

## Death Sentence

Why am I doing this? I can't overpower them. I can't even put up a fight, but death is better than continuing to live in this hell. I was informed earlier that I would be executed the following day. Why did I have to be falsely accused of murdering the queen? Of all people, why did I have to be put in this horrendous situation? Was I simply at the wrong place at the wrong time? Surely I did nothing wrong. Well one thing's certain.... I am most definitely *not* leaving this world without a fight.

It must have been three days before, when while soaking up the sun on a nice afternoon, I found myself surrounded by guards. His majesty, king of Silas, one of the grandest kingdoms on Earth, had summoned my immediate arrest for my supposed involvement in the plotting of his beloved queen's murder. In his rage, he ordered my permanent removal. This was to be dated on April 17, 1517.

Just the thought of execution freezes my limbs. But if I am to escape, I cannot afford to stay in this mindset. Every night, I lie awake in bed thinking, plotting. Questions fly at me aimlessly day and night. How can I escape? Is it possible? Who was really behind the queen's murder? All of these questions went unanswered until one night. I was awake in bed, staring up at the ceiling when two guards making their rounds opened my gate and threw me my dinner: a piece of bread with some cheese. "Did you finish writing your will yet?" the taller one asked. I looked up at him, unmoving, my face full of sorrow. As they left, he threw me a sideways glance, then asked the other "Do you really think he did it?" "No." the other replied, "He is just a useful fool. The king has been wanting to get rid of the queen for the longest time, but her clan is powerful, and their loyalty is critical for his rule. In addition, it is rumored that the king has had his eye on another woman." Suddenly I understood why I was framed. The king has despised me ever since I protested against his taxes and he knew all too well that I was friends with the queen's younger brother Simon. That was his way of creating an animosity between our families. He was hitting two birds with one stone. The truth must be revealed. I came up with a plan and sprang into action, grabbing the paper that I was given to write my will. I quickly wrote everything I had just learned, and swore my innocence from the queen's blood, pleading for Simon's help. I then signed it and searched for a messenger, coming back empty handed. I took my bread, crumbled it into small pieces and placed them on the windowsill. It took a few hours, but eventually pigeons began feeding on the bread. I extended my hands through the iron bars, grabbed one gently and brought it in. Using string I had found on the cell floor, I tied my letter onto the pigeon, whispered in its ear and set it free. All of my hopes flew with it as it headed east. Hours felt like an eternity as I waited restlessly for a reply. It never came. Sunlight crawled into my cell as the echoing sound of footsteps filled the corridors. It was time.

My legs weakened as the guards lifted me off of the floor. I never thought it would end like this. In the prison courtyard I stood on a stool as the executioner tightened the rope around my neck. I gazed up into the sky, sure this would be my last time seeing its beauty. Has it always been this breathtaking? Despair overwhelmed me, and I thought all was lost. Darkness clouded my vision as they kicked the stool from underneath me.

Instead of the expected silence I heard commotion. The sound of hooves hitting the road, many hooves. I felt my body fall to the ground. I couldn't move. Although, I *could* hear Simon's voice, loud and clear. "I always believed you were innocent, my friend, but now I have the proof."

Could he really have proof? He has no reason to lie, so I hung on to that string of hope, for it was all I had left.

I was unconscious for what felt like hours, but turned out to be mere few minutes. I finally opened my eyes to see Simon towering above me with a concerned expression on his face.

"Good to see you, my friend. Glad to see you received my letter in time." I said with a grin. His face lit up, "Yes, but I was delayed while finding the evidence." I shot him a questioning look and he recounted how his older sister, the queen, had shared her suspicions with him concerning her husband's fidelity. She also mentioned who the other woman might be. Upon receiving my letter, he knew exactly where to go. It took some time to locate, but he emerged from her house clutching the king's love letter confessing to the crime. I knew now that I was safe, but our journey hadn't come to an end, for we had to bring the king to justice.