

Extra 2

"It's alright, my Princess..."

The young girl kept crying helplessly in her mother's arms, despite her kind words, inconsolable. She was shaking despite being nestled in her mother's arms, her little arms tighter around her neck, crying tirelessly against her shoulder. Every time the thunder would drum above them, she'd scream in fear and cry more. Cassandra sighed, still caressing her baby's chestnut locks gently and patting her back. That heat storm wasn't going to stop anytime soon, sadly for the terrified little girl child. It was one of those big ones that they would get after several days of drought, when the air was hot and humid. The first rain in a long while was welcomed by the inhabitants, but for the little princess, this unseen event beforehand was a nightmare.

Cassandra exchanged a glance with the woman seated by her side. Phemera gave her a sorry glance, visibly also worried about the little girl. She still had on her lap the untouched remains of the dessert they had tried to feed the girl for comfort. Nothing could stop her cries, and they couldn't really blame her. At only six years old, all she could do was cry and seek refuge in her mom's familiar embrace.

"Daddy..." She cried again.

"He'll be back soon, dear," Phemera said, her heart pinching at the little girl's big tears.

"Daddy's gone to help the citizens," Cassandra explained gently.

It wasn't enough to calm young Cessilia down. Another thunderbolt struck the sky at the window, and Cassandra covered her baby's ear. Behind her, Glahad the golden dragon let out a faint growl, right at the same time as the thunder outside. Perhaps it was enough, because Cessilia didn't react to this one. Cassandra and Phemera both glanced to the side and smiled at the older dragon. They had decided to stay in the place Cessilia considered the safest, which was the throne room, next to her grandfather's dragon. Cassandra's back was even lying against the golden scales, both she and Phemera sitting on the cold marble floor rather than any of the chairs. Cessilia's aunt glanced to the side. Hidden against Glahad's chest was Cessilia's own dragon, little Cece, probably trembling and curled up in a bundle of silver-magenta scales, tucked as far as possible under the adult dragon's body.

"Bloody hell!"

The two women raised their heads at the Empress' entrance, while Glahad barely looked up. Shareen, Cessilia's aunt and the Dragon Empire's very own Empress, was walking in, drenched, with half a dozen servants running to pick up the pieces of armor she threw behind her, until she grabbed a towel out of their hands. She wiped her face with a groan, and tried to start drying her hair aggressively with it, the female servant behind her going pale at the thought of the mess it was going to be to untangle.

"How's the situation outside?" Phemera asked.

"Mostly under control," Shareen said. "Two trees fell in the middle of the road, the streets closest to the river should be safe from the rising waters, and a few idiots who were injured were taken to the hospital... Is she still crying?"

Cassandra nodded.

"She'll get used to it," sighed Shareen. "...What about the other two brats? Are they around?"

"Weren't they with Kairen?" Cassandra frowned.

"He sent them both back a while ago. ...What, they aren't home yet?"

"I'm here!"

Arriving behind her, the young Prince Kassian walked in, also wet, his silver dragon immediately running ahead to curl up against Cassandra's legs with a satisfied, cute growl. He got another towel from the servants, and quickly dried himself off, walking up to his mother with a sigh.

"Sorry, mom, aunties. We saw someone who was struggling with their chariot on the way back, so I stopped to help."

"It's alright," smiled Cassandra, a bit proud of her ten-year-old.

"What about Darsan?" Shareen frowned, putting her hands on her hips. "Where's he?"

Kassian opened his mouth and closed it, visibly surprised.

"He... should have been home before me..."

Cassandra chuckled. Unlike Cessilia, her older brothers were quite fearless, even when it came to helping their father out in the middle of a storm. Phemera, too, smiled, as Shareen's expression dropped.

"You're telling me that wild brat is running free and unsupervised in my Palace? ...Find him!" She shouted at the servants. "If you can't find a seven-year-old boy before this storm is over I swear you'll be the first ones sorry about it!"

Cassandra was already feeling sorry for the servants; Even if they were used to Shareen's temper, finding her son in the large Palace would be no easy task. Not only was the Palace way too large, but Darsan had already become a master at escaping the adults' surveillance. At best, they would find him when the boy actually caused a ruckus... Which would already be far too late.

While Shareen was still furious, Kassian walked up to his mom, his eyes on his little sister.

"Are you still crying, Cessi? It's alright, the storm isn't so scary."

This time, Cessilia turned her tears-soaked eyes towards her older brother. He sat on his knees by his mom's side, petting his little sister.

"What about Kiera and Shenan?" Asked Kassian, a bit worried about his younger siblings as well.

"Missandra is looking after the younger ones," smiled Cassandra. "I believe they're all asleep."

They had put the younger ones into one of the Palace's guest rooms, which had thicker walls and a better sound barrier too. Cassandra wasn't too worried about the younger babies; they were used to loud noises like dragon growls, and they were still too young to tell the difference with a thunderstorm. They would probably sleep through the night along with Missandra's daughters.

Only Cessilia was at the right age to recognize this scary weather and be legitimately afraid. After another roll of thunder, a little squeak came from under Glahad's chest. The golden dragon growled, and laid down its head.

"So that's where Cece is," scoffed Shareen. "See, you Old Butt, you've got another use from being a chair after all!"

Probably used to her temper, the old dragon didn't even flinch, its eyes half-closed, more bothered about the younger baby dragon hiding underneath.

"Daddy..." Cessilia cried again.

Cassandra sighed, and held her daughter a bit tighter, kissing her forehead. She had calmed down a bit with her big brother's arrival, but she was still worried about her dad being out there.

"He will be back soon, Baby," Cassandra whispered.

"Cessi," said Kassian, smiling at her. "Dad is the strongest! He only went out to beat that bad storm out there! I'm sure when he will be back he'll hug Cessi first!"

Cassandra smiled, as always proud of her oldest, very well behaved son. Kassian had been an only child and motherless for two years, and now, he was the best older brother to all his siblings. He was incredibly mature for his age, and always trying to help out the best he could. All four of his younger siblings seemed to gravitate towards him. Even Shenan, who wasn't even a year old, seemed to like his big brother best.

"...I'm proud of you," she whispered to her son.

Kassian, who didn't expect the sudden compliment from his mom, seemed surprised for a second, before putting on a big smile. Cassandra gently combed his wet hair back. Since he had come back, his little sister had calmed down a little, and was now crying silently against her mom's shoulder, her eyes on Kassian.

Meanwhile, Shareen rolled her eyes, and turned around, the group of servants following her again.

"Where are you going?" Asked Phemera.

"To find that missing brat!" She shouted, annoyed. "I'm not going to let your ridiculously strong boy wreck my Palace a second time!"

Cassandra waited a few seconds after she was gone to chuckle. Phemera too, had a faint smile on her lips.

"...She's not going to be happy," she whispered.

"It's alright," chuckled Cassandra. "As long as Lady Kareen loves him, I'm pretty sure Shareen won't dare get too mad at my troublesome son... It's all material damages,

anyway. It's not his fault he's excessively strong. He'll get better at controlling it when he's older."

"Let's hope so..."

Suddenly, the doors of the Palace were banged open. They all turned their heads towards the large figure that walked in, his coat dripping with rainwater. Once again, the servants didn't dare approach, only picking up the large piece of clothing when he left it behind him. He got rid of his gloves the same way, and combed his wet hair back. Glahad the old dragon finally raised its head, glancing towards the man, while Cece, the baby dragon, peeked up too.

"Look who's back, Cessi," Kassian smiled.

The little girl looked back just as the man was walking up to them.

"Daddy!"

She left her mom's arms to run across the room.

Kairen smiled, and put a knee down, welcoming his little girl just as she ran into his arms. She was crying and smiling at the same time, and he smiled too, standing back up carrying her. Kassian smiled, but took this little opportunity to go and hug his mom, who happily welcomed him. Her ten-year-old son was already so big, he'd soon be taller than her... Meanwhile, Cessilia was still small in her dad's strong arms. The thunder had finally stopped outside, only replaced by a pouring rain and hot winds, but it would all be gone by morning.

"Were you afraid?" Kairen whispered to his daughter.

Cessilia nodded, her cheeks still wet. He smiled, and suddenly raised his hand to show her something; It was containing a small object, something unknown to the little girl. She frowned, and picked it up. It was a curious, cone-like and voluptuous little object, with a hole. It smelled like salt, despite being so smooth and colorful. She was a bit confused. Her dad wiped her cheeks with his big thumbs.

"Daddy... What is it?"

"It's a present from the wind," he said.

"From the wind?" She frowned.

"Yes. When there's a big thunderstorm like this, the wind brings a lot of presents, from far away. So whenever there's a storm, dad will bring you one, like this."

Cessilia's big green eyes looked at her present, confused; it was the first time she had seen anything like this. Her mother stood and walked up to them. After giving a quick kiss to her husband, she then turned to her daughter, and gently turned the object in her hand.

"Listen to it."

Cessilia frowned, confused again, but gently put the object's hole against her ear. The little girl's face frowned for a second, and then it lit up, ecstatic.

"Mommy, what is it?"

"It's the sea, my Princess. This is called a seashell... and you can hear the sea it came from, if you put it against your ear."

The little girl was visibly amazed. Kassian too, came to listen to the seashell. Cassandra and Kairen exchanged an accomplice's glance while she handed it to her older sibling. Perhaps thunderstorms wouldn't be so scary to their oldest daughter from now on...

"My Lady?"

They turned their heads to find The Imperial Counselor, Evin, standing there in his bedroom bathrobe. He let out a faint sigh.

"I have to report, a wall of the palace has collapsed."

"A wall? How come? A landslide?"

"It does not seem so, my Lady. The... roof above the wall held on, as well as the rest of the room it was adjacent to. If I may dare put my personal opinion forward, I believe this was more of a natural disaster originated by a... young but very vandalism-prone young man."

Cassandra and Kairen exchanged another glance.

"...Darsan!" Exclaimed Cessi, chuckling.

"Mom, did Darsan just cause a lot of trouble again?" Sighed Kassian.

"I'm sorry, my Love. Could you go and get your brother before your aunt finds him?" Asked Cassandra. "I have a feeling he'd better fly north and far from our Empress' wrath..."

Kassian laughed, and put a quick kiss on his sister's cheek.

"I'll be right back, Cessi!"

She waved goodbye as he and his dragon ran out of the throne room.

"...Let's all go home," suddenly said Kairen.

"Really?"

He nodded, putting his other arm around his wife's waist. Cassandra smiled, and glanced at her daughter.

"You heard your dad, my Princess? We're flying home at dawn."

"Can we go see grandma?"

"We'll make a stop at her Palace. But first, you need to catch some sleep, my Princess."

Cessilia nodded, and leaned against her dad's chest, curling up against his warm skin. She visibly had no intention to leave his strong arm, but it was alright. Soon after she closed her eyes, the little girl had fallen asleep, breathing slowly. Cassandra gently put a strand of her hair behind her ear.

"Phemera, do you want to come with us?"

The woman, who had young dragon Cece on her lap, shook her head with a smile, without surprise. She never, ever left the Palace. Cassandra couldn't comprehend why her sister-in-law had decided to seclude herself in this place, but she respected her wish. They exchanged a simple smile.

"Please greet Lady Kareen in my stead," she simply said.

"We will."

Kairen turned around, carrying his daughter, and holding her mother's hand. Cece chirped cutely and ran to follow. Left behind, Phemera simply smiled at the retreating

figures of the family, while Glahad moved its large head under her hand to be pet. Her fingers gently caressed the golden scales.

"I know, Glahad," she said. "I'll miss them too. Until the next time... Now, shall we prepare ourselves for an angry Empress?"

The Dragon Empire Saga continues in

The White King's