

The War God's Favorite by Jhonny Fox Chapter 66

The Mermaid's Chant

As she walked up to the center, every pair of eyes was on her. Most people were curious to know more about the War God's Concubine, the young lady the Emperor himself was so fond of.

Cassandra's frail figure, despite being alone, looked very proud and solemn at that moment. With her beautiful dress, her jewelry, and those gorgeous eyes, no one could deny her beauty. If it wasn't for her scars she didn't bother to hide, no one could have guessed she used to be a slave...

The young concubine walked up to the lake but, instead of stopping near it, she kept going, taking off her shoes and stepping barefoot into the water. The fresh sensation on her little feet was delicious.

Cassandra stood there for a few seconds, making people wonder if she was going to dance, but contrary to their expectations, she sat down, on her knees. All of her lower body was now immersed in the water. She put her palms on the surface of the water, making it stay there, her hands on top of the surface as if she was sensing it.

Shareen glanced at Missandra, who was smiling. It was obvious the younger sister already knew what Cassandra was about to do. Shareen thought about asking, but then, she did not. She would rather have the surprise of it.

After a few seconds of silence, Cassandra opened her lips and, softly, began to sing.

Everyone was surprised. Not only this language was completely unknown and very strange to them, but her voice was much deeper and clearer they had thought. It felt like an echo, her silvery voice spreading around like a cold wind. There was something eerie and unreal about it, that kept the whole crowd speechless. 2

As Cassandra kept singing, people exchanged looks, barely believing their ears. Was that haunting voice even human? It was giving them

shivers and goosebumps, hearts beating faster. Some people felt strangely appealed to it, while others found it... scary. As if the woman that was sitting there was singing some forbidden chant, something that did not belong to this world.

The song wasn't over, but something else happened. One of the Concubines saw it first, and gasped, pointing it out with her finger without a word.

Something was happening with the Lake. It was calm just a few moments ago, but slowly, little circles were now appearing at random locations on the surface. At first, it was very subtle, making people think it was just a coincidence until they realized it wasn't. One by one, little ripples started appearing, and the precision of how it matched Cassandra's voice didn't leave any doubt. The young concubine was doing this.

Her eyes closed, Cassandra kept singing, and it was as if the Lake was echoing her song. The circles started growing bigger and bigger, crossing each other, matching every note she sang. No one dared to say a word, or even breathe too loud. They were absolutely mesmerized by this show. When they thought they couldn't be more surprised, another guest pointed something in the water. Sure enough, under the clear surface, something else was happening.

Little movements were seen and kept intriguing everyone until people realized it was the fish. As if they were dancing, hundreds of little or middle-sized fish were swimming around, staying close to the surface but without crossing it. Moving in little crowds, the underwater creatures were going in circles and curves, so synchronized it was incredible to witness. As unbelievable as it was, they were definitely reacting to Cassandra's song. Most of them were gathering close to her, in such numbers that all of the water around her was filled with fish all sizes. Bigger fish started to appear as Cassandra's voice got deeper, taking people by surprise. Among them, a large white carp was dancing around, in the middle of the lake, following the currents created by the other fish. With the song taking a new turn, the ripples increased, smaller and more

agitated.

Something was getting a bit scary about her song. The clear surface broke, and little waves appeared randomly, chasing the smaller fish back into the lower levels of the lake, while the bigger ones stayed.

At that very moment, Cassandra opened her eyes, staring right at Phetra. The Princess was very uncomfortable with that. There was something threatening about that song, the more she heard the more she wanted to get away from Cassandra. She was shivering, feeling scared and uneasy. The Lake, too, was getting dangerously agitated. The little waves were getting bigger, like an angered sea that was about to swallow its surroundings. The young Concubine didn't feel like a frail young woman anymore. More like a water creature, waiting to trap her victim...

When the song came to a sudden end, it took a few seconds for everything and everyone to settle down.

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The lake returned to its quiet state, and only a few fish kept hanging and circling around Cassandra. Some little ones were poking against her legs and feet with curiosity. The crowd stayed speechless for one more minute. No one dared to break the silence as if the magic would be washed away. The first clap came from the Imperial Concubine Kareen. The brutal sounds had several people jump as if they had been woken up from a dream. She was followed by her children and the Emperor. Since the most powerful man in the Empire was clapping, no one else could hold back.

While everyone was cheering loudly and acclaiming her, Cassandra stood, sending one last glance at Phetra before turning around to leave the water.

“Beautiful! Absolutely heavenly!” Claimed the Emperor.

Cassandra bowed, before walking back to her Prince. Kairen stood to go and meet her halfway.

In her chair, Shareen let out a long sigh.

“What the heck was that? This is divine power!”

“It's called the Mermaid's Chant,” explained Missandra. “In our native

tribe, every child begins to learn it when they turn seven. Our people have this ability to modify our voice to have it match the water's natural rhythm."

"You're telling me this was all a.. some water trick?"

"This is not a trick! It takes years of training to master it! My sister was naturally gifted with a great voice, she learned it in a few months. Some people try their whole life without success. Your people could never master it."

"Missandra, please," said Cassandra as she was arriving at their side.

"What? It's true! The Rain Tribe is one of the very few tribes who descend from a Mermaid and inherited her voice. People in the Dragon Empire can't have that."

"That's only what the legend says," chuckled her sister.

While Cassandra and Missandra kept bickering, Kareen was still truly amazed. While the Imperial Family had inherited the gift of Dragon Taming, she had never suspected other people could have rival characteristics... Underneath her appearance, Cassandra had kept that precious gift hidden for so long, today's demonstration was a real shock.

"Well, well!" Said the Emperor. "Phetra, after that, I don't think you can say you're unimpressed anymore! My White Lily, what a gift you have! You need to come and sing for that old man sometimes, I would love to hear that beautiful song again!"

Everyone around didn't dare say a thing, but they were utterly shocked. Why did the Emperor make it look so normal? That woman had just sung something strange and shaken up the whole lake! No one could look at Cassandra with the same eyes as before. That song was heavenly, and whether people had felt fear or bliss while listening, they all shared the same strange feeling of wanting to hear that again.

The Emperor ordered for more entertainers to come, but after Cassandra's song, anything else felt quite blend.

However, there was an unexpected effect on that. While Shareen when on to chat with the ministers present, and Kareen discussed with another

Imperial Concubine, a bunch of young concubines appeared to greet Cassandra.

“Lady Cassandra! Your song was marvelous!”

“I didn’t think you had such talent!”

“Your dress is so beautiful, it suits your skin tone perfectly!”

“Is that the Emperor’s gift? How lucky!”

While she was taken by surprise by this sudden wave of praises, Cassandra answered politely, but nothing more. She hadn’t forgotten the cold treatment she had received previously from all those women.

Cassandra couldn’t trust any of them, regardless of their words and smiles. She was actually grateful to Kairen, as the War God’s presence next to her kept those women from standing too close to her. They didn’t dare get within a five feet circle around him, otherwise, Cassandra was sure they would have been all overwhelming her.

They didn’t even mind her answers much, most of their talk was between them, chatting about how beautiful, how smart or how surprising Cassandra was as if she had to hear them again and again to believe it.

“What a bunch of annoying leeches,” sighed Missandra behind her.

“What did that servant say!” Yelled one of the concubines who had heard her.

“Nothing that wasn’t true,” replied Cassandra, standing up. “If you are done, I’d like to eat in peace, ladies.”

In other circumstances, the Concubines wouldn’t have let that go. They would have complained to their Princes, maybe got the servant killed and Cassandra punished. However, it had been made very clear that the War God’s favorite was not someone they could even consider punishing in any way. Hence, they had no choice but to bite their tongues and swallow their pride.

“Where are you going,” asked Kairen.

“Just going to take a stroll. I’ll get sleepy if I just laze around, stay seated and eat.”

“I’ll come with you.”

Cassandra frowned, glancing at the bunch of men in uniforms that had been waiting to the side to approach.

“Aren’t you going to talk to the ministers at all? It’s okay, I’ll keep Mie and Dahlia with me.”

The War God frowned. It was that expression he always made when Cassandra was taking a reasonable decision he wasn’t very fond of. He sighed, glaring the poor ministers’ way.

“Fine. But be careful, and where I can see you.”

“I’m not leaving the area, I promise,” she said while giving him a quick peck on the lips.

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The First Prince

The area was indeed crowded, people gathering in little groups to chat. Cassandra soon noticed most of the groups were concubines gathered around their man, or men talking between themselves.

A lot of them actually interrupted their conversations to greet her, much to Cassandra’s surprise. Whether it was her relationship to Kairen, the Emperor’s speech earlier or her song, something had definitely changed in the way people looked at Cassandra. The women actively tried to befriend her, while the men were a bit... corny. She didn’t like either and did her best to avoid the groups. All the young concubine wanted was to have a little stroll, but she hadn’t thought it would be so complicated.

Missandra played her part as her servant, carrying a little tray of food for her, and giving her excuses to avoid people who were acting too pushy. Compared to her, Dahlia was quite quiet and a bit awkward. Cassandra had realized the young woman had gotten a lot shyer since Missandra had appeared, but couldn’t figure out why.

As she was talking with both of them, a duo she hadn’t expected to meet came up in front of her, followed by a crowd of concubines. The fifth and sixth princes.

“Lady Cassandra! That song was terrific!” Said Anour, as nice and

smiling as usual. "I had no idea you could sing so well!"

"Indeed," sighed Lephys. "None of my concubines could sing as well as that, even the best ones! I'm a bit disappointed. I thought our older brother's tastes were odd, but now I realize he might have a good eye for women."

Cassandra didn't like the way he said that or how he was talking about his concubines. The ladies behind him were all strikingly beautiful and visibly desperate to get his attention, wearing splendid red outfits and lots of jewelry and makeup. However, no matter how rude she found him, Lephys was the fifth Imperial Prince, she couldn't say anything impolite to him.

She bowed politely.

"Thank you for the compliments, your Highnesses, I am glad you enjoyed it."

"Isn't this your first New Year Celebration at the Palace, Lady Cassandra?" Asked Anour. "I need to show you the Dragon burning flames! Wait for a second!"

The young Prince ran off to get something, followed by two servants who were struggling to keep up with his energy. Meanwhile, Lephys smiled, his eyes checking Cassandra from head to toe with a smirk.

"Actually, now that I look at you from up close, you are quite fine, aren't you? I'll revise what I said earlier, my older brother has an eye for women. After all, sometimes it's not all about the outer appearance!"

"Thanks..."

Lephys winked at her, making her even more uneasy. She could feel Missandra's disapproving glare in her back but hoped her younger sister could stay quiet just a few more minutes before causing an incident.

"You know, I'm always amazed how a weak-looking woman like you was able to seduce my older brother. Your voice probably isn't your only skill, is it? Do you have other secrets my brother can enjoy? Come on, feel free to tell me, I'm curious! I realize women have many secrets I have yet to..."

“Women do have secrets, your Highness, and sometimes it’s better to respect them,” coldly replied Cassandra.

She had taken enough of his attitude. Treating his concubines like toys and making remarks about her as if she was a cunning hoe that acted innocent only to seduce Kairen into sleeping with her was more than she could bear. No matter how patriarchal and unbalanced the Dragon Empire was towards women, there were limits. Even the Emperor himself acknowledged and treated his concubines better than that.

Lephys, however, didn’t take the hint. Whether she was too subtle or he was too sure of himself, he hadn’t even noticed Cassandra was mad.

“There’s something about foreigners. Maybe I should try more foreign women! I’m getting awfully bored, always seeing the same face, anyway. I can always... Aouch!”

He crouched down and suddenly wailed about some bee sting, holding his foot and yelling around. Cassandra knew exactly where to look, but Missandra was playing innocent next to her, pretending to be absorbed in the details of her dress, which didn’t have any.

“It hurts! You! Aren’t you a doctor! Do something!” He yelled, still holding his foot.

“Sorry your Highness, I’m afraid a lowly woman like me is not skilled enough to treat you,” replied Cassandra.

Meanwhile, his concubines quickly surrounded him, asking how they could help and showing pity for him. They were mostly unuseful and noisy, but in a matter of seconds, the wall of women between Cassandra and the Prince was enough for her to walk away without being impolite. Missandra was laughing behind her, unable to hold back any longer.

“What did you do?” Asked Dahlia, at a loss.

“She dropped some stinging nettles on his feet,” chuckled Cassandra. “I didn’t see you do it but I recognized the leaves on the ground... They definitely weren’t in this garden before.”

“I always have some with me, just in case. You have no idea how many men I have needed to use them on... Actually, that guy should call

himself lucky, I don't always use it on their feet." (3)

Dahlia gasped, shocked, while the sisters laughed together.

After that, Cassandra made sure to stay away from the fifth brother, who complained for one more hour before an Imperial Physician was called to treat him. Anour, however, came back to show her some interesting little candles, shaped like Dragons, that would burn with blue flames. She wondered if the Princes had grown with so different personalities because they had been born from different mothers... Though Anour had also been raised by Kareen, he was still twelve years younger than the War God, and still quite innocent.

Cassandra chatted with him for a while longer, happy no one dared to distract them. The sixth Prince was still a bit too young to be of much interest to the single ladies, and they all focused on his older brothers. Though she had seen it before, Cassandra still couldn't believe how desperate some women were to enter the Imperial Harems. Some girls younger than her were ogling the Emperor or kept bugging the Princes present. The only ones who were free to walk without being harassed were the War God and Anour, for obvious reasons.

Cassandra exchanged quick glances with the War God, from where he was standing and chatting with the ministers and scholars. She had seen him frown and glare a lot during her brief exchange with his brothers, but Missandra had solved the problem before he had to come.

No matter where she stood, Cassandra could feel his warm shadow over her. The War God was protecting her from a distance. That feeling was the best and made her feel safe. Though, she liked it better when he stood where she could reach him.

When she couldn't take it anymore, after another stroll, she headed back to her Prince, her cheeks blushing with a shy pink. He was still not done talking with the ministers, but welcomed her silently, putting an arm around her waist and kissing her temple. No words were needed, and even the men present acted normally, only nodding to greet the young Concubine.

They were talking about war and the matters of the North. Cassandra knew exactly what was being discussed, and listened to it carefully. Most of those men probably thought she was only standing there, unable to understand what was going on, but they would have been completely wrong. Her few weeks spent in the camp had taught her anything she needed to know. She didn't say anything, however, as she didn't care what those men thought, and couldn't bother to step in. Strangely, those days were among the best she had in her entire life. She couldn't help but blush a bit more, remembering the snowstorm and the long, long hours with Kairen in his tent... Their child had likely been conceived during that storm, too. Cassandra couldn't repress her soft smile while thinking about it.

She didn't realize her expression at that time got the men's attention. The young Concubine was truly too charming at that moment, with her skin as pink as her beautiful dress.

Unfortunately for the ministers present, the War God had seen it too. He dismissed them with a glare, and turned to Cassandra, putting his hands on her hips.

"Don't do that in front of other men."

"Do what?" She asked, confused.

He frowned, but whatever it was, he couldn't express it. Eventually, the War God sighed, holding her closer.

Cassandra chuckled and gave him a quick peck on the lips, brushing his growing beard with her fingers. She didn't care for the curious crowd around them anymore. Actually, she wished they'd be alone, as they had barely got any time together all day... She sent a glance back, and Dahlia understood her completely. She grabbed Missandra's hand and pulled her back to Kareen's side, ignoring the younger sister's complaints.

Meanwhile, Cassandra turned to her Prince again, giving him a shy smile.

"Is it alright if we... step out for a little while?"

The Prince took a few seconds to understand her request. He was flustered, but Cassandra's pink cheeks and eyes confirmed what he

thought she meant. It wasn't like her at all to be this... demanding. Was it because of the pregnancy? Or her sister's influence? In any case, there was no way he wouldn't agree.

Guiding her out of the wide garden, Kairen walked to the closest corridor and found an isolated and desert area, a little salon where no one was likely to come by. As soon as he closed the door, both lovers turned to each other and kissed. Cassandra was rarely this bold, but she had missed him too much. For some reason, her whole body was craving this. Her thoughts got blurry, as she couldn't do anything but focus on his lips on hers, the touch of his hands exploring her body, lifting her dress' skirt to caress her legs. She caressed his spiky cheeks, his neck, every inch of his hot skin. The simple contact of him under her hands was spreading an incredible warmth through her whole body. The little flame that had ignited earlier was growing into a big wildfire, something she couldn't stop, didn't want to stop and was consuming her flesh into the intense burns of desire.

Kairen wasn't able to hold back either. He gently pushed her all the way to the luxurious couch waiting on the side, unable to stop touching her. He wanted her, to get drunk in her perfume and lost in that soft skin. That woman was a mystery, yet he knew her far better than he had known any other woman. Mermaid or woman, Cassandra would open up her arms for him. He didn't care much how many more secrets she had. He liked her, the mysteries she held close and anything she still had to reveal after.

As they sat facing each other, he pulled her onto his lap, one of her favorite position, and took off her dress' straps, letting it slide down to her waist and revealing her perfect breasts. It was a bit rounder and bigger since she was with a child, and he didn't hate that. He started kissing her, making her moan with his tongue. Every sound she made was like music to his ears. He hadn't forgotten her song from earlier, but the one voice he liked more was the one she had when she was excited by his touch. No one knew that one but him...

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The Dragon's Hunger

Cassandra shivered, feeling her skin warming up way too quickly under his hot touch. Her cheeks were red, as she let him toy with her breasts, breathing loudly and closing her eyes, enjoying those sensations. Could he hear her heartbeat going crazy when he was this close? It felt like it could bump out of her chest! Cassandra had to hold on to his shoulders, and struggled to undo his armor. He was lifting her skirt and pulling her top down to caress her without taking her dress off completely, but she wanted to be able to feel his chest against hers.

Once the armor loudly fell on the floor, Kairen smiled, and reached out for her lips again. He put his fingers in her hair, playing with the free strands and caressing her nape, keeping her close. His other hand was busy between her legs, his hot fingers driving her crazier and wetter. He knew how to play, and obviously took pleasure in watching her tremble and react to his every move. Cassandra felt him getting harder despite his pants between them, and blushed even more. She wanted him. She wanted him, now...

Kairen was just about as impatient as she was. Lowering his pants a bit, he finally let it out and, slowly, guided her. Cassandra felt her legs and her inner parts trembling, just from feeling him so close to her entrance. She was red, moist and too excited to bear it anymore. She slowly sat down, exhaling loudly with pleasure. It took a few seconds for both of them to adjust, but those seconds were filled with kisses and caresses. It was the best sensation. Him, filling her, spreading his warmth like a fire through her whole body. Cassandra has gotten used to it, enough to be addicted to this sensation. She was panting a bit, but his lips soon found hers, keeping it busy with another wild kiss. They were both impatient, and unable to wait any longer. Kairen started moving his hips, and Cassandra responded naturally, trying to tame the beast under her. He was wild, savage and unpredictable. She moaned, gasped for air and

moaned again. The wiggling of her body on his had something terribly indecent about it, and yet, she loved it. She wanted more, crying out his name out and holding on to his neck. His fierce rod in her was driving her unbearably crazy. Something snapped in her head, and she couldn't hide her pleasure anymore. Her own voice was getting hoarse, louder and indecent, but she didn't stop it. Kairen didn't give her a second to rest. He just wanted more, more, more of this woman. He'd take her, grab her hips and pull her in and out on him, guiding her shaking body to relish in this pleasure. It was wild, primal sex. The oldest dance in the world, a man and a woman together indulging in the pleasures of the flesh. 5
Cassandra's skin was pink and sweaty, her blood rushing to her extremities, her limbs going numb from such wilderness. She kept calling him, like a plea, her voice so embarrassingly sexy and suave. The War God was like a wild beast, mating his queen and unleashing his desire for her, inside her. Cassandra felt it coming, like always. She knew his body, all too well to not know when he was about to give it to her. That incredible, last moment of unleashed, furious pleasure. He'd accelerate, pant and groan, deepen his thrusts and, deep inside, relish it. Cassandra moaned even louder, feeling him so deep... She heard her own voice break into a hoarse moan, exhausted.

The heat was gradually decreasing, but that short exercise had been intense nevertheless. Cassandra took a minute, her head resting on her Prince's shoulder, to catch her breath and wait for her heartbeat to slow down. Her skin was still shivering a bit, and Kairen's warm hand caressing it was soothing her.

He gently pulled away, making her grimace a little, and kissed her skin gently. Cassandra let out a long sigh of relief, her thirst quenched. They didn't need any words. She kissed him gently, savoring his taste a bit more with a little chuckle.

"Feeling better?" He asked.

"Yes..."

It was as if he knew she had needed this. A little break away from the

world, just the two of them, indulging in this carnal desire.

They stayed like this a while longer, just caressing and kissing each other, gently and slowly, enjoying this moment alone. Neither of them felt like breaking that bubble and going back yet. After a short moment, though, Cassandra chuckled.

“We have to go back...”

Kairen simply nodded, looking at her with his dark eyes.

“You look content.”

“I am,” she admitted, still blushing.

She did her best to dress up, making sure nothing felt out of place.

Somehow, she felt like their intimate moment was going to show one way or another on her, and felt a bit embarrassed. She helped Kairen put his armor back on to keep her hands busy instead of fidgety, and he adjusted the little diadem on her head with a frown.

“What is it?”

“...I don't like it.”

“The diadem? It's very pretty though.”

I was curious that he didn't like something she was wearing. He usually seemed happy whenever she had an occasion to dress up a bit... However, to her little diadem, he was almost glaring at. (4)

“You really don't like it? It's from the Emperor...”

She couldn't refuse to wear something the Emperor had personally gifted her!

“It's from my father.”

“What about it?”

“I don't like you wearing something coming from another man.”

Cassandra was rendered speechless. Really? Did his jealousy know any limit! How was she supposed to answer to that? From his expression, she could tell he was going to be stubborn about this... After thinking about it, she shouldn't have been so surprised He even bickered with his own Dragon, and the Emperor probably had some concubines about as young as she was.

She sighed.

“I have to wear it tonight, though, his Highness personally gifted it to me.”

He frowned a bit more. He obviously didn't like it, but Cassandra couldn't help it. She chuckled, giving him a quick peck on his lips despite his sour expression.

“I'll leave it at your mother's apartments when we leave, alright? I don't need to wear it outside of the Imperial Palace, as long as I take care of it, it should be fine.”

“Fine...” He growled.

Cassandra smiled, happy she had tamed the beast just this once. She was getting a bit better at handling him. She took his hand, trying to distract him.

“Let's go back now,” she said with a gentle voice.

They walked back to the big area where the festivities were still ongoing. There were so many guests and people attending, it was unlikely anyone had even noticed they were gone for a few minutes at all.

They took a few steps together. When she was walking beside the War God, things were much different for Cassandra. People would glance at them, but no one dared to stare or even approach them too close. A new show had begun too, exotic dancers, capturing most of the crowd's attention.

Cassandra and Kairen walked back to their table. After their little exercise session, she needed to rest a bit. She let out a sigh of relief while sitting down, though her body was still clearly remembering the vigorous exercise

from earlier. Kairen, sitting next to her, was defying anyone to come close with his natural death-threatening expression.

Cassandra couldn't have been more grateful, though. For some reason, she was hungry again, and enjoyed her time eating in peace.

However, strangely, her usual favorites had changed again. The cheese cubes she used to love now made her feel nauseous, while she was

strangely craving... meat.

She whispered to Kairen about it when she heard a peal of familiar laughter behind her.

“Yeah, carrying a Dragon’s child will do that to you,” said Kareen while taking her seat back at the next table.

She gestured for a nearby servant to come, and ordered them to bring a set of cooked meat for Cassandra. The young concubine felt a bit strange letting Kareen order for her, but she usually didn’t eat any red meat, this was a first for her. She was more used to a vegetarian diet, with some fish sometimes.

“Don’t eat raw meat though”, said Kareen. “Your stomach is still human, even if it tells you to eat like a Dragon.”

“It feels so strange. I feel like a whole new person.”

“You still have a few months to go, dear, you better get used to it. And once your son is born, prepare to feed a carnivore. Kairen could eat almost as much as his Dragon when he was born, and was horribly grumpy when he was hungry.”

Cassandra laughed a bit, thinking of her Prince’s younger days. She wondered what kind of child he was? And if their son would be like him...

She caressed her little baby bump. She couldn’t hide it under her dresses now, it was getting more and more obvious as the days went on.

However, she didn’t mind. She had new curves, wasn’t looking so bony anymore and even her hair felt a bit soother. She was grateful to be so well cared for, though. Having to deal with her nausea and growing appetite would have been terrible if she wasn’t helped by Kairen and the servants of the Diamond or Imperial Palace.

“Brother!”

Shareen had just come back, too, with a frown on, her hands on her hips, “Did you listen to that annoying minister of the War Affairs? Or should I have punched him for two?”

Indeed, behind her, one poor man was on the floor, half of his face

looking very, very painful and purple... No one dared to come to his help, though, keeping a careful distance around him until some servants came to help him up.

“Shareen, I already told you not to make your fights too obvious, didn’t I?” Scolded her mother. “He is wearing such a big outfit, yet you had to go for the face.”

“He can walk around like that, mother, I don’t care. That idiot was downgrading Brother’s army, calling them lazy for maintaining the border without crossing over!”

“Oh. Why did you let him be conscious then? He looks too fine for me.” Shareen ignored her mother, though, turning to Kairen, waiting for his answer.

He didn’t say anything, though, not for a while. Just when Cassandra was wondering what was wrong, she heard a flap of wings.

“Krai!” She said, happy to spot the familiar black silhouette.

However, the Dragon didn’t stop, only turning his head to her with a light, familiar growl. It was obvious he wouldn’t be able to land in this area, not without crushing a few people under him. However, he extended his giant claws, making people run away in fear. However, he flew low only to pick that same minister up from the ground. The man screeched so high-pitched, some people rubbed their ears, annoyed.

However, no one dared to comment as the Dragon flew away with his prey, disappearing again. Shareen smiled, looking satisfied, and helped herself to some wine.

No one dared to comment on the incident, whether they had heard the fight with Shareen earlier or were too scared to ask.

“Kairen! Son, what was that?” Asked the Emperor.

“Taking out the trash, Father.”

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The Feud

Several people couldn't help but laugh at that sentence, though they were smart enough to hide it. Some others were more terrified, avoiding Kairen's direction at all costs and their faces white as a sheet. Meanwhile, from his throne, the Emperor sighed.

"Make sure your dragons behave, will you? How can the party go on if there are no more guests!"

"Dragons tend to be wilful, father," said Shareen with a sneer. "Who knows, if they get hungry they might come again looking for snacks."

"Don't make us laugh, Shareen," suddenly growled the Second Prince.

"As if he didn't control the Black Dragon perfectly..."

Shareen didn't appreciate the prince talking out against her. She immediately glared at him back.

"How about you teach us about controlling Dragons, brother? Call yours out now, let us all see how much of a Dragon-tamer you are!"

Right as she finished saying that, a loud growl echoed from somewhere in the Palace. It was further away, though. No matter where he was, the red Dragon was echoing his master's anger. Cassandra couldn't help but be a bit worried. What if he really called him all the way there?

Wouldn't he get in a fight with Krai, or injure people? Every time she had seen the red Dragon, he was securely caged, but what if he was actually freed? The animosity between the brothers would definitely have him target Kairen. She trusted Krai would respond immediately, but...

Just as she was lost in her thoughts and worrying, Kairen gently put his hand on hers. He wasn't looking at her, still glaring in Varhen's way, but his thumb was gently caressing her skin, helping her calm down a bit.

Varhen took a few seconds but then, to her surprise, a reptilian smile appeared on his face as he was still glaring at Shareen.

"Why would you need me to teach you anything about Dragons, Shareen? Women don't need to know about dragon-taming."

The insult was clear, and even Cassandra felt outraged. He was clearly

looking down on the Princesses, because unlike their brothers, they had no Dragons of their own. Shareen became red in anger, but just as she was about to say something, the loudest growls were heard.

Though she wasn't surprised to see Krai come back, though he had to half-stand on one of the roofs, Cassandra had not expected to see the Golden Dragon make an appearance too. However, Glahad was growling even more furiously, clearly glaring at Varhen with his ruby eyes. The arrival of the two biggest Imperial Dragons was enough to scare a lot of guests, who, for some reason, apparently thought the wisest place to hide at would be inside the buildings. Cassandra disagreed, as the walls looked about to collapse under the beasts' weight...

Even Missandra and Dahlia had run back towards her, both of them hiding behind her seat, afraid. She couldn't blame them. She probably would have been just as terrified if the War God hadn't been holding her hand all this time. The Dragons' angry growls were deafening, proportionally to their anger.

Shareen, who had paid no attention to the Dragons all this time, suddenly stood up and took out her sword, too, furious.

"I dare you to say such words again, Varhen."

"Enough!"

The Emperor was standing up too, and glaring at the both of them.

"Enough of your feuds! This is the New Year Celebrations. I want no fight in front of our guests, not tonight, not tomorrow or for the next days! Varhen, Shareen, enough of you too! Both of you go back to your apartments for tonight!"

Shareen was about to protest, but her mother clicked her tongue. The two of them exchanged glances for a while, almost as if they were having a silent conversation until Shareen cried out in frustration. She violently swang her sword through the air in frustration, put it back and turned to leave without a word.

Cassandra felt bad for her, and couldn't help but glare in Varhen's way. The Prince was watching Shareen go, but hadn't moved himself. He was

also about to say something, but the War God opened his mouth first.

“Father told you to leave, Varhen.”

The ice and hatred in his voice was so intense, the whole area became as cold as the Onyx Castle for a few seconds. Cassandra wondered if the second brother would argue or fight Kairen...

However, after a long glare, he stood up silently and walked away in a strange silence. The air was tense, so much that absolutely no guest dared to say a word for a few minutes after the Prince was gone. Cassandra, who had been holding her breath unknowingly, took a long sigh. She felt sorry for Shareen, but couldn't help but be grateful that Varhen was gone, at least for that night.

Just as the moment became awkward, the Emperor sat back, looking tired. Glahad and Krai, who obviously were faster to calm down, seemed unwilling to leave. Both Dragons were overlooking the area with curious eyes, their front paws in the roofs of the building. They looked like they were wondering if they would fit in the area if they climbed over. The answer was no. Even with the area cleared, there were still many food stalls and tables everywhere, ready to be crushed.

Moreover, the bravest guests were slowly coming back since the Dragons had stop growling like angry beasts. Cassandra, who had just been delivered a humongous portion of meat, grabbed one big chunk by the bone, and stood up, walking to Krai.

“Hinue! What are you doing...?” Asked Missandra, still following behind her, worried.

She kept sending glances back to Kairen, as if she was hoping he'd stop Cassandra or his Dragon, but Kairen wasn't even looking their way.

Meanwhile, his concubine was walking towards the building which Krai was on top of, his snout sniffing the piece of fuming meat with deep interest.

He growled softly, lowering his head as much as he could without climbing over, and Cassandra threw the meat at him. He caught it, happily eating his little snack with a satisfied expression. When he was

done, including his lip licking, she smiled and extended her arm, making Missandra squeak.

“Hinue, are you crazy! This is a wild creature! He can eat you!”

“He won’t,” said Cassandra with a confident smile.

Indeed, Krai only touched her head with his snout, his eyes wide open, curious to what his favorite human was playing at. Cassandra scratched his scales a bit before stepping back and grabbing Missandra with her other hand.

“Oh, no, no, no,” said Missandra, “I am not going to like this...”

“It’s okay, he’s a good boy.”

Missandra did not believe a Dragon several times her size could be anything near a good boy! However, she only struggled a bit, while Cassandra confidently, pushed her in front, talking to the Dragon.

“This is my younger sister. Can you try not to eat her? Please?”

Krai was staring at the both of them, busy sniffing, curious. Of course, there was no way to know he understood. He tilted his head to the side and growled a bit, making a curious impression, as if he was chatting with her. His claw was scratching against the roof, though, so maybe he was just getting a bit impatient.

Cassandra smiled, but it was time for him to go before the building really collapse. She wasn’t sure the Imperial Palace was fully dragon-proof.

“See you tomorrow,” she said to the Dragon, before walking away, still holding Missandra’s hands.

Krai didn’t understand, as he was still on the roof, growling a bit and trying to get her attention. Cassandra ignored him and walked back to her seat, where she couldn’t see him. She washed her hand full of meat juice and whatever dirt Krai had on his scales while releasing Missandra with her other hand,

As soon as she let go, the younger sister’s legs went numb, and she fell on her knees with a sound of despair. Dahlia crouched down next to her.

“Are you okay...?” She asked.

“I am not! Those were the most terrifying minutes of my life...”

The young servant girl chuckled. It was the first time for Missandra to lose her fierce and feisty upfront like that. Cassandra laughed too and gave her a few minutes to regain her composure. Missandra kept pouting after that though, stating that her older sister had almost risked her life with the crazy idea to befriend a dragon...

After the previous events, the guests were slowly coming back under the Emperor's impulse and tried to resume the party as if nothing happened, and two enormous Dragons heads weren't hovering over them. Glahad and Krai soon got bored, though, and after a while longer, both of them left flying. It was a magnificent sight to watch the Golden Dragon actually spread his wings and fly, though. He was shining brightly in the night, while Krai was like a black shadow, hard to follow and drawing shapes in the dark blue sky.

The New Year Celebrations were supposed to last for a full week, all day and night long, but of course, people had to take breaks in between. At the Emperor's party, most people tried their best to stay the longest possible, as not to offend the Host. The Emperor seemed to have incredible stamina despite his age, not showing any signs of fatigue.

Kareen, however, soon got bored and decided to leave. She was obviously upset after Shareen got kicked out, and no one managed to keep her any longer once she had made up her mind to go back to her apartments, much to the Emperor's disappointment.

Other people would do their best to stay the longest and enjoy themselves, but everyone was bound to show fatigue at some point.

It was especially true for Cassandra, with her pregnancy taking a toll on her. Several hours after dark, despite her best attempts to stay entertained and eat and drink at a slow pace, she kept dozing off until Kairen didn't let her argue anymore and decided to leave. She didn't argue, as she was too tired. The Prince gently helped her up and took her back to his room, no one commenting on their departure. Cassandra felt bad for being among the earliest to leave the party, but it couldn't be helped, she truly was too tired. She was falling half-asleep already just from being carried

in his arms.

Kairen dismissed Dahlia and Missandra when they reached their room and landed her gently on the bed. Cassandra was too tired, she didn't even feel him undress her and remove her jewelry. She was just relieved to be finally laying in a bed. She hadn't realized her back pains were getting so terrible until then.

Finally, the War God laid next to her, wrapping her up in his embrace, and, once she felt her skin against hers, she let go and fell asleep for good.

The War God's Favorite by Jhonny Fox Chapter 70

The Wedding Plan

Cassandra fell into a deep slumber, exhausted by the whole day. She had a dreamless night, a peaceful one, surrounded by the right warmth and soft scents of verbena. Several pots of that plant had been put in their room to help her sleep better.

Kairen, too, made sure to position his arms in the most comfortable position for her before getting to sleep himself. He was even more cautious than usual, as his Concubine recently struggled to get a good night's sleep, and often woke up to her nausea.

That next morning, Cassandra slept as much as she needed. No one dared to bother her, and, when she woke up by herself, felt refreshed after a good night's sleep. Her body was a bit sore, but nothing unbearable. She stretched a bit, sitting up to confirm she was alone. The Prince's side of the bed was cold... How long had she slept? She could hear the music outside, the festivities still going on. The sunlight made her feel like it was quite late in the morning, too.

She grabbed her robe and walked to the window, glancing down. Indeed, she could see the lake and the garden around, flooded with people again. Did some not sleep at all? She was too far and too high to recognize anyone, though.

“Lady Cassandra! Did you sleep well?”

Dahlia had just walked in, carrying a new dress for her. Two other servants girls entered right behind her, with hot water and oils. They started preparing her a bath, immediately surrounding the room with a refreshing citrus smell.

“I did, thank you. I slept late, didn’t I?”

“His Highness insisted we let you sleep, my Lady. It’s almost midday now! But Imperial Concubine Kareen said she wants to have late breakfast with you.”

“She’s been waiting for me!” Realized Cassandra, a bit embarrassed.

“She knows you were sleeping, my lady, she said she was fine with waiting as long as you got a good rest. His Highness the third prince agreed to it too, and insisted we wait for you to wake up.”

“My Lord is with his mother?” Asked Cassandra, while undressing to get into her bath quickly. –

“Yes, my Lady, Princess Shareen, and Lady Missandra as well.”

Cassandra felt a bit embarrassed at the thought of everyone waiting for her. Moreover, they weren’t even attending the Celebrations but having breakfast at Lady Kareen’s apartments? She wondered if Shareen was still implicitly banned from there, or Kareen was the one who refused to go again. Both Mother and Daughter definitely shared the same fiery blood...

As she didn’t want to keep anyone waiting much longer, Cassandra asked the servants to help her hurry to get ready, after a quick bath. She let Dahlia pick the jewelry for her, put on her tiara and walked out quickly. Only Dahlia followed her, as the two young servants stayed behind to clean up the room.

For once, Cassandra was grateful to be spared of her usual nausea. She hurried to Kareen’s apartments, not running but still unwilling to walk slowly. She got there a few minutes later, and walked in, as she knew Kareen didn’t for her to be announced.

It was a large room, with the panels on one side open on a large garden

for them to admire and the sunshine to come in. However, unlike the warm sunlight, the atmosphere was icy inside. She walked up to the large table, where Kareen, Shareen, Kairen, and Missandra were all seated and strangely quiet. To her surprise, the young Prince Anour was seated with them too, though he had obviously just arrived, his plate and cup empty and clean.

They all raised their heads when she came in, but Cassandra noticed both Missandra and Kairen were unhappy, and Kareen ignoring them, drinking her tea. Shareen rolled her eyes.

“Finally!”

“Good Morning!” Said Anour, apparently the only one not sulking or pissing.

“Sorry, I’m late...” muttered Cassandra, confused about what was going on.

Kareen stood up to walk to her, gently smiling and taking her hand.

“It’s fine, my dear, every pregnant woman needs a good night’s sleep. I’m glad you rested, you look better than last night. Now, come. You must be hungry.”

Indeed, she was. Her baby and his dragon stomach were already starving, and the large display of food on the table made it worse. She sat next to the Imperial Concubine, greeting everyone while she was served some of her favorite lemon tea.

“What is going on...?” She finally dared to ask.

“Oh, well,” said Shareen, that dearest brother of mine is fighting with Mother and your just as stubborn sister. For the record, I’m on their side as well. It’s been like that for over an hour so I do hope you can talk some sense into him.”

“A fight? About what?” Asked Anour, curious.

“Their wedding.”

Cassandra was speechless. Their wedding? He had talked about it to his family and Missandra? She suddenly remembered, she said she wanted his mother’s approval... Yet, she hadn’t really thought he would go

ahead and ask her straight-out! It wasn't exactly a breakfast topic... Anour too, had his mouth open, visibly shocked. He was about to say something, but Kareen gestured for him to be quiet and eat, like a child. Cassandra sighed, putting down her cup.

"I guess you didn't answer what my Lord wanted to hear?" She asked Kareen.

"Of course not. But you don't seem too surprised by that, dear. You already knew I'd be against it, didn't you?"

Cassandra sighed, glancing at the War God's furious expression. He was quiet and still, but she could tell he wasn't furious. He had his frown on, and his dark eyes were glaring at anything nearby. This was going to be a complicated one...

"If something happens to me," Cassandra said, "my Lord won't have any chance for another child."

"Finally, someone with some sense in here!" Said Shareen. "Kairen, let her lead your army next time, this one knows how to think!"

Her words were met with another deathly glare from her brother, but of course, she wasn't one to be so easily scared by him, crossing her arms with a proud expression.

"Kairen, stop being a child and listen to Cassie," said Kareen.

"I won't marry another woman," he growled.

"We are not asking you too, you stubborn child! Just to wait until you two have several children. Do you need me to remind you what happened to Anour's mother?"

The sixth prince immediately nodded, looking resolute. Indeed, his mother had died in childbirth... If it wasn't for Kareen, he probably wouldn't even have reached his teenage years.

"I'll protect Cassandra."

Seeing his stubborn expression, she stood up and walked to him, taking his face into her hands, having him look at her. She knew he couldn't resist her long. She gently brushed his beard with her fingers.

"It's not that I don't trust you to protect me," she said softly. "But

anything can happen in the next four months. So many people are against me having this baby. Even if there weren't any external threats, this is my first child. I could die in childbirth, face complications. Those things happen, even with all my medicinal knowledge."

"Cassandra is only eighteen," added Kareen. "She is still young, and not as resistant as us." 3

Talking about her possible death wasn't anything comforting for Cassandra, but she needed him to understand. If something went wrong, during this pregnancy or later on, she didn't want her Prince to lose his opportunity to become the Emperor because of her.

"Still... I won't want any other than you," he growled.

"You can't think like that," Cassandra replied. "You could make a great Emperor... If you have a son."

"I only want the children you'll bear."

She sighed. He was truly too stubborn. Shareen let out a long sigh of exasperation.

"Do you two have to be so cheesy and mushy for breakfast, seriously? We are still there!"

"I'm against it, too!"

Everyone turned to Missandra, surprised to hear her speak.

"Can someone remind me who is she?" Asked Anour, confused. "She looks like Lady Cassandra..."

"Her younger sister."

"You had a younger sister?" He exclaims, his eyes wide open in surprise.

"How come I didn't know! It was you at the celebrations yesterday, right!"

"Anour, it's a secret," said Kareen with her serious expression.

"Yes, but..."

"A secret."

He opened his mouth again, but seeing his adoptive mother's glare, he shut it close again, and nodded. Cassandra couldn't help but chuckle at their little interaction. Kareen was obviously a good mother to her

children, no matter how strict she could be.

After a few seconds, Missandra crossed her arms.

“I am still against it. And I don’t understand your weird ways, anyway. The Dragon people are strange. One man can marry as many women as he wants, but women can’t? And this whole wife/concubine statuses thing, too! This is just...”

“Missandra, calm down,” said Cassandra.

“Wait, I’m curious,” says Shareen. “You girls are from a different country, after all, tell us about it.”

“It’s not a Country,” replied Missandra. “We don’t own the land or anything but ourselves. You people see a square of land and declare it’s yours. It’s ridiculous!” (5

Cassandra was waiting for Shareen to get mad, but actually, she only looked genuinely surprised. Kareen, too, was rubbing her chin with her finger, looking interested. She grabbed her tea.

“Tell us more, child. I’m curious, too. None of us ever heard of others... cultures or tribes beside the Eastern Republic and the Northern Barbarians...”

Missandra seemed surprise to hear her being interested, and sat down, a bit perplexed. She glanced at Cassandra, unsure, but seeing her older sister gives her a little nod, she proceeded to speak, blushing a bit. For once, she looked shyer than Cassandra, and her real age.

“W... Well I was only seven, so I don’t remember many things... But I know we only lived in the swamps, and in our shacks...”

“Shacks? Not real houses?”

“The soil was too uneven for stones like here, it would get muddy and moldy in no time,” explained Cassandra, who remembered it better. “We used special types of woods, and grew creepers around it.

“Us children played all day in the rivers, catching fishes and swimming and diving,” said Missandra, smiling.

“You were the best at catching fishes,” noted Cassandra with the same smile.

“You were the best swimmer! My sister dived very deep and she could stay the longest underwater. So many kids were always following her around and trying to imitate her. I was the proudest since you were my sister...”

Missandra blushed a bit after saying that, and Cassandra was touched. Indeed, she remembered the cheeky six or seven-year-old Missandra, always following right behind her, playing around and going on adventures in the swamps. She wasn't afraid to get dirty or climb the mangroves.

“You mentioned your mother taught you about herbs?” Said Kareen.

“Everyone in our tribe knew about all the basic herbs... We cooked most of them, but we would use them for hygiene, medicine, cleaning... Most of our knowledge was based on what the elders transmitted to us. It was our main resource.”

“Our Grandfather was the chief of the village, as the eldest of the adults,” explained Missandra. “Mother was the best doctor. She taught my sister a lot, and the other children who were old enough, too.”

“You kept making everyone eat tingling leaves once you discovered their effect,” chuckled Cassandra. “You even put it in Paba's tea when he was nagging you...”

The sisters laughed at the memory, making everyone else chuckle too.

“Paba?” Repeated Kareen. “I noticed you two can talk in that strange language. What is it?”

“Our mother tongue,” explained Cassandra. it doesn't really have a name. Paba means grandpa.”

“You call each other Linue et Hinue too,” said Shareen.

“It's little sister and big sister. We can use to address other girls even if they are not from their family though, as long as we are close.

“Interesting...”

“How do you say, husband?” Asked Kairen.

Everyone was surprised to hear him speak. Missandra immediately frowned.

“We don’t say it,” she said. “And we don’t get married to men who take lots of concubines!”

“Missandra,” sighed Cassandra.

The little sister pouted, crossing her arms, visibly unhappy. Cassandra turned back to her prince.

“We don’t really have a word for “Husband” since we don’t get married like you... We do have a union ceremony, though. Partners call each other Almien.”

“Almien?”

“It means who is mine,” sighed Missandra. “You can do that with only one person, though!”

“It means who is mine,” sighed Missandra. “You can do that with only one person, though!”

“So lovers do this?”

“It’s not just lovers, but people who promise to unite their lives forever. You cannot change or take another one after!”

“Missandra, I think they understood,” said Cassandra. “Anyway, it’s...”

“Let’s do that.”

She turned to Kairen, confused.

“Do that?”

“You and me, let’s do that thing from your tribe. Almien.”