

War Song 1081

Chapter 1081

Violet's heart sank. "What are we supposed to do? Just let him continue to harm his daughters? For the sake of his so-called career, he's sacrificing one daughter after another, treating them like mere objects to be given away! "And I just can't understand why he would push Karen to kill herself. With such a vile mind, shouldn't he have kept her alive so that... Ugh, I can't even finish that thought."

Rafael picked up his cutlery, took a few bites, then put them down again. He had lost his appetite.

"Because he doesn't know who the culprit is. The whole thing has already leaked out, and he's afraid there might be consequences. So, it was easier for him to have Ms. Whitley kill herself, deny her being his daughter, and cut off any future leverage. He probably erased her from the family record too," the prince explained.

Violet's eyes blazed with fury. "Is there really nothing we can do? Can we only watch as he keeps ruining his daughters? The officials are so corrupt, yet the king won't do anything? Isn't the prime minister going to intervene either?"

"Of course, we can launch an investigation. The Supreme Court can look into it," Rafael said, glancing at Carissa. "But if we want to avoid involving Ms. Whitley, the investigation would have to focus on other aspects of Mr. Whitley's life. He's just a minor official in the Protocol Department. He has no power to embezzle, and his negligence doesn't warrant much attention.

"We could look into his family life or his character, but externally, he has a decent reputation. He knows how to maintain a good public image. The greatest evil here is selling his daughter for his own gain, and even selling his sister to further his ambitions." "So, to take him down, there are only two options," Violet said. "One is to drag Karen into this, but I won't do that. The other is to fabricate charges against him."

Carissa pressed her fingers together, then lifted her gaze to look at Violet. "There's a third option. We can keep him bedridden for the rest of his life, unable to hold office, barely surviving, and living at the mercy of his wife and daughters."

Violet's eyes brightened, then she glanced at Rafael and whispered, "Let's talk about this in private later. His Highness is from the Supreme Court-he's responsible for the law. He can't hear about this."

Rafael picked up his cutlery again, eating slowly. "I didn't hear anything. Eat up. No matter what happens, don't neglect your stomach."

Violet smiled, clearly pleased. "Yes, of course. All of us should eat well."

Carissa took a few bites of her food, then paused, setting the cutlery down. "The man who harmed Karen also needs to be found. I'll have the Capital Guard look into it."

"Leave that beast, Douglas, to me, Cari," said Violet, who was always merciless when it came to scum like him. "You just focus on finding the man who hurt Karen."

Rafael spoke up, "The hot spring is owned by The Golden Tower's young heir and manager, Nathaniel Judd. If you want to investigate, it might be better to start there. Give him a heads-up. If he's willing to cooperate, any issues that arise will

make the Capital Guard's will

investigation more legitimate."

Carissa immediately understood. "Got it. I'll do that."

To investigate the people who came and went from the hot spring around that time, it would be ideal if something had happened there that day,

valua Perhaps a guest losing

valuable jewelry. That way, the Capital Guard's involvement would be perfectly reasonable and not raise suspicion.

Being an official, Rafael understood the intricate workings of the system and knew how to maneuver through its loopholes.

After dinner, Carissa discussed the plan with Violet. They would investigate first, then act-giving the beast a few more days to live.

Having calmed down now after acting out of anger earlier, Violet looked at Carissa with concern. "But you're a court official. Do you think this approach might cause trouble? If it's discovered, will you still be able to keep your position?"

Carissa sighed. "There's no other

way. In this world, if we make

Karen's suffering public, she won't have a chance at survival. Her sisters would be in trouble too. The law might be more refined now, but there are always corners that get overlooked. But if it comes to it, we'll have to rely on brute force."

Violet felt her blood boiling, eager to take action, but Carissa placed a hand on her arm to steady her and said, "I don't recommend using this method unless we absolutely have to. Otherwise, what would the law even be worth?" Violet nodded solemnly. "Yes, the law must be upheld. Otherwise, His Highness' position as Chief Judge would be meaningless."

Chapter 1082

Carissa personally went to The Golden Tower to see Nathaniel.

As a businessman, he was sharp and straightforward. While he wasn't overly meticulous in his business dealings, he worked hard to make money. However, he also had a strong sense of patriotism. Unable to pursue a scholarly path or master martial arts, he had always generously donated to the nation's cause during times of war. He greatly admired Carissa and wanted to befriend her. However, he rarely had the chance to meet her, and being a businessman, it was difficult for him to visit her. So, when she came to see him in person, he was eager to give her a warm reception.

Nathaniel had heard a little about the incident at Crystal Springs, but it involved too many sensitive matters tied to officials for him to probe further. What he did know was that a young woman had suffered greatly there.

When Carissa said she wanted to investigate the matter, Nathaniel didn't hesitate for a second.

He slapped his chest confidently and said, "Leave it to me, Lady Carissa. Just go back and wait for my good news."

Less than half a day later, Nathaniel arrived at the Capital Guard headquarters, seeking help. He explained that a noble guest had lost an emerald pendant at Crystal Springs some time ago and requested the Garrison Unit's assistance in locating the family heirloom. When ordinary people lost something and reported it to the authorities, it was usually never recovered and often ignored. But the person who lost this item was of notable status. Since their identity wasn't publicly disclosed, no one could find out who they were. All that was known was that the person was a retired high-ranking official.

This wasn't seen as a major incident, so it didn't attract much attention at first. However, since someone had come forward to seek help, the Garrison Unit had every right to conduct an investigation.

The fees to enter Crystal Springs weren't cheap, and there were attendants serving there. So, it wasn't hard to investigate who came and went on the day of Karen's incident.

Malcolm had reserved a private spring, Emerald Pool, that day, but he could be ruled out as a suspect as he and his wife had been at a temple, which a novice priest could confirm.

Carissa and Max took a walk around the Crystal Springs area to familiarize themselves with the layout. The springs were located to the east of the temple, about 1.5 miles away. It had a large gate and a surrounding wall, so there was only one entrance. Crystal Springs was a thriving business, with reservations required most of the time. If one didn't book in advance, it was unlikely they would get a spot.

Carissa asked Crystal Springs' manager for the list of guests who had visited that day and began reviewing it carefully. Meanwhile, Max went to question the staff, looking for anyone who might seem suspicious.

As the fees for Crystal Springs were

expensive, most common folk couldn't afford it. Those who came here were either wealthy families or high-ranking officials, lords, and nobles. Most of them traveled with their families, so according to the staff, everyone had gone straight to their reserved pools. None of them had visited the pool Malcolm reserved.

Since Malcolm hadn't come, there were no staff assigned to Emerald Pool that day. And with the place being so busy, no one had noticed whether anyone had gone near the pool.

Carissa didn't find anyone

suspicious on the guest list. All the

names belonged to prominent

officials or at the very least, wealthy merchants. According to the staff's statements, everyone had stayed in their own reserved pools. Afterward, the staff personally escorted them out, and no one left or returned after they had finished.

The Whitley family had made a reservation, so that was how Douglas had been able to get Karen into the hot springs.

Carissa paused, then decided to investigate the people on Malcolm's side of the story. She went to the temple and asked around. It turned out that Malcolm had come with Marjorie, accompanied by a coachman, two guards, and four maids.

The temple staff were certain that Malcolm and Marjorie hadn't left, but they weren't sure about the rest of their party. Only the people by Malcolm's side that day knew that he hadn't gone to Crystal Springs. The four maids were easily ruled out, leaving only the two guards and the coachman.

Carissa suddenly realized she had been overlooking something important-How had the staff at Crystal Springs known that Malcolm wasn't able to come? She immediately called for Max to go and question the staff. Realizing the mistake too, Max quickly mounted his horse and rode off.

After asking a few of the staff

members, he finally got to the truth

when he raised his fist. One of the staff admitted that one of Malcolm's guards had come with the reservation slip, claiming that master wouldn't be attending. Since the reservation had already been paid for and it would be a shame to let it go to waste, the guard had slipped the staff some money and gone in himself to soak.

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The investigation ultimately led back to the Quinton family.

Malcolm was completely unaware of the matter until Carissa explained it to him privately. After hearing the entire story, his fury was uncontrollable, his whole body trembling with rage.

He had already made a grievous mistake in the past-fathering a daughter with a mistress-a stain on his reputation that he could never fully erase. If this new scandal were to spread, how could he possibly face anyone? Even if he was innocent, others would assume he

was guilty.

In his rage, Malcolm ordered the guard involved to be brought forward.

The guard, Trey Carter, was a family servant from birth. After learning some skills, he stayed on as a guard in the household. His parents were senior servants in the estate, and it was through them that he learned of the Whitley family's inquiries to the gatekeeper about Malcolm's visit to the hot springs. Later, Trey followed Malcolm and Marjorie to the temple. When he saw Malcolm had not gone to the hot springs, he decided to exploit the situation for his own gain.

It was him. He had defiled Karen.

For a moment, Malcolm was so furious that he wanted to kill Trey-especially because Carissa was sitting across from him.

This was the same woman who had personally exposed his mistress and handed his illegitimate daughter over to his wife. Malcolm was no ordinary man-he was the father-in-law of the king and the Civil Minister. Countless officials' futures were in his hands. Yet, he feared Carissa. In her presence, he couldn't hold his head high.

A man's mistakes could be many-he could murder, steal, or destroy-but none carried the weight of this particular disgrace.

Without hesitation, Carissa kicked Trey to the ground. The force of her blow seemed strong enough to kill him. Blood gushed from his mouth as he collapsed, clutching his abdomen. He curled up on the floor, his mouth wide open, unable to make even a sound of pain. Malcolm wiped his forehead with a handkerchief, sweat beading not just there but on the tip of his nose too. He didn't even know what to say.

Carissa sat back down across from him. "Lord Quinton, how do you propose we settle this? The people involved deserve an explanation."

Malcolm wiped his face again, his thoughts racing before he finally let out a long sigh. "Trey is undoubtedly at fault, but wasn't Mr. Whitley also to blame? He was the one who sought to sell his daughter for his own advancement."

"That will be handled by someone else," Carissa said coldly. "I am only asking how you will deal with Trey, Lord Quinton."

Malcolm stared at Trey. As much as

he wanted to kill him on the spot, he couldn't bring himself to do it. Trey was a family servant from birth,

someone Malcolm had watch net

grow up since childhood. How could he not feel something for the man who had been by his side day in and day out?

Trey clutched his abdomen, dropping to his knees with tears streaming down his face. "Lord Quinton, Lady Carissa, please spare my life! I was momentarily blinded by greed-I'll never do it again! I beg for mercy!" Malcolm kicked him hard, his fury boiling over. "You have the audacity to beg for forgiveness? Even ten deaths wouldn't be enough to atone for your crime!"

Not satisfied with just the kick,

Malcolm rose and slapped him across the face-once, then again. The blows were so vicious that Trey fell to the ground, disoriented, blood spilling from his mouth. Grabbing a cup from the table, Malcolm Burred it at Trey's head. The force sent him crumpling further to the floor, blood trickling down his face.

After venting his rage with kicks, slaps, and the broken cup, Malcolm finally sat back down, though his face was still twisted with anger. "Someone, drag him out of here!"

At once, guards stepped forward to remove Trey.

But Carissa's icy voice cut through the room, "No one touches him. Leave."

The guards froze, glancing between Carissa and Malcolm.

Malcolm hadn't expected her to be so merciless. After everything Trey had endured, she still wasn't willing to show him any leniency. Clenching his jaw, he waved the guards off.

"Fine. What do you want done with him, Lady Carissa? Just say the word, and I'll have him dealt with immediately."

Carissa let out a cold laugh. "Dealt with? Dragging him off to be 'dealt with' means I wouldn't see what happens next."

"Yes, he's committed a crime, but it's not one worthy of death! Surely you don't intend to take his life? If this matter were brought to court, the worst he'd face would be five or six years of imprisonment," said Malcolm, his patience wearing thin.

His brows lifted slightly as he added with a mocking edge, "Besides, dragging this to court won't do that lady any good. I hear she's already bent on taking her own life. In cases like these, the ones who suffer most are always the women. Why not let this matter rest?"

The sorrow and fury in Carissa's eyes slowly surfaced as she spoke, "If this goes to court, the one who suffers won't just be her."

She leaned forward slightly, her

voice laced with venom, adding,

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"Lord Quinton, have you considered what will happen to you? Harboring a guard who committed such a crime under your own roof and allowing a woman to be violated... When the Oversight Department comes knocking, they won't just charge him, they'll charge you too."

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Carissa leaned forward slightly, her tone sharp with accusation as she asked, "Tell me, Lord Quinton, can you withstand being charged?"

Malcolm's expression darkened instantly. All he wanted now was to keep things as quiet as possible, to avoid drawing any unnecessary attention. After all, his youngest daughter had just been brought back into the household and was now being raised under the care of

his concubine, Willow.

And with the matter of the crown prince's succession still undecided, any scandal involving the Quinton family would reflect poorly on Connor as well.

At the end of the day, Trey was just a servant. He had only risen to the rank of guard because Malcolm had elevated him. Weighing the situation, Malcolm made his decision without much difficulty, the malice in his gaze unmistakable.

Trembling from head to toe, Trey slammed his head against the ground and desperately pleaded for mercy.

"You wretched scum!" Malcolm bellowed. "You dare beg for mercy after defiling an innocent lady? Even death wouldn't be enough to atone for your crime!"

Through his sobs, Trey choked out, "My lord, how is she innocent? The Whitley family sent her as an offering to you! You didn't want her, so... so I made a mistake! But she wasn't innocent! She had taken aphrodisiacs! I was trying to save her! No matter what I did wrong, I don't deserve death!"

Malcolm's fury deepened, his hatred for Douglas burning brighter. He had already rejected the man's earlier request to take his daughter as a concubine, yet Douglas had dared to resort to such vile methods.

He turned to Carissa, his resolve hardening. "Lady Carissa, just say the word. Do you want his life? If you do, I'll end it right here and now."

Carissa's expression remained cold and unmoving. "He belongs to the Quinton household. How you define his crime and punishment is entirely up to you, Lord Quinton."

Malcolm pressed his lips into a thin line, the anger inside him building to a boiling point.

This woman was as cunning as ever. She clearly wanted Trey dead but refused to say so outright. No matter how things played out, she could distance herself entirely from the outcome, keeping her hands clean of any controversy. She was always careful to remain untouchable, protecting the Hell Monarch and his household like an impenetrable fortress.

Grinding his teeth, Malcolm's face turned a shade darker as he ordered, "Drag him out. Beat him to death!"

Trey's eyes widened in horror as if he couldn't believe what he had just heard. He threw himself to the ground, pleading frantically, "My lord, have mercy! Please, my lord-spare me!"

As Malcolm turned away, Trey dragged himself to face Carissa, his voice rising in desperation, "Even by law, my crime doesn't warrant death! You vicious woman!"

Carissa's gaze turned icy, her tone sharp as a blade as she spoke, "If you believe the law will spare your life, then ask your lord to send you to the authorities. Whatever sentence the court delivers, that's how many years you'll serve. I will not interfere."

Her words left him utterly deflated. Trey slumped to the ground and turned to Malcolm, his face streaked with tears.

Bowing low, he begged in a trembling voice, "My lord, please! Send me to the authorities! Let them decide my fate!"

Malcolm's eyes widened in fury. Though he could show mercy, there were limits to his patience and this was it. Trey's request to go to the authorities wasn't just ignorance; it was outright defiance. He had to know what that would mean.

Sending Trey to the authorities

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would drag the Quinton family's reputation through the mud-a humiliation they could not afford. Every servant in the household understood this lesson from the moment they could walk. The family's honor came before all else, even their own lives.

Someone this foolish was not worth sparing.

Whatever faint flicker of pity Malcolm had felt disappeared entirely. His face hardened as he barked, "Take him away!"

The guards stepped forward and hauled Trey out of the room. Outside in the courtyard, the punishment began. The crack of the rod echoed through the still air as the blows rained down one after another, until Trey's screams faded into silence.

Malcolm turned his gaze to Carissa,

his eyes alight with anger. "Are you

satisfied now, Lady Carissa? This whole affair was Mr. Whitley's doing-rejected him outright from the start! This has been nothing but an unprovoked disaster for my family. Yet, you insist on sinking your teeth in and refusing to let go. It's truly disheartening."

Carissa laughed bitterly. "If Trey hadn't harmed Ms. Whitley, then this entire matter wouldn't have involved your family in the slightest. But it's a fact that he did, so it's no longer an unprovoked disaster for your family. Whose power did Trey borrow when he did what he did? Don't you know that in your heart, Lord Quinton?"

After saying that, Carissa glanced at the pale-faced man and stood up to leave. In the courtyard, she gave Trey a cold look.

He wasn't dead yet, but he was barely hanging on, his legs and hips soaked in blood. Though he would survive, he would never be able to stand again.

Chapter 1085

Marjorie had been standing quietly outside the courtyard. When she saw Carissa emerge, she curtsied respectfully and walked her to the gate. She had heard everything from her spot outside. "How is the girl doing now?" Marjorie asked softly as they walked.

"She's staying at the workshop," Carissa said with a faint sigh. "But she hasn't given up on trying to end her own life."

Marjorie fell silent for a moment before murmuring, "What a tragedy."

At the gate, she stopped and added, "If there's anything I can do to help the girl, please don't hesitate to let me know, Your Grace."

Carissa inclined her head. "Thank you, Madam Marjorie. I'll remember that."

Marjorie curtsied once more, watching as Carissa mounted her horse and rode away. She remained at the gate for a long while, lost in thought, until Trey's parents approached. They fell to their knees and pleaded with her. "Please, my lady, call for a physician to save Trey!"

Marjorie's expression turned cold as she looked down at them. "Ask Lord Quinton to make that decision. This is not something I can handle." Trey's mother grabbed at Marjorie's skirt as she begged, "My lady, please have mercy! Trey is our only son! We can't let our family line die off!"

A flicker of anger flashed in Marjorie's eyes. "He brought this on himself. Who else can you blame?"

She tugged her skirt free from the woman's grip and turned to leave, ignoring the wails that followed her. On her way back, she felt lightheaded and leaned against her maid, Thea, for support.

"Madam Marjorie, are you truly going to leave it be? What if the servants grow disloyal?" Thea asked hesitantly, finding it strange.

Marjorie was known for her fairness and kindness toward the household staff. Part of it was her gentle nature, but another part was practicality-she understood the danger of alienating the estate's lifelong servants, who could easily tarnish the Quinton family's reputation if they turned against them..

Under normal circumstances, Marjorie would have balanced punishment with mercy. Now, she really didn't care anymore, despite the fact that Trey and his parents had been in the household for many years and knew a lot of things which could lead to trouble if they ever had thoughts of betrayal.

This time, Marjorie simply frowned and shook her head. "I can't get involved. How could I justify it to that young lady?"

Thea tried again, cautiously saying, "But that young lady's dad intended to send her to Lord Quinton. He refused her, but eventually, she would have been offered to warm someone else's bed. She is just... an object meant to be used."

"Be quiet!" Marjorie snapped, her

voice sharp with anger. "What the Whitley family chooses to do is none of our business. But Trey wronged Ms. Whitley, and that's a fact. Why bother with what ifs? What matters is what's happening right now. You say she's an object-what about you? You're a woman too. How could you speak such cold, heartless words?"

When she saw how angry Marjorie was, Thea fell silent immediately.

Marjorie's heart sank. It was a painful truth-sometimes, men viewed women as objects. At times, even women themselves saw each other the same way.

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On the same day that Trey was dealt with, Violet snuck into the Whitley family's residence at night.

She had thought that a person with such a heartless and cruel nature would have a cunning, deceitful face, or at least be ugly and repulsive. She never expected Douglas to look so honest and sincere.

His skin was fair, with round eyes that gleamed with an innocent brightness and a bright gaze. When Violet entered, dressed in all black, his eyes showed a hint of surprise, making him seem utterly innocent.

For a moment, Violet even wondered

if she had the wrong person. It wasn't until one of his concubines shrieked his name that she realized this was indeed Douglas, the man who had used his daughter for his own gain.

Still, she asked, "Are you Douglas Whitley?"

At the sight of the gleaming sword in her hand, Douglas' expression shifted to fear.

"Guards! There's an assassin!" he screamed.

Violet wasted no time. She kicked him hard in the stomach, sending him crashing to the ground. She leaped into the air, her foot landing with a sickening snap on his lower leg.

His cries echoed through the room, loud and desperate. As she stomped on his back, her heel digging into his spine, she could hear the bones break, the sound bringing her a twisted sense of satisfaction. The concubine huddled in terror, trembling on the bed. The guards outside? Already dealt with.

No one would come.

Violet's assault was brutal. She targeted his ribs, his back, and

then, to finish, she struck his

innocent looking face over and over, landing more than a dozen slaps. Blood poured from his mouth, and soon, he was dizzy and

unconscious.

Only then did Violet give him one final, contemptuous kick to the head before turning and walking away.

Chapter 1086

The next day, both the Garrison Unit and the Capital Guard learned of the incident. It was said that an assassin had broken into Douglas' home, severely injuring him to the point where he was vomiting blood and nearly died. The physician said that with injuries like his, he would likely end up as a bedridden, drooling mess for the rest of his life, unable to do anything except stay in bed to eat, drink, and take care of other basic needs. Naturally, both the Garrison Unit and the Capital Guard did everything they could to track down the assassin. In the king's domain, to commit such

an audacious act against a government official was downright brazen. After some investigation, Carissa uncovered a witness who revealed that a martial artist had come to the capital. Knowing that Douglas had once caused his sister's death, the martial artist had snuck in and beaten him senseless in a fit of rage.

Further investigation revealed that the rumors surrounding Karen's defilement were entirely false. She had remained pure, but Douglas believed the rumors and cast her out when he thought she had lost her innocence. Betrayed by her father's lack of trust and wounded by the rumors, Karen had taken her own life by jumping into the river. She had already passed away, and Skye Embroidery had taken care of her burial arrangements. At least, that was the official story spread throughout the capital.

When people heard that version of events, they were outraged at Douglas, and many praised the martial artist who had taken justice into his own hands. A crowd began gathering at Karen's grave, offering flowers in her memory, hoping she would be reborn into a better life.

In fact, the grave was a ceremonial one for Karen, where she buried the clothes she had worn when trying to take her life. Alana and Leah had helped her make it, marking the end of her 17 years of life.

Violet had given her a new name-Soraya.

Now, she sat in a carriage with Carissa and Violet, watching as the townsfolk gathered at her grave, offering prayers and flowers. Listening to their heartfelt wishes, Soraya's eyes welled with tears.

She leaned on Violet's shoulder, crying softly. "No one has ever cared for me like this. If I ever think of dying again, I would be betraying all the sacrifices you made for me, betraying your kindness. Rest assured, I will live my life well, Your Grace, Ms. Spencer." Violet's eyes were also red-rimmed. She was different from Carissa. She just acted on impulse, not knowing if what she did had any meaning. Even Skye Embroidery was something she had taken on because Carissa had insisted it was necessary.

But now, seeing Soraya given a second chance at life, Violet truly felt the purpose of her actions. She had found her own sense of worth.

After sending Soraya back to the workshop, Carissa had one more task to handle the person responsible for spreading the rumors in the first place.

She had already identified the culprit as the deputy steward at Crystal Springs. This man was known for selling gossip for profit. Since Crystal Springs catered to high-ranking guests, the information that leaked from there held weight.

However, Carissa didn't deal with the

matter herself. Instead, she

informed Nathaniel and left him to take care of it. Though outwardly refined, Nathaniel was ruthless when it came to handling such matters. He had the man's tongue ripped out and his arms broken before casting him out.

There were all sorts of tasks piling up, and before they knew it, May and June had slipped through their fingers. The summer heat of July was unbearable. The capital felt like it had become a giant furnace, sweltering in the oppressive air.

On the third day of July, Yuvan came to visit Hell Monarch Estate. He was preparing to return to Valken soon, and had come to say his farewells. Since Rafael and Carissa had visited Edgeview Estate previously, the two families had some familiarity, so Rafael did not turn them away. He welcomed Yuvan and his family into their home.

Yuvan had been back in the capital for over a year now. He had hoped to arrange marriages for his children, but had been unable to make any progress. Now, he was so overwhelmed with one thing after another that he couldn't keep up with everything. He arrived bearing many gifts, most of which were for Violet.

In the unbearably hot weather, he was dressed in a tight-fitting tunic with a brocade design, featuring intricate gold thread embroidery in the pattern of a serpent. His face was lightly powdered, and his clothes were infused with a strong scent. As Yuvan sat down, Rafael couldn't stop sneezing. In the end, he had someone light a cherry wood-scented candle, hoping to mask the overpowering fragrance of his uncle's garments.

Molly asked Violet to stay by her side, and Yuvan's gaze lingered on her, almost too intense to ignore. Despite Violet's obvious impatience, Yuvan continued making small talk. He mentioned his plans to visit the Spencer family on his way back to Valken, and asked if she would accompany him.

Violet bluntly replied, "No."

Yuvan didn't feel awkward at all. Instead, he let out a low chuckle.

"If you're not coming along, would you like me to bring a letter or gift back to your father?" he asked.

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Violet thought for a moment, feeling a twinge of guilt. She hadn't been able to go back and spend time with her father. Maybe writing him a letter and asking him to send her some money would make up for it-spending his money would be one way to honor him.

"Alright, I'll write a letter. Please wait for a while," she said.

"There's no need to rush, my dear cousin-in-law. You can write it tomorrow and send it to me then. We won't be leaving for a few days. Why don't you stay and chat with your cousin for a bit longer?" Yuvan responded with a smile.

Carissa's eyes flickered with a cold glint.

Was Yuvan still not giving up?

Violet turned to smile at Yuvan, unaware of how mischievous her expression was. "Alright then."

Carissa shot her a glare.

What was she up to now?

Violet ignored her friend's warning gaze. She didn't meet Carissa's eyes, treating the unspoken rebuke as though she hadn't noticed.

Rafael observed Yuvan's persistent gaze on Violet's face, feeling a surge of disgust. It seemed the man wouldn't back off until he hit a wall. He was still hoping to charm Violet in order to gain favor with the Spencer family and manipulate them. And from the looks of it, he had his own selfish desires too.

Yuvan was truly a despicable man.

Rafael held nothing but contempt for him and had no intention of inviting the man to stay for a meal. His rare day off was already being wasted hosting this family, and he was more than ready for them to leave.

"When do you plan to depart for Valken, Uncle Yuvan?" Rafael asked.

"We'll be leaving in three days. I've already informed His Majesty," Yuvan replied, sounding relieved.

He had been reluctant to leave the capital, afraid that Salvador would refuse. But to his surprise, the king had agreed when he asked.

Rafael smiled. "I'll be busy with things, so I won't be able to see you off. But I wish you a safe journey."

Yuvan waved his hand dismissively. "No need to send me off. If you're free, you can visit Valken sometime." "I'll definitely make the trip," Rafael responded without hesitation.

Once the unpleasant family had left, Carissa grabbed Violet by her ponytail and led her back to the side hall.

"I see you have some opinions," Carissa said, folding her arms across her chest, her eyes fixed on her friend.

Violet gave a mischievous grin. "None at all! I'm just doing what needs to be done. Don't I need your approval? Without it, I won't be going."

"You're not going," Carissa said firmly, her voice serious. "Raf has been investigating them for so long yet we still can't locate where they've hidden their suicide soldiers. Their mansion is full of skilled fighters, all disguised as maids and servants. It's too risky for you to go alone."

"Of course! Why would I go there? That place reeks of bad luck!" Violet said, shaking her head vigorously.

"If you go, we're done. Consider our friendship over," Carissa warned sternly.

"Stop nagging!"

Violet immediately dropped the idea. Carissa wasn't someone you could argue with-when she said something, it was final. If she said their friendship was over, it would really be over.

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Meanwhile, Rafael and Jacob were in the study, discussing Yuvan's departure. It had been expected, or perhaps, Rafael had known it was coming all along.

They had made no progress on

finding the suicide soldiers, but they were aware that Yuvan had been steadily expanding his private army. Several groups of men had been sent out, but none had managed to locate where the private soldiers were hiding.

So, Salvador decided to let Yuvan return to Valken.

Rafael actually thought that having Yuvan leave the capital wasn't necessarily a good thing, because the suicide soldiers hadn't been found yet. While he was in the

capital, the suicide soldiers would net

have to protect him. But with him leaving, there was the risk that a group of suicide soldiers might remain behind, which was more dangerous.

These people seemed to be hiding everywhere, making it impossible to find any trace of them.

"They've been insisting on inviting Ms. Spencer to their estate again," Jacob said, stroking his chin thoughtfully.

He hesitated, unsure whether he should continue, but decided to speak anyway, adding, "Prince Yuvan is quite clear about his intentions. This might be an opportunity to stir things up at Edgeview Estate." "No," Rafael replied firmly. "We've already been to Edgeview Estate; the suicide soldiers aren't there. There's no need to cause a commotion. It could end up putting Violet in danger."

Jacob nodded. "You're right, of course. I was just throwing ideas out there. There's nothing to be gained from it. If they were hiding anything at Edgeview Estate, they'd be incredibly bold." "Let's just wait and see. Once they leave for Valken, we'll have a better idea. Yuvan won't just ignore his private army," Rafael said.

Over the next few days, Molly kept asking Violet to visit Edgeview Estate, but Carissa's warnings kept her from going.

Molly couldn't help but complain, "You and I are practically sisters, and now you've turned your back on me? Have you really stopped thinking of me as your cousin?"

Violet felt like there was no point in pretending since they were leaving the city anyway, so she replied bluntly, "Yeah. When you married Yuvan, I stopped thinking of you as a cousin." Molly glared at her in frustration. "Fine. Don't come crying to me later!"

Chapter 1088

Violet's patience had worn thin. With a flick of her whip, she chased Molly out, forcing her to shield her head with her hands as she scrambled to flee.

Carissa couldn't afford to let her guard down until Yuvan left the city. Knowing his unscrupulous intentions, she sent Claire to keep an eye on Edgeview Estate, making sure Violet didn't defy her orders and secretly visit. For two or three days, Claire kept watch. Violet stuck to her usual routine, returning to Skye Embroidery each day, without once stepping foot into Edgeview Estate. Only then did Carissa allow herself to relax a little. Skye Embroidery and the women's academy were slowly becoming accepted in the city.

But one concern about the academy remained: the fact that many people were only coming to build connections. Uninterested in studying, they spent their days bringing pastries, embroidery, and gifts to flatter the women from prominent families.

Some of the women from these noble families started to boss around the daughters of lower-ranking officials, and gradually, cliques began to form. The students who truly wanted to learn often found themselves pushed out.

Some others came to learn etiquette from Catherine or to pick up household management skills, since they would eventually marry and be in charge of managing the household.

It was completely different from when the academy first opened. Back then, many people came because of Kyle's reputation, and some even had selfish motives of hoping to get him to paint for them. They believed that obtaining a calligraphy piece from him would be worth it, even if it meant leaving the school.

As the headmistress, Carissa was constantly called in to handle these issues.

A hundred girls in one academy could certainly cause a ruckus. How had these young women, all from respectable families, learned to be so disruptive? Had they forgotten all the rules they were taught in their homes?

Instead of rushing to discipline the troublemakers, Carissa took a moment to investigate, trying to find out who was leading the disruption. Eventually, she uncovered a few troublemakers.

One was Kylie's younger cousin, Jocelyn Quinton, a 15-year-old who had just come of age. Her dad was Malcolm's younger brother, the Royal Ceremonies Department's minister.

Another was Cassidy Xavier, the granddaughter of Tyler Xavier, the general who had once commanded the capital's soldiers. After he retired due to his old injuries, he had been living in a countryside estate on the outskirts of the capital.

The third troublemaker was the

Marquis of Glandale's youngest

daughter, Haley Schmitt. The

Marquis of Glandale's family was an old noble family in the capital. Their ancestors fought alongside the founding king to build Starhaven and were granted a dukedom. The title was passed down for three

generations before being lowered to a marquissate. The current Marquis of Glandale, Fabian Schmitt, was the third person to hold the title.

Despite their prestigious history, the Marquis of Glandale's family rarely appeared in public. One reason was that they only held the title without any family members serving in the court. The other reason was that before the new king ascended the throne, they had close ties with Kendrick, Dakota's son. Because of that, they feared retaliation from the current king, so they kept a low profile.

The Marquis of Glandale's family had ties to the Quinton family through marriage. Fabian's eldest sister had married Malcolm's third uncle. As a result, Hailey and

Jocelyn were good friends. With net Cassidy, who had some martial

skills, they had managed to recruit several other similarly restless noble young women. Together, they often found themselves at odds with others who didn't agree with them.

Not only did they exclude their classmates, they also began bullying their teacher, Rosalind. To put it bluntly, they looked down on her for once considering a marriage with Thomas—a match that never materialized. Although the two families never formally discussed the arrangement, the news still managed to spread.

In situations like this, it was always the woman who bore the brunt of criticism. Rosalind, already burdened with a reputation, became the subject of even more rumors. Although the gossip had died down long ago, it resurfaced unexpectedly after the women's academy opened. Jocelyn and the others seized the opportunity to amplify the story, twisting it further.

They claimed that at first, Rosalind hadn't minded that Thomas had been married before and was several years her senior. Because she had heard about his military achievements and his bright future, she eagerly agreed to the marriage.

But when the king delayed giving Thomas a post, she backed out. Surprisingly, right after she withdrew, Salvador promoted Thomas. People began to believe she regretted her decision, making the situation worse.

Chapter 1089

Sometimes, the malice between women could be the most dangerous of all. Trevor may be the royal chancellor and a highly respected figure, but Rosalind was still young. Some of the students would naturally feel reluctant to fully accept her as their teacher. If it were only that, it would be easy to handle. What worried Carissa was that behind the group of troublemakers, there could be someone

trying to sabotage Gracewood Women's Academy. Right now, the group of troublemakers seemed to be led by Jocelyn, but there was no sign they were following someone else's orders.

With Carissa holding so much leverage over the Quinton family, how dare they disrupt the academy?

Her first priority was to reassure Rosalind, fearing the toll it might take on her mood.

Rosalind sat in her private study, flipping through a pile of practice sheets in front of her. Her brow furrowed as she examined each page, so deeply absorbed in her thoughts that she didn't even hear Carissa approach.

It wasn't until Carissa spoke her name that she looked up, her eyes briefly flashing with irritation before she caught herself. She quickly stood and greeted Carissa with a polite bow, though her smile didn't quite reach her eyes.

"Headmistress, I didn't see you come in. I apologize for my rudeness."

Carissa nodded in return to her greeting. "No need for formalities, please. Do sit down."

As they settled into their seats, Carissa noticed the stack of practice sheets in front of Rosalind and recalled how furrowed her brow had been upon her entrance.

She gently asked, "Are they falling behind on their assignments?"

Rosalind handed her the first few sheets of paper. "Take a look, Headmistress."

As Carissa took it, Rosalind explained, "I just wanted them to practice writing better, so I had them copy some essays. But these girls had their own ideas. They wrote their own stories, and their handwriting is... Well, to be frank, it's more like scribbles. It's as if they're intentionally making a mockery of it."

Carissa flipped through a few pages. The stories they wrote all revolved around the same tale—a woman named Rosalind Lopez from the previous era. She was known for being shallow and greedy.

When her fiancé's family fell into

ruin, she insisted on breaking off the engagement. But three years later, her ex-fiancé became the top scholar and married the former

Vol

prime minister's daughter. One

of

jealousy and spite, Rosalind Lopez attacked the scholar's new wife with a hairpin in a jewelry shop, killing

her. She was eventually executed for her crime.

It was obvious they were using the story of Rosalind Lopez to insinuate things about Rosalind.

They didn't hold back, accusing her of being shallow, greedy, and hideous. They claimed someone like her was barely even fit to be a person, let alone qualified to be a teacher. They went as far as saying that in her next life, she would only be reborn as a pitiful dog.

Carissa shook her head, unable to suppress a chuckle. The spitefulness was childish, especially the last curse. Glancing at the signatures on the practice sheets, she noted that it was indeed from those same few girls.

Carissa set the papers down and looked at Rosalind. "Do you need me to step in and handle this, or would you prefer to take care of it yourself?"

Rosalind spoke with quiet

determination, "As their instructor, it

should be my responsibility to

address this. It's a trivial matter and not worth troubling you with, Headmistress. But I do

wonder-these girls were taught at home before coming here, so how can a short essay of a few hundred words have over thirty mistakes? What were they learning all this time?"

Carissa blinked, then picked up the papers again. Upon closer inspection, there really were a lot of errors, mostly involving longer words that were misspelled or swapped for similar words. "So, you're upset because of the mistakes?" Carissa asked.

Rosalind straightened up and said firmly, "Headmistress, you mustn't overlook these errors. These girls all had private tutors at home, so can they still make such basic

mistakes? It shows they do not

take

their earning seriously. They think women only need to recognize a few

words to get by, as long as it's enough for them to manage the account books.

"Men believe that women who lack talent are virtuous. How can we as women accept this? Especially considering the Quinton family's history-they once produced a renowned scholar, and I've heard their servants are all literate. How could a daughter of their family be so ignorant and careless with her studies?"

Chapter 1090

Carissa nodded and glanced over the other girls' practice sheets. Asking them to work on their handwriting was likely a way to see where their skills stood and ensure they could write neatly. Most of the writing samples were decent, but a few stood out. The delicate cursive characters were meticulously written, each stroke crafted with care, showing no sign of sloppiness or laziness. Setting the papers down, Carissa asked, "So, is this the only thing bothering you? What about all those things they're saying about you and General Farrell? You're not letting that get to you, are you?"

"Their mouths are their own, so they can say whatever they want. It doesn't stop me from eating, sleeping, or living my life. It doesn't hurt me, nor does it draw a single drop of my blood. So, why should I let it bother me?" Rosalind replied.

She even laughed a little as she added, "Although I have to admit, their creativity is refreshing. Using an old story to insult me is at least more original than their usual nonsense about how I'm heartless or greedy."

Carissa couldn't help but admire Rosalind. It took incredible strength and confidence to brush off such malicious gossip so effortlessly.

Still, something about it made Rosalind frown. "Do you think this might cause trouble for General Farrell?"

"It won't," Carissa said reassuringly. "These kinds of rumors don't usually hurt men."

Carissa paused. Seeing how Rosalind didn't mind, she continued, "In fact, in the story they've spun, General Farrell comes out looking like a hero. His reputation has only grown because of it. Now, when people talk about him, they don't even mention his military achievements. They're too busy praising how he defended his honor and let the royal chancellor's granddaughter slip through his fingers."

Rosalind smiled, though her expression was complicated. "As long as it doesn't harm him, that's good. But isn't it strange? He earned his reputation through hard-fought battles, yet now it's overshadowed by some ridiculous romance rumors made up by these girls. I really don't know what to make of it."

Carissa wasn't sure if Rosalind felt any regret deep down, but she was certain of one thing-ever since Rosalind made her decision, she never mentioned Thomas again. This time, it was only the gossip and her concern for him that had prompted her to bring him up.

Rosalind was a woman who could take things up and let them go with ease. Her composure and grace were qualities that even many men could only dream of having.

"If you can handle Ms. Quinton and the others, I'll stay out of it," Carissa said.

"Don't worry about it. Right now, I'm

just getting to know their

personalities If they're not

interested in learning, I'll give them. three chances. If they don't take them,

ask you to approve their

dismissal. These spots are too precious to waste on people who don't appreciate them. There are so many girls eager to learn who

couldn't get in-it would be such a shame to let those spots go to waste," Rosalind replied.

Carissa nodded. "Alright, I'll leave it to you."

"This opportunity is rare," Rosalind said with a sigh. "I hope they understand its value."

Rosalind wasn't optimistic about the future of the academy. She wasn't sure how long it could last, but hoped it would endure as long as possible She knew all too well how restricted women were, even when they could read and write. Many books were forbidden to them. She had only been fortunate enough to read widely because of her grandfather's broad-mindedness and generosity.

But then, there were women like Kylie, a so-called prodigy. Rosalind had heard from her grandmother that the queen's reputation had been carefully crafted. It wasn't that she had no talent at all, but at least half of it was exaggerated. The Quinton family needed a well-known daughter to marry the crown prince, but not one who was too clever. A woman who was too sharp would be much harder to control.

As Carissa stepped out of Rosalind's private study, a group of giggling girls came toward her. She didn't recognize them, but they had clearly seen her before, as she had made an appearance at the academy's opening day.

When they spotted Carissa, the girl at the front eyed her up and down before letting out a snicker. "Well, if it isn't our headmistress. Still in your official robes? This is an academy for women, not a

government office. I almost thought a man had arrived." She gave a mock curtsy. "Greetings, Headmistress."

As soon as she straightened up, the other girls burst into laughter, clearly not taking Carissa seriously.