

The War God's Favorite by Jenny Fox Chapter 26

The Weeds & Herbs

The Prince's words from that morning still followed Cassandra's steps as she made her way across the camp. Evin followed her, but both were silent. At times, she wondered if she was just living in a dream. In her dream, everything would suddenly end when she opened her eyes and found herself sleeping in a cold cell of the Emperor's Arena again, or back in Lyria's slave room. However, the cold on her cheeks was real, and so was the snow under her footsteps. Cassandra didn't want to think too much about it. She missed having a friend to talk to, and Evin probably wasn't a good replacement.

It had been only two days since she came to the Camp, but she felt the lack of another feminine presence. Cassandra often thought of the other girls from the Castle, wondering how they were doing, if their life had gotten better without the Governor there. She didn't really dare to ask the Prince when they would be going back. He had already made an extra trip to bring her here.

That was another reason why she wanted to keep herself busy.

Cassandra wasn't totally unhappy in the camp. She was discovering many things she had never seen before, and was basically free to go anywhere she wanted. Her red dress, and the imperial servant following her, were enough of an explanation for the men who had never seen her before, and even a few high-ranked soldiers took time to salute her politely when she crossed their paths. It was clear that no one really knew how to interact with her, though. For the Third Prince to actually have a Concubine was already surprising enough; no one really wanted to ask more. The rumors about the Palace concubines' legendary attitudes and willfulness was enough to keep most men at bay.

Cassandra was actually able to enjoy her walk all the way to the mountain, as soon as she had stopped thinking about the Prince's request that morning.

Once she got to the Red Room, however, quite a surprise was waiting for

her. About three times more men than the previous day were all helping around the room, and there was obviously a lot going on, with people moving the injured in or out of the room. She stayed at the entrance, a bit surprised, when four of them rushed to her.

“Good Morning, Madam!”

“Good Morning...Excuse me, but... how come so many people are...volunteering today ?” she asked, a bit unsure, while Evin took off her fur cloak.

One of the men stepped forward. Cassandra recognized him as one of those who were present the previous day.

“Actually, once we got back to our units, we talked with some others about what we had done, madam, and many wanted to come and help. The word kind of spread quickly, and even the men who had punishments asked to be sent here.”

“I see...”

Cassandra was at bit of a loss. She didn’t expect so many people to show up after only one day!

“Madam, we are almost at the end of your notes, and we have counted everyone and reported their status, as you said,” the man announced proudly. “We already asked for permission to use the closest rooms and started moving some people, following your notes. Do you want to check ?”

“Yes, uh...”

It took a few minutes for Cassandra to get a hold of the situation and move forward, while the men were apparently waiting for her directions. Taking a deep breath, she took a look at the full list that they had done their best at completing while she was gone.

“All right, I will... Wait, everyone stop what you’re doing!”

Every man in the room looked at her, surprised. Cassandra, remembering this morning’s conversation with the Prince, couldn’t leave things as they were.

“I want everyone to get out of the room and go wash your hands and faces with clean water. Only come back once you have some tissue on

your face, like I did yesterday.”

They all exchanged glances, surprised by her strange request. As Cassandra suspected, these men didn't know the basics of hygiene and self-protection while handling the wounded or sick people. And unlike her, they had received no form of protection against diseases. If things went on like this, she would do more harm than good, as the volunteers would soon fall sick too.

Hence, the first part of that matinee was focused on Cassandra showing them how to properly wash their hands and wear fabrics over their mouth and noses to protect themselves. She also checked their hands before they walked back in. ?

“What are you looking for, Madam?” asked one of the men.

“Little cuts, open skin...Any kind of opening can let the disease into your own body, I want to avoid that. Thankfully, most of you have thick skin thanks to combat training, but...”

If she had any kind of doubt, Cassandra asked the men to do something that wouldn't involve touching the injured people, like gathering clothes or herbs for her. The others kept moving people to the different rooms following her notes.

By noon, all the people had been moved to different rooms, and following Cassandra's request, the men had gathered a lot of herbs in various baskets that she intended to keep in a storage room. Two of the men looked at the now empty red room in disgust.

“I can't believe almost two hundred men were here. Damn, there are even insects!”

“That's why we need to clean it.”

They both turned to Cassandra, shocked. She wanted to clean that? The blood had stained the ground, some remnants were clearly from human defecations, and it had smelled so bad for months! But as the Prince's concubine began bringing in clear water and brooms, it was apparently decided.

“Are you sure, Madam? This place is really...”

“Disgusting? Yes, but this is the largest room here, and we will need it. Nothing here is uncleanable, and we need to make use of any resource we can.”

Actually, no one was really enthusiastic about cleaning that room. Saying it was awfully dirty and disgusting was still an understatement. However, as soon as Cassandra started cleaning, three of the men rushed to take it all out of her hands.

“Madam, do you want us to lose our dignity as men? We can’t let the Commander-in-Chief’s woman dirty her hands while we watch!”

“We would lose our heads for sure!”

Cassandra chuckled a bit, but before she could protest, she was gently pushed out of the room and the men started cleaning despite the horrid task. She sighed.

“I feel a bit bad leaving them to do this...”

“Don’t be. They were right about probably losing their heads,” said Evin, very calmly.

The Imperial Servant was the only one who hadn’t helped at all. Actually, he had spent all day following Cassandra like a shadow, making sure she didn’t injure herself or get her dress dirty. It was too much for her at times, but neither her attempts to have him stop or the glares from the men could stop Evin.

“Madam, you should have lunch now. His Highness won’t like it if you skip meals.”

“Yes, yes...”

“Madam, come and eat with us!”

Several of the men now started bickering about which unit she should have lunch with, surprising Cassandra. When had things become like this? She thought they were merely following her directions, not that she had gained popularity! 1

“Which is the closest?” She asked, hoping to put an end to the argument before it turned into a fight.

It was then decided that she would eat with the nearby third unit of charioteers. To her surprise, Evin had someone bring lunch for her, with

the usual cheese, fruits and meat. It was different from the vegetables and meat the men were having, though. None of them seemed too bothered, which surprised Cassandra at first. But thinking about it, she was having a meal befitting a member of the Imperial Entourage, while those men were soldiers, and supposed to eat what they were given by the army. Eating such luxury foods next to them was making her a bit uncomfortable.

“My Lady, how long will you stay with us?” asked one of the men as they were all sitting in a circle.

“I don’t know. My Lord hasn’t said anything about my stay here.”

“Probably only a few days. The Commander-in-Chief comes and goes back pretty often. You won’t like it, Madam. As soon as the barbarian’s attack, it can be up to a week of fighting and it gets nasty!”

“Do you still get attacks?” Cassandra asked, worried.

The men shrugged.

“It happens. We don’t really know where they come from because no matter how many times we push them back into the mountain, they eventually come back.”

“When it’s been quiet like this for a few weeks, the next strike is usually stronger. Nothing to worry about, though.”

Cassandra nodded. She was a bit surprised how calm the men were about this. But it did appear true. There were very few injuries actually, compared to the size of the Camp. The men, thinking she was impressed, went on to talk about their accomplishments within the camps or in battle, and Cassandra listened for the rest of the lunch.

She kept it short, however, as she wanted to get as much as she could done before sunset. Hence, they all returned to the mountain soon after. Now that the injured and sick were properly sorted, and she had men cleaning the room, Cassandra started sorting the herbs she had at her disposal. It was no use treating people if she didn’t have the resources. Six men helped her count the quantities, but they were still confused.

“Are you sure, Madam? Most of those are just wild herbs and weeds.”

“No plant is useless. We just don’t know all their properties yet.”

To be precise, the Dragon Empire’s people didn’t. They had gathered everything they could, but the men were totally clueless about what those weeds were good for. Yet, the Prince’s Concubine started sorting them under their eyes and showed them how to wash the plants without wasting any of them. Soon, they started repeating her moves, sorting, and cleaning all of the green mess.

“Can we get more?” asked Cassandra.

“We need to ask the accountants to buy more, or have more men gather them from the nearby mountains... Don’t you have enough, Madam?” She sighed.

“Certainly not, if I hope to treat as many as I can...can I let you handle these? I’ll be back soon.”

“Yes, Madam!”

With that, Cassandra left the premises, still followed by Evin, who looked unhappy.

“They won’t appreciate it.”

“I just need to ask for herbs.”

“They won’t like it. More herbs means more work, more men mobilized. The accountants do not like buying and giving anything away without getting something back. They will require a high rank official’s approval. You’re not a high rank official, Madam.”

Cassandra sighed. It wouldn’t hurt to ask. Evin guided her through the Camp, on which it had started snowing. The sun was slowly starting its descent, meaning Cassandra only had about an hour or so left before she had to go back to the Prince’s tent. She wondered if she could expect another dragon ride, or if she should think about the walk back.

Finally, the duo arrived in front of another tent, as Evin guided her.

“The Head Accountant’s office...well, tent.”

As soon as she stepped in, Cassandra knew this wasn’t going to be easy. Because the Head Accountant turned out to be the man whose report had been interrupted by her arrival the previous evening.

“Well, if it isn’t Her Mightiness,” sighed the man.

The accountant was a tall but thin man, with a thin mustache and a crooked nose. From his attitude, Cassandra could tell he already didn't think much of her.

"Good afternoon, Sir. May I take some of your time?"

"What would the Commander-in-Chief's Concubine need me for?"

"I wanted to ask for some resources."

"Shouldn't you just ask the Commander-in-Chief for that? Isn't that how a concubine is supposed to do things?"

Cassandra exchanged a look with Evin. Though he was still polite, the Head Accountant was clearly set on giving her a hard time.

"What I need isn't for my personal needs. I wanted to ask for some herbal medicine."

The man frowned, apparently surprised.

"What is that for?"

"For the men who were in the red...I mean, in the mountain's rooms. I want to gather some herbs and make medicine out of it to help them, but with what has been gathered I won't have enough."

The man put down the papers in his hands and crossed his arms, visibly doubtful.

"Make medicine? You?"

"Yes. I know of some techniques that can--"

"Why would I waste resources on a concubine and sick men? I have no proof that you can do anything you say, and I have no intention to waste anything on dying men."

"These men are your fellow soldiers! How can you--"

"They're a deficit of money. I see numbers all day, woman, and these men are nothing but a waste of resources and energy on my papers. If they die, I hope they die soon and stop wasting extra food and time. We already have doctors who tend to the people we really need here."

He had said those words while frowning at Cassandra, clearly giving into his contempt.

She was so angry, her fists were shaking. How could a man be so cruel and merciless! They were talking about humans, not mere numbers!

Evin took a glance in her direction, wondering what she would do. From what he had seen, Cassandra already had plenty of power in her hand, if only she dared to make use of the Third Prince's Dragon that seemed so smitten with her. However, he also learned that she had a strange temper.

"How many do you need?" she suddenly asked.

"Excuse me?"

"How many men do you want me to heal and send back to their units to prove that it is worth using money, and that my medicine works?"

The head accountant looked at her, speechless for the first time. What was this crazy woman thinking now?!

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The Medicine

Cassandra was perfectly calm and composed.

She didn't act arrogant or conceited, despite the Head Accountant's expectations. Just like Evin before him, the man was starting to understand she didn't belong to any of the usual types of Concubine. He had already been quite surprised that the Commander-in-Chief actually brought a woman here, but now, she was going around the camp trying to take care of the men? What was wrong with this woman?

He had noted that she was a slave from her collar, but that only made him think she was uneducated and stupid. So why was he now caught in some negotiation with her?

"What kind of slave knows about medicine?" he asked, frowning.

Medicine was a very precious and rare teaching in the Dragon Empire. There were no medical schools, and very few documents to pass the ancient techniques along. Most of the time, doctors would take a handful of apprentices and select the best, to learn from them. Even so, the techniques of each doctor were kept a secret most of the time, as they were afraid it would spread to commoners and make the prices of

common medicine drop. Hence, being a doctor in the Empire was seen as one of the top and highest paid professions certainly not something within a slave's reach.

"I know enough. But the Dragon Empire's medical techniques are rudimentary, barbaric, and old. Your healing techniques don't travel enough to be improved on, even in a few years time, and those are not the ones I know of."

Evin was, once again, surprised and impressed. Cassandra had a point. Because the doctors of this Empire were so set on keeping their techniques to themselves, it was rather known that the same methods were used for centuries, and any kind of innovation was seen as a break-through.

The head accountant frowned. He was a very educated and wise man, despite his lack of natural empathy. From hearing Cassandra, he had to admit she wasn't talking like an ignorant slave or a willful concubine.

"Where did you...supposedly, learn medicine? he asked.

"The Rain Tribe."

The Head Accountant stayed silent for a while, but he was thinking. The name itself was unheard of, but he clearly remembered having studied about some south barbarians, people living in tribes beyond the border of the Dragon Empire. The scholars didn't have much knowledge of those people, considered like any barbaric populations who didn't have material wealth: uninteresting. However, their information clearly mentioned those people's strangely high life expectancies, despite them actually living in swamps, and in dire conditions. Could this woman's words be of some truth?

The Head Accountant thought long and hard, but no matter what, he couldn't really refuse nor give into her request. Those injured soldiers were still a problem among his reports, and if something could be done about them... If anything arose, he could always blame it on this woman. The Commander-in-Chief probably wouldn't scold his own woman, and even if he did, it wouldn't be the accountant's problem.

"Fine. A hundred men. Once you send a hundred men back on the field,

I will...”

“Fifty.”

“Excuse me?”

“I can send back fifty men within ten days, with my current stock of herbs. But a hundred would be too much, I don’t have enough medicine or volunteers yet.”

The Head Accountant nodded, pretending to think. He had actually intended to give her a full month’s time.

Could she really do what she said within ten days? He was still doubtful, but it was worth letting her try. Those men would die anyway. If she made things worse, she would at least save them a few days’ worth of food for his reports.

“If I manage to heal and send back fifty men within ten days, will you listen to my request?” asked Cassandra, looking to confirm his words.

The man nodded.

“You have my word. As long as you keep your end of the deal, I’ll allow a budget for those medical herbs. But I want proof of those men being actually injured or sick, and sent back to their units...”

“You will,” said Cassandra.

Once again, her self confidence impressed him a bit, though he wouldn’t let it show on his face. He actually had the means to get the reports on the injured coming in and out of the Red Room, but he wanted to make sure she wouldn’t try to cheat her way out of this.

“All right, then, I guess this deal is done. Do you need anything else? If not, I will resume my activities and ask you to leave; I’m quite busy.”

Cassandra indeed left promptly, followed by Evin. Once outside, she couldn’t help but to let out a big sigh. She didn’t think it would be so nerve-wrecking.

“Why didn’t you use the Third Prince’s authority?” suddenly asked Evin. Cassandra turned to him surprised.

“What do you mean? I am not His Highness.”

“You are his concubine. A few words and you would have been able to

use His Highness, the Third Prince's authority to make him comply with your demand. Making that bet was unnecessary, and added to your plate."

She shook her head. They were already headed back to the mountain, as Cassandra wanted to check on a few things and leave some notes before she went back.

"I didn't add anything, I would have been able to send back fifty men anyway. I only delayed the Head Accountant's help by ten days. I don't want to use His Highness' authority. If I did, that man would respect me even less and think I cannot do anything without the Third Prince, and would probably try to give me less than I need. If I can prove what I'm saying, he will trust me and help us more. Or so I hope."

"There are only one hundred and seventy men there at the moment. Do you really think you can send fifty of them back? You sent thirty of them to a separate room, saying those could not be cured..."

They entered the mountain again, passing several of the rooms where the men had been sorted.

"Actually, I'm hoping we will get more men in the meantime. A lot of soldiers like Orwan didn't dare to come here in the first place, remember? But what if I can show them I can heal them properly?"

"More men will come..."

Cassandra nodded, and entered one of the rooms to talk with the men still sorting her medicinal herbs. Behind her, Evin was once again speechless. She had thought that far ahead during her conversation with the Head Accountant? That her changes to the Red Room would convince more and more men to come get healed, and naturally help her win her bet?

"Alright, can you split them as we said?" asked Cassandra. "We will need to count how much we have and then dry or boil it. I'll see later."

"Yes, Madam," answered the men.

Then, she went to the next room, talking to the men who were busy there.

"Please, remember to wash your hands often and keep your masks on.

We need to wash the sick men's clothes and sheets often too, and ventilate the room as much as we can. I'll see the people who came in

today now.”

For the next hour, Cassandra checked each of the men that had come in, inspecting their overall state or injury, and sorting them into separate rooms.

She had spread the men into a total of eight rooms: one for those who hadn't been diagnosed yet, one for small wounds and cuts, one for the bigger injuries, one for the people with light symptoms like a cold, another one for dangerous or infectious diseases, one for the patients with special needs, and the last one she called for “short stay”, for soldiers who were suffering from stomach pains or headaches. The eighth room was called the “silent room”, where people who wouldn't survive were put to rest.

However, despite that sorting, it was clear there was still way too much work for one woman to do alone. Evin said it out loud as they were leaving the mountain for the day, and Cassandra nodded.

“I know... That's my main problem. I can teach some men, but they are supposed to come and go, and eventually, I will need people to do the exact same thing as I do, like apprentices. But where to find apprentices in a military camp? Do the doctors here have some? You mentioned there were doctors, right?”

“There are currently seven doctors working here, and each military doctor is allowed three apprentices in the Camp.”

“That's twenty-eight people. It's not enough for a camp of thousands of soldiers!”

Evin was about to say something about her knowing how to calculate, but didn't. This woman was really too much.

“Actually, most of them only have one or two. I can ask if you want.”

“Please do. What are they thinking, with so few apprentices to help...”

Cassandra was still astonished. How could such a large Empire still be so uneducated about medicine and common hygiene? All day, the soldiers had watched each of her moves as if they were learning something, questioning why she did this and that non-stop.

It wasn't like they were unwilling to learn. The main problem was that from the crib until they reached adulthood, every man and woman in this Empire was focused on one career. First sons would take over their father's job, shop, or farm. Second sons trained to be scholars. From the third one on, they would be raised as warriors. Women very rarely had careers, but those who did would become shopkeepers, embroiderers, cooks, mostly positions that were related to the household, and not too tiring.

It was a patriarchal society, with its pros and cons.

"I need to find apprentices," Cassandra muttered to herself.

"Do you want me to ask?"

"For apprentices?" she asked, a bit surprised.

"Some people might be interested. It's a very vast camp, with lots of different people. I can try to ask around, if you wish."

Cassandra nodded. Could it be possible? Would some of those men agree?

What about their current positions? Well, it couldn't hurt to ask, possibly...

"Madam."

She turned to him, but Evin was looking up at the dark form that had appeared in the sky. Cassandra smiled. Her ride had arrived.

Krai landed with a loud growl, immediately looking for Cassandra.

Wiggling up to her, the dragon waved its tail around with anticipation.

As usual, she waited until Krai stopped a step away from her to move.

"Hi, Krai. Is this going to become a routine?" she asked softly, giving a few scratches.

"He is a pain when he misses you..." suddenly said a voice from above.

"My Lord!" exclaimed Cassandra.

Kairen held out his hand, and helped her climb on the dragon's back, making her sit in front of him. She was obviously glad to see him, her cheeks a bit red, and a smile on her face. The Prince immediately pulled her closer for a long, deep kiss. His tongue enticed her, and Cassandra realized that they hadn't had sex since the hot springs.

The black dragon interrupted their kiss while taking off, and Cassandra felt a bit disappointed. She held onto Kairen's cloak, as close to him as she could. It was not dinner time yet, could it be he had come to get her sooner on purpose?

However, as they flew over the Camp, Cassandra soon realized they weren't going to the Prince's tent. Where to then? The hot springs maybe? She had liked it a lot, and hoped they would go back.

To her surprise, Krai landed in front of the forges. Why there? Cassandra wanted to ask, but Kairen helped her

"Here. Undo this thing."

Cassandra was a bit surprised, until she understood he meant her collar! She turned to him, a bit concerned.

"My Lord, I..."

"Cassandra, sit here."

He had her sit on a little chair, but after a few seconds, she realized the abnormal silence around them. What was wrong? All the men present were either looking at her or the Prince in awe. Could it be...because he had called her by her name?

"What are you waiting for? Take this damn collar off her!"

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Dragon's Heir

The Prince's sudden anger made everyone step back, fear and surprise on every face. Then, one of the older men stepped up, standing in front of Cassandra.

"Young Lady, if I may..."

He leaned in to observe the collar, and Cassandra held her long hair out of the way. She could feel the old blacksmith's hands examining the collar, checking the system and metal. After a while, he stood up and turned to the Prince.

"It won't be easy, My Lord. Those things have really precise systems."

"Can you do it or not?"

“We can try, but...this type of lock isn't made to simply be undone, Commander.”

He turned to one of his colleagues, who nodded and examined Cassandra's collar too, but this time he used some tools. She could hear the mechanism at work, and her heart suddenly beat faster. Could they really do it? Could they take it off? Finally?

Kairen stood by her side without moving, his eyes fixated on her collar, not missing any of the blacksmiths' movements. For a long while, Cassandra sat with her head bent, wondering if this could really happen. But the longer it took, the more she doubted it. Those mechanisms were made so that slaves would not be able to escape. Many had tried to get rid of them already, but it was so complex.

Just as she started to feel discouraged, a large hand caressed her cheek. She smiled softly and closed her eyes, relying on the Prince's warmth. Cassandra slowly calmed down. She would be fine. Even if the collar didn't come off, she had him. 1

Suddenly, the sound of metal breaking was heard, and something scratched her. Cassandra frowned from the little pain, trying to touch the injury by reflex. The blacksmiths stepped back, looking terrified. The Prince was glaring at them.

“You useless...”

“We're so very sorry, Your Highness! This lock can't be undone simply by forcing it! The Dragon Empire would lose its slaves daily if we could.”

As the man kept apologizing and explaining, Cassandra glanced at her shoulder to finally see what had happened. Her collar was still there, but one of the blacksmiths' instruments, something that looked like a thin little spindle, was half stuck in it, its other half broken on the floor. It had probably broken when trying to force open the collar's mechanism, and scratched her shoulder by accident.

Cassandra saw the Prince's hand going for the sword at his belt, but she immediately stood up in front of him, putting her hands on his torso,

trying to get his attention on her.

“My Lord! It’s fine, I expected so...”

“If those men were more competent...” he hissed, but Cassandra shook her head.

“No. They are right. It is this Empire’s will that slaves shouldn’t be freed so easily.”

Cassandra’s words finally got to him, as he looked down at her.

It was his Empire, his father, and the slavery system that had put this collar on her neck from the beginning. Those blacksmiths were right. It was no easy matter, and not a simple collar. There was a lot more weight behind it, and Cassandra’s sentence.

This did not cool down the Prince’s anger one bit. He glared furiously at the men present, despite Cassandra’s attempt to have him calm down.

Clenching his fists, he resisted the urge to break or throw something across the tent with all his might.

“Let’s go, please? My Lord?” she asked in a soft voice.

Kairen’s jaw was still clenching, yet he grabbed Cassandra’s waist and suddenly carried her, holding her on one arm as if she weighed nothing. They left the tent as she put her arms around his shoulders, while the men behind them let out a big sigh of relief.

There wasn’t a word exchanged until they reached the Prince’s tent.

Cassandra only held on and focused on the cold breeze. Was the evening colder than usual? Or was it the Prince’s silent anger only giving her that impression? She held on a bit tighter as they reached the tent, before he let her down.

Kairen was still frowning and visibly unhappy about what had happened. Cassandra took a deep breath in, and stepped closer to him, putting her hands on his torso again.

“My Lord, it’s fine. I knew it wouldn’t work. I’ve seen many try to force those locks for hours without it ever coming off.”

He stayed silent, looking at her with those dark, black eyes of his. It was hard for Cassandra to guess what he was thinking at that moment. Was

he disappointed? Or just angry things weren't going as he wanted? 3
After a long while, though, the frown on his face seemed to dissipate,
and he put his large hands on her waist, looking at her with a calm
expression. Cassandra was expecting him to say something, but instead
he leaned in to kiss her, a soft very gentle kiss. She didn't know what to
do, so she answered naturally to his lips, feeling comfort in it.

The collar was still there, heavy and uncomfortable, but as long as she
was by the Prince's side, Cassandra felt safe. She didn't want to leave his
side anymore. She enjoyed this kiss, and for once, claimed more with her
tongue. One of Kairen's hands went up, twirling his fingers in her long
hair like he liked to do.

Gathering her courage, Cassandra gently pushed him towards the bed,
blushing from her own boldness. Of course, her strength was barely
enough to make the War God move, but as soon as he understood her
intent, Kairen complied and stepped back, until he could sit on the bed.
As he did, he held Cassandra across his lap, not interrupting their tender
kiss. She was starting to feel a bit hot. How long had it been since their
last...intimate moment? In that short while, she already missed his hot
skin, his large hands, and musky smell.

"Cassandra..." he muttered against her ear as their lips parted, making
her blush.

She loved the way he pronounced her name, too. There was this intense
mix of sensuality and tenderness in his deep voice.

With her fidgety hands, she took the cloak off his shoulders, exposing the
muscular, naked torso she now knew by heart. Kairen had already taken
her cloak off, but for once, he let her do most of the undressing, only
kissing her shoulder, collarbone, and finally her breasts as soon as she
exposed them.

Sucking and stroking them, he made her blush in a matter of seconds.
Cassandra had always felt her breasts were on the smaller side, but that
didn't seem to bother him... The War God kept playing with them,
arousing her, and making it more difficult for Cassandra to focus on

taking her dress off. Once she finally had it off though, he smiled and pulled on her hips to have her closer, sitting on top of his prominent bump. She shivered a bit, both excited and cold, as her inner temperature didn't match the one inside the tent.

Kairen's glance, as he let go of her rosy breasts, went to her collar.

Cassandra was afraid this might anger him again for a bit, but the Prince suddenly smirked.

"Once we get this thing off, let's have you wear something that really fits you...gold or silver...gems..."

"Like a necklace?" she whispered, a bit surprised.

"Anything you want," he nodded. "Gold, gems, jewelry... We'll get it all. I want to see you wear it..."

Cassandra thought about disagreeing, but eventually, she only blushed and kissed him. She knew how strange and whimsical he could be sometimes. She didn't want to talk him out of it until they got to it. He complained so often about her appearance as a slave, she had to be a bit more careful about it.

Kairen slowly laid down, Cassandra still on top of him, and they both used their hands to help him get out of his pants. She wondered for a second if they should change positions, but the Prince pulled her arms, having her ride

Rubbing against each other, she felt their equal arousals. He didn't even touch her, yet she was already wet from their kissing only... Feeling his pride standing tall and hard against her thigh was a torture she couldn't endure any longer. Cassandra bit her lip, her hands in his, and slowly sat down, feeling him fill her with a long exhale.

They both took a minute to enjoy this, the feeling of their bodies connected, filling each other, looking at each other's eyes. Then, Cassandra slowly started moving, to her own rhythm, enjoying it. He was big inside her; any move made her tremble and blush in pleasure. In just a couple of days, she had missed this so much.

Underneath, lying still with the eyes of an excited lion, Kairen watched his concubine move and breathe loudly. Cassandra was even more

beautiful when she was exalted. Her body moved like a wave on him, her breasts jiggling around. She closed her eyes when she was too embarrassed or excited, and exhaled even louder, until it became ecstatic moans, her hips moving faster on him. The War God just ogled her, feeling his own excitement rise along with her moves, and that delicious feeling of her body pressing down on him, taking him in, rubbing and hammering

When he grabbed her hips and thrust without warning, she let out a surprised moan. His hammering was much more intense and bestial. Cassandra forgot completely about moving against him, and held on to his hands, moaning loudly to meet his thrusts. Despite being underneath, Kairen took control in an instant, holding her hips firmly and thrusting repeatedly, lifting his waist, making Cassandra bounce on him. It was fast, erratic, and overwhelming. He couldn't hold it in. He wanted to put his mark on her and make her cry in pleasure. That intense, savage, hot sex had Cassandra completely lost in her senses. The Prince's burning black eyes made her crazy. The sounds of their bodies colliding, the slaps of their skin and moist sounds made it even more lustful, if possible. Her insides were burning hot, the sensation overpowering her, making her shake and scream out her pleasure. The bed was embarrassingly squeaking, but that was nothing compared to their exalted voices. As Cassandra was crying out, the Prince was groaning, feeling his pleasure grow inside, reaching heavenly levels. Cassandra orgasmed loudly, one second before his final groan. Both spasmed intensely, his rod deep inside her, exulting and relishing. She breathed loudly, falling on her side, exhausted. It was short but...intense. Her thighs were still trembling and burning, and she felt a bit dirty, shamefully dirty.

Kairen sighed, putting a hand in his hair, feeling the cold air and satisfaction of their intercourse. Cassandra's breathing was still loud by his side, and he caressed her hip silently, waiting for her to recover. He had thought about it before, but he silently hoped she would soon

bear him a child... An heir. He could already see what kind of mother she would be. It had never been a wish of his before, but now, he wanted to see that image become real. If she became an Imperial Dragon's mother, Cassandra would be in a much better place. She could become a Princess...far from her status as a slave.

Out of the six Princes, three already had children. But Kairen was the only one without a concubine, until now. He turned his head to the woman laying beside him, and caressed her hair. If Cassandra got pregnant, she would become a target. (2)

He had never cared for the Imperial Throne before. He would live his life with war and blood, as a Commander. He was bored with the women of the court, and hated the treacherous creatures coveting his wealth or imperial title. Kairen was born in a world where he was considered like a God, deciding the life or death of others, untouchable. Yet, he had seen many of his siblings killed by envy and jealousy at the Imperial Palace.

His mother, a concubine

among many others, had been smart and cunning enough to have him and Shareen reach adulthood despite her rivals. She probably had to dirty her hands many times for that to happen.

Cassandra was nothing like those women, nor his mother. She was smart, but caring, brave, and selfless. She wasn't afraid to die, or to face a dragon. She could pet a creature a thousand times her size, which would eat her own kind, and even feel empathy for it. She wasn't afraid to look him in the eyes, yet she blushed when he touched her. So innocent, yet so fierce.

Kairen leaned over her, resting on his arm while scrutinizing her.

“My... Prince?”

But Kairen pushed her legs open, and in a swift movement, positioned himself to penetrate her again, making Cassandra moan in surprise. Her insides were still burning, wet and hot from their wild sex just a few minutes ago. She couldn't help but tense her legs upon his sudden

entrance, closing her eyes and putting her head back.

“Oh, Lord...gen...gently, please...” she begged, breathing erratically. He started moving slowly, listening to her pleas and moans, but he wanted more, so much more of this woman.

The War God's Favorite by Jenny Fox Chapter 29

The Lady of the Mountain

The man was grimacing, trying to hold it in. Half a dozen people were watching, as Cassandra was slowly stitching, explaining each movement and proceeding carefully.

“Here. If you make it as even as possible, the scar will be neat and healed in just a couple of weeks. No need to bandage it as long as you make sure it stays clean like I showed you.”

The soldiers nodded, some even taking notes, but all of them were impressed. She turned to her patient, who was observing the stitches on his arm with a frown.

“Thank you, Lady Cassandra... I hope my fiancée won't mind this.”

“I promise, the scar will be thin and neat. If she's marrying a soldier, this should be fine, right?” said Cassandra with a soft smile.

The man blushed a bit and nodded. Lady Cassandra was becoming prettier and prettier as the days went by. She had already won the hearts of many soldiers with her gentleness and hard work.

No one feared the Mountain Hospital anymore, as it had been renamed recently. The Red Room was forgotten and now people willingly came over to get treated or volunteered in their free time. Seven of the rooms were constantly busy, though a lot of changes had been made in just a few days.

More and more soldiers now knew the first aid gestures or basic treatments for small wounds, and to Cassandra's surprise, it had spread naturally among the troops. Fewer and fewer people came to get treated, unless they were at a loss on what to do, or seriously injured. The soldiers who had volunteered a few times had become knowledgeable in

their own units, and helped their peers learn about hygiene or tended to them before they needed to go to the hospital. The number of volunteers was steadily growing. As word spread about the changes in the Mountain Hospital, more men came to help, and much to Cassandra's surprise, some of the unit Captains even sent men who had forced labor punishments to her. But the most impressive difference was how much the attitudes of the men around Cassandra had changed tremendously in such a short time.

Before, she was only seen as the only woman in the camp, a nameless slave that the Commander-in-Chief had brought for his own entertainment. Nowadays, things are very different. Anywhere she went, Cassandra was saluted and welcomed, as the men had started calling her "the Lady of the Mountain". They talked to her with respect, and her reputation grew fast among the ranks, as the new female doctor of the Camp. If a man dared to leer at her or disrespect her in some way, he was soon scolded by his peers. She was untouchable as the Commander-in-Chief's woman, but she was also seen as a respectable Lady.

"Lady Cassandra?" called a man who had walked in while she was tending to someone's cut. "The Head Accountant is here to see you, Madam."

"Oh, thanks, I will come soon."

Cassandra finished tending the wound, which had signs of early infection, and got up. As usual, she was closely followed by Evin, silent as a shadow but very efficient. He always had her cloak ready, made sure she ate her meals no matter how busy she was, and scolded the soldiers who got too familiar with her.

"It hasn't been ten days already Evin, has it?" she asked, a bit worried about this sudden visit.

"No, Madam. We still have two days to go before the deadline."

"I hope he hasn't changed his mind," she sighed.

As they walked through the mountain's tunnels, Cassandra was saluted many times by the men who hadn't seen her yet this morning, and some

of them also stopped her to ask questions about which herbs to use for this infection, or how to address a large burn. It took her longer than she thought to finally reach the mountain's entrance, and meet with the Head Accountant. It was starting to snow rather heavily outside, and the man already had a white layer on his shoulders and hood. Despite that, he didn't seem to mind. In fact, he was waiting with a younger accountant, and two large closed bags at his feet.

"Good Morning, Head Accountant," she said while Evin was busy adjusting her cloak and the hood on her hair.

"Greetings, Madam."

"Is everything all right?" asked Cassandra, unable to hide her nervousness.

Even if she still had two days and worked hard, her stock in herbal medicine was getting dangerously low. Cassandra was afraid the Head Accountant had found a way to cancel their bet and leave her to deal with it on her own.

The man seemed quite displeased too, and let out a big sigh.

"Truthfully, I hate making mistakes, Lady Cassandra. However, I am not sure if this can be called one."

"I'm sorry, what is this about?"

"Our bet. I had an interesting talk with the three Generals this morning. Since you took over the Mountain Hospital, it appears thirty-three men were sent back to the Cavalry Unit, twenty-six to the Infantry Unit, and seventeen to the Artillery Unit, and only nineteen men in total from all the units died. You obviously won."

Cassandra was speechless. She had worked hard for the past few days, she hadn't even realized how much she had done. Moreover, with so many volunteers, she didn't even see everything that was going on in the Hospital, and how many men were sent back healed.

"Congratulations. It appears I misjudged your abilities. I also got scolded by the Generals for, and I quote, 'being a scoundrel and a stingy rat'."

The young Accountant behind him almost chuckled, trying hard to repress a laugh. Cassandra repressed one too. To hear the stern and stubborn Head Accountant had been scolded like that was quite funny to imagine.

The man showed the two bags.

“Here is all the herbal medicine we can provide at the moment. You may see my assistant for more. I will listen to your request and decide on a monthly budget after hearing it. The Generals also suggested they can provide money from their own budgets to help, if you send a request for them to do so.”

Cassandra was astonished.

“Really? But...”

“They were extremely satisfied with their soldiers being sent back in full health and the recent significant reduction in leaves for sickness or injury, Madam. Hence, they said that the Mountain Hospital was worth investing in.”

This was truly quite an achievement. Not only at the Hospital, but the changes were also starting to be visible in the camp. The men could now take care of any small injury by themselves, and look out for diseases and infections. The morale in the camp had been boosted by this new teaching and talk was spreading as the men were sent back to their units.

“Thank you for this...” said Cassandra, her eyes on the bags.

The Head Accountant nodded, and after a little silence, turned his eyes to the bags too.

“To be quite honest, Madam, soldiers like the ones in this army are not found easily. I am also in charge of recruiting more, and counting the deaths. Each loss is significant for this Army. Your work has been...a great relief, if I may say so. I may not understand your abilities, but I see the results. Those medicinal herbs should be used by people who can value them properly. Though, I suspect this may also bring you more trouble.”

Cassandra had already thought about that. Her unique ways of healing

would soon reach the Army doctors' ears, even faster if she was given actual goods and a budget to pursue. This would probably bring some disputes with them.

"Thank you for your appreciation, Head Accountant."

He bowed respectfully, and gestured for his assistant to go to her side.

The young man nodded and carried the two bags over.

"I will now take my leave, Madam. In the future, feel free to reach out to me or ask my assistants if you need anything. I won't make the mistake of underestimating you again."

Cassandra watched him turn around and leave, a little smile on her lips.

"Didn't it sound like an apology to you, Evin?"

"I think that is the best you will get from him, Madam."

She chuckled.

"You're probably right. Come on, let's bring those inside and check what we got so we can order more as soon as possible."

"Yes, Madam."

With the assistant accountant's help, Cassandra and Evin dragged the two bags all the way inside, to the stockroom which had been rapidly depleted in a few days. Two men who were boiling herbs immediately hurried to take over and sort them into the different pots and baskets on the shelves, while Cassandra discussed with the assistant accountant about more stocks.

Suddenly, a loud ruckus was heard at the entrance, making everyone in the room turn heads. A young man came running in.

"Lady Cassandra, could you come? There's a bit of a dispute outside."

Cassandra sighed and followed after him. What now? She didn't even have time to undo her coat and she was going back outside again. With such weather, she would rather stay inside.

It turned out that said dispute was actually taking place right at the entrance, by a large snow-covered hill where a dozen men were assembled. Cassandra had already got a hold of what was going on, before she got there, from all the yelling.

"I am not going, you damn skunks! Let me down right now!"

“But Captain, you cannot stay like this! You will lose your leg if it goes on.”

“Lady Cassandra is very skilled! She can definitely help!”

“I do not care!” yelled the man on a stretcher. “I’d rather lose a leg than be healed by a woman!”

“We can arrange that,” said Cassandra.

The men turned to her, two of them running to her as soon as they recognized her under her hood.

“Lady Cassandra! Please help the Captain! His leg was injured days ago!”

“It’s getting bad!”

“All of you shut up! Bring me back! I do not care for that witch’s methods! A woman healing is absurd! Women should be confined to the household and stay quiet!”

“I have many patients waiting for my help and not so many beds available. If you are yet to make a decision, do it quietly, please. Some of them need silence.”

The Captain glared at her, even more pissed.

“Shut up, woman! I shall not take orders from you! And do not look me in the eye, impudent little...”

“I suggest you watch your words in the presence of His Highness’ Concubine...” started Evin, but the man interrupted him.

“I will not allow a low woman to talk to me! And a slave, at that! The Commander-in-Chief may have been seduced by this wench, but I... I...”

The man suddenly lost his words, as he had caught a movement behind Cassandra. The snow-covered hill suddenly started moving and growing under his eyes, which opened wide in shock and fear. The snow fell in large chunks, revealing black scales and two glowing red eyes. Evin sighed.

“As I was saying, in the presence of His Highness’ Concubine and Dragon.”

The War God's Favorite by Jenny Fox Chapter 30

The training Grounds

As the large black dragon was eyeing the group, it lowered its head to Cassandra's side, where she gently scratched under its chin.

Krai was obviously glaring at the man, though. Could a dragon have understood his words? Was he upset about the words used toward the Commander-in-Chief's concubine just now? It couldn't be, right? The Captain swallowed slowly.

"If you do not wish to be healed, I suggest you see another doctor in the camp. But please don't be so noisy in front of the hospital or I'll have you removed."

"Re...removed?" said the Captain, though he had lost most of his voice. Cassandra nodded, still scratching Krai's maw. The dragon was chewing some snow, some of its back still white. The men around the Captain, despite being impressed, tried to convince him again.

"The Lady of the Mountain is very skilled, Captain! She stitched the Lieutenant's arm and now he is fine! Please, Captain, at least let her examine you."

As the Captain was still frowning and glaring at Cassandra, one of his men walked to her, pleading.

"Please, Lady Cassandra, our Captain is very stubborn, but he is a great soldier and like a father to most of us! If he loses his leg, he will be sent back!"

"What happened?" finally asked Cassandra.

"He twisted his leg while training a while ago. We thought it might get better, but now it's been two weeks now, he can't even walk, and the area is all black and blue!"

She sighed. This was probably only a muscle contusion, but if that man was this stubborn, he probably hadn't taken any rest for his leg to heal. Two of the men pulled up one of their Captain's pant legs to show her the large bruise that had spread up his thigh. The Captain immediately became red.

“You little scums! How dare you undress me like that! You’re all going to regret this!”

“How is it, Lady of the Mountain? Is it bad?”

“Don’t you touch me you vicious...!”

But before he could end his sentence, a loud, angry dragon growled at him. The men ran in all directions, just before Krai’s paw landed on the Captain, pinning him on the ground. He lost all air in his lungs in a funny expression, the beast crushing him to the ground.

“Hey, Krai, no. No, no, get your paw off. Here.”

Krai was still growling, but Cassandra’s calls managed to distract the dragon enough. She kept making gestures until the red eyes looked her way instead of the Captain’s. Her voice was as gentle and calm as usual, yet every man was shocked to see the dragon attracted to her like a moth to a flame. Krai kept growling, unhappy, and the Captain was still being crushed under his humongous weight.

“Let go, come on. Come here,” said Cassandra, stepping away so the dragon would follow.

Eventually, Krai turned around, its paw finally lifting from the man’s body, who painfully tried to breathe again.

“Good dragon,” said Cassandra. “Come here.”

While she was scratching and petting Krai, Evin rolled his eyes and walked to the soldiers, helping their Captain up.

“You idiot. Insulting the Concubine in front of His Highness’ Dragon.”

“The dragon listens to the Lady of the Mountain!” said one of the men, impressed.

Evin clicked his tongue.

“His Highness’ Dragon listens to His Highness only. He just likes to act as Lady Cassandra’s bodyguard...and pet, apparently.” ?

Even so, all the men were watching the scene of the young woman, standing in the snow to cuddle and pet a dragon that was about a thousand times her size. Krai seemed to have already forgotten about them, only focused on Cassandra.

At some point, she had the dragon walk away, though they had missed

how she did that. Had she thrown something away to play catch? That death machine just acted like a dog around this woman...

“You should have him rest and apply fresh snow on his injury. It will most likely heal by itself as long as he doesn’t overdo it,” she said to the men.

“Thank you, Lady Cassandra!” said some of the men in unison.

“You better take him out of here, though. Next time, I can’t guarantee His Highness’ Dragon won’t bite him on the first try.”

The men left swiftly, taking away the Captain who was still acting grumpy. Evin turned to Cassandra.

“You did a good job preventing His Highness’ Dragon from eating him.”

“Yes. Even dragons can get sick from rotten meat.”

Cassandra laughed. Sometimes, Evin really surprised her. Was he ironic or really trying to crack a joke? Either way, it was amazing to see how his facial expression never changed one bit.

“The weather is getting worse. I suggest you go back now, Madam,” said Evin, looking at the sky.

“All right. Let me give some instructions to the men in the hospital and then we can go.”

Indeed, a few instructions were sufficient for the men to know what to do even if she was absent. Cassandra had been surprised with how fast some of the younger soldiers were able to learn from her. Many were very proactive and curious too, always asking questions and coming up with suggestions.

They obviously held her in high esteem, as she was always called “Lady Cassandra” or “Lady of the Mountain” by the men. Some were coming daily, even for a few hours, just to learn more from her and spread the knowledge about first aid around. She didn’t feel too bad about leaving the mountain a bit earlier than usual that day, knowing she was leaving it in good hands.

Since the wind was too strong, Krai stayed on the ground, walking beside her, its huge body actually shielding Cassandra from the snow during the

whole trip back.

“This is going to be a storm,” said Evin.

“Are the storms bad here?”

“They can be, but the men only need to stay confined in their tents. If it lasts several days though, it can be problematic.”

Cassandra nodded, and looked up. It was all grey and white in the sky. How long would this last? Evin was probably right, as the snowfall was getting heavier. Snow was piling up on Krai’s back. As they progressed in the camp, many men warned her to take cover, too. Cassandra was looking for the Prince though, and was directed to one of the training grounds. Despite the name, it was in one of the buildings.

A very large room, like an interior stadium, was conceived for men to train and attend meetings inside. It could easily contain thousands of men and their steeds. There weren’t any horses when Cassandra got there though, actually most of it was empty. On one side a group of men were practising movements all together and on the other some were doing physical exercises. The center was the busiest, twenty soldiers in full armor were all fighting against one man, Kairen, alone with two swords. Immediately, Cassandra couldn’t help but worry about the obvious difference.

“Is this okay?”

“Probably not. I hope His Highness remembers it’s a pain to replace soldiers.”

Cassandra frowned. Was the Prince still at an advantage, despite the numbers? He didn’t even have his armor on!

Yet, after a few minutes of observing the battle, she had no choice but to admit Evin was right. The Prince had no need for armor. With his two swords, he effortlessly dismissed any attempt the soldiers made to get to him. He didn’t even seem to get tired, or put any effort in. Each movement was perfect and precise. Despite his broad frame, he moved with the agility and speed of a tiger. His muscles’ hard at work were showing with each gesture, under his tan skin.

Cassandra couldn't help but slowly start blushing after a while. The lines of his body were just dancing perfectly, the Prince's perfect form revealed. Cassandra felt a slight fever coming up inside. She could have used some more of the snow.

She was just watching from the side, but Cassandra was hypnotized by the fight, as if it had been some dance. Her heart fluttering with each of the Prince's moves, she reacted to every action, fearing for him when a soldier seemed to stand a chance, relieved when he pushed them back, excited when he attacked himself.

As Cassandra didn't bother him and stood silently, Kairen hadn't noticed her entrance. Yet, the fight was over after only a few minutes. Each of the twenty soldiers, no matter how good they were, ended up butt or face in the sand, full of aches and muscle pains. Kairen was unscattered. "How impressive," whispered Cassandra.

"Of course. His Highness wasn't named this Empire's War God for nothing," said Evin.

She couldn't even hear Evin, her green eyes still stuck on her Prince. Kairen's skin was barely sweating despite all this exercise, but it was shiny and lustrous, making her blush even more. She could vividly remember the feel of his skin under her fingers.

"Shall we go get His Highness?"

Just as Evin suggested that, Kairen's eyes suddenly turned to them. Cassandra immediately blushed even more from having his eyes on her. Just as the Prince turned to walk up to her, Cassandra saw one of the soldiers aiming a knife at him.

"My Lord!" she yelled, a bit too late.

Though Kairen's shoulder movement to dodge was near perfect, it was a second too late. The blade scratched his shoulder, before falling on the ground. A vivid red line appeared on Kairen's skin, before he turned to the man who had done this. Cassandra's heart was worried for a moment. Was he going to kill the soldier? Or get mad for attacking from behind? And injuring a member of the Imperial Family? But contrary to all her

thoughts, Kairen talked to the man, calmly, something she couldn't hear. They exchanged words briefly.

"What's going on?" she asked Evin, confused.

"That man managed to injure the War God. His Highness is asking for his name and unit, for him to be rewarded."

"Rewarded? Isn't wounding the Imperial Family something to be punished?"

"Things are different on a training ground."

Cassandra nodded. So it did seem. The Prince's talk with the soldier was short, though. As soon as he was done, he turned around and walked to Cassandra. She found herself unable to stop blushing again as he came closer.

Once he faced her, as she was on some stairs that put her at the same height as him, he put his arm around her waist and leaned in for a kiss. Despite Evin being there, Cassandra couldn't resist him, putting her hands on his chest to respond. His smell was even stronger after training, enticing her. Their kiss lasted a while, as Kairen kept playing with her tongue, caressing her hair and holding her close.

When they parted, Cassandra had to catch her breath a bit.

"Why are you so red?" he asked his concubine with a frown.

"I was...watching you," she admitted, unable to answer any further.

"It made you like this?" he asked with a little smirk, his hand noticeably going down her back.

Cassandra felt ashamed that his hands were exciting her even more, and in the presence of Evin, too! She was about to burn away if things kept going.

"My Prince, a winter storm is coming... Can we go back to our tent?" she asked shyly.

Kairen frowned a bit, turning to Evin, who nodded. Then, without adding a word, Kairen lifted Cassandra, carrying her effortlessly against his shoulder. Since she knew there was no use in protesting against this, Cassandra held on to him until Kairen brought her back to the tent, inside

which Evin didn't follow.

Once inside, Kairen put her down, and she put her fur coat aside.

"My Lord, let me look at your injury, it..."

"It's fine."

But Cassandra didn't listen and got on her toes to take a look at it.

Immediately, she wondered if her eyes were going crazy. Instead of the injury from earlier, on the Prince's shoulder she could see a line of...
little black scales?