

“Pardon me, Father. May I have a moment?”

“Yes Maagy. What is it?”

“I’d like to be excused please. I have something to attend. I’ll see you at the door at nine sharp.”

“I suppose. Don’t be late.”

She exchanged smiles with Rudolpho and left. She took a deep breath and slipped quietly into the main dining room. She paused to locate the right person and then made a beeline for him. She slipped a hand written note on the table beside him and was gone before he knew who had done it. The note read:

*Your Excellency,*

*Please do me the honor of having audience to discuss the events of yesterday. I will be in the first floor library for the next half hour if you will be so kind.*

*My humble appreciation*

Chieftain Obuku folded the note and concealed it in the pocket of his robe. He finished his last sip of coffee and moved through the room making sure he was not being watched by anyone. He found the library and Maagy waiting for him. She took a deep breath and stood to face him. She nodded her head as a sign of respect.

“Your Excellency, Chieftain Obuku, thank you for meeting me. I feel I owe you a personal accounting and explanation of the incident between your son and myself.”

“You are the Impetuous Princess Maagy of whom I have heard much. What do you wish to say?”

“I deeply regret handling the situation as I did. However, I do not regret interceding on behalf of my chambermaid who was doing nothing more than following the rules of etiquette with regard to unmarried young men and women being together in a bedchamber without proper chaperons. The protocols are for our guests’ protection as well as that of our household. Surely, there are similar requirements in your culture. I’m certain you understand.”

“According to my son, the young woman refused to make his bed and when he chastised her for it, she smashed a piece of crystal on the floor and stormed out. Is there anything you would like to add?”

Maagy was furious that the boy had told such a blatant falsehood. Her instinct was to scream at the top of her lungs what a liar he was, but since her goal was to resolve the dilemma and not make it worse, she did as her father had said and ‘*swallowed her tongue*’. She maintained her composure and continued respectfully as she chose her words carefully.

“All I can say is... my chambermaid is an honest person... who cares for a sick mother with the money she earns in humble service to our household. I do not believe she would jeopardize her position... or her mother’s welfare... to behave in such an irrational manner. She told me it was *he* who threw the paperweight *at her* and she ran out in fear. I went to your son on her behalf to elicit an apology and he *dismissed me* as a lowly female not worthy of his respect,” she said, seething under her skin. “I’m afraid it was this last straw that broke the camel’s back. I allowed my anger to get the better of me... and... I threatened invasion. Fortunately, my father, His Royal Majesty King Henry, is a fair and wise man. He has a much more tranquil temperament than his daughter. I would never *actually* ask him to commit an act of war for such a small offense. Neither would he do it... even if I did. That, Sir, is what I wanted you to know.”

Obuku stood looking at the plucky girl who was standing straight and as tall as her tiny frame would allow. She likewise, looked him squarely in the eye never diverting her gaze.

“You are a brave young woman to speak to me this way. I know my son all too well. I also know your father and agree he is a wise man and has raised an equally wise daughter. Things are not always as they seem are they Princess Maagy?”

She got the distinct impression from his tone the chief was trying to tell her something without actually

saying it, a sort of coded message. ‘*Things are not always as they seem*’. She thought she might have understood.

“I suppose... *sometimes*... perception is its own truth, Your Excellency.”

“No truer words were ever spoken. What is it you wish from me?”

“The only thing I’ve ever wanted was an apology for my chambermaid.”

“And if you get it... you will not ask your father to invade us? And you will give him the message... *all is well?*”

“You have my word, Sir.”

“Then things are truly *not* as they seem.”

She was sure now this was the message, not for her, but for King Henry.

“How shall we accomplish this apology? Tell me when and where and I shall see to it my son is there.”

“On the west lawn down the hill in front of the castle there is a pond partially obscured by shrubs. The spot is adequately secluded for privacy of this matter. Everyone seems to take their leave after luncheon and go to their rooms for some quiet time. One o’clock beside the pond if you will, Your Excellency.”

“We shall be there.”

“Thank you for your kind understanding and willingness to resolve this matter peacefully, Sir,” she said, with a slight bow of her head.

“You *will* give your father my regards, will you not, Your Highness?”

She was positive she was right.

“I shall, indeed, Sir.”