

War Song 591

Chapter 591

The next day, Carmen and Greta arrived at Hell Monarch Estate to return the horse. They also brought along gifts of gratitude. Luke met with them, but after waiting for a while without seeing Carissa, they decided to take their leave.

As they were leaving, they happened to see Violet.

She greeted Carmen warmly, saying, "Ms. Lester, you've come to return the horse? The people in the estate have been busy these past few days. Let's talk and discuss martial arts in a few days."

Carmen curtsied politely. "Thank you for your kindness, Ms. Spencer. I will certainly come to seek your guidance after some time."

With a smile, Violet waved her hand. "You should head back now. I have my own tasks to attend to."

As Greta and Carmen climbed into a carriage, Greta muttered, "Why take the long way around? You didn't see the Hell Monarch's princess consort today, but Ms. Spencer was quite enthusiastic. I think you should start with her. If you can get in good with her, you'll have more freedom to go in and out of Hell Monarch Estate. That would be a significant step forward."

Feeling a bit discontented about the delay, Greta continued, "Although your sister can be difficult, she does get things done efficiently. On the other hand, you're quite soft-spoken. Do you still want to get your mom out or not?"

"Sage Greta, can you speak to Mother and let me see my mom? Once I've seen her, I'll do my best," Carmen pleaded.

"Let's wait a few days," came the response.

Carmen persisted and bowed low. "Sage Greta, please just let me have one meeting. If you plead with Mother on my behalf, I promise I will complete my task."

"Now is the best time. With Princess Kiera's imminent wedding, things are chaotic. Right now, I can still go back to Harmony Palace. But if I catch Prince Rafael's eye, they will definitely investigate me. By then, I won't even be able to see my mom."

Seeing that Greta remained unmoved, Carmen cried, her voice tinged with a mix of sorrow and indignation, "If I have to risk my life, I deserve a reward! I can't rest easy serving Mother if I don't know how my mom is doing!"

Greta furrowed her brows, realizing that she needed to give Carmen some hope. After all, no matter how obedient someone was, they couldn't be completely controlled.

A mom and daughter shared a bond. As long as Carmen saw her mom, she would be driven to do everything in her power to save her.

"Wait a little longer. I'll help you plead your case."

"Thank you so much, ma'am! Thank you!" Carmen cried, her cheeks glistening with tears. "I will never forget your immense kindness."

Greta's expression was as stoic as ever. Even though Carmen was her apprentice in name, she was merely a tool in Greta's eyes. She felt no pity at all for the younger woman.

Rafael had already sent people to

investigate the Lester family,

Carmen, and Celeste, along with the brothel she had once been in.

Although Eleanor had been rain ne

Celeste in the palace, Samuel had met her in that kind of place, so the brothel was likely involved in some unsavory dealings.

Yesterday, Rafael had entered the palace to report the details of the rescue to the king. Salvador had praised him verbally and mentioned that Yuvan would be returning to the capital.

Rafael saw that Salvador harbored

no suspicion toward their uncle, and the king even sighed heavily as he said, "You know, I suggested taking Lady Ruth to Valken, but Uncle Yuvan insists that she has the court physicians looking after her here in the palace. He believes it's safer that way.

"He's worried I might suspect him, so he prefers to keep Lady Ruth in the capital to reassure me. But I've never doubted him. His excessive caution only prevents their family from being reunited. He and Uncle Harvey are both overly cautious and timid, but I can't blame them. They've always been like that since Dad was on the throne."

After hearing those words, Rafael stayed silent. There were some things that, if spoken by him, would take on a different tone. It could make Salvador suspicious of the wrong people and blind him to the real threats. However, action had to be taken.

Yuvan's return to the capital signaled a greater strategy at play, and most of his foundation in the capital stemmed from Eleanor. That aunt of theirs had pretended to be virtuous and upright for so many years. It was about time to have her true colors revealed to everyone.

Chapter 592

The eighth of August was Kiera's wedding day.

Unlike typical noble ladies, Kiera and Helen returned to the palace the night before, with Carissa naturally accompanying them. Henrietta and Meredith stayed close, hoping to ease Kiera's nerves about her wedding and share some secrets about navigating life with a prince consort. Henrietta said, "The Quinton and Young families are among the most distinguished scholarly families in Starhaven. They have a reputation for being harmonious, though they do have their rules. But honestly, how could their rules compare to those of the royal palace? "Besides, you're a princess with your own estate. You don't need to worry about their opinions. Your mother-in-law and father-in-law are both kind-hearted people. Your father-in-law is almost childlike. If you ever want to visit the Quinton family for a bit, no one would dare give you trouble."

Kiera was well aware of these details. Her father-in-law had suffered a head injury at a young age, and her mother-in-law, having known him since childhood, had still married him without caring about his shortcomings. Together, they had Logan and his sister, Crystal. They were all easy to get along with.

In truth, Kiera didn't feel nervous at all. She wasn't sure why everyone assumed she would be. She decided to play the part of the anxious bride. It felt more fitting for the occasion.

After all, if it made everyone happy, why not? Life was but a play.

Dressed in her bridal finery, the intricate phoenix crown perched atop her head framed her dainty face. Her features were delicate, and her eyes shone with a bright and honest sparkle. There was nothing sharp or regal about Kiera's demeanor. Instead, she radiated warmth and tranquility.

Kylie arrived with the eldest prince and the second princess. After all, Kiera was marrying Kylie's cousin. As Kiera's cousin-in-law, she had to help with the preparations.

The king's favored concubine, Sylvia, dropped by briefly. She delivered a few congratulatory words before leaving, her demeanor still as haughty as ever. As she walked away, she cast a glance at Carissa, leaving her somewhat bewildered. Dealing with Sylvia was no easy task.

When it was time, officials from the Ministry of Protocol and the Heritage Bureau announced the edict at the eastern steps of the ceremonial gates. Logan knelt before them to receive it. His heart was brimming with joy as he absorbed every word in the edict. He didn't care much for the royal customs regarding what a groom should do. All he wanted was to cherish Kiera, just like his father and mother did each other.

Accompanied by Kylie and Carissa, Kiera first went to the family chapel to bow in farewell, then proceeded to greet her mother and the queen dowager.

Tears welled up in Victoria's eyes as she embraced Kiera. Standing nearby, Helen struggled to comprehend why mothers cried when sending off their daughters. It wasn't like their daughters were heading into a den of dragons and tigers.

However, seeing Victoria cry made Helen instinctively join in. Though she couldn't squeeze out any tears, she dabbed at her eyes with her handkerchief.

Victoria held Kiera close, her voice

choked with emotion as she said, "I still remember the day you were born. You were a rosy little bundle and you cried so loudly! You've always been such a good child, charming everyone. Even those who right not like your mom adored you."

Dakota and Josephine exchanged awkward smiles, clearly the subjects of Victoria's remarks. It was true. They hadn't cared much for Helen back in the day, but her children were simply delightful- especially Kiera. That little girl had a sweetness about her, bounding towards them with her tiny legs and calling them "aunt" with such endearing innocence.

Reflecting on those times made their eyes misty as they realized that little girl was now grown up and getting married.

Soon, officials from the Heritage Bureau and the Royal Management Department came to urge Kiera onward. She took her time, bowing to the queen dowager, her mother, and the other concubines in farewell.

As the white veil was placed over

Kiera's head and the palace attendants guided her out, a sudden wave of sadness washed over

Helen, and tears spilled from bernet

eyes without warning. She finally grasped that her daughter, who had always clung to her side, was about to become someone else's wife.

The days of Kiera calling her "Mom" and staying by her side were coming to an end.

Overwhelmed with emotion, Helen felt Carissa's hand grip hers. The tears she had tried to hide spilled under her daughter-in-law's gaze.

Carissa sighed softly. She couldn't bear to see women cry. It made her heart ache.

Chapter 593

On the day of Kiera's grand wedding, the Quinton family's residence was abuzz with activity.

The dowry had been delivered to Ivory Estate the day before, but the wedding ceremony and banquet were to take place at the Quinton family's residence. The threshold of their estate was nearly worn down from the countless guests who streamed in to celebrate. Before Eleanor arrived at the Quinton family's residence for the feast, she allowed Carmen a brief visit to Harmony Palace.

Melanie Lester remained imprisoned in Harmony Palace's dungeon, a place reeking of decay. Each day, the door would open for just an hour to air out the stench, a supposed act of kindness from Eleanor, who claimed it was out of compassion. But it wasn't just Melanie who was imprisoned there. Several other concubines and servants who had erred shared her fate. Once someone entered the dungeon, there was little hope of escape. The foul odor was tinged with the scent of blood. As Carmen stepped into the dungeon, an overwhelming wave of revulsion hit her, causing her to feel nauseous. But she pushed past the discomfort and hurried straight to her mom's cell.

The cells weren't separated by iron bars but built with solid walls, ensuring no one could see one another. Each room had a door with a small window at the bottom, through which food was passed. Those confined within had no one to talk to.

Every cell contained a bed and a toilet, with the promise of a bath just once a month. The meaning behind Eleanor's actions was that Henry would visit them during that time, so they had to stay clean when he did. If they went an entire month without any screams or noise, they would earn a half-day to go outside and stretch their legs.

Carmen had been here once before. It was just before her mission, when Eleanor had taken pity on her and allowed her a glimpse of the suffering her mom endured.

Greta called for the door to be opened, and Carmen rushed inside.

On the bed lay a thin and pitiful woman. She coughed weakly as she turned to the door. Upon recognizing her daughter, she struggled to sit up.

"Mom!" Carmen cried, wrapping her arms around the woman, tears spilling over in an instant. "Didn't they say they would get you a physician? Why are you still coughing so badly?"

Melanie clutched her daughter tightly, her frail body-nothing but bones-seeming to channel an immense strength as she nearly squeezed the breath from Carmen.

"I thought I would never see you again. How are you? Are you alright? And your sister?"

Carmen fought back her tears, her voice catching in her throat as she replied, "I'm doing well, Mom. The grand princess treats me very kindly."

Melanie's eyes filled with disbelief. She wept as she said, "You coming to see me means she needs you now."

Leaning closer, Melanie whispered in a trembling voice after a few sobs, "Don't worry about me. Escape while you can. Go as far away as possible." Her heart aching, Carmen replied firmly, "Don't worry, Mom. I'll complete the task given to me by the grand princess and get you out of here." Melanie grasped her daughter's clothing tightly. "Just run away!"

"You just have to nodded vigorously, her eyes glinting with an unusual resolve. Leaning closer to her mother, she whispered, "If Dad comes to see you, persuade him to cooperate with my plan. We have no other options."

trust me." Carmen

Melanie released her grip, her tear-filled eyes watching Carmen with confusion.

"Trust me, Mom. I'll save you..." Carmen took a deep breath and mouthed silently, "And the other concubines."

Then, she spoke louder, "Don't worry. I'll definitely follow the grand princess' instructions. If I do everything right, we will be reunited."

Melanie's eyes widened. They were already gaunt and hollowed, and they now reflected a fresh wave of terror, making her appear even more pitiful. Carmen nodded confidently. "Mom, remember what I said. I can do this."

She lifted her gaze and locked eyes with Melanie. The determination in her daughter's eyes was something Melanie had never seen before.

Fear clutched at Melanie's heart.

She reached out, wanting to say

something to dissuade Carmen. She wanted to warn her daughter to not attempt the impossible-doing so might lead to destruction, and she might not even know why.

But looking at her daughter's unwavering resolve, Melanie slowly withdrew her hand. Even if she couldn't help, she wouldn't hinder her daughter's efforts. Melanie, Carmen, and Celeste, along with the Lester family, were bound to one another.

Melanie couldn't afford to seek death. Otherwise, her two daughters would pay with their lives, and the Lester family would surely face a grim fate. She couldn't die, but she couldn't have a good life either. In that case, it was time to fight back. After all, they had been pushed to the brink.

Chapter 594

Meanwhile, the wedding banquet at the Quinton family's residence was buzzing with excitement.

To make an effort to uphold the third branch's reputation, the head of the Quinton family, Malcolm Quinton, who was also the current Civil Minister and the father of the queen, invited all the influential officials and nobles of the capital. This included the Warren family.

Although the Warren family was now on the decline among the powerful, their ancestors had indeed produced a great general. Otherwise, how would they have Valor Estate? As a key official in court and the king's father-in-law, Malcolm was naturally expected to treat everyone fairly.

The Farrell family members were also among the guests.

On the third day after the Septimus Tetra reconnaissance team returned, a royal edict was delivered to every member. Thomas was promoted to third-rank major general, while Felix was elevated to fourth-rank general. As for Lawrence, he was granted the title of Earl of Dunewind, and his wife, Kayla, was awarded the rank of a third-rank countess.

The special promotion was a recognition of Lawrence's role as the chief strategist for the Septimus Tetra reconnaissance team. After his capture, he had endured severe torture without betraying a single comrade, standing firm against the brutal interrogations. Salvador needed such spirit to bolster morale among the troops. Furthermore, since Lawrence was now disabled in one leg and would never see battle again, granting him an earldom and a title for his wife ensured he could enjoy a comfortable life for the rest of his days. As for the other members of the Septimus Tetra reconnaissance team, Salvador would undoubtedly continue to rely on them, especially Thomas, Felix, Homer, and the two sons of the Cooper family. Even the rest of the team, who had all been ordinary soldiers, had been elevated in rank, and were awaiting orders from the king.

This was Thomas' first banquet since returning to the capital, as well as his first time being among so many people again. The Farrell family had initially planned to host a banquet to celebrate his

return, but Thomas felt too drained to engage in socializing. Alice was concerned about her son's dazed state, so she took it upon herself to cancel the event.

Thomas wasn't in great spirits. Since returning to the capital, he had been plagued by nightmares every night. He dreamt the Septimus Tetra reconnaissance team was still teetering on the edge of danger. After waking, he found it hard to drift back to sleep.

He hadn't sought news about Viola, subconsciously avoiding the subject. Also, he hadn't intended to come to the banquet today. It was Felix who had insisted on dragging him along. Felix was very fond of Logan. Although they didn't share blood, the bond between them was truly strong.

Amidst the festivities of this joyous

banquet, both Felix and Thomas felt an overwhelming sense of contrast, as if they were out of place. They

were often lost in thought. As a net

result, the members of the Septimus Tetra reconnaissance team

gravitated toward each other, finding comfort in their shared presence.

Lawrence hadn't attended, but

members of the Marquis of Elderglen's family were there with Kayla. Previously, she had seldom attended social gatherings. However, her husband had expressed a desire to attend this

one He had explained that it was Felix's brother getting married and lamented his inability to go, urging his wife to represent him instead.

Thus, Kayla made her appearance.

Freshly bestowed with the title of a third-rank countess and having a royal edict in hand, she was met with great enthusiasm. Everyone gathered around to inquire about Lawrence's health. Even

Eleanor came over to ask a few questions before congratulating her on finally seeing the light after the storm.

As Kayla basked in the attention, Viola couldn't help but feel as if she was being roasted over an open flame. Even though no one had directed a single question her way or cast her any disapproving glances, the embarrassment and anger simmered within her.

She regretted coming to this

gathering. She hadn't wanted to

attend, but her mother-in-law had insisted that since the Quinton family had sent an invitation, it would be disrespectful to not attend. With the constant buzz of praise for Kayla ringing in her ears, Viola felt increasingly agitated and decided to take a stroll outside.

Noticing her sister-in-law's unrest, Zoey discreetly sent a maid to follow her. Viola had been particularly irritable lately, and Zoey didn't want her causing any trouble at the Quinton family's banquet.

Viola wandered alone into the garden, where laughter echoed from the occasional passing guests. The sound only heightened her irritation, and she unconsciously moved past an archway adorned with cascading flowers. It wasn't until she heard a man's voice that she abruptly halted.

Beyond the archway lay the front courtyard, where the male guests gathered. Blue lanterns and silk ribbons hung from the branches, filling the air with a festive atmosphere.

Lifting her head, Viola saw several men standing in the courtyard under the shade of the trees. One of the men happened to look up just then, locking eyes with her. A jolt coursed through her and she froze, unable to move. He... he had gotten darker, but he still looked as handsome and confident as ever, his figure tall and poised.

Thomas regarded Viola for a moment, then steadied himself and quickly averted his gaze before briskly walking away.

Chapter 595

"Madam Viola!" Zoey's maid, Jane, called out as she hurried over. "What are you doing here?"

Viola turned away, her face pale as she murmured, "I heard he's now a third-rank major general."

"Who are you talking about, Madam Viola? It's best not to gossip about others," Jane replied.

She had spent many years by Zoey's side and knew exactly who Viola was referring to. She sought to remind Viola to tread carefully.

But Viola seemed oblivious to Jane's warning, saying, "The king only made my brother a major general before he left for the Southern Frontier. A major general is the main commander responsible for defending a region. Which region would he be stationed at?" Jane's tone turned serious, "Madam Viola, you should be more concerned about your husband. He's here today too."

Her heart filled with bitterness, Viola appeared not to hear Jane's words, continuing, "What merit did he achieve to earn such a reward? Lady Kayla's husband was granted an earldom, and now she has a noble title of her own. He received a third-rank major general title. What great achievement does that represent? Wasn't it just delivering messages? On what grounds? What about those soldiers who truly fight on the battlefield-don't they feel disheartened?"

Jane grasped her arm tightly, her nails digging in to pull Viola back to reality. "Madam Viola, mind your words. We're at the Quinton family's residence."

The sharp pain in her arm jolted Viola, bringing her back to herself. She felt a mix of shame and anger.

"Who told you to follow me?"

"Madam Zoey was worried you might get lost, so she sent me to accompany you," Jane replied calmly.

"Is she afraid I'll get lost? Or is it that she fears I won't know my place? She's worried I'll embarrass myself and tarnish the reputation of the Earl of Silverstone's family," Viola shot back coldly.

"You wouldn't do such a thing, Madam Viola. Madam Zoey doesn't think that way either. If you find the crowd too noisy, I can keep you company while you take a walk in the garden. The breeze today is nice. It will clear your mind and remind you of your identity as a member of the Warren family," Jane responded.

Viola glared at her fiercely. "Shut your mouth. If you're going to follow me, stay at least ten feet away."

Fuming, Viola turned to walk away, but it was too late-several eyes were already on them. Now, every glance directed at her felt mocking, as if she were the subject of a cruel joke. She truly didn't want to stay in this place for another moment.

Lost in her thoughts, Viola marched straight out of the Quiton family's residence, leaving even her maid, Poppy, behind.

Upon returning, Jane quietly reported to Zoey, who frowned when she heard what happened.

Viola just left like that? Barrett was still in the courtyard. Also, she hadn't informed the host before leaving.

That was quite embarrassing,

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especially since there were so many

people at the entrance.

Despite the anger simmering inside her, Zoey maintained a calm demeanor on the outside. Privately, she instructed Jane to find Poppy and have her return as well.

"Tell her to keep an eye on things," she added. "If anything happens, report back immediately. Also, give her an extra monthly allowance."

Barrett only learned about Viola's early departure after the feast had concluded. Once he returned to the estate, he hurried straight to Grace Mansion, where he found her already lying in bed. "Why did you leave early? You could have at least told me," he asked, irritated.

Viola rubbed her forehead. "I had a terrible headache and thought it best to come home."

Seeing her pale face, Barrett's irritation softened into concern. He sat down beside her. "You should have mentioned that you weren't feeling well. It's not proper to just walk out like that without informing anyone."

As he reached out to gently massage her forehead, Viola couldn't shake her gloom. Before Thomas returned, Barrett's tenderness would have warmed her heart, but now...

The two men were hardly comparable. One was merely a low-ranking guard, while the other was a third-rank major general who commanded troops.

Today, that fleeting glance from Thomas had still made her heart race. Though it was quick, the meaning behind that look was clear-Viola understood it all too well after being married to him. Thomas hadn't truly let go of her. She was still in his thoughts.

Frustration bubbled within her, especially towards her sister-in-law, who had returned Thomas' death pension as if to signify the end of their connection. It left her feeling trapped and uncertain about her next steps.

No, Viola had to see Thomas, no matter what.

Noticing her silence, Barrett's expression grew more worried. "Are you still feeling unwell? I can send for a physician."

"I'm much better," she replied, grasping his hand.

Chapter 596

The next day, Viola dressed with care. She pinned a peony blossom in her hair before heading out with Poppy. She had a specific destination in mind. If she found him there, it would confirm that Thomas still held her in his heart.

At the base of Richspire Peak, there was a stream. About halfway up, the stream flowed down a steep slope, forming a small waterfall. Whenever Thomas felt upset, couldn't figure something out, or struggled to make a decision, he would come here to practice his swordsmanship. He had brought her to this spot once before.

As they climbed, Poppy supported her. However, Poppy grew increasingly uneasy as they ventured further from civilization. "Madam Viola, where are we going? It's still so hot. Do you think you can handle it?" "We're almost there."

Viola felt exhausted, but it wasn't like she could ride a carriage up this mountain. It had been years since she had walked such a rugged path. She paused to catch her breath, casting a cold glance at Poppy. "No matter whom we see today, you mustn't breathe a word to anyone, understand?"

Poppy nodded nervously. Though she hadn't learned proper manners, she sensed that their trip to the mountains was not entirely appropriate, especially with so few people around.

What would they do if they encountered danger? Who was Viola even going to meet? The secrecy weighed on Poppy's mind, and she recalled Jane's words from the night before.

By the time they reached the halfway point, the sound of the waterfall reached Viola's ears, making her heart race.

Would he really be here?

Suddenly, the ground felt impossibly heavy beneath her feet.

What if he wasn't? She had spent all night thinking about him. If he were absent, wouldn't her actions have been ridiculous?

After taking a few deep breaths, Viola made her way along the narrow mountain path. It had been years since she had last visited; now, there were even small trails, indicating that others had discovered this scenic spot. Back then, when they came, he would hold her hand as they leaped over waist-high grass. That exhilarating sensation of being airborne was thrilling and refreshing.

As she rounded a bend, the view opened up before her.

There he was, practicing his sword dance by the waterfall. The sight ignited her blood with fervor—he was here.

Thomas was really here.

Viola brushed the peony blossom in her hair. Then, she took a deep breath and instructed Poppy, "Stay here and don't come any closer."

Seeing Viola approach a man alone, Poppy turned pale with fear. "Madam Viola, y-you can't do this! If the general finds out..."

"He's no longer a general." Viola shot her a cold glance. "If you don't say anything, no one will know. Just stay here and keep watch."

As the sound of voices reached him,

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Thomas Sheathed his sword. Even

amidst the roar of the wa

he

could still hear clearly-a skilt honed

during his time as a spy.

Turning to the source of the sound, he saw Viola approaching.

He blinked in surprise. Was it really her?

As they locked eyes, Viola moved closer, her eyes brimming with unshed tears. She didn't wipe them away. Instead, she let them flow freely down her cheeks.

Thomas was drenched, revealing his lean and tall figure. He retreated a few steps and asked, "Why are you here?"

Viola took another step forward, her

voice breaking as she cried, "I wanted to see you! I was so happy when found out you were back. Thomas, you're alive! You have no idea how happy I am."

Seeing her tears twisted his heart. Since the day they married, he had sworn to protect her. But even amid his pain, he knew the boundaries they had to respect.

"Thank you for your concern, but we're no longer husband and wife. You've married someone else. We need to keep our distance."

"Keep our distance?" Viola let out a bittersweet laugh through her tears. "Have you really become this cold-hearted?"

"I..." Thomas stood in the water, watching her approach despite her shoes and socks getting wet. "Don't come down. I'll come up."

He climbed onto the bank but instinctively stepped a few paces to the left, maintaining the distance between them.

"You shouldn't have come. We shouldn't meet like this. If word gets out, it could harm your reputation."

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Viola cried out, "I don't care! What reputation do I have left? You've probably heard about the Warren family. I've walked straight into a den of wolves! Thomas, you owe me this! If you were alive, why didn't you send me a letter? Even after receiving the divorce letter, I've remained a widow for you at my family's home. "If it weren't for Mrs. Murray's matchmaking, I would still be a widow for you. I was trapped at my family's house, and was completely powerless. My sister-in-law looked down on me, and was eager to marry me off. When Mrs. Murray came to talk about a marriage, I didn't have a chance to refuse her!"

Hearing her words twisted his heart. Thomas had been struggling with his feelings for days. It wasn't just because his wife had remarried; it was also the sorrow and pain his mom and family felt over his "death". His mom had even fallen ill because of it, though her health had improved recently.

He kept telling himself that loyalty and devotion were often at odds; but deep down, he felt he had let his family down. He wanted desperately to make amends, but living like he used to felt impossible. Even at home, he remained in the same tense state as when he was a spy. On top of that, the king had entrusted him with significant responsibilities. How could he manage when he couldn't even hold his life together, let alone meet the king's expectations?

The sleepless nights and mounting frustration drove him to practice swordplay here, seeking even a fleeting sense of peace.

Now, Viola's accusations made him feel as if he had betrayed another person.

But all he could say to her was, "I'm sorry. I've let you down."

Viola scoffed through her tears. "How can you think you've let me down? You must think I can't compare to Kayla. She's remained a widow for her husband for all these years, and the two women from the Quinton family have also..."

Thomas shook his head vigorously. "I never thought that! I've never compared you to anyone. Everyone is different, and your choices were not wrong. You were young then. If you had wasted your life for me, I would have felt even guiltier. I've let you down." "How could you think that? You're the hero returning in glory. Everyone praises you. How can you feel you've let me down?"

The pain in Thomas' eyes deepened. The so-called hero returning in triumph was the source of his anguish. He didn't want that kind of fame. It wasn't about pride. He felt that the credit for reclaiming the Southern Frontier didn't belong to him or their team—they had merely contributed a small part.

Salvador had awarded him the title of third-rank major general, while those who had truly fought and bled for the Southern Frontier received far less recognition.

Thomas couldn't refuse, and he remembered Derek's words that day. Salvador wanted to commend them for their spirit. After all, the Septimus Tetra reconnaissance team had set an example and inspired the troops.

Thomas sighed heavily. "It's not like that. Don't misunderstand."

Wiping her tears, Viola looked at him with glistening eyes. "Do you really think you've let me down? If you truly believe that, then treat me well."

Looking at his former wife and recalling their past affection, Thomas felt a surge of complicated emotions. "You've married someone else. We shouldn't be meeting in

private anymore."

toFindNovel

"I want a divorce!" Viola's determination was unwavering as she lifted her chin and asked, "I want to know, if I get a divorce, would you still want me?" Thomas was taken aback. "You want a divorce?"

Viola stepped closer, her eyes

sparkling with intensity. "I want a divorce. Marrying him wasn't my choice. My sister-in-law forced me into it. Barrett doesn't treat me well, and assassins have once infiltrated Valor Estate. My two maids, Julia and Yvonne, were killed by assassins. All I need from you is one answer: do you despise me for having married Barrett?"

"Julia and Yvonne are dead?"

Thomas was shocked. He

remembered the two maids-they had been Viola's attendants. But many years have passed since then. Had they returned to serve her at the Warren family again?

Given their ages, the two maids should have been married off by now.

Viola cried, "They died protecting me! They were slaughtered by the assassins! I could die at any moment in Valor Estate. I want a divorce! Just answer me: would you despise me?" Thomas' heart raced at her words. Without thinking, he shook his head. However, his mind lingered on the news of the assassination attempt at Valor Estate.

Currently, there were no high-ranking officials living in Valor Estate. Even if they had offended someone, it shouldn't have resulted in an assassination attack. Something was off.

Seeing him shake his head, Viola sighed in relief. "You said you won't despise me you can't go back on your word. This is what you owe me."

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Thomas looked up. "You want a divorce because the Warren family mistreats you, Barrett treats you poorly, and there are assassins threatening your life. It's not because I've returned, right?"

Viola stepped forward suddenly, and wrapped her arms around him. Thomas was startled at her actions. He pushed her away, and stumbled back several steps.

Seeing his reaction, Viola froze for a moment. Then, tears streamed down her face, her heart breaking. "Do I disgust you? It seems that I do."

Thomas looked at her, his emotions simmering just beneath the surface. "I'll look into what's happening at Valor Estate."

"I don't need you to investigate!" Viola's voice rose, teetering on the edge of desperation. "What are you going to investigate? Don't you trust me? All I ask is this: if I get a divorce, will you still want me? Do you despise me or not? Just answer that question." Faced with her aggressive questioning, Thomas took a deep breath. He opened his mouth several times, but couldn't find the words. His heart was a tumult of confusion, and he didn't want to make any promises until things were clearer.

However, he couldn't shake the guilt he carried toward her. After a long silence, he finally murmured, "I don't despise you. I don't have the right to."

Viola's tear-filled eyes brightened. "With that, I can rest easy. Wait for me, Thomas."

With that, she turned and walked away.

Thomas wanted to call her back, but recalled her earlier words. The attack on the Warren family couldn't be simple. It was a matter of life and death. Julia and Yvonne were gone, and Viola could be in danger too.

He sighed heavily. These matters were beyond his control. He had already let Viola down. If her life were truly at stake, wanting a divorce was understandable.

If it ever came to that point and she came back to him, he wouldn't have any reason to refuse her. It was also a responsibility Thomas felt he needed to take.

Viola made her way down the mountain with Poppy, her steps light and her heart soaring. She hadn't been wrong-Thomas still cared for her.

She needed to think of a way to divorce Barrett. After that, Thomas would surely marry her again. At that time, she would be the wife of a third-rank major general. Then, it wouldn't be hard for him to secure a title for her. Compared to her excitement, Poppy was nearly terrified to the point of losing her mind.

She had heard most of the conversation between Viola and Thomas, even from a distance. Viola intended to divorce Barrett and remarry Thomas, and it seemed that Thomas was in agreement.

Once back at the estate, Poppy made an excuse to go out for supplies and headed straight to Silverstone Estate.

When she arrived, she was brought before Zoey and quickly relayed everything she had overheard between Viola and Thomas.

Zoey sighed heavily after hearing the news. Despite all her precautions, they had still fallen short.

How could Thomas not care if Viola claimed her life was in danger? He had always been a man of deep feelings and loyalty. Zoey dismissed Poppy, instructing her to report anything else that came up.

"Madam Zoey, what should we do now?" Jane asked anxiously. "If she truly divorces Mr. Warren, what will happen to the Earl of Silverstone's family's reputation? It could ruin the marriage prospects for the other ladies in the family!"

Zoey thought for a moment before responding. "The Warren family is a pit. If Viola wants to leave, I won't stop her. If she returns to us, I will welcome her. But if she wants to return to Thomas, I can't agree to that." Jane whispered, "But Mr. Thomas seems to be in agreement, Madam Zoey. If Madam Viola really does get a divorce and comes back, returning to the Farrell family might not be a bad choice."

"That's unacceptable!" Zoey's voice

was firm. "I won't allow that to happen. Jane, you've worked for me for many years, so you should know how I am. Also, you know that some things can't be hidden forever. She came back home to terminate her pregnancy then, and we only ever had one physician in our residence. How difficult would it be to investigate?"

Jane was aware of this fact too, and her heart raced with fear. "Surely they wouldn't investigate that matter without reason?"

"That's hard to say." Zoey's eyes

darkened. Her voice was thick with

frustration, something she had been swallowing for years but could

neither spit out nor ignore. "If she truly intends to go down that path, I

will speak to Thomas myself."

Jane quickly intervened. "You can't do that, Madam Zoey! Madam Evelyn would be furious with you, and there's no reason to disclose the sordid affairs within our own household!"

Chapter 599

Zoey closed her eyes and rubbed her temples. All of this was giving her a headache, leaving her overwhelmed and frustrated.

Jane continued to urge her, "Madam Zoey, if you tell Mr. Farrell about this, the Earl of Silverstone's family will lose all dignity if he makes a scene. You absolutely can't do that! And if the earl finds out that you instigated it, he'll be furious!" Thinking of her husband in the Southern Frontier only added to Zoey's headache. Back in the capital, Oliver used to listen to her, taking in her advice to some extent. Some things could be discussed without things going awry. However, the disagreements and arguments between them had always been numerous. She had to patiently analyze each issue with him and convince him bit by bit.

It was just like teaching a child.

Yet even when Oliver did comply, resentment lingered in his heart. His capacity to accept a wife with a broader vision than his own simply wasn't there, and that was a fundamental dilemma in Zoey's life. Everyone had their share of disappointments. No one lived entirely free of burdens.

Kayla was now living a good life, but how had she endured the previous years? Who knew the pain she had endured?

Carissa now basked in Prince Rafael's love, drawing envy from others. But who could truly understand the anguish of losing her entire family?

Fate dealt everyone their share of suffering. It was up to them to manage it and carve out a smooth path for their lives and futures.

Unlike Viola, who rushed toward anything good, only to turn her back the moment something felt off. Such fickleness was not just a betrayal of womanly virtue-it showed a complete disregard for even the most basic principles.

"Jane, I am the Earl of Silverstone's wife. I must think of our family's future," Zoey said slowly after a long silence. "I won't oppose Viola's divorce, but if she clings to Thomas and hopes to return and bask in his riches, she doesn't deserve that. It would weigh on my conscience. I know exactly what kind of man Thomas is. Even if he finds out, he wouldn't make a fuss or shout it from the rooftops. This also concerns the reputation of the Farrell family. If I tell him, I would only bear the resentment of my mother-in-law, my husband, and Viola."

She rubbed her forehead, then

continued, "If I ignore everything, I won't offend anyone. But if she goes back to Thomas, the reputation of the Earl of Silverstone's family will be ruined. The single women in our family will have a hard time finding suitable matches, and my daughter Will suffer the most. And if the Farrell family catches wind of this... Well, I don't need to spell out the consequences, do I?"

Jane felt a pang of sympathy for her mistress. Ultimately, Zoey was the one who would bear the burden, so she suggested, "Why not discuss it with Madam Evelyn? She might offer some insight into the situation." "Mother won't agree to tell Thomas about this."

"That would still be Madam Evelyn's decision, so you wouldn't have to shoulder the blame later."

Zoey sighed deeply, feeling as if new wrinkles were forming on her brow. "Jane, do you think I'm afraid of the blame? All I want is to have a clear conscience. I shouldn't have helped her then. Back then, I considered the fact that she and Thomas were ultimately still a married couple at heart. She cried and begged me, swearing she would never do it again. I was just too softhearted."

"But that's not your fault! It was Madam Evelyn who insisted you help her," Jane said, unable to watch her mistress wallow in self-reproach. She knew the circumstances clearly, and had personally prepared the medicine.

"Few people know about this. But if anyone picks up on something, it won't take long for the truth to come out. After all, when the physician prescribed the treatment, it matched the time she spent at Silverstone Estate to recuperate."

Thomas was unaware of Viola's

return home to recuperate. But once

Viola really divorced Barrett, the

Farrell family would certainly bring it up. Thomas might wonder what illness would require Viola to stay at her family home for more than a month.

The Farrell family hadn't suspected anything back then, but once they reflected on it-especially with Viola's turbulent marriage to Barrett and if she really divorced him-doubts would definitely arise. "Summon Viola back home tomorrow," Zoey said firmly.

Zoey would use this situation as leverage. Viola could divorce Barrett, but she couldn't go back to Thomas.

That was the line that couldn't be crossed.

Chapter 600

The next day, Zoey sent someone to bring Viola to Silverstone Estate. However, Viola replied that she wasn't feeling well and would return on another date. She was plotting how to discuss the divorce with Barrett, and didn't want her family to know just yet. However, Barrett had been on night duty lately. He slept during the day, which left them with little time to talk. It wouldn't do to bring up the divorce out of the blue without any preparation-there had to be some sort of commotion first.

Since Viola's visit to Richspire Peak, she had felt utterly exhausted. There were two days when she slept through the afternoon, not waking even when Barrett returned from his shift. It was only when Poppy nudged her awake for dinner that she finally stirred. Fatigue, drowsiness, and a slight sense of nausea plagued Viola. On top of that, her monthly cycle was delayed by several days. With all the facts combined, she couldn't shake the worry that she might be pregnant.

Calculating the dates in her mind, she recalled how Barrett had spent nearly every night at Grace Mansion during what had been the most romantic phase of their marriage. Panic set in as she fervently hoped she wasn't pregnant.

She didn't dare call for a physician to come to her, so she donned a veil and headed to a physician's office with Poppy to get checked.

At the physician's office, an elderly physician with silver hair smiled and said, "Congratulations, my lady. You are indeed pregnant."

Viola felt her blood run cold. Even though she had suspected for days, the confirmation left her reeling.

How could she be so unlucky? Why did it have to happen now?

If she had become pregnant before Thomas returned, she wouldn't have entertained any other thoughts. But now that she had opened up to Thomas, her feelings were uncontrollable. If she had become the wife of a third-rank major general and gained a title of nobility, it would have fulfilled all her aspirations in this life.

However, the arrival of this child threatened to shatter everything she had worked for.

She returned to Silverstone Estate in despair, and ordered everyone out of Evelyn's quarters.

Then, she knelt on the ground before her mother, just as she had years ago. She raised her head, trembling all over, panic and desperation flickering in her eyes.

"Mom, please help me," she pleaded, "I can't keep this baby."

Evelyn nearly fainted at Viola's words as she exclaimed, "What are you saying? Is the child not your husband's again?!"

For noble families, this was a nightmare from the past.

Tears streamed down Viola's cheeks. "It's Barrett's. But Mom, I've reconciled with Thomas. He promised that if I divorced, he would marry me again. I can't keep this child." Evelyn struck Viola across the face sharply, and Viola's face snapped to the side. Yet she quickly turned back to face her furious mother, her own body trembling with defiance. "Mom, if you don't help me, I'll kill myself right now!"

Evelyn's vision blurred, and pain constricted her chest. She pressed her hand to her heart, and slowly collapsed to the ground.

"Mom! Mom!" Viola cried out in panic, wrapping her arms around her. "Someone! Mom has fainted!"

After the family physician administered treatment, Evelyn gradually regained consciousness.

With a weary gaze, she looked at Zoey and Luna. "You two stay. Everyone else, leave."

"Mom..." Viola knelt beside the bed, sobbing.

Evelyn turned her head away, refusing to look at her. "Get out!"

Viola sniffled, and bowed her head. "Mom, you must help me. I'm begging you one last time."

With that, she slowly rose and walked out.

Not even Evelyn's closest maid was allowed to stay. Everyone was ushered out. The door was locked, the curtains drawn, and the room fell into darkness.

Zoey had an inkling of what had happened. It seemed that Viola was truly intent on divorcing, and Evelyn couldn't bear the news.

So she asked directly, "Mother, is it about Viola wanting a divorce?"

Evelyn fixed her with a heavy gaze "Zoey, you're preparing for the worst, but it won't matter. She has already gone to see Thomas. She truly intends to divorce."

"If she really can't get along with Barrett and wants to divorce, that's fine. We're her family. We accepted her back once, and we'll accept her back again. After all, such a thing happened at Valor Estate, and several lives were lost. No one knows if there will be assassins lurking-" Zoey began.

"She's pregnant," Evelyn interrupted Zoey sharply. "She wants to get rid of the baby and remarry Thomas."

"What?!" Zoey and Luna gasped in unison.

Upon hearing the full story from

Evelyn, Zoey's heart burned with fury toward Viola. She didn't care about the consequences any longer, and instructed Luna to take care of Evelyn.

Once outside, Zoey ordered, "Prepare the horses!"

That matter could no longer be buried. Thomas needed to crush any thoughts Viola had and put an end to her intentions.