

War Song 721

Chapter 721

After leaving the palace, Rafael made a quick stop at the estate to update Jacob, who had just fallen asleep, instructing him to wait until Carissa woke up before telling her the news.

As soon as Jacob heard the news, he was wide awake. He had planned to ask Carissa to take him to see his sister once she was up, but now, he found himself pondering the implications of the king's unexpected

actions.

Sleep was no longer an option.

When Carissa finally got up and dressed, Jacob approached her directly.

*His Highness returned just now and mentioned that the king plans to promote you to the commander of the Mystic Army. You'll oversee the Capital Guard, the Garrison Unit, the Royal Guard, and the Crown Guard. However, I haven't quite grasped the king's intention behind this move.

Carissa could hardly believe it. "A real position with work and authority?"

"Yes!"

She was genuinely shocked. "There's never been a precedent for a woman serving at court in our kingdom. Even when Aurora distinguished herself in battle, she was only assigned to a guard unit. And while I technically hold the title of deputy commander, I've never been allowed to interfere with the Mystic Army's affairs. It's just a title for a bit of extra pay."

There was a world of difference between women fighting on the battlefield and serving at court.

Carissa understood she would command not only the Mystic Army but also the Capital Guard, the Garrison Unit, the Royal Guard, and the Crown Guard. The latter was directly tied to the king. While they might feign respect, they would ultimately answer to her. This was a considerable amount of power.

“I don’t know why His Majesty would do this, but I suspect the official appointment will come after the court session. By the way, His Highness mentioned that His Majesty would personally issue a royal edict,” Jacob added.

Though Carissa found it strange, she realized she would accept the position if it truly materialized. While it was rare for women to serve at court during this era, precedents existed in previous ones.

The status of women in this era was rather low, a fact the queen dowager often lamented. So, when Aurora became a female general, Victoria was overjoyed and praised her openly.

“Jacob, Raf has always been cautious, reserved, and yielding. The king sees this. He knows Raf is trying to maintain their brotherly bond as well as his loyalty as a subject. However, he also recognizes that Raf doesn’t have to be this submissive, even if he doesn’t rebel, Carissa said thoughtfully.

Jacob sighed. “The king is suspicious, His Highness doesn’t want to create any rifts between them as brothers, as he’s thinking about the bigger picture. If he didn’t, the court would descend into chaos. His Majesty wants to rely on the prince, but he also fears him, which is why there’s such a contradiction. Ultimately, it comes down to trust.”

“So, Raf’s constant concessions only serve to placote His Majesty on the surface. They don’t actually solve anything. In that case, I think it’s better to take decisive action. Whether he doubts or fears us, it won’t change anything.” Carissa replied.

Jacob’s

eyes sparkled with a hint of realization. “Is that also how you feel, Your Grace?”

“Have you thought this way, Jacob?”

“His Highness has mentioned something similar to me before, Jacob admitted. “He said since there’s only Lord Ryan to inherit the Duke of Northwatch’s title and estate, we must protect him and help him grow. So, sometimes, it’s better to avoid unnecessary trouble. Plus...”

Jacob hesitated before continuing. “His Highness was worried you wouldn’t want to be dragged into the royal power struggles. He wanted to let you live a peaceful life. He believes you’ve endured too much unhappiness, and hopes for your future to be calm and steady.”

Carissa was momentarily taken aback, realizing Rafael had considered both her and Ryan in his thoughts. Until now, she had only thought Rafael wanted to preserve his brotherly bond with Salvador or keep his household out of the king’s constant suspicion.

A warm feeling surged within her. The thoughtfulness directed her way touched her deeply.

Initially, Carissa often felt that the Hell Monarch’s household was somewhat pathetic. No matter what they did, they first had to consider how Salvador would perceive it. It was hard to do anything.

Moreover, she had been preoccupied with her identity as the Hell Monarch’s princess consort. She was always mindful of her words and actions; so much so that she had nearly forgotten who she truly was. Carissa recalled saying that Barrett felt like a part of a past life. Wasn’t her time in Meadow Ridge the same? The vibrant and spirited Carissa of Meadow Ridge felt like a ghost now.

Perhaps it was time to boldly pursue what she wanted in life. Life was too short to hold back.

“Jacob, I’ll have Violet bring Jaina here. After you meet her, take her home to see your grandfather and mother.”

Jacob’s eyes glistened with tears.

The day he had waited for a long time had finally arrived.

Chapter 722

When Violet woke up, the first thing she heard was that Carissa was about to join court as an official.

Carissa would actually become the commander of the Mystic Army and oversee the Capital Guard, the Garrison Unit, the Royal Guard, and the Crown Guard.

Violet felt like she was in a dream. She gasped several times before rubbing her eyes and asking. “Are you really going to be a government dog?”

Carissa chuckled. “Are you talking about being a corrupt government official? Why can’t I be a good one?”

“Then, you must be a righteous official!” Violet propped herself up on her elbow, tapping her chin with her finger. “Alright, you can definitely be a righteous official.”

Carissa remembered the times they had ventured through the martial world together. Back then, like all martial artists, they looked down on local officials, especially those known for their corruption. Those officials were often referred to as “government dogs“.

Of course, they had also encountered righteous officials who were honest and stood up for the people- true parental figures for their communities. They held great respect for those individuals.

It was a pity their journey had lasted only a short time. They had been caught and brought back, and Everett had even locked Carissa up for half a month.

Thinking back on their Meadow Ridge adventures made Carissa’s smile brightly with nostalgia.

“You’re going to be an official, but you’re smiling so brilliantly,” Violet said, her eyes suddenly misting with

emotion.

It had been long since she had seen Carissa smile like that.

“It’s not just because I’m going to be an official. It’s because I no longer have to adhere to the rigid expectations of being a virtuous woman, I can step out into the world. I feel much freer, there are so many things I can do now,” Carissa said, her eyes twinkling with delight.

Violet nodded. “That’s true. I felt so frustrated watching you interact with those noble ladies before. You were smiling without showing your teeth. I felt like prying your mouth open!”

Puzzled, she added, “But why does the king suddenly want to appoint you as an official? When you returned after your achievements, your popularity was at its peak. That would have been the right

time to give you a real position. Bringing it up now means many ministers will likely oppose it. They won't want a woman stepping into court."

"The ministers' opposition is something the king will have to worry about. As for why he chose to appoint me, I won't waste my time pondering the reasons.

I just need to step out and get closer to him. Only then will he clearly see that he doesn't need to constantly be concerned or suspicious about the Hell Monarch's household," Carissa said.

Jacob had intended to urge Violet to hurry and fetch Jaina, but he was caught up in Carissa's words. When he heard her say that, he realized her vision was far broader than he had imagined. She was the one without any worries.

Meanwhile, Rafael was preoccupied with the Duke of Northwatch's household as well as the Sinclair

family, and was constantly overthinking everything.

Violet chimed in, "Let's celebrate tonight! I'll get Jaina first. The Marquis of Grovehill's household is probably in chaos right now, so no one will have time to look after her. I'm also worried she might try to go to Harmony Palace. She hasn't even been told the truth about the so-called life-saving grace Eleanor gave her."

Jacob nodded. "Please hurry, Ms. Spencer,"

"I'm on it. Maybe you should bring your grandfather and mother here too, so they can see Jaina sooner. You haven't told them yet, have you?" Violet asked.

"Not yet, but it's probably a good idea. I'll go get them right away," Jacob replied, giving Violet a nod again, "Thank you for this. I'll leave it to you to bring Jaina here, then."

Violet smiled warmly. "It's no trouble at all. Carissa and I both love a happy reunion. By the way, has your father arrived?"

"I've already sent someone to fetch him. Why don't you hurry along, Ms. Spencer?" Jacob said, feeling a bead of sweat form as anxiety crept in.

Violet nodded, then turned to Carissa. I'll celebrate with you when I return!"

With that, she dashed out like a whirlwind.

Jacob had arranged for a house in the capital, and had hired a few maids and servants to care for his grandfather and mother.

His grandfather was aging and in poor health. His mother had been heartbroken and distressed over her sister's disappearance, which had taken a toll on her health. She had received care from Sebastian over the past couple years, which had helped her improve a little.

Chapter 723

On this day, a sudden change occurred in the capital.

Albert York heard from a servant he sent to buy things that there had been some kind of commotion. He instructed the servant not to get involved or pay attention to any of it. His grandson was serving as the head archivist at Hell Monarch Estate, so they shouldn't mix

with anyone related to political affairs or even discuss them.

Of course, Albert didn't believe the events would affect his family in any way. Since they started living in the capital, they followed a principle of caution in their words and actions to avoid causing trouble for Jacob.

After breakfast, Albert settled in the small courtyard to soak up the sun. As winter approached, the weather gradually turned colder, and sunny days became especially rare.

Jacob's mother, Ethel, approached and spoke respectfully to her father-in-law, "Father, I heard from Daisy that you didn't eat much at breakfast. Are you unwell?"

"My appetite's just a bit off. It's nothing to worry about, Albert replied, opening his eyes. Noticing the

his brow. "Another nightmare?"

weary expression on his daughter-in-law's face, e

“I’ve been dreaming about Jaina lately. I don’t know what’s going on,” Ethel replied, unable to hide her sadness

Albert sighed, knowing that his daughter-in-law’s dreams weren’t as simple as she implied. They were nightmares filled with Jaina enduring various forms of torture—one moment she was having her limbs severed, the next she was drowning, and then she was engulfed in flames.

“What you dream of reflects your waking thoughts. You’re too worried. Think positively. Perhaps she’s married now, raising children, and living a peaceful life,” said Albert.

Ethel opened her mouth, but hesitated. Seeing the sadness in her father-in-law’s eyes, she realized he was only trying to comfort her and didn’t truly believe it either.

She nodded. “Yes, I should think positively. But the heavens were to show mercy and allow us to see her one more time, I would pay any price for it.”

Albert reassured, “Don’t dwell on it too much. Many things in life can’t be forced. If you don’t push too hard, who knows? You might be surprised one day.”

In truth, everyone held on to their own obsessions. They found solace in comforting one another through their shared sorrow.

“Speaking of which, we must start making arrangements for Jacob’s marriage soon. It’s been delayed for so many years and he’s already turned thirty,” Albert added.

Ethel sighed helplessly. “Every time he comes home, I urge him to settle down but he never listens. He always says... He always says he needs to find his sister before he can start a family.”

“If he doesn’t marry and have children, how will our family’s legacy be carried on?” Albert lamented. Forget it. That child is stubborn and Impossible to persuade. I don’t want to force him into anything. Our family has suffered enough. Let him live as he pleases

Chapter 724

Jaina’s heart sank. “What do you mean?”

Violet spoke in a low voice, “Our suspicions were correct. She arranged for those bandits. The trouble. your troupe was facing? That was her doing. She aimed to bring you to the capital and intended to hand you over to Lord Henry. But for some reason, she didn’t go through with it.”

“Oh my

my god, it’s true,” Jaina said, her hands going cold. “What about Lucas? She didn’t take care of him, did she?”

“We sent someone to investigate. You hadn’t been gone long when Lucas was

killed in his sleep. They slit his throat with a sword.”

Violet refrained from telling her Lucas had starved to death. That would be too brutal for Jaina to bear. Being killed in his sleep sounded less torturous.

It was what Violet, Carissa, and the others had discussed before. When they picked up Jaina after their operation during the Emberfest Festival, they would break the news to her gently. Lucas’ death would be hard for her to accept, but at least she would be reunited with her family, which could somewhat ease the pain of the loss.

After a long moment of stunned silence, Jaina trembled and finally asked, “Was it Grand Princess Eleanor?”

“She had someone else carry it out, but yes, it was her. She’s likely responsible for many deaths, and now, she’s been implicated in treason. Don’t be too upset. At least Lucas’ death has been avenged.”

Jaina buried her face in her hands and cried uncontrollably. “I’m such an idiot! How could I have been so stupid? She kept me locked away the entire time. How could I have believed she would treat Lucas well? It’s my fault he’s dead...”

Chapter 725

Violet loved happy reunions, but she dreaded the heart-wrenching pain of separation and death. Unsure how to comfort Jaina, she gently patted the latter’s back.

“Don’t cry. Life and death are fated. Lucas had suffered from illness for so long. Death may not be a good release, but at least he passed without prolonged suffering.”

At that moment, Violet truly wished Lucas had died peacefully in his sleep.

Initially, Jacob had suggested telling Jaina that Lucas had died of his illness. However, both Rafael and Carissa disagreed. Jaina had the right to know who was responsible for Lucas’ death.

Violet shared this sentiment. If someone had killed her mentor—just hypothetically—she would want to know her enemy rather than remain blissfully unaware

As Jaina continued to cry sadly, Violet reassured, “Don’t be sad. I’m taking you to see Jacob, your grandfather, and your mother. Your father is on his way to the capital too. I’m sure Lucas’ spirit will be happy to see you reunited with your family.”

Even the thought of meeting her family didn’t ease Jaina’s sorrow. She had longed for this day since Violet mentioned that her brother was in the capital. She had been trying hard to recall memories from before she turned seven. She remembered several family members, including her grandparents, parents, and brother. Gradually, their faces began to materialize in her mind.

One memory stood out her mom hitting her palm with a yellow wooden ruler. It had hurt so much. But after each punishment, her mom would wipe away tears, and Jaina would playfully lean in, making faces to cheer the older woman up.

Suppressing the aching in her heart, Jaina used her handkerchief to dry her tears. She knew they had been searching for her for eighteen long years, and those years had been difficult. She couldn’t bear to make them cry anymore.

Yet, thinking of Lucas brought another wave of pain.

Anger flickered in her eyes as she asked, “Will Grand Princess Eleanor be executed?”

“She committed treason. Even if she doesn’t die, her life will be no different from death. It might be better if she died,” Violet replied.

As she fixed Jaina's hair, Violet reassured, "Don't worry, Evil deeds have a way of coming back around. Someone will avenge Lucas. You just need to be happy, and that will please him."

Jaina's tears spilled over again.

Violet gently wiped her face. "Don't ever think it's your fault Lucas is gone. Remember, it was Grand Princess Eleanor who caused his death. Don't carry that burden. If you must hate someone, hate her, not yourself."

After Violet's somewhat irrational comfort, Jaina's emotions stabilized slightly.

Upon arriving at Hell Monarch Estate, they stepped out of the carriage, and the gatekeeper informed them that Jacob was already inside.

Jaina instantly felt nervous. She gripped Violet's hand tightly as she took a deep breath.

"Don't be nervous. They're waiting for you," Violet encouraged, pulling her along as they entered.

Jaina followed; each step seemed heavier than the last, as if her feet were lead-filled. The moment they turned around the intricately carved partition screen, Jaina spotted an elderly man with white hair standing in the corridor. In front of him stood a young man, supporting a woman clad in a stone-blue dress.

When their eyes met, Jaina felt like she had been struck by thunder and froze in place.

The blurred images in Jaina's mind began to take shape—her mother, a woman with a sharp tongue but a soft heart. The older woman had been young and beautiful, exuding an air of authority with each step she took.

Her grandfather had only a few gray strands in his hair when he was younger, and had sported a beard. Jaina remembered pulling at his beard as a child, when it was still black. He still had a beard now, but it had turned white.

And her brother... Was that really him? No—he resembled their father, who always carried himself seriously, yet had eyes filled with warmth and affection.

Tears streamed down her face, blurring her vision.

She vaguely saw someone rushing toward her, hearing a heart-wrenching cry echo in her ears.

“My daughter! My Jaina! I finally found you!”

Jaina felt herself enveloped in a warm embrace and instinctively reached out to hug back. However, the feeling was different from her memories. The shoulders and back of the woman holding her were so thin.

In her recollections, Jaina had nestled into her mom’s embrace, which had always been wide and strong. Her mom’s broad back had been too wide for her little hands to wrap around fully.

Jaina heard herself burst into tears as she cried loudly

Chapter 726

Jaina felt a deep grievance, an indescribable mix of hurt and sorrow. Holding the frail woman in front of her, all the injustices she had endured in the past surged forth like a river breaking through a dam.

This was her mom—someone she had never dared to dream she could embrace again in this lifetime.

After a moment, Jacob stepped forward with Albert. Following a heartfelt reunion, both men were soon in tears, while Ethel still clung tightly to Jaina’s hand. In her memory, her little girl had been just seven—and now, she was twenty-five.

The images from Jaina’s memories began to sharpen, but her recollections of her mom remained vivid and youthful. The woman had been so full of life, her voice so loud that neighbors could hear her scolding. Yet now, Ethel could barely manage to speak without sounding breathless.

Violet and Carissa stood outside and watched. They dabbed their eyes as they listened to the family reminisce through their tears, feeling both touched and sad.

It turned out that Jacob had always been such a caring brother, and their weak and frail mom had been a force of nature. Jaina had once been a mischievous little girl, much like Violet and Carissa had been at Meadow Ridge.

Carissa also took a moment to receive her appointment letter. She barely had time to glance at it before expressing her gratitude, as Derek had come in person to announce the edict. It was clear the court session hadn't yet ended. That could only mean Salvador had exerted his influence over the officials to elevate her to the position of the Mystic Army's commander.

Derek had mentioned wanting to speak with her privately, but Carissa simply arranged for refreshments, wishing to stay a little longer before heading over.

Violet was right—family reunions were beautiful and heart-wrenching, stirring a profound sense of emotion within her. She wiped her tears and watched as Ethel held Jaina tightly.

Carissa felt a pang of envy. She would never be cradled by her mom in that way again.

Turning around, she noticed Helen standing behind her with tears streaming down her face. Gillian stood beside her, trying to help wipe her tears. The elderly woman was also sobbing softly.

Helen's heart softened when she saw the tear streaks on her daughter-in-law's face.

She reached out and beckoned Carissa over. "Come here!"

Carissa wiped her tears and stepped forward, allowing Helen to embrace her. "From now on, I'll be your

mom."

Carissa was touched, but didn't dare move as she was half a head taller than her mother-in-law.

Since Helen held her head down firmly and was affectionately ruffling her hair, Carissa had no choice but to bend slightly. She leaned against her mother-in-law to prevent Helen from standing on her tiptoes.

Standing on tiptoe to be close to someone was an experience Carissa had tried before, and it had felt awkward. She thought that she would fall at any moment

“Mr. Walker is still waiting for me, Mother, I’ll be back shortly,” Carissa said softly.

Helen released Carissa, tears still glistening in her eyes. She cradled her daughter-in-law’s cheek, marveling at the latter’s delicate, smooth skin. It was almost as beautiful as her own when she was younger, which made Carissa even more precious.

Rafael had good taste.

“Go on, then. I want to watch them a bit longer. Isn’t this even more touching than a play?”

Violet moved closer to Helen and nudged Carissa away. Her voice was choked with emotion as she said, Go on with your business, Cari. I’ll stay with Lady Helen. Just let me lean on your shoulder for a moment. My heart is both touched and heavy. This family shouldn’t have been torn apart. That’s 18 years of separation—years, not just 18 days. It’s so painful. My heart hurts so much.”

“Who can argue with that?” Helen said, embracing Violet and wiping her own tears, inadvertently pushing Gillian aside.

Carissa glanced around the room, where Jacon and his family had dried their tears. Jaina was kneeling on the floor, bowing to Albert and Ethel.

A sharp pang struck Carissa’s heart as memories flooded back. She remembered returning from Meadow Ridge upon hearing the news of the deaths of her father and brothers. She had knelt before her mom and sisters-in-law in the same way.

The past loomed vividly in her mind. At that time, Carissa had thought losing her father and brothers was the most devastating thing imaginable. Little did she know that later, even her mom, sisters-in-law, nieces, and nephews would be slaughtered.

How could she settle for a life confined to the inner household? The situation in Fawnrun City had yet to come to light, and her maternal grandfather and uncles were still in danger.

Carissa truly wanted to be the Mystic Army’s commander.

Chapter 727

In the side hall, Derek was enjoying the refreshments, sipping a cup of coffee. When he saw Carissa enter, he smiled warmly and rose to greet her.

“No need for formalities, Mr. Walker. Please, take a seat.” Carissa urged, gently pushing down Derek’s hand.

She knew Derek had helped her and her mom significantly over the years, often in ways she couldn’t openly acknowledge. Today seemed like the perfect opportunity to express her gratitude.

Once Derek sat down, Carissa bowed her head slightly. “I know you’ve done a lot for my mother and I over the years, Mr. Walker. After I married Raf, I can only imagine how much you’ve spoken on his behalf in front of the king. I truly thank you for that.”

Derek smiled kindly at her. “Your gratitude is too much for me to bear, Your Grace. Please sit down. I want to talk with you for a moment.”

Carissa took a seat, her expression warm and inviting “Please go ahead.”

“It’s about this position you’ve taken on,” Derek said, his demeanor gradually turning serious as he met her gaze. “You must do your utmost best. Since His Majesty trusts you and is using you, he will definitely give you his full trust.

“But remember this, Your Grace—no matter what happens, you and His Highness must never let your hearts drift apart. You must trust each other as long as it doesn’t involve betrayal. Always communicate openly, and never allow disputes to arise from interests or power. Remember, you are one as a couple.”

Carissa pondered his words.

How deep was Salvador’s trust in her? It was clear he couldn’t possibly trust her entirely. Even shared interests between people wouldn’t guarantee absolute trust. Moreover, Salvador was inherently suspicious. It was already generous of him to grant any level of trust.

As for being united as a couple, Carissa understood that all too well. She and Rafael were married. Even if they shared similar goals, they would inevitably have different perspectives on certain matters, which would lead to conflicts or disagreements.

As the commander of the Mystic Army, she had to follow Salvador's orders. That meant that regardless of the situation, she was expected to be loyal to the throne above all else.

Since conflicts were inevitable, trust between husband and wife became even more crucial.

Yet, Carissa couldn't shake the feeling that there was another layer to Derek's words. His insistence on their unity as a couple made her wonder if Salvador intended to use her position as commander to stir up discord between her and Rafael.

For now, she brushed off the concern. She hadn't entered the fray yet, so there was no need to worry too much. As Adrian often said, "Where there's a will, there's a way."

If conflicts did arise

, she and Rafael could resolve them through communication. There was no reason to hesitate over something that hadn't happened yet.

"With your reminder, I know how to proceed, Mr. Walker. You don't need to say more. I understand

everything." Carissa assured.

Derek looked at her and sighed inwardly. What a smart and earnest girl she was! She could have probed deeper, but she knew he was in a difficult position. She might think that asking too much would only burden him.

But... did she truly understand the implications of his words?

Carissa met his eyes with a clear gaze and added, "You don't need to worry. I know how to strike a balance. I'll remain loyal in my duties. I won't allow anything to drive a wedge between Raf and me."

When Derek heard this, he realized she genuinely understood his message and felt relieved.

He stood. “There’s not much more I can say. Just make sure to share what we discussed today with His Highness later.”

“Of course I will. Thank you, Mr. Walker.”

Derek waved his hand. “I’ll take my leave now that my tasks here are done.”

“I’ll see you out.

Carissa walked with him to the door, where a few royal guards waited outside. As Jacob had been reuniting with his sister, Carissa had personally come out to handle giving some monetary gifts to the royal guards.

However, knowing he wasn’t motivated by that, she didn’t offer any rewards to Derek. She would remember his preferences and send him some gifts later on.

Chapter 728

Harmony Palace was in disarray.

All the stewards, along with Eleanor, had been taken away. The palace maids and servants were temporarily confined in Harmony Palace under the watchful eye of the Supreme Court officials, to be summoned later for questioning.

The Capital Guard and the Garrison Unit had withdrawn, and the case was now in the hands of the Supreme Court.

Rafael’s deputy minister, Matthew, arranged for the women who had been imprisoned to send word back to their families. If their families were found to be involved and their assets needed to be confiscated after the case was over, the Supreme Court would take the money from Eleanor’s funds instead.

Melanie Lester lived in the capital, so she was allowed to return home first. Carmen came to pick her up personally, still reeling in disbelief that the operation had taken place on the first of October rather than the fifteenth

Thinking about how Carissa had kept that from her, Carmen felt a surge of anger. Carissa didn't trust her. Carmen had shared everything with her and had even brought Henry along, yet Carissa had concealed her true plan.

It wasn't until they were in the carriage on the way home that her mother spoke up. "Your dad never intended to cooperate with Lady Carissa, He told Grand Princess Eleanor about the plan for the fifteenth. It wouldn't have succeeded if the timetable hadn't been moved up."

Carmen could hardly believe her ears. "Dad sold me out? Doesn't he realize he

could have gotten me killed?"

Melanie leaned weakly against her daughter's shoulder, tears slipping down her cheeks. "He sees each daughter as a tool, just like Grand Princess Eleanor."

"But... He loves you the most, doesn't he?" Carmen wiped the tears from her mom's face, but her own tears began to spill. "He said he'd do anything for you as long as you could get out of the dungeon!"

"You would do well to not trust a man's words. If you trust him completely, you'll be irreparably lost." Melanie said bitterly, resentment swirling in her heart. In the beginning, your father paid some attention to me because of my beauty. But love? There was none.

"It was all an act to make Grand Princess Eleanor think she had something on him. His weakness lies with the Kingsley family. His repeated visits to the dungeon were merely for the grand princess to think she was using the bond between us three to control him. Meanwhile, he was using that to control you and Celeste."

Melanie coughed a few times, her face pale with a hint of anger. "If he had even the slightest bit of concern for you and your sister, he wouldn't have told that poisonous woman your plan. If he thought it was too risky, he could have persuaded you to give up instead of pretending to agree and then betraying

you."

Carmen clutched her mom tightly. Her admiration for her dad had been shattered.

“How could he be so cruel? I’ve always obeyed him. Doesn’t that mean anything to him? I’m his flesh and blood! Carmen cried,

Melanie gripped her daughter’s hand, teeth clenched as she warned, “Remember, you can’t trust men. Don’t give your heart away even when it comes time for you to marry. Never follow the same path as me. I fell for his lies, and it led to you two being used by him, You’re better off because you’ve had some training in martial arts and are on the right path. However, your sister has been taught all the wrong things from childhood. Her life is ruined.”

“Now that you’re safe, Celeste doesn’t have to carry out any more tasks. She can come home,” Carmen said, wiping her tears.

Melanie let out a long sigh. “She visited me. I told her to escape and forget about me. She claimed she was merely playing the part of a servant for that poisonous woman, but deep down, she wants to entangle herself with a powerful family.

“She wondered why she should settle for less. She’s gone astray, and likely thinks she can make her own way in the world. But it’s not entirely her fault. From a young age, that venomous woman taught her to only pursue wealth and power. Those are the only things in Celeste’s eyes now.”

Chapter 729

Carmen felt a chill run through her as she listened to her mom.

“That can’t be true! If she really wants to rely on a powerful family, wasn’t Samuel a good match? He loved her dearly.”

Melanie smiled bitterly. “Samuel was the Earl of Gracehold’s heir and a top scholar. However, he married the Duchess of Everpeace, Prince Harvey’s daughter, Since that was the case, Celeste had no hope of rising higher. Samuel may have said he loved her, but he never truly did anything for her. He doted on her, but he wouldn’t dare elevate her to the status of a rightful wife.”

Carmen blinked in confusion. “A rightful wife?”

As the carriage rolled forward, Melanie’s gaze darkened. “Yes. She believes that unless she becomes a rightful wife, she’ll have no chance of becoming the main wife after the current wife dies. If she can’t become a rightful wife, she’ll just be a concubine. Even if the main wife dies, she won’t attain her desired status. She said she could accept being a concubine, but she doesn’t want to spend her life in that role.”

“It’s understandable she wouldn’t want to be a concubine. Who would choose such a fate unless they had no other options? And she’s been used all this time for your sake. It’s tragic for her,” said Carmen, her heart twisting in turmoil.

Melanie leaned against Carmen, her breath coming in short gasps before a violent cough wracked her body, causing her to spit out blood.

Carmen anxiously patted her back. “Why are you coughing so violently, Mom? Didn’t you say a physician checked your health?”

“Yes,” Melanie replied, wiping the blood from the corner of her mouth with her tattered sleeve, forcing a weak smile, “Don’t worry. I’ll get better. Remember my words—no matter what your sister asks you to do in the future, you must never agree to it. Remember—no matter what it is, don’t agree.”

Carmen frowned in confusion. ‘Grand Princess Eleanor has fallen. What could Celeste possibly ask me to do? We can leave the capital and live somewhere no one knows us.’”

Melanie grasped her daughter’s wrist tightly, her breath coming in quick gasps. “Remember my words. You mustn’t have too much contact with her, and you shouldn’t see her again. Do you understand?”

As she finished speaking, another fit of coughing seized her, making her double over. It took a moment before she could straighten up again.

Once she did, she held onto Carmen’s hand

and whispered hoarsely, “Do you understand?”

“I understand, Mom,” Carmen replied, tears brimming in her eyes as she watched her mother struggle to breathe. “Didn’t you say a physician checked on you? Why is your illness still this severe?”

Melanie leaned weakly against her daughter, her silence filled with unspoken sorrow. Tears streamed down her cheeks, a reflection of her profound grief.

The entire court was stunned by the scandal. No one had anticipated that Eleanor harbored such wicked ambitions. Alongside their shock, many officials were genuinely afraid, as their families frequently

Interacted with her.

During the morning court session, Salvador erupted in a furious rage. He issued orders for a thorough investigation. Still simmering with anger, he seized the moment to promote Carissa to the role of the Mystic Army's commander, giving her control over the army and all its divisions.

Some officials opposed this decision, but no one dared to provoke Salvador's wrath. Evert the Oversight Department minister was silent, so the officials who opposed the decision had nothing more to say.

Furthermore, it was worth noting that Carissa had previously been the deputy commander of the Mystic Army, while the Hell Monarch was the commander. Now, she was just taking over her husband's position. Her abilities were clear for everyone to see.

However, some conservative officials believed that allowing women to hold positions at court would lead to chaos. They were particularly alarmed because, in addition to promoting Carissa, the king had also permitted her to establish a women's academy in the name of the queen dowager.

If this continued, wouldn't it mean women would rise to unprecedented power?

Of course, these concerns could be raised gradually. Today wasn't the time to voice them.

Chapter 730

The Supreme Court was busier than ever today. At Rafael's command, all leave was canceled. Even the assistant minister, Peter Salter, who was at home mourning a loss, was worried about keeping his position.

When the major conspiracy case arose and Rafael asked him to return, Peter quickly put on his official uniform and went back.

Eleanor and Henry were brought to the Supreme Court, Rafael would personally interrogate his aunt, while Matthew was tasked with questioning Henry. Peter and Jared Lynch, the Supreme Court's associate chief, would interrogate the remaining officials, servants, household physicians, and other staff.

Rafael didn't rush to interrogate Eleanor. Instead, he ordered that all the weapons from Harmony Palace be transported to the Supreme Court as material evidence. Meanwhile, the rest of the team began their questioning.

Despite working tirelessly until nightfall, they only managed to interrogate a handful of people. Rafael then ordered shifts for questioning, meaning there would be no rest. Matthew began organizing the interrogation reports and statements they had gathered to present them to Rafael.

Rafael glanced at the statements and noted there were few. He pulled out the reports on Henry, which were filled with questions but few answers, as Henry often deflected with claims of ignorance.

Matthew sighed in frustration. "Lord Henry claims he knows nothing. He only admits that the women in the dungeon and those watched over in the courtyard are his concubines. When it comes to the weapons! or whether Grand Princess Eleanor was involved in treason, he simply says he doesn't know."

"Without concrete evidence, why would he confess?" Rafael set Henry's statement aside and pulled out the statements from Florence and Kurt. "Florence has been by Grand Princess Eleanor's side for a long time. She's her trusted confidante. As for Kurt, he's the head of household soldiers. What did they reveal?"

Matthew replied, "Florence seems to be in shock. She kept muttering 'impossible' under her breath, and we couldn't get much out of her, Kurt provided a good deal of information, but it was mostly trivial.

"He mentioned how Grand Princess Eleanor interacted frequently with certain families, the cruel treatment of the concubines in the inner palace, and the various ways those concubines had met their ends—drowning, strangulation, and even being thrown to their deaths. Each story was more tragic than the last. But when it came to the weapons, he had nothing to say. He only says he doesn't know anything about them."

"When did he start working at Harmony Palace? Rafael asked.

"It's been five years. He mentioned that the well in Harmony Palace's back courtyard hides a number of corpses mostly newborn boys and a few concubines who were tossed in after they died.

That well is usually sealed. When it's opened, it means someone's about to die," Matthew replied, still shuddering at the thought.

"Have you found out how many people have died? We need to trace the origins of those women as well," Rafael asked.

The treason case was undoubtedly significant, but the tragic deaths at Eleanor's hands also demanded justice.

"We haven't compiled the figures yet. The servants at Harmony Palace were rotated in and out, including the trusted ones. No one knows if anyone had already died before they arrived. Also, not everyone knows how the grand princess dealt with those people. Only a few of her trusted people handled it, and I suspect the old confidants may have been dealt with too. I've also dispatched someone to retrieve the bones from the well, but they haven't returned yet," Matthew explained.

"In other words, we haven't managed to uncover much information," Rafael noted, picking up and glancing at a statement from one of the household physicians

Matthew sighed. "We've been busy all day, but there are many people to bring back and even more to accommodate. The interrogations only began a couple of hours ago. Since they're not afraid yet, we haven't gotten much out of them. I'll focus solely on the questioning tomorrow."

Rafael nodded, scrutinizing the statement in his hand. This household physician named Billy has been in the estate for ten years, which means he knows quite a lot, but..."

Matthew interjected, "Peter conducted the interrogation, and his questioning style is always quite sharp. I didn't expect him to uncover such details. Grand Princess Eleanor strictly forbade the physicians from treating the concubines in the courtyard or the dungeon, but she granted permission for Melanie Lester's

treatment.

"After two days of treatment, Celeste-Henry's concubine's daughter sought Billy out and seduced him. She got him to use a potent drug on her mother. She intended to worsen Melanie's condition to kill her at the end."