

## War Song 1121

### Chapter 1121

Davis also thought of a problem-he couldn't openly announce it yet, because the six-barrel matchlock hadn't been tested enough. Although Rafael said it had been tested, one test wasn't enough to confirm its reliability. Multiple tests were needed to ensure the risk of the Davis stood there, almost as though in a dream. He carefully examined the matchlock, feeling it over and over again.

barrel exploding was low before it could be used in the military.

"No need for a matchstick to light it... The convenience is incredible. With this, we can establish an elite shooting unit and even an ambush unit. With such a godly weapon in hand, what can we possibly fear?"

He held the matchlock and hugged it, laughing and crying all at once.

"To put it bluntly, the one at home would be considered a concubine next to this! Why not take a concubine? Do you think I'm afraid of the one at home? No, I always have a special place in my heart reserved for my true first wife-this six-barrel matchlock!" Rafael laughed. "The six-barrel matchlock is your one true wife? Then, what about the ten-barrel matchlock? The cannon?"

"W-What?" Davis stammered, his lips trembling. "What cannon are you talking about? Is it the kind from Nerathia?"

Rafael took out the notebook slowly, just like Isaac had, and handed it to Davis. "Everything's in here. Have a look for yourself."

Davis nearly snatched the notebook from Rafael's hands, greedily flipping through the pages. He turned page after page until he reached the end, but found no blueprints. He was slightly disappointed, though only a little, for the formula for its creation was there he could still study it and work through it.

"By the heavens... By the heavens, this is a gift from the gods!" Davis clutched the book to his chest, overcome with emotion. He suddenly threw his arms around Rafael, tears streaming down his face. "Peace is no longer a mere dream! Without war, how could our great kingdom not thrive?"

Rafael understood exactly how Davis felt. When the six-barrel matchlock had fired 500 feet, he had nearly jumped out of his skin with excitement.

Of course, if they could manage to build the cannon carriage, nothing could stand in their way.

Rafael recalled a remark from Everett, who had said that Adrian's experiments with gunpowder and fireworks had once blown up his courtyard. It was likely that, in attempting to create the six-barrel matchlock, Adrian had also dabbled in crafting a cannon carriage. The notebook did contain some blueprints for the cannon, but they were not fully developed, suggesting that Adrian was still in the process of refining the design. Still, the six-barrel matchlock, for now, was already a tremendous advancement.

"We must keep this secret," Davis said, wiping his tears, his gaze now hardening with determination. "Until we've tested it thoroughly and begun mass production, no one can know about this, especially not with those treacherous minds lurking about." Rafael remembered Isaac had fired a shot when Yuvan had captured Violet. He wondered if they had seen the six-barrel matchlock in Isaac's hands.

If they hadn't, that would be

fortunate-they might have just thought it was a simple matchlock. He would need to ask Isaac how far the shot had been. If it was at a short range, perhaps Wayne wouldn't have noticed. But if the shot had been fired over several dozen feet... That might reveal too much.

Rafael and Davis entered the palace together to meet the king.

Salvador was overwhelmed with excitement and found himself speechless. When he finally regained his composure, the first person he looked at was Rafael, his eyes filled with a mix of complexity and excitement.

Perhaps, deep down, he still held

some wariness toward his younger brother. One thing was certain-up to this point, Rafael had no ambition to rebel. Otherwise, Rafael never would have handed over the

six-barrel matchlock to the

Ministry

of Defense and presented it to the king.

During these recent days, Salvador had come to appreciate the benefits of working with Rafael. Though the investigation into Yuvan's private army was still ongoing, he had found that his tasks were going

remarkably smoothly. Ian's abilities were far from being on par with Rafael's.

Moreover, when Salvador praised Rafael, the latter had casually mentioned that he was just someone suited for handling tasks. Salvador understood perfectly what that meant it was a way of establishing his position and making it clear. Salvador couldn't help but feel a touch of regret. The cannon blueprints were in hand, but research would likely take years-three to five years, or even seven or eight. Still, it was only a matter of time before they succeeded, so this small regret hardly mattered. With the six-barrel matchlock, at least they didn't have to fear a resurgence of Sandoria or Westhaven causing further border disturbances.

"Reward him-reward him richly!" Salvador muttered to himself in excitement, still caught up in the frenzy of triumph. "Restore Sage Adrian's title as an honorary monarch!"

"Your Majesty, I advise that another reward be given instead," Davis quickly interjected. "Please, do not reinstate Mr. Russell's title as an honorary monarch, not yet. Otherwise, he could be blamed for possessing such a precious item."

Chapter 1122

In his excitement, Salvador momentarily forgot the consequences.

Adrian's ancestors had once been given a royal title, but the hereditary line had long since ended. Granting such a title again, especially without a major accomplishment to back it, would surely raise suspicion.

At present, the six-barrel matchlock had yet to be mass-produced and an elite shooting unit was still not established. It was far too early to grant a royal title, and doing so now would only draw the eyes of the entire kingdom to Meadow Ridge. "Yes, you're right. We'll hold off on it for now. There's no rush," Salvador said, his eyes gleaming.

It was the brightest light Rafael had seen in his eyes since he had ascended the throne.

Salvador was eager to see the full power of the six-barrel matchlock for himself. He ordered the Nightsteel Guard to seal off the Cold Palace, forbidding anyone from entering.

The Cold Palace was vast and uninhabited since Sigmund's reign. Out of kindness, the women who had lived there had been relocated to a royal convent for their care.

When Salvador saw how the six-barrel matchlock nearly pierced through the Cold Palace's wall, he was stunned beyond measure.

"Can it also fire steel pellets?" he asked.

"Yes, Your Majesty," Davis replied. "It can, though we haven't fully figured out its maximum power yet. I'll have the armory chief and the weapon smiths study it further when I return." Davis understood some of the contents of the notebook. The most powerful part was the gunpowder pellets, which could explode on impact and cause greater damage to the enemy. "Good. I entrust this important task to you, but make sure it's in trusted hands."

Salvador was also nervous. He had obtained a great treasure and wanted to make the most of it, but he was also worried about others taking notice. He felt both excited and uneasy. "Yes, Your Majesty. I will obey your command," Davis replied solemnly.

Salvador flipped through the notebook again. There were some disorganized parts, but also areas that had been corrected. It was clear that the ideas were continuously being refined. Adrian hadn't hidden anything—he had given everything, including the design for the cannon. Unfortunately, there were no blueprints.

Salvador reflected for a moment.

Adrian had always been particularly fond of Carissa, his young apprentice, Rafael, too, had come from the Pathfinders Guild. Although they both held positions of authority, they were still warriors at heart. In the event of war, they would surely be called to the battlefield. At least, that seemed like how Adrian had always envisioned it.

So, Adrian had no reason to hide anything. In fact, his dedication to research was driven by a desire to protect Carissa and Rafael on the battlefield, to help them fight and win without suffering

unnecessary harm. After leaving the palace, Davis hurried back to the Ministry of Defense, practically bouncing with excitement. However, Rafael didn't return to the Supreme Court. Instead, he headed back to the estate to meet Isaac. Isaac was nibbling on a slice of chilled melon that Violet had brought him. It was especially refreshing after being chilled, and he seemed to savor it.

Violet had just come by to thank him, saying that old grudges were now forgotten. He shrugged and told her it was fine, but as long as he was in the capital, she would have to provide him with all the fine wine he wanted.

As someone wealthy and influential, why wouldn't Violet agree to such an offer? Not only that-if Isaac wanted to visit entertainment houses or theater halls, Violet wouldn't mind covering all the costs either.

As he finished his melon, Isaac glanced at Violet. "Fine. Next time, I'll come asking for money."

Once Violet left, Rafael came inside. Isaac had just finished the melon and was wiping his hands with a handkerchief.

"What did the king say?" Isaac asked casually.

"He's pleased," Rafael replied. "He wants to reward Sage Adrian, but since the matchlock hasn't been mass-produced yet, it's still under wraps. The reward will have to wait."

"Sage Adrian doesn't care about that. After all, he doesn't lack anything," Isaac said with a nonchalant shrug. "But if he could send a few jars of palace wine, that would be a perfect gift."

"I'll ask for them on your behalf," Rafael said, pulling Isaac inside and pressing him into a chair. "You only have that one formula, don't you?"

Isaac wiped his hands on his clothing and then smiled, giving his handsome features a mischievous look. "Of course not. Sage Adrian is far too wise to give everything away at once. He said he's keeping some back to safeguard Carissa.

"Who knows, the king might turn on

us. Sage Adrian doesn't care about national affairs, but he's doing this. out of his own interest. Plus, by offering some well-placed gifts, the king will treat Carissa better. That way, she won't always feel bothered and upset. We can't hand over bigger stuff yet unless Sage Adrian feels it's safe to do so."

Rafael sighed Adrian really was a man who thought ahead. It wasn't that he was unwilling to give it, but he would only do so when the time was right. And based on what Isaac was saying, it sounded like the cannon was already under development.

## Chapter 1123

These past few days, the talk on the streets and in alleys was all about Yuvan and his family. No one mentioned a word about Violet.

Violet's apprentices were no pushovers. Not only did no one dare to criticize her, but when someone even lightly mentioned the connection between Violet and Molly, they quickly found someone to lash out at those people. Sisters in unity? Violet and Molly were cousins with different parents. Molly had married out and become part of her husband's family. What connection did she have with the Spencer family or Violet?

As for the incident at the western mountain pass, Thomas had sent someone to investigate. It was confirmed that witnesses had seen a group of men abducting a young woman who appeared to be disoriented. Some common folk had even tried to help, brandishing hoes. However, none of them could make out the woman's face, as it had grown dark and she had been struggling. Her hair had been a mess, obscuring her features.

Thomas was relieved when he heard they couldn't see her face.

On the other hand, Yuvan and his household had borne the brunt of the people's anger. The king himself had issued an edict reprimanding them, showing just how serious the situation was. People cursed the powerful, venting their anger, but they also praised the king's wisdom for not shielding Yuvan just because he was his uncle.

Yuvan's wounds had taken a turn for the worse. His stubborn nature was partly to blame. He refused to believe that his condition was grave. He insisted on reading erotic literature to see if he was really incapable of performing, which only worsened his condition. He had summoned nearly every famous physician in the capital, but only a few had turned up. The royal physicians had also visited. After all, he was still royalty. Plus, Ruth had heard about his condition and had begged Victoria to assign a few royal physicians to attend to him.

All the physicians gave the same grim diagnosis. The damage had been done, and recovery would be difficult. However, they mentioned that if Yuvan could somehow get Sebastian to treat him, there might still be a glimmer of hope.

In a fit of anger, Yuvan ordered Wayne and Fiona to fetch Sebastian. If they couldn't bring him back, he would beg his mom.

As luck would have it, Sebastian had left the city the day before. He had claimed it was to gather a rare medicinal herb that only bloomed once every hundred years. He had spoken to someone at Arcane Sanctum and was expected to return in about half a month. Half a month? By then, it would be too late.

Yuvan could only lie in frustration, powerless due to his rib and leg injuries. Confined to his bed, he was unable to return to Valken. His situation felt no different than imprisonment. His impoverished estate also required many purchases.

The money Molly had brought was now all spent, so she wrote a letter seeking help from the Spencer family.

Meanwhile, the head of the Spencer family, Eustace Spencer, had already received a detailed letter from his beloved daughter, Violet.

Eustace had initially planned to

travel to the capital, but the messenger stopped him. The latter explained that since Violet was safe, his arrival in the city could raise suspicions. After all, no one suspected it was Violet who had been abducted.

Eustace was still fuming with anger, and he convened a meeting with the family elders. They discussed the scandal Caused by Yuvan and the investigation's findings-that it was Molly herself who had administered the aphrodisiac to Violet, making her an accomplice.

They agreed that such behavior was disgraceful and unworthy of the Spencer family name. To avoid further tarnishing their reputation, they decided Molly could no longer remain a part of the family.

The Spencer family officially expelled her and filed the necessary paperwork with the authorities. They even made a public announcement, declaring that Yuvan's princess consort, Molly, was no longer affiliated with the Spencer family.

Without the Spencer family's support, Molly became useless to Yuvan.

When news of this reached the capital, Yuva@grew utterly disgusted with Molly. However, at this point, it was too delicate to outright dismiss her. Instead, he ordered that she be sent to Verdant Monastery-the same place Avis had been sent to recover from illness and await her death.

Yuvan's fury toward Molly was intense. Not only had she been of no help in the grove, but she had also confessed everything, leaving him in such a precarious position.

In truth, this was nothing more than his excuse to shift the blame. Even if Molly had kept silent, the situation would have remained hopeless. He had been caught red-handed and quickly surrounded by a large force, leaving him no chance of escape.

By placing the blame on Molly, Yuvan could convince himself that the disaster was not due to his own lust, which had led to this irreversible downfall.

#### Chapter 1124

Seeing that Yuvan was unable to leave the capital, Wayne deliberated for several days before saying, "Your Highness, you need time to recover and cannot return to Valken. However, it is concerning that Prince Harvey has been managing affairs there for so long. I fear he Yuvan stared at Wayne, stunned, and then his face shifted into anger. "So, you're abandoning me here and going back to Valken? How do you expect me to handle this mess on my own?"

may take advantage of the situation and claim your position for himself. I must return to Valken to handle matters."

Wayne was prepared for Yuvan's outburst. He took a deep breath and said calmly, "Your Highness, the situation is already a mess. While you're recovering, the public will soon forget about it. It's best if you stay here in the capital for now. I'll go back to discuss the next steps with Prince Harvey. Half of our suicide soldiers are now under his control. We need to reorganize and strategize. And besides, can you really trust Prince Harvey to run Valken?"

Though Yuvan did not trust Harvey, he was reluctant to face the mess alone. His frustration remained evident.



Wayne pressed on, "Your Highness, the Spencer family has already expelled Lady Molly. You and the Spencer family are no longer allies. You can't rely on their warhorses, weapons, or financial support. We need to find another way. If we don't act now, we may lose our chance. We've got an army to maintain, and it takes money-money that Grand Princess Eleanor can no longer provide. I must return to find a solution."

Wayne spoke the harsh truth, but he was careful not to let it crush Yuvan's spirit completely. The reality was grim, but Wayne didn't want to demoralize him further.

Yuvan didn't immediately agree to Wayne's departure and instead asked him to stay a few more days. He wanted to see if Salvador would issue any further edicts.

What concerned Yuvan most was the possibility of someone randomly bringing forth a woman and accusing him of dishonoring her. In such a scenario, he feared he would have no way to defend himself, and only Wayne could offer counsel and strategies. When Wayne understood his worry, he sighed inwardly. It was frustrating that Yuvan couldn't see through such a situation.

"Your Highness, they won't resort to that. The woman in question is Violet Spencer. They are eager to bury this scandal as quickly as possible. Besides, their efforts to establish the women's academy and workshop are all for the sake of reputation. They advocate for protecting women's rights and dignity-how could they then push a woman into the spotlight to be scorned? That would completely contradict their cause."

But Yuvan wasn't ready to listen to reason, whether based on facts or logic.

In the end, it was Fiona who persuaded him. She reminded him that years of careful planning couldn't be allowed to fall apart now. If Harvey had any thoughts of rebellion, the power in Valken would fall into his hands.

Yuvan finally relented, but not before

summoning his son, Lucian. He

instructed Lucian to go back to Valken with Wayne, and insisted that Wayne repeatedly swear to ensure the authority would be transferred to Lucian. He even planned to request the title of heir apparent for his son.

Wayne knew that securing the title of heir apparent wasn't a simple matter, but for the sake of returning to Valken, he had no choice but to agree. The next day, he left the capital with Lucian.

Meanwhile, Randall, who had been

living in the capital as a political hostage, had moved to a separate residence after Yuvan's initial departure from the capital. To this day, he hadn't returned to Edgeview Estate. Though he wasn't formally confined, someone always followed him when he left the residence, leaving him far from free.

When Randall heard about how Yuvan petitioned to name Lucian as his heir, a sour bitterness crept into his heart.

Though Randall was the eldest son borne by a concubine, he had been raised by Avis. Lucian and Raymond, on the other hand, were born to Fiona and thus were also the children of a concubine.

Yet, despite having an elder son,

Yuvan chose to pass his title to Lucian. Randall felt indignant, but knew there was nothing he could do—he had never been in a position to fight for anything. He couldn't face Avis, nor could he face his cousin, Carissa. His life seemed destined to pass like this, without even the hope of marriage.

Perhaps it was for the best. At least now, he had found a friend of sorts. His name was Barrett, the fallen son of the Warren family.

Barrett had first sought him out to ask about Aurora.

At first, Randall paid Barrett no mind. Upon seeing him linger outside the courtyard for hours, refusing to leave, Randall eventually told him.

How Randall knew of Aurora's fate was another matter—he had overheard Wayne speaking with Yuvan about it. There were things he knew but had to feign ignorance.

Chapter 1125

Barrett sat motionless for a long time. Randall had thought he might cry, but not a single tear appeared in his eyes. He just sat there blankly, lost in thought.

Unsure of what was on Barrett's mind, Randall handed him a bottle of wine. Barrett drank it all in one go and passed out drunk. Randall didn't bother sending him back home, letting him stay in the guest courtyard for the night instead. By the next morning, the steward reported that Barrett had left before dawn.

He came by a few more times after that. The two didn't talk much-they were simply drinking companions.

Randall heard that Barrett's wife had returned to her family, intending to divorce him.

One drunken night, Barrett let slip that he knew one of his wife's secrets. It was like a thorn lodged deep in his heart-something he couldn't quite remove, yet he also didn't feel the need to. He could live with it. However, she no longer wanted to look back.

When Randall asked what the secret was, Barrett didn't answer. He simply smiled bitterly and shook his head.

"If I tell you, it'll ruin her. If she wants to divorce me, she'll need to marry again. She's the daughter of an earl's family. She'll have no trouble finding another husband."

Randall didn't press further. The secrets of women in the inner households could be harmful, often tied to life or love affairs. In the end, the two men were nothing more than drinking companions. Barrett was poor, so Randall paid for all the meals and drinks. It didn't matter. Having someone to keep him company was enough.

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Meanwhile, Zoey hadn't been going to the workshop lately. She was overwhelmed with many troubles.

First, she received a letter from the Southern Frontier. It said that two of the concubines who had gone with Oliver had fallen ill and passed away. Now, only one concubine remained by his side, and this woman had diligently cared for him during his time of loss. With Oliver so busy with all the military duties at the Southern Frontier, this concubine had been managing the marshal's residence,

Redstone Manor, as well as his daily needs. Now, Oliver was writing to Zoey, discussing the possibility of elevating this concubine to the status of a rightful wife.

The letter didn't even mention the

concubine's name, likely out of

caution. Oliver knew of Celeste's true identity and had already arranged new one for her. If he were to elevat her to a rightful wife, her former identity would no longer suffice. He would need to find her a new one to match his status as an earl.

The second matter was Viola's return to her family, where she was insisting on a divorce.

However, she wasn't entirely set on divorcing. Whenever Evelyn scolded her, she would cry, claiming she couldn't bear it because Barrett was going to enlist and start again as a lowly soldier.

He had once been a general, and now he was returning to serve as a mere foot soldier. If that happened, their reputation would be in complete tatters. Viola's tears were merely a plea for Evelyn and Zoey to intervene and secure a better position for Barrett.

Evelyn had already declared that she

wouldn't get involved in Viola's

affairs. When her daughter continued to cry, she reluctantly

summoned Barrett to speak withnet

him. However, he refused to leverage his in-laws' connections, insisting he simply wanted to join

the army even if it meant starting as

a cook at the campsite.

Evelyn berated him, calling him spineless. He had a good position but threw it all away, causing himself to end up with nothing. He brought a wife home but never treated her well, always breaking her heart.

In the end, Evelyn ordered that until their issues were resolved, Barrett wasn't allowed to join the military. The situation remained at a standstill.

Zoey couldn't escape the fallout. Evelyn was sick, demanding Zoey and Luna stay close and tend to her daily. She would cry about Viola's lack of understanding and disgraceful behavior, while also lamenting Barrett's incompetence. Her underlying message was clear- she expected Zoey and Luna to help look after Viola.

Zoey couldn't even talk to anyone about such matters. She kept it all bottled up inside, while also trying to figure out her daughter and son's futures.

Her daughter was to marry, and finding a good match was no small task.

What troubled her more was her son. He was the legitimate eldest son, and if the title of earl could be passed down without any issues, he was supposed to inherit it.

The title of Earl of Silverstone looked

prestigious on the outside, but Zoey knew better. The family was corrupt through and through. She knew just how many dirty secrets were buried beneath the surface. Aside from her brother-in-law and his wife, who were innocent, Oliver and Viola had their share of shameful deeds.

Zoey was exhausted, but as a mother, she had no choice but to keep planning for her children's futures- no matter the cost.

In the end, she turned to Carissa.

Chapter 1126

Carissa was a bit surprised.

"I remember your son is quite good with his studies. Why would he want to study martial arts with me? Madam Zoey, I don't know how to be a good mentor, especially for someone who is meant to inherit a title. Surely his best path is to continue his studies and become an

official?"

Carissa didn't want to take on an apprentice. She already had a public position, and she couldn't devote the time necessary for proper teaching. And Cedric was still young-just a boy in his teens. Besides martial arts, she would need to teach him how to conduct himself and guide him toward the right outlook on life.

It wasn't like Violet, where her apprentices were all older than her, each with their own responsibilities.

"Inheriting a title?" Zoey gave a wry smile, her eyes full of helplessness. "Your Grace, whether this title can even be kept is still uncertain. And even if it is... I fear it will be more of a troublesome burden."

She sighed. "I'm not asking you to take him as an apprentice. I don't care who teaches him, as long as he learns how to defend himself. If something happens to him one day, at least he'll have the strength to face it-so he won't be tortured to death in just a few days." Carissa was taken aback. "What kind of trouble are you anticipating? Why do you speak of such grim things, Madam Zoey?"

Zoey absentmindedly adjusted her hairpin, feeling the coldness of the metal against her fingers, much like the coldness in her heart. "I hope for peace, of course. But it never hurts to make long-term plans."

Carissa had many doubts, but seeing Zoey wasn't willing to elaborate, she decided not to press further. She knew Zoey was always far-sighted, thinking many steps ahead, always hoping for the safety and well-being of her children.

Carissa thought for a moment, then said, "I can't teach him well myself, but I can ask Mr. Mullen to guide him when he has time. You can give him some money for his trouble. What do you think? Is your son studying at the academy or in your family's school?" Zoey was overjoyed. "He's at the family school. He can come in the evenings. He's not particularly talented, but he's obedient, eager to learn, and not afraid of hardship. As for money, just tell me how much is needed. I'm not stingy with it."

"Alright." Carissa nodded. "I'll speak to Mr. Mullen first. If he agrees, we can start as soon as tomorrow. But he has strict rules and doesn't easily accept apprentices, so it will be more of guidance than a formal apprenticeship." "Alright. Please ask him, Your Grace," Zoey said quickly.

Carissa didn't call Travis in right away. Instead, she went out to find him and discussed the matter with him directly.

Travis shook his head vigorously.

"Take on an apprentice? No way!"

"How can I take on an apprentice? If

I do, my mentor must agree first. But you know, I'm the only male apprentice in the guild. She probably wouldn't want a male apprentice at all."

"Not as a formal apprentice. Just guide him a bit."

"That won't do, either. Though our guild's martial arts are diverse and lack a clear style, we don't take on just anyone as an apprentice," Travis said.

"I see. In that case, I'll have to refuse. Forget the money, then," Carissa said as she turned to leave.

Travis grabbed her shoulder firmly. "What money?"

"If you were going to guide him and also be his sparring partner, you must be compensated. The Earl of Silverstone's wife is known for being generous. I'd say you could earn three to five silver coins a month." Travis' eyes were suddenly filled with a compassionate warmth.

"To be honest, I don't take on just anyone as an apprentice, nor do I care much for that paltry amount of money. Three or five silver coins isn't much at all. But it seems there aren't many capable people in the Earl of Silverstone's family. I've heard that Oliver's martial arts are just average. If there isn't a rising talent, how could the title be passed on? Bring him to me. Three or five silver coins-it doesn't matter. Let's settle on five silver coins."

Carissa chuckled. "I shouldn't have bothered with the first part. I should have just mentioned the money directly."

Travis grinned "Come now, the

money is just a trivial matter. How vulgar would it be to just focus on that? Bring him over tonight and let me take a look. I'll test his limbs and muscles. Who knows, maybe he's a martial arts prodigy after all."

After learning more about the Lunar Guild, Zoey gained a deep respect for its leader. It was impressive that a woman had taken in so many orphans and raised them all so well-each of them upright and virtuous.

Chapter 1127

The next day, when Zoey arrived with her son, Cedric Prince, in tow, she mentioned the annual salary she intended to offer Travis-three hundred silver coins. Travis was fond of money, but even he knew he wasn't worth that much. He immediately tried to refuse.

"No, that's far too much. Sixty silver coins a year is already more than enough. Three hundred is too generous, and I wouldn't feel right accepting it."

No matter how Zoey insisted, he refused to take three hundred silver coins and stood firm on his demand for just sixty silver coins a year.

Zoey turned to Carissa, silently pleading for help in convincing him.

Carissa smiled warmly. "Sixty silver coins it is, then. Listen to Mr. Mullen. Whether it's sixty or three hundred, the teaching will be the same. This way, he won't have such a heavy burden on his conscience." Since Carissa had said so, Zoey could only express her deep gratitude. Whether it was for schooling or learning skills, Zoey had no objections to spending money-so long as it was within her means.

On the other hand, Travis thought that five silver coins a month were already quite a lot. Many common folks didn't even earn that much in an entire year.

Furthermore, he was merely offering guidance, not giving full lessons. After all, Cedric was already in his teenage years. It was a bit late for him to start learning martial arts, so his progress might not be remarkable.

As Zoey had said, Cedric was indeed diligent and well-behaved. Zoey had raised him well-he was polite, knew how to read the room, and called Travis "Sage Mullen". Cedric used Travis' surname as



it wasn't an official apprenticeship, and he also showed him the same respect one would expect of a true apprentice. He didn't show the arrogance one might expect from a noble's son.

On the first day Cedric trained with Travis, he only practiced basic physical conditioning.

In his youth, Cedric had practiced some martial arts, though his skills were disorganized and lacked any real foundation. He had no illusions about the difficulty of learning martial arts, so he steeled himself for the hard work ahead. No matter how challenging Travis' training was, he gritted his teeth and never complained.

Carissa sat nearby, sipping on coffee and watching.

The young man had a slender build and the appearance of a frail scholar, with features resembling his mother-gentle yet with an unmistakable air of determination.

Carissa couldn't understand why

Zoey had decided to send her son to

endure such hardship. She had heard rumors about Oliver's situation at the Southern Frontier and his involvement with Celeste. Afterall, Timothy, along with some others, were at the Southern

Frontier. They had been under

Hector's command and were now

under Rafael's. They still exchanged

letters.

However, no matter what was happening with Celeste, it wouldn't affect Zoey's position as the rightful wife, nor would it touch Cedric's position. Unless, of course, Oliver was planning to discard Zoey and marry Celeste instead. Even in that case, there seemed to be no reason to send a promising scholar to learn martial arts.

"He's not suited for martial arts," Rafael remarked, stepping up beside her and watching Cedric leap through the motions in the yard.

"I agree. I don't really understand why Madam Zoey would do this either," Carissa admitted.

Rafael offered his thoughts,

"Perhaps there's nothing to it, but

women often have some intuition or a sense of impending danger, especially when they know someone well. Madam Zoey is sharp, especially after the failed plot by Eleanor. She knows the mastermind is still out there. And what does a rebellion require? Soldiers. Marshal Prince commands soldiers. Frankly, I think she's just preparing for the worst."

The worst-case scenario was that even children wouldn't be spared when something happened.

Carissa felt a pang of sympathy for Zoey. She was such a clever and compassionate woman, capable of great schemes and kindness alike, yet she hadn't found the right partner.

Oliver likely wasn't plotting to rebel-he didn't have the power to command the Hell Monarch Army or the Sinclair Army. But even without raising an army, a few well-placed moves could cause significant damage. "What do you think of Marshal Prince?" Carissa asked.

Rafael thought for a moment and

said, "It's hard to say. He's not exactly evil, but he's far from good. He's not a fool-he has his moments of cleverness. But his flaws are many, and there are two that are particularly dangerous: his greed for power and his love for women. It's not that he has no loyalty to his country, but when it comes to personal gain or a beautiful woman, his sense of duty means nothing."

Carissa sighed. "It must be hard for Madam Zoey."

"It is," Rafael agreed with a nod, then glanced at her and added, "Especially now that her youngest sister-in-law has returned home, causing a stir about divorce."

Carissa had heard of it but hadn't paid much attention. Now that it was mentioned, she wasn't particularly interested.

"I see. Well, best not to concern ourselves with others' business," she said.

## Chapter 1128

Rafael didn't care much about other people's marital issues. He had only overheard the matter, and he casually mentioned it now that the topic had come up.

Cedric had been practicing for four full hours, not returning to Silverstone Estate until nearly late evening. For several days now, he hadn't complained about being tired or found his training dull. Sometimes, he would even recite his lessons while holding the horse stance. Carissa often watched him in disbelief, finding it hard to imagine that he was Oliver's son. Then again, remembering that he was Zoey's son, it seemed only natural.

At that moment, Jacob hurried over and announced, "Your Highness, the intelligence report is back. It hasn't been successful yet."

Rafael wasn't surprised and merely asked, "Was there someone secretly escorting them?"

"Yes, there were experts sent along the route. Three battles took place, but we didn't gain much."

Rafael's brow furrowed. "Were they suicide soldiers?"

"Based on their fighting style, they weren't. All of them were dressed as martial artists, but we couldn't discern their specific martial arts techniques." Carissa had been listening intently, and she didn't understand at first. As she pieced it together, she realized they had sent people to assassinate Wayne. "Then, those people can't be Yuwan's. My suspicions were correct-Wayne has backing. Yuwan is merely a pawn in someone's game," Rafael said. "Who could it be?" Jacob frowned. "Prince Harvey? That doesn't make sense."

It wasn't that Jacob underestimated Harvey, who was certainly ruthless. But in the past few years, he hadn't cultivated enough influence or power. He had only been assisting Eleanor and Yuwan with their schemes. A man who hadn't even managed to establish a household army, no matter how ruthless he was, could only strike from the shadows. He couldn't possibly take control of Yuwan's network, which had been built up over the years in Valken.

"Our people have yet to gain any ground. Are they continuing the pursuit?" Rafael asked.

"They're still on the trail, looking for another opportunity," Jacob responded.

Rafael gave a slight nod. "Then, keep pursuing. Whoever this is, they'll have to show themselves eventually. Yuvan's situation in the capital has changed, and it's only a matter of time before Wayne's backer makes their move."

Previously, Yuvan had been in the capital to tend to Ruth's illness, and his influence hadn't waned. Much of his power had still been in his hands, including the networks he had cultivated in Valken, his wealth, weapons, private army, and local officials.

But now, Wayne had returned to Valken with news of Yuvan's severe injuries. As long as they added a twist to the situation and tarnished Salvador's reputation, there would certainly be someone ready to rise. That person would be the one who had been lurking behind Yuvan all along.

Yuvan probably hadn't paid much attention to the person, thinking of them as merely a loyal follower.

"There's no rush," Rafael said, his gaze dark and focused, almost like a hunter lying in wait. "Scott, Wilfred, and Bruce have already moved on to Valken. Let's see what they uncover."

If power was to be shifted, there would certainly be complications. That person would undoubtedly emerge to take control.

"We can compile a list of officials in Valken and Stonebridge County, then analyze them one by one," Carissa said.

Rafael nodded. "It's unlikely to be any of the ordinary officials, but those serving as the deputy governors are worth looking into."

Suddenly remembering something, he added, "Also, the Ebonflow and Frostwater branches of the royal family."

"You're right," Jacob agreed.

A prince was generally not allowed

to leave his fief at will, but it was different for other distant relatives of the royal family who had lost most of their power over generations. The court no longer monitored them closely, allowing them the freedom to move around.

However, in certain regions, if one truly had the ambition to build power, they could do so-especially when they had private business and trade. Here, the court could hardly intervene. Sometimes, with wealth accumulated, new ideas would emerge.

And when the opportunity arose-such as encountering someone like Yuvan, who as the son of Augustus, still held significant power-they might think that they could achieve something by aligning with him.

#### Chapter 1129

Violet had been leaving early and returning late lately. Even before the sun was up, there would be no sign of her. Yet, without fail, she would return to Skye Embroidery for an hour or so.

The workshop had gained a new addition recently-Eliza Carter, a woman cast out of her home. Her brother had offered to take her back in, but her sister-in-law disagreed. Not wanting to cause trouble for her brother, Eliza had instead chosen to come to the workshop. The two of them worked on embroidery and shared quiet conversations, never speaking of the past, only of the future. Violet quite enjoyed this peaceful atmosphere. On her occasional visits, she found herself chatting with Leona while Alana and Leah were also around. Their relationships seemed to grow closer with each passing day. Zoey also came by and happened to run into Violet that day, so they chatted casually for a while.

Violet knew that Cedric was training under Travis, and said frankly, "He's diligent, but he lacks some natural talent. He's more suited to being a scholar."

Zoey wasn't bothered by it, and smiled. "No matter. I don't expect him to become a martial arts prodigy. I just want him to be strong enough so that if trouble ever comes, he won't be caught unprepared."

Her words, though light-hearted, struck Violet as oddly bitter.

If she thought about it, the concern was clear. The heir to a noble house would be well-guarded on the road. If he were traveling to visit relatives, he would be surrounded by attendants, guards, and servants in abundance. If he were to take the national examinations and be appointed as an official

in a distant land, the entourage would be just as grand. The noble heir would have little to worry about in terms of hardship or danger.

The only ones who could truly be under threat and endure suffering would be those exiled.

Though the Earl of Silverstone's family was no longer at the height of its power, it still held a prominent position-so why did Zoey seem to worry about such things?

Just as Violet was about to ask, Jane quickly entered. Not caring that Violet was present, Jane hurriedly reported, "Madam Zoey, Madam Luna sent someone to summon you. She asks that you return to the manor quickly. Madam Viola has tried to commit suicide!" Zoey shot to her feet. "Why? Was she saved?"

"She was saved... but... let's talk as we go."

Jane knew that family matters were not to be aired outside. In her panic, she had spoken hastily. Now, the details couldn't be shared publicly.

Violet craned her neck, eager to hear why Viola had taken her own life. When she saw that no one was speaking, a sense of disappointment settled over her.

Zoey soon reached the workshop's entrance and saw that Luna's maid, Maya, was already waiting. The three of them climbed into the carriage together.

"Madam Zoey, Madam Evelyn hasn't

been feeling well these past few days," Maya explained. "Madam

Viola decided to buy some Snowdrop Pills for her. She knows these pills are rare, expensive, and usually not sold. So, she went to Arcane Sanctum herself

"Unexpectedly, she ran into Mr. Silas Lewis. When she found out the Snowdrop Pills were unavailable, she begged him for help. She even cried in front of him, telling him about her difficulties.

"Mr. Lewis' wife, who had come with

food, saw this and caused a scene. She accused Madam Viola of past impropriety with Mr. Lewis. Many people heard their argument, and Madam Viola was so ashamed that she went back and hanged herself."

Zoey listened, her hands suddenly cold. She could hardly believe what she was hearing.

She had been arranging a suitable match for her daughter, hoping to settle the marriage soon. With this scandal, how could she possibly continue with it? Her whole body shook with anger.

"With all the servants in this house, why did she need to go out and buy medicine for Mother? If it was necessary to get Snowdrop Pills, she could have sent Luna! Why go to Mr. Lewis? Doesn't she have any shame? She should have turned and left as soon as she saw him. And she's still not divorced, for heaven's

sake!"

Jane hurriedly comforted Zoey, rubbing her back. "Madam Zoey, being angry now won't help. The matter's already out in the open. We need to think about what to do next."

"Do? What can we do?!" Zoey's voice was cold. "The rumors among the common folk spread like water. Within a day, this will be all over the city!"

Zoey felt a chill spread through her heart. She had worked so hard to keep everything hidden and covered for Viola, only for her to expose it all herself.