

Chapter 11: Bridget

Chapter 11: Bridget found herself slipping between emotional extremes as she tried to process everything happening around her. Rhys's presence on the flight offered a brief distraction from her spiraling worries, allowing her a rare moment of rest, but when the plane touched down, reality crashed back in full force. The anxiety over her grandfather's health had gnawed at her so fiercely that every second stuck in traffic toward the hospital felt like agony. Panic gripped her, fueling terrifying thoughts about arriving too late. Even deep breaths barely kept her fear in check, and by the time she reached the hospital's hidden entrance, she was on the brink of falling apart. Seeing Markus's composed, albeit slightly disheveled, appearance was the first flicker of hope that her grandfather had made it through the worst.

Relief washed over Bridget when Markus confirmed that King Edvard was awake, but her heart didn't settle until she laid eyes on him herself. Walking into the sterile hospital suite, she had to fight back memories of her father's sudden death, memories that flooded her mind with painful clarity. Her grandfather looked frail yet stubborn as ever, scolding her gently for worrying and trying to brush off his condition with the kind of gruff affection that had always defined him. Bridget clung to the small comfort his words offered, but deep down, she knew nothing about the situation was truly fine. As she recounted tales of her life in New York to keep his spirits up, her mind drifted between gratitude for this second chance and dread over what the future now demanded of her.

The official medical explanation for Edvard's condition left her rattled. It wasn't just a fainting spell—it was a serious, lifelong vulnerability triggered by stress. No amount of royal command could wish it away, no matter how much the king tried to act invincible. Doctors insisted on major lifestyle changes to protect him, but Bridget and Nikolai both knew convincing Edvard to slow down would be like trying to stop a flood

with a broom. As Bridget watched her grandfather insist on being discharged early and return to work, she realized how deeply ingrained duty was in their bloodline, and how terrifying that legacy could be. She didn't want to lose him the way she lost her father—suddenly, without warning, and with no chance to say goodbye.

Weeks later, as she rode with Nikolai across the palace grounds, the weight of her new reality pressed heavily on her shoulders. Their conversation, at first lighthearted with sibling teasing, soon veered into dangerous emotional territory. Nikolai's revelation that he planned to abdicate sent Bridget's carefully reconstructed world crashing down again. She understood his reasons—love was rare and precious—but the cold truth was that his decision left her trapped. The Royal Marriages Law, rigid and archaic, wouldn't allow Nikolai to marry Sabrina, and so the crown would pass to Bridget instead. The freedom she had tasted living abroad, pretending to be just another young woman, would be stripped away permanently.

Bridget tried to keep her voice calm, but rage and betrayal churned within her as she realized Nikolai had shared his plans with palace officials before telling her. Even worse, she had no time to prepare. Everything she knew about her future was being rewritten without her consent, and the suffocating expectations she had managed to avoid for years now loomed closer than ever. Her mind raced with images of royal duties, endless scrutiny, and a lifetime spent fulfilling a role she had never truly chosen. Meanwhile, Nikolai, visibly burdened with guilt, tried to explain himself, but no words could fix what had already been shattered between them.

The raw ache in Bridget's heart wasn't just fear for herself—it was mourning for the life she would never get to reclaim. Her days of anonymity were numbered, and the idea of falling in love freely, living without calculation, became a fantasy she had to bury. The palace walls, once merely symbolic, now felt like real prison gates closing in around her. Though she loved her family fiercely, the resentment building inside her was undeniable. It wasn't fair that the dreams she had nurtured so quietly had to die for traditions written centuries before her birth. Yet the burden of history and duty was not one she could escape—not if she wanted to honor the people she loved.

In the silent space between her and Nikolai, Bridget saw the heavy cost of royalty laid bare. Love could move kings off thrones, and devotion to country could break hearts. She recognized the courage it took for her brother to make his choice, even if it left her feeling abandoned. As the horses trudged back toward the palace, Bridget squared her shoulders and swallowed the bitterness gathering in her throat. No matter how much it hurt, she would meet her fate with dignity. Somewhere deep down, she knew she would find a way to survive this too. After all, survival was a skill every royal had to master—even when it felt like the world they knew had been stolen right out from under them.



Summaryer