

Her Graceful War Song

chapter 1663

As Violet and her companions were still guests at the estate, Melanie chose not to embarrass her daughter too much. She allowed Carissa to accompany her friends and show them the sights and wonders of the capital.

As the New Year approached, the streets were bustling with people stocking up for the celebrations. Suddenly, a galloping horse charged through the city gates, racing straight toward the palace.

The rider shouted at the top of his lungs, "Great news! The Hell Monarch has reclaimed the Southern Frontier! The Southern Frontier is ours again!"

Standing in the doorway of a silk shop, holding two bolts of fine satin in her arms, Carissa heard the cry with her own ears.

She remembered how Rafael had swept through the Southern Frontier like wildfire after heading to the battlefield, reclaiming more than a dozen cities in quick succession. It wasn't until he reached Ilyrian City and Simonton City that the fighting had dragged on. And when Westhaven forces lent their aid to Sandoria, the battle had stalled even longer.

But according to the timeline, the two armies should still be locked in a stalemate. How had victory come so soon?

Still, Carissa never doubted Rafael would win. She had simply not expected it to happen this quickly. As it turned out, without Westhaven meddling, the campaign to reclaim the Southern Frontier went smoothly.

When she got home, she shared the news with her mother. Then, she prepared food and wine to honor her late father and brothers. They deserved some of the credit for reclaiming the Southern Frontier too. After all, they had passed down their hard-earned experience of fighting Sandorian soldiers to Rafael.

In February, the Hell Monarch Army returned in triumph.

Carissa had wanted to go to the city gates to greet Rafael, but Melanie had been sick with a cold since the start of the new year and still hadn't recovered. Carissa had to stay by her side to care for her, so she couldn't join the crowds in celebration.

Still, she missed Rafael terribly and wanted nothing more than to see him.

Carissa decided that once her mother had recovered, she would visit Hell Monarch Estate herself. He surely wouldn't remember the life they had once lived together, but she did. And she knew that before he departed for war, he had come to Northwatch Estate to ask for her hand.

In this lifetime, she was willing to take the first step. It didn't matter if she had to pursue him instead of the other way around.

But early the next morning, Carissa was caught completely off guard. Lily came rushing in to report that the Hell Monarch had arrived with Natalie to deliver a formal proposal of marriage. Melanie was already in the main hall to receive them.

The previous night, Carissa hadn't returned to her room until after midnight, having stayed up late caring for her mother. Once she finally lay down, she had tossed and turned, torn on whether she should seek out Rafael.

She wanted to see him so badly, but she knew better. After the long journey back from the front lines, he must be exhausted. What mattered most was that he got some rest. She never imagined he would come to her first.

Without a second thought, she hurried toward the main hall. She stood shakily at the doorway,

struggling to steady her breath

she watched his proud figure kneel before her mother. He was saying something, but she couldn't hear the words. Her heart was caught up in the moment, desperate to take in every detail of the man who haunted her thoughts.

Melanie caught sight of her daughter and smiled softly. There was no need to ask what Carissa thought about the proposal. Her longing to be by Rafael's side was written all over her face, and she looked ready to throw herself into his arms.

Snow fell gently, the flakes drifting softly through the air. The trees in the yard were bare, except for one orchid in full bloom.

Rafael took off his cloak and gently draped it around Carissa's shoulders, making her heart race. Though they had been married for years previously, seeing him now as the young man he once was left her unable to look away.

"That campaign of yours..." she managed to say, clearing her throat as she tore her gaze from him. "You won so quickly. It was quite the victory."

Rafael looked at her steadily. "I couldn't wait to win. Every day, I thought about coming back to marry you once the war was over. I feared that if I was even a step too slow, someone else might take you away."

Carissa's eyes widened. "What?"

Rafael gently held her shoulders, his voice soft and tender as he said, "Carissa, when I said I'd lie down with you for a while that day, I didn't mean to fall asleep. But I did. And when I woke up, I found myself back on the Southern Frontier battlefield.

"It felt impossible, like a dream... yet I was glad. Because it meant we'd been given another lifetime together. The thought that we have decades ahead of us fills me with joy."

Carissa intertwined her fingers with his, holding his hand tightly. Wiping away the tears in her eyes, she smiled, bright and beautiful.

"This time, we'll be in love before we marry," she said.

Rafael pressed a gentle kiss to her forehead.

Though the wind was cold, Carissa's heart was warm.

Things set in motion long ago were

stirring again, and the future was moving forward beyond anyone's

control. Trouble brewed at court, but

Carissa and Rafael were ready Victory would come easily, and they would live happily ever after once more.

The End

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