

War Song 1151

Chapter 1151

However, the report from Silverstone Estate's steward Bernard struck Zoey as strange.

The properties she had sold had quickly been taken over by someone, and the price they paid was quite high-higher than the market rate by a good 20 percent.

Zoey had managed the household for many years, overseeing property transactions several times. Typically, deals followed market trends, with a property or two occasionally sold for a bit more. But recently, every property she had sold had been at prices well above what

was normal.

It left her feeling uneasy.

She even wondered if Carissa had found out she was selling her property and thought she was desperate for money, and so offered a high price.

Zoey asked the steward for the sale agreements. When she saw the buyer's name-Yves Gardner-she didn't recognize it.

"Does Hell Monarch Estate have a steward with that name?" Zoey asked Bernard.

"I've never heard of the name," Bernard replied.

"Then what's the deal with this buyer?" Zoey asked, a bit concerned. The price was much higher than usual, and she feared there might be some hidden risks in selling her property.

After a moment's thought, she remembered that all the sales had been handled with proper documentation-the contracts had proper signatures and seals, were registered, and witnessed by officials. Everything was legal and above board. What could go wrong? "Forget it, then. Don't worry about it. Don't sell anymore for the time being, though. I don't want to draw attention from Mother," Zoey said.

She had kept the property sales a secret from Evelyn, even from Caspian and Luna. They didn't manage the household and wouldn't concern themselves with such things. If they found out, she would explain it to them then. After all, she wasn't just thinking of herself. Still, she couldn't completely shake off the mystery surrounding the buyer. Later, when Carissa came to visit, Zoey casually asked, "Do you happen to know anyone named Yves Gardner?"

Carissa lifted her gaze and thought for a moment. "Yves Gardner? The Gardner surname is rare in the capital. Did he offend you somehow?"

Zoey shook her head. "Not exactly. I was just wondering. I sold a rather out-of-the-way shop recently, and he was the buyer. But his offer was 20 percent higher than the going rate." Carissa smiled. "Well, isn't that a good thing? You got a bargain."

"I thought so at first, but then it seemed odd. With the market the way it is, anyone could easily find out. Plus, he set the price himself-it just doesn't add up." Carissa laughed softly. "As long as it's a legitimate transaction, it doesn't matter if the price is higher than market value. Consider it a good deal for you."

Zoey was certain that Carissa knew

Yves, because she didn't answer directly when asked about him.

Instead, she had skillfully avoided

the question. From what Zoey knew of her she was straightforward-if she knew someone, she would say

so If not, she would simply say no.

So, Zoey instinctively believed that Yves must be someone from the Hell Monarch's household. Perhaps Carissa had learned of her selling the shop and, thinking she needed money, had bought it for a higher price out of kindness. After a moment of hesitation, unsure whether to accept the offer or address it directly, Zoey decided to speak up.

"Your Grace, the shop should be sold for whatever it's worth-no more, no less. I can't take advantage of your generosity. Let's stick to the market price."

Carissa had already done so much for her, and Zoey couldn't bring herself to take advantage of her any further.

Carissa merely smiled. "You've misunderstood, Madam Zoey. My household didn't buy the shop."

"But you know Mr. Gardner, don't you?" Zoey pressed.

Carissa, who was always good at reading people, realized she had slipped up—mainly because she hadn't expected Zoey to mention Yves.

"I know him," Carissa admitted. "He's my senior guild member and fourth apprentice in the guild, but I didn't know he bought the shop. In fact, I didn't even know he was in the capital. He hasn't been to Hell Monarch Estate."

Zoey's eyes widened in surprise.

"He's your senior guild member? In

that case, could you arrange for me to meet him? The price is far too high. My estate's steward should have known better. Since I know about it now, I can't just take

advantage of your kindness.

"I told you," Carissa replied, "Yves didn't tell me he was in the capital. I don't even know where he is. But he's a smart man. He wouldn't pay a high price unless he thought the shop was truly worth it. I'm sure that's why he offered that amount."

At this point, Carissa had already

figured out what had happened—the

shop had been bought by Isaac but under Yves' name. She held back and decided not to ask Zoey about Isaac for now. Jacob and Luke were already looking into the matter, so it was better to wait and see.

Chapter 1152

After Jacob and Luke's investigation, they learned that the situation wasn't as simple as it first appeared.

According to Kyle, Adrian's initial investigation showed that David had believed Isaac brought him good fortune, but it cost him his health. Despite seeking treatment from many renowned physicians in the capital, none could cure Isaac. Eventually, he was sent to a temple for healing. This suggested that David did care for the child, as a dad would, and it was common for the youngest child to receive the most affection.

However, based on what Luke had learned from the elderly stewards and servants working for the Earl of Silverstone's extended family, David in truth despised Isaac deeply. The servants couldn't recall his attitude at the very beginning, but it was clear David had treated Isaac poorly over time. They even gave examples of such situations.

During Vincent's birthday celebration, Isaac—who was then called Seraphina—was carried into the banquet by Vincent himself. At that time, Vincent's health had greatly improved, and he was full of energy. But afterward, David had dragged Isaac out. He claimed Isaac had tired Vincent, and had given Isaac ten hard strikes on the palm.

These things were likely unknown to the masters of the house, but the servants had witnessed them.

Another time, Vincent took Isaac hunting, and they caught a white fox. The fox fur had been given to Isaac. But later on, it was Viola who wore it.

There were many other small incidents where David showed clear signs of dislike toward Isaac. Many servants had witnessed them, including those who shared these details with Luke.

At that time, the family hadn't been split up, and they all lived together at Silverstone Estate. David wasn't one to hide his emotions and his disdain often showed on his face, though he wasn't always aware of it.

There was another thing. When it came to treating Isaac's illness, Vincent had called for the physicians. However, the herbs were often subtly changed when the medicine was being prepared.

David told the servants who handled the medicine that Sebastian had provided the herbs, claiming they were of better quality than those from the physicians Vincent had hired. He also claimed that he privately made these changes to avoid upsetting Vincent.

Furthermore, Vincent initially strongly opposed sending Isaac to the temple, believing the charlatan priest had no real skill. Yet after meeting with the priest a few times and hearing him reveal many private matters, Vincent became convinced of the man's abilities. Some servants, however, had overheard that David deliberately disclosed these secrets to make the charlatan priest appear knowledgeable.

Thus, the charlatan priest's supposed divine insight was little more than cheating. He already knew the answers in advance.

So, David didn't like his youngest son

and may have even hated the boy. The supposed treatments for Isaac's illness, which went on for years without improvement, were likely prolonged by David's manipulation of the medicine to ensure no real recovery.

Given David's strong belief in fate, it was easy to imagine that when he was named heir and Vincent was seriously ill, he assumed he would inherit the title any day. What he didn't expect was for Vincent to recover.

With few significant accomplishments to his name and only trivial duties assigned to him, David became increasingly desperate to secure the title.

From what they could tell, David believed that Isaac had brought good luck to Vincent and that this was the Reason Vincent's health had been steadily improving. So, the only way to weaken Vincent's luck was to send Isaac away and sever his influence.

However, to send Isaac away, David needed Vincent's approval. After all, David worked with the charlatan priest, and they still needed to get money from the old man each year.

From this, two conclusions could be drawn. First, Adrian's investigation was flawed-either he only scratched the surface, or was outright deceived by David.

Second, Adrian may have discovered the truth but chose to spare Isaac the pain of knowing.

With the investigation now clear, a new dilemma arose should they tell Isaac? And did Evelyn know the full truth of the matter?

Carissa and the rest discussed it

briefly and agreed that Evelyn likely had no idea if she had known, she would not have gone to visit Isaac. The temple was not far from the capital but it wasn't a short journey either. A woman of her standing would not trek through the

mountains and valleys just to check

if a child was dead.

Of course, it was also possible that Vincent had been worried about the situation and had sent her to check.

As they debated whether or not to reveal everything to Isaac, Violet suddenly burst in, her face a picture of urgency. "Shh, don't say another word! He's standing right outside listening." Carissa froze for a moment, then sprang to her feet and ran outside. Sure enough, Isaac was standing casually at the door to the council hall, his demeanor nonchalant as ever.

With a wide grin, he said, "Thank you for figuring all of this out, Cari. But honestly, aside from the name, I don't care about anything else."

With that, he turned around. He waved a hand dismissively as he walked off, exuding a carefree, almost reckless charm.

"Don't waste your time looking further into this just go back to whatever you were doing."

Chapter 1153

Kyle chased after Isaac, calling out as he caught up.

Isaac waved him off, continuing to walk ahead. "Don't say anything. It's not worth mentioning."

"Isaac, this is just our guess. It might not be true," Kyle said, knowing his younger guild member well. Isaac never spoke of his discomfort but would always seek solitude when troubled.

"It's fine, really. I'll just go have a drink," Isaac replied with a grin. "It's rare that the autumn wind is blowing, and the weather's perfect. A drink is what's needed-preferably with some beautiful company."

Violet stepped forward and grabbed his wrist. "Come on, let's go drink then."

It was only now that Violet realized Isaac wasn't the child of a concubine. Evelyn was his mom, and he had the same parents as Oliver and Viola.

"The place I'm going isn't appropriate for you," Isaac said, not wanting Violet to follow.

Violet ignored him and kept a tight grip on his arm. "I'll settle the bill for you."

"I have money. You don't need to follow me," Isaac snapped, suddenly sharp and biting. "Do you think I'm that poor? You want to take care of my drinking and amusements? I'd rather you stop dwelling on that life-saving favor you think you owe me. Honestly, I'm so tired of women like you-you don't even know how annoying you are."

Violet wasn't upset in the least. Instead, she smiled cheerfully. "So, women are annoying? What about men?"

Isaac shot her a sour look. "They're all just as annoying."

"Then I'll take you riding. No men, no women. Just us and the open air," Violet said, pulling him toward the stables. "The wind is so fresh-when you ride into it, it feels like everything just blows away." "No!"

"Yes!" Violet insisted, her tone turning sharp. "If you're not going to ride, then you're coming to drink. Either way, you have to come with me I'm not in a good mood."

They continued walking, their voices fading as Violet tugged Isaac along, getting her way in the end.

Carissa's shoulders slumped, and a heaviness settled in her chest.

How did it come to this? Adrian must have known the truth long ago, but chose the lies because they were easier to bear. Why did they have to make such a fuss? What was even there to investigate?

No one said a word. Whether the investigation was good or bad, no one had the right to judge.

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Violet and Isaac were drinking at the Glimmering Tower, a few wine bottles already emptied. The shopkeeper had come to check on them. Seeing Isaac start to slur his words, the shopkeeper refused to serve him any more alcohol.

money, huh?

"Do

you think i'm out of Why won't you bring me more wine?" Isaac said, fuming, his face flushed. Stumbling to his feet, he pulled out a thick stack of property deeds from his chest. "I've got money! Plenty of money!"

Violet was also tipsy, and she giggled as she bent down to pick up the scattered deeds. "What are you buying all these properties for? Planning to settle down in the capital? Aren't you going back to Meadow Ridge?" Isaac raised a hand to tilt her chin, his eyes bloodshot, reeking of alcohol. "Meadow Ridge is my home. There's no one for me here in the capital except my little martial sister. I don't have any other relatives."

He collapsed backward, hitting the floor with a dull thud, the world spinning around him. Mumbling to himself, he said, "I'm such a fool. Spent all that money on these useless properties."

"It's my

fault. How could I be so

blind? Everything was so obviously wrong. Their son was gravely ill, and instead of getting proper medical

help, they let some stranger take

him hundreds of miles into the mountains. It's all my fault. Sage Adrian knew the truth all along. It's no wonder he wouldn't let me come back to find them. He knew everything. He just made up a story that wasn't quite as cruel."

Isaac slammed his fist against the floor in frustration.

Violet held her forehead, her eyes filled with pity as she watched Isaac, usually so carefree and unburdened, now caught in his tangled thoughts. She couldn't bear to watch him suffer like this. Without a second thought, she grabbed his arm.

"Come on, we're going to Silverstone

Estate. Your dad's a scoundrel, but your mom's betting she was kept in the dark. Now that we know everything, let's clear things up. If she knew, then you can tear into her. If she didn't, she must still be troubled by what happened to you. You've always been carefree, Isaac, so stop hesitating. Go ask her yourself."

Isaac tried to push himself up, but his limbs were uncooperative. He turned away, weak and unsteady, before finally managing to crawl to his feet.

"You're right," he muttered. "Let's go. I can't curse the dead, but what's stopping me from cursing the living?"

Chapter 1154

Before long, the two drunken figures arrived at Silverstone Estate. Knowing Violet's status, the gate was opened for them even at this late hour. Since Zoey was still recovering, a servant went to inform Caspian and Luna.

Both Caspian and Luna were surprised. What could Violet want at this hour?

"She brought a man with her? Who is this man?" Caspian asked, confused.

The gatekeeper hesitated before answering, "I've never seen him before, Mr. Caspian. His attitude isn't the best-he came in looking around and even kicked over two chairs. He was muttering about being treated unfairly and how someone had gone too far." Caspian frowned. "Is he here to cause trouble? Could it be someone Viola offended?"

Caspian had grown wary. Whenever trouble came knocking, his first thought was always that Viola had something to do with it.

"I don't think so," the gatekeeper said. After a moment of hesitation, he cautiously added, "He was cursing Madam Evelyn and...and the late master."

Caspian, being a dutiful son, was furious at the thought of anyone cursing his deceased dad and sickly mother. Without a second thought, he stood up and snapped, "Let's go. I'll see who dares to make a scene in our home."

Caspian believed that the deceased should be respected above all else. Only a person of poor character would speak ill of the dead. Furious, he stormed off with Luna.

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When Isaac had kicked over the chairs, someone had already gone to report to Zoey.

Everyone knew that when things got out of hand, it was the lady of the household who could keep things under control. While Caspian was an official, he was gentle by nature and wouldn't be able to control a drunken man in such a rage.

When Zoey heard that it was Violet who had brought the troublemaker and that the man had been insulting her deceased father-in-law and her ill mother-in-law, she immediately rose. She quickly threw on a robe and tidied her appearance, then made her way out with Jane's help.

Her health had improved, though she still felt a bit weak. The autumn wind was sharp, but as she walked briskly, the cool air seemed to refresh her, making her feel more energized.

When she reached the main hall, she found her usually calm brother-in-law's face darkened with fury, pointing at the cursing man.

"Enough!" Caspian shouted. "How dare you speak like that about my dad? Do you have any respect at all?"

The moment Caspian said those words, Isaac grabbed the front of his shirt, his fist poised to strike.

Zoey's voice rang out urgently, "Hold on!"

When Isaac heard Zoey's voice, his fist clenched for a moment, but then he finally relaxed his hand and shoved Caspian aside.

Caspian stumbled, nearly losing his balance, but Luna quickly caught him.

Throughout the scene, Violet remained silent, watching with bleary eyes from her armchair. When Zoey entered, Violet finally stirred. She rose unsteadily to her feet and gave a tipsy bow. "Madam Zoey, my apologies," she said, her words slurring slightly.

Zoey knew that Violet wasn't someone prone to recklessness or lacking in discretion. If she had brought the man here to stir up trouble tonight, there had to be a reason behind it.

Zoey studied Isaac carefully with

narrowed eyes—he seemed vaguely familiar. However, his disheveled state, with flushed cheeks and tousled hair, made it harder to place him. His eyes, wild and almost manic, were unsettling.

But then again, maybe she hadn't seen him before.

"Madam Zoey, this is Isaac Prince-Cari's senior guild member and fifth apprentice in Pathfinders Guild," Violet explained, her tone direct. "He's here to see Madam Evelyn. Would you kindly take him to meet her?"

Zoey immediately thought of Yves, the man who had bought her shop. Yves was Carissa's senior guild member and the fourth apprentice of the Pathfinders Guild, and this man was the fifth.

Was there an issue with the property deals? Had Bernard deceived him, overcharging him because he was an outsider and intentionally taking advantage of him?

With that thought in mind, Zoey said, "There's no need to involve Mother. Tell me what's going on. I can handle it."

Isaac collapsed into the chair beside Violet, breathing unevenly. His eyes scanned the main hall, the outer courtyard he recognized them all t had been nearly 20 years since he had been here, but he always had an exceptional memory. He

remembered more than just the surroundings. He also remembered Caspian. However, the most vivid memory was of his grandfather-but the old man was gone now.

Isaac had been born here, and now, nearly two decades later, walking back into the place felt like stepping into a past that no longer cared for him. There was no warmth, no laughter-only the cold, watchful eyes of strangers. The weight of that rejection hit him like a crashing wave, pushing all his frustrations and bitterness to the surface.

His head spun, and he felt miserable. The urge to vomit rose, but he fought to lift his gaze to Zoey. His eyes were bloodshot and dark with pain.

"You can handle it, huh?" Isaac spat bitterly. "Then go ask her-why was she so heartless? Why would she abandon her own son without a second thought?"

Chapter 1155

Caspian pointed an accusing finger at Isaac and shouted angrily, "What nonsense are you spouting? When has my mom ever abandoned her son? My brother and I are both fine!" "You all are fine, but what about me?!" Isaac yelled, his voice cracking with fury.

He had put too much force behind the shout, and his stomach and throat reacted painfully. Clutching his stomach, he crouched down, using all his strength to hold back the swirling alcohol in his gut.

Caspian stood there, stunned for a moment, as if the words hadn't fully registered. Then, as though something had clicked into place, his eyes widened in disbelief. He stared at Isaac, his face pale with shock.

Zoey suddenly recalled something from the past. It was something she had learned when she first entered the family-Evelyn had borne three sons.

The youngest had fallen ill, and no matter how hard they tried, the child didn't recover. He was sent to a temple to be cared for, but a fire broke out and the boy perished in the flames.

Zoey's heart thudded in her chest. Could it be? Could the boy have survived the fire?

"What's your name?" Caspian asked, his voice choked with emotion. His lips trembled uncontrollably as he looked desperately at Isaac.

Isaac held his stomach as he slumped back into the chair, clearly exhausted. Even his voice was barely a whisper. "Ask her... Go and ask her..."

Zoey took a step forward, her own emotions rising.

"I remember now," she said. "I've seen you. You've walked around the estate's entrance several times."

Isaac didn't respond, and Zoey turned to Violet for answers. Violet didn't meet her gaze and instead stared at Isaac.

"Isaac Prince, since you're here, you might as well clear things up. Tell them the truth. Tell them you were once named Seraphina Prince, and you were raised as a girl since you were young. At five years old, you were abandoned at a temple. You were left to suffer, and you almost died from the torture after a few months before being thrown out. Your mentor found you and saved your life. You didn't do anything wrong-they did. You deserve an explanation."

Caspian felt as if he had been struck by lightning. He froze, his entire body stiff, his eyes wide and unblinking.

Then, with a strangled cry, he lunged forward, throwing himself at Isaac. He wrapped his arms around Isaac, crying out with a raw, heart-wrenching wail that echoed with a grief he had never felt before. "Seraphina... You're alive! You're not dead!"

Caspian didn't even wait for a confirmation. He clung to Isaac and sobbed uncontrollably.

Caspian couldn't bring himself to tell them that after the death of his brother, he had dreamed of the boy returning countless times. The.

dreams felt so real, but when Caspian woke, it

to the

crushing emptiness of loss. belongs to

Isaac tried to push him away, but Caspian clung to him with all his strength, refusing to let go. No matter how much Isaac struggled he couldn't break free. The sound of Caspian's sobbing was unbearable, echoing in his ears like an incessant noise.

Isaac grimaced, feeling his frustration start to fade. Somehow, things didn't seem as overwhelming anymore. It was as if, at that moment, he realized there was someone in this family who truly cared for him. Zoey's eyes welled up with tears, her hands trembling as she grasped Jane's firmly. Her voice was barely controlled, wavering with urgency.

"Quick, go help Mother and bring her out here. Don't tell her yet-she might get too upset and fall."

Since Viola's incident, Evelyn's health had worsened. She didn't stay in bed all the time, but her spirits were low. She had no desire to leave the comfort of her chambers, not even to step out into the courtyard. When Jane came to fetch her, Evelyn was already in a sullen mood. "No matter who the guest is, tell Zoey to handle them. I won't go."

"Madam Evelyn, Madam Zoey insists that you come. You must go, even if just for a moment," Jane insisted.

Evelyn's brow twitched, and her heart skipped a beat. "Has something happened with Viola again?"

The mere thought of another scandal made her heart race. She couldn't bear to hear more of it.

"No, it has nothing to do with Madam Viola," Jane reassured her quickly.

"Don't lie to me!" Evelyn gasped, clutching her chest. Her breath grew shallow, panic spreading through her. She was too afraid already.

Just then, Evelyn's maid Rosie hurried over to support her. She turned to Jane and asked, "What's going on at this hour? Who's here? Can't Madam Zoey handle it herself? Why must Madam Evelyn go out?"

Jane knew she couldn't hide the

truth. "Ms. Spencer brought a man with her. He's drunk, and he's demanding an explanation from Madam Evelyn. He wants to know why she abandoned him all those years ago. And now, Mr. Caspian is holding him and crying, calling him Seraphina."

Evelyn suddenly gripped Jane's hands tightly. She gasped for air, her body swaying as if she might collapse.

With a hoarse cry, she ordered, "Quickly, take me to him!"

Chapter 1156

It was as if some unseen force had taken hold of Evelyn. Despite her unsteady steps, she suddenly moved with surprising speed, leaving Jane and Rosie struggling to keep up.

Evelyn could hear nothing but the rush of her heartbeat. Before her, the courtyard faded away. What remained was the vision that had burned in her heart for years the blazing fire and the haunting screams that filled the air. Back then, people had dragged and pulled her, and she could do nothing but watch helplessly as the fire devoured everything.

Her youngest son-gone, consumed by those flames.

They had pulled out so many bodies, and yet, she couldn't tell which one was his.

She had cried until she lost consciousness, over and over. However, never had she dared to think or hope that perhaps, just perhaps, her son had survived.

He had been so weak and sickly, barely able to walk without help. How could he have escaped that inferno?

As Evelyn reached the main courtyard, there was only one figure she could see-the rest was a blur. Tears kept falling, clouding her vision, and she walked towards that faint, indistinct shape.

Her head tilted slightly, her voice weak and uncertain. "Are you my son?"

Isaac recognized her; deep down, he was angrier at her more than anyone else. Upon seeing the tears streaming down her face, something in his chest twisted with an unfamiliar pain.

He stood still, unable to speak or move.

"Mom, it's Seraphina!" Caspian cried out beside him, his voice cracking with emotion.

Evelyn's cry was raw, almost unbearable, as she collapsed into Isaac's arms. The past surged back like a dark, suffocating wave, and her heart felt as though it had been torn open. All the pain she had buried for so long exploded in one desperate shout: "You didn't die!"

Her hot tears soaked through Isaac's shoulder. At first, he remained unmoved, but slowly, his tears began to fall.

But soon enough, he pulled away from Evelyn, his voice flat and cold. "Who are you trying to fool, madam? It was you all who sent me to that hellish place. I should have died there, but my benefactor saved me. I'm no longer Seraphina. My name is Isaac." "No..." Evelyn reached out, pulling him back into her embrace. "I didn't know. I didn't know any of it..."

Overwhelmed by the weight of her grief and joy, Evelyn collapsed, fainting in Isaac's arms.

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The soft glow of a few lamps illuminated Evelyn's room, their light gently filtered through delicate glass shades.

Evelyn only allowed Zoey and Isaac to stay by her side, sending all the servants away. Even Caspian and Luna weren't allowed inside.

Caspian sat on the cool stone steps,

the wind blowing and the lamp casting faint shadows. The night was deep, and the air damp and heavy. The lights seemed to be wrapped in mist, making everything feel unreal.

Caspian muttered to Luna, "My dear, am I dreaming?"

Luna took his hand, her voice hoarse as she whispered, "It's real. It's not a dream."

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After talking for a while with Zoey, Violet told her everything she knew. Then, she made it clear that they needed to sort things out on their own. She was exhausted and needed rest.

Inside Evelyn's room, she hadn't

released Isaac's hand since she

woke up. Her eyes stayed locked on him, gazing at him with an intensity that deepened with every passing moment, a growing pain in her heart. Her voice cracked as she spoke.

"You really look like your uncle."

Isaac didn't resemble Caspian or Oliver much. Instead, he took after Evelyn's brother, who was long gone.

Isaac still felt uneasy, but looking at Evelyn, he didn't get the sense that she was about to abandon him. There seemed to be more to the story, and he was willing to listen.

Violet was right—if there were grievances, they needed to be aired. Why should he suffer in silence?

"Mother, what really happened back then? Is it as Ms. Spencer said?" Zoey asked.

"I called you here because I want to tell you the whole truth. Originally, I planned to take this secret to the grave and explain it to Seraphina the afterlife when I passed. But I since he's still alive, there's no

reason to keep it from you. Once I've told you, I can die in peace," Evelyn replied.

There was a cold, hard glint in Evelyn's eyes-a look Zoey had never seen before.

Chapter 1157

Zoey helped Evelyn drink the herbal soup, then sat down with Isaac to listen to what she had to say.

"Back then, I was deceived," Evelyn began. "I thought the priest, Reverend Lazarus, told David that Seraphina would bring him good luck. At the time, David seemed to care for Seraphina deeply. When Seraphina fell ill, that man was more anxious than anyone and ran around looking for physicians and treatments. But Seraphina's condition only got worse. By the time he turned five, he could barely get out of bed."

Evelyn's voice faltered, the pain of those memories still raw in her chest.

"Reverend Lazarus said that if we didn't do something, Seraphina wouldn't last a month. He advised sending him to the temple at Gravelstone Peak and praying for the gods' blessing, giving him a chance to live past 18. Once Seraphina made it past that age, his life would be smooth sailing from then on."

"Your grandfather disagreed. He thought it was all nonsense. But then David brought Reverend Lazarus to meet him. I don't know what they said, but your grandfather agreed after some discussion. He even started paying the priest three thousand silver coins every year, saying it was for some kind of blessing or ritual to protect your life."

Evelyn suddenly raised her voice, becoming fierce.

"Those were all lies! He lied to me, your grandfather, and everyone! The truth is that the so-called priest told him that Seraphina was the one keeping your grandfather alive. As long as Seraphina didn't die, David couldn't inherit the title, and he might even die young. "He plotted against Seraphina and swapped out the medicine the physicians gave him. Some of it had poison, some of it had ingredients that canceled each other out, and some of it weakened Seraphina's heart and drained his strength. That was why Seraphina's health got worse."

Her breath was ragged, her eyes filled with nothing but hatred.

"How did I find out? After the fire, Reverend Lazarus came looking for David. They talked in the study for a long time, but they didn't realize I was right outside the door, listening to every word. David was wrong to do this to my child, wrong-he should never have done this!"

Evelyn clenched her fists tightly, her chin lifted slightly as her entire body tensed, still as rigid with fury as the day she had learned the truth. Even now, with the man long dead, her hatred hadn't faded.

Seeing the intensity of Evelyn's anger, Zoey suddenly thought of something. She stared at Evelyn in disbelief. "Then... Father's death?"

"It was me," Evelyn said coldly, her eyes gleaming with an icy resolve. There was no hesitation in her voice.

"He killed my son, so he had to die. I knew the methods he used to harm my child-after that, every bowl of soup he drank was laced with a slow-acting poison. It wasn't enough to kill him right away. He grew weaker, and his body slowly fell apart. In the end, he was bedridden, and he was never able to inherit the title."

Zoey and Isaac were both deeply shocked. Murdering one's husband was a grave crime.

Isaac stared at the fragile woman before him, disbelief clouding his expression. He couldn't quite accept her words as the truth.

On the other hand, Zoey was more conflicted.

Evelyn had always been unconditionally devoted to her children. To her, they were everything her heart and soul. Even when Viola had caused so much trouble, her heart had never truly given up on her.

Evelyn took a few deep breaths, as though struggling to gather her composure.

"In the end, your grandfather found out what David had done. That was when he confirmed the heir and refused to let David inherit the title. David didn't get what he wanted. That was his punishment- he never got the title, not even until his death."

Tears welled in her eyes as she spoke, her voice breaking. She looked at Isaac with an unbearable sorrow in her eyes.

"I watched him die. In the end, I told him I was the one who poisoned him. He wanted to tear me apart, but there was nothing he could do. But my child...he would never come back."

Evelyn gripped Isaac's hand tightly, sobbing uncontrollably. "I never thought you were alive... I failed you. I didn't protect you well enough. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry..."

Zoey watched Evelyn's anguished

tears, her heart aching. When she had first entered the family, her father-in-law was still alive, though in poor health. For the longest time, she believed her in-laws had a loving relationship. She had thought her father-in-law to be a good man.

But this... This was worse than she could have imagined! A father who would harm his child? Even a beast would never do such a thing.

Yet, Zoey couldn't help but wonder- given Evelyn's character, was it truly possible for her to have killed her husband?

Isaac's emotions were a tangled mess. He felt sorrow, but not the overwhelming grief he had felt earlier upon learning the truth. After all, he had discovered that there were people who cared for him.

However, he couldn't bring himself

to call Evelyn "Mom". The bond had died in his heart a long time ago. At least, every time he thought about it, he reminded himself that his only family was his mentor and the other apprentices in Pathfinders Guild.

He had no other family or kin.

Chapter 1158

Evelyn was still lost in her overwhelming mix of joy and sorrow. She clung to Isaac's sleeve, her gaze greedy as if she couldn't seem to get enough of him. Her tears never stopped.

"Can you forgive me, son? I truly didn't know... I've avenged you, I swear. Please, forgive me, won't you?"

Isaac was silent for a long moment before he finally shook his head.

"Madam Prince, Seraphina is dead. However, he didn't die in that fire. Not long after he was sent to Gravelstone Peak, he was tortured to death. Reverend Lazarus made him do backbreaking work, and he was beaten and abused. In the end, he was left to die. He was thrown out like garbage and devoured by wolves."

"That's impossible!" Evelyn's eyes widened in disbelief. "You admitted it before, so why are you telling me something different now? You're still angry at me, aren't you?"

Isaac pulled his hand back, his expression becoming calm. "I was a novice priest at the temple, the same as him. I was close to him, so I know what happened to him. But I'm not him."

"Look at your face..."

"Mother!" Zoey's quick mind seized the moment. "He's just my brother-in-law's friend. He's not my brother-in-law."

Evelyn looked at Zoey in confusion. But he was Seraphina!

Zoey turned to Isaac. "You should go for now. I'll come find you in a couple of days."

"You can't leave! You can't!" Evelyn desperately tried to hold onto Isaac, but Isaac had already stood and was walking away.

"Mother." Zoey gently pressed her hand on Evelyn's shoulder. "Don't force it. You know he's alive. Isn't that enough? You don't know what he's been through, or if he's holding a grudge. If you feel

guilty, make it up to him. Transfer most of the family's assets to him. With time, he'll come around, and one day, he'll let it all go.

"The past can't be changed, and the dead can't be brought back to life. But as long as you know he's alive, even if you don't acknowledge each other, what's the problem? Isn't that better than thinking he was dead?"

Evelyn seemed to snap back to reality. "Right. I will make it up to him. If you're willing to agree, that would be even better."

Zoey agreed, of course. In fact, it would be best if everything were given to Isaac.

Zoey glanced at Evelyn, a lingering sense of unease gnawing at her. She couldn't shake the feeling that the older woman wasn't telling the whole truth.

Zoey had no intention of allowing Isaac to claim his heritage. He had never known the privileges of the Earl of Silverstone's family, so why should he bear the burdens of it in the future?

No, he shouldn't ever have to.

Relief finally washed over Zoey. As

long as Isaac didn't claim the title, there was still hope for the future. He was a member of the Pathfinders Guild, and she trusted them. By passing everything over to Isaac, she ensured that if disaster ever struck, at least the children of the family would have a roof over

their heads and food to eat.

After leaving Evelyn, Zoey sought out Caspian and Luna. There had been many things she hadn't told them before, but now, it was time.

"When Oliver went to the Southern

Frontier," Zoey began, her voice steady but serious, "I sent some people with him. They report back to me on his situation-who he's been in contact with, and what he's done. From what I know so far, he's become involved with a traitor.

"This woman was innocent, but she foolishly aligned herself with the guilty. Once they make their move, Oliver will be held accountable and we will get dragged into it too.

"I don't know what will become of our family, but it will definitely be in turmoil. So, I cannot allow Isaac to be brought into this. Remember, Seraphina Prince is dead. The person who came tonight is merely his friend." Caspian and Luna were stunned, their faces ashen.

"Can we not talk Oliver out of it?" Caspian asked, his voice filled with desperation. "We can ask him to cut ties with whoever it is before it's too late."

Zoey's expression darkened. "I've

met

already tried. had someone warn him, but he refused to listen. That woman, She's carrying his child now, and he's obsessed with her." Just recently, I received a letter from him saying he plans to take her as

his rightful wife."

"What?!" Caspian jumped to his feet, fury evident in his features. "How could he? I'll go to the Southern Frontier myself and knock some sense into him!"

"Don't be rash. You can't go to the Southern Frontier," Zoey intervened sharply. "Be reasonable. After he sent me a letter about that, I stopped all communication with him. I haven't sent him any more letters or money." Caspian and Luna were surprised that Zoey had already thought this through so thoroughly. No wonder she had seemed so troubled lately.

Chapter 1159

Isaac and Violet walked side by side along the wide street, leading their horses. The night breeze was gentle, clearing away the last remnants of the alcohol from the evening.

"I was impulsive tonight," Violet admitted with a hint of regret. "I shouldn't have dragged you there."

"It's fine," Isaac replied.

"What's going through your mind? Are you planning to acknowledge them?"

"No." Isaac smiled, his expression becoming noticeably more relaxed. "She invited me and Madam Zoey inside, and talked for a long time. But not once did she ask me how I've been these years. Not once did she ask how I was after being taken away. She was just explaining and trying to clear her name."

"Is that so?"

Isaac ran a hand through his slightly disheveled hair, his carefree demeanor returning.

"I remember my first time leaving the mountain. I was away for a month, and when I came back, Sage Adrian and Sage Everett surrounded me. They asked me a lot of stuff-what I ate, who I met, what inns I stayed at, whether I got into any fights, if anyone tricked me out of money, what sights I saw, among other things."

"My mentor's the same," Violet nodded in agreement. "That's normal."

"Exactly," Isaac chuckled. "I've been surrounded by love since I was a child. I've always had a family."

Violet was unsure of how Isaac truly felt, but he seemed alright. "So, you've made peace with it?"

Isaac nodded, a faint smile tugging at his lips. "Made peace? Yeah, I guess. It's not all good, but it's not all bad either. No need for reconciliation, but there's no reason for hatred either."

Perhaps Isaac should be moved by the fact that Evelyn had avenged his death by killing David, but he couldn't bring himself to.

He didn't have children, but if he did and their lives were on the line, he would do anything to protect them. Even if it meant sending them far away to some place where so-called priests could offer their protection, he would go with them. And if he couldn't, he would make sure someone trustworthy went in his place.

Yet, Evelyn hadn't done any of that.

Maybe it was because he had seen too much, but Isaac finally saw through it all. When Caspian had held him, he had felt moved. But after hearing Evelyn's story, everything became clear.

Evelyn's maternal love, he realized, had always been for her comfort. It had never been about truly guiding or protecting her child.

In her account, she mentioned how David sought out medical help for him, so she knew about the changing of his medicine.

Did she never question it? Constantly changing his medicine-how could that be reasonable?

She was the one taking care of him. How could she not see?

Isaac didn't want to assume the

worst of her. But if he allowed himself to think that way, he would suspect that, perhaps, she had quietly condoned David's actions. Unfortunately, everything unraveled when Vincent found out. Once Vincent named his heir, Evelyn's hope of becoming a countess was dashed, and only then did she start

to pity her poor son.

Of course, Isaac could never confirm this theory, but it didn't matter. Whether it was true or not, it no longer mattered. Fate had already sealed their story when the fire had come. Before knowing the truth, he had believed the narrative Adrian had spun for him, holding onto doubt and hope in his heart.

Now, without that burden, he felt light and free.

Back in her room, Zoey couldn't

shake the memory of the way Evelyn had so bitterly recounted poisoning David. The cruelty of it had lingered in Evelyn's voice, as if years of buried hatred had finally found a release.

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If what Evelyn said was true—that she poisoned David out of revenge for her son's death—then surely, she would have simply brushed over the details when recounting it. It would have been a passing remark tinged with bitterness.

Not this repeated, deliberate emphasis.

It almost felt like Evelyn was saying it on purpose for Isaac to hear, or maybe even for herself as if repeating it aloud would somehow ease her guilt.

Zoey found herself returning to Evelyn's room. The older woman hadn't slept. Her eyes were wide open, tears streaming down her face.

Zoey sat beside the bed and asked gently, "Mother, you didn't poison Father, did you? You only thought about it. Perhaps you even obsessed over it—but you didn't actually do it, right?"

Evelyn didn't answer, but her tears flowed even more. Her lips trembled, but she couldn't say a word.

Zoey knew she had guessed it right.

After a long silence, Evelyn finally spoke. "Give him compensation. Do whatever you can to make up for it. Whatever he wants, give it to him."

"I will," Zoey replied softly.

As she rose to leave, the muffled sobs behind her grew louder, interwoven with Evelyn's regretful murmurs.

"No matter what, husband and wife share the same rise and fall...the same honor and ruin..."

Zoey paused at the door, clenching her fists. A wave of exhaustion hit her, the weight of everything pressing down on her.

Husband and wife share the same rise and fall? Did it mean that Evelyn had known everything from the very start?

If that were true, then she wasn't innocent at all.

At that moment, Zoey understood who Viola truly took after-they were the same, both masters of self-deception.

Chapter 1160

Carissa and the others had been waiting for Isaac and Violet's return. When they heard that they had gone to Silverstone Estate and laid everything out, Carissa couldn't help but feel uneasy. The situation with the Earl of Silverstone's family was complicated right now. "Don't worry, we didn't reconcile or formally acknowledge each other," Isaac reassured Carissa with a light pat on the shoulder and a brief smile. "At first, it was moving, but then it just seemed...insincere."

On the way back, he found himself reflecting more and more on the scene with Evelyn. The more he thought about her words, the clearer everything became.

Compared to Caspian's sincere display of emotion, every word Evelyn spoke had felt like it was meant for herself, not for him. It also explained why she never asked how he had been or cared about his well-being-she was only concerned with whether he and Zoey believed her story, not with him as a person.

Carissa frowned, confused, and looked at Violet for clarification. However, Violet simply shook her head, just as uncertain.

"Go ahead and sleep. It's late," Isaac said, walking away with his hands behind his back. His light-hearted demeanor made it clear that he wasn't weighed down by the events, which seemed to put everyone else at ease as well.

Violet stayed behind to fill them in. Caspian and Evelyn had both been very emotional, crying uncontrollably. As for Isaac's comment about feeling insincerity, she wasn't sure what he meant either.

Carissa learned that Zoey had also been present, so she said, "I'll ask Madam Zoey about it next time."

Carissa hadn't brought it up with Zoey before because Isaac hadn't said anything. Now that it was out in the open, nothing was stopping her from asking.

The following day, Zoey herself came to visit before Carissa had the chance to go to her. She got straight to the point and presented two matters.

The first was that she needed Carissa's help in persuading Isaac to take ownership of some of the assets of the Earl of Silverstone's family-essentially buying them.

The second was to make sure Isaac didn't believe Evelyn's words. He shouldn't reconcile with the family, and he shouldn't engage with her at all.

Zoey didn't try to hide anything-she laid it all out, giving the reasoning behind each request.

She knew that right now, Carissa was the only one she could truly trust. Thus, she told Carissa everything she knew about the situation at the Southern Frontier.

"There's someone who frequently meets with Celeste. They meet at the back gate of the Redstone Manor. There's no exchange of letters, only messages relayed verbally. I suspect that even though Celeste managed to escape blame for her involvement with Eleanor, she's now involved with the people behind Eleanor.

"Rest assured, Your Grace, I've sent only trustworthy men. On the surface, they appear to be Oliver's trusted advisors, but they're actually people I trained. They answer only to me."

Carissa looked at Zoey, whose anxious explanation seemed to hang in the air, and quickly reassured her, "I trust you, Madam Zoey."

Information from the Southern

Frontier often made its way to Hell

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Monarch Estate. However, secretive private dealings like this could be uncovered by those with connections within the marshal's household. It required trained eyes to notice such things.

"I was originally worried Oliver wouldn't be able to handle the situation at the Southern Frontier, so I sent my people along with him. Seven or eight of them went, all under my command. The truth is, he's been useless—he's accomplished nothing at the

Southern Frontier. He hasn't even participated in any military drills. He just shouts orders on the field and then goes home," Zoey said, her

concern clear.

"I know all this, Madam Zoey," Carissa replied calmly. "Right now, with no war, his lack of action doesn't matter much. It's better for him to do nothing than to cause trouble." To be blunt, he was giving random orders and messing with the soldiers, which was unproductive. It would be better if he stayed in Redstone Manor and lounged around with Celeste. Timothy and Louis were stationed there. When there was no battle, they could focus on training the troops and building up fortifications.

Carissa shook her head. "I only know part of it. There's still much that isn't clear, but it will soon be. Don't ask too many questions. It's better for you not to know anything at all."

Zoey couldn't help but ask, "Your Grace, who is the traitor, exactly?"

Zoey nodded. "Then, do you think I'm worrying for nothing?"

Carissa paused before answering, "You can never be too prepared. Follow your instincts. Isaac is reliable."

Having fought a lone battle for so long, this moment was supposed to bring Zoey a sense of recognition and support. Instead, it only made her heart heavier.

It meant her worst fears could very well come true.

Once the Starlight Harvest Festival passed, the weather grew colder.

Barrett arrived at the Southern

Frontier. Given his current status, he wasn't allowed to meet with the marshal directly. Instead, he sought out Timothy. With a document from the Ministry of Defense in hand, Timothy officially took him under his wing. The older man didn't say much and simply instructed Barrett to stay out of trouble.