

## War Song 111

### Chapter 111

Liam and Victor were still not on the battlefield. They stood on high ground, watching the battle unfold.

The city was littered with corpses. There were fallen soldiers everywhere, and the blood almost seemed to stain the city red. The majority of the dead were Westhaven and Sandoria soldiers. The battle in this trapped city was all about courage; no tactics could be applied any longer.

Victor understood it was only a matter of time before they would have to give up the Southern Frontier. After entering Simonton City, he saw clearly that the Westhaven forces were only there to take out their frustration on Starhaven soldiers and to kill a general named Aurora. They lacked the resolve to defeat Starhaven, and had no intention of dividing the Southern Frontier with Sandoria.

Their motives were driven more by anger than by a strategic goal:

Victor was furious. If not for the Westhaven forces, the Sandoria forces might have been defeated long ago. If that happened, fewer battles would have been fought, and fewer soldiers would have been lost.

"If you seek only to vent your rage, why not destroy the entire city?" he asked Liam coldly.

Victor knew Liam's hatred for the Starhaven people was intense, having heard about the massacre of the civilians in Fawnrun City during the Victory Pass battle.

Liam's eyes burned with fury. "War has already brought devastation and ruin upon the common people. If I continued slaughtering them, even if they are from an enemy nation, what difference would there be between me and a beast?"

Victor watched as soldiers fell into pools of blood, his own heart trembling at the sight. At this point, he realized that adjusting their tactics was no longer an option.

"Never would I have expected you to speak such words," he said, his face reddened by the cold wind, his words slightly slurred. "You spare the lives of the enemy's civilians, while yours are being slaughtered. Pathetic."

"A true warrior despises war," Liam said, watching the snowflakes drifting through the air. "It's snowing. This battle's outcome is already decided. If you don't want to lose more men, you should withdraw."

"Have you killed the ones you wanted to kill?" Victor asked.

Liam's lips twisted into a cold smile as he glanced towards the hastily advancing vanguard. "Kill? No."

Death was too lenient a fate for Aurora.

One of the vanguards of the Westhaven army advanced swiftly. The man, covered in dark red blood, wore a look of smug satisfaction as he reported, "Marshal, we have captured eighteen people, and the rest were all annihilated."

Liam slowly extended his hand to catch a pure white snowflake. It quickly melted in the warmth of his palm.

It was as though he was performing a ritual.

He closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them sharply, his gaze intense. "Send the order. All Westhaven soldiers are to withdraw from Simonton.

He patted Victor on the shoulder. "Withdraw, General Crow. You've already lost too much on the Southern Frontier. You won't be able to defeat the Hell Monarch."

Victor's lips twisted into a grimace, and he said coldly, "You shouldn't have come."

He suddenly drew his sword and aimed it at Liam, gritting his teeth. "You shouldn't have come! You gave us hope, but you didn't fight alongside us!"

Liam sneered, and deflected the sword with a casual gesture. "You've fought for the Southern Frontier for so many years, but your kingdom is already empty. Your king took three million silver coins and twelve million kilograms of grain from us, just because we only wanted to use the Southern Frontier battlefield for a while. Besides, we supplied all the military expenses and supplies ourselves. You haven't been shortchanged."

Victor kept his sword pointed at Liam. "How many civilians did they actually massacre? Is this your way of seeking revenge? According to our statistics, the Westhaven forces have only killed a few thousand enemy soldiers in battles at Ilyrian. Adding today's fight, it's at most ten thousand. You've paid such a heavy price for the sake of ten thousand and eighteen prisoners you've taken. I really don't understand." Even though the Westhaven forces killed ten thousand enemies, they lost several tens of thousands of men and paid so much silver and grain.

With such a huge grudge and high cost, why not attack Victory Pass directly?

A tactic that harmed so few enemies but cost a huge number of their own was unprecedented!

Victor couldn't make sense of it.

Liam didn't answer. Instead, he stepped back and nodded politely. "Farewell."

The Westhaven army sounded the retreat, and their soldiers on the battlefield began to withdraw gradually.

Seeing the situation was hopeless, Victor slowly lowered his sword. Looking up, he saw Sandoria soldiers falling one by one to the Hell Monarch Army. Even the bravest among them seemed tireless, and struck continuously with lethal intent.

Finally, he said, "Order the entire army to retreat from Simonton."

Chapter 112

The sudden retreat of the Sandoria and Westhaven soldiers left the Starhaven army stunned.

When they heard the retreating horns, they thought the Sandoria army might be using some kind of tactic to lure them in. After thinking it over, the Starhaven army realized there was no need to chase them after they left Simonton City. Their goal was to drive them away, not wipe out the entire army.

The Starhaven army could only watch as their foes fled, abandoning their armor and weapons in their hasty retreat.

Was victory really that easy?

They had prepared themselves to fight to the last breath. With Westhaven making such a grand effort to assist, how could they possibly retreat so easily?

Even with Rafael personally on the battlefield, it was a fierce fight. The reality was just as harsh- everywhere was filled with corpses, and the city was drenched in blood. Even the falling snow couldn't cover up the overwhelming stench of blood.

Simonton City was vast, and beyond the city, there were numerous villages.

Timothy hurried back to the command post. "Marshal, should we pursue them? We need to prevent them from slaughtering the civilians and ravaging the villages."

"Liam won't do that, but Victor might. Send General Sinclair with the Mystic Army to chase them down," Rafael replied.

Rafael knew Liam well. He was never a warmonger in Westhaven, and atrocities like destroying villages were not something to expect under Liam's command.

However, Victor had spent many years on the Southern Frontier without achieving any military merit. He might resort to killing civilians out of frustration. With the pursuit underway, Victor would be too preoccupied to commit further atrocities against civilians.

"Understood, sir!"

Timothy mounted his horse, and set off to find Carissa to deliver Rafael's orders.

Carissa raised her Rose Spear, and shouted, "Mystic Army, follow me! We're going after the Sandorial

soldiers!"

As the Mystic Army moved, the other soldiers followed suit. Their eyes were bloodshot from the battle, and they were determined to witness the Sandoria soldiers flee from Simonton City. Barrett, meanwhile, had been searching for Aurora amidst the retreat.

He shouted as loud as possible, "Aurora! Aurora!"

In the midst of the resounding footsteps and chaos, his calls seemed feeble. Without hesitation, he followed Carissa in pursuit...

of the Westhaven forces.

When the two armies clashed within the breached city, Aurora led her troops in pursuit of the Westhaven soldiers. Among them were several junior officers dressed in distinctive attire-her primary targets.

What Barrett didn't realize was that Aurora had already fallen into the hands

Her plan was to capture these junior officers and use them to force Liam's withdrawal. If Westhaven retreated, the Sandoria forces would collapse as they couldn't withstand the pressure.

If she could capture them, she would certainly make a significant contribution!

As she chased them, she realized she was on the right track. The group ahead was clearly trying to avoid fighting, and was heading straight out of the city. These were likely nobles and royalty seeking to make a name for themselves on the battlefield. Their goal was just to show their faces so they could return home and secure a position.

Aurora had struck gold with this plan before, so she was determined to see it through. Leading her men, which numbered fewer than a thousand, she pressed on relentlessly.

After chasing for about half an hour, the group ahead finally stopped, gasping for breath. Aurora's men were also exhausted, with some barely able to lift their weapons.

Just as she ordered her men to attack, many Westhaven soldiers, who had been waiting in the alleys, surged out from all directions.

Her head snapped up as she noticed the smug, calculating grins on the faces of the junior officers she had been chasing. It was clear now that she had been lured into a trap. After a relentless chase, her stamina was no match for the well-rested soldiers lying in wait.

A commanding officer's voice rang out, "Kill everyone except that woman!"

The Westhaven soldiers brandished their large blades, advancing with fierce determination. Their movements were swift and merciless-it was evident that they were highly trained and ruthless killers!

### Chapter 113

The Westhaven soldiers surrounding Aurora were numerous. She struggled to hold her ground. Glancing around, she saw even more of them converging on her position.

They hadn't engaged in the main battlefield but had been lying in wait, preparing an ambush specifically for her. It dawned on her that while her previous use of this tactic had yielded significant gains, this time, it had led her straight into a trap.

Her martial skills, slightly superior to those of her cousin Zeke, allowed her to hold off the attackers for a while. However, her soldiers were falling around her, one by one, into pools of blood. The Westhaven troops showed no mercy, their ruthless efficiency revealing them to be elite forces.

Panic gripped Aurora's heart. She tried to escape, but Westhaven soldiers surrounded her, their long blades blocking any possible retreat. She fought back in desperation and panic, but fear drained her strength. As a blade descended toward her arm, she instinctively pushed a nearby soldier into its path.

The soldier took the blow to his head and face, blood pouring from his wounds. He looked back at Aurora with disbelief. They had fought together at Victory Pass, and she had promised to share in their fate, but now...

Aurora pushed the soldier aside, abandoning him to the enemy's blade as she turned and fled. She attempted to use her Lightfoot Skill to bypass the soldiers behind her, but they raised their sharp blades, forcing her to step on them. The pain caused her entire body to tremble as she collapsed to the ground.

Blood flowed from her feet, but the soldiers with the sharp blades merely stood together, blocking her path rather than attacking her further. It was clear now that their intent was to capture her alive. Despair filled Aurora's heart. She could only hope that Barrett would come to her rescue.

When he had seen her pursuing the enemy, he had shouted for her not to follow, likely suspecting it was a trap. He would surely come to save her!

All she had to do was hold on. But with the Westhaven soldiers' ferocity and the excruciating pain in her feet, her efforts to resist were becoming increasingly futile.

Soon, she was struck by several blades. Although the wounds were superficial, the pain made it increasingly difficult for her to defend herself. Her neck was quickly pinned by two swords, and her weapon was knocked to the ground. She dared not move her neck, forced to watch as her soldiers fell one by one, their blood staining the entire road.

"Zeke, save me!" she called out desperately as she noticed Zeke still fighting fiercely.

But soon, Zeke's neck was also trapped by blades. In addition to Zeke, more than ten others were captured, while the rest were all killed.

After Westhaven troops had secured control, one of the young captains walked slowly towards Aurora, holding a bloodied blade. He removed his helmet and took off his golden mask, revealing a face that made her shiver.

His face was strikingly similar to the young general she had captured at Victory Pass. However, this man had a harsher, colder, and more ruthless expression.

"Aurora Yates," the man called coldly. "I am the third prince of Westhaven, Edmund Tudor. You've finally fallen into my hands."

Aurora's legs went weak.

A prince? Was the captive from Victory Pass also a prince?

Aurora took a deep breath. It should have been obvious, and she should have guessed it a long time ago. If the young general she captured at Victory Pass weren't from the royal family, how could Liam have been so quick to call for a ceasefire and force her to negotiate for his release?

Whether it was the cold or her fear, Aurora's voice trembled slightly. "W-What do you want?"

"What do I want?"

Edmund stared at her with eyes full of hatred, as if he wished he could skin her alive.

"Naturally, I want to give you a taste of your own medicine!"

Chapter 114

Aurora's face went deathly pale.

A taste of her own medicine?

She knew very well what she had done to the young general she had captured at Victory Pass.

At the time, the young general had led over a hundred men and fought fiercely. After killing a few of her soldiers, he fled. To capture him, she had ordered the slaughter of several villages in Fawnrun City, suspecting he was hiding among the common people.

She burned with the need to find him to avenge her fallen comrades and establish her own reputation. Moreover, capturing a young general was worth more than killing ten soldiers.

At the time, her intention was straightforward. But after capturing the young general, he had been extremely arrogant, accusing her of violating the treaty between their nations and massacring civilians. His curses were particularly vile, condemning them to be childless and bereft of descendants.

Because of the severity of his curses, she had decided to punish him. As for his curses about being childless, she made sure to render him impotent. Her men had even urinated on him and forced him to eat excrement so he would stop uttering any more vile words.



Yet, the young general had an iron will. Despite their efforts, he continued to spew curses, infuriating her further. So, she ordered her men to stab him a few times. The soldiers had been a bit rough, but it was the young general's own fault.

With such venomous curses coming from his mouth, how could anyone resist torturing him further?

What she hadn't anticipated was that Liam would lead thousands of soldiers straight to Fawnrun City to surround her. Seeing the tortured young general, Liam demanded a ceasefire, proposing negotiations and setting a boundary line. Westhaven soldiers were to step no further into Starhaven territory, and all he asked of her was to release the captive.

To her, this was like a golden opportunity falling from the heavens. The negotiations and boundary setting between the two nations were usually determined by the top generals or presented to the kings. Yet, they were voluntarily conceding to Starhaven's boundary and not pursuing the matter of the massacred civilians. Moreover, they promised never to mention it to Salvador or Dominic.

With the signed treaty in hand, Aurora could return to claim her reward. The Westhaven forces only asked for the release of the humiliated young general.

She felt like she was being handed a tremendous military achievement. She hadn't expected the Westhaven forces to be so easily manipulated!

At that time, she thought this was a golden opportunity. However, once the Westhaven troops arrived at the Southern Frontier battlefield, she began to sense that the young general's identity was more - complicated than she had anticipated.

Liam was a man of his word. Following the treaty, Westhaven soldiers didn't set foot on Starhaven territory again. Yet, they chose the Southern Frontier battlefield to seek revenge because as long as

Sandoria had not completely withdrawn from the Southern Frontier, its sovereignty did not belong to

Starhaven.

With the cold blade pressing against her neck, Aurora couldn't stop her body from trembling. She couldn't hear the sounds of the approaching army. The fighting sounded so far away, almost inaudible. She knew Barrett wouldn't reach her in time. He might also fall into the hands of

Westhaven, as Liam wouldn't have mobilized such a large force just to capture her alone. Aurora dared not even breathe, but then she suddenly thought of something.

"You... You've caught me, but it won't help! It wasn't me who defeated you on the Southern Frontier battlefield! It was Rafael and Carissa! Do you know Carissa? She's Hector Sinclair's daughter! Hector had also defended Victory Pass before going to the Southern Frontier. Her arrival was what caused your defeat there. She has killed many of your soldiers. If you're looking for someone to blame, it should be her!" Hearing that, Edmund's eyes turned ice-cold. He waved the soldiers holding the blades at Aurora's neck away.

Just as Aurora thought they had taken her words to heart and allowed herself a moment of relief, Edmund slapped her face with a resounding blow. His face was filled with fury.

"You shouldn't have brought that up. Now that you did, even slicing you into a thousand pieces wouldn't quell the hatred in my heart!"

## Chapter 115

The Westhaven spies in Starhaven had been active for a long time, eventually falling under the direct control of Westhaven's crown prince, Arthur Tudor. After Arthur's downfall, these spies massacred an entire household. Their actions tarnished Arthur's reputation, and led to the destruction of the whole Intelligence network.

Hector was a commendable general. He and his sons all perished on the Southern Frontier battlefield. The widows left in his family, including orphans and even household servants, were mercilessly slain by Westhaven forces.

Indeed, Westhaven had committed such barbaric acts.

Because of this, they dared not publicize Aurora's massacre of the civilians and kept it hidden.

Aurora was the instigator, but she wasn't solely responsible. The Westhaven spies had committed even more heinous atrocities. The only victims were the Sinclair family. Edmund had heard Carissa was the only one left from Hector's family, which was who Aurora had mentioned.

Aurora had even replaced Carissa to become Barrett's wife. At first, these matters weren't directly related to Westhaven. But with Hector's entire family wiped out and Carissa abandoned, Westhaven was undeniably implicated in these tragedies.

Edmund's anger was rooted in this.

Westhaven was not a beastly, barbaric kingdom.

Battles between two kingdoms were the soldiers' business, but the massacre of Hector's entire family, including infants, was a permanent stain on the Westhaven royal family's honor.

Now, Aurora dared to suggest they capture Carissa?!

The reminder that they had massacred all the innocent elderly, women, and children in Hector's family was akin to a blade twisting deep in their hearts.

Aurora was stunned by the slap. She was then roughly seized by the hair, and kicked in the stomach. She was propelled a few meters away, only to be yanked by her hair and brutally slapped until she nearly lost consciousness.

"Take her away!" Edmund commanded.

The vanguard's deputy took the lead, directing the prisoners out of Simonton City.

Beyond Simonton City lay the desert to the south and an endless chain of mountains ahead. A rugged mountain range split the terrain, forming a path leading into a grassy expanse that connected with more mountains. Nomads inhabited this area, and beyond it was the border of Sandoria.

The Westhaven troops didn't care about the details of their withdrawal beyond that. After crossing the -grassland, they ascended a mountain. A wooden hut had already been constructed earlier, specifically

to hold Aurora.

Aurora was now destined to experience for herself what had happened to Arthur.

Including her, there were a total of nineteen captives. The captives were all soldiers under her command, and they had participated in the village massacre she had orchestrated. Among them was her cousin Zeke.

These men had once been fiercely loyal and deeply admiring of Aurora. However, seeing her use her own comrade-in-arms as a human shield left them profoundly shocked. The general they had once revered now suddenly became very unfamiliar and frightening.

Especially disturbing was the fact that, even as she was captured, she had practically told the Westhaven troops to capture Rafael and Carissa.

To them, Aurora's actions were utterly unacceptable.

The previous misunderstandings the reinforcement troops had about Carissa had been cleared up. After the challenges against her, it was confirmed Carissa was indeed capable. And today, she had led the assault on the city. She was a great contributor to reclaiming the Southern Frontier.

Despite that, Aurora had ordered the capture of Carissa. If Aurora's initial actions were motivated by suspicions that Carissa had claimed military credit unfairly, then her actions were now a matter of personal grudge-cowardice, even.

If it was about personal grudges, then Carissa should be the one harboring resentment towards. Aurora, especially since she and Barrett had sought the marriage edict through their military achievements, effectively taking Barrett away from Carissa.

Aurora's actions today were incomprehensible and devastating to them. Their faith in her had been shattered.

The Westhaven forces had imprisoned them in a wooden hut. They were bound tightly, and escape was impossible. Even if they managed to free themselves, the heavily guarded exterior offered no way

out.

Unable to contain his fury, Tristian glared at Aurora.

"You used John to block the blade coming for you! Did you know he just became a father?!" he roared.

## Chapter 116

Aurora was beyond flustered. Facing her cousin's questioning, she felt guilty. Despite that, she still tried to defend herself, "I thought the person standing next to me was a Westhaven soldier. I didn't realize it was John."

"Hypocrite! How could an enemy soldier be standing next to you? If you're going to make excuses, at least make them logical!" Zeke retorted angrily.

Aurora, embarrassed and angry, snapped, "Enough! Now, we're all prisoners of the enemy! We've slaughtered civilians in Fawnrun. They won't let us off easily. Instead of blaming me, think about how to escape!"

"The massacre of those civilians was your order! You said the young general was hiding among the civilians, and that some soldiers were disguised as commoners. You're the one who ordered us to kill them without any mercy!" Zeke snarled.

Knowing people outside could hear, Aurora said loudly, "I only told you to kill a few people to force him out! I never told you to kill them all!"

Upon hearing this, the other captured soldiers erupted in anger.

"You ordered us to slaughter everyone and cut off their ears! You killed civilians, but claimed they were enemies to gain more contribution!"

"General Yates, we wouldn't have dared massacre civilians or destroy villages without your order!"

"Exactly! And you even said the Westhaven army had killed our civilians! But when we got back, we found out they hadn't killed any of our people.

"If you were truly at ease with your actions, why did you tell us to keep it secret? You knew you were falsely claiming credit for killing civilians!"

"Now, you still want to deny it? You have the gall to act, but not to take responsibility! You're nothing compared to General Sinclair! You're not even a finger's worth!" Aurora's face turned ashen with anger as she listened to the dissent around her.

Ignoring the Westhaven soldiers outside, she rebuked angrily, "Falsely claiming credit for killing civilians? The battlefield is cruel! Haven't our civilians died because of war? Were those civilians we killed innocent? Were they good people? They were all from Westhaven!

"For decades, they've fought us along the border, wasting countless military resources and supplies. I'm the one who got the peace treaty signed! The border conflict ended because of me! The death of a few civilians is a small price for true peace between our kingdoms! They died for a worthy cause!"

Her face had grown swollen from being slapped, and her hysteria made her features even more distorted. Her hair was messy, and she looked like a madwoman. For a moment, no one dared to refute her, not even Zeke, who suppressed his anger

Zeke had originally been willing to follow his cousin, because she treated her soldiers well. She always spoke of brotherhood and loyalty. When she married Barrett, she even invited her soldiers to the wedding, earning a reprimand from Owen.

After today's battle and her current words, however, Zeke felt he never truly knew his cousin.

Aurora moved to sit alone, feeling extremely uncomfortable with her hands and feet bound. Her face stung from the slaps, her ears buzzed, and the cold made her feel even worse.

Leaning against the wooden wall, she desperately hoped Barrett would arrive soon and rescue her before the Westhaven soldiers had a chance to exact revenge.

She also harbored a faint resentment toward Barrett. Since he realized her pursuit of the enemy was unwise, why didn't he chase after her? Why did he only call out a few times, and then leave her to fend for herself?

This left Aurora deeply disappointed. In his heart, what mattered more-gaining military merits, or her safety? If he had caught up and stopped her, she wouldn't have fallen into the hands of the third prince of Westhaven.

The wooden hut was full of cracks, letting in the bitterly cold wind that chilled them to the bone. All nineteen of them shivered constantly, their teeth chattering uncontrollably. Aurora was struggling the most, waves of dizziness washing over her.

She tried to steady herself, her mind filled with worry about how they might torture her.

However, she was also somewhat hopeful. Westhaven governed with kindness and compassion, so they likely wouldn't mistreat prisoners of war, right?

If they were going to mistreat them, they would have done so already instead of leaving them here

Chapter 117

Alas

Aurora's sliver of hope soon shattered completely.

A bonfire was lit outside, and the wooden door was violently pushed open. A tall figure, exuding a powerful and oppressive presence, slowly entered. Even with his back to the fire, Aurora could make out his silhouette and knew who he was.

It was Liam, the Westhaven marshal with whom she had signed the treaty in Fawnrun

City.

Aurora trembled violently, her back pressed against the wall as she stared at Liam in terror.

During the treaty signing, this man had exuded an aura of strength and bravery, creating a sense of pressure. At the same time, he also carried an air of elegance. The negotiations and treaty signing had gone smoothly and quickly. He agreed to some clauses she proposed without hesitation, with only one condition: that she release the prisoner promptly after signing.

He had been so agreeable then, making her believe the heavens were gifting her these military accomplishments.

But now, his face was dark and murderous, with a cold ruthlessness in his eyes she had never seen before. The oppressive aura he emitted felt like the presence of death itself.

Just one look from him filled her with icy fear.

Liam removed his leather gloves and tossed them to the soldier behind him. He turned to Edmund, who had accompanied him in. "Drag them down. Use whatever means necessary. These people have all harmed your brother. On the day the treaty was signed, I memorized each of their faces."

Edmund gritted his teeth. "Understood, Uncle Liam. I will avenge my brother."

Then, he looked at Aurora and asked, "What about her?"

Liam smiled coldly. "Her? I'll deal with her personally

Edmund nodded, then turned to his men. "Take them all out and strip them. I want to hear their pleas

for mercy.

Everyone's faces turned ashen, and they collapsed in despair. Yet, they maintained their soldierly pride and did not beg for mercy.

On the other hand, Aurora trembled even more violently.

"General Tudor... W-We signed a treaty. There is peace between our nations...peace... Y-You can't harm me! Let me go. If you release me, we can renegotiate the border!"

"Aurora!" Zeke roared as he was dragged out. "How can you say something so spineless? You're unworthy of being a general! The border has been settled! It's not up to you to change it!"

Liam glanced at Zeke coldly. "We of Westhaven keep our word. Since the border has been established, there is no need to change it."

Westhaven had already suffered this loss. If they went back on their word and launched an attack on



Victory Pass, it would tarnish the reputation they upheld since the founding of the kingdom.

As Zeke was dragged away, he threw a look of deep disdain at Aurora. Knowing there was no way he would make it out alive this time, he shouted, "Aurora Yates, you're a disgrace to Starhaven and the Yates family!"

your family

Edmund stepped on his hand, and sneered coldly, "What high moral ground are you and trying to claim? When you destroyed villages in Fawntun, did you call that disgraceful? When you tortured a prisoner of war, did you call that disgraceful?"

These people were all despicable-every last one of them deserved to die.

Zeke endured the pain without uttering a sound. His face was ashen, and he trembled uncontrollably.

As the wooden door closed, Aurora curled up, raising her pitiful eyes to Liam in a desperate attempt to plead for mercy. However, Liam's words cut off her pleas.

"Begging for mercy will only make your death uglier. Since Hector's family sacrificed themselves, Starhaven only has one useful military officer-the Hell Monarch. Your king must be blind to have used you. What military achievements do you have? You're nothing but a beast driven by a hunger for false glory." 2

Being called a beast driven by a hunger for false glory shattered everything Aurora had ever prided herself on.

Chapter 118

Outside the wooden door, agonized screams pierced the air. When Aurora heard them, she nearly fainted from fear.

She knew exactly what torture her cousin and comrades were enduring, because she had inflicted the same punishment on the captured Westhaven crown prince.

Castration-cutting a man's private part off while the victim was alive, and watching it writhe on the ground like a twisted worm.

If Arthur had screamed even once, the torment might have stopped. However, he had bitten his tongue and stayed silent. Her soldiers then urinated on his wounds and body, then slashed him repeatedly, mixing blood and urine together.

Recalling that scene had once brought Aurora satisfaction.

Now, it filled her with deep terror.

Liam pulled out a dagger, and she screamed, "No! Stay away from me!"

He kneeled, and cut the ropes binding her. Seeing her cower in fear only fueled his rage further.

To think Arthur had been humiliated by such a cowardly creature!

Once the ropes were gone, he grabbed her by the hair and dragged her roughly outside. The cold and the pain on her scalp were overwhelming, and she almost burst into tears.

Liam yanked her into the open, snow-covered ground, and flung her down forcefully.

Eighteen men lay in the snowy clearing. They had been stripped naked, and not a single piece of fabric covered them. Each of them were lying in their own pools of blood. Their severed manhoods lay nearby, also soaked in blood. They screamed in agony, writhing just as Arthur had. Unlike him, however, they couldn't hold back their miserable screams.

Only after prolonged torture did Arthur finally scream.

The moment he did, everyone cheered. Destroying a man's dignity proved to be a deeply satisfying experience.

Aurora, unable to bear the sight, was terrified and tried to crawl away. But she was quickly grabbed by the hair and dragged back. Someone gripped her chin, forcing her to watch.

"Look closely," a cold voice commanded. 'See how you inflicted this brutality."

Her jaw ached from the grip, and she struggled in vain. She had no choice but to witness the gruesome scene before her.

Many soldiers approached, unfastened their pants, and urinated on the eighteen men. In the freezing weather, the urine quickly turned to ice on their bodies. They were in unbearable pain, the cold and the injuries combining to make their suffering even worse. Their screams echoed across the hillside.

Aurora's body went limp. What had once been a satisfying sight now filled her with horror and pain.

"Are you

them.

afraid? This is just the beginning." Liam said, his voice as cold as the snow and ice around

Aurora was in so much fear, her soul was close to leaving her body.

The Westhaven soldiers began to slash at her soldiers' bodies with their swords. Each cut drew blood, which then froze in the cold. The pain from the cold didn't numb them; it only worsened the agony. The Westhaven soldiers deliberately avoided vital areas, ensuring they would live but suffer immensely.

Aurora didn't want to look. She didn't dare to look, but her chin was held tightly in place, and her shoulders were pinned down. She lacked even the strength to struggle. She was forced to watch helplessly as her cousin and soldiers endured the torment.

She trembled violently, knowing that she was next.

Sure enough, she was pushed to the ground with her limbs splayed out. Another group of men approached, undoing their pants and urinating on her. The foul-smelling liquid drenched her body. head, face, eyes, mouth, and nose, causing her to cough and choke.

She didn't dare open her mouth to scream. She could only shake her head frantically, trying to fling off the foul liquid. But her mouth couldn't stay shut because she wanted to vomit, and when she opened her mouth to retch, more urine poured in.

Aurora struggled desperately, utterly humiliated.

Someone roughly yanked off her clothes, tore off her inner clothing, and pulled down her pants. She screamed in terror, thinking they intended to assault her.

But instead of violating her, they cut her. A sword sliced into the base of her thigh, and she felt warm blood gushing out.

However, it soon stopped. Someone took a dagger, and began carving words into her face.

She was held down, her eyes wide with terror. She could feel her blood flow with each cut, mingling with the searing pain and overwhelming shame.

#### Chapter 119

Just when Aurora thought they would continue to torment her, she was dragged back into the wooden hut along with everyone else.

A charcoal fire had been lit inside the wooden hut, providing a bit of warmth amidst the drafts. They all crawled towards the fire, seeking to fend off the cold and the pain.

Aurora's pants had been torn off, and the wound on her thigh prevented her from closing her legs. With the warmth in the room, the blood continued to flow slowly and pooled beneath her. Everyone was in such agony that no one paid attention to her. The hut was filled with nothing but the sound of pained groans.

Someone entered, and forced a bowl of medicine down her throat. The mixture of the medicine and the lingering stench of urine nearly made her vomit again.

She didn't vomit, fearing they would urinate on her again. She felt that there was no chance of survival, since she was in Liam's hands. If they gave her poison, it would at least grant her a quick death. She would accept that fate.

After Aurora drank the medicine, Edmund entered and began beating her. He kicked and punched her, leaving her face and body covered in bruises and cuts. He didn't use a knife, except on her face. She didn't know what words they had carved into her face. But since she was going to die anyway,

she didn't care.

Lying on the ground, any movement sent waves of terrible pain through her body. She felt as though her internal organs were shifting. She thought about how Barrett wouldn't come to save her, and that she was going to die here.

To think that the first female general of Starhaven would die here like this-it was just too frustrating! Thinking about how Carissa would soon bask in glory, Aurora felt a deep sense of dissatisfaction. Didn't Carissa just have a better birth and a more privileged life? Well, Aurora would have achieved great deeds long ago if she had such a background!

Meanwhile, on Rafael's orders, Carissa led the Mystic Army and followed the retreating forces of Westhaven and Sandoria from a distance.

Barrett followed closely behind her, and observed her on horseback. Her upright and graceful silhouette, though slender, exuded an impressive energy. For a moment, he was lost in thought.

Violet and others also rode alongside Carissa. After the battle, they had returned to retrieve their horses and had brought Carissa's mount, Lightning, as well.

They didn't need to chase after their enemies. They simply needed to keep watch from afar to ensure that the retreating forces didn't raid the nearby villages or slaughter civilians.

Meanwhile, Barrett was searching for Aurora. He was a little panicked, as Aurora had gone after the enemy and hadn't returned. He feared she had likely fallen into the hands of the Westhaven troops.

Among the large group of retreating Westhaven troops, neither Aurora nor the other prisoners of war

were seen.

As night fell and the last of the soldiers had withdrawn from Simonton City, Carissa and the others trailed the retreating forces for a while longer. Once they confirmed the enemy troops didn't hide in the nearby mountains but were truly heading back to Sandoria, she ordered them to stop tracking.

Violet was still worried. "I'm afraid they might turn around and attack us."

Carissa shook her head. "They won't."

If that were the case, Rafael wouldn't have allowed her to monitor their retreat with the Mystic Army.

"Why v

wouldn't they?" Violet asked, pulling on the reins. "We have only twenty thousand men, while they have hundreds of thousands. They could easily overwhelm us if they wanted to."

Carissa merely smiled, offering no answer to the question.

In reality, Carissa was right—there was no need to worry. Sandoria had lost their fighting spirit, and Westhaven was indifferent to their plight. Westhaven had achieved its objective, and Victor wouldn't naively think that Westhaven would lend a hand if they decided to retaliate.

Since Westhaven had met its goals, they wouldn't risk their own soldiers.

Moreover, this was war. If Liam truly wanted to intervene, he wouldn't be disguising

an invasion

himself as a Westhaven soldier. Though such disguises might fool no one, their denial meant there was no party with a vested interest to investigate further.

To other kingdoms, Westhaven's reputation remained untarnished.

As Carissa and the others watched the last of the Sandoria and Westhaven troops withdraw from Simonton City and head towards Sandoria, Carissa received orders from Rafael to halt their advance and wait in the surrounding field.

The temperature was frigid, and piles of campfires blazed to provide warmth. The generals and soldiers huddled around the fires.

Barrett, noticing that the group had stopped advancing, approached Carissa.

"Aurora's missing! We can't stop here. We must continue forward!"

Chapter 120

Carissa and her friends were huddled around a small fire, their cracked lips dry and chapped.

"Is there any evidence that she was among the troops withdrawing from Sandoria?" Carissa asked.

"No, but she chased a group of Westhaven soldiers when the battle started, and she hasn't returned since," Barrett said.

Then we should thoroughly inspect the city for her among the corpses," Violet sneered icily.

"She's not dead!" Barrett's eyes flashed with anger. "Don't curse her! As members of the same army, how can you curse a fellow soldier?"

Violet rolled her eyes, and snorted. "The war is over, and I'm done with being a soldier. Don't drag me into being her comrade. She doesn't deserve it!"

Barrett was infuriated by her words. He turned to Carissa, and said seriously, "I'm the one who disappointed you, not Aurora. If it were another soldier captured, would you save them?"

Carissa countered, "If another soldier was captured, would you risk the lives of twenty thousand troops to chase after the enemy's main force?"

Barrett was momentarily speechless. "Well..."

Carissa continued, "I trust you understand the value of a soldier's life, General Warren. You have no proof that General Yates is among the retreating troops. Even if you did, you couldn't be sure she was with the main force. Pursuing them through the border mountains would be risking the lives of the troops."

Naturally, the others, particularly Travis, who always supported Carissa, were unsatisfied with Barrett.

"Exactly! Besides, there are many nomadic tribes in the area. They don't belong to the Southern Frontier. Intruding on their territory could easily spark another conflict."

Although Travis wasn't well-versed in nomadic tribes, he understood that anyone intruding on their territory would face their wrath.

Barrett was visibly frustrated. "So you're just standing by? Aurora wasn't the only one captured-her soldiers were, too!"

"How can you be so certain she was captured?" Carissa retorted.

"When the battle started, I saw her chasing after a group of enemies. As soon as the battle began, there was a retreat, which was clearly a trap. She fell for it."

"General Yates isn't new to the battlefield. If she was fooled by such an obvious trap, it shows poor judgment. Do you want us to risk the lives of so many soldiers for her mistake?" Carissa replied calmly. She looked at him sternly, and continued, "Also, why didn't you stop her if you noticed it?"

Barrett had no answer for the criticism of Aurora's poor judgment. It was indeed a lapse in judgment.

As for why he didn't stop her, he explained, "When I realized what was happening, I called out to her, but she didn't listen. I was leading my troops in combat. If I had pursued her urgently, my soldiers would have followed me without knowing the situation. I couldn't jeopardize the larger operation because of her."

During the intense fighting in the city, with the chaos and confusion, it was possible for friend and foe to be indistinguishable. If he pursued Aurora amidst the intense battle, his soldiers might



mistakenly think it was part of a tactic and follow him. That would have endangered the Hell Monarch Army troops, who were advancing behind them.

As the leader of the second siege unit, Barrett absolutely couldn't afford such a mistake.

Carissa knew Barrett's account was accurate. After Aurora was lured away, Rafael had judged that the enemy would soon retreat from the battlefield, so he had returned to the command camp.

As for why Sandoria didn't immediately retreat after the battle was clearly lost, it was because there were still formalities to observe. They couldn't just flee at the start of the battle; they needed to engage in a prolonged fight to show their king and people that they had done their best.

Victor had long been aware of Liam's intentions to use the Southern Frontier battlefield to his advantage, which was one of the reasons for their lack of unity from the start. Even though they had later discussed unity, it was too little, too late.

The Sandoria troops were destined to lose.

Seeing that Barrett still maintained the awareness of a military general, Carissa said, "Barrett, it's true that Aurora has been captured. However, we can't rescue her and can only wait here."