

THE ELITE Deleted Scene for B&N

AUTHOR NOTE: This is from America and Aspen meeting up just after King Clarkson and Maxon leave for New Asia. The earliest drafts of the book contained a lot of wedding talk between the two of them. Almost all of it ended up being cut, but this little moment as they say goodnight is kind of precious to me.

He set me on my feet and handed me my cane. “I’m going to wait a few minutes in here, but you need to go. I’ll write soon.”

“I’ll be waiting.” I leaned into him for one last kiss, which he happily gave me, and then went to leave. Just before I opened the door, he called to me.

“Mer?” I turned. “Start thinking about what you want, okay? For when we get home, I mean.”

I shook my head. “What if I said something ludicrous? Like I wanted you to build me my own palace, something better than this dump?”

He put his hands on his hips, smiling at my request.

“I get to pick the carpets. These are too squishy.”

I giggled quietly. “Fine.”

“So... is that a yes, then?”

The whole world seemed to grow still.

“Can we wait until I’m legally allowed to say yes? It would feel better if it actually *felt* official,” I said apologetically.

With some work he held the smile on his face. “Absolutely.”

“I’m sorry,” I said, feeling terrible. My chest heaved and the urge to cry over what I’d just said was overwhelming.

“No, Mer.” Aspen walked over to me and put a gentle hand to my face. “You’re right. When you’re home, and I’m really allowed to ask you, I will. I’ll send you the gushiest, most ridiculous love letter you could possibly imagine,” he promised in playful tones, making me laugh. “And I’ll be here, waiting for a letter from you. One word. That’s all I’ll need.”

“I’d like that,” I said. “It would be nice to have it written down.” Part of me needed to have a promise in writing. I’d been able to depend on so little lately.

“Then you’ll have it. Any anything else you want,” he promised. “Even a palace with carpets that are too deep.”

He smiled. That face, that beautiful face, was so honest and forgiving, that I found myself astonished again that I’d almost given it away. He gave me a quiet kiss.

“Love you, Mer.”

“Love you, too.” I turned the handle and dashed away.