

War Song 101

Chapter 101

The Mystic Army was now utterly impressed with Carissa, particularly Michael.

He could see the formidable nature of Carissa's move. She had shattered the wooden staff into many pieces, and they had all been perfectly aligned. There was a subtle but powerful technique hidden within her inner force. Among all the flying wooden shards, only the one that landed on his neck was light.

As the sun set and darkness enveloped the land, the campfire cast its glow over the gradually dispersing soldiers. They chattered excitedly about Carissa's technique.

"That staff shattered into pieces right on the spot! It was incredible-almost like magic!"

"She's truly worthy of being the late General Sinclair's daughter. She's amazing!"

"I told you, if she hadn't made real achievements on the battlefield, how could she have risen to the rank of a fifth-ranked general?"

"You shameless idiot! You were the loudest back then! You even made a fuss and tried to protest to the marshal. If I hadn't dragged you away, you're the one who'd get lashed."

"Hey, come on! I was just believing what General Yates said. She claimed General Sinclair was on the battlefield to avenge a marriage insult, wanting to outdo everyone and make General Warren regret his decision."

"To be honest, I think General Yates is a bit shameless-spreading rumors and making righteous accusations against General Sinclair before the fight even started."

"Shut up! Do you want to get beaten?"

Various voices buzzed in Aurora's ears. Her face burned with embarrassment and shame, and she felt a surge of anger. She wiped the blood from her lips, suppressed the boiling rage inside her, and strode up to Carissa.

"When Michael challenged you, you knew I was watching from the city tower. You deliberately staged the performance for me so that I would challenge you, right?" she demanded.

Violet's cold voice cut in from the side, "Staged a performance for you? Who do you think you are?"

"Shut your mouth! Who do you think you are? Did I ask for your opinion?"

Aurora's face twisted with fury as she shouted at Violet. Violet was momentarily stunned, but was immediately enraged. She lifted her whip, ready to strike Aurora.

"Vivi!" Carissa grabbed Violet's whip with one hand. "Stop!"

Violet was seething with rage. "Cari, let me go!"

Who dared to shout at her like that except Carissa?

Cynthia quickly approached them, wrapping her arms around Violet's waist and pulling Violet back. "She's a general. We can't show disrespect. The marshal is strict with his troops, and we need to fight alongside Carissa soon."

However, Violet couldn't tolerate the humiliation. "Let go of me! I don't care if she's a general or a marshal! I'm going to shit on her face!"

Aurora's anger reached a boiling point. "How dare you!"

Carissa, both exasperated and amused, released the whip and tossed it to Violet. "Violet Spencer! Go back for now. I'll speak to her."

Violet lashed out with the whip, creating a deep crack in the ground that extended all the way to the campfire stand. With a furious shout, she growled, "You better deal with her properly, or I'll come back and give her a proper whipping!"

With that, she stormed off.

Carissa signaled to Cynthia and the others to follow Violet to prevent her from impulsively destroying Aurora's tent.

Aurora stared at the crack in the ground, stunned. She could hardly believe her eyes. Just one lash from the whip, and the ground had split open so dramatically! What kind of people did Carissa keep by her side?

Carissa saw that most of the soldiers had dispersed, leaving only a few stragglers watching from a distance.

Barrett stepped forward and stood beside Aurora, his eyes filled with unspoken emotions.

"So, Michael's challenge was, as Aurora said, staged for us, right?" Barrett asked.

Carissa's eyes reflected the flickering light of the campfire. They burned with intensity, yet her voice remained cool and indifferent.

"Do you think so highly of yourselves? A performance for you two? Do you really deserve that?"

Aurora stepped closer and sneered, "Michael just stood there and took a single hit from you without moving. After that, he surrendered immediately. Are you telling me something like that wasn't staged?"

Chapter 102

Carissa pointed with her Rose Spear toward where she had fought Michael.

"If your eyes are still working, see why Michael surrendered for yourself."

The location wasn't far, just about seven or eight paces away. Aurora followed the direction Carissa indicated, and took a deep breath. She saw five cracks on the ground, each twisting and winding, as if a centipede had crawled through. They converged at one spot.

That spot was roughly where Michael had been standing. The cracks seemed to have passed through beneath his feet. One crack was about the size of a footprint, indicating a lighter impact. It appeared that Carissa's inner force had struck Michael's feet, causing this lighter crack.

If Carissa hadn't carefully controlled her inner force, it could have crippled Michael's legs. That was why he had surrendered.

Aurora took a deep breath, realizing that in Carissa's presence, she had been thoroughly defeated.

However, she straightened herself quickly, clinging to Barrett's arm and leaning against him. She displayed the kind of smile she had previously scorned—a delicate and charming smile.

"Yes, I lost to you in the challenge, and my skills may not be as good as yours. But I'm the one who secured Victory Pass, and I'm married to General Warren by royal edict. His love for me is undeniable. "Even if you achieve great feats on the battlefield and hold a higher rank in the future, I will still have beaten you first. I will always be the first female general of Starhaven and Barrett's wife. You'll never be able to claim these positions."

Carissa's smile remained cool and indifferent.

"I'm not interested in being General Warren's wife, and I don't covet the title of Starhaven's first female general. Why would I want to replace you? After you said those words that trampled on women's dignity, I've lost all respect for you. No matter what great achievements you make, your character is lacking."

Aurora's smile faltered, and she struggled to maintain it. "Hah! Now you're attacking my character. It seems you do care, after all. Why else would you be so sharp-tongued?"

She raised her chin defiantly.

"And another thing! Do you dare to claim that you didn't come to the battlefield to overshadow me? Your intentions are unworthy! You entered the battlefield with personal motives and no true loyalty to defend the nation. In that regard, you will never compare to me!"

Carissa held her Rose Spear with casual elegance. She threw Aurora a fleeting smile, and left with a parting shot.

"Being overly narcissistic is a sickness. You should see a physician to check for anything wrong with your head."

"What?!" Aurora was enraged and embarrassed. She screamed at Carissa's retreating figure, "Are you saying otherwise?"

Carissa didn't turn around or offer a reply. Her silhouette stretched in the firelight as she leaped gracefully into the air, soaring towards the city tower. Her form was swift as an eagle. As she neared the city tower, she ascended easily and landed atop it.

She glanced back towards the open field, where the cracks were still clearly visible.

Indeed; with poor character, one might as well be blind.

Carissa retrieved an arrow from the city wall soldiers, and shot it with a flick of her wrist. It sliced through the air, and landed precisely in the middle of the cracks. Then, she sent a message with her inner force. [From here, the cracks are still quite clear. Are your eyes failing you?]

Her effortless Lightfoot Skill and the accurate shot left both Barrett and Aurora stunned. When Michael challenged her, the couple had been standing where she had, and they hadn't noticed the cracks on the ground.

They weren't blind-they were simply inferior to Carissa in every aspect.

Aurora trembled all over, clutching Barrett tightly, tears welling in her eyes. "Barrett, you won't despise me, will you?"

Barrett gazed at the spot where Carissa's figure had disappeared from the city tower, but he didn't turn away. He forced a bitter smile on his lips, and tightened his embrace. "No."

Aurora buried her face in his chest, crying softly. "She... She just comes from a better background than I do."

Barrett's arms fell to his sides. He no longer held her, his heart growing cold.

Aurora had lost, but was unwilling to admit it. Her openness, her straightforwardness, her boldness-they had all been illusions.

Rafael summoned Carissa to the command tent.

A cup of hot coffee was placed before her, its steam hazy and blurring her vision. She picked up the cup, and took a sip. It was bitter-but on a battlefield, having any drink was a luxury.

"Do you want to kill her?" Rafael asked.

"I've considered it," Carissa admitted candidly.

"The scouts we sent have reported back. Westhaven has even hidden the fact that Starhaven destroyed villages. They're claiming that a fire destroyed the entire area instead, and everyone was burned alive. Do you know what that means?" Rafael continued.

Carissa held the cup tightly. The warmth of the drink contrasted sharply with the coldness in her heart.

After a long pause, she finally replied, "I understand. Westhaven wants to conceal the humiliation of their crown prince."

"Even if the king discovers the truth, he can't punish Aurora publicly. At the very least, you can be assured that your grandfather won't be implicated because of her," Rafael said.

Since Westhaven denied the destruction of the villages, the king would be unlikely to force Aurora into admitting it. It wouldn't make sense to pressure Westhaven into confessing and then send emissaries to apologize.

Carissa understood this well. If Westhaven launched a retributive campaign, Aurora wouldn't be seen as a hero, but as the chief culprit. Her grandfather Dominic would also be implicated.

However, Westhaven kept the truth hidden. They established a border, signed the treaty, and granted Aurora military honors.

Suddenly, Carissa thought of something and looked at Rafael.

"So, Liam's assistance to Sandoria in the Southern Frontier is to force the court to send reinforcements. Aurora, having achieved military merit, will definitely be chosen as one of the commanders for the reinforcements. Liam's goal is solely Aurora and her troops."

Rafael nodded slowly.

"Exactly. Although the two kingdoms have superficially reached peace, the hatred between them remains. In the battle at Simonton, Westhaven will undoubtedly spare no effort to avenge Fawnrun. For us, it will still be a difficult fight. If you kill Aurora today and Liam cannot take his revenge personally, I fear all his hatred might be directed towards the civilians of Simonton."

Carissa was startled. "Are you saying that Liam might order a city massacre?"

"Not right now, but it's highly likely he would if Aurora dies. Liam is Westhaven crown prince's maternal uncle," Rafael explained.

Carissa felt a wave of anxiety. If she had killed Aurora today, the consequences would have been severe.

Thankfully, she hadn't!

Rafael's gaze softened a bit. "Don't overthink it. Focus on training. Liam's primary target is Aurora. Once the fighting starts, the main forces of Westhaven will undoubtedly pursue her. Even if you don't kill her today and the court can't punish her in the future, she will still find it hard to escape Liam's grasp."

Carissa nodded slightly. "Understood."

She rose, gave a respectful nod, and returned to her tent.

Violet had calmed down and was chatting and laughing with Bun and the others. That was just how she was-her temper flared up quickly, but dissipated just as fast.

She looked up with a face full of joy. "After this battle, let's see if Aurora can still be so arrogant. Hmph! She really thinks too highly of herself."

Carissa sat down, and started cleaning her spear. Her lowered gaze gave her a particularly beautiful profile. "Don't provoke her. Focus on preparing for battle. We'll soon be attacking the city." "Why would we provoke her? That'll just give us bad luck!" Violet replied.

Upon hearing that an impending city assault was on the horizon, they all got excited, eager to showcase their skills once again. They chattered animatedly about their previous heroic battles. Carissa pretended to listen, but her thoughts were occupied with Rafael's wisdom and strategy.

He had directed Aurora to challenge Carissa. With Aurora's defeat, even if she fought bravely in the upcoming battle, she would gain no military merit and would face punishment.

Now that she had lost, Aurora would likely be more passive and disengaged on the battlefield. She would make an easy target for Liam. Alternatively, she might be captured by him.

If she died on the Southern Frontier battlefield, no one would investigate further into the Victory Pass battle. This would preserve Starhaven's reputation, and maintain the Westhaven crown prince's dignity. It would hit two birds with one stone.

Rafael's strategy was indeed a win-win. It seemed he truly was as wise and capable as rumored.

Was it possible that he had requested Aurora to lead the troops when sending the appeal for reinforcements to the court?

Chapter 104

After Aurora's failed challenge, she faced considerable criticism from soldiers behind her back. The generals who had been punished for their trust in her now treated her with visible disdain. Fortunately, the soldiers under her command still held her in high regard, especially the three hundred who had fought alongside her. Their loyalty remained unwavering, largely because the victory at Fawnrun City had earned them a substantial reward.

Despite the murmurs of outsiders, their loyalty to Aurora was steadfast. Moreover, they shared a secret they were bound never to reveal.

After two days of emotional turmoil, Aurora slowly began to recover her composure. Though she had no achievements of her own, she took solace in the fact that as long as Barrett succeeded, it would also bring glory to them as a couple.

When the time came, she planned to lead her troops alongside Barrett to fight and gain merit. After Barrett's victories, she hoped he would speak on her behalf.

Excitedly, she approached Barrett and said, "Barrett, when the battle begins, I'll lead my troops with you to help fight the enemy. Your victories will be mine as well. When it comes to rewards, just mention me in front of the king. I refuse to believe that the marshal can control everything."

Barrett remained silent for a long time, before finally giving her a curt nod.

Seeing his listless demeanor, Aurora raised an eyebrow. "Barrett, are you having regrets?"

"Regrets about what?" he asked.

"Regrets about marrying me."

Barrett avoided her gaze. "No."

Aurora placed her hand on his shoulder, looking into his eyes with a hint of redness in her own.

"I didn't come from an illustrious background like Carissa, and I didn't have a master as good as hers to teach me martial arts. I don't have the reputation of a father and brothers' like hers to protect her. She didn't stay home and be the noble lady of a duke's family as she should. Instead, she came to endure hardships on the battlefield in an attempt to surpass me and make you regret your choice. Don't let her succeed in that."

"I understand," Barrett said, nodding. "Let's not talk about this anymore. It's time to focus on training."

"Barrett!" Aurora hugged him around the waist, her cheek resting on his shoulder. "I feel like you've become much colder towards me. Do you really regret it?"

Barrett remembered the harsh words he had spoken to the Sinclairs when they were moving things out of the Valor Estate. He even told them to pass a message to Carissa-that she shouldn't regret her decisions.

He smiled bitterly, feeling a sharp sense of irony. "Why would I regret it? I don't. Don't overthink it."

Sensing the unusual tone in his voice, Aurora grew anxious. "Promise me you'll never leave me."

"I promise." Barrett's voice was hollow.

A smile finally appeared on Aurora's face, though it was tinged with a teasing edge. "Remember your promise! If you ever grow tired of me, I'll have your heart."

The word "promise" struck Barrett with heavy impact. He had once made a promise to Melanie Sinclair as well.

Lately, he found himself recalling the first time he had met Carissa. Her beauty was unlike anything he had ever seen; her demeanor was dignified and graceful, and every smile and frown was imbued with the elegance of a noblewoman. At that time, he thought that if he could marry Carissa, he would want for nothing else in life.

He did marry her, but on their wedding night, he was urgently called to serve the court and lead troops into battle. Although he had been reluctant to leave Carissa, he also believed that she was his and that his career demanded his focus.

When he met Aurora on the battlefield, he was struck by her bravery and resolve. He began to think that while there were numerous noblewomen like Carissa in the capital, someone like Aurora was truly one of a kind.

He developed feelings for Aurora, completely forgetting his promise to Carissa's mother about not taking a concubine if he married her.

At that time, he had rationalized that she was already his wife. Even if he took Aurora as a wife, Carissa would throw a tantrum for a while, but would eventually have to relent.

His feelings for Aurora were deep and strong, and he saw Carissa as somewhat rigid and uninteresting in comparison. He even convinced himself that his initial fascination with Carissa had been superficial, and that his true affection lay with Aurora.

Yet, when Carissa left him with such finality, he felt a sudden emptiness in his heart. Even now, recalling her departure still brought a sense of panic in him.

Chapter 105

Everyone was busy preparing for battle, and Carissa had been focused on training formations for several days.

The fifteen thousand soldiers from the Mystic Army were divided into two groups: one for offense, and one for defense. Each group was further split into ten squads, making a total of twenty squads for both attack and defense.

Carissa's battle plan was straightforward: start with five squads on the offense, then quickly rotate in five defensive squads. Once the defense was solidified, they would rotate back to offense, and so on. This method of rotation would push their advance.

After several days of training, the results were already noticeable.

The weapons were now in place: shields and short swords for the defenders, and long spears for the attackers.

Rafael had announced that the siege would begin in just a few days. As the vanguard, the Mystic Army needed to finalize their assault plans.

During this period, Barrett would lead ten thousand men to set up siege ladders and operate catapults. In the days leading up to the battle, Carissa and Barrett needed to discuss coordination.

Rafael had already devised the overall strategy, so their discussions were mostly about fine-tuning and addressing any potential issues that might arise. They went through the scenarios on a sand table, bringing up and correcting any foreseeable problems.

Barrett had initially thought Carissa was merely a skilled warrior, but their strategic discussions astounded him. Carissa's deep understanding of tactics and her quick resolution of minor errors were impressive, ensuring that every aspect of the siege was flawlessly planned.

Several times during the exercises, he found himself lost in thought, captivated by her earnest explanations. Her presence was even more striking than when he first met her, her bright eyes radiating an almost mesmerizing charm.

Regret churned in his heart more times than he could count.

After the exercises were completed, Carissa stood up, her expression returning to its usual cool demeanor. "That should be all for now. If you think of any additional issues, you can come and discuss them with me, General Warren."

Barrett, still seated, looked up and was met with the elegant curve of her jawline. His voice was hoarse as he asked, "I have one question."

"Please go ahead," Carissa replied.

He slowly stood up and faced her, his gaze fixed intently on her. "Why did you hide your martial skills from me at the beginning?" Carissa raised an eyebrow, her eyes sparkling with a hint of amusement. "Does it really matter?"

Barrett pondered for a moment, looking somewhat despondent. "It doesn't. It's just that, it wasn't until the day we parted that I learned about your martial skills. What puzzles me is, given your understanding of military strategy and your formidable skills, why did you choose to marry me instead of continuing your family's military influence?"

Carissa remained silent, her expression as impassive as ever.

Barrett watched her, his smile tinged with bitterness.

"Forget it. I suppose I have no right to question you. You don't need to answer. I was just confused. Clearly, you're so exceptional and had any pick of the prominent families in the capital. Yet, you and your mother chose me. I've never really understood you, but what does it matter now? I chose Aurora, and she's also good. I shouldn't dwell on the past. I'm losing my mind. Aurora treats me well. I shouldn't be telling you this..."

Carissa frowned, and interrupted his ramblings. "You're right. You shouldn't."

Barrett was taken aback, and met her cold gaze. Something seemed to be blocking his heart, making him uncomfortable.

"I was being foolish."

Carissa's eyes were dark and serious as said quickly, "I'll answer one question for you as to why I chose marriage over the battlefield. My father and brothers were dead. Naturally, I wanted to go to the Southern Frontier to avenge them. But my mother opposed it.

"She feared I would also die on the battlefield. She wanted me to give up martial arts, marry, and live a stable life. I followed her wishes and chose to marry, but since my husband turned out to be less than ideal, I naturally chose to return to the battlefield after our divorce. It wasn't to compete with Aurora."

Barrett was surprised by Carissa's sudden willingness to explain. As he listened, he understood her words.

Aurora had always said Carissa went to the battlefield to overshadow her, but Carissa wanted to clarify that her true purpose was to avenge her father and brothers, not to compete with Aurora.

Chapter 106

"So, did you marry me because you truly liked me, or simply because your mother chose me for you?" Barrett asked softly.

Carissa replied, "That question is pointless."

"I want to know," he insisted quickly.

Carissa's brow furrowed again. "Barrett, you've never understood your place. When you were my husband, you didn't get it. You're Aurora's husband now, and you still don't get it."

Barrett's eyes darkened as he looked at her, his tone turning cold.

"So, you never really liked me. You married me only because your mother told you to. I knew it! I just wanted to have another wife, but you immediately went to the palace to request a divorce. You never had any feelings for me. You were the one who was heartless first, but you made it seem like I wronged you!"

Hearing that, Carissa grew exasperated.

"Whether I had feelings for you or not is beside the point. From the day I entered the Warren family, I served your parents without a single day of neglect.

"I did my duty. I was devoted and respectful, and I waited for your triumphant return. And you? You promised me when you proposed, and before you left for battle, you told me to wait. I waited a year, only for you to come back and inform me that you had used your military achievements to take Aurora as a wife.

"Barrett, I fulfilled my duties as a daughter-in-law and a wife. From the moment I married into your family to the day I left, I have a clear conscience. And you? Can you look me in the eye today and tell me, with a clear conscience, that you kept your promises to me and my mother?"

Barrett was left speechless.

Seeing his expression, Carissa felt the suffocating weight of the moment and turned to leave.

She had intended to go over the siege plan one more time, but with a great battle looming, she couldn't bear to be entangled in such personal matters.

She had to leave.

Barrett stared blankly at her retreating figure.

She was right. What right did he have to accuse her? What right did he have to demand her affection?

Some wounds had already been inflicted. What was the point in dwelling on them?

Her words rang true—he had never understood his place. He was now Aurora's husband, and his words and actions must be worthy of Aurora. Carissa was an outsider now. He couldn't afford to fail Aurora, too.

Aurora had her flaws, but nobody was perfect. At her core, she was kind, upright, and loyal to both the king and the people. He could tolerate some minor imperfections.

Barrett sighed deeply-he was about to leave, when he heard Aurora's sharp voice from outside.

"Carissa, what were you doing in there with my husband?"

Barrett hurried out to find Aurora blocking Carissa's way, her face full of hostility. Carissa glanced back at him.

"Your wife, your explanation," she said before walking away.

Behind her, Aurora's accusations continued. "What were you doing in there with her? No wonder I couldn't find you! If a subordinate didn't tell me you were with Carissa, I wouldn't have known you two were alone for so long."

Carissa quickened her pace, not wanting to listen to the couple's argument. The further she stayed from them, the better.

On the eighth day of the new year, Rafael issued the order to attack the city.

The weather was bitterly cold, and their winter clothes were insufficient to ward off the chill. They couldn't delay any longer, as food supplies were also running low. Meanwhile, the supplies from Westhaven and Sandoria were almost at Simonton City.

Just before the soldiers moved out, Rafael gave an inspiring speech. The call to reclaim their lost land and their shared hatred for the Sandorian invaders filled them with righteous indignation, readying them for battle.

The siege began at noon.

Carissa led the Mystic Army as the vanguard, with Barrett's troops supporting.

As the charge horn sounded, the Mystic Army surged forward and led the assault.

Barrett's forces advanced quickly, pushing catapults, ballistae, and scaling ladders.

Rafael rode his horse and took command, no longer allowing anyone to impersonate the marshal.

In this final, decisive battle, he would personally lead the entire army. He would wait for the vanguard to break through the city and plunge into the fray!

Chapter 107

Siege warfare was the most brutal battle.

From the walls of Simonton City, crossbow machines aimed at the soldiers below. As before, they relied on those skilled in Lightfoot Skill to scale the walls. However, this time, the walls of Simonton City had been reinforced and heightened.

In just ten days, the Sandorian army had raised the walls by a meter, leaving only Rafael, Carissa, Violet, and a few others capable of reaching the top.

Timothy struggled initially, unable to fly up. After several attempts, he finally made it, but an enemy spear thrust towards him as soon as he landed. He fell straight down, only to be saved by Violet, who kicked the enemy away and threw her whip, lashing it around Timothy to pull him up.

With Violet rescuing Timothy, Cynthia immediately covered her, blocking enemy spears that reached out.

Amidst the throng of enemies, Carissa and Rafael destroyed two crossbow machines.

Carissa shouted to the Mystic Army, "Deploy the catapults!"

Michael relayed the command, "Deploy the catapults!"

Barrett's troops arrived with heavy artillery. As the Mystic Army and Barrett's forces joined, Michael spotted a familiar figure. He focused, and realized it was Aurora. He was puzzled.

Wasn't Aurora supposed to be leading the rear troops? She wasn't needed at the front for the siege. Carissa had mentioned that only coordination with Barrett's troops was necessary; they were responsible for transporting the heavy machinery.

Despite his confusion, Michael ordered the catapults to be moved into position. Massive stones were hurled at the city tower, raising clouds of dust.

The Mystic Army quickly set up the scaling ladders. Following the drills they had practiced, the ladders were divided into front and rear sections. The first team, equipped with shields, ascended first. Enemy spears jabbed at them, but the shields provided cover as they arduously climbed the ladders.

Upon reaching a certain height, they drew knives. If they could kill an enemy, they did; if not, they still obstructed the enemy.

Immediately after, the second team, armed with long spears, climbed up under the shield team's protection, picking off enemies one by one with their spears.

Meanwhile, Rafael, Carissa, and a few others were fiercely battling atop the city walls. The Sandorian army had sacred firearms, but these could only fire one shot before needing to be reloaded, making them impractical for close combat. Still, their volleys posed a significant threat.

More and more soldiers swarmed the walls, filling the entire city tower. Archers on all sides had their arrows trained on the walls, ready to fire as soon as anyone took to the air.

Massive logs were battering the gates, and more Mystic Army soldiers were climbing the ladders. The soldiers below were shouting, and the charge horns blared continuously, creating pressure and tension among the enemies.

Rafael and Carissa quickly surveyed the surrounding walls. If the archers unleashed their volleys, it would be an inescapable net of arrows. Opening the gates from below would take time and surely attract the archers' fire.

Simonton City was unlike Ilyrian City. Its walls were higher and thicker on both sides, with four walls in total. Beyond the first gate, there was a second one. Even if they breached the first gate and charged inside, the archers would kill the first wave of soldiers.

Thus, they needed to deal with the archers first.

"Carissa, take out the archers!" Rafael ordered swiftly, flying towards the left wall with his weapon drawn.

Carissa and her friends each chose a section of the wall. They needed to move quickly and use their weapons to deflect the incoming arrows.

Timothy couldn't manage this; his role was to destroy the crossbow machines on the walls. Fortunately, he wasn't alone. The Mystic Army had already managed to scale the walls.

Carissa and her friends flew across the walls like meteors. Her spear spun to deflect the rain of arrows before she finally landed on the southern wall.

The archers couldn't fire at close range, and had to engage in hand-to-hand combat. They swarmed her while another row of archers quickly took their place, aiming at the gate.

Even if the gate were opened, the second row of archers could still shoot any Starhaven soldiers entering the city.

All the soldiers had been prepared for the difficulty of this battle, and fought with calm determination.

Chapter 108

Below the walls, Barrett was aiding in the siege when he noticed Aurora leading her troops behind him.

Startled, he demanded, "What are you doing here? The marshal ordered you to stay in the rear with General Murray!"

"I told you, I'm here to help you gain merit," Aurora replied, her eyes flashing with determination. "Breaking through the city is a primary achievement. We can't let Carissa and her group take all the credit! Besides, when you present yourself before the military council and the king, you can mention that I fought in the vanguard."

"But you shouldn't disobey military orders!" Barrett said, exasperated.

"It doesn't matter as long as you achieve merit," Aurora said fearlessly.

She was going to receive lashes after the battle, anyway. That aside, she was confident Rafael wouldn't kill her. She was Starhaven's first female general, whom the empress dowager had acknowledged personally. She fought for the dignity of all women in the world!

Moreover, she was unsettled by how long Barrett and Carissa had spent alone strategizing. She felt compelled to prove herself; she believed that if she helped Barrett earn merit, he would align with her more firmly.

No matter how capable Carissa was, she couldn't help Barrett achieve this!

Though Barrett was angry, he couldn't possibly argue during the siege. He ordered his troops to coordinate with the Mystic Army.

However, Aurora commanded her soldiers to attack the city alongside the Mystic Army. She had brought a thousand troops, including the original three hundred that had been with her.

Seeing her leading her soldiers forward, Barrett was infuriated. He grabbed her arm and said, "Are you insane? We have a plan and steps for this siege! Your actions will lead to unnecessary sacrifices!"

"I can't worry about that. This credit can't go solely to Carissa!" Aurora wrenched her arm free, and raised her sword. "Zeke, lead our men up with me!"

Zeke was one of her subordinates, so he naturally obeyed her orders. He led the men to scramble up the ladders.

Michael was stunned at the sight.

What was going on? Their chaotic climb would disrupt the siege plan!

He grabbed Zeke, and shouted, "Get your men down! We've rehearsed our attack and defense! You weren't part of the drills, and you'll only mess up our plan!"

Zeke ignored Michael. "Up! Everyone, up the ladders!"

The situation soon devolved into chaos. Michael's eyes were blazing with rage as he yelled at Barrett, "What's going on? Stop them now!"

Aurora approached with her sword in hand, her voice cold. "Lieutenant Brown, besieging a city is the most dangerous task. My soldiers are willing to sacrifice themselves to reclaim the Southern Frontier. Calling them back now would harm their morale."

"Do you know anything about warfare?!" Michael shoved her aside, and bellowed at the soldiers climbing the ladders, "Anyone who isn't part of the Mystic Army, get down! Now!"

However, the soldiers didn't listen and kept climbing. The ladders became a mess, and the Mystic Army was pulled down. Some who managed to climb up without shields were speared by the enemy and fell, screaming.

Sounds of agony filled the air. Michael and Barrett were furious, but their shouts seemed powerless amid the chaos.

Aurora's voice, however, cut through the noise. "Climb! Climb to earn military merit and receive rewards!"

Under the promise of rewards, more soldiers tried to climb, only to meet death. The screams of the dying echoed as bodies fell, blood staining the ground.

Barrett was in shock. He turned, and slapped Aurora hard across the face. "Are you insane?! You're killing them all!"

Aurora held her cheek, stunned that he had actually hit her. Tears instantly welled up in her eyes.

"I was helping you! They knew the risks. If they die, the court will compensate their families. What did I do wrong?"

Chapter 109

Upon hearing Aurora's words, Barrett felt a chill in his heart.

Furious, he shouted, "They don't need to sacrifice themselves! The Mystic Army is leading the siege! We're just supporting them. Even if you're here to help me, you could have them load stones instead of sending them to their deaths!"

Michael no longer cared about the chaos, and commanded, "Mystic Army, up the ladders! If anyone's not part of our unit, kick them down!"

The Mystic Army, initially stunned, quickly regained their composure. They began climbing the ladders again, pulling down or kicking off anyone not wearing Mystic Army armor. People continued to fall, but they at least had a chance to survive without being speared.

Seeing the situation coming under control, Barrett shoved Aurora aside. "Go cry somewhere else!"

He rushed to the catapults, and instructed, "Keep loading the stones! Keep firing!"

Aurora stood and wiped away her tears, her expression hardening. She ordered her soldiers to fall back, waiting for the city to be breached so they could rush in.

Her troops simply must steal Carissa's glory!

Barrett would regret this!

Unaware of the chaos by the ladders, Rafael and Carissa focused on destroying the crossbow machines. Liam had clearly prepared enough archers to replace those they killed, but at least the arrow rain was less dense.

Rafael needed to find an opportunity to open the gate, which required more than one person to cover him. Only he and Carissa had the skill to do it alone. Violet and the others couldn't manage it.

The gates of Simonton City were heavy and stood almost ten meters tall, reinforced with two layers of iron. Opening them was an arduous ordeal, especially when countless arrows kept raining down from all around them.

Rafael would never let Carissa take that risk. After taking down several archers and waiting for the next wave, he flew to Carissa's side. He quickly dispatched an archer, then whispered urgently in her ear, "Cover me! I'm going down to open the gate."

Carissa spun her Rose Spear, glancing quickly at Rafael. His face was covered in the enemy's blood, and she figured hers was probably the same.

"Yes, sir!" she responded.

On the battlefield, lives were as cheap as grass.

Amidst the torrential rain of arrows, Rafael's battle robes fluttered as he darted through the city like a shooting star, quickly ascending and descending to reach the city gate.

Carissa followed closely, spinning the Rose Spear in her hand to shield him.

Seeing this, Violet and the others quickly took positions on the four corners of the city walls to destroy the enemy's archer formations.

A group of Mystic Army soldiers who had climbed onto the walls saw what was happening, and shouted, "Shield unit, to the gate!"

Many Mystic Army soldiers, armed with shields, quickly took to the stairways on either side. The spear unit followed closely behind, hiding behind the shield unit and fighting their way down the stairs. Their disciplined training paid off-their offensive and defensive formations were perfectly executed. The hardships endured during training were worthwhile, as these maneuvers had become muscle memory. After taking down one wave, the shield unit quickly repositioned to face the next wave of attackers. They fought up close with blades, and the spear unit would advance as soon as there was a certain distance between them and the enemies.

Soon, they reached Rafael and Carissa. They formed a tight shield formation around the two, like an iron fortress.

Barrett ordered the soldiers manning the catapults to continue launching stones, keeping the enemy at bay. Even he was surprised at how well he and Carissa coordinated. Then, he ordered to cease the battering ram, pulling everyone back to prepare for the breakthrough.

By now, Aurora had composed herself. She gripped her sword, ready to charge in once the gate was breached.

The heavy city gate groaned loudly.

Standing at the highest point and commanding the troops, Liam didn't order his men to continue holding their positions. He focused intently on one spot, but with so many people on the battlefield, he couldn't discern which one was Aurora.

However, he wasn't worried. He knew he wasn't the only one watching for Aurora. All the Westhaven soldiers were looking for her, as capturing her was their primary goal. They had spent significant resources and manpower for this very purpose.

As the gates opened wide, the Hell Monarch Army and reinforcements surged in like a tidal wave.

Chapter 110

The battlefield had moved inside Simonton City.

From the moment the siege began, the citizens locked their doors and hid inside their homes. The Sandoria soldiers had enslaved the people, and even abused women during their occupation. Despite knowing that the city would be a battlefield after the gates fell, the townsfolk fervently hoped the Hell Monarch Army would drive the Sandoria soldiers away.

As the fierce battle raged, Aurora charged into the city with the main army and quickly fought her way to the front lines. Though she wasn't the only female general, she was the only one wearing a custom battle robe specially made for her by the Ministry of Defense.

Her armor featured a red headscarf, symbolizing her determination to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with her male counterparts.

Despite the chaotic fighting, she stood out like a sore thumb.

Liam spotted her, as did many Westhaven soldiers.

The strategy to target her began. The Westhaven troops she pursued began a strategic retreat, knowing her competitive nature would compel her to chase them down and try to eradicate them. Barrett noticed this, and shouted, "Aurora, don't chase them!"

Something felt off. Starhaven and Sandoria's armies were still fighting, and the entire city was a battlefield. It was unlikely that the enemy would actually retreat without a clear signal. The only plausible reason for their retreat was to lure Aurora into a trap.

Moreover, the soldiers' appearance indicated they were from Westhaven.

Barrett couldn't shake the suspicion that Westhaven had a specific strategy targeting Aurora, possibly related to the peace treaty at Victory Pass. Despite his claim of trusting her, he always had his doubts. "Aurora, come back!" Barrett yelled. He tried to follow her, but the enemy surrounded him, and he couldn't break free. He had to keep fighting, unable to spare another glance at Aurora.

Aurora heard Barrett calling for her, but didn't stop. She relied on her own judgment.

The retreating soldiers were clearly suspicious; possibly, they were young nobles from Westhaven seeking battle experience. Capturing them and repeating the same trick she had used before might force the Westhaven forces to withdraw completely.

She knew that to earn military achievements now, she needed to find a unique approach. No matter how many enemies she killed, Rafael wouldn't include her name in his commendation report. "Keep chasing them! There's definitely something off!" Aurora ordered as she continued her pursuit.

Among the retreating soldiers were three or four clad in golden armor, resembling the young captives from Victory Pass.

From her experience, these weren't ordinary soldiers—they were likely members of the Westhaven royal family or nobility. That was why Liam was pressured to sign the treaty at Fawnrun City. Such a golden opportunity was right before her! How could she let it slip through her hands?

Aurora pressed forward, and both Rafael and Carissa noticed her. They exchanged a glance in the midst of the chaos. Carissa saw a look of relief in Rafael's eyes before he leaped into the air, stepping on heads and shoulders, making his way back to the command post.

The marshal was supposed to be in the command tent, waiting with their strategists and advisors to see the battle's outcome and then decide how to deploy their forces. With the city breached, capturing it was only a matter of time.

Carissa found it odd that Rafael, who had been fiercely fighting moments ago, would suddenly retreat to the command post after seeing Aurora lured into the city. It seemed almost as if he had anticipated this. She didn't dwell on it. The battle at hand was too fierce to allow any distraction.

With tens of thousands crammed inside the city, the fight was brutal. The long spear became cumbersome, but Carissa's Rose Spear had a mechanism to shorten it into a more manageable length for close combat. Even in close quarters, she was formidable.

After about half an hour of intense fighting, Carissa had slain countless enemies, her entire body soaked in their blood. Due to the overwhelming numbers, she sustained some injuries.

Though the Mystic Army tried to protect her, she rebuffed them, insisting they focus on killing the enemy. She needed no protection.

Seeing their general fighting so fiercely, the Mystic Army gave their all.

After nearly two hours of fierce fighting, the Hell Monarch Army grew more determined with each passing minute. They knew this was the final battle, and they had to muster all their strength.

If they won, they could reclaim the Southern Frontier once and for all!

In contrast, the Sandoria soldiers were showing clear signs of retreat. They had left their kingdom and fought in the Southern Frontier for many years. Despite their long struggle, the Starhaven forces had never given up on the land.

By now, the Sandoria soldiers were completely worn out.