

HER GRACEFUL WAR SONG

War 1

At Grace Mansion, the lanterns in the corridors cast intricate shadows on the window frames, resembling beasts looming on the walls.

Carissa Sinclair sat on a chair with her hands folded in her lap, her slender body hidden beneath plain clothes. She looked at the man before her—her husband whom she had spent a year waiting for. Barrett Warren was still wearing his slightly-worn battle armor. Standing under the dim light, he looked commanding and handsome. His face showed a mix of determination and a touch of regret. "Carissa, the king has issued a royal edict for this marriage. Aurora will be joining our household. There's no question about it," said Barrett.

Carissa's eyes clouded with confusion. "The queen dowager has said that General Yates is a model for all women in the kingdom. Would she be willing to be a concubine?"

Barrett's eyes flashed with a hint of annoyance. "No, she won't be a concubine. She'll be my legal wife and equal to you."

"Calling her that doesn't change anything. Ultimately, she's really just a concubine in disguise," Carissa replied, remaining indifferent.

Barrett frowned. "What does it matter? Aurora and I developed feelings for each other on the battlefield. We earned this marriage through our achievements. I don't need your approval."

Carissa smiled mockingly. "Developed feelings, huh? Do you remember what you said to me before you left for war?"

On their wedding night a year ago, Barrett had left to lead reinforcements on an expedition.

Before leaving, he had lifted his wife's veil and promised her, "Carrisa Sinclair, you're the only woman I'll ever love in my life. I will never take a concubine!"

Feeling awkward, Barrett turned away. "Forget what I said. When I married you, I didn't understand love. I thought you were a suitable match for a wife until I met Rory."

Talking about the woman he loved, his eyes softened and filled with deep affection. He turned back to Carissa and added, "She's unlike any woman I've ever met. I love her deeply. I hope you'll agree to this." Carissa felt a lump in her throat.

Despite feeling a mix of disgust and unwillingness, she still asked, "What about your parents? Do they agree?"

"They do. It was a royal edict. Besides, Aurora is straightforward, cheerful, and lovable. She visited my mother a while ago."

They agreed? Hah... How ironic! Everything Carissa had done over the past year had all been for nothing.

"Is she currently in the mansion?" Carissa asked, lifting her brow.

Barrett spoke of Aurora Yates with a softness in his voice, "Yes, she's talking to my mother. She's made her very happy. Even her health seems to be improving."

"Improving?" Carissa felt a whirlwind of emotions. "When you went to war, your mother was seriously ill. I brought in the best physician to treat her. I managed the estate's affairs by day and stayed up nights by her bedside. It was only because of this that her condition started to improve."

Carissa wasn't seeking praise. She was stating the facts of her exhausting year.

"But seeing Aurora has made my mother feel even better," Barrett said earnestly. "I know this is unfair to you, but for the greater good, please support Aurora and me."

Carissa pressed her lips into a thin line as she blinked away the tears in her eyes and sharpened her gaze. "Invite General Yates over. I have a few things to ask her."

"There's no need for that. Carissa, she's different from any woman you know. She's a general, and she's above the usual household squabbles. She wouldn't want to meet you," Barrett refused instantly. Carissa retorted, "What kind of women do I know? What kind of woman am I to you? Have you forgotten? I'm also the daughter of a noble family. My father and my six brothers died on the Southern Frontier three years ago-"

"That's them," Barrett interrupted. "But you're a delicate woman suited for the comforts of home. Aurora has no respect for such women. She's straightforward and unrestrained. If she meets you, she might say things you won't like. Why put yourself through that?"

As Carissa looked up, the striking beauty mark under the corner of her eye became more evident in the light.

She calmly said, "It's fine. If she says anything unpleasant, I'll ignore it. Understanding the bigger picture and acting with dignity are essential virtues for any matriarch. Don't you trust me?"