

# The Cover of Evil by Hannah Albano

So there I was in the driver section of my carriage, coming home from a tiring journey. I was ready to go to sleep and let my back sink into my bed. A huge jostle in the carriage lifted me from the seat and flung me to the floor. The side of the carriage broke open and a tall man with a black mask on yanked on my arm. Before I could comprehend what had happened, I was easily pulled out of my carriage and on the ground in seconds. I could taste dirt in my mouth and tried to spit it out, but each time I tried, the the man pushed my face back into the dirt. He kicked the side of my leg and I started to curl into a ball.

"You move, you die!" the man yelled, pulling out a sword. I wasn't thinking about moving anyway. The pounding in my head was awful and my leg ached from where he had kicked me.

"Iden!" the man called, still focusing on the sword at my throat. A man, dressed the same way as the one who held me down, walked around the corner. He held a knife to his palm and looked it over a moment before wiping fresh blood off of it. "What of the horses?"

The mask didn't cover their mouths and I could see the evil smile spread over Iden's face, "They didn't trust me. Tried to kick me, Darryl." I paled. Iden walked over to me with a disapproving glare. I didn't dare glare back despite all of my nerves telling my to.

"What do you think of her?" the one called Darryl asked, pushing the sword closer to my throat. "She worth anything?"

Iden crouched over me. He yanked a golden locket off my neck and rolled in over in his hands. If my life didn't depend on my movement, I would've jumped for his sword, but it got closer to my throat every second.

"We can sell this," Iden said, holding up my locket. "I am not sure anyone will want a girl, but then again, she is pretty. Someone may pay a royal sum for an ornament like her."

"I am not an ornament," I snapped. Iden was quick to back hand me across the face. I admit, it hurt. It seemed as if he were holding back, though. Right away, I was regretting my words, a burning sensation spreading across my face.

"Eh," Darryl started, "I think, I may want to keep her. She may be good with a broom."

"No. We need the money. And we must keep her in pristine condition," Iden got up and motioned for Darryl to let me up. He grabbed my arm and pulled me to my feet. I let out a yelp, my shoulder feeling as if it had been pulled from it's socket.

"Pristine condition," I muttered to Darryl.

"What is is your name? Are you a nobleman's daughter? Or did you steal that dress?" he muttered.

I narrowed my eyes at him. "You don't give me enough credit," I spat at Darryl. "I am the Duke's daughter."

Iden glared. "You lie!"

"I don't know. She does look a little royalish," Darryl said. "Look at the locket."

With disgust, he opened his hand. "The royal crest," Iden uttered, disappointment filling his voice. "If you tell your heritage, you'll be dead within minutes!" he threatened, knocking me back to the ground.

"I don't know, Iden. I don't feel too good about this. If any of the guards catch us—"

"It is too late now, Iden. We'll sell her to get off our hands. If we let her go she'll tell. If we kill her, though..." he added, brushing his hand across his face and pulling off his mask. "That would solve our problems."

I groaned. I didn't know where to start with my pleas. I looked up at Iden's face. Fear crossed it as he looked around.

"Don't ask questions. I have the ability to kill." Iden threatened, catching me scoffing at his expression.

"Doesn't everybody?" I asked. "Just give me a sword and you would be dead in a second."

"Don't challenge him," Darryl warned. I wouldn't dream of challenging him. I could dream of killing him, though.

"No, guess not. Only because of my leg," I taunted with a laugh. Darryl laughed also, but quickly caught himself.

"Look. We're not the kind of people who would torment other people. So I don't really like the thought of selling you," Iden muttered. He pulled a crate out of the carriage and sat on it as he threw me an apple.

"Well nobody has a sword at your throat," I told him.

"Actually we have many," Darryl said, catching an apple from Iden. "I am surprised that one of them hasn't scratched yet."

Both of them quieted and looked at the ground. A rustling in a tree to the side of me got my attention. I looked up to see the head of a person. He had the same kind of mask on that Darryl and Iden had. Wind started up and moved a branch in front of his face. When it died down, he was gone.

"D-D-Darryl," My voice quivered.

He took another bite out of his apple, "What?" he asked, through a mouthful.

I leaned in and whispered to them, "There was a man. In that tree," I said, looking up at the tree, "He was looking right at me."

Iden gulped. "Scream! Try to run from us!" Iden whispered through gritted teeth.

"What?" I asked so quietly, I was almost mouthing it.

"Just do it!"

I started to scream wildly as Iden chased after me. Darryl got up too and started to run also. "Oh," I breathed to myself. It's an act. I let myself look a little more helpless. Soon Iden caught me. I tried to wriggle out of his grasp. He looked at me and smiled for a split second, knowing that I saw what he was getting at.

"Don't hurt me! I am begging you!" I laughed in my mind. My acting skills were better than I had thought.

"So, you weren't going soft that second. Glad to see it." the masked man stepped out from around the corner as he smiled at Iden.

Iden smiled back, "Yes. A way to gain trust. Too bad this one is too smart for her own good."

"Are we going to ask for a ransom?"

"Eh... Captain, It is too likely that we will be caught. I say that we sell her."

The "captain" nodded and said, "Smart thinking, Iden. Shaping up to be like your father, eh?"

Iden weakly nodded.

"Okay, you do that. I am going back to headquarters. Good job, you have fulfilled your first mission."

Iden grimaced without any control on his part, but the "captain" didn't see it. Lucky for him.

When the man had left, Iden turned to me, "That was the captain of the rebel group," he whispered as if it explained the ominous conversation that had just taken place, "We need to get you to the castle before they find out."

"You killed my horses," I reminded him with a glare.

He laughed, "I would never kill anything. It is a trick to intimidate you."

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Darryl lifted me onto my horse and Iden got on the other. "I will stay behind and keep guard," Darryl told me. My mind was in too much a whirl to answer. He slapped the rear end of the horse and we set off.

As we neared the castle, I slipped off the horse and tied him to a tree. "You probably shouldn't go any further. With my carriage gone and you on my other horse, it will look suspicious."

"I will go with you. The wolves might catch you."

"It's the middle of the day," I said, inching away from him.

"No, I mean the group of rebels."

"Oh. Sure," I agreed.

"I will come back and get the horses later."

I led Iden around back where an unguarded kitchen entrance stood. I tried the handle. Locked. Rats.

"Look a ladder!" Iden pointed to a rickety wooden ladder that looked as if were to crumble in a matter of seconds.

"It'll break!"

"I will be here to catch you if you fall."

I stepped onto the first rung. I could feel it bending. I stepped onto the second, and then the third, and then the fourth until I got to the top where I could jump onto the soft landing of the courtyard grass.

I was about to jump when I heard a shriek. I turned back as a mass of men dressed in black reached for Iden. The wolves.

"Push down the ladder and jump!" Iden screamed. I pushed down the ladder as it broke into a million pieces with the landing.

I jumped and landed in the soft green grass of the courtyard.