

The Healer Bride: Awakening the Ruined Dragon King

Chapter 6

Aspen POV:

Mr. Price's efficiency was abysmal.

It was nearly an hour before two maids arrived with a few worn, yellowed sheets and a single bucket of lukewarm water.

Their attitude was insolent and resentful.

One of them, a maid named Maeve, dumped the items onto the floor with a clatter and turned on her heel to leave.

"Hold," I said, my voice cutting through the room like a cold blade. "I specifically commanded the cleanest boiled linens in this fortress and large cauldrons of boiling water."

Maeve rolled her eyes with casual insolence. "This is all the storeroom has, my lady. The fires in the kitchen are occupied. If you want boiling water, you'll have to wait until supper is served."

My silver-gray eyes turned glacial.

"Are you telling me the ancestral seat of House Carlisle cannot provide a single kettle of hot water for its rightful master? Or have you and the staff grown so comfortable pocketing the estate's provisions that you've forgotten the penalty for theft and insubordination?"

Maeve's sneer vanished, replaced by sudden, sickly pallor.

In a feudal stronghold, servants withholding supplies from their liege lord was punishable by the whipping post.

The second maid quickly bowed, trembling. "F-forgive us, my lady! We will check the linen vaults again at once. We will stoke the hearths and bring boiling water immediately!"

As the two girls scurried down the hall in panic, Penny whispered anxiously, "My lady, they are completely shameless. It feels as if no one in this entire keep cares whether the Lord lives or dies."

"Why would they?" I gave a humorless, razor-thin smile. "To them, he is already a corpse. They are simply waiting for him to draw his last breath so they can divide his remaining gold."

I walked back to the bedside.

Though his Dragon Core was shattered, the innate constitution of his Dragon-God lineage lingered stubbornly beneath his skin.

It was the only reason his heart was still faintly beating-yet that very warmth, combined with the filthy surroundings, made him an ideal incubator for lethal bacterial cultures.

I couldn't afford to wait for the servants to bring supplies.

The necrotic infection on his chest was spreading toward his pericardium.

I inspected the bedframe.

The mattress beneath him was damp and reeking of mildew, resting upon a thin layer of rot-infested straw.

They were treating a decorated war hero worse than a dying hound.

"Penny," I instructed, "bring the leather tool roll from my personal chest-the one containing the custom silver blades and surgical needles I forged before our departure, along with the high-proof grain spirits we secured on the road."

We needed to transfer him away from the contaminated mattress immediately, but I couldn't lift a fully grown man on my own.

My eyes landed on a broad oak chaise lounge lined with thick, clean furs resting near the hearth.

Together, Penny and I dragged the heavy lounge directly beside the bed.

"Penny, take his legs," I said, taking a steadying breath. "Support his hips, and be extremely careful not to jostle his ribcage or touch the wound on his torso."

Though trembling with apprehension, Penny nodded bravely.

Straining with every ounce of our strength, we carefully shifted his heavy, emaciated frame from the festering bed onto the fur-lined lounge.

His joints were stiff, his muscles locked from months of unnatural immobilization.

When I pulled away the thin, soiled blanket entirely, the full horror of his state was laid bare.

Beyond the horrific laceration across his torso, his lower back and hips were covered in large, weeping pressure ulcers-the direct result of prolonged, deliberate neglect.

Penny gasped, clapping a hand over her mouth, tears of horror welling in her eyes.

To a frightened maiden, it was a nightmare.

To a master surgeon who had spent a lifetime in trauma units, it was simply an urgent clinical debridement.

"Penny, lock the heavy bolt on the door," I commanded calmly. "Light every candle sconce in the room and pull back the window drapes. From this moment on, no one enters this chamber without my direct permission."

"Yes, my lady!" Penny hurried to lock the door, her terror giving way to absolute, awe-filled obedience.

I unrolled my handcrafted leather kit onto a clean wooden tray.

Before heading here, I had spent days secretly selecting the finest silver ingots, grinding and sharpening thin steel blanks into precision surgical tools based on the exact specifications from my memories of the modern operating room: razor-sharp scalpels with angled blades, delicate forceps, curved suture needles, and fine linen threads boiled in distilled alcohol.

In this primitive realm, no blacksmith had ever seen such refined instruments, but to me, they were extensions of my own hands.

I poured the high-proof grain spirits generously over the silver instruments and needles, letting the strong alcohol sterilize the metal.

The fading crimson glow of the northern sunset poured through the casement, casting long shadows across the dust motes dancing in the air.

I tied back my hair, took up the custom silver scalpel, and looked down at the unconscious warrior resting upon the furs.

Once a terrifying dragon who ruled the skies, he was now utterly defenseless, his life hanging by a single thread.

"Boyce Carlisle," I murmured softly, my blade hovering with surgical precision over the blackened edges of his wound. "Your executioners believe your story ends in the dark. Now, let's show them what happens when you refuse to die."

