

## War Song 86

### Chapter 86

No wonder Carissa knew that soldiers from Westhaven had disguised themselves as Sandorian soldiers and gone to the Southern Frontier battlefield. That was also why she had traveled alone for a thousand miles to bring Rafael the news.

"Take your time to calm down, then talk to me," Rafael said as he sat down beside her, his tall figure acting like a protective barrier shielding her from the world.

"What else do you want to know, Marshal?" asked Carissa, who had calmed down considerably.

Rafael's eyes were like a dark sea churning beneath the surface. 'Everything. Why you suddenly got married, what happened after you got married, and everything surrounding the Westhaven splen massacring your entire household.'

Carissä didn't know why he wanted to know about her marriage, but she answered truthfully, trying to keep her emotions steady and her recounting as straightforward as possible.

"When I returned from the Pathfinders Guild, I learned of my father and brothers' sacrifice. I told my mother I wanted to go to the Southern Frontier battlefield, but she refused.

"My father and brothers' deaths hit her hard, and she cried so much she nearly went blind. She forced me

promise to stay in the capital, get married, and lead a stable life. I was used to the wildness of the Pathfinders Guild, so she had people teach me etiquette for a year before she started arranging my marriage." Rafael looked at her. "I remember you weren't someone who followed orders so easily."

A hint of confusion flashed in Carissa's eyes.

He was right, but how did he know that?

"Yes, but after my father and brothers passed away, only the elderly, women, and children were left in our household. So, I agreed with my mother. I tried to learn to be a proper lady and let her choose a husband for me.

"Among the many suitors, she chose Barrett. Although she originally didn't want me to marry a military man, she feared I wouldn't fit into a noble family.

"Noble families have strict rules and much infighting among the ladies in the family. She thought I couldn't handle it, that I would either be bullied or end up bullying others. That kind of life wouldn't be

stable.

"She said that scholars weren't suitable for me either. Aside from strategic military books, I've never liked reading anything. Books about etiquette make me sleepy, and I know nothing about poetry or songs. I wouldn't have anything in common with a scholar, and the differences in our interests would make it hard to be happy.

Carissa smiled bitterly as she continued, "In the end, she chose Barrett for two reasons. First, he swore never to take a concubine, even if I couldn't bear children. Second, although he comes from a military background, his family was in decline.

"Given the state of the Warren family at the time, it would be hard for Barrett to rise. He wasn't likely to be sent to war, and at most, he would hold a minor position in the capital. Also, his family situation was simple.

"His father and elder brother hold low-ranking positions, his mother is chronically ill, and his eldest sister-in-law is an introverted, indecisive person. He has a younger sister who will eventually marry out, so she wouldn't be a problem. That's why my mother chose him."

Rafael nodded slightly, his bright eyes now dimmed. "If I were your mother, I would have chosen the same for you."

"Yes, I understood my mother, so I obeyed and got married. But on the day of the wedding, we received an urgent report from the Ministry of Defense stating that they needed reinforcements at Victory Pass. General Ward had fallen seriously ill, so Barrett led the reinforcements.

"Although we completed the wedding ceremony, we never consummated the marriage. He told me to wait for his return and promised to treat me well."

Carissa recounted these events without any expression, as if it had all happened long ago and no longer stirred any emotions within her.

"I waited for a year. During that year, I cared for his mother and managed the household. Valor Estate was falling apart, and there wasn't enough money to cover expenses.

"I used my dowry to pay for my mother-in-law's medicine. After a year, Barrett returned victorious, and the first thing he did was use his military merits to request to marry Aurora as his rightful wife."

Rafael gazed at Carissa intently. "You disagreed, of course. With your personality, how could you agree? And he swore to never take a concubine."

"Not exactly." Carissa smiled mockingly. "If he had discussed it with me beforehand, I might have agreed. But he didn't. He sought the marriage edict without consulting me, then came back to inform me and force me to accept it.

"He condescendingly promised to have a child with me first, so I would have some prospects in his family. Then, he expected me to continue as his wife, care for his and Aurora's child, and be dutiful to his parents."

Rafael's eyes flashed with anger. "That's outrageous!"