

When you love someone so deeply, how hard is it to forgive the worst things they could do?

3 years ago- my room

“I am an orphaned princess,” I said to my best friends and ladies-in-waiting, Lady Harmony and Melody of Salmany. I was now fully understanding what that meant: my parents, the 12-year reigning King and Queen of Salmany, are now deceased. Almost six mornings ago, a royal servant went into their room to awaken them, only to find my parents slumped over and very pale. Up until two mornings ago, I didn’t know of their death. On that horrid day, my ladies-in-waiting were entertaining me by playing games of chess and reciting my favorite poems and sonnets. We were startled when someone started frantically pounding on the door. Harmony quickly jumped to answer it. My governess Rachael rushed into the room in a flurry. She stared very intently at me as her red-rimmed puffy eyes filled with tears. She took a deep breath and said, “Princess Alexandra Michelle Catherina Wentworth-Goldsmith, I regretfully inform you that your parents, The Great King Jonathan and Queen Miranda Wentworth-Goldsmith, were poisoned seven nights ago and died.” My blue silk skirts rustled as I stood abruptly, walked over to Rachael and slapped her roughly across her face. The sound and feeling of shock reverberated around the room. “You will remember your place here as a servant of my father. You will never speak ill of my parents again or you’ll be removed from this household”, I said coldly. “Princess” Melody whispered so softly that we could hear her just barely from across the room.

Tears streamed from my eyes as I walked through the long corridors and hallways that led to the south wing of the castle. That is where my parents’ rooms were. On the way there I saw weeping cooks, maids, guards and other servants walking through the halls in one slow mob, merging into one direction. I pondered on the fact that Rachael could be right. I shook the thought from my head as quickly as it came. She was wrong and I would prove it to her. She would be punished for her words. I arrived in their room just minutes later. I walked through the door and saw my father’s favorite advisor Michael sitting in a chair. His eyes were rimmed with red as Rachael’s had been in my room earlier.

I walked further into the room and I stopped as I saw two pale, still bodies that belonged to my parents. I gasped and Michael stood to help me into a chair. "I am so sorry Princess Alexandra. Your parents died six mornings ago. I am so sorry", he whispered. Tears began to stream from my eyes as I stared at the unmoving bodies. "Why.... why are you in here, Michael?", I managed to ask. He paused, thinking of how to answer my question. "The first advisor of the king has to sleep over the dead body of the King and Queen for seven days and eight nights. This is done to put the king's body to rest." I thought over his answer. "Why has no one told me of their death after this happened? I want to know why I was not to know of my own parents' death! I am their daughter, I should be the first to know!" I cried, my voice rising with every word I said. "It is not proper to say such a thing to a young maiden under the age of five and ten, Princess", Michael whispered. I started to cry. I felt Michael trying to console me. After countless minutes of my deep sobbing, Lady Harmony came into the room to escort me back to my room. "I have been told to take you back to your room, Alexandra." She informed me. I nodded and started to stand with Michael's help. I clasped his hands and I thanked him for comforting me. As I walked out the door I gave a parting glance to my parents and I remembered that I'd never see my mother smile or my father laugh his hearty chortle at my jokes. The last thing I saw that day was Lady Harmony and Michael yelling my name and calling servants.

The Present- My room

At twelve o'clock midnight, it will be the beginning of the night my parents were poisoned and died. Ever since then, I seldom told jokes or laughed. I was thinking about how excellently the sun shines on the saddest days. As I was lost in my thoughts, I didn't hear Lady Melody or Lady Harmony enter my room. I didn't notice their presence until Melody touched my bare shoulders with her icy hands. "Princess! You are still in your nightgown! You are sixteen years old. That is too old to not be ready on your own. You should have at least called us in to assist you." She playfully scolded. I smiled and said, "Let's lace up my corset." I held onto my favorite chair as Harmony and Melody tightened the laces of my light pink corset with abnormal strength. I fell onto my bed, breathless from the strength they used on my body. Lady Harmony sighed contently "You are so shapely and beautiful, Princess." I blushed at her

compliment. “The ladies of the court will be so envious of your curvaceous figure”, Lady Melody said. “It’s time to put on your lovely gown” Melody said. I stood up and Harmony grabbed my silk pink gown with cream trim. I breathed with satisfaction as I felt the smooth silk fabric fall onto my skin.

Just as the last button was fastened on my dress, my governess Rachael busted through the door with a very flushed face. I turned around slowly to face Rachael. “Have you forgotten to knock? If I wasn’t dressed, someone could see me improperly attired.” I said. Rachael bowed her head apologetically. “Your boyfriend, the Prince of Elliston wants to see you in the ballroom” She said. I nodded and she sat in a chair with a heavy sigh. “We have to fix your hair before you leave.” Harmony said. I closed my eyes as Harmony rushed my waist-length auburn hair. She twisted my hair into a braided bun and I was ready to go. Lady Harmony started to follow me out the door but I stopped her. “Lady Melody will escort me today.” I said calmly.

As we walked through the halls of the palace with Melody, I felt a peace that I don’t usually feel when I’m with Harmony. I turned sharply into a library that was built for the servants to use. Melody pointed out the secret passage that I was looking for. She opened the door and let me through. “Are there spiders in here, Princess? I really don’t like spiders.” Melody whispered to me fearfully. “If there were to be spiders in here, perhaps they would be afraid of you?” I replied. Melody whimpered in response. I finally saw the door at the end of the long corridor and I reached out to open it. The first thing I saw was my boyfriend Prince Howard admiring the architecture of our ballroom. I studied the way he read the foreign words of our country. I started thinking about how I loved him and I would always want to be with him. I was so lost in my thoughts that I didn’t see him standing in front of me until Melody gently nudged me into him and I gasped. Howard smiled at me. “You were watching me, Alexandra.” He said. I blushed a deep crimson red. He leaned down and kissed me so passionately that my head started to spin. When he stopped, my heart was racing and we were breathless. “I want you to know that I will do anything to make you happy. I really love you, Alexandra.” He promised. I leaned on his chest and I thought of anything I could have wanted in the world. I looked up at him and whispered “Anything?” He nodded. I saw that Melody was still standing at the passage doorway.

“ Why don ’t you wait for me in the passage, Melody. I have to ask Howard something.” I said to her. She gave me an alarmed look but obeyed my command. As the door closed I looked up to Howard. “I want to know who killed my parents and why.” I declared. Howard looked at me with a cry of surprise. “That isn ’t what I meant, love.” Howard sputtered. He looked at me as if I was insane. “ Well that is what I want. If you cannot help me, then thank you for lying to me.” I said. I started to storm away towards the passage but he wrapped me in a tight embrace. “ I ’ll do this because I love you, Alexandra. I love you so much and one day I will marry you.” He said to me. I listened to all of the promises he whispered into my ear.

I was listening to the words he said until both Harmony and Melody burst through the passage door. “Your aunt wants to see you, Princess.” They said in unison. I kissed Howard on the cheek and ran all the way back to my room. When I got to my room, Rachael was waiting for me. Everyone sprang into action, doing something that would prepare me to see my aunt.

After I was declared ready, I was escorted by Rachael to see my Aunt Marie Theresa and Uncle James in the royal throne room. I watched as the royal painter was apologizing to my aunt and uncle. They are the new King and Queen of Salmany. While the rich would say they are bringing money to the country, the poor would disagree. But now as I stare at my aunt and uncle ’s lavishly designed outfits, I can see why the poor would say so.

Ever since my Aunt Marie Theresa became Queen of Salmany, she has changed almost everything my parents have done. I now only had small reminders of my parents around the palace. On the days that I wander the palace alone, I find letters addressed to me from my parents. They date all the way back to when I was born. I keep the letters in the same place I find them, knowing that one day I will find them again to remember my parents memories.

“You ’re late” my aunt barked. I looked at her with a sigh. “ You did not mention a time for me to meet you in the throne room.” I said coyly. She growled at me and walked over to her chubby husband. “There will be a new painter coming to the palace to make a new family portrait of us. I have sent an emerald green gown with gold trim to your room. That is what you must wear to the painting.” She said to me. I scowled at the thought of being in a family portrait with my aunt and uncle. “You call this a family? You see me for less than an hour once or twice a week. I refuse to be painted with people who aren ’t my parents! I want to find out who killed them!” I cried. My aunt gasped but quickly regained her composure. “Your parents died, Alexandra. They aren ’t coming back and now we are your family. Start looking towards the

future and forget the past.” My uncle spat. I turned away and went back to my room with Rachael following close behind.

I opened the door to my room and found Howard chatting with Melody and Harmony. I looked at him in anticipation. “After promising many dances at the ball tonight, I got a lot of good information. I shall withhold this information until I receive a kiss from a beautiful and fair maiden that I love.” He said. I grabbed Howard’s face and I smashed my lips into his and kissed him with fiery excitement. Rachael cleared her throat. “If you please, Prince Howard, tell us what you have found out. He nodded and began. “Queen Marie Theresa has always been jealous of the late Queen Miranda for wielding the love and power of Salmany. One lady-in-waiting your mother had was rumored to have seen the late King and Queen being poisoned by your aunt and uncle, Alexandra. She said that two or three people poisoned them on the night they were celebrating their twelfth year of reigning. There was to be a ball but it was canceled because your parents were feeling ill. The next morning they were found dead.” Howard said.

I sat down in a nearby chair and thought about everything he said. “I want to talk to everyone you questioned, Howard.” I said, standing up. “That won’t be necessary at all Princess Alexandra, my sweet.” A familiar voice said. “We’ll tell you every you need to know.” I looked all around the room and suddenly found my aunt and uncle standing in front of my bookcase. “They must have heard everything we have said, Princess” Harmony said, the fear growing intense in her voice.

“Your prince was right about me being jealous of your mother, dear Alexandra,” my aunt began. “But there is more to that. Miranda had everything she wanted. From the daintiest glass slippers to the most charming princes, she got it all. I would always ask my father why I wasn’t given as much attention as Miranda, but he would always tell me that my time would come. My father was only lying to make me feel better. Miranda stayed the favorite Princess and eventually the famed Queen of Salmany. But even then I knew that I would see Miranda fall one day. But then you were born.” She said and turned to look at me. I gasped in horror as I thought that she would one day bring harm to me. My aunt laughed at the horror on my face and shook her head. “I would never lay a finger on your pretty little head. But I couldn’t say the same for your mother.”

My aunt continued, “so you were born and I had to plot fast. I married your uncle because he wanted power as much as I did. For eleven long years we planned to take down your

parents and claim power fro ourselves. But soon we learned we would need a young boy to help us. So we went to Elliston to find an orphaned child to come to Salmany. On the day of your parents' twelfth year of reign celebration, the little boy was disguised as a servant and he put lemon poisoning in your parents' food. They fell ill very quickly and died around midnight. The day after, I was sitting in my room with my husband sewing cloths when royal soldiers came into our room. They came to declare us King and Queen of Salmany. I had finally gained what I wanted most: your mother's crown."

"It was terrible what had to happen to your parents, but the sadness was quickly masked with the joy that I was Queen of Salmany." She said, her face turning into a terrible scowling smile. "But there was poison found in their drink too!" I cried. My aunt paused and the room grew still for some time. "Oh yes" She said. "That dear boy thought to put extra poison into their tea too. It worked so well for the boy. I believe that boy was adopted by Elliston's King and made the Prince of Elliston. He was then brought here to court our Princess of Salmany."

I looked around the room, trying to put all of this into my head. My eyes stopped wandering as they landed on Howard. My eyes filled with tears as I looked into his eyes, searching for the answer. Howard bowed his head in defeat and nodded. Harmony and Melody came to stand beside me. I grabbed Howard's hands and whispered, "It was you, my love?"