

## War Song 521

### Chapter 521

Carissa called Violet over, asking her to help place Kayla on her back. With Kayla securely on her back, Carissa hurried back to the carriage.

"Stay here. I'll find it for you," she promised.

Kayla shivered uncontrollably, her hair soaked through. It was impossible to tell whether the moisture on her face was from tears or rain, and her lips quivered violently. "Please... Please, you must find it."

"Don't come out!" Carissa's tone grew more urgent. "Take care of yourself. We can't have you distressed, even in spirit."

Kayla covered her face and wept.

Carissa instructed the coachman to keep an eye on Kayla, then turned back to continue the search.

After a little more than half an hour, the carriages began to thin out, but the rain still poured relentlessly. The sky was ominously dark. Even with the help of the coachman from the Marquis of Elderglen's family and three others, they were exhausted and unable to find the earring.

Just as they were about to give up, Carissa noticed a glint of light near the academy's entrance. She rushed over and found that it was indeed the pearl earring. She quickly picked it up, but the earring was damaged the gold thread and the two gold leaves holding the pearl were missing, leaving only the pearl itself.

The place she found the earring wasn't where Kayla had fallen. The earring must have been crushed by a carriage and then kicked to this spot.

Carissa searched the area briefly and managed to recover one thin gold leaf, but couldn't find anything else.

Soaked through, everyone returned to the carriage. Carissa held out the pearl and the gold leaf to Kayla.

Kayla grabbed them, clutching them tightly in her palm. She kneeled in the carriage, bowing deeply and sobbing uncontrollably.

Carissa held her close, letting her cry on her shoulder. She felt the intense heat of Kayla's tears, which made her heart ache.

Kayla's crying gradually quieted down. It seemed she was used to suppressing her emotions, and she soon composed herself. She wiped her tears, looked up from Carissa's shoulder, her face pale and her eyes still wet.

She managed a faint, bitter smile and said, "I was so afraid it would be lost like his remains, but finding it now is a relief. Thank you, Your Grace."

She signaled her maid to help her out of the carriage and thanked Carissa again before limping toward her carriage.

Carissa sat in the carriage, her hair dripping wet. The droplets fell onto her face, and she felt uncomfortably warm.

Violet held her close and said, "Don't be too upset. This is the fate of many soldiers. Remember the many battles we fought at the Southern Frontier? We lost so many of our comrades then."

"Yes, and it's the families left behind who suffer the most," Carissa replied, wiping her face with the back of her hand. "She's never been able to move on."

"The token proves that they were already deeply attached before their marriage," Violet continued.

"Yes," Carissa murmured. "So, she remains in the Marquis of Elderglen's family, holding onto their past home. She even adopted a son and named him Alexander, just as they had once planned."

Violet sighed,

Septimus really is

Thomas, and if the rescue is successful, he would return to find his wife married to someone else. Meanwhile, Lady Kayla, who waited so long, will never see her beloved husband again."

Fate played cruel tricks, and the world was full of suffering.

Why couldn't the heavens be fair?

Since they were soaked through, they had to return to the estate and change into dry clothes. Carissa had Travis arrange for a few household soldiers to keep watch and later bring Ryan back.

In the afternoon, both women felt unwell after being caught in the rain for so long. They had the estate physician prescribe medicine. After taking it, they both went to bed.

In the evening, Barrett emerged from

the Capital Guard barracks. He was requesting time off because his mother had fallen ill since that day. Serena had been unwilling to part with the ruby tiara and was now keeping it with her constantly while caring for his mother, displaying an unprecedented level of devotion. Barrett planned to take a few days off to handle matters at home. If Serena continued to refuse to return the tiara, he would have to take it by force. He couldn't allow Serena to use Thomas's pension to buy it.

It would be an insult to both him and Thomas.

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Barrett went out and bought a gold hairpin, and placed it in a box. Upon returning to the estate, he inquired about Serena and learned that she was in their mother's room. He went straight there. As expected, Serena was holding the jewelry box when he arrived. Seeing him, she immediately stood up, her expression wary. "Aren't you on duty tonight? Why are you back so soon?" "This is for you." Barrett handed her the box and said coolly, "I bought it with my allowance."

Serena looked at him with suspicion. "You bought a hairpin for me? Why?"

She clutched her jewelry box tighter. For the past few days, she had been told to return the ruby tiara. Now, she was suddenly being given a hairpin?

"It's to add to your dowry, and also because you've been taking such good care of our mom these past few days. Just accept it," Barrett said with a sigh, then turned to look at Rebecca on the bed. "Mom, how are you feeling today?"

Rebecca was surprised by her son's actions. She replied, "Your sister has indeed worked hard taking care of me. I'm feeling somewhat better today. I should be able to get out of bed and walk tomorrow." "Shall I help you up for a walk now?" Barrett lifted the blanket, and extended his hand to assist her.

Seeing this, Serena finally set aside the jewelry box that held the ruby tiara and opened the new box. Inside was a gold hairpin.

She picked it up, noting its weight and the fine craftsmanship. It resembled the hairpins from the Golden Tower. But upon closer inspection, she saw it was a bit different. It was likely from the Gilded Tower. Although she felt a twinge of disappointment, it was still pure gold and not a loss. She looked up at Barrett. "Thank you, Barrett."

"Try it on and see if it suits you," Barrett said as he helped their mother stand.

Serena went to the dressing table to try it on, but was startled by Rebecca's exclamation from behind, "Barrett, what are you doing?"

Serena turned around abruptly to see that Barrett was no longer assisting their mother, but was holding her ruby tiara.

Her heart leaped to her throat. "Barrett, what are you planning to do?!"

Barrett said coldly, "Since you can't wear a ruby tiara made from pure gold as a concubine in the Marquis of Ironridge's family, I'll return it for you."

With that, he turned and walked away.

"No!" Serena screamed, rushing forward. "Give it back!"

Barrett had already used his Lightfoot Skill to leap away, quickly mounting his horse and heading towards The Golden Tower.

He needed to return the item and retrieve the money before the Golden Tower closed for the night.x Although the Golden Tower was still open, there were few customers left. The capital didn't enforce a curfew, but no wealthy patrons would visit the store at night, so they would close by dark.

Barrett was the last customer of the day.

William was the one who greeted Barrett. Upon hearing that he was here to return the ruby tiara, he maintained his smile. William's friendly demeanor eased Barrett's embarrassment. He had expected the return process to be a hassle, but to his surprise, the Golden Tower staff handled it smoothly. After inspecting the ruby tiara, they promptly processed the return.

The full sum of 36,800 silver coins was refunded without any deductions.

William personally escorted Barrett to the door and politely said, "We look forward to your next visit."

As Barrett looked back at the Golden Tower's golden sign, he thought to himself that he would never set foot in the place again.

The last shred of his pride had been lost there.

Riding swiftly back to the estate, Barrett found the place in chaos.

Knowing she could not catch up with her brother, Serena concluded that Viola had forced him to return the tiara. Enraged, she had stormed into Grace Mansion and slapped Viola across the face with all her strength.

Viola had spent a lot of money

buying the ruby tiara and had been

feeling resentful about her

husband's indifference. So, when Serena came in and slapped her without warning, she was infuriated and immediately retaliated with a slap of her own.

The two women began to fight, struggling and hitting each other.

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When Barrett returned to Valor Estate, the maid had managed to pull the two women apart.

However, both Serena and Viola were in a terrible state-hair disheveled, clothes torn, and their faces marked with scratches and handprints. They looked like they had been in a street brawl.

Rebecca sat on a chair, gasping for breath and glaring fiercely at Viola. "Serena is about to debut into society! How can she face anyone with her face so marred?"

Viola was sitting on the floor, crying inconsolably. Her sobs filled with deep frustration and helplessness.

Barrett strode in and helped Viola to her feet, then handed her a stack of banknotes. "The ruby tiara has been returned. Take this money back with you."

"Are you out of your mind, Barrett?" Rebecca snapped, rising angrily. "Returning the jewelry we bought-what's left of our family's dignity?"

"Bring it back! I won't return it!" Serena had just caught her breath, and she rushed at him. She pounded his chest and displayed an unseemly tantrum. Barrett endured her blows stoically, his face impassive. He was weary of this life, and was utterly exhausted.

Viola was stunned as she held the banknotes in a daze, momentarily forgetting her tears.

After striking Barrett for a while, Serena turned to snatch the banknotes from Viola, who quickly hid them behind her and stepped back.

"What are you trying to do?"

"That was a gift you bought for me! You insisted on buying it," Serena's voice was hoarse and filled with bitterness.

"I regret it," Viola said blankly.

Was she regretting the purchase of the ruby tiara, or something else? She wasn't sure of her own feelings.

But this was not the life she wanted.

The Warren family felt like a rotting, festering cesspool into which she had plunged headlong.

However, she had no say in this marriage. It had been arranged by Natalie, who had come as a matchmaker. Her mother had explained the reasons behind it, and it wasn't that she couldn't refuse, but rejecting it would have been detrimental to her eldest brother's prospects.

Moreover, she had been very lonely then. She wanted someone by her side who understood her, someone who would make her feel the way she had felt with Thomas.

She had thought Barrett would be like Thomas, but he wasn't.

The Warren family was also a far cry from the Farrell family. Everyone in the Farrell family was so easy to get along with. Alice treated her like a beloved daughter, sparing her from daily duties and not requiring her to wait on her. In the Farrell household, there was no one difficult to deal with.

In contrast, the Warren family was

full of difficult people. The air was et

constantly filled with the sounds of insults, shouts, and cries.

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Suddenly, she felt a deep sense of weariness. Holding the banknotes, she turned and walked out, sitting listlessly in the side hall.

By evening, Viola's crying had finally stopped. She leaned back on the chaise, tears still quietly falling.

She felt so aggrieved. Even if Barrett had come to comfort her, it would have eased her heart a little.

But Barrett didn't stay in Grace Mansion. After Rebecca and Serena left, Yvonne came to report, "Mr. Warren has gone to Madam Aurora." Viola buried her face in her hands, and cried bitterly.

What had she done wrong? Why was she being treated this way?

She would have preferred if he had stayed in the study rather than going to Aurora's side.

She felt deeply hurt tonight, yet Barrett didn't stay with her but went to Aurora instead. Did he care about her at all?

Aurora had been disfigured and lost. an ear-she looked like a monster Barrett would rather be with a monster-like figure than stay with her.

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Barrett sat in Aurora's room, having no other place to go.

He had stayed in the study for several days. It was quiet, but the solitude of the late night was terrifying for him.

He was plagued by memories of his

past mistakes, his heart weighed down and suffocating under the burden of regret. As if to prove to himself that he had not made those

mistakes in vain, he came to Aurora

tonight.



But as he sat across from her, her cruel actions replayed in his mind, making his stomach churn with nausea.

"You really do despise me," Aurora said coldly, her eyes fixed on him since he entered the room.

Since returning from the battlefield, he hadn't sought her out unless she made a fuss.

Aurora was well aware of the recent turmoil in the residence. She enjoyed watching the chaos and seeing the foolish people flounder.

Look, she hadn't done anything, yet Barrett had come to her of his own accord.

#### Chapter 524

Barrett's eyes were cold as he said softly, "I truly wish you could tell me that you didn't do those things in Fawnrun City."

Aurora smirked coldly. "Is it because of what happened in Fawnrun City that you despise me? No, you despise me because I was captured on the mountain outside Simonton City, because I was disfigured. You think I'm no longer pure, but I can assure you, I am." Barrett shook his head. "No, it's not the events on the mountain outside Simonton City that trouble me. I only feel pity for you in that regard. Otherwise, I wouldn't have taken a beating on your behalf. What I can't accept are the things you did in Fawnrun City." "Stop deceiving yourself, alright?" Aurora continued to smirk. "Do you really think that what I did in Fawnrun City was wrong?"

"Don't you think you were in the wrong?" Barrett took a deep breath. "Even now, you still don't see your mistakes?" Aurora didn't wear a veil, and the light revealed the full extent of her emotions. Her eyes burned with fiery ambition.

"Barrett, you're not the only one who wants to make a name for yourself. I do too. I am the first female general of this era. No matter what great feats Carissa achieved at the Southern Frontier, she can't replace me! I worked hard for my achievements in Fawnrun City. If I hadn't done those things, how could I have solidified my status?"

She removed the hairpin from her hair, lifting the lamp wick slightly to cast a harsher light on her disfigured half-face.

"Do you think those great generals never committed cruel acts? To survive on the battlefield, no one is soft-hearted. General Sinclair became the Marquis of Northwatch at a young age. Do you really

believe he relied solely on his bravery in battle? No, the darkness hidden behind those achievements is something you and I will never fully understand. Only someone as foolish as you would think of sacrificing your life for military achievements! Even if you fought to the death, you would never become someone like General Prince." Barrett shook his head. "I don't believe that."

Aurora placed the hairpin back into

her hair. "You don't need to be so stubborn. You know very well why General Prince could replace the Hell Monarch to command the Hell Monarch Army. Was it because of his abilities? No, it was because of his title, the merits accumulated by his ancestors, and the privileges he enjoys.

"I only hoped that we could be promoted and that we could also enjoy such blessings for our

descendants. As long as we become nobles, our children will have the

Carissa and General Prince

chance to become people like

individuals who can attain

everything without needing to exert much effort."

Barrett looked into her eyes, and saw both ambition and bitterness. He felt once again that he didn't truly understand Aurora.

He said to her, "You once told me how women's positions are so low. You saw countless women stuck in domestic roles, wasting their lives, and it made you feel sorry for them. You said you wanted to succeed to help improve their status, and make sure they're not easily mistreated."

Aurora countered, "Is there a conflict? I want to succeed and benefit my descendants, and I also hope that my success can improve the status of women. There's no contradiction. I can't just sacrifice myself for others without gaining anything. Am I wrong for wanting both?"

She leaned forward and pressed, "Tell me, am I wrong for thinking this way? Am I?!"

Barrett hesitated for a moment, then instinctively shook his head. "No, you're not wrong."

"If I'm not wrong, is it reasonable for you to distance yourself from me because of what happened in Fawnrun City? Ultimately, it's because I was captured and disfigured. You think I'm tainted."

Barrett pulled himself free from her line of thinking. "Wanting to succeed doesn't make it right to kill civilians."

Aurora's eyes grew cold. "Those were Westhaven people, not Starhaven citizens."

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Barrett said, "Even if they were Westhaven people, they were still civilians. We had an agreement not to harm civilians. It was a promise from the rulers to the people, and it benefited the citizens of both kingdoms. Did you never consider that the people of Victory Pass might also be at risk of slaughter?"

Aurora snorted, her eyes filled with disdain. "As a former military general, you should know better, Barrett. You're not cut out for the battlefield. You're too soft and lack the resolve needed. If it weren't for me, you wouldn't have achieved anything. Even in front of General Sullivan, you needed me to strongly advocate for sending troops to burn the supply depot in Fawnrun City. Without me, you wouldn't have even achieved that.

"You gained merit because I earned it first. I signed the treaty, and you, as the commanding general of the reinforcements, reaped the benefits of my accomplishments. Now, you have the audacity to blame me for achieving success? Don't you find yourself despicable and shameful?"

Her tone, filled with mockery and contempt, seemed to trample Barrett's pride into the dirt.

Barrett was stunned. He was fully aware that what she was saying was wrong, but he didn't know how to respond.

"Nothing to say now?" Aurora said, with a smile that suggested she felt vindicated. "Barrett, look at what I gave up for you. And what did you give up for me? I was at my peak when I chose to marry you as your second wife. I remained steadfast during your fall from grace, and yet you married Viola after your divorce from Carissa.

"Do you think you've wronged Carissa? The person you've truly wronged is me!"

Her voice was soft but laden with profound bitterness, tears slipping down her cheeks.

"The king arranged our marriage, and I planned everything for our future. What did Carissa ever do for you? When you wanted to marry me as a rightful wife, she turned her back on you. She requested a divorce and left with her dowry. She was heartless and showed no affection, yet you still hold her in such high regard.

"What has Carissa ever done for you? Managed your household? Sent your family small gifts and seasonal clothing? Attended to your mother? But weren't those things expected of her? They were her responsibilities, not her special sacrifices for you! What have you done wrong to her? Just because you didn't keep your promise about not taking a concubine?

"But look, everyone has to make compromises. I married you as a second wife despite being a general. Wasn't that a compromise on my part? Why is it acceptable for me to compromise but not for her? She held you accountable for breaking your promise, sought a divorce, and made everyone scorn you, tarnishing the reputation of your family. You should be angry with her, but why do you feel guilty?"

Barrett's heart ached with bitterness. Everything seemed to connect just as she said.

"The person you've wronged is me. You first had Carissa, then Viola. I never complained and remained in your family, waiting for another opportunity to prove myself. I continued to plan for our future. Barrett, was your affection for me truly just a momentary impulse?"

She covered her face, tears soaking her fingers. Her sobs were stifled and heavy. After a long while, she choked out, "Do you know how hard every day is for me? If another woman had gone through what I've endured, she would have ended her life by now."

Aurora's crying left Barrett feeling both confused and upset. She was right. No matter what, she was someone he used to care about deeply.

He stood, walked over, and embraced her. "I'm sorry. It's my fault. I..."

Suddenly, a sharp sound pierced the

air-a small arrow flew swiftly through the window, heading straight for them. Barrett

immediately pulled Aurora bonet

and

the arrow embedded itself into the wooden partition screen behind

them.

A small arrow? And at such close range!

Barrett sprang up, quickly retrieving a pair of swords from the wall. He threw one to Aurora. The two of them exchanged wary glances. They gripped their swords and moved cautiously along the wall. Aurora's heart raced.

Assassins? How could there be assassins? Could they be Westhaven spies?

Carissa's family had been slaughtered by Westhaven spies.

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Barrett lifted the curtain and stepped outside the room with Aurora. They moved so silently that their footsteps were almost inaudible, and the surroundings were eerily quiet.

After waiting for a moment, he opened the door and quickly hid behind it. Once he was certain there was no immediate danger, he cautiously peered outside.

The sight that met his eyes was chilling.

The lanterns in the corridor cast light on the stairs, where three bodies lay sprawled. These were the maids who had served Aurora. They had been killed with a single sword thrust to the throat, unable to even utter a cry. Blood trickled down the stone steps, staining them a deep crimson.

Barrett's mind instantly flashed to the Duke of Northwatch's family's massacre.

He gasped. "My parents...!"

He was about to rush out when Aurora grabbed his arm.

Aurora's face was ashen, her lips trembling slightly. "I think... I think they're after me."

Barrett quickly understood. It was possible that spies from Westhaven were seeking revenge.

Just moments ago, Aurora had insisted she was in the right. But now, Barrett saw how hollow those justifications were. Aurora had been so confident in defending herself, but now, she was clearly terrified.

Four shadowy figures silently entered the courtyard. They were dressed in black, and their faces were concealed. Only their cold, piercing eyes were visible.

The four of them held a sword each, and each blade emanated a chilling aura. The strong scent of blood and a murderous intent filled the air.

Aurora clutched her sword, and her hand trembled slightly.

Suddenly, four swords came at them at once. Barrett and Aurora quickly turned and ran into the room, shutting the door behind them. One person secured the door while the other blew out the lamp, plunging the room into darkness. They stood back to back with their swords drawn, the blades' glint illuminating their sharp, vigilant eyes.

After returning to the capital, Barrett had been regulated to the Capital Guard and had been doing his rotation as a regular guard on patrol. That exercise routine he was put through daily was proving to be good training now. Although nothing seemed out of place outside, he felt a sense of danger from the window.

He held his sword ready at the window. Just as he suspected, it was suddenly kicked open and a dark figure leaped in. Barrett had anticipated this happening, so he quickly swung his sword at the assassin. The assassin sensed the attack and leaped out of the way, barely avoiding Barrett's Strike to his legs.

The remaining three assassins climbed in through the window. After rolling on the ground for a while, they quickly oriented themselves. The sounds of clashing swords and spears filled the room. But after exchanging a few blows, Aurora knew she couldn't match

their skill.

In her panic, she abandoned Barrett and jumped out of the window, heading straight for the outer courtyard while shouting, "Help! There are assassins!" Barrett was furious.

Had she lost her mind? There were so many people in the estate-how could she lead the assassins out?!

The assassins did not linger with Barrett. The four quickly pursued Aurora.

Aurora's cries alerted the household, and lanterns began to light up one by one. The guards of the estate sprang into action, some running out to call for the garrison unit and the local authorities.

The assassins pursued Aurora, but her familiarity with the estate's layout allowed her to dodge and weave through the buildings, eventually seeking refuge in Grace Mansion.

Viola had heard the commotion and rushed outside, only to see Aurora entering with a sword. Assuming Aurora intended to kill her, Viola recoiled in fear and screamed, "What do you want?"

Julia and Yvonne trembled with fright, but they stepped in front of Viola. Aurora pushed them aside and rushed into the room, quickly shutting the door behind her.

The doors and windows of Grace Mansion were constructed from the strongest ironwood on Carissa's orders. It would be difficult for the assassins to break through in the same manner as before. Once the door was secured, Aurora immediately took up a position at the table. She gripped her sword and nervously faced the outside.

Though breaking the door wouldn't be easy, it would eventually be breached if it couldn't withstand the assassins' attacks.

At this moment, her heart raced

uncontrollably. The brutal massacre of the Duke of Northwatch's family flashed in her mind. She was certain these were Westhaven spies seeking revenge for the Westhaven's previous crown prince and those civilians.

They would likely slaughter everyone in Valor Estate, just as they had with the Duke of Northwatch's family. Aurora hoped to remain hidden until the garrison unit arrived, then she would be safe.

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Before Viola could react, she saw the black-clad figures burst in, their swords dripping with blood. It was obvious they had killed people on their way here.

Viola screamed and rushed to the door, banging on it with urgency. "Aurora, open the door! Open the door!"

Yvonne and Julia shielded Viola, their bodies trembling uncontrollably. "Stay away..."

The black-clad figures swung their swords, slicing through the air with deadly precision. Yvonne and Julia felt a cold sensation across their throats, and then blood splattered and gushed out. Their throats were cut, and they couldn't even utter a sound before collapsing.

Viola was paralyzed with fear and sank to the ground. She covered her ears and cried, "Help! Help!"

One of the black-clad figures advanced towards Viola with his sword raised. Just then, Barrett delivered a powerful kick, sending the assailant flying. He immediately took up a defensive stance beside Viola.

"Get inside and hide!" Barrett was facing imminent danger, and he pushed Viola toward the room.

Viola sobbed and said, "Aurora has locked the door!"

Barrett kicked the door with all his might, but it wouldn't budge. He continued to fend off the attackers while shouting, "Aurora, open the door!"

Aurora stood inside, her face serious as she gripped her sword, her hands slightly trembling. She ignored Barrett's words and showed no sign of opening the door.



In a short span of time, Barrett had been struck by a sword. He barely managed to evade further attacks. His skills, honed during his time in the Capital Guard, were his only saving grace. Otherwise, he might have been dead by now.

He attempted to draw the assassins into a deserted courtyard, but it was clear that they were specifically targeting Aurora. So, three of them tried to knock down the door, and one was left to deal with Barrett.

Despite battling only one of the assassins, Barrett found it exceedingly difficult.

As Viola watched the chaos unfold, she nearly fainted from fear. She scrambled into a corner and hid.

The estate's guards arrived, but the Warren family couldn't afford many, and those present were no match for the assassins. Within a few minutes, they were all gravely injured.

Despite being stabbed twice, Barrett continued to resist fiercely. He was once a military general, and he was stubborn and resilient. Even as blood flowed from his wounds, he fought with all his strength.

The attackers might not have intended to kill him. They seemed to be showing restraint, only wounding him to drive him away. It took them more effort than they probably expected.

The commotion was so loud that it

reached the second branch's

residential area as well. Gregory

worked in the Royal Citadel as a civil servant, but he still came with his two sons. While his sons had only basic martial arts training, they

rushed over to help.

Soon, Jonathan also arrived with Benjamin and Bryan. They saw that there were a few people lying on the ground, covered in blood. Terrified, they ran outside and shouted for help. The entire household was in chaos, with servants screaming and running in all directions, desperately seeking a safe place to hide.

Hearing the cries of the servants, Rebecca and Serena understood that there were assassins in the estate. Fearing that the assassins might come their way, Rebecca grabbed her daughter's hand and urgently said, "We can't go outside! There are surely assassins out there too. We need to hide in Grace Mansion. Carissa had ordered the doors there to be made from

ironwood."

Ignoring her concerns about the ruby tiara for now, Serena and Jade helped Rebecca up and headed towards Grace Mansion.

When they reached Grace Mansion, they didn't expect to see Barrett fiercely fighting the assassins, his clothes stained with blood and clearly injured.

The second branch family members were of little help. They were only able to wield knives ineffectively and get injured in the process. They were truly useless. Rebecca was terrified. She scanned the room, but didn't see Aurora fighting alongside Barrett. Instead, she noticed Viola cowering in a corner.

"Where's Aurora? Find her!" Rebecca took a deep breath and pushed Jade urgently. "Go quickly!"

Jade was frightened and ran off in a panic. Seeing this, Serena hurried back to her own courtyard to hide.

In the end, the window had been shattered, and the three assassins leaped inside.

Aurora had been alert and had positioned herself near the door. As the assassins broke through the window, she swiftly opened the door and charged outside. The assassin fighting Barrett saw Aurora and immediately kicked Barrett aside, leaping at her with his sword raised.

Aurora tried to block the attack, but was forced back by the impact. Her chest heaved with exertion as she struggled to regain her footing. As she did, she felt the sharp sting of the sword cut through her flesh at her waist.

Despite his earlier frustration with Aurora for hiding, Barrett rushed to help her after seeing she had been injured. The two fought back to back.

The assassins had previously been cautious when fighting with Barrett. But now that Aurora was out here, they attacked with lethal intent.

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The two of them fought desperately but were quickly overwhelmed, blood splattering everywhere.

The assassins showed no desire to linger in battle. One dealt with Gregory and his sons, while the remaining three pressed their attack on Aurora, targeting her chest with their blades.

In a panic, Aurora threw down her sword and pulled Barrett in front of her, using him as a shield.

"No!" Rebecca and Viola both screamed in shock at the sight.

Never in Barrett's wildest dreams would he imagine that Aurora would do such a thing. He was injured, and Aurora held him tightly. As a result, he couldn't swing his sword in defense. He could only watch helplessly as the three assassins advanced, their swords poised to plunge into his heart.

Everyone's blood ran cold, but no one could do anything. Rebecca couldn't even bear to watch, terrified of seeing her son die at the hands of the assassins.

In the nick of time, a red spear flew through the air, expertly knocking aside the three swords. The impact caused the assassins to recoil in pain and urgently step back.

A figure landed gracefully, quickly retrieving the spear and immediately engaging the assassins. With swift and precise moves, she forced the attackers back without hesitation.

The assassins were forced to retreat continuously. The formidable sword techniques they had used earlier were rendered ineffective under the pressure of her spear. Within ten moves, the assassins' swords were all on the ground.

Within twenty moves, all the assassins lay defeated. Their tendons had been severed, their inner force depleted. They collapsed, unable to even lift their swords. The summer night breeze tousled

her slightly disheveled hair. Under the light from the corridor, she slowly lifted her face, and everyone finally recognized her. Viola was trembling in fear as she uttered the name.

"Carissa?"

Carissa was wearing a white dress and a pair of embroidered cloth shoes. Her sleeves were wide, and the long dress accentuated her slender figure.

However, the murderous intent in her gaze had not dissipated. Her clothes were stained with the blood of the assassins, the spots spreading out into delicate patterns like small camellias on the white satin.

As everyone stood stunned, Gregory quickly stepped forward and ordered, "Tie them up and hand them over to the Royal Citadel."

"Fetch a physician! Now!" Rebecca rushed over to support Barrett, whose face was pale. "Where are you hurt? Where?"

Barrett's eyes were bloodshot as he looked at Carissa. He was covered in wounds, mostly superficial, but the pain seemed to penetrate deep into his core.

Earlier, he had thought he would die when Aurora used him as a shield against the assassins' swords.

But just as death was closing in on him, Carissa arrived.

At that moment, Barrett felt a mix of excitement and pain. After such a close brush with death, his emotions were all over the place.

Dragging his bleeding leg, he looked

at Carissa and asked, "You came to save me? How did you get here? You still care about my family's safety, don't you? You still care about me, right?"

Carissa's gaze was cold as she watched the members of Gregory's family bind the assassins.

When she heard Barrett's words, Carissa frowned and turned to him. "I am the deputy commander of the Mystic Army. Isn't it logical for me to be here?"

"No!" Barrett stared at her with reddened eyes. "You care about me! You do! You're just angry that I took a concubine."

Carissa rolled her eyes and

addressed Gregory respectfully, "Mr.

Gregory, know you work in the

Royal Citadel. I've severed the tendons of these assassins. After they're bound, send them directly to the Royal Citadel for severe interrogation."

"Yes, Your Grace!" Gregory called out loudly, emphasizing her title to remind Barrett that she was now a princess consort, and he had best keep quiet.

Barrett's face turned ashen, and his eyes were filled with sorrow.

Carissa watched as the assassins were bound. Then, she heard the sound of many footsteps approaching from outside and knew the garrison unit and the Capital Guards had arrived. Leaving the aftermath to them, Carissa turned to leave Grace Mansion. She didn't want to stay here for another moment.

Just as she was about to step out, she heard Gregory's shocked exclamation behind her, "Aurora, what are you doing?"

Carissa whipped around to see

Aurora slashing at the assassins' necks with the sword in her hand. After finishing off the last one, blood splattered onto her face, making her look sinister and cold.

"Those who kill must die!" Aurora coldly declared.

## Chapter 529

"You're insane!" Gregory was furious. "They're all bound! If we don't get the authorities to interrogate them to find out who sent them, we can't eliminate future threats!"

Aurora looked up, her gaze locking with Carissa's in midair. Her eyes were a mix of complexity and malice as she gritted her teeth.

"You're a discarded woman the Warren family cast out. What right do you have to come back here?"

Carissa observed Aurora's bloodied face, and her frown deepened. "Did you think they were Westhaven spies? What an idiot."

Aurora's expression shifted slightly, her eyes filled with even more venom. Yes, she was worried that they could be Westhaven spies. If they were tortured by the Royal Citadel and the local authorities, they might reveal information about Fawnrun City. Right now, she was still hoping for the best since the king had yet to punish her.

But if the matter was discovered through interrogation by the local authorities...

Aurora couldn't afford to gamble on it.

Carissa could tell exactly what Aurora was thinking, and it made her feel exposed and humiliated.

Moments later, Michael arrived with the Capital Guards. When he saw Carissa, he saluted.

"Greetings, Deputy Commander Sinclair."

"The assassins are dead. Take care of the rest," Carissa said, dragging her Rose Spear as she turned to leave without looking back.

"Understood!" Michael's voice echoed behind her.

Barrett's gaze still lingered on her retreating figure, and he was unwilling to look away.

Carissa's departure, from her descent to her calm exit, took no more than 15 minutes.

Though she was the deputy commander, she was a divorced woman from the Warren family and had no control over Mystic Army affairs. So, it was inappropriate for her to stay longer.

Michael ordered the masks of the assassins to be removed. Aurora stood by, watching coldly. Although she maintained a calm exterior, turmoil raged within her.

These assassins weren't from Westhaven?

If they were not from Westhaven, then who wanted to kill her?

Only the people from Westhaven would hate her to the bone.

However, even if the assassins were not Westhaven, they might still have been hired by someone from Westhaven.

The physician arrived, and Michael instructed them to tend to the wounded before questioning.

Barrett had more than several cuts, and Rebecca's tears fell as she looked at him.

"How cruel. Who are these people?"

Barrett remained silent, unable to determine who the attackers were but certain they had targeted Aurora. However, his current concern was not about their identities but his shock at why Carissa had come to rescue them tonight.

The Hell Monarch's household had its own spies and could easily know about the assassins' movements. But even if she wanted to help the Warren family, why had Carissa come personally? There were so many skilled fighters at Hell Monarch Estate, including the formidable instructor, Travis.

Wouldn't it have been better to send

him?

Why did she have to come herself?

The question kept spinning around in his mind, constantly causing him discomfort and pain.

From the moment Carissa's Rose Spear had saved him when Aurora used him as a shield, he realized that everything else his pride and past grievances-seemed less important compared to what she had done for him tonight.

He was so overwhelmed by this

realization that he didn't even hear

Michael's questions. It was Viola's crying that brought him back to his senses. He looked up in

a daze

seeing the servants carrying away the bodies of Viola's maids and Viola

herself sitting on the ground, wailing loudly.

The guards in the estate had either been killed or gravely injured. While Valor Estate wasn't drenched in blood, it was still a scene of utter carnage.

"Do you recognize any of these people?" Michael asked again.

Barrett shook his head. "I've never seen them before."

Michael frowned. "Tell me everything about how the assassins entered the estate tonight. Since they're dead and we can't interrogate them, we need to find out who was behind this." Barrett glanced at Aurora, who was sitting nearby and tending to her wounds. The blood on her face had dried and couldn't be wiped away, and her eyes were filled with gloom and complexity.



Barrett recounted the events, leaving nothing out. He plainly stated that the attack was aimed at Aurora, and that the many deaths in the estate were due to Aurora locking the door to Grace Mansion. As he spoke, Viola suddenly stood up from the ground and walked toward Aurora.

With tears streaming down her face, she slapped Aurora across the face and yelled, "Why did you lock the door? If you hadn't locked the door, they wouldn't have died!"

## Chapter 530

Aurora's head snapped to the side from the slap. She clenched her teeth but didn't strike back, focusing instead on tending to her wound.

Viola turned to Michael, wiping her tears with one hand as she shouted, "Mr. Brown, it was her! The assassins came for her. She locked herself in the room, and pushed me and my maids out. She's responsible for my maids' death! And the assassins-Carissa had already taken them down and tied them up, but Aurora went crazy and killed them all. Mr. Brown, please get justice for me!" Michael glanced at Aurora. Before he could ask any questions, Aurora said coldly, "They broke into Valor Estate and killed guards and maids. Why would I leave them alive? Keeping them around would only bring more trouble."

Michael examined the assassins' bodies, and was dissatisfied with Aurora's response. "Their tendons were severed, their cores were damaged, and they were bound. What further danger could they pose? Leaving them alive and questioning them to find out who was behind this would have been the real way to prevent future threats."

Aurora remained unnervingly calm. "I apologize. They killed so many people in Valor Estate. In my anger and grief, I didn't think to leave any alive for interrogation."

Michael chose not to respond to this. There was no need to waste words.

Viola's anger was far from abated, even though she had slapped Aurora. She recalled that Aurora had locked the door in the face of danger, leading to Julia and Yvonne's deaths. Hearing her reply to Michael, Viola was convinced that Aurora was at fault.

Viola coldly demanded, "The assassins came for you! Who exactly did you cross, and what kind of shameful things have you done? Julia and Yvonne died because of you. You owe me an explanation!"

Aurora scoffed derisively. "If you want an explanation, ask the assassins. I didn't kill your maids."

"It's because you locked the door that the assassins were able to kill them!" Viola retorted.

Aurora's tone was icy, "Why not say it's because you blocked the door, and they were standing in front of you? You're the reason they're dead."

"You're talking nonsense!"

Aurora tightened the bandage on her wounds and looked up at Viola, her face half covered and shrouded in gloom.

"There were so many people in the estate, but the assassins didn't kill them. Didn't they kill your maids because your maids were trying to protect you, and you just happened to be blocking the door? I locked the door and kept you out, so the assassins wouldn't have killed you. But instead of running, you stood there pounding on the door. Are you still going to say it's not your fault they died?"

Viola recalled the events and

realized it was indeed as Aurora had said. She had been standing at the

door, while Julia and Yvonne had

been trembling with fear but stiet

trying to protect her. The assassins had killed Julia and Yvonne, and

then had intended to kill Viola. It was only her husband's timely arrival that had saved her.

Realizing she was the reason they died, Viola collapsed to the ground, her body going limp as tears flowed uncontrollably.

As Barrett listened to the exchange between Aurora and Viola, he couldn't help but think back to the things Aurora had said to him before the assassins arrived.

It was laughable-he had almost believed her then.

From an outsider's perspective, hearing her now blame Viola for everything made him realize how skilled Aurora was at distorting the truth.

Before the attack, she had insisted she was thinking of their future. But when disaster struck, she had thrown him in harm's way to save herself. He had seen the depths of her ruthlessness.

No wonder she saw massacring

civilians as just another step toward

was

her ambitions, something she believed everyone would do. In her mind, if it served her interests, no act terrible. She cared for no one but herself. Her talk of raising the status of women was just that-talk.

All she ever wanted was to raise her own status.

For such a selfish woman, he had abandoned Carissa!

Barrett's heart sank into an icy abyss, and he shook with rage. He wanted nothing more than to strike Aurora down on the spot. Yet, his anger would have to wait until they got through questioning from the Royal Citadel and the Capital Guards. Then, he would make sure she paid for all of it.