

Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 13 – Torn Apart (1)

When asked back in a shrill voice, his lips cynically twisted into a sneer.

“I told you, you’re my wife. We consummated three years ago. Why are you acting like that?”

Max glowed red from her head to toe. Ashamed, her face became visibly hot at once, her hands fidgeting at her sides.

“D**n it, do not freak out, I just changed your clothes! You should have fainted on the night of our wedding if you abhorred the very thought of me touching you!”

Her shoulders shook; her mind in a terrible shamble. Gravely enraged, Riftan spewed out these words, “A corrupted noblewoman is frustrated, losing her mind even, by things as trivial as this!”

Max blushed and muttered in a muted voice. “I’m sorry.”

Her apology was returned by his silence. After a short moment, Max heard the hinges of a closing door as Riftan went out to the road. And, she found herself alone with only the cold walls of the shabby room to keep her company.

She shook her head in disappointment. How many times have she made him upset today? An entire had yet to pass since they had reunited hours ago. *Is it okay to let him be like this?*

Max bit her lip nervously. Riftan now treats her as a wife, but there was no guarantee that this would last. *‘No, it was only a matter of time before he comes to his senses.’* The very thought of a divorce haunted her, making her loathe herself even more.

‘What if he realizes that I’m useless? He’ll certainly take a harsher attitude towards me.’

Riftan was a knight who, out of scratch, made a name for himself. Now that he was already with a high position, he would naturally be invited to numerous social gatherings and banquets in the future.

At this thought, Max sighed, thoroughly disheartened. She knew well that she was not the kind of wife a husband would want to boast around. *‘I’m sure he will realize this soon enough and start abusing me... just like my father. Why don’t I just go home and ask for my father’s mercy before it happens?’*

She recalled him standing tall, clutching his sword by its hilt. He cut a monster three times his size in one stroke. It was terrible to imagine what would happen if he wielded a whip against her. This possible scenario made her squirm anxiously.

'But... he hasn't hit me yet.' She gathered her brows at this musing. He didn't raise his hand against her even after becoming irritated with her many times. Maybe he is not as cruel as his father.

On a second note, they have just been reunited. There was no telling what will happen next.

She was pondering on these possibilities when she heard a rattle of the door. Riftan came back to the room with a tray of steaming bread and soup.

"It's a bread made of vegetable soup and barley. Try to eat before going back to sleep. We're going to stay at this inn tonight and leave tomorrow as soon as the sun comes up."

"" "

He put the tray down on the bedside shelf and said so. Max blinked her eyes. He went out in a rage and came back with food as if nothing had happened. This man is... unpredictable.

"What are you idling about? Eat it before it gets cold."

In haste, she took the bowl of soup and a wooden spoon in her hand.

"Thank you. I'll eat well...."

Max stirred the soup, blew it, and put it in her mouth. It was a little hot, but it wasn't enough to leave blisters on her tongue. Truthfully, she didn't have much appetite, but still, she managed to push in a few spoonfuls of the savory soup, which made her feel a bit better.

After a minute, she put down her spoon and couldn't help but glance at the man. He was dragging a chair by the bed and started grooming his sword. He looked two or three years younger than his actual age.

"...What are you looking at? Why aren't you eating?"

Does the back of his head have eyes? She blushed at the thought of him catching her peeking.

"I—I want to change..." Looking around, she added, "I don't see my clothes anywhere."

He turned around as he hesitated to open his mouth, stirring the soup with a spoon.

“Now that it’s late, just go to bed. I’ll buy you a new one tomorrow.”

“My, my clothes....”

“I asked the maid who works at this inn to wash it.”

He spoke calmly; the reflection of his face visible in the sword he was cleaning so thoroughly. She hesitated for a long time and then spoke again.

“My... underwear. Give it back.”

At that moment, the man’s face became incredibly red. He rubbed his palms roughly around his mouth, and then answered calmly.

“It’s torn apart.”