

Under The Oak Tree

Under the Oak Tree, Chapter 3 – Wedding Night (1)

“Take off your clothes.”

By the end of the wedding reception, she was led into the bridal chamber by a nanny. With the help of the maids, she washed herself clean and sat on the bed, and after a while her husband followed her into the room. Then he, who was hardened by tension, said so to her.

Max didn't know his intentions, but her eyes were wide open. She couldn't understand why the man, who had completely ignored her presence throughout the wedding, had made such a demand out of the blue. She had no specific knowledge, though vaguely aware, that something secret happened between couples.

The nanny said, “You have to obey your husband unconditionally and accept whatever he asks in silence.”

How can such unconditional obedience involve taking off her clothes? She was at a loss on what to do, but the man who threw his top over his head gave her a hard look.

‘Do I have to take it off?’

She took a breath of surprise. Riftan Calypse was like a giant made of twisted steel. His shoulders were twice as wide as hers, his neck was long and thick, and his waist was lean and straight, akin to an elegant hound. She was ridiculous in comparison.

She knew at first that he was a man of unique physique among the knights, but it was overwhelming to see him face to face. She swallowed hard.

It hurts when his father hit her, what more if he is the one to hit her?

“You look terrible.” His cold voice made Max tremble. The man strode up to the bed and openly stared at her. His huge body, purring golden at the fireplace light, blocked her vision.

“You don't like me very much, do you?”

“Ah... I, I...”

He bent over her. On the face of near perfection, his black eyes held an eerie glow. The man's tight lips twisted with cynicism.

“Of course, a duke's daughter would never place in her heart a low-ranking knight.”

There has been an uncontrollable tremor in her body when she heard his voice is full of hostility. A wife belongs to her husband. If he desired, she could be beaten and a harsher corporal punishment was tolerated in her society. Max sweated with fear in the situation where she was forced to cling to his husband's generosity and that at this moment, she might have angered him.

"Come here. You know what you have to do."

Max couldn't urge to ask what she had to do and instead, looked down at her toes. A dark shade fell over her head. The man raised her chin with his long, rough fingers, sending an indecipherable gaze.

"" "

"If we don't do it on the first night, this marriage is considered invalid. Do you want an annulment?"

Caught in his dark pupils of unknown depth, she shivered. The man twisted his mouth.

"If you want me to go out, tell me," he said.

" . . . "

"Once we start, there's no stopping in the middle."

Max's throat constricted and she swallowed hard a second time. If she went away like this, her father would surely not forgive her. She had no choice in the first place. Max closed her eyes and loosened her belt with trembling hands.

The fear of being beaten by her father was much greater than the fear of being humiliated by a stranger. No. She would not end up being beaten. Perhaps, a more severe punishment would be, her father would even be back with another knight in a few days. She was nothing more than a tool for her father's convenience.

In the punctuating silence, Max took off her ornaments one by one and placed them down beside the bed. Only the sound of the fire cackling could be heard through the room. She could feel the man's stinging gaze as she pulled down the strap of her linen dress and pulled her arm out of the sky-high sleeve.

The cold night air swept across her naked back and shoulders harshly, making her flesh erupt to goosebumps. She clutched her clothes to her chest, unable to lift them further down. Then the man put one knee on the bed and pulled the hem of her skirt in one motion.

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