

War Song 55

Chapter 55

They rested at an inn that evening. Both Lightning and Carissa managing a good night's sleep. Being away from home made her unusually alert. She rose before dawn, washed up, and covered her face with a black cloth before continuing on her journey.

The journey was naturally arduous, made worse by the biting cold that even the cloth couldn't shield from, roughening her skin considerably.

The previous night at the inn, she had looked into a mirror. Her once smooth skin was now red and almost cracking. She applied camellia oil to prevent it from worsening-it wasn't about beauty, but avoiding pain.

On the fifth morning of travel, she arrived at the Southern Frontier. The absence of supply convoys on the road along the way troubled her. It meant that the Hell Monarch thought victory was assured, and didn't need to constantly obtain provisions.

However, there was still a fierce battle ahead.

Upon reaching the Southern Frontier, she inquired and learned that only two cities, Ilyrian and Simonton, remained unrecovered.

The Hell Monarch had led his troops like a war god and reclaimed 90% of the lost Southern Frontier territory. Only these two cities remained, explaining the absence of supply convoys.

Now, all the Hell Monarch's forces were focused on Ilyrian. Once the city was recaptured, they could drive the Sandorian forces back to Simonton. There, they would continue the assault and reclaim the entire Southern Frontier for Starhaven,

Carissa urged Lightning towards Ilyrian City despite fatigue creeping in. This was the final push. She pushed Lightning harder, determined to meet the Hell Monarch by day's end.

As night fell, she approached the battlefield. The Hell Monarch's troops were stationed outside Ilyrian, but the city itself remained unconquered. The devastation she witnessed since entering the Southern Frontier filled her with sorrow and love. Her father and brothers had sacrificed their lives here.

Alas, there was no time for sentimentality.

She rode straight into the camp, brandishing her Rose Spear high in the air.

"I am Carissa Sinclair, daughter of Hector Sinclair, the Duke of Northwatch! I seek an audience with the commander of the Hell Monarch's army!"

She repeatedly shouted until her voice was hoarse. Soldiers tried to stop her, but Lightning burst through their ranks like a thunderbolt, like a steed born of the gods.

"I am Carissa Sinclair, daughter of Hector Sinclair! I have urgent military intelligence for the Hell Monarch!"

Carissa shouted loudly, her hoarse voice piercing the night air.

Inside the camp, torches flickered to life. Soldiers emerged with weapons drawn at the sound of her voice. Upon hearing her words that she was Hector's daughter, they hesitated and held their ground. She dismounted swiftly, letting her spear hang low, and faced the approaching soldiers who were wearing battered and worn armor. Holding Lightning's reins, she removed the black cloth from her face, revealing her features.

"I am Carissa Sinclair, daughter of Hector Sinclair, the Duke of Northwatch. I bring urgent military intelligence for the Hell Monarch!" she said firmly.

When they heard she was Hector's daughter, the soldiers lowered their weapons. Even the hostility in their eyes disappeared. They watched her with curiosity, but allowed her no closer.

In this tense standoff, a black steed thundered towards them from the front. It halted before Carissa.

A tall man in golden armor sat upon the steed, and looked down from his elevated position. His face was smudged and his beard covered half of it, leaving only a pair of bright eyes shining with visible intensity. The black steed circled Carissa once before the man leaned down, towering over her.

"You're Hector's daughter?" His voice was grave and laced with doubt.

"Yes!" Carissa looked up at the commander before her, unsure if he was indeed the Hell Monarch, Rafael Sanford.

He was Salvador's younger brother. When a king was crowned, they took up a different surname to usher in a new era. That was why Salvador and Rafael didn't share the same family name. Carissa had seen Rafael when she was young, but at that time, he was still a teenager. Because he had started training in martial arts at an early age, he was much taller than boys his age.

Even in his youth, Rafael had a refined and handsome appearance. When Carissa returned to the capital from the guild, she heard he was renowned for his bravery and unmatched combat skills. Some even said he was the most handsome man of his time.

The man before her was far from handsome, but he exuded an undeniable aura of command and authority. His eyes held a particularly sharp, chilling gleam, like the vast and dark horizon.

The man eyed her spear, a glint of determination in his eyes. After a moment's contemplation, he declared, "I believe you. Come with me!"

Carissa breathed a sigh of relief.

This must be the Rafael. She had expected it would take more effort to meet him; unexpectedly, merely shouting outside Ilyrian had drawn him out.