

Under The Oak Tree

Under the Oak Tree, Chapter 2 – Second Meeting

To clean up the taint, a man from her family would have to challenge Riftan Calypse to a duel. But her father had no son, and none of his relatives or knights in service could ever hope to match him.

After all, who can fight against the swordsman who has defeated a dragon? Eventually, it could only lead to the family's honor being tarnished and her father never, ever forgiving her. Perhaps she would suddenly face death even before the process of the formal divorce would take place. This was her father she was talking about...

'So somehow...'

'But will he listen to me?'

She bit her lips, her mood as if she was standing at the tip of a cliff. Their marriage was made solely for the convenience of the Duke of Cross and his knights.

Three years ago, when news spread across the continent that Red Dragon, hibernating in Aranthal, had opened its eyes, Elnuma Ruben III ordered his vassals to arms with stringent action.

Naturally, the Duke of Cross also had to lead his knights on the expedition. But his father passed on the duty by marrying Riftan Calypse to her.

She shivered at the thought of the insulting remarks that the guests had mumbled on the day of the wedding day. The low-ranking knight, Riftan, had to be dragged out of the ceremony as he could not disobey the order of the Duke. The anger and humiliation he would have felt was unthinkable. His expression of restraint was just as fearful.

'If only I were half as beautiful as Rosetta... Maybe he will feel much better and would not think of divorcing me.'

Ideas drifted in her head in self derision. Despite his low status, Riftan Calypse was a man with breathtaking features. Even Rosetta, who was mocking him for his origin, blushed at the sight of the knight.

Riftan could have enjoyed a lot of romantic relationships with beautiful ladies. Such a man could have escaped having a stutter as his wife. Furthermore, his status was no longer a hindrance.

'In the event he marries the king's daughter... I won't be able to change his mind even if I begged him.'

They spent only one night together. The very next day, Riftan left with the army without saying a word of farewell. Even after that, he did not send her a single telegram. She felt doubtful whether he had even regarded her as his wife.

As she clasped her face in a dismal mood, a gloomy voice penetrated her ears.

“What a sight worth seeing.”

Max looked up in surprise. Since when had a giant man been standing by the door staring at her?

“My wife trembling, waiting for her husband to come back from the dead.”

””” ”

The man walked up slowly, his sarcasm dripping. She looked at him, forgetting even to breathe. Riftan Calypse, wearing a dark blue tunic and silver armor, reminiscent of a monk, looked much larger and overbearing than she had remembered.

“I didn’t expect a warm welcome, but there’s no reason to shiver like you’ve seen the plague.”

The cold words finally brought Max to her senses. The blood drained from her face at the thought that she had offended him in less than a minute after their reunion.

“Y-you’ve come, safely, back safely....”

‘What should I say? I don’t know what to call him.’

Riftan? It seemed too much of an endearment. Lord Calypse? She thought she’d be laughed at. As she mumbled back her words, she suddenly felt an intense gaze looking at her and took a step back.

She couldn’t figure out why he was looking at her like that. As if it couldn’t get worse, the man’s face became colder for some reason. He snatched her arm and uttered harshly.

“At least pretend to be happy in welcoming me.”

She froze as their bodies met within a hair’s breadth, the smell of leather, horse, and of faint sweat piercing the tip of her nose. His masculine odor flashed across her mind, and a memory that had been buried for three years.

Mysterious heat blossomed from his hard, penetrating gaze. He looked down at her like one looking at a raw meat, like a hound on the brink of biting its meal.

She dropped her eyes in a hurry, her face burning as if she was under the unforgiving heat of the sun.

With her heart beating faster with every second, memories of their marriage slowly flooded her thoughts. Her husband was finally back home. How would she deal with him now?

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