

Wife of The Demon Prince

Chapter 10 - Back home (part 2)

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"What? Have I not told you to look after her? How bad is her health that got her to come back without attending the banquet?.....You all are useless!" Henry Snapped at his guards.

Unlike Anne who had learned about the reason of Ara's early return later, Henry had been briefed on what had happened in advance. As soon as they arrived at the mansion, the guards who escorted Ara, had to go through hell for not doing their job properly.

The lead guard quickly went down on his knees and begged. "I'm sorry, sir it won't happen again, I'll risk my life for her next time."

Henry looked at his guards with annoyance on his face and announced to them. "It's too late to beg...and there will be no next time. Line up accordingly, and do 150 pushups, that will be your punishment for failing to perform your duties properly!"

When Henry made up his mind, no one could stop or change it. It was a memorable event for those who trained and those who watched them. Just like that Ara had been turned from a simple lady to someone they would risk their life for, all of which was unknown by Ara.

As the day passed and night descended, general Richard soon arrived at the mansion. All the servants stood in a line with the senior butler Jacobs, at the head of it, they all bowed respectfully.

"Welcome back Lord Richard." They greeted all together.

As Richard walked inside his home, in reality Richard didn't really like this kind of grand welcome, but Ara had also prepared this for her father in her previous life. After his long absence few new servants were aware of his face, and Ara had thought of this as a way to give such a grand welcome in her father's honour.

It was the same today. At the end of the long line Ara stood with Anne and Henry waiting for him. Ara's cheeks flushed with happiness at the thought of seeing her father for the first time in nineteen years.

"No matter how often father comes home, I feel like I haven't seen him for years." complained Anne with a frowned brow.

Ara smiled at Anne's words. From Ara's point of view her sister wasn't completely wrong. When Ara began to see her father's approaching shadow, she hurriedly smoothen her dress.

"Anne, how do I look?"

"You look stunning. How many times have I told you that you look gorgeous, today?"

"Oh, have you?"

Anne shook her head at her sister's unusual nervous behavior. When Anne had heard that her sister became sick during her trip, she tried to make her rest all day in bed, but she refused and said. "I can't stay in bed all day, when father is coming today." Ara had been acting very strange since she came back. She wasn't usually self conscious, but she had changed her dress several times and kept asking on how she looked. Everyone envied Ara's beauty. And the envy of others was Anne's pride. She had never seen anyone as prettier as her sister.

Despite Ara's natural beauty, however, she was not very interested in taking care of herself. It was the first time for her to pay attention to her appearance. If the occasion had been to meet another man, then Anne would have thought her sister had fallen for him. Anne could never had believed that the man they were waiting for, was their father whom they hadn't seen for weeks, Anne stared at her sister with a look of curiosity, but could not discern her thoughts.

Richard finally appeared to their view. Though middle-aged, her father still retained his handsome features. He stood tall and had light green eyes and a smooth ginger hair just like Ara. Thanks to his long career as a general he had a strong physics, but at the moment looked like a gentleman with his black suite instead of his armor suite. He had the same stoic expression as Henry, but his jawline bore a resemblance to Ara.

Ara became overwhelmed with emotion as she saw her father coming forward to them. The last image she remembered was his cold body hanging on a tree, She quickly shook her head to clear the disturbing image in her mind.

' I won't let that happen again!' She vowed internally. She secretly swallowed a happy smile, she turned to her side to look at Anne and Henry, standing next to her this will do. She won't be greedy.

At Richard's appearance, Henry gave a short bow, while Ara spoke with affection in her voice. "Welcome back, father."

"Thank you." Richard said curtly, then immediately strode towards Anne. She looked cutely up at him as she held her dress and Richard stern expression gently relaxed. He gently patted her head with his large hand. "How have you been doing?" He asked with a soft smile on his face.

"I'm doing well, father. I missed you so much."

"Oh really? Because I missed you to darling." He said with affection in his voice.

"Sister Ara, also missed you too, she has been taking care of everything for you, father."

Anne was the youngest child, and even her graceful way of talking was cute. Even though their father favoured Anne than his other children, because she looked so much like their mother. Ara watched the two of them talking before her father's eyes turned towards her. She spoke in a slightly shaky voice.

"I hope your journey went well, father?"

Richard nodded lightly. she couldn't breath for a moment, her heart was full, she had a father she thought she would never see again.

"Have you had dinner yet, father?" She asked.

"No, I knew you all will be waiting for me to have dinner together. Let's go have dinner now." With that Richard made his way to the dinning hall first, followed by his three children. He would often arrive at the mansion late at night and would go to the dinning hall as soon as he arrived. No one knew how special this dinner was for Ara today. She walked quietly behind him as she tried to hide the tears in her eyes.

They arrived at the hall, the centerpiece of it which was a long table covered in white tablecloth, the table was large enough to accommodate 25 people, and it was neatly decorated with candles and fresh flowers. Before Richard had arrived Ara had taken care of the arrangement, as usual her father was seated at the head of the table and Henry sat on his right, Ara and Anne were seated on his left.

The servants began to bring in the food. In the past when they celebrated Richard homecoming the family would enjoy dinner because of Ara's careful preparation, but tonight she had pulled out all the stops. No one would say it, but the large table was so full with different types of delicacy. Anne mumbled something under her breath, while Richard and Henry enjoy their meal silently. It was Richard who broke the silence.

"Are you going to participate in this year's sword trials competition?"
Everybody at the table knew he was talking to Henry. Henry hadn't been able to participate in last year's competition because of an injury he suffered during a training session. Her father and brother didn't speak about it, but she knew Henry had a deep regret for not competing last year.

"Yes, I'm thinking of participating this year." Henry responded.

"If you decide to join, try and perform well.....don't put our family's name to shame."

"Yes, I'll do my best."

Maybe this was just how a conversation between a father and a son went. Ara pressed down a smile as she listened to the conversation between the two extremely similar men. In the past it was uncomfortable, but now she simply smiled. As the meal went on Richard turned his attention towards Ara. And asked.

"You were to attend Danielle's birthday banquet, weren't you?"

"Yes, father"

"I heard you came back home, because you had an upset stomach on the way. I know you care for others, but next time I'll like you to stay at home and take care of the household, than attend things like birthday banquet, okay?"

"Okay father."

Richard didn't stop there and continued speaking. "If Henry participate in this year's trials, he may have to live with me in zari in future, don't pay attention to any more unnecessary things and concentrate more on the servants and the household."

Ara paused as she held her fork tightly. After a moment she replied in a subdued voice. "Yes, father."

"And don't forget to take care of your sister all the time, she only has you to care for her once we leave for zari."

"I Wil care for her." She replied softly.

"Your brother is the pillar of our family. He will follow my footsteps later and become a commanding general. As I have said before, women are better off in the kitchen and with children. I don't expect much from you, but to work hard on the household until you get matched."

Ara heard this all the time in her previous life, but suddenly she couldn't figure out why these words weighed so heavily on her chest now, Ara's expression turned sullen, and Anne burst out in anger.

"Why is it that you always think women are better off doing house work, huh? Even though you oppose to it father, their are women out there doing things better than men and having professional jobs."

Richard looked at his youngest daughter with a soft expression and said. "Because those women you're talking about, don't come from noble families, you don't have to compare yourself to such disgraceful women, understood?"

"Well then can't you let sister choose what she want? She's old enough to know what she wants, father."

"You're talking nonsense Anne." Richard said while he turned to Ara with a displeased look on his face and asked.

"Ara! What have you been teaching your sister, to talk back at her elders?"

Ara glared at Anne to stop. Then she answered to her father in a soft voice. "I'm sorry father. Anne is still young she doesn't know what she's saying."

"Anne, don't take after your big sister, and know how to talk to your father in a respectable way, understood?" Richard asked.

"Tch." Even with Richard's firm tone, Anne simply pouted her lips and looked away from him without answering. If it was Ara who did this, she would have been scolded for life, but Anne had never been scolded because she was their father's favorite. As usual, Richard stared at Anne in a disapproving manner but quickly moved on as if things were fine.

Since Ara's childhood she had a lot of responsibilities to fill in her mother's absence, the care of the family, the care of the family men, and the care of her sister. It was all up to her, but she had never been dissatisfied with her life, she was simply living out her destiny, but tonight she felt disappointed at what her father had said. Perhaps she wanted to be recognized for her sacrifice, she had endured so much when her family had died in the future, and there was some hope he could appreciate the tears and sweat she had given for this family. She was just as capable as her father.

Ara swallowed a bitter smile. It was like a dream to have a meal together with them like this. There was no end to human greed, she wanted her family to be ignorant of the life she lived, but at the same time she wanted to be rewarded? Ara laughed inwardly at her selfishness. This was alright, she didn't want any more than this. Ara swallowed the lump in her throat and tried to finish her meal.

Dinner finally came to end. Each family member dispersed into their own rooms while Ara had to stay behind to clean up, although she did not work with her hands, it was her job to distribute work and supervised the servants, just like her father wanted.

After she finished her work and left the dining hall, she saw a mug of chocolate tea waiting for her at a table. As soon as she saw it she knew immediately who kept it there. It was the kind of gift that Henry would sometimes leave for her, since she was a little girl, whenever she heard some things that made her angry at the family gathering he would give her chocolate, perhaps the conversation at dinner was on Henry's mind.

'I haven't received this in a long time, why haven't I recognized his kindness to me before?' She thought internally, and warmed her hands around the mug, the comfort seemed to seep into her thoughts.