The Queen's Seneschal

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The Queen's Seneschal

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Summary

When Guinevere and Kay got captured by Meleagant, it was almost too obvious that Lancelot would try and save them. The lovers are happy to be reunited, and Kay would really be happier if this reconnection happened outside of the room he's trying to sleep in.

This fic is meant to fill in in a weird gap that's always stuck in my mind in Charette, where Lancelot and Guinevere make out and are implied to have sex with Kay sleeping in the room.

It had been a long while since he had been wounded and imprisoned with the queen, Guinevere. They had long since been freed, and their captor killed like the traitor he was.

But no matter how he tried, Kay was still unable to forget.

He had been injured before that time, and imprisonment was nothing new. Meleagant had put him in the same room as Guinevere. Kay’s injuries had been more serious than he liked to admit. If not for the queen’s assistance, he might have died from blood loss shortly after Meleagant had captured the two of them.

They had been imprisoned for less than two weeks when something changed in Guinevere’s attitude. She seemed to be happier. Kay figured that someone from court might have sent her a message that help was on the way. He didn’t ask, since that way he could claim innocence if Meleagant asked, and he knew the prince would never interrogate a noblewoman like he might a seneschal.
In what turned out to be the final night, Meleagant had ordered for Guinevere and Kay to be brought to dine with him in the hall. Kay had been propped up and wasn’t given a knife to eat with. There wasn’t much to do but eat and listen to the prince try and woo the queen, and to smile at her caustic rebuffs. After the meal ended, Meleagant stalked off and the guards locked the prisoners in their room again. They talked for a while before Guinevere suggested they get an early night, implying that something might happen tomorrow.

Kay was happy enough to oblige, and not just because he still felt the wound in his gut. But at some point in the night, he jolted awake at the sound of voices.

“What are you doing here?”

He knew Guinevere’s voice as well as his own, even when she was talking quiet and low. Had he not been wounded, Kay would have been upright in an instant and on his feet to make certain the newcomer meant the queen no harm. But he couldn’t do that, and winced at his twitchy movement. In that moment, he heard a familiar voice respond to her.

“I had to make certain you were unharmed, and to see you again.” It was a man’s voice, deep and rich, one that Kay had last heard a few years ago at court. The hint of an accent remained even after many years. It was Lancelot, the queen’s champion, at the window, returned after a few years of self-imposed exile to act as her savior once again. Personally, Kay would have preferred if Gawain had been the one to rescue them, since he vastly preferred Gawain to Lancelot, but it wasn’t like he had much choice in the matter.

The pair near the window presumably figured he was still asleep, so Kay decided to oblige them and shut his eyes tight, willing himself to fall asleep again.

“It’s dangerous here! How did you get past Meleagant’s guards?” Guinevere said.

Lancelot made a small sound that was probably him trying not to laugh. “There are a lot of guards, but their training is somewhat lacking. But how are you? Have you been treated alright? We didn’t have a chance to talk before, when we met very briefly… And how is the seneschal?”

“Kay is wounded, and I being to think that Meleagant wishes he will not recover,” Guinevere said. “But I am fine.”

“I am glad of that,” Lancelot said.

Kay risked turning his head slightly toward the two people. He saw Lancelot was gripping the bars of the window and that the queen had her hands over his. It was hard to discern features and emotion in the stark palette of moonlight and shadow, so Kay shut his eyes again.

“Where have you been these last years?” Guinevere said, her voice sounding thick.

“Many places. I can tell you in great detail once you are safe, but suffice to say, I did not stay in any one place more than a week, to try and forget…”

They were quiet for a moment before she said, “And were you successful in… in forgetting?”

“No, my queen. Everything I saw, all I could think was that I wished you could see it, too. I was glad to meet new people, but I found myself longing for familiar faces… for you. Distance cannot make my love for you fade.”

Kay bit his lip to keep from crying out. Like many others, he had noticed the closeness between the queen and her champion, but he had obviously underestimated just how close they were.
“You don’t know how happy that makes me,” Guinevere said. Kay heard her sniff. He wished that he hadn’t woken up so they would’ve had privacy to talk and to cry.

“Step back for a moment. I think I can get inside.”

“The bars are made of iron!”

“I know, but let me try anyway.”

Kay nearly laughed at the confidence in his voice. But then he heard a long creak of metal, and the sound of something heavy being set on the ground. He cracked open an eye to see that Lancelot had indeed removed the iron bars from the window, and set the frame containing them down. The knight entered the room and, once he was standing on the ground, Kay saw Guinevere grab Lancelot’s arms as they began to kiss. He shut his eyes again, and turned his head away. He didn’t want to see this, he didn’t want to know any of this, he wanted to go back to sleep and forget this.

“I am impressed that you managed to remove the bars. Are you hurt, my love?” Guinevere said from between their kisses.

“Just a small cut on my hand, but it is no matter,” Lancelot said. He had spoken a bit louder than she had, so she shushed him.

“We need to make sure we’re quiet!” she said.

“I’m surprised that Sir Kay didn’t wake up when I dropped the frame,” Lancelot said with a chuckle, but he was quieter.

“Let me check on Kay,” Guinevere said and he heard two pairs of footsteps walk over. He made sure his breathing was even as he heard a rustle of fabric that he presumed to mean she was leaning over him. He felt her hand brush against his forehead. He heard her breathe as she listened to him. Then, she was gone, fabric rustling again as she stood. “Kay seems to be alright. But…I do not know if he is well enough to be moved… Kay had been badly injured.”

“I am not sure that I can check on Sir Kay’s wound directly without waking him,” Lancelot said, sounding nearer, and again forgetting to make sure he was as quiet as the queen.

“We can check tomorrow. Hopefully, he will be somewhat better in the morning,” Guinevere said.

The footsteps moved away from his bed. He heard a laugh and a creak from the other bed as weight was put on it. Kay shut his eyes even tighter and tried not to listen to Guinevere and Lancelot in the other bed.

The lovers spoke again later in the night, before Lancelot left. He was planning on arriving the next morning to challenge Meleagant to a duel and to free Guinevere and the seneschal, since Kay was too injured for a nighttime escape. Even after Lancelot had left and replaced the bars, Kay had a hard time falling asleep.

In the morning, Meleagant and his guards came to bring the queen and Kay to breakfast as they had every morning of their imprisonment. But Kay’s wounds had opened again in the night, and there was nothing unusual in that, except there was blood found in the queen’s bed. There wasn’t a scratch on her and there was too much for it to have been her (period), so it didn’t take long for Meleagant to accuse Kay of sleeping with the queen. He denied it, and thought to himself that the injury Lancelot must have gotten getting into the room must have been larger than he had thought, or else he had been wounded before, and that he had left the blood behind. There was no way that Kay would tell any of that to Meleagant, so when questioned where else the blood had come from, Kay said he
“Under my own roof!” Meleagant shouted. His face was red, and a vein stood out in his neck. “I have been the perfect host! Despite my love for the queen, I have not even kissed her! And yet here you are, you wretch, taking advantage of her under my own roof! I ought to kill you for this insult —!!”

Kay knew he had grown pale, but he grit his teeth and literally bit his tongue to keep from snapping back at Meleagant.

Guinevere, though, had also grown pale, but it was from anger. Her brows lowered and her mouth was tight. “Sir Kay is the most honorable knight I know, and the best of men,” Guinevere said, cutting off the prince’s tirade. “I promise you, we have never made love, and that the love we share is that of a brother and sister.”

“Love? You speak of love, my lady? I know what love is well enough! I have loved you for years, even when you married that fool… But I have remained true to you, my love, which is more than you can say!!” Meleagant grabbed one of Guinevere’s wrists.

She tried to twist away. Kay leapt forward and shoved the prince away from her.

“Do not touch the queen!!” Kay said, almost shouting. He could feel his pulse in his wound, and hoped it wasn’t going to open again.

Meleagant brought back a ring covered hand and slapped Kay. He kept standing in front of the queen, and glared. The prince sneered then punched Kay in the gut, right where he had been stabbed. Kay nearly doubled over, and clenched his fists to keep from hitting back.

Meleagant laughed. “Well then, my lady, it appears that you have other champions coming to my aid! Do you wish to fight me for her, seneschal?”

Before Kay could say yes, dammit, another voice spoke.

“I will fight in his place. Sir Kay is too injured for combat, and we have fought together many times,” Lancelot said from the doorway. The queen was behind Kay so he couldn’t see what her face looked like. Lancelot was tall, and standing there glaring from the entrance, he looked more imposing than Kay had seen him before.

“Who let this man in?!?” Meleagant snarled at a harried-looking steward who was a few steps behind Lancelot.

“Your Highness, Sir Lancelot arrived this morning, and wished to speak with you,” the steward said, bowing towards the prince.

Before Meleagant could say anything else, Kay said, “Your offer is most generous, Sir Lancelot, and I accept your aid.” He glanced down at himself quickly and saw that there was a few drops of blood on the floor.

“Fine,” Meleagant said with a sneer. “Allow me to arm myself, then we shall fight! Steward, see that Guinevere is placed under guard until she is claimed as prize. Sir Lancelot, since you are so eager to defend Sir Kay, he can act as your squire. Your things will be brought to you here.” Meleagant stalked off. After a backwards glance at Lancelot and the seneschal, Guinevere followed the steward into the hall. One of the guards closed the door after her.

Kay found himself alone with Lancelot, the man whom he heard make love to the queen the
previous night, whose act he was now accused of. He felt exhausted and embarrassed and his wound was aching, so he sat on the edge of his bed with a groan.

“Forgive me for sitting,” Kay said, trying to even his breathing.

“It is no trouble. May I help you, Kay?” Lancelot said, kneeling next to him. The bastard was sincere, even if the mess was of his making.

Kay looked the knight in the eyes and resisted the urge to sigh. He knew that Lancelot cared and would do everything in his power to see that all three of them, but particularly the queen, arrived safely back at court. Kay hated to admit it, but Guinevere and the knight did suit each other, in temperament as well as in looks. They were both beautiful, of course. She had long, light brown hair with green eyes and a beautiful smile, an intelligent mind, and a sharp tongue with a keen wit. Lancelot was helpful and more kind than most people would be in his position, and he had thick dark hair, strong shoulders, and an easy laugh and smile.

Kay did sigh, and said, “You can help me by beating that bastard and getting the queen out of here.”

Lancelot frowned. “I… She has not been hurt, has she?”

“Thank God, no. I have been with her all of our capture, up till now.”

“I am glad she is unharmed, and that… that you have been here with her,” Lancelot said. Kay figured he was probably guilty that he hadn’t been there himself to protect her. He also figured he probably ought to ask where Lancelot had been the last few years, since he wasn’t meant to have been awake in the night, but before he could, Lancelot said, “Please, tell me everything that has happened.”

“I’ll start with what’s happened here before I fill you in on court gossip,” Kay said, and he did. Partway through, some servants deposited Lancelot’s bags, and Kay helped him to equip the armor.

“You should not be helping me like this, Sir Kay,” Lancelot said, apparently flustered by this upset of the social order.

“Who else is here to help you?” Kay said with a low chuckle.

After both combatants had been armed and equipped themselves, they were to fight. Kay was to watch the duel off to the side with Guinevere, who was tense. He had no real fear that Lancelot would lose, though, or even that he would sustain any injuries. It was love that made her worry for Lancelot, he figured, even though the champion was untouchable.

Lancelot was the victor in the end, but the duel had lasted longer than expected. He even granted Meleagant his life, something that Kay doubted the prince would have done had their positions been reversed. There was some more trouble with Meleagant after that, which Kay had been expecting. But Sir Gawain had showed up, and he saw the queen and kay safely back to court.

Kay still remembered that last night before they were all freed, try as he might to forget. He told no one, not even his confessor, what he had seen, but he thought about it constantly.

After a night of listening to some young knights boasting about their adventures, Kay sat with Gawain and a bottle of wine between them. Gawain said, “What’s wrong, Kay? You’ve seemed different since returning to court. Has your wound not fully healed?”

“Please, don’t worry about me, Gawain,” Kay said.
“But you are my friend,” Gawain said simply.

Kay wanted to tell Gawain what he had seen and heard, but he didn’t. He didn’t want anyone else to have the same divide of loyalties. And besides, the king was Gawain’s uncle.

That same king was also Kay’s foster brother.

“Thank you, Gawain. That means a lot, truly.” Kay said. He wouldn’t burden any of his friends with this. It was better to truly forget, he told himself again. He found himself noticing whenever the queen and her champion were both missing, or went for walks together. Kay hoped they were happy, since the situation was dangerous for them, and stressful for him.

Kay nearly told Arthur more than once. He wasn’t entirely sure what stopped him every time. This was the same person who he had grown up with, except that Arthur was now a king. He really did feel the same affection for Guinevere that he did Arthur. She was the sister he wished he had known all his life. And as for Lancelot, Kay couldn’t ignore that he was a powerful knight and ally. And again, if they loved one another as it seemed they did, Kay didn’t want to be the cause of that being lost.

One night, when Gawain and Lancelot were both absent questing and the king had gone hunting with some visiting dignitaries, Kay sat alone with Guinevere. They shared some honey cakes and wine, and they talked quietly together before the warmth of the fire.

She had been asking him if he missed participating in tournaments since becoming the seneschal and having to organize them. He said no, since he hadn’t been a knight for long before that. “But you are one of the best knights,” she said. “You are smart as well as strong.”

“I’m not strong enough to have kept you from getting captured by Meleagant’s men, nor smart enough to have figured a way out for us,” Kay said, taking a long drink.

“You did remarkably well, considering we were ambushed by twenty men and you felled half of them,” Guinevere said in a dry voice that made him laugh.

“I won’t keep arguing with you since soon it’ll become treasonous, Guinevere, but thank you for your confidence in me,” he said. “But… for your question about tournaments… I think I would prefer to leave the glory to Gawain and Lancelot, presuming that I could ever beat either of them. I have a different duty to fulfill.”

She grasped his hand and smiled. “Don’t underrate yourself, Kay. You’re a good knight, and an even better friend.”

He smiled back at her. “As are you. I hope you know that I would never betray you,” Kay said carefully. “You have all of my loyalty, and I think of you as though you were my own sister by blood.”

“And you are my surly older brother,” she said and laughed.

“An accurate description,” he said with a chuckle, but then frowned.

“Kay, what’s wrong?” she said, her smile also falling.

After a moment, he slowly said, “I know that you and Lancelot are… very close to one another.”

She swallowed, but didn’t look away from Kay. There was some color in her cheeks, though. “Yes,” she said.
“Not like we are, but…” Of course he was the one getting embarrassed, and he was sure he was blushing by now. “But close romantically.”

She was silent for a moment, before she said, “I love him. And he loves me.”

He nodded. “If you ever need a confidante, I am here for you.” Whatever conflicts he felt, hers were probably greater, and he didn’t want to leave her alone if he could help it.

He saw tears well up in her eyes before Guinevere flung her arms around Kay in an embrace. “Thank you,” she said, her voice somewhat muffled since she was leaning into his shoulder. Kay too put his arms around Guinevere, and smiled. He heard her sniff a few times and hugged her tighter. After a few moments, they broke apart.

“Kay, I…” She shook her head and smiled.

“I’d do anything to see you happy,” Kay said.

“And if you ever need anyone, I am here for you, Kay. Even if you’re just sick of speaking with Yvain or one of the other knights, I can deal with them for you,” she said.

“Voluntarily speaking with Yvain? Now that’s a sacrifice,” he said, and Guinevere laughed. Whatever his anxieties about her relationship with Lancelot, he would support her. If he got word of any rumors, he would silence them and warn her, Kay decided. He might be breaking the king’s trust, but their marriage had been purely political. Besides, he could never break the trust of his dearest friend, Guinevere.

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