

War Song 771

Chapter 771

Giles, the head steward of Ironridge Estate, stood outside the door. He nodded respectfully as he entered

the room.

He explained, “Madam Emma, there’s no need to worry Grand Princess Eleanor’s treason has essentially been established. The Supreme Court’s Investigation is merely to uncover those behind it. Even if they don’t find anyone, the Supreme Court will still go through the motions. Since the Marquis of Ironridge’s household and Grand Princess Eleanor’s household are connected through marriage, some fallout is

inevitable.

“However, Lady Carissa only summoned the marquis and Lady Jessica for questioning today, which clearly indicates she doesn’t intend to escalate things. Otherwise, even those close to Lady Jessica would have been called in.”

Emma sighed. “I really don’t understand. Grand Princess Eleanor holds such a high position. Why would she resort to treason? And what about the concubines in her household? I’ve heard there were over a hundred, and most of them have died, I also heard that no male infants were left alive. How can a person be so cruel?””

With how things were, it wasn’t strange why Jessica had never gotten pregnant.

Emma wanted to mention that, but the thought was too harsh to voice aloud. Still, it lingered in her mind.

The consequences of one’s actions would always come back to haunt them.

Margaret felt a chill in her heart. It was all too horrifying to contemplate.

“Giles, summon those who were with Jessica and ask if they have suffered from her abuse,” she said.

Giles hesitated but, seeing Margaret’s serious expression, he finally spoke up, “Most of the maids who accompanied her are gone. Rumor has it they were sold off, but I fear their fates weren’t any better.”

“Investigate further,” Margaret commanded. “In the past, we didn’t manage her affairs closely and let her do as she pleased. We were unaware of her cruelty. Whether they were sold or killed, there will be someone who knows what happened.”

Emma, always dutiful and respectful towards Margaret, understood her mother-in-law’s thoughts. Asking someone to look into this matter meant Margaret was considering asking Leopold to divorce Jessica and

cast her out.

*Ask Lady Serena. Since she entered the household, she’s always been by Lady Jessica’s side. She should know quite a bit,” Emma added, her tone now calmer.

Given the results of the questioning, it was clear the Marquis of Ironridge’s household would be implicated to some degree. If word got out and the public began to discuss and condemn them, how would the servants mistreated by Jessica or those sold off feel? Margaret and Emma feared they might go public with their grievances.

Therefore, a thorough investigation of the household should be conducted. Anyone who had suffered under Jessica’s cruelty should be compensated well.

Margaret struck the armrest in anger. “My health is failing, and I’m already struggling with household matters. I thought Jessica wouldn’t dare act recklessly only to discover how truly malicious she is. I’ve

been far too complacent.

Giles replied, “There’s no need to be upset, Madam Margaret. Let’s first find out where the people from her quarters have been sold off to and see if we can bring them back. As for those she has wronged, we’ll make sure they are compensated.”

“Giles is right. Mother, don’t blame yourself. It’s not unusual for a mother-in-law to refrain from interfering in a daughter-in-law’s treatment of her maids and servants, especially when their contracts aren’t under the family. You shouldn’t bear the burden for this,” Emma said.

Margaret sighed heavily. “You think you know a person, but you never truly understand their heart. I never imagined such a depth of hidden malice would be concealed in Grand Princess Eleanor’s household. It’s truly horrifying. What we know is likely just the tip of the iceberg. This scandal could severely tarnish the royal family’s reputation.”

In the main hall, Carissa finished her questioning and prepared to wrap up.

Leopold was stunned. He had always known Jessica to be domineering, willful, and unruly, but he never suspected her heart could be so vicious.

She had even justified her actions, claiming she had only beaten a few pets—pets that belonged to her mother’s household. She even asked if that really warranted such a grand inquisition?!

To her, human lives were as insignificant as dirt.

Moreover, Jessica had been secretly running businesses in the gold and silk industries, yet she could only keep a small portion of the profits. The rest went directly to her mother, Eleanor.

What did Eleanor do with that money? It was all too clear—she had bought weapons.

If these matters came to the king’s attention, Leopold and his family would likely be dragged down with them.

Chapter 772

After Carissa left, Leopold remained in a daze for a long while. It took him a while to slowly regain his senses. His eyes were bloodshot as he seized Jessica by the collar and raised his hand, delivering a sharp slap across her face.

“How dare you hit me?! You coward!” she screamed like a crazed woman.

“That’s not all I’m going to do! I’m divorcing you!” Leopold snapped, raising his voice for the first time as rage boiled within him.

“What?” Jessica froze for a moment, her face darkening ominously. “Say that again!”

“You’re such a vicious woman! Why wouldn’t I divorce you? Am I supposed to keep you around to harm my family and our people?!”

Suddenly, a ceramic pot came crashing down on Leopold’s head, shattering with a resounding crack. The force of it sent him staggering back, disbelief washing over his face as he stared at the frenzied Jessica. As dizziness overtook him, he collapsed to the ground blood gushing from his head.

“Lord Leopold!”

The servants rushed in and hastily supported him as one shouted, “Fetch the physician!”

“Divorce me? You want to divorce me? Then, I’ll make sure we both go down together!” Jessica glared coldly at the man lying on the floor, not an ounce of sympathy in her eyes.

As Carissa stepped outside the gate, she immediately heard the sounds of yelling and screaming from within. She instructed Michael to go in and find out what was happening while she returned to the Supreme Court to report. She needed to gather and organize the testimonies first.

Ironridge Estate was thrown into chaos. Fortunately, due to Margaret’s poor health, they had already employed a physician, which allowed Leopold to receive timely medical attention. While it didn’t result in a fatality, he was gravely injured.

After assessing the situation, Michael returned to the Supreme Court to report to Carissa.

“Are his injuries serious?” she asked, concern etching her features.

“The physician said Lord Leopold was saved in time, so his life isn’t in danger. However, we won’t know if there will be any further complications until he wakes up. When I left, he still hadn’t regained consciousness,” said Michael, recalling how shocked he had been when he saw the blood pooling on Leopold’s head.

“That’s truly ruthless,” Matthew remarked, shaking his head. He had just finished questioning Eleanor and couldn’t help but smile wryly. “The mother and daughter are quite similar. During my interrogation, Eleanor initially said nothing. But then she erupted into a fit of curses, her voice growing hoarse from screaming before she finally stopped. Now, it’s Peter’s turn.”

Rafael chuckled and acknowledged Matthew’s hard work. “Let’s organize the testimonies. I have to drop by the palace to report to His Majesty. We need to update him on the preliminary investigation.”

“Should we report everything she raved about as well? Matthew asked.

“Of course. We must report exactly what she said, no matter how ridiculous.”

Noticing the troubled expression on Matthew’s face, Carissa asked, “What did she say?”

Matthew handed her Eleanor’s statement. “Please take a look.”

As Carissa sat down and quickly skimmed through the report, her expression shifted to one of exasperation.

She looked at Rafael and asked, “You...

want to submit this to the king just like that?”

“Yes. Exactly like that,” Rafael replied decisively.

Carissa wasn’t concerned that Salvador would actually believe Eleanor’s words. Anyone with half a brain wouldn’t fall for such nonsense.

Salvador knew that Rafael and his people had uncovered this rebellion case, If Rafael was the mastermind, wouldn’t that mean he was effectively stabbing himself in the back?

It simply didn’t make sense.

But wouldn't submitting such an unreasonable confession make the king think Rafael was trying to pull a clumsy cover-up?

Rafael understood Carissa's concerns and said, "It's fine. Since she said it, we can't just ignore it. His Majesty is eager to see her initial statement. He wants to sift through it for any clues that might validate his suspicions.

Carissa realized that relying on this testimony wouldn't lead to any verifiable truths.

"I'll accompany you to the palace to see His Majesty. We need him to make a decision regarding Jessica's situation," she stated firmly.

Chapter 773

Rafael and Carissa traveled to the palace by carriage. Ever since the rebellion case had emerged, their lives had become a whirlwind of chaos, leaving them barely enough time to exchange a few words before collapsing into bed.

As they traveled, Rafael wrapped his arm around Carlson and said, "There's something I need to tell you upfront, just so you won't be disappointed."

know

what you're going to say. His Majesty won't execute Eleanor, will he?"

Carissa leaned against his broad chest, her eyelids growing heavy. She didn't mind the fighting and killing on the battlefield, but the constant travel to gather testimonies and enduring the sarcastic remarks from various families was wearing her down, especially when dealing with those who were overly self-important.

"I mentioned Yuvan to him, but His Majesty didn't ask you to investigate him. With his level of suspicion, how could he not look into Yuvan? I suspect he sent someone else to check. He probably sent people from the Crown Guard and Shadow Guard, who aren't under your command.

"Even if His Majesty claims that the Crown Guard is under your purview, it's only in name. Until they finish their investigation, he won't execute Eleanor. And as long as

she is alive, Yuvan will live in constant fear,” said Rafael, analyzing the situation.

Carissa nodded with her eyes closed. “Your analysis makes sense, but with two major cases looming over Eleanor’s household—one being the rebellion and the other involving the murdered and imprisoned concubines, along with so many dead infants—if they don’t execute her, it’ll be hard to quell the public’s

anger.”

“An explanation for this matter is definitely necessary. A cold glint flickered in Rafael’s eyes. “If the rebellion is covered up, then only one person will have to take the blame for all those deaths.”

Carissa suddenly opened her eyes wide. “Henry!”

Rafael nodded, his voice icy as he continued, “Yes. After all, he’s not innocent. He’s the biggest accomplice. No matter how he tries to argue that he had no choice and was afraid to defy Eleanor’s orders, it doesn’t matter.

“He is tied to the Kingsley family, and my grandfather was still alive when Eleanor started all this. She wasn’t all-powerful, but Henry still chose to submit to her—not because he was truly afraid of her, but because the declining Kingsley family needed her.”

Carissa knew Henry was not innocent. In fact, he was utterly despicable. Those women were his concubines. They shared a bond with him, and all the children they bore were his flesh and blood. Yet, he let his sons be murdered and his daughters be used as pawns.

Was he truly helpless? Perhaps at first, but not anymore. Just look at how he treated Melanie Lester and her daughters! If he cared for them at all, he wouldn’t have betrayed Carmen, nor would he have turned a blind eye to Melanie’s fate.

If he had pleaded with Eleanor, he could have spared Melanie the torment of the dungeon. After all, Celeste had completed her mission at Gracehold Estate, and Carmen had managed to infiltrate Hell Monarch Estate. It was likely Henry had exchanged those favors for something else, such as securing

benefits for the Kingsley family.

Rafael pondered for a moment before speaking meaningfully, “It’s possible His Majesty might spare Henry in exchange for his testimony about the mastermind behind the rebellion—at least as bait. Once Henry confesses, he’ll still be executed to appease public outrage.”

In the royal study, Salvador reviewed Eleanor’s initial testimony. Anger flashed in his eyes, and he laughed coldly.

“She’s still trying to implicate you two? Even with death looming, she shows no remorse. Continue the interrogation.”

He set aside Eleanor’s statement and turned to Jessica’s. After reading it, he took a deep breath, his expression calming considerably.

“Such malice is truly unprecedented. How can someone so cruel be part of the royal family? Issue a royal edict to strip Jessica of her title. Revoke her lands and demote her to a commoner. If it’s confirmed she personally took a life, she shall be dealt with according to the laws of the kingdom.”

After issuing the edict for Jessica’s demotion, the king looked at Rafael and said, “It seems Eleanor won’t confess easily. We’ll have to resort to torture. If she still doesn’t cooperate, lock her up in the Heritage Bureau. The case file must remain open, and investigations shall continue. When applying torture, we must tread carefully—she must not die.”

If the case files weren’t sealed, it meant the rebellion case hadn’t been concluded yet. Doing so would leave some individuals trembling with uncertainty.

This was much like Rafael had expected.

Salvador continued, “Anyone involved in the rebellion will be detained as soon as it’s been verified. The concubine case has far-reaching implications and a severe impact. All of them are Henry’s concubines, so the Kingsley family will compensate them and their families.

“As for Henry’s mistreatment of women and the taking of lives, his crimes are unforgivable and warrant execution. Tell him that if he can expose the individuals behind the rebellion, I may spare his life.”

Carissa lowered her head to hide her raised brows.

Rafael was right on all points. It looked like he understood Salvador well.

Chapter 774

Salvador turned to Carissa and asked, "What have you found out about

ties with Eleanor?"

the noble families that have close

Carissa replied honestly, "I haven't finished my inquiries yet, Your Majesty. So far, I've discovered that one of Henry's concubine's daughters is at Stillcrest Estate. Her name is Tabitha. After questioning her, it appears she hasn't been involved in any tasks.

"That's because her biological mother passed away the day after she entered the Marquis of Stillcrest's family, so Eleanor couldn't get hold of her weakness. Since she is favored by the Marquis of Stillcrest's heir, she has since distanced herself from Eleanor."

A glint of sharpness flashed in Salvador's eyes. "Does anyone in the Marquis of Stillcrest's family know her true identity?"

"The entire family claims to be unaware. I asked the servants, and they said Lady Tabitha has been in the house since she married into the family.

Salvador inquired further, "Is Tabitha still residing in Stillcrest Estate?"

rarely leaves the

"She had a son and a daughter after entering the family, so she hasn't been cast out. They've sent her to a monastery and have some people keeping an eye on her there."

Salvador continued, "We can't trust the Marquis of Stillcrest's family blindly. We must keep a close watch on them and investigate who they've had frequent dealings with in the past."

*Rest assured, Your Majesty, we are already looking into it," Carissa assured.

However, Salvador still seemed somewhat dissatisfied. “There were so many concubines’ daughters sent out, so why have we only identified this one?”

“It’s because the person in charge of managing these concubines changes every so often, and most of those who’ve been replaced end up dead. It’s not that we’ve only found one. There’s also the courtesan who entered the Earl of Gracehold’s family. Her real name is Celeste, and she has since changed her appearance. According to one of the stewards in Harmony Palace, Celeste has left the capital,” Carissa explained.

“I see. Keep searching. We need to find them all and ensure they’re not being used again. They’re all unfortunate souls,” Salvador replied.

Salvador’s words had Carissa letting out a quiet sigh of relief. In truth, they had nearly found all the concubines’ daughters. She just hadn’t had the chance to visit some, such as those in the Whitfield and Quinton families.

As for Tabitha, she had admitted her identity herself. When Carissa visited Stillcrest Estate, the woman immediately knelt and confessed her identity, so this needed to be reported.

Eleanor had sent the concubines’ daughters out, and even the person responsible for overseeing them had to be changed every so often. This proved that the one lurking in the shadows couldn’t directly

contact them.

That was why Salvador could only utter the word “unfortunate“. If Eleanor hadn’t acted that way, those women would likely have become accomplices.

That was also why Carissa hadn’t revealed Celeste’s trip to the Southern Frontier to seek out Oliver. If she had mentioned it, those women would face dire consequences. The identity of Oliver, the marshal of the Southern Frontier, was far too sensitive.

Salvador would never allow anyone who had been in contact with Oliver to escape unscathed. All of Henry’s concubines’ daughters shared the same fate. Celeste was identified as an accomplice,

Salvador would treat everyone else, including Carmen, the same way.

Throughout history, those in power have preferred to let the innocent rather than let a guilty party slip through their fingers.

After leaving the palace, Rafael asked, “Have we already sent someone to the Southern Frontier?”

A steward from Harmony Palace had told them that Celeste had inquired about Oliver’s preferences, and Matthew had been in charge of that particular interrogation.

After Matthew showed the testimony to Rafael, the latter tore it up. He believed it shouldn’t be reported because it involved the lives of those women and their biological mothers.

“Violet has sent someone.” Carissa hesitated, feeling uneasy. “You know His Majesty well. If you told him about Celeste’s trip to the Southern Frontier, what do you think he would do?”

Rafael lifted his chin slightly and peeked out the carriage window. His expression darkened. “That would be a gamble with an almost certain loss.”

Carissa sighed softly. “We’ve uncovered quite a bit. We’ve more or less established their identities. But in the end, we still have to present this list to the king, and we can only say that Celeste’s whereabouts are unknown.”

Tabitha had been sent to a monastery, and most of the others would soon follow. Even if they had given birth to children, the noble families couldn’t afford to keep them. Anyone even remotely connected to the rebellion would not be allowed to remain, especially since the purpose of these women entering the noble families had been so clear.

Even if Salvador described them as unfortunate souls, no one would be willing to take the risk. Salvador was unpredictable. Who could say that him calling them unfortunate today wouldn’t lead to a different conclusion tomorrow?

Chapter 775

Rafael agreed with Carissa’s approach. After all, these were innocent people caught in the crossfire.

From the moment they were born, the daughters of Henry's concubines had been destined to be used.

That alone demonstrated that Eleanor had harbored treasonous thoughts for many years. If Eleanor claimed Rafael was the mastermind behind the rebellion, Salvador wouldn't believe it, nor would the officials or the common people.

"If we're going to protect them, we need to keep a close watch on them. Some of them have spent many years in noble households and know each of those families' weaknesses. We can't allow them to be exploited again." Rafael said.

"Don't worry, I know what I'm doing," Carissa replied confidently.

The royal edict was delivered to Ironridge Estate, stripping Jessica of her title, reclaiming her lands, and removing her from the ranks of the inner court. Jessica was condemned to a life as a commoner, without the possibility of regaining her title. This meant that even if it was eventually confirmed that she hadn't been involved in anyone's death, Leopold could not request a title for her.

If it was discovered that she had committed murder or had incited others to do so, she would face legal repercussions according to the law.

Derek was the one tasked with delivering the royal edict to Ironridge Estate. When he arrived and made the announcement, Jessica flew into a frenzy.

She lunged at him as she shouted, "You might as well just kill me!"

The royal guards blocked her path and kicked her away, sending her sprawling to the ground, blood spilling from her mouth:

Margaret didn't immediately cast Jessica out. Instead, she chose to investigate the matter internally, confining Jessica under house arrest until the inquiry was complete.

But the outcome was already decided. Given that Jessica had nearly caused Leopold's death, there was no way anyone in the Marquis of Ironridge's household would tolerate her.

The next day, Carissa arrived at Oakspire Estate with Michael in tow.

Norman had previously cursed Carissa, accusing her of disregarding the royal family's dignity by bringing the Capital Guard to Edgeview Estate without evidence. Norman was known for his upright character, and he had a notoriously explosive temper. Even in his old age, he would roar like a thunderstorm whenever he encountered something he deemed unjust.

He had once declared that if Carissa dared to bring the Capital Guard to Oakspire Estate, she would be allowed to enter but not to leave. However, after waiting several days and seeing that she hadn't shown

he assumed she was wary of the estate and would stay away.

up,

Then, today, just past seven in the morning, he received word that the commander of the Mystic Army had

arrived.

He immediately ordered, "Don't let her in."

In his youth, Norman had once led troops to the Southern Frontier, hoping to drive out the people from Sandorin. Unfortunately, he had failed to accomplish that mission before his retirement. Throughout his life, he had amassed a formidable record in battle, but the repeated defeats he suffered at the Southern Frontier were a source of immense embarrassment for him.

As a fellow military man, he naturally respected Hector but grudges were clear-cut. Hector was one thing, and Carissa was another. Even if Carissa had participated in the campaigns to reclaim the Southern Frontier, he didn't believe a woman possessed such strength

The real hero was the Hell Monarch, Rafael.

While Norman admired Rafael, the same rule applied—Rafael was Rafael, and Carissa was Carissa. Even as a couple, they couldn't be lumped together.

The heavy doors stayed shut, and Carissa exchanged a glance with Michael. They were both mentally prepared for this closed-door reception.

They knew the Duke of Oakspire's family and the Quinton family were formidable adversaries, which was why they had saved this visit for last.

"We can't get in, and it's not like we can just crash through the door," Michael said, looking a bit troubled. This was a duke's residence, after all. Even though they were here on official business, they were merely seeking information. So, the people in the household should be treated with due respect. Otherwise, if Norman complained, Salvador would likely placate him at the expense of the Capital Guard.

"Let's wait. I'll knock every once in a while. If the door remains shut after an hour, I'll go in myself," Carissa said resolutely.

"That's not advisable. It's too dangerous for you to go in alone," Michael quickly protested.

"Dangerous? Not really. I'll just get yelled at, which is a given anyway." Carissa shrugged. "It's no big deal. I have a mouth too. If they yell at me, I'll yell back. If they hit me, I'll hit back."

Michael smiled wryly.

If Carissa yelled back or fought back and angered Norman, wouldn't that just escalate the situation? Wouldn't Norman then bring this matter to Salvador's attention?

Chapter 776

At Oakspire Estate, all men with official positions had already left. Those without official positions were summoned to the main hall. They listened to the intermittent knocking that echoed from outside.

Throughout his life, Norman had worn his emotions on his sleeve, never concealing his feelings. He was the illustrious Duke of Oakspire, a title he had earned through his own efforts. Though his sons and grandsons had served in court, their positions were modest. Their family avoided jealousy and suspicion from the king.

As long as Norman hadn't harmed anyone, no one dared to be disrespectful in his presence. The title of commander of the Mystic Army meant nothing to him. He only respected the Mystic Army itself. To him, the commander was simply trash.

As the knocking came again, Norman leisurely picked up a cup of coffee. He blew on it before sipping, his gaze fixed on his anxious sons and grandsons.

“Don’t worry about it. Let them keep knocking,” he said dismissively.

Norman’s eldest son, Mikhail Whitfield, cautiously asked, “Dad, Isn’t it a bit inappropriate to keep outside? After all, she’s here on official business.”

them

Mikhail was also a military man who had once been the Royal Guard’s commander. He had retired before the late king’s death. As the Duke of Oakspire’s heir, he was poised to inherit the title once his dad passed.

Norman’s title could be passed down for three generations. Even if they did nothing, their wealth and status could endure for another three generations. However, Mikhail had a more gentle temperament and approached matters with caution. He was the complete opposite of Norman, hence Norman never liked Mikhail much. He thought Mikhail was too timid.

Among his five sons, Norman preferred his fourth son, Gareth Whitfield. But as a concubine’s son, Gareth was at a disadvantage. With an eldest son, a second, and a third son in line, it was unlikely he would ever

inherit.

“What’s inappropriate about it?” Norman shot his son a cold glance. “What are you afraid of? You’re too cautious, and you lack the ambition needed to accomplish great things. You’re scared of a mere woman.”

“Yeah, what’s the worry? Let her knock. The door won’t open for her today. If she has the ability, she can come in herself,” Gareth quickly chimed in, supporting his dad’s view.

Gareth held a low-ranking position as the armory officer in the Ministry of Defense, a role that may not seem prestigious but was crucial as it involved overseeing weaponry. Just as he was about to head back to the ministry, he heard that Carissa had arrived with her men. His dad immediately ordered everyone to stay inside, so he sent someone through the side door to request leave from work, as

the others had already left.

He shared a similar temperament with Norman—impulsive and fiery. His years of stagnation in promotion were undoubtedly related to his explosive nature. However, Norman appreciated this trait, believing that decisiveness and a bit of anger were essential for commanding respect.

again.

After Gareth spoke, Norman looked at him with approval before scolding his eldest son

“When will you have half the guts of your fourth brother? Then, I might feel at ease. With your overly cautious demeanor, your children and grandchildren will become as timid as you if the title is left in your

hands.”

Mikhail was used to his dad’s reprimands by now, so he didn’t get angry. Instead, he maintained his calm

demeanor.

“She’s here on official business, so there’s no need for us to oppose her. Our household is not the only one she has questioned. She’s been to other noble farrelles as well. It’s better to cooperate than to confront her unnecessarily, right?”

“Pathetic!” Norman shot a glare at his eldest son.

Gareth snorted with a haughty expression. “Mikhail, our family has no ties with Grand Princess Eleanor. What could she possibly want from us? She just wants to show off—to let everyone see that she can waltz into Oakspire Estate without consequence. She’s trying to establish her authority here.

*Prince Yuvan has been in Valken for years, so why did she question his household first before us? It’s because she’s a bully who picks on the weak, right? Just look—does she dare approach Lord Kendrick’s household? Lady Adelaide is from the Quinton family, after all. And what’s more, that woman didn’t even go to the Quinton family’s residence first, but came to ours instead. Isn’t it because she’s just looking for an easy target?”

Norman had always valued Gareth's opinions, as the two shared the same mindset. In fact, Norman also thought of Carissa in the same manner as Gareth did.

Once Gareth spoke up, everyone nodded in agreement, primarily because Norman had shown his support first. He never hesitated to express his approval for his fourth son.

In contrast, Mikhail's objections seemed weak and feeble. Despite his diminished state, he felt compelled to voice his thoughts.

"Gareth, you're mistaken. The Capital Guard has its own methods for handling cases. Lady Carissa hails from a military family and has made contributions on the Southern Frontier battlefield. If she were incapable, His Majesty wouldn't have set a precedent by assigning her such an important task.

"Moreover, she's not investigating just any case—she's dealing with a treason case. The fact that she's acting on official orders means she could have summoned us to the Supreme Court for questioning. Instead,

she came to us directly and waited outside for nearly an hour. Her actions demonstrate her respect for our family."

He paused to take a breath before he continued, "Dad, this case involves many parties. They probably have limited time to spare. If it weren't necessary, they wouldn't have come here. I believe we should invite them in. Whatever they ask, we can cooperate. If she was trying to use our family to establish her authority, waiting outside for so long isn't the way to do it. By doing so, she's actually showing consideration for us. She respects you, Dad—"

Norman was becoming increasingly irritated by Mikhail's rambling. He raised a hand, cutting his son off

with a furious shout.

"Shut your mouth! If she truly had respect, she wouldn't be here! What dealings do we have with Grand Princess Eleanor? Though we receive numerous invitations from her every year, we only accept a handful, and that's merely to facilitate young couples meeting for potential matches!"

"But there has been some contact—"

“Did you not hear me? Shut up!” Norman’s disappointment was palpable as he stood up. “Men! If they knock again, bring a bucket of water and pour it over them to chase them off!”

“Dad, you mustn’t do that!” Mikhail quickly rose to stop him, urgency in his voice. “That would not only insult Commander Sinclair, but also humiliate His Majesty!”

Mikhail felt a knot of worry tighten in his chest.

Norman had achieved great military success, but he was a military general from the late king’s reign. Norman looked down on everyone because of the title Sigmund had given him. Due to Norman’s temperament, Sigmund had already been displeased with him during his reign. However, Sigmund had tolerated it because of Norman’s past military achievements and the fact that nothing major had happened.

But the current king’s position was shaky, and he was wary of powerful families. The Duke of Oakspire’s family couldn’t afford to behave as recklessly as they had under the previous king’s reign.

Mikhail had warned his dad countless times, but the older man never listened. With Gareth stoking the fire, Mikhail was genuinely concerned.

Did they not consider why the Whitfield family’s men had never been promoted in the court?

The people in the estate naturally followed Norman’s commands, especially the older veterans who had served alongside him. They shared Norman’s temperament and decisiveness.

Without hesitation, they grabbed two buckets of water to douse Carissa.

“Commander Sinclair, watch out-

Michael noticed what was happening. But before he could finish his warning, Carissa had already vanished. Then, he heard a surprised shout from inside

“How did you get in here? How dare you breach Oakspire Estate? How bold of you!”

The two buckets of water missed Carissa completely as she deftly avoided them, her movements elegant as she glanced at the two veterans.

They both had white hair and wrinkled faces.

That was fine. Carissa respected her elders!

Without saying a word, Carissa strode forward. Since Norman had not commanded them to act, the guards could only try to block her way.

However, they were no match for Carissa. With a few agile leaps, she reached the entrance to the main hall just as Norman bellowed, “She will not step foot through the doors of my estate today!”

Once the words left his lips, he turned to find a young official he didn’t recognize standing at the entrance, pursued by his guards.

‘Carissa remained calm, and a sly smile graced her lips. “I’m sorry, but I already stepped through the doors of Oakspire Estate.”

Chapter 778

Gareth shot up from his seat and glared at the guards behind him. “What’s going on? Didn’t I tell you not to open the door? Who let her in?”

“I came in myself. I waited for an hour. When you didn’t open the door and planned to douse me with dirty water, I had no choice but to offend you by intruding,” Hald Carissa, stepping forward.

Her gaze swept across those present. Norman was the oldest, and he was flanked by two men who must be his second and third sons.

Before coming here, Carissa had looked over portraits of those who served in Norman’s household, so she had a general idea of their appearances. One of the men, wearing a stone-blue brocade coat, looked anxious and frustrated. When he saw her, a flicker of surprise crossed his features.

That must be Norman’s heir, Mikhail.

Carissa recognized the man who had spoken earlier. He was Norman's fourth son, Gareth. He was easily recognized because he was the armory officer in the Ministry of Defense. Also, Carissa was here because of him and his concubine, Cecilia.

Hearing that she had barged in on her own, Norman was even more enraged. "How dare you! I didn't

permit you to enter, yet you dare intrude into the residence of a first-rank duke,

"I apologize for the offense, Lord Norman," Carissa responded with a mixture of politeness and firmness.

Norman slammed his hand on the table. "If you know what's good for you, you'd get out at once! If you don't, don't blame me for being rude!"

-Carissa replied, "I already sensed your lack of courtesy at the door, but I'm afraid I can't leave until I have the chance to ask my questions. You may be angry now, but do try to contain it. You can report me to His Majesty later."

Norman had lived his life as a fierce warrior. When had he ever been provoked by someone from the younger generation?

His expression darkened as he commanded, "Seize her and throw her out!"

The material of the official uniform Carissa wore was a bit stiff, making it somewhat inconvenient to fight. However, that also meant she could utilize a dancing technique with it. With a swift motion, Carissa flung her cloak and weaved through the guards like a dancer in a whirlwind. The sounds of her cloak slapping against their faces echoed through the hall. She jumped and spun gracefully, her movements elegant and extraordinary. She embodied the essence of a young martial general perfectly.

In fact, she had learned this technique from Carmen: With a bit of cleverness, this flashy maneuver worked surprisingly well. It wasn't a direct slap, so it didn't outright disgrace them, but it certainly felt like a slap to the face.

In just a few swift moves, she sent the guards staggering back. With a final spin, she raised her cloak and settled into a chair with an air of confidence.

Norman was beside himself with rage. He rolled up his sleeves and prepared to teach Carissa a lesson.

“How dare you act recklessly in my residence! You’ve come to the wrong place!”

Carissa’s gaze hardened as she focused her energy on her palms.

Norman felt a sudden rush of inner force bearing down on him like a gale, the overwhelming pressure nearly choking him. He struggled to remain upright, but found he couldn’t withstand the sheer force of her

power.

Panic gripped him—he hadn’t anticipated that Carissa possessed such skill.

Just as he thought he might be sent flying across the room, the pressure abruptly dissipated and the suffocating feeling vanished. It took him a moment to regain his composure, only to see that Carissa hadn’t even directed her palms toward him to unleash such a powerful gust.

His face turned pale at the realization.

“Please have a seat, Lord Norman. I’m here to ask a few questions today. Once I’m done, I’ll leave,” Carissa said, her tone steady and respectful.

Norman retreated to his seat, feeling a surge of blood rising in his chest. He drew a deep breath to calm himself but found he couldn’t speak, his expression dark and brooding.

The others in the room didn’t understand what was happening. They merely assumed that Norman had chosen not to make things difficult for Carissa and had temporarily let her off the hook.

Gareth glared at Carissa. “My family has little to do with Grand Princess Eleanor. If you’re trying to establish your authority here, you’ve miscalculated. You’ve barged into our residence, and my dad will surely report you to His Majesty.”

Her voice low and firm, Carissa replied, “I already said you can report me, but please do so based on the facts. Those facts include the hour I spent waiting outside, being turned away, and even almost being ‘doused with dirty water. I respect Lord Norman’s esteemed reputation, which is why I was willing to wait but how you choose to accept that respect is entirely your business.”

She paused, fixing her gaze on them.

“Also, I advise you to open the door. The questioning process needs to be documented, and everything discussed will be presented to His Majesty for his review.”

Chapter 779

Gareth angrily shouted, “No need for that! If you have something to say, spit it out and then get lost!”

“Gareth!” Mikhail snapped. “Mind your manners!”

Gareth rolled his eyes. “Don’t be so weak, Mikhail. What are you afraid of? If we’ve done nothing wrong, we have nothing to fear.”

Carissa studied Gareth, recognizing that his temperament mirrored that of his dad. However, Norman had genuine skill and achievements, which made people endure his temper even when it was difficult.

Gareth was different. He relied on his dad’s power and barked out complaints at the slightest provocation -he was like a yapping dog emboldened by his connections. With such an explosive attitude, few in the Ministry of Defense dared to cross him, which

only encouraged his arrogance.

Carissa wouldn’t indulge him. “Fine, since you don’t want the scribe to come in, I’ll just remember our conversation in my head. You’re Lord Gareth, right? Bring out your concubine, Lady Cecilia. I have questions for her.”

Cecilia had been in the Whitfield family for seven years. She had given birth to two sons and a daughter, and was the apple of Gareth's eye. While it didn't go so far as to diminish the position of his primary wife, Cecilia had far more favor than the others.

Gareth's primary wife had given birth only to daughters, while Cecilia had blessed him with two sons. Naturally, Gareth held her in high regard.

The mention of Cecilia changed the expressions of those present. They had heard the rumors about the daughters of concubines from Eleanor's household scattering into various noble families, and the 'implications weren't lost on them.

However, Gareth was only momentarily taken aback. Hearing Carissa name his beloved concubine directly only fueled his anger further.

"What does a woman of the inner courtyard know? Do you want her to come out just to humiliate her? You can ask those of us present whatever you want!"

Carissa gazed at Gareth's flushed face and enunciated clearly, "Lady Cecilia's surname is Kingsley. Her dad is Lord Henry, and she's part of the Kingsley family as well as Eleanor's household. Her biological mom's name is Thelma, who passed away in May three years ago."

The revelation stunned everyone in the room.

After a moment of shock, Gareth exploded with rage, shouting, "You're just spouting nonsense!"

It was the typically subservient Mikhail who remained composed enough to act.

He immediately commanded a servant, "Bring Cecilia out here."

"Mikhail!" Gareth turned to his brother, his eyes blazing with anger. "This is absolutely impossible! Why are you calling Cecilia? This is a blatant attempt to frame her! You know her parents are both deceased, and she has no relatives left. This woman is trying to pin this identity on Cecilia to drag our family into the treason case! How could you even entertain such a malicious notion?"

Mikhail ignored him and continued, "Open the main door and let the Capital Guard and scribe in."

“Dad!” Gareth looked at Norman, whose face was ashen. “If Mikhail lets them in like this, what dignity will our family have left?”

Norman remained silent. Having suppressed the surging energy and blood in his body, he had calmed down, but he could not refute Carissa’s statement, nor could he oppose the Capital Guard’s entry.

It was no wonder Carissa hadn’t left after waiting for an hour. As Mikhail had said, she had only come here because it was necessary, and there were things that she needed to verify..

Now, all Norman could hope for was that Cecilia wasn’t Henry’s daughter, or this could blow up into a huge scandal.

Norman naturally was unaware that Carissa had already reported to Salvador before coming here. Once Salvador agreed that the concubines’ daughters were all victims, Carissa came to Oakspire Estate.

Otherwise, with Gareth’s sensitive position in the Ministry of Defense, Salvador would have no choice but to suspect the Duke of Oakspire’s family. After all, most of the weapons and armor found in Harmony Palace were modeled after those from the Ministry of Defense’s arsenal.

Among the concubines’ daughters, the most dangerous were Celeste and Carmen. As for the one currently with the Quinton family, she was relatively harmless. The Quinton family was known for being strict, so it was unlikely the woman there could cause trouble.

Still, they would need to take the woman away for the time being.

Chapter 780

Cecilia wore a simple, pale blue dress, and the wide sleeves of her outer garment made her look incredibly light and graceful.

Despite having borne three children, her skin remained radiant and devoid of any wrinkles. Her long hair was styled into a bun adorned with hairpins. Each piece was adorned with pearls, which added to her refined and otherworldly appearance.

It was clear that she lived a comfortable life within the Duke of Oakspire's family, untouched by the hardships of life.

She was genuinely cherished.

Carissa had encountered other concubines' daughters before, but only Cecilia exuded the air of someone who had never been battered by life's trials. There was a softness about her, a sense of being delicately cradled in someone's palm.

When Cecilia arrived, her demeanor was courteous. She performed a graceful curtsy and stood to the side, keeping a respectful distance from the men. When she heard Carissa call her full name, her expression remained calm, as if she had anticipated this moment.

She knelt and lifted her head, her eyes reflecting a sense of acceptance. "Yes, my name is Cecilia Kingsley. I am not without family. Lord Henry is my dad, and I'm part of the Kingsley family and Grand Princess Eleanor's household."

Her statement hit the main hall with a jarring intensity, leaving everyone speechless and frozen in place. Gareth's eyes widened in shock, his gaze filled with fury. "What? You're Lord Henry's daughter?"

"I'm sorry, Lord Gareth." Cecilia lowered her head. Her voice was steady, and she showed no signs of tears. "I deceived you and everyone else."

"What?!"

Gareth raised his hand, ready to strike her, but the anger that had flared within him dissipated when he saw Cecilia's red-rimmed eyes. Ultimately, she was still his favorite concubine and the mother of his two

sons

As Gareth slowly lowered his hand, Michael entered with the Capital Guard and the scribe. Carissa instructed the scribe to take notes and repeated what had just been said.

Once she finished, she turned to Norman. "Did I make any mistakes, Lord Norman?"

Norman was stunned, and his gaze was fixed on Carissa's serious, composed face.

A wave of indescribable shame washed over him.

Norman recalled how his household had erupted into chaos from the moment Carissa first knocked on the door. They had acted like a bunch of monkeys jumping around. Only his eldest son—whom he had always disregarded—had attempted to be the voice of reason amidst the rising tide of anger.

Yet, no one had listened to Mikhail.

"There was no mistake," Mikhail replied on Norman's behalf, his expression grave. "You have an

Impressive memory, Commander Sinclair. Not a single word was wrong"

"That's good to hear, Carissa said. Then, she turned to Gareth and added, "Lord Gareth, you might as well take a seat. I still have a few questions for you and Lady Cecilia regarding the weapons"

Gareth had been so arrogant moments ago, but now he felt a chill run down his spine.

Many blueprints for armor and weapons were stored in his study, which Cecilia could enter freely. When he worked late into the night, examining and amending the blueprints, she was often right there at his side, attending to him,

Carissa asked, "Lady Cecilia, have you ever delivered any blueprints for weapons and armor from the Ministry of Defense to Eleanor?"

Gareth could barely breathe, his heart racing as he stared at Cecilia, terrified she might reveal that she had stolen his designs.

After a moment of silence, Cecilia finally spoke, "I served Lord Gareth in the study and saw those blueprints. I stole two pages and sent them back."

Gareth felt as if he might faint.

Norman's gaze shifted to his favorite són, the approval that usually filled his eyes replaced by a simmering anger.

He had always believed Gareth resembled him the most in temperament and style. But now, it was clear that only the boy's temper matched his own—there was no trace of the carefulness or caution that Norman was known for. Gareth didn't even know where the woman by his side came from, yet he had pampered her without hesitation for all these years.

To think Gareth had even allowed her into his study, where she could see the weapon designs! Armor and crossbow designs were the most sensitive of secrets—civilian replicas didn't even come close to what the Ministry of Defense could produce.

With Cecilia's confession, the color drained from the faces of everyone from the Duke of Oakspire's family. Just moments ago, many had exclaimed that Carissa was merely trying to establish authority by making use of their household.

Now, they were all silent.