

Her Graceful War Song

#Chapter 1621 - Read Her Graceful War Song Chapter 1621

The merchant ship docked, and Thomas led Elise and Selene ashore.

On the way, Elise asked, "Did you come alone this time? Did the boys come with you?"

Thomas smiled. "They didn't, but Rosalind did. We've been here for half a month, staying at Hearth Inn. This time, I came on your father's orders-partly to investigate the bandits and pirates around Port Liantra, partly to see if you had arrived safely. I also took it as a chance to take Rosalind out for a bit. The academy is on holiday for the New Year, so it was easy enough for her to take leave for a month or two."

Elise brightened. "Ms. Young is here? That's wonderful! Please take me to see her quickly."

Rosalind had been Elise's first teacher when she studied at the academy. She was clever but restless, never able to sit still. During her studies, she had been sent to Meadow Ridge several times, but was returned each time. Finally, she stayed at the academy until she was seven years old before trying Meadow Ridge

again.

Whether one studied books or trained in martial arts, respect for one's teacher was important. When Elise came of age, Rosalind had even given her a gift, though the ceremony had been too crowded to exchange many words.

Now, being able to meet here in Port Liantra was truly a blessing.

Hearth Inn stood in a rather quiet part of town. It was no grand inn, more a simple place for traveling merchants, most of whom stayed there for long stretches because the price was low. No matter how much the officials in Port Liantra might guess, they would never suspect that a general like Thomas had come and stayed at a place like this.

In the small courtyard of the inn, Rosalind sat reading a book. The weather was mild, and a gentle breeze carried the fresh scents of early spring. Warm sunlight spilled over everything, filling her with a peaceful comfort.

In the courtyard stood a tall cotton tree that was just beginning to bloom. The fiery red flowers were few, but their bright color stained the branches like flames.

The innkeeper had told Rosalind that in about two weeks, the ground would be covered with fallen cotton blossoms. The locals liked to make soup from the cotton tree flowers, saying it was the best remedy to drive away chill from the body.

Rosalind thought that if she could stay until then, she would surely pick some of those blossoms to make soup. Using flowers in soup was practical, yet still poetic.

But the book in her hands was unread. Since her earliest lessons, books had been nearly her whole world. She had always found joy in flipping through pages, seeking life's truths and rules for how to live.

Yet, as the saying went: Reading thousands of books was not as good as traveling thousands of miles.

In recent years, her husband had been stationed at the capital's garrison. Occasionally, he took her out on short trips, but never far. This journey from the capital all the way to Southmere Eastmarch had opened her eyes.

Of course, she had read many records about different places, but nothing compared to seeing them with her own eyes.

"Ms. Young!"

A cheerful voice broke Rosalind's thoughts. She looked up to see a

figure moving swiftly toward the courtyard. As the visitor entered, her steps slowed, and she approached with calm grace, like a well-bred young lady.

Perhaps Rosalind had been too deeply absorbed in her thoughts earlier, so her mind was still a little dazed. When she looked up and saw the person before her, she was suddenly reminded of that day at Harmony Palace, when Carissa had presented Kyle's painting of orchids in the snow.

At first, she had thought it a mere chance meeting. Little did she know that because of that young lady, her own life would soon change.

Rosalind rose to greet Elise with a smile. "Hello, Your Grace."

Elise bowed deeply. "Your student greets you, Ms. Young. I hope you are well."

Rosalind took her hand and looked her over. "Why are you dressed like this? Where have you been?"

Thomas' voice came from outside the courtyard: "We went to catch thieves." He strode in, his eyes full of gentle warmth as they met his wife's.

Rosalind understood his mission and felt some relief seeing him return safe and sound. "Come inside and have some tea and a little something to eat. The snacks here in Port Liantra are truly delicious."

Thomas came over, took the book she was holding, and habitually held her hand. "Good. I have business at the local authorities' office later, but first, I will stay and enjoy some snacks with you."

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Though there were clearly three of them sharing the tea, Elise felt as if only the couple was truly eating.

Inside one of the small meat pies, there was mostly fat. Rosalind did not care for fatty meat, so Thomas carefully picked out the fatty parts one by one and handed the rest to her.

With her small appetite, if Rosalind ate a whole pie, she would have little room left for anything else. So, after she took a bite, Thomas took the pie away and offered her a prawn puff instead, as well as gave her a bite of a stuffed cabbage roll.

"Your stomach is weak, too much meat won't sit well. When the bread pudding comes, just have a little," he said.

Elise put down her spoon and rested her chin on her hand, watching them.

Her own parents were loving too, but her mother didn't fuss much over food. When the three of them ate together, they all ate quickly. Carissa often reached for what she liked first, leaving little chance for Rafael to offer her a bite.

Yet, at palace banquets or other formal dinners, Carissa changed completely. She was always graceful and proper. She would take a small bite and chew slowly seven or eight times before swallowing a true example of careful eating. It was only then that Rafael had a chance to offer her a dish.

Thomas noticed Elise watching them so intently, while she herself had not eaten.

He looked up and asked, "Why aren't you eating? Is it not to your taste?"

Elise puckered her lips and pouted. "No one is offering me any food."

Rosalind smiled and picked up a piece of meat. "Here, I'll give you some. Eat up."

But Elise did not take it. Instead, her curiosity got the better of her.

"Ms. Young, how did you marry Mr. Thomas in the first place?" she asked.

The gossip-loving Elise had already heard a bit about them, though not in much detail.

Looking at the two now, it was clear that Rosalind was still young and beautiful, though she was already a mother. Meanwhile, Thomas was indeed tall and elegant, but he did seem quite a bit older than her.

Rosalind glanced at her husband with a look full of tenderness, then softly said, "If you want to hear the story, you must eat first. When you're finished, I will tell you the story."

Hearing that, Elise immediately bowed her head and ate with eagerness, waiting to hear the story. She ate quickly, much like Carissa before her, and naturally, like those in the Pathfinders Guild.

Thomas watched the ladies with a smile. When they had finished, he went to the local authorities' office to meet with Bertram and Ansel to learn the latest news.

As for the story from long ago, even now, Thomas thought himself fortunate to have found a treasure like his wife. So, he asked Rosalind to share that sweet memory with Elise.

Sitting beneath the cotton tree, Rosalind's eyes were filled with a tender warmth and gentle sweetness as she spoke softly.

"When the troops returned to the

capital, I saw him at once. He rode a horse that was thin and worn, and he himself was thin, tired, and worn too. But his eyes were bright and full of life. I don't know why, but from that one glance, my heart pounded and my cheeks flushed. Do you believe in love at first sight, Your Grace?"

"I do," Elise answered.

Rosalind smiled gently. "Well, what I felt was not quite love at first sight. That usually means liking someone the very first time you ever see them

without knowing anything about them. But I already knew of him-1

had heard of his deeds, admired

him, and mourned his sacrifices. Not

just his, but those of so many

soldiers who gave their lives to

protect our kingdom. I respected them all deeply."

But with Thomas, it was different. Perhaps at first, it was as Trevor had said, that Rosalind felt a bit of pity for the man. After all, the return of a soldier coming home victorious to be reunited with his family and beloved-ought to have been a time of greatest joy and happiness.

Yet, Thomas had none of that.

Viola had eagerly returned to her parents' home the moment news of his "death" reached the capital. She never mourned him, not even once. And by the time he returned, she had already remarried.

Rosalind had thought Thomas would be broken by it all and be grief-stricken, perhaps bitter even, or full of blame towards Viola.

But he wasn't. He accepted it all with calm and bore no hatred in his heart.

When Viola tried to return to him, Thomas neither scolded her nor clung to her. He simply let his actions speak for him-telling her that they should part in peace and live their separate lives with dignity.

Her Graceful War Song #Chapter 1623 - Read Her Graceful War Song Chapter 1623

Rosalind had learned these things quite by chance. And with that first sudden feeling of love, she grew to think even more highly of Thomas' noble character.

She was of age to marry, after all. How could she not have dreamed, now and then, of the kind of man she might one day wed? Yet, those dreams were often just illusions. But when a real man appeared alive in her thoughts and dreams, she knew he was the one she wanted to marry.

At first, her grandfather was against it. Besides the difference in their ages, Trevor thought about how Thomas had already been married before. Though Rosalind would be his lawful wife, she wouldn't be his first.

She was the granddaughter of the royal chancellor, famous throughout the land. Many noble families in the capital sought her hand. Why, then, would she choose Thomas? He was just a soldier returning from battle, with no certain future.

But Rosalind was determined, so Trevor had no choice but to yield. This was the only time in her life she acted on her own will.

Trevor sent matchmakers, yet Thomas refused the arrangement, shocking Rosalind's entire family. Some thought he was ungrateful; others thought it shameful that she pursued him only to be rejected.

Rosalind's nursemaid, who was especially angry, said, "A young lady from your family and with your character-anyone would be glad to accept your hand in marriage. The Farrell family truly does not know its own good fortune."

"Is that so? Anyone would be glad? Then, what do you think the others who came calling saw in me? My family? My looks? My talents? Or perhaps my grandfather's name?" Rosalind retorted.

The nursemaid said that noble marriages always considered family, looks, and talent.

However, those who sought Rosalind were only interested in her as the granddaughter of the royal chancellor. Though Trevor had retired, a civil official who earned his praise would surely rise in rank. Marrying into the royal chancellor's household brought many benefits; anyone with ambition would rush to accept.

But Thomas had refused. He felt sorry for Rosalind, and believed she was only caught up in a foolish fancy. He thought that once she truly married him, she would regret it, and by then, it would be too late.

In truth, Thomas later told her that at first, he didn't believe she truly loved him or wanted to marry him. Of course, he didn't feel the same for her either, for he had never thought of such things.

It was only after he refused the proposal that he began to think of her sometimes. When others spoke of her, he would pretend not to care and listen quietly. But the more he learned about the young lady, the more he doubted she could truly love him.

She was beautiful, learned, kind, and understanding—far above his station. Elise rested her chin on her hand and interrupted, "Was Mr. Thomas really so lacking in confidence? Then, what changed, that he finally agreed?"

Rosalind smiled more warmly, her eyes soft and full of tenderness as she drifted into her memories.

What had happened at Gracewood Women's Academy was a shock for any unmarried young woman—a heavy blow, as if the world had fallen apart. But Rosalind never imagined that misfortune would turn to blessing, leading Thomas to ask for her hand.

She would never forget how she felt when she heard the news. After a

moment of wild joy, she thought he must feel sorry for her, so she refused him at first. It was his sincere confession that had truly brought them together, resulting in their marriage.

Those days felt like a dream. Her nursemaid said she never stopped smiling; she was so happy. How could she not be? She was to marry the man she loved and become his wife. She was truly joyous. Even on her wedding day, she was still in a dreamlike state.

When Thomas lifted her veil, their eyes met under the soft light.

"Are you hungry? I've had food prepared. Eat a little first; I must go greet the guests," he said gently.

At that moment, when her gaze met his, her heart beat fast-and it felt real.

Later, when he returned half-drunk, they shared a cup of wine together. Then, he took her hand and sat beside her to talk. He never spoke of the past. Instead, he said that as husband and wife, they must trust, support, and understand each other.

Her Graceful War Song #Chapter 1624 - Read Her Graceful War Song Chapter 1624

Thomas didn't make many promises or say exactly how he would treat Rosalind. He only said that from now on, as husband and wife, they would work together and live their days in harmony.

On their wedding night, Rosalind felt a little nervous. When the curtain of the bridal chamber was drawn, she found herself trembling for some reason.

Before she left her family, her nursemaid had told her what to expect on the wedding night and how to be with her husband. Though she was shy, she listened carefully and thought she understood it all well. But when the moment truly came, she didn't know what to do. Her whole body trembled with nerves.

Luckily, Thomas was very gentle.

Rosalind's nursemaid had said the wedding night might not always be a pleasant experience for a young woman, but if she could endure the first few days, everything would get better. Still, she felt her nursemaid had not said everything. The closeness of their bodies, the meeting of their souls — she found that feeling very beautiful.

Of course, she kept those thoughts to herself and didn't tell Elise.

The days after their marriage were sweeter than Rosalind had imagined. She had thought Thomas would be a stern, serious man, strict and perhaps dull. But he was very attentive. He noticed her moods and took care of her feelings. When he had time off, he took her to explore nearby places.

As a commander of the city garrison, he wasn't allowed to leave the capital without permission. So, the places they visited were only around the city. Over the years, they had seen all the interesting and not-so-interesting spots in the capital.

Her mother-in-law and sister-in-law were kind to her and very understanding. They knew she had to return to teaching at the academy, so they tried not to trouble her with household matters. Knowing how tiring teaching was for her mind, Alice would even have soup prepared every day, waiting for her when she came home.

They had only been married six months, but everyone praised how healthy and radiant Rosalind looked. Her grandparents finally breathed a sigh of relief, trusting that she was truly happy.

Rosalind still remembered the winter of their second year of marriage, when she caught a cold. At that time, Thomas had been busy with the army and couldn't come home, caught up with distributing winter clothes to the soldiers.

Her illness was strange. At night, she would burn with fever, feeling as if her whole body was on fire. Alice was very worried. After many days of medicine, she saw no improvement, so she personally went to bring Sebastian to check on Rosalind.

After a few days of treatment, the cold passed, but Rosalind still felt weak and uncomfortable all over. She remained too ill to return to the academy and had to keep taking leave.

Sebastian was called again. This time, when he took her pulse, he frowned and told Alice, "At first, I feared it was too soon, and because she was sick, I couldn't tell. But now I see that she is with child."

Everyone was happy to hear that. But seeing Sebastian's worried face, they remembered all the medicine Rosalind had taken for the cold and feared it might have harmed the baby. When they queried about that, Sebastian first asked when her last monthly bleeding had been.

After calculating the dates, he said, "It is not strange that it was only just discovered now. The pregnancy is very early-only just over a month. Because of this, I cannot guarantee if the medicine will cause any problems.

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"She took medicine for about ten days, including ones to reduce fever and clear toxins, which do affect her body. Whether the baby will be saved is uncertain. And if saved, whether the child will have any issues is also unclear. Even if there is just the slightest amount of risk, I must warn you so that you're aware of everything and can be prepared."

"Have you seen cases like this before, Healer Dalton?" Alice asked quickly.

"I have seen many. Most children are born healthy. But there were a few cases where the child was born with defects because the mother's body was weak from the cold."

Hearing that, everyone's hearts grew heavy. Even a few cases were frightening.

Seeing their silence, Sebastian

added, "Mrs. Farrell has just

recovered from a serious illness, and her body is still weak. If the

pregnancy is ended now, she

may

have trouble conceiving again, as the medicines are very strong. If you decide to keep the child, she must take good care of herself. If there is no bleeding after four months, then the pregnancy will be safe."

All in all, whether to keep the child or not was a difficult choice.

Chapter 1625

This was the first real trial in Thomas and Rosalind's marriage.

The sweet days were suddenly mixed with bitter medicine.

Such a matter required Thomas to make a decision. When he received the news,

he hurried home without delay. He didn't even stop to greet his mother and went

straight to Rosalind's room.

He came back cold from the snow, with flakes resting on his shoulders. After shivering for a moment outside, he warmed his hands by the fire before daring to

hold her.

His voice broke as he said, "Why didn't you tell me you were ill? You must never

do that again. If you feel unwell, you must tell me at once."

With his return, Rosalind felt steadier and more at ease.

But when Thomas saw how thin she had grown, tears filled his eyes. "I've let you

suffer. It's my fault. I have not taken good care of you."

As she laid her head against his chest and listened to his strong heartbeat, the

worries and sadness of recent days slowly began to fade.

"I'm the one who has troubled you. You are so busy, yet I made you come home,"

she said.

"No matter how busy I am, someone else can take my place in the army. But no

one can take my place by your side." Thomas gently stroked her back. "I

understand everything now. Let me speak with the physician again, and then we

will decide. Is that alright?"

She nodded. "I'll follow your lead."

They held each other for a while before reluctantly letting go.

Looking at her pale, thin face, Thomas felt nothing but deep sorrow. He didn't rush

to see Sebastian right away but stayed with her a while longer before heading to

Arcane Sanctum. There, Sebastian repeated what he had said before.

In short, falling ill had left Rosalind very weak. Terminating the pregnancy now would harm her health and might make it hard to conceive again. If they kept the

child, she would need attentive care, but the baby might not survive. If the pregnancy was terminated later, that could harm her too. As for whether the child

would have defects, Sebastian said it was possible but not very likely.

After some thought, Thomas said, "If terminating the pregnancy now means she

cannot have children later, that's alright. But I want to ask—if she takes the medicine to end the pregnancy, will she be safe?"

"The medicine to end a pregnancy is very strong. She is so weak that it is surely dangerous. One dose might work, but often, it doesn't fully end it, and then stronger medicine is needed. I fear her body cannot bear it," Sebastian explained.

Troubled by the danger, Thomas asked, "If the pregnancy was further along but

still couldn't be saved, would that harm her more than ending it now?"

"Before three months would be somewhat better. After three months, the fetus is

more formed, so the harm is greater," Sebastian answered.

Seeing Thomas so troubled and unable to decide, Sebastian added, "You should

go and discuss it with your family. If you decide to keep the baby, I will do my best

to help."

After Thomas left, he invited members from the royal chancellor's household. Both

families met to make the decision together. They all found it difficult and sighed.

The baby had come at an unfortunate time.

"The worry now is that if we manage to keep the child safe until six or seven months, yet still lose it then, it would be all the more dreadful," Trevor said, clearly concerned.

His worry was shared by all.

At this point in the story, Elise couldn't help but ask, "Was the baby Alaric?"

Rosalind gave no direct answer but

slowly said, "When I first learned I

was with child, I felt nothing at first.

But I began to accept it. Knowing

there was life in me, I decided I must try to keep it. Whether it survived or not, at least I would have done my best and would have no regrets."

No one could decide, but she made her choice—not to give up lightly, and to take care of herself and the child.

Thomas immediately took leave from court and stayed at home to care for her.

The pregnancy was difficult, as Rosalind's body was too weak. No sooner had she decided to keep the child than she began to bleed. She couldn't keep down any food, vomiting even the medicines meant to strengthen her. Some days, she could only manage a few sips of broth.

It was painful to watch, and everyone was deeply worried. Alice even sent for Sebastian, asking if the child might be lost naturally if they stopped trying to keep it. It was unbearable to see Rosalind suffer so.

Sebastian said he couldn't guarantee that. The best they could do was to continue

to care for Rosalind whenever there was bleeding and to give her medicine whenever she could take it.

Her Graceful War Song #Chapter 1626 - Read Her Graceful War Song Chapter 1626

Rosalind sighed.

"If Thomas had not been by my side during those days, I don't think I could have survived. If you ever marry, you must find someone who truly loves you. Only someone who loves you will protect you through the storms of life," she said gently.

Elise smiled. "I believe in love. Mom and Dad love each other."

Her home was warm with love, and her life was full of good things. As a result, she believed deeply in love, family, and friendship.

Rosalind smiled softly. "Yes, your mother and father do love each other very much."

Eager to hear more, Elise asked, "Did the baby survive? How did you get through those days?"

Every day, there were needles, medicine, and nourishing soups. Rosalind vomited so much that she felt dizzy and weak. She couldn't even get out of bed. Even standing to use the chamber pot drained all her strength. The baby took all her nutrients, but she could eat nothing herself.

Later, when the sickness was too much, she stopped taking the medicine meant to stabilize the pregnancy. Alice believed it was better to let nature take its course, and if the baby didn't come naturally, they would give Rosalind gentler medicine to end the pregnancy. That way, her body might bear it better.

This course of action had also been carefully considered and approved by Sebastian.

So, she stopped taking the strong medicine and relied only on nourishing broths and small bowls of millet porridge. Even then, she often vomited, but kept drinking more afterward. Everyone feared that without the medicine, the baby would be lost. The very next day, the bleeding started again, but still, she endured. By the fifth day, the bleeding had stopped.

The baby had not yet fully formed but showed a fierce will to live. The baby's strength, along with the love and care from her husband and mother-in-law, gave Rosalind courage.

Eventually, she vomited less and slowly managed to drink half a bowl of millet porridge and some meat broth. By the third month, her morning sickness was still severe, though mostly dry heaves. She could at least keep some food down.

This gave everyone hope.

And so, Rosalind endured-day by day—until the fifth month, when she stopped vomiting completely and her appetite returned.

Sebastian examined her and said the baby was now safe and stable. Everyone breathed a little easier, but their hearts were still heavy with worry. After all, childbirth was dangerous for a woman. Only when the baby was safely born could they truly relax.

Sure enough, trouble came. When Rosalind was eight months pregnant, she fell whilst on a walk. The pain in her belly was unbearable, so they sent for Sebastian at once.

A midwife had already been hired and was living in the house to care for her. The daily walks were the midwife's idea, as walking helped prepare the body for birth. Usually, Thomas would walk with his wife every day. But that day, Alice had called for a physician after experiencing a bout of dizziness, so Thomas had gone to tend to her.

When he didn't return for a long time, Rosalind grew worried about her mother-in-law and decided to go check on her. The midwife and her maid followed behind, but they didn't hold onto her, since she had always been steady on her feet.

Rosalind had only ever walked in her own garden, where every step was familiar. But after so long indoors, and with her swollen belly obscuring her view, she missed a small stone, stumbled, and fell.

The sudden accident frightened everyone. They quickly carried her back inside. The midwife examined Rosalind and found her water had broken, which meant she was going into labor early.

Sebastian was summoned again. Giving birth at eight months was premature. The baby was also in the wrong position. The midwife had been trying to correct this, hoping to have two more months to fix it.

But now, the situation had changed.

With skill and experience, the

midwife carefully reached inside to turn the baby into the correct position. It was terribly painful for Rosalind. Thomas stayed by her

bedside the whole time. No one

could convince him to leave, he was determined to stay with his wife.

Such a strong, brave man—yet when Rosalind was in pain, he cried in heartache.

After the baby was turned, Rosalind

was too weak even to speak. Her belly still ached, and though her water had broken, she was not yet ready to give birth. They needed to use medicine to start the labor and open the birth canal. That was Sebastian's job now.

There was no time to lose. They had to begin the birth soon or the baby might suffocate.

Her Graceful War Song #Chapter 1627 - Read Her Graceful War Song Chapter 1627

The birth was not easy.

The baby gave Rosalind a hard time for five long hours before he was finally born. At first, he didn't cry. The midwife had to tap the soles of his feet a few times before he burst into a loud wail. The moment he cried, everyone's hearts settled

once more.

Thomas had been so tense with worry that when he finally relaxed, his vision went dark and he fainted.

Elise gasped. "I heard about that before. Mr. Jacob told me that Mr. Thomas once fainted in the delivery room and everyone teased him for it for a long time."

Rosalind smiled. "Yes, it's true. He was made fun of because of that. The baby in this story was indeed Alaric."

She went on to explain what happened after the birth. Because he was premature, Alaric was weak and often fell ill. He took medicine nearly as often as he took milk. Thankfully, by the age of three, he had grown stronger and begun training in martial arts to build his strength.

The second child came much like Elise did—it was fate. After Alaric was born, Thomas had asked Sebastian for medicine to prevent more children. He took it himself and was told it would work for five years, after which he could take another pill if he wanted to stop having children altogether.

No one expected Rosalind to become pregnant again before the five years were up.

When Thomas learned she was expecting once more, he nearly fainted in shock. But this time, her health was better, and unlike the first pregnancy, she didn't suffer from morning sickness. She could eat, drink, and walk about. She didn't neglect the household or her lessons in the slightest.

Everyone said this child must be a daughter-a girl would be more gentle and less troubling for her mother.

Thomas, who had been anxious at first, grew hopeful. Since Rosalind was pregnant, he hoped for a little daughter, who would be so dear and loving. But alas, the hoped-for little lady did not come. Instead, they had another boy.

When the baby was born, the midwife came out to announce it was a boy, and everyone was happy. Boy or girl, a child was always a blessing.

The child was strong and healthy, heavy in Rosalind's arms-so different from his older brother, who had been as fragile as glass when he was born.

"That's so strange. Alaric was the frail one, so he ought to have been a scholar. Meanwhile, Ives was strong and hearty, so he seemed the sort to take up the sword. How is it they ended up the other way around?" Elise said with a laugh.

Rosalind smiled. "Because Alaric was weak, he began training his body with sword practice at the age of three. He never stopped since then. yes, on the other hand, went with me to the academy. Being surrounded by books and lessons, he naturally grew to love studying.

Now, the couple had two children-one took to books, and the other to the sword. Both were dutiful and well-behaved. Alaric had already joined the army, and Ives had passed the national examinations, ready to rise higher step by step.

As the two women spoke, Thomas had been listening outside for some time. He had just returned from the local authorities' office, where he had settled some matters, and happened to hear their conversation about the past.

He looked at his wife's happy face and felt the same joy reflected in his own. He often thought himself unworthy of her. He had once been married before, but that union had not lasted.

True companionship required two hearts that understood each other, to be in harmony and trust. Only then could it endure. Life was not the same with everyone; different people made all the difference, and happiness could make up for many hardships along the way

Many years ago, Thomas had received a sincere letter of apology from Viola, and had long since forgiven her. Viola's betrayal and departure had caused him pain for a while, but fate had more than made up for it.

Now, every day was filled with joy and contentment. He was certain that he and his wife would grow old together, loving each other for the rest of their lives.

Her Graceful War Song #Chapter 1628 - Read Her Graceful War Song Chapter 1628

Before my separation, I, Leona Sanford, used to lead a life that was nothing but a joke.

Since I was young, my parents taught me to keep a low profile, never seek attention, stay out of other people's business, and guard my reputation carefully. I was never to invite trouble upon myself.

Everyone said my parents were generous, modest, and noble in character.

I believed it was true.

After all, my father was a dignified prince, while my mother came from the noble Sullivan family. Even with such high ranks, they never troubled others or lost their temper. Even when treated unfairly, they simply smiled and bore it.

But as I grew older and learned to see things clearly, I realized the people's so-called praise was really mockery. To them, my parents were cowards.

The frightening part was that I had grown up with such teachings, never even realizing how timid I had become. I had mistaken my own weakness for gentleness, and that mistake stayed with me even after I married Samuel.

I thought my parents were simply kind—perhaps cautious to protect their good name and avoid conflict. But when I, a proud duchess, was mistreated by my husband's family, it became clear to me that my family's weakness had long been known to others.

Samuel was a handsome and charming scholar, one of the top graduates of the national examinations. I fell in love with him at first sight. When he rode through the streets on horseback, I threw a scented pouch at him. It was something everyone did, so I never thought he would notice me. When the marriage was arranged between our families, I was overjoyed, lost in the happy dreams of becoming a bride.

My parents kept the world's troubles from me, so I had no idea what my cousin was going through. Only later did I learn that Cari had sent me wedding gifts, but my mother refused to accept them, saying they were unlucky.

I was very upset. Cari had always been kind to me, and when she was in trouble,

I had failed to help her. Now, my mother had even rejected her goodwill—it was a clear insult.

When I asked my mother why she had done that, she wept and said it was all for my own good.

"If unlucky people send gifts, their bad fortune might harm your marriage. What will you do if that happens? A woman's marriage is her happiness for her whole life," she said.

I asked her why Cari's divorce was unlucky. My mother coldly explained that Cari's whole family was dead, and now she was divorced too. How could that not be unlucky?

I could hardly believe my ears. The family members who had died included my mother's sister—her very own blood. And yet, she called that unlucky?!

I was so angry that tears fell from my eyes, but I couldn't say a single word. That was always how I was. When angry, I only knew how to cry and couldn't speak properly.

Once, when Cari came back from Meadow Ridge to visit me, she warned me that my nature would only bring me harm. She told me not to think too highly of myself, but also not to belittle myself.

I was a duchess, yet why did I always seem like a weak, bullied woman? Cari urged me to be confident, gracious, and steady. I wished I could, but I couldn't.

My mother knew how poorly I was treated in my husband's family, yet she kept telling me to be patient and forgiving. She said all men were the same if I could not tolerate them, I was jealous, petty, and narrow-minded—and people would point and mock me behind my back.

Even when I lost my baby and almost died, it was Cari who stayed by my side and protected me. She wanted to take me away from the Earl of Gracehold's residence.

Yet, my parents came to try to stop me from leaving. I will never forget how they said that if I got divorced

would never be allowed to come home Their words broke my heart; their cruelty hurt me just as much as

Samuel's did.

I had been blinded by love when I married Samuel; it had been a mistake. But

how could my own parents treat me like that?

In the end, Cari helped me get a divorce edict, and Samuel's name was erased

from the official records. He was even sentenced to exile.

Though even the king and his officials couldn't bear Samuel's behavior, my parents still pretended nothing was wrong. Their coldness toward me was fiercer than ever, and they refused to let me return home.

No one could understand how terrifying it was to feel trapped at the bottom of such an abyss.

People said children must never hate their parents. But I truly hated them deeply. At my worst, I secretly swore I would never call them my parents again, no matter what the future held.

Her Graceful War Song #Chapter 1629 - Read Her Graceful War Song Chapter 1629

My parents, Harvey and Heather, had truly fallen. Not even in my wildest dreams had I imagined that my timid and cautious father would one day take part in treason.

My father and elder brother were executed, while my mother was imprisoned. I wasn't implicated in the scandal, as the whole capital knew they had long since severed ties with me.

I used to swear that if they ever came to ruin, I wouldn't lift a finger to help them. But blood ties weren't so easily broken. Even if I couldn't forgive them in my heart, the pain was still there. I couldn't eat or sleep in peace.

I went to Cari and pleaded to be allowed to send in some food and clothing at the right time. When my mother saw me, she wept bitterly and begged me to help her escape. I still couldn't break the habit of crying too easily, but my heart had hardened.

"When I was miserably trapped in the Langley family's mess, I begged you for help. You told me even a muddy pit has air to breathe, and that I ought to stay where I was. Now, I return your words to you-so long as you can breathe and live, it is enough."

Having said that, I turned and walked away. My mother cried after me, shouting her apologies, but I didn't look back.

When the new king took the throne, a general amnesty was issued. Samuel, who had been sentenced to exile for ten years, was allowed to return to the capital six months early.

Even though I was a divorced woman, I was still the Duchess of Everpeace, so many came to propose marriage. But I no longer had any thoughts of marrying again. As I spent my days moving between Skye Embroidery and Gracewood Women's Academy, my life was full and free.

Though I turned down all the suitors, there were always people worrying over my marriage-none more enthusiastic than Mrs. Murray, the prime minister's wife.

Two years ago, a new top scholar was named: Lucien Claude, aged thirty-two. As an only child who had lost both parents, he had delayed both marriage and taking the national examination out of mourning. He held a post at the Academy of Wisdom and was known to be kind, steady, and devoted.

Mrs. Murray admired him and had come more than once to speak on his behalf. I lost count of how many times I refused, but she simply wouldn't give up.

"He's the top scholar of the year. Surely it wouldn't be hard for him to marry a young lady in the prime of her youth. Why should he marry a divorced woman like me? Besides, even if you mean well by matchmaking, perhaps Mr. Claude doesn't truly wish it. Maybe he would rather find a younger lady, and only agreed because you kept pressing him," I said helplessly.

I truly disliked reminding others that I was a divorced woman, but Mrs. Murray was so persistent that it became hard to ignore. Regardless, what said was the truth. I had seen Mr. Claude before. Though already thirty-two, he was refined and charming, with striking, elegant features.

Also, as a top scholar, he was held in high regard by the king himself. With such status, he could marry any noble young lady he wanted. I suspected he simply didn't know how to turn down Mrs. Murray.

When Mrs. Murray heard what I said, she quickly assured me, "Your Grace, ever since he met you, he has been quite taken and hasn't thought of anyone else. He begged me to act as a matchmaker. Why not meet him once more?"

But I wouldn't agree and quickly found an excuse to see her out.

I thought that would be the end of it-until the day I returned from the workshop

and saw someone waiting near the gate.

At first, I didn't recognize him. He

was thin and tan, wearing fine clothes that sat awkwardly on him like a scrawny monkey dressed silks. The sight was almost laughable. Then, he called my name in a familiar manner, though his voice was rough and unfamiliar. I looked at him more closely and finally realized who he was.

It was Samuel.

Before I could call for someone to send him away, he stepped forward in a flash

and grabbed my hand.

"I know you never forgot me and have been waiting for me. Everything that happened before was all my fault. I've thought about it over the years. From now on, we'll

start fresh. I swear I won't let you
down again," he said, his eyes full of
intensity.

I was so stunned that I forgot to pull my hand away. I just stood there, wondering if
I had misheard. How could he have the nerve to say such a thing?!

"Outrageous!" someone barked before I could respond.

A figure stepped forward and struck Samuel's hand away.

His words were sharp with authority as he coldly snapped, "What scoundrel dares
lay hands on the duchess?"

Her Graceful War Song #Chapter 1630 - Read Her Graceful War Song Chapter 1630

I looked up to see Lucien Claude standing there. Without a word, he stepped
quickly between Samuel and me. With his back to me, I couldn't see his
expression.

However, his voice was firm and sharp when he instructed, "Step back."

Samuel clearly hadn't expected that.

He stumbled back and eyed Lucien coldly. "Who are you? I'm here for my wife. What
business is it of yours?"

Samuel calling me his wife made my stomach turn. The past rushed back all at once,
filling me with bitterness and anger.

"I have no husband. I am no one's wife. Mind your words, or you'll ruin my reputation," I
said coldly.

Samuel hurried to speak: "Leona, I know I was wrong. Punish me, scold me, whatever
you like, but we—"

"You are not husband and wife," Lucien cut him off, having clearly seen my position on the matter.

He waved a hand toward the end of the lane. "Guards, come and see the young lord of the Earl of Gracehold's family back to his home."

At once, two men stepped forward and took Samuel by each arm.

Samuel grew agitated and shouted, "Who do you think you are?! I'm here to see my wife! This has nothing to do with you!"

"Who I am is no concern of yours," Lucien replied coolly. "Take him away!"

At his command, the men dragged Samuel off. To keep him from shouting, they stuffed a cloth into his mouth before hauling him to the carriage waiting just beyond the alley.

Once he was gone, Lucien turned back. He stepped back a few paces, gave a proper bow, and politely said, "Your Grace, forgive me for overstepping."

I dipped into a slight curtsy in return. "Were you merely passing by, Mr. Claude?"

"I was, yes," he confirmed, his expression sincere.

My mood already shaken from Samuel's appearance, I had no desire to press further.

I simply replied, "Thank you."

"You would be safer with a few maids accompanying you. There are always some who can't let things go," Lucien suggested.

These past few years, I often stayed overnight at the workshop, sometimes joining the young ladies in embroidery. Occasionally, when I returned home, I took a carriage without any maids or servants, only the coachman. Just now, the coachman had waited outside, and I sent him to buy a few things. Since I had already reached the estate gate,

I didn't think it mattered.

I hadn't expected Samuel to be waiting here.

"Thank you for the reminder, Mr. Claude," I said quietly, then turned and walked into the estate.

I didn't hear footsteps leaving behind me, so I turned and saw him still standing where I had left him, looking in my direction. Perhaps he hadn't expected me to turn back so suddenly, for his face flushed red before he quickly looked away. He gave a stiff bow, then turned and walked off in haste.

I found it rather strange. Why had he blushed?

When Cari heard that Samuel had come to see me, she went to Gracehold Estate herself.

According to Lulu, Samuel had knelt before Cari that day, weeping and full of regret. He said he finally understood how good I had been to him, and now wished to get back together and be a married couple ore. He begged my cousin to help persuade me.

He even swore a dreadful oath in front of her, saying that if he ever dared to wrong me again, may he be struck by lightning and die a miserable death.

He echoed the old saying: "To realize one's mistake and correct it is the greatest virtue."

He had paid the price for his wrongs—exiled for years, enduring hardship. Now that he had repented, he ought to be forgiven.

Cari didn't waste time lecturing him. She simply looked him in the eye as she confronted him in front of the Earl of Gracehold's family.

"Whether you know your faults or not is your own concern. But if you dare show your face in front of Leona again, I'll break your legs myself," she said.

Samuel tried to argue, saying Cari had no right to decide for me, and that the reason I hadn't remarried all these years was because I was still waiting for him.

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Then, with no small amount of pride, he added, "Leona fell in love with me at first sight. She loved me deeply Now that I've come back, she's naturally overjoyed. She's just pretending to be proud, and m willing to apologize and give her that. Whatever quarrel we've had, it's between husband and wife. What business is it of yours? Though

you're the regent's princess consort, you're an outsider-"

Lulu said he didn't manage to finish that sentence, because Cari lashed out with her whip right then and there. The blow sent him to the ground, howling and wailing like a child. People from the Earl of Gracehold's household rushed out to beg for mercy, promising they would watch him closely and keep him from causing more trouble.

Cari shot a sharp glare in his direction and scoffed. "It seems that exile didn't teach you a single lesson. One strike and you're howling like you're dying. Good. Go ahead and keep causing trouble-see if I don't handle you myself."

She even gave her whip another flick, and Samuel fainted on the spot from sheer fright.

When I heard all this, I couldn't help but laugh, and yet, I also felt he was rather pitiful. After all these years of exile, it seemed he hadn't suffered much at all. The Earl of Gracehold's family likely couldn't bear to see him truly endure hardship. It wouldn't surprise me if they had sent money in secret to ensure he was well taken care of.