

Wife of The Demon Prince Chapter 3 - "I will protect you"

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"Haaa!"

The strong smell of sweat and the sound of heavy breathing came from inside a training hall.

Unlike the large areas where soldiers trained as a group, Henry her older brother, preferred this quiet, cozy hall. He was absorbed in practicing, he was unaware of Ara's presence. She observed him quietly without a word.

"Brother." She murmured to herself

For a long time when she had survived alone, she had held a grudge against Henry in a corner of her heart. Not only did he forcibly prevent her from trying to save Anne, but....

He also died to save her.

Ara had been dragged out of the mansion, leaving Anne in jeopardy, and Ara was so dazed out of her mind she couldn't tell whether it was a dream or reality. The cries of the servants filled the air, and the smell of blood stung her nose. There were footsteps of the king's soldiers and the sound of yelling.

Until then, Ara was only the ordinary daughter of a general and found herself helpless to that nightmare.

Henry finally raised his hand and slapped her, her head jerked with a loud smack, her cheeks had never been hit before. Her eyes widened into awareness, Henry said to her seriously, holding her face squarely in both hands and staring straight into her green eyes.

'Ara, I can buy you some time so you can escape from here, don't look back and go to zari. Our family's second safe house is there, so you must hide until you know it's safe.'

She didn't fully understand what Henry was saying, but she nodded at his fearsome eyes. There was sound of approaching voices and Henry pulled out his sword. He turned back to her and said again.

'Go! Go Ara and survive, NOW!'

That was the last time she saw him. She watched her brother's back gradually get further away, then she turned and began to run in the opposite direction. She didn't do it to live, she was too terrified and simply followed her brother's commands. Through her haze of terror she didn't realized until her dress was torn and her bare feet were covered in blood.

Henry, her dear brother sacrificed himself to protect her, she kept running through the pitch black forest even though she could hardly see anything. That dark night was the most terrible night in all of Ara's memory.

Only later did she find her father and siblings bodies hanging on a tree for all to see. When she saw them she felt her blood drained out of her body. Not even a scream came out of her mouth, she felt a tears roll down her cheeks, the world was collapsing on her, she wanted to follow her family but she was so angry and bitter that she couldn't even kill herself to end her misery. Her brother had wanted her to survive.

Surviving was hell. It had been heavy to handle her family's death. She became angry at her brother for saving her. As a matter of fact, Henry had always been hard to deal with, and growing up as the heir of Boxtan, he was as blunt as his father. He rarely said "Thank you" or " Sorry" during Ara's childhood. She wondered if all palace soldiers were like this. And in the end he had sacrificed himself without any special hero's death.

Ara was unable to express her gratitude towards him, and what she wanted to say to him built up to a mountain of words in her heart. The funny part, she didn't realized how much she loved him until he died. She blamed him for leaving her alone in this cruel world.

'I miss you so much brother.'

She wanted to say it out, but she couldn't bring herself to say it. She had missed him as bitterly as she was angry at him for leaving her.

"How Long have you been standing there?"

Henry belatedly noticed Ara's presence and interrupted her thoughts in a low voice. She had to clear her throat before she answered.

"Not that long."

"What is it?"

Ara's heart warmed at his straight forward style of speaking, unlike in the past when she found it difficult to communicate with him.

"I came here to tell you that I'll be going to Danielle's birthday banquet, I'll stay there for some days."

"Okay..."

Henry had an uninterested look on his face and he looked away from her. Ara turned around, took a few steps then stopped as if she forgot something. She looked at him again. She saw the present Henry and the one who saved her from dying in her previous life overlapped in her eyes.

"Brother Henry."

"...?"

He looked at Ara with his brows knitted together, as if the conversation already been over for him. Then she strode to his direction, she came into his view with her wavy red hair and her emerald green eyes.

"I really wanted to say...Thank you so much."

"What?"

Henry asked dumbfoundedly, but Ara turned and walked away with a soft smile on her face. He tilted his head. Ara seems different from yesterday, she was his precious sister, but they hadn't been very close. As he watched the growing distance between them Henry mumbled in a worried voice.

"I hope she's not planning on going alone without taking enough guards."

After meeting her brother, Ara went into armory where swords, bows, arrows, all kind of weapons were stored. Not everybody was allowed to enter this place, but fortunately there was no place in the Boxtan mansion where she couldn't enter, but even so she tried to avoid everyone's eyes, and passed.

She walked to the neatly displayed weapons and headed for the innermost part of the room. She passed through a dark and narrow corner before arriving at scarlet red suite armor standing in lofty grandeur.

Ara knew how special that armor was to her father. The metal used to make the armor, was a very expensive and so pure that even some official generals couldn't afford it. It was only until she became a soldier did she realized it's value, but it had been taken away by Cornell before she could even use it.

As she gently placed her hand on the armor, the cool solid touch under her palm brought back memories of her previous life.

As a child she had always wanted to learn how to fight with a sword, but her father was against women holding a sword not to talk about learning how to fight with one, because of that she had never asked her father to let her learn how to fight, despite being born into a family of soldiers. In the end to avenge her family she had to learn it anyway.

After recalling the past, she soon began placing the armor into a large sack.

'I know father won't be happy about this, but I have to go against him to save him.'

Furthermore her body was less physically fit than in her previous life and she needed this armor to protect her on the battlefield.

After finally placing the armor and helmet in the sack she selected a sword, it was the same sword she held in her previous life, but to her it was just like yesterday. Her soft hand awkwardly gripped the solid handle. Her mind felt a strange sense of perfect understanding, she was fortunate that her training never left her.

Ara unsheated the sword from the scabbard and saw her reflection in the sharp blade. The face of the woman reflected on the sharp blade was much different from the one she was used in the past, but the only thing that will never change is the determination in her face and heart. It burned fiercer than before. Ara brandished the sword in the air a few times and muttered to herself.

"I need to get better...am only half as good as before."

Her speed and power were limited in this untrained body. However, she had swung a sword thousands of times, she had risked her life beyond count in her previous life. no matter how weak and slow her body was now, she knew exactly where to swing her sword. She had fought in dire circumstances than in favourable ones, and she had become resourceful in bad situations.

She could still remember how their food supplies ran out, and they starved for days and nights, while some fought crippled and unable to move. She's used to hard labor, even her untrained body is not diminished in skills. She concluded while her power was significantly lowered, she could overcome it to some extent with experience and instinct.

Ara, finally placed the sword in the sack, she tied the sack in a knot that could not come lose that easily. She lifted the sack to her shoulder and suddenly realized that carrying a huge sack like this as a lady, will bring her so much attention, she put it back down and left the place. She saw a servant passing and called him.

"James, take this to my carriage."

She said while pointing at the sack .

"Why is this so heavy and large?" He asked.

"These are gift for Danielle's birthday banquet."

"This much? When lady Danielle sees all of this, she will be so much happy to see you, milady."

Though the size and weight of the sack was a little unusual to be a gift to a lady of nobility. The servant didn't ponder on it and did what he was told. Other luggage, such as dresses and other items, were already taken care of by the other servants. Ara confirmed that everything necessary was loaded, she stepped up on the carriage steps.

"Sister Ara! Wait!"

Anne held on to her dress with one hand as she ran towards the carriage while on the other hand was a basket of food. Ara paused at the sight of Anne running towards her.

"Anne, please slow down, you'll hurt yourself."

But Anne did not slow down until she was right in front of Ara, she took a deep amount of air and gave her sister a bright smile.

"I was busy preparing your food basket, and here you are trying to leave without it...never mind, take this you haven't had anything to eat."

Anne gave her the basket and as Ara took the basket, confusion crossed her face, because the weight of it was too heavy for her to hold with one hand.

"You've prepared so much in such a short time? Wow! It's like a feast."

"I can't believe you forgot your own words, you are the same person who used to say 'eating well everyday will make you healthier,' right sister?"

"..."

Ara became momentarily speechless. That was what she used to say to Anne whenever she refused to eat.

Anne realize that she was holding her sister up, so she quickly pushed Ara into the carriage and said.

"Go on, so you get there early...quickly, quickly, and don't forget my present."

After being pushed inside, Ara wistfully looked through the carriage window, and said.

"Make sure to take care of yourself, I'll be back soon, and don't forget to eat well."

"Yes, I will sister...be careful."

The carriage set off and Anne waved goodbye. Ara hold her head out of the window until her sister disappeared from view. She almost wanted to cry, she couldn't believe she had a home to return to.

Ara suddenly remembered the basket on her lap. She placed it on the carriage seat and took out the food one by one. Inside was a baked shellfish, with breads and chicken, fruit tart, and so on. She couldn't even list out everything inside the basket, Anne's lunch box seemed to be an endless feast of all Ara's favorite food, except for shellfish.

"....."

She spread the food on the carriage seat, but she couldn't bring herself to eat it. Emma the maid sitting across her, looked up at her and asked.

"My lady, is everything alright?"

Ara was holding her face in her palms and it appeared as if she was crying, which got the maid worried.

"I'm okay. I just...I feel like I am a happier person than I thought I was."

She had always missed this moment when she had people who cared for her in her previous life. Her father, her brother, her lovely sister. She had wished a thousand times that they were still alive, now she was happier than she imagined.

"How could I eat all of this food?"

Emma replied, not understanding the preciousness of the food to her mistress.

"If you can't finish it, we can wrap it up again, if you like."

Ara nodded rubbing her wet eyes with her palm.

"Yes...That will do...Thank you."

"..."

Emma couldn't believe that her mistress just thanked her. But she didn't dwell on it for that long as she saw how Ara was enjoying her meals.

Ara on the other hand was happy that her whole family was now alive. As long as it remains like this, her happiness would last forever. Ara vowed to herself to change the bitter future at all costs.

'I will protect all of you this time!'