her absence. However, she still felt a pang of guilt about leaving Steffan in the lurch, so she immediately reached out the next day to apologize. Her excuse about a friend's emergency was met with grace, but Bridget couldn't shake the feeling that Steffan's behavior had shifted during the evening, maybe even secretly relieved by her early exit.

As Bridget and Mikaela sit in her room the following day, the focus shifts from the aftermath of the reception to the more pressing matter at hand: persuading Erhall to bring the Royal Marriages Law repeal to the parliamentary floor. While brainstorming ideas, Mikaela casually asks about Bridget's sudden disappearance, raising the tension between the two. Bridget quickly deflects, claiming it was a college friend's emergency, though the doubt in Mikaela's voice suggests she's not entirely convinced. More lies pile up, each one adding weight to Bridget's already strained conscience. When Mikaela mentions that her cousin Andreas had been looking for her at the reception, Bridget's heart skips a beat. She had thought Andreas had already left, but now doubts began to cloud her mind. Had he seen her leave with Rhys? If so, how much did he know? The thought of Andreas finding out about her secret relationship with Rhys unsettles her, but the uncertainty of what he might know keeps her on edge.

Bridget's mind races as she contemplates the possibilities. What if Andreas had followed them, witnessed everything, and was now planning to confront her? Despite the anxiety, she reassures herself that her reaction might be overblown. Still, the thought lingers in her mind, causing her to feel more paranoid with each passing moment. She's left questioning whether Andreas truly was looking for her for trivial reasons or if something more significant is at play. The conversation with Mikaela only intensifies Bridget's internal conflict, as she tries to maintain control over the situation. She brushes off Mikaela's concerns, opting for a laugh to downplay her stress and dismiss the mounting pressure. With Mikaela leaving for dinner, Bridget's mind refocuses on the work in front of her, but the anxiety over Andreas's potential discovery never fully leaves her thoughts.

After Mikaela departs, Bridget distracts herself by attending to a growing stack of letters from citizens. Despite her assistants handling much of the workload, she still takes pride in responding personally when she can. It offers a much-needed distraction from her spiraling thoughts about Andreas. Bridget tries to convince herself that her worries are irrational, that Andreas could have been seeking her for any number of insignificant reasons. However, the more she attempts to convince herself, the more her doubts continue to gnaw at her. As she sifts through the letters, the constant worry about Andreas hangs over her, making it difficult to concentrate. Just as she begins to settle into a more productive rhythm, her laptop pings with a new email notification. She hesitates but is compelled to open it, only to find an unsettling, cryptic email address—a string of random numbers that raises a fresh wave of suspicion. What was this email about? Could it be linked to her concerns over Andreas, or was it just another distraction?

Bridget is now caught between her personal anxieties and the political realities she must face. The Royal Marriages Law continues to loom large in her mind, alongside the constant pressure to act decisively for her kingdom's future. Meanwhile, her complex relationship with Rhys and the secrets she keeps from those closest to her continue to complicate her emotional landscape. This chapter underscores the weight of Bridget's responsibilities, not only as a royal figure but as a person grappling with love, duty,

and the consequences of her actions. The tension between her personal desires and her public role intensifies, with each decision pulling her further into a labyrinth of emotions. As the narrative unfolds, Bridget's internal conflict takes center stage, setting the stage for the battles she must face both within herself and against the forces that seek to control her.

