

## War Song 121

### Chapter 121

Barrett's face turned red with frustration. He grabbed Carissa's hand, and pulled her to one side.

"Carissa! You know she's been captured, and you won't rescue her? What do you mean by that? Do you know where she is?" he yelled.

Violet snapped a whip in their direction, forcing him to release Carissa's hand and take a step back.

"If you have something to say, keep your distance. Don't get too close to Carl," spat Violet coldly.

Barrett's anger towards Violet was obvious, but he grudgingly restrained himself. She was too skilled and not under his command, making her difficult to manage.

He turned back to Carissa, his voice still sharp. "You know where she is, don't you?"

Carissa shook her head. "I don't know. She could be in the desert, on the plains, or hiding in the mountains. But no matter where she is, we can't send the entire Mystic Army to find her. It's too risky."

"Then what are we waiting for?" Barrett demanded, pacing with frustration. "Are we just waiting for them to bring her back?"

Carissa's gaze remained calm and steady. "Exactly. We're waiting for them to bring her back."

Barrett stared at her in disbelief. "Are you out of your mind? If they've captured Aurora, why would they ever let her go?"

Carissa's expression remained impassive. "They wouldn't release her easily. Nothing is ever that simple-just like how the treaty with Victory Pass wasn't achieved without effort."

Barrett was stunned. "What do you mean?"

Carissa looked at him with a steady gaze. "You don't really believe that Liam withdrew his army from Victory Pass to Fawnrun just because Aurora spread the news about the marshal heading to the Southern Frontier as reinforcements, do you? If you believe that, you're unfit to be a general, alone a soldier. It's impossible."

Barrett had indeed doubted it before.

Even at the last moment, he questioned Aurora. Ultimately, he chose not to pursue it further, as the treaty was signed and the matter had passed.

His voice trembled slightly. "So, why did Liam do this? Please, tell me."

"There's no need for me to tell you. Just wait here-someone will inform you," Carissa said.

With that, she took Violet's hand and walked away, leaving everyone else to continue tending the fire.

The field was littered with piles of dry firewood, brought by Westhaven. These were stacked outside the city and to be fetched as needed, to prevent the townsfolk from stealing them.

Westhaven had come fully prepared for their campaign in the Southern Frontier.

Everyone was hungry, but they couldn't return to the city. They had no idea how many of Westhaven's

troops remained, or where they might be hiding-whether in the mountains or on the plains.

Barrett paced restlessly, his anxiety evident. He wanted to question Carissa, but noticed she was surrounded by four formidable figures-two men and two women. Even Michael stood watch nearby. So, Barrett reluctantly returned to his own men.

Unable to wait idly, he ordered his troops to take torches and follow him into the desert.

He estimated that the Westhaven forces wouldn't venture into the plains. Having traveled such a long distance, they wouldn't dare to risk conflict with the nomadic tribes residing there, especially with soldiers in tow.

As for the mountains adjacent to the plains, the route carved out by the great peaks was the retreat path of the Sandoria forces. Heading in that direction meant heading toward Sandoria, and Liam wouldn't have taken Aurora there.

The only possible places left were the mountains and the desert.

At this late hour, searching the mountains was impractical-how could one find anything among so many peaks?

The only viable option was to search the desert. If the Westhaven forces were in the desert, they wouldn't venture too deep. After all, the harsh winter made the desert freezing at night.

Carissa didn't stop Barrett. Though he was desperate to find Aurora, he wouldn't actually lead his soldiers deep into the desert. It was likely he would search the areas near the desert instead. Barrett took over a thousand men with him, torches in hand, and headed towards the desert.

"Is it true that the Westhaven forces captured Aurora?" Violet asked.

Carissa nodded. "It's almost certain."

"Then what's the point of waiting here? We might as well let the Westhaven soldiers kill her," Violet said, barely concealing her satisfaction at the thought of Aurora meeting a grim fate. Putting aside Aurora's actions, just her haughty demeanor made Violet feel she didn't deserve an easy end.

## Chapter 122

As Carissa watched the fire slowly dim, she added a few more logs. The flames quickly devoured the dry wood, sending up bright flickers of light. The scene before her brought back a painful memory- returning to Northwatch Estate and finding it filled with corpses and bloodstains.

The ache in her heart surged again, so intense that it made breathing difficult.

How she wished for Aurora's death!

But simply killing her might not be the most satisfying revenge. Carissa thought Liam might share this

view.

She was certain Liam wouldn't kill Aurora, Rafael had given orders to wait here, and it was likely because Liam had said something to him.

Rafael had previously mentioned having spies in Ilyrian City, so it was reasonable to assume there were spies in Simonton City as well. Waiting here was both Rafael and Liam's directive.

By late night, everyone was exhausted. They were sleepy and hungry, though the cold was no longer a concern with plenty of firewood available. Supplies had arrived from the rear-simple bread and beef jerky. But in the midst of a battlefield, any food that could fill their stomachs was welcomed.

Timothy had brought the supplies, and conveyed Rafael's orders to Carissa. "The marshal ordered you to continue waiting here. He says you can relax a bit and take turns sleeping."

"Do we re

really need this many people here?" Carissa asked.

"The marshal believes it's necessary. He said not to easily trust a certain someone's assurances," Timothy replied.

With this statement, Carissa was certain that Rafael and Liam had reached some sort of pite agreement. He seemed to know everything.

Timothy was somewhat puzzled, unsure why Rafael had ordered them to wait. However, military orders were absolute, and he followed them without question.

After delivering the supplies, Timothy returned to the city. Although the Southern Frontier had been recaptured, the battlefield still required cleanup, and the bodies of fallen soldiers needed to be buried. There was much work to be done in the aftermath.

Victory on the battlefield always brought joy, but it was accompanied by sadness and pain. The comrades who fought alongside them-perhaps the closest one-would never see the victory. Their eyes would forever be closed.

Before dawn, Barrett returned with his men, who were utterly exhausted. Michael distributed the food to them.

They sat down to eat, but Barrett didn't touch his food. He gazed at the rising sun, which indicated a clear day. It was the best weather they had seen since arriving in the Southern Frontier.

Yet, his mood was incredibly heavy. They had found nothing in the desert, and couldn't continue searching indefinitely. They had no choice but to return.

He glanced at Carissa several times. She was resting her head on Violet's shoulder, clearly exhausted. She was injured, and someone had bandaged her wounds, though it was uncertain how serious her injuries were.

After a while, Barrett stood up and walked over to Carissa. He asked softly, "Are your injuries serious?" Resting her head on Violet's shoulder, Carissa didn't respond and showed no change in her expression.

Violet shot him a look of utter disdain, and silently mouthed, "None of your business. Go away."

Understanding her lip movements, Barrett was angry and embarrassed. Fuming, he turned and went back to sit down.

Violet rolled her eyes. What was that? Not just anyone could come over and concern themselves with Carissa.

Carissa wasn't that cheap!

They waited until the sun began to set, painting the sky with twilight hues.

At that point, Barrett could no longer sit still. Seeing Carissa standing up, he hurried over. "I plan to head to the plains before it gets dark."

Carissa glanced at the setting sun, feeling a mix of warmth and chill, which made her exceptionally uncomfortable.

"If you're going, you don't need to inform me. I command the Mystic Army, and you're not part of it, she said, then lifted her chin and gestured to his soldiers. "You're their general."

## Chapter 123

Barrett stared at Carissa. He couldn't continue speaking, as she had rendered him speechless.

She was right. She was the deputy commander of the Mystic Army and a fifth-ranked general of the court. Every word she spoke carried weight.

He didn't have many men with him, and had hoped the Mystic Army would join him. His own troops were exhausted, but the Mystic Army had rested here for quite some time. He believed that if they encountered the Westhaven forces or nomadic tribes, they could fight.

In a low voice, he pleaded, "I want to lead the Mystic Army, even if I have to beg you, Carissa. I know I've wronged you before. You can punish me however you want. But we've been waiting for nearly two days! Aurora can't hold on much longer. I know you hate her, but we'll make amends together once we find her."

Carissa's gaunt face remained cold. "This has nothing to do with personal grudges. The Mystic Army cannot advance any further."

Barrett clenched his fists. "Carissa, I'm already begging you! What more do you want from me?"

Violet sneered, and spat sarcastically, "Is begging supposed to be impressive? Your plea is so sincere, we're tempted to beat you up ourselves! If the Mystic Army joins you in the plains and you encounter the Westhaven forces or those tribes, will you fight or let them handle it?"

"Be quiet!" Barrett's anger reached its peak, and he finally couldn't contain his fury. "Who do you think you are, speaking to me like that?"

Violet lifted her chin in contempt. "What a joke! Do I need any special status to talk to you? How about you measure your own worth? Are you even qualified to be so presumptuous in front of me?" Barrett was utterly furious. "Carissa, control your people. Don't let every stray dog bark at me!"

It was Bun who sprang up first. His fists were large, and he quickly launched himself at Barrett. Almost immediately, his fists began to rain down on Barrett's head, face, and body.

Travis was slightly slower to react. Nonetheless, he moved with impressive speed and delivered swift and powerful blows with his legs.

This relentless assault left Barrett unable to defend himself. He could only hunch-over, using his hands to protect his head as he endured the beating from the two men.

"Damn it! I've wanted to hit you for a long time! If it weren't for my military status, I'd have taken action the first time I saw you two!" Bun spat out.

"Do you really think so highly of yourself? With your character, you dare to be fickle! We men make promises and stick to them, even if it means death! You made us look bad!"

"You said you'd accept any punishment Cari gave you, didn't you? Well, now you're being punished! Take it and learn to be a decent person for the rest of your life!"

All the soldiers watched the scene unfold, including Barrett's own men. They wanted to intervene, but knew that Bun and Travis were formidable, and they were standing up for Carissa. The Mystic Army was also there to protect their general.

Besides, everyone present was a man of honor.

Barrett's disdain for his ex-wife and abandonment of her was something no one could tolerate. As he and Aurora had requested a marriage edict through their military achievements, however, nobody dared speak out about it.

It was only when Carissa felt the beating had gone on long enough that she spoke up. "Bun, Rod, stop

it."

Bun and Travis finally ceased their assault, though they spat in disdain before walking away.

The soldiers then helped Barrett up. He spat out a mouthful of blood, and staggered toward Carissa. Blood trailed down his chin as he asked, "Can we go look for Aurora on the plains now?" Carissa looked at his battered appearance. Did he think enduring a beating would allow him to lead the Mystic Army?

Her eyes grew serious as she replied softly, "Barrett, just wait. It's not the plains, but the mountains. Over a hundred thousand Westhaven soldiers are up there now, seeking justice. We can only wait."

## Chapter 124

Barrett's expression shifted dramatically. "How do you know they're in the mountains? What justice are they seeking?"

Carissa took a few steps away, and Barrett limped after her. When she stopped, he stared at her.

expectantly.

The wind howled around them, and Carissa's voice was barely audible. "If you calm yourself and listen, you might hear something beyond the wind."

Barrett tried to focus, but apart from the wind, he heard nothing.

His skills were not on par with Carissa's, and his inner force was minimal. How could he hear any movement in the mountains, especially with such a strong wind? It was impossible to discern the presence of nearly a hundred thousand people.

He suspected Carissa was being evasive, and his frustration grew. "What justice are they seeking?"

"Use your brain. Why would a hundred thousand soldiers stay in the mountains without retreating? Why capture Aurora? And why come to the Southern Frontier after signing the treaty?"

After saying this, Carissa walked back, leaving Barrett standing there, his face pale.



The setting sun cast a dark shadow over his handsome features, making him appear like an unmoving statue.

This was the second time Carissa had given him such a hint. He knew something terrible had occurred, but was unwilling to believe it.

He walked back to Carissa, and hissed through gritted teeth, "You're only accusing her because you resent her for taking your husband! Carissa, you're a sinister and malicious woman!" When Violet heard this, she was about to lash out at Barrett with her whip. However, Carissa stopped

her.

Carissa said, "Ignore him and keep your distance."

Violet had initially wanted to lash out at Barrett to relieve her frustration, but she thought better of it.

"Cari's right. Just ignore him. We don't need to pay any attention to his nonsense. Keeping a distance is best, to avoid being tainted by his words."

Barrett's attempt to provoke her was as effective as hitting a pillow-completely pointless and only served to humiliate him further.

These martial artists had the most vile language.

There was nothing to do but wait.

Meanwhile, in the wooden cabin on the mountain, Aurora wasn't subjected to severe physical torture, but she endured humiliation.

The humiliation came through words, being urinated on, and physical abuse. She lay disheveled in the cabin, surrounded by the pained cries of her comrades. 1

Liam, the devil himself, crouched beside her, his gaze fixed on her scarred face. "Did you think I would kill all of you?"

Aurora trembled all over. The murderous intent in his eyes was unmistakable.

"That's right. I'm going to kill

you."

His large hand tightened around her throat, and the suffocating sensation of death enveloped her.

Unable to breathe, her chest felt as if it were about to explode with pain. Waves of dizziness blurred her vision, and her mind was flooded with memories. She had only recently married into the Warren family, and had an unlimited future and happiness ahead of her.

She was truly so unwilling to accept this fate!

Aurora didn't want to die. But if they were determined to kill her, it would be better if they did it now to spare her further torment.

Just as she thought her end was near, Liam released his grip.

She gasped for air like one rescued from drowning, taking deep, shuddering breaths. The dizziness intensified, making her feel as if she might faint at any moment.

Liam's cold voice cut through her haze. "I told you, this is just the beginning. Killing you would be pointless. It would only grant you a quick end."

Aurora clutched her throat as she tried to catch her breath. Then, she asked in terror, "W-What do you want from me?"

Liam replied coldly, "Just this."

He stood up, left the cabin, and ordered the door to be shut behind him. "The army is to withdraw down the mountain."

Liam had sent word to Rafael, so he believed there would be troops waiting for him on the plains below.

The commander of those troops was the person Liam needed to see.

## Chapter 125

Night fell, and the Westhaven army descended from the mountain. When the troops began to move, Carissa and Violet knew about it and exchanged glances.

Carissa stood up, and issued a command, "Everyone, stay alert! Weapons at the ready."

The entire Mystic Army rose to their feet. Holding their shields and weapons in hand, they swiftly moved into their battle formation.

The Westhaven soldiers moved quickly, descending the mountain in three parallel columns. The soldiers at the front held torches, with one torchbearer every ten men to provide illumination.

The mountain was icy, making their rapid descent risky. A single slip could cause a disastrous chain reaction. Yet, they moved with remarkable steadiness, clearly wearing specially designed footwear.

Westhaven was a wealthy and powerful kingdom, and its troops were showcasing its financial might at this moment. Their actions served as a stark reminder to the Starhaven soldiers that engaging in large-scale warfare with Westhaven would not be advantageous.

Soon, ten thousand Westhaven soldiers stood on the field, facing off against the Mystic Army.

Neither side made a move.

Barrett charged forward, shouting angrily, "Where have you taken Aurora?"

Liam slowly emerged from the front ranks of the Westhaven troops. A distance of about ten paces separated the two armies.

Barrett had only rushed to stand in front of the Mystic Army, but he didn't dare rush over to question Liam directly.

Liam glanced at Barrett, but offered no response. His gaze shifted to Carissa, and a complex mix of emotions flickered in his eyes.

"General Sinclair, may we speak privately?" he asked.

Carissa, still holding her Rose Spear, nodded. "Certainly."

Liam looked at the Rose Spear with a deep sigh. "No weapons. But if you're concerned, you may bring another person. I will approach alone."

"Cari, I'll come with you," Violet immediately said.

However, Carissa pointed to Barrett. "You should come with me."

Barrett was initially stunned, but he quickly nodded in agreement. "Alright!"

He needed to know where Aurora was, and whether she was alive or dead. Still, he was puzzled as to

why Carissa chose him instead of her own friend.

Liam approached without any weapons, and Carissa handed the Rose Spear to Violet. Barrett hesitated for a while, reluctant to put down his sword

"If it comes to fighting, we can begin immediately. With just our two thousand men against their hundred thousand, there's no chance," Carissa said coolly. Only then did Barrett lower his sword and walk alongside Carissa.

They reached a point where there was a five-pace gap between the two armies. The wind howled, so the distance made it difficult for anyone else to overhear their conversation, unless it was Violet and Carissa's other friends.

Liam observed the slender woman in front of him. Though unarmed, her confidence and dignified presence belied her age of barely twenty. She stood before him with no trace of hesitation or caution, exuding an air of grace and composure.

In contrast, Barrett's gaze was sharp, and he was scanning the surroundings with evident suspicion and caution.

Though Liam knew of Barrett, their only encounter had been from afar after the Westhaven troops had retreated from Victory Pass.

Liam bowed slightly, and addressed Carissa. "I am Liam Tudor, the marshal of Westhaven. General Sinclair, your demeanor indeed reflects the excellence of your lineage. The apple does not fall far from

the tree."

His tone was admiring, but his eyes revealed a complex mix of emotions.

Carissa didn't return the bow. She merely stood silently with a cold expression.

Barrett also didn't bow. Instead, he stared at Liam, and demanded, "Where have you taken Aurora? Is she dead or alive?"

Liam glanced at him with visible disdain. "You're Barrett Warren, once General Sinclair's husband and now Aurora's."

As Liam spoke, he cast a contemptuous look at Barrett.

Feeling the disdain in Liam's gaze, Barrett's fists clenched in anger. "I only ask you this: is Aurora dead or alive? You have no reason to mistreat or kill prisoners of war!"

Liam's eyes were as cold as steel, and they were fixed sharply on Barrett's face. "You have no right to say such things."

Chapter 126

Barrett felt a shiver under the intensity of Liam's gaze, and instinctively took a step back.

Liam was obviously reluctant to engage in conversation with Barrett. He stood before Carissa, his expression a complex mix of emotions.

"General Sinclair, the massacre of your family was not my order," he began, his tone earnest.

"The leader of our spies issued that command. He did it because he learned that Aurora's forces had wiped out several villages in Fawnrun City, and that she had subjected a prisoner of war to inhumane

treatment.

"Our king and the entire Westhaven court uphold a strict policy: issues on the border should not involve the lives of civilians. We do not condone the slaughter of innocents, especially not the elderly, women, and children of an entire family.

"While your kingdom's general had committed grievous acts, I must apologize on behalf of Westhaven for everything they have done."

Barrett was stunned. "W-What nonsense are you talking about?"

Liam paid no attention to Barrett, and continued to address Carissa.

"Our king and everyone in our court holds the late marshal in high regard. Despite leading armies against us, General Sinclair strictly adhered to the agreements between our nations. He never harmed a single civilian from our kingdom. Each time he waged war, he withdrew his forces once he reached" the border your kingdom set. I am deeply sorry for the tragedy that befell your family. It is a debt that Westhaven owes you.

He paused, then added somberly, "A debt owed only to your family-the Sinclairs."

Liam did not mention the matter of Arthur's disgrace and subsequent suicide. The only justification for the massacre was Aurora's destruction of villages. Westhaven owed nothing to Starhaven, only to the Sinclair family.

As a military general and soldier, Aurora had committed crimes against the civilians of Fawnrun City..

However, the Sinclair family was made up of the elderly, women, and children. All the men of their family had died on the battlefield.

Liam couldn't accept that Aurora had mistreated Arthur so cruelly, nor could he accept that Westhaven spies had slaughtered the entire Sinclair family.

Liam had apologized to Carissa, but Arthur would never receive an apology from Aurora.

As for the battlefield on the Southern Frontier, their men's killing of Starhaven soldiers might have been seen as revenge, though Westhaven soldiers had suffered greater losses.

Nevertheless, these issues must be resolved. The two kingdoms couldn't remain forever hostile. They were neighboring nations and major powers. They needed to engage in trade, cultural, and technological exchanges.

That was Liam's perspective.

It was also Rafael's perspective; otherwise, this meeting between Liam and Carissa would never have

occurred.

After a long silence, Carissa lifted her head. Her eyes were red, and she struggled to hold back tears, determined not to let them fall.

"Aurora and several hundred soldiers with her have likely been killed or severely wounded and humiliated. Your revenge is complete. However, I know that the Westhaven spies who massacred my family have returned to your country. My revenge is not yet fulfilled. What I am owed, I will have them

pay

with their lives," she said firmly.

Liam looked at her, his gaze full of sorrow and complexity. "If that's the case, then the debt is settled. I've killed all the Westhaven spies who returned. General Sinclair, you can grieve in peace. But know that the sorrow in Westhaven can't be measured. It is a perpetual shame and an eternal pain of our kingdom. Even if Aurora and her soldiers are killed, it will never be erased."

Carissa nodded silently, understanding his meaning. "I am not in a position to apologize on behalf of anyone, but this matter is also a source of pain and shame for those of us in Starhaven who are aware of

it."

At these words, Liam's eyes became red, as if the wind had harshly touched them. His shoulders slumped slightly. "General Sinclair, your words hold great significance for me, him, and the Starhaven royal family."

One of the young soldiers beside Liam suddenly broke down, covering his face with tears. Moments ago, he had been standing there filled with hatred and anger. Yet Carissa's words had comforted him, leading him to lose control and weep.

Liam, Edmund, and Carissa all had pains they could not reconcile. But for the greater good, they had to reconcile in a broader sense.

Liam then turned to Barrett, whose face was ashen, "Do you want to know what your wife has done? Go up the mountain. Their current state is a reflection of the sins they have committed,"

Chapter 127

Liam and Edmund left with the Westhaven soldiers.

"If you want to rescue Aurora," Carissa said to Barrett, "take your trusted aldes up the mountain."

By saying this, Carissa was actually preserving some dignity for both Barrett and Aurora. If the shame endured by the Westhaven crown prince were to be repeated on them, the things Barrett would see upon going up the mountain would surely be appalling.

However, Barrett was concerned there might still be Westhaven troops stationed on the mountain. Thus, he requested that Carissa lend him the Mystic Army to accompany him.



Carissa regarded him for a moment. "Are you certain?"

Feeling an inexplicable tremor at her gaze, he asked, "Can you tell me if Aurora truly committed the massacres?"

"You should have asked Liam earlier," Carissa replied calmly. "Or, you can ask Aurora yourself when you meet her. Liam is unlikely to have killed her."

Barrett found it hard to believe that Aurora could have committed such acts. He recalled Liam's words, which were extremely vague. The massacre was mentioned only briefly, while the apology to Carissa was emphasized.

If Aurora had indeed committed the massacre, then the destruction of the Sinclair family would indirectly be attributed to her. She had caused the death of Carissa's family, and Barrett had sought to marry her, abandoning Carissa.

As Barrett contemplated this, a flood of conflicting emotions overwhelmed him. A heavy weight was pressing down on his chest, making breathing hard.

He was unwilling to believe that Aurora could do such things. He would personally ask her once he saw her again.

Barrett suddenly lifted his head. "Liam's words cannot be fully trusted. You should accompany me up the mountain so we can get to the bottom of this, General Sinclair. If Aurora admits to it in your presence, then..."

His face turned pale and grim.

If Aurora confessed, what could he possibly do? What could ever make up for those irreparable mistakes and lost lives?

After a moment of silence, Carissa agreed to go up the mountain with him.

Barrett didn't trust Liam, and feared that there might be Westhaven troops lying in wait on the mountain. He also requested the Mystic Army to join them.

He was unsure of the exact nature of the abuses inflicted on the prisoners of war, believing that such abuse would, at most, involve torture. Therefore, he had no idea what he would encounter on the mountain.

Carissa understood all too well, but this was also part of Liam's plan.

Aurora hadn't killed Arthur. He had taken his own life after being released due to the crushing of his dignity, honor, and physical torment.

Because of that, Liam wouldn't kill Aurora, Intending to destroy her dignity and reputation. He would leave it to Aurora to decide whether she would end her own life, or endure.

Liam knew many would come to rescue her. With a hundred thousand soldiers descending from the mountain, who could say if another hundred thousand might be waiting above?

At the very least, he was sure Barrett believed so, for Barrett had never truly understood Westhaven.

Michael ordered the torches to be raised, and over ten thousand men marched up the mountain in a grand procession. Violent and the others followed without any objection, because they knew exactly what they would see.

After traveling for about half an hour, the winding path finally led them to a flat area. This area had been cleared as a temporary camp, large enough to accommodate a hundred thousand soldiers. In the middle stood a wooden cabin, from which the sounds of agonized screams were coming.

Hearing these cries, Barrett sprinted forward and kicked the hut door open. It was pitch dark inside, so he quickly instructed someone to bring a torch.

When the torchbearer stepped inside, Barrett's gaze fell upon nineteen figures within the cabin.

His face went ashen instantly.

All of them were completely naked, their bodies covered in numerous scars and cuts. One horrifying injury was particularly disturbing-it was as if... They had all been castrated!

The hut was filled with the stench of feces and urine. It was evident they had been drenched in it.. Excrement smeared their faces, bodies, and mouths. Aurora was no exception.

She was the only one wearing something. However, she lacked pants, and the blood pooled beneath her. Her private parts were clearly visible.

Coming to his senses, Barrett roared, "Get out! All of you, get out!"

He grabbed a torch and rushed inside, but there were no clothes or armor left in the hut. They had all been burned.

Desperate, he stripped off his own armor and outer garments, wrapping them around Aurora's legs. He then put on his armor again, and lifted her carefully in his arms.

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Aurora had lost consciousness.

Liam kept choking her, dragging her back and forth between life and death. At the same time, he slashed her with a knife on her body and face. Also, he had cut off one of her ears.

As Barrett carried her out, she remained unaware of her rescue, still in a state of unconsciousness.

However, it was clear to everyone that Aurora wasn't wearing any pants. Many had also seen the pool of blood beneath her, revealing the horrors she had endured.

Barrett's expression was livid. He finally understood why Carissa had insisted that he only bring his trusted aides up the mountain.

He shot a fierce, resentful glance at Carissa. Until Aurora told him the truth herself, he refused to believe Liam's accusations. He was unwilling to accept that Aurora had indirectly caused the death of Carissa's family.

Seeing his eyes, Carissa saw only a coward. She ignored him, and proceeded with the rescue efforts. Soldiers entered the cabin to carry out the remaining prisoners. The hut had originally been warmed by charcoal, but the Westhaven troops had extinguished it before leaving. The fact that the prisoners were still alive, though still screaming in agony, was a testament to the residual warmth keeping them from freezing to death.

Some people spontaneously removed the cotton-padded lining from their own uniforms to dress the prisoners before descending the mountain.

Upon returning to Simonton City, military doctors were summoned. Barrett personally tended to Aurora, scrubbing away the stench from her body and painstakingly removing the excrement from her mouth. Several times, he nearly vomited from the nauseating task.

He dared not inspect the wound between her legs closely, and simply applied some ointment indiscriminately. The rest of her injuries were carefully treated.

The word "slut" had been carved into her face. Barrett steeled himself, and used a heated iron brand to burn it away. He would rather disfigure half her face than leave that mark.

Aurora had awakened during the treatment, her mouth continuously cursing and denouncing the cruelty of the Westhaven troops. Her bitter tirade ceased only when Barrett pressed the hot iron against her face, causing her to scream and tremble uncontrollably.

"Barrett!" Aurora called hoarsely. Her eyes were filled with pain, and the foul odor of her mouth still made one want to gag. "Why are you destroying my face?"

"There's a foul word branded on your face. Do you want to live with that mark for the rest of your life?"

Barrett's eyes were cold and terrifying.

"Those beasts! Those vile dogs! Aurora cursed vehemently. "Liam Tudor, I will not rest until you're dead!"

Barrett grasped her chin, leaned in, and stared into her eyes. "Tell me, did you destroy villages in Fawnrun? Did you kill innocent civilians?"

At that moment, Aurora was consumed with rage and anguish. In response to Barrett's interrogation, she screamed, "I regret it! I should have razed all the villages there, not just the three I destroyed!" Barrett swayed slightly, his eyes filled with horror.

"Did you really do that? And what about the abuse of the prisoner? Did you do the same-castration and endless beatings?"

"Not just that!" Aurora's eyes were filled with malevolent fury, almost bordering on madness. "I had his face carved up slowly, forced him to endure being urinated on, and fed him excrement. I used every method to torture him to make him reveal his identity! Now, I regret that I was too lenient!"

"So it was because of this prisoner that Liam hastily established the border and signed the treaty with you," Barrett said in an icy voice, his demeanor chilling to the core.

Even someone as dense as him could piece together the identity of the prisoner.

Liam's desperation to make concessions, his eagerness to sign the treaty with Aurora, and his avoidance of returning to Victory Pass to negotiate with Dominic-it all pointed to the fact that the prisoner was likely Liam's nephew and the previous crown prince of Westhaven.

It was no wonder the Westhaven troops would appear and fight on the Southern Frontier battlefield.

Everything made sense now.

The border dispute was a significant issue that both kingdoms had contested for years, but Liam had rushed to sign the peace treaty.

Barrett should have suspected there was something wrong from the beginning.

He had been tasked with burning the supply depot in Fawnrun City. By the time he rushed over to Aurora's side, the peace treaty had already been signed, which showed just how anxious Liam had

been.

## Chapter 129

Barrett looked at Aurora as if she were a stranger.

The person before him was nothing like the woman he had loved. She was cruel and cold, like a demon. He had sacrificed all his military achievements for her, betraying Carissa in the process. He was the biggest fool in the world.

Yet, he remembered Aurora's words' about loyalty and righteousness-how women shouldn't be confined to the house, but should bear the responsibility of defending their homeland.

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that time, Aurora's eyes had been filled with fervent brilliance.

Barrett collapsed to the ground, his face a mask of tears and laughter. Suddenly, he erupted into maniacal laughter-a crazed, frenzied laugh that filled the room.

Aurora was terrified by his outburst. Struggling against her pain, she propped herself up and looked at him in shock.

"Barrett, w-what's wrong? Don't scare me."

Barrett laughed until tears streamed down his face. He covered his face with his hands, his shoulders shaking as tears leaked through his fingers.

Suddenly, he dropped his hands from his face and glared ferociously at Aurora.

"It was you who caused Carissa's entire family to perish! Her family was annihilated because you abused the prisoner and slaughtered the civilians!" he roared. 1

Aurora was frightened by his gaze, and instinctively shook her head. "No! It was the Westhaven spies who did it! It had nothing to do with me!"

Barrett's eyes were filled with pain. "How could you be such a wicked person? How could you be so cruel? Those were defenseless civilians! How could you bring yourself to commit such ev..... Despite his words, Aurora still didn't see herself as at fault

"They were hiding the Westhaven general!" she argued. "I ordered the civilians slaughtered just to force out that young general! I don't understand why you think I'm cruel. Yes, I destroyed villages, but they were Westhaven people. Even if they were civilians, they still belong to Westhaven!"

"Two kingdoms at war must not harm civilians or kill prisoners of war!" Barrett's eyes were red with fury, his teeth clenched in pain. "This was the agreement between our kingdom and Westhaven. I told you this many times before the Victory Pass battle, and you said you remembered."

His voice exploded into an enraged roar, "Now, tell me what did you remember? You didn't just abuse a prisoner of war! You also slaughtered civilians, and destroyed several villages! Are you even human? Are you?!"

Aurora was terrified by his hideous expression. Tears immediately streamed down her face.

"But didn't I already sign the peace treaty and establish the border? The king was very pleased with

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the outcome, and all the officials were happy too! We won't have to go to war anymore. Is killing a thousand or so Westhaven civilians really that grave a sin?"

She wiped away her tears. Feeling that her reasoning was justified, her voice grew louder.

"Go ask at Victory Pass-ask our civilians if they'd be willing to sacrifice their lives to ensure that our kingdom maintains its borders and has no more wars! I'm sure many would agree!"

When Barrett heard her words, he laughed. He swept his messy hair back, revealing a bruised face that looked particularly wild and disheveled.

His voice was soft yet venomous as he said, "And what about you? Would you be willing to trade your life for peace? If you would, then why all the curses earlier? Isn't that what you should be enduring? They are all dead, but you're unwilling to die? Why don't you die too?!"

Aurora was at a loss for words.

"Have you ever asked the civilians you slaughtered? Have you asked the people of Victory Pass? Did they all agree? Did they?!" Barrett continued to press.

He leaned on the edge of the bed, looking as if his world was on the brink of collapse.

Aurora began to cry. "Barrett, what are you doing? You're scaring me! I've endured so much suffering, but you're not comforting me at all. You keep cursing me. Even if I am at fault, I've also achieved great things!"

Barrett watched her tears mix with the burn mark on her face, which dripped down her face along with her blood.

It was a pitiful and tragic sight.

Yet, he showed no pity or concern.

"Do you know that all of your soldiers, except those who got captured, are dead? The ones who survived have been castrated, and you..."

He didn't finish the sentence, but his expression was a mixture of deep shame and a complex range of emotions.

Aurora stopped crying, suddenly realizing the implication behind his words.

"Do you think they... Nothing happened! Barrett, they didn't touch me!" she said urgently.

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Seeing Barrett remain silent, Aurora grew anxious.



Ignoring her injuries, she said angrily, "They did hurt me, but they definitely didn't violate me! I'm telling you the absolute truth. If you don't believe me, you can ask them yourself!"

Barrett's expression darkened. "What's the point in asking? Isn't it humiliating enough already?"

Aurora felt a chill at his words, and was deeply hurt. "You don't believe me?"

Barrett smiled sadly.

"Believe you? Have you ever told me a single truth? Every time I asked you about Victory Pass, you always said it was because you spread rumors that the Hell Monarch was heading there as reinforcement. So Liam retreated and went back to sign a treaty with you. You even hid something so important from me. How can I trust you again?"

"I didn't tell you because I knew you wouldn't like it... Aurora appeared very agitated and almost frantic. "You kept saying you didn't want to harm the civilians of both kingdoms, but I clearly saw the enemy hiding in the civilians' homes. Since we attacked Fawnrun, we had to gain something from it. I only killed some civilians, but how many of our soldiers did the people of Westhaven kill?" Barrett took several deep breaths to calm himself. "What was our purpose in entering Fawnrun?"

"To burn the supply depot," Aurora answered without hesitation.

"I went to burn the supply depot and left you in charge of reinforcements, but you chased after that young general. Did you ever consider what might happen if Westhaven soldiers arrived while we were burning the supply depot, and you failed to notify me in time?"

"But in reality, I did accomplish something!" Aurora shook her head, feeling a sharp pain in her heart.

She didn't want to argue anymore.

"Forget it. We have different views. You don't agree with me, and I don't agree with you. Continuing this argument will only harm our relationship. Why should we damage our marriage over a few Westhaven civilians? Let's not discuss it any further, okay?"

Barrett was filled with disappointment. Despite everything he had said, she still regarded the lives of a few Westhaven civilians as insignificant. It was as if they were merely ants in her eyes. He had nothing more to say.

Before turning to leave, he smiled bitterly and said slowly, "It's laughable. I abandoned Carissa for you, and I truly regret it."

Aurora gasped, looking at him in disbelief. "What did you say? You regret it?"

Barrett turned, and walked out slowly. The night outside was illuminated by the campfire, and it was snowing again. But no matter how cold the weather was, it couldn't compare to the coldness in his heart.

Meanwhile, Carissa sat in the command tent.

Hot coffee was served, along with a steaming bowl of chicken noodle soup. The noodles were served without any additional toppings, not even a simple egg.

Yet, it was the best food Carissa had eaten since going to the battlefield. She had never thought chicken noodle soup could taste so good before.

Seeing her enjoy the meal, Rafael couldn't help but ask, "Is one bowl enough?"

"No. Is there more?" she asked, looking up while eating.

"There isn't."

Carissa was speechless at his answer.

If that was the case, wasn't that a pointless question?

Rafael smiled, watching her with a gaze that seemed to appraise her. With how she was devouring the food, she seemed far from the refined young lady she was supposed to be.

After she finished eating, he informed her that he and Liam had already exchanged letters before the battle.

"His goal was Aurora and the soldiers who participated in the massacre. I knew about this a long time ago. I even tried to arrange for her to stay in the rear, but she insisted on leading the attack herself. "You've certainly done your duty in trying to protect Aurora," she commented.

"She was too determined to die," he said, his handsome features tightening.

He handed her a handkerchief to wipe her mouth, then continued, "Aurora has no understanding of her limits. Liam didn't kill her outright because he thought she would be too ashamed to live. Do you think she'd choose to end her own life?"

Carissa took the handkerchief. The embroidery was crooked and poorly done, but it was clean. It was surprising the marshal would keep such an unattractive handkerchief.

In the military, people didn't pay much attention to such details. Carissa used the handkerchief to wipe her lips, and said, "It's hard to say. Given the humiliation she's endured..

She decided not to mention the more vulgar aspects of what Aurora went through, as she still wanted to enjoy the soup.

"And with so many people having seen her in such a state, it won't stay hidden in the army. If the army knows, the people in the capital will find out too. It'll just depend on whether she can endure it."