

The War God's Favorite by Jhonny Fox

Chapter 5

#5 The Black Dragon

Everyone present turned their heads towards the north wall and held their breath in fear.

Standing there was a large, furious dragon. Glaring at them with its red, reptilian eyes, while one large paw was grasping the muraled wall, the other scratching the stone one. The black beast growled menacingly again in their direction; no one dared to move an inch. But Cassandra raised her head, despite Lyria's grip, to look up at the dragon.

"The... the Th-Third's Prince's...dragon," stuttered one of the terrified concubines.

None of the other servants or concubines said a word, petrified into silence. The Black Dragon couldn't possibly be mistaken as any other. It was the biggest among its peers and the only one of its color, with its obsidian scales and blood red eyes. It moved, stepping effortlessly over the wall and stalking towards them. Garden statues and lush plants were crushed under its huge feet as it continued forward, growling angrily.

A few concubines and half a dozen servants ran off, screaming in fear. Those who remained were frozen in their spots.

All except one.

"Ha! See! His own dragon has come to finish you off! Why would the Third Prince have any interest in a worthless slave like you?!"

Lyria was so sure of herself, she brutally shoved Cassandra into the arms of a nearby servant.

"You! Give her to the beast!" she ordered, as if she knew what was going on.

The servant, who knew very little about the dragons, nodded obediently and yanked Cassandra's arm, forcing her closer to the beast. Terrified, Cassandra tried in vain to free herself. Tears slid silently down her face, as the pain from her fresh injuries made themselves known. After all the violent manhandling from Lyria and the servants, within the past fifteen minutes, she didn't even have the strength to break free. Within seconds she was face to face with the Black Dragon for the second time that day.

The servant kicked her in the side, forcing her down to the dragon's feet. As they had been working or resting in the Palace, none of them had witnessed the

earlier scene in the arena. He genuinely believed Lyria was right and was doing what the dragon wanted.

He didn't even get the chance to gasp before a giant claw brutally pierced through his chest. In one movement, he found himself pinned to the ground in a pool of his own blood.

People began to scream in panic at the sight of the limp body, pierced by the gigantic claw. Cassandra, also shocked, brought her hand to her mouth in disgust.

"What is going on here?"

His voice thundered out, silencing the screams. Still in front of the dragon, Cassandra turned her head toward him.

The Third Prince Kairen had just stepped into the courtyard. His arrival had almost the same effect as that of his beast. However, some of the concubines were also flustered, too. He was a warrior indeed, and a well-sculpted one at that. Wearing only his large fur coat, part of his muscular chest was left exposed, just enough to leave many women blushing.

As he stepped forward, Lyria, as arrogant as ever, turned towards him. She knew perfectly well who he was, but her new status as one of the other Princes' concubines clearly gave her enough confidence to address the War God.

"My Lord! Please excuse the ruckus, this shameless slave of mine has angered your beast, I fear."

It was hard to say if she was acting seductively on purpose or not. Her pink dress was very sexy, flattering her voluptuous curves, and her hair and makeup were flawlessly done to enhance her beauty. Anytime she talked, her red lips would pout a little, a quality that made many men succumb to her charms.

Kairen, however, only glared at her.

"Who is this whore?" he asked in his low, cold voice.

"It's one of my slaves, my Lord," mumbled Lyria. "A simple..."

"I was not talking to you."

In a split second, anyone who had not caught on already, realized that he was actually addressing the slave, not the mistress standing between them. While Lyria flushed red in embarrassment and anger, Cassandra lowered her head, stifling her sobs.

"She... she is Lady Lyria, my... mistress..."

Maybe she should have added 'former', but that didn't seem necessary at the time. The dragon suddenly growled again, impatient, and moved to approach

Cassandra. Its obsidian scales felt warm as it clumsily curved its enormous body around her. It was hard to ignore all the blood on its paw, but Cassandra turned her head towards its face – the red eyes were fixed on her. People around them were completely shocked by the scene that was unfolding. The War God's dragon was acting like a clingy pet towards a worthless slave!

Kairen suddenly drew out his sword.

"I told you to stay in the room."

Afraid that he was mad at her, Cassandra bowed her head. Her cheeks were still wet with tears as she struggled to explain herself with her hoarse voice.

"I... I meant to, but... I was brought here..."

"By whom?" he asked, impatiently.

Before Cassandra even answered, the two men who had dragged her all the way here screeched in panic. The idea of the Prince's wrath directed at them was so terrifying that they had given themselves up without even realizing. Kairen's glare caught them right away, and they started to run away in fear.

The Prince clicked his tongue and raised his head to exchange a glance with his dragon. As if obeying a silent order, the beast moved, crushing one of them under his paw, and chomping down on the other one. It was over within seconds. A rain of blood fell from his maw, spilling on some of the concubines and servants, who screamed again in fear and disgust. Cassandra got some on her shoulder too and she brought her hand over her mouth to hold back the strong nausea that rose in her stomach from the smell; the gruesome sight of the beast chewing on the servant still fresh in her mind.

Lyria, splattered in blood too, screamed. She was finally catching up with the reality of this situation and turned her terrified eyes towards the Third Prince Kairen, who was silently walking towards her, like a deadly shadow.

"Your Highness! This slave was mine! She... she is just an insignificant slave! I am your brother's doted concubine! You can't..."

Her voice died as the sword pierced her chest, right between her perky breasts. Her eyes were still open wide, in surprise, as she fell back like an inanimate doll. 10

With this final act, the bloodbath had scared the last of the remaining crowd away, with the exception of a few servants who were still frozen in fear. Cassandra was shaking.

She watched Kairen calmly retrieve his sword and wash the blood off in a fountain. The War God was acting as if killing one of his brother's concubines had

been a totally normal occurrence. Once his weapon was cleaned and back in his belt, he turned toward Cassandra. As he was walking up to her, her mind turned over, she had no idea how to react. She was scared of this man. Her eyes went from the body of the woman she had feared the most for years, to him, who was now even scarier.

“Are you injured?”

His question took her by surprise. Cassandra stared blankly at him, but the Prince was looking at her dress, which was covered in blood. She quickly came to her senses.

“No. No, my Lord. This blood isn’t mine...”

She meant to get up, but while leaning on her wrist, a sharp pain made her cry out. Did she twist it when she fell? Or was it from her earlier struggling? Her thin wrist was painful whenever she moved it, and was a bit blue too. Cassandra held it against her chest trying to ignore the pain, but just as she moved to try to get up again, the Prince knelt by her side. 2

“My... my Lord?” she gasped in surprise.

“Silence.”

The familiar feel of a warm coat suddenly enveloped her as Kairen’s sturdy arms reached around her shoulders and beneath her knees, gently lifting her up as if she were a fragile child. Instantly, Casandra’s face flushed a bright crimson. A Prince carrying a slave? And like a Princess, too!

She wanted to protest and tell him that he shouldn’t do this, but she didn’t dare to speak. Thus, she found herself held against Kairen’s hard torso, carried like some precious package, wrapped up in his cloak. Above them, the Black Dragon tilted its head and growled quietly. Kairen clicked his tongue.

“You shut up, too.” 25

Cassandra watched the huge beast sulk a bit while following them slowly. Its gigantic body was too big for the courtyard, destroying anything that got in its path, but neither it nor its master seemed to care. Behind them, what had been a nice little banquet not long ago, now resembled a bloody war zone. 2

Kairen walked away from the scene, unbothered, carrying Cassandra close to him. When they were almost back to the courtyard door, a group of people suddenly arrived. Embarrassed, she stayed still in his arms, completely at a loss of what to do.

The people who had arrived seemed familiar, too. After a few seconds, she recognized two of the five other Princes that had been on the platform, and became even more scared. But none of them, nor their attendants, paid any attention to her. Instead, the Fifth Prince took a glance over his brother’s shoulder to see the mess.

“Brother, didn’t you go a bit too far? I had just acquired that concubine! Did you have to kill her right away?! Didn’t you see how pretty she was?”

Next to him, the youngest Prince Anour, rolled his eyes.

“Brother Lephys, don’t you have enough women already? Who cares? If she displeased our older brother, that woman had to die.”

“Still... Oh well, I guess I’ll write a letter to her family or something. But brother, isn’t that the slave from earlier? I thought you had killed her already.”

- Cassandra was appalled at how easily they talked about someone’s death. Unlike Kairen, the two younger Princes were dressed in ceremonial clothing with colorful silk and gold embroidery. Not to mention the lavish jewelry in which they were both adorned. Each had a crowd of servants following closely behind them with their heads lowered.

Both Princes looked around her age, between fifteen and twenty years at most. But they didn’t seem to have much in common with their third brother.

“Enough, Lephys, enough,” sighed Prince Anour. “If our brother finds this woman to his taste, who cares? But Brother Kairen, Father was angry that you left the banquet so early. He wanted to introduce two new concubines to you.”

Kairen snorted, visibly annoyed.

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“Tell that old man he can keep those greedy sluts for himself.”

Cassandra frowned. Never mind the concubines, how could he talk about the Emperor like that? Kairen ignored both of his brothers as he walked past them, still carrying her. She was embarrassed beyond words to be transported like this in the Palace’s corridors, but did not dare to move. Behind them, she heard the dragon’s disappointed growl. The large beast could not follow them inside.

As the Prince climbed some stairs, she realized that they were not going back to his chambers. They were heading a bit further into the Palace, and Cassandra was worried as to where he would take her and why. Not to the Palace’s cells, right?