

War Song 551

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On June 19th, Oliver dispatched Timothy and Louis with three thousand soldiers to the mountains outside Simonton City. They were there to wait for the Hell Monarch and Septimus.

While Oliver chose not to concern himself with the rescue operation's details, it was crucial that the pickup went smoothly. To secure his position as marshal, everything had to be executed flawlessly.

If the Hell Monarch's rescue attempt failed and they fell into the hands of the Sandoria forces, it would spell disaster for Oliver. He couldn't afford to send troops to the Sandoria border city.

Louis and Timothy reached the highest mountain outside Simonton City, and left a thousand men behind to stand by. They led the remaining two thousand further, hoping to intercept Rafael as soon as possible. However, after crossing another mountain, they ceased advancing. Beyond lay the nomad grassland tribes, where bringing two thousand soldiers would likely result in a battle.

In truth, once Rafael reached the grassland, the Sandorians would hesitate to enter. They would likely only send a few elite troops after him. With a manageable number of pursuers, Rafael could handle the situation if he was uninjured.

They waited for two days. On June 21st, Timothy grew increasingly anxious.

He said to Louis, "Waiting here doing nothing isn't going to help. Here's the plan-I'll take a dozen men down into the grassland, cross another mountain, and see if we can find Prince Rafael. I'm worried he might have been injured when he rescued Septimus." Louis replied, "Don't rush. Taking just a dozen men won't make a difference. The mountain is so vast and dense with forest, and there's no direct path. It'll be too difficult to locate anyone."

"But waiting here accomplishes nothing," Timothy insisted. "In fact, the marshal's decision to station so many men here is pointless. If they manage to cross the grassland, it means they're safe. Whether we have three thousand or a thousand men, we can't traverse the grassland and climb the mountain."

Louis lowered his voice, "He's just trying to show full cooperation with the rescue mission, all to impress the king. He doesn't care if sending us with three thousand men actually makes a difference." Both men sighed.

They had served under the best marshals and had little respect for Oliver, but the king valued Oliver highly.

Fortunately, there were currently no ongoing battles. The task was simply to guard Simonton City and prevent the Sandorians from counterattacking.

Moreover, the Southern Frontier had

endured years of warfare, rampant looting, and mountain bandits and robbers causing trouble. So, it was essential to have a strong military presence to maintain order and allow the appointed officials to

govern effectively.

"Enough! I won't wait any longer, Louis." Timothy devised a compromise. "How about we split into teams of ten and cross the grassland that way? Do you think it will work?"

Louis considered the plan. "Alright, we'll send out ten teams of ten men each to cross the grassland in shifts toward Crow Mountain. You stay here to guard, and I'll go."

"No, I'll go." Timothy placed a hand on Louis' shoulder, his expression serious and solemn. "Even though His Highness didn't tell me much, he looked at me several times when he mentioned going to rescue Septimus. I suspect that Septimus is actually the eleventh son of my family, Thomas."

Louis looked at him in shock. "Do you also think so? Don't get your hopes up too much."

When the two kingdoms exchanged prisoners, Louis and Thomas had hoped to see their own relatives. They had eagerly identified the prisoners one by one. However, Louis didn't find Felix, and Timothy didn't find Thomas.

They joined in the laughter and celebration, welcoming the returned prisoners with joy. As leaders of the Sinclair Army, they embraced everyone, offering encouragement and toasting with them.

But once they turned away, their tears were unstoppable. That night, neither Louis nor Timothy could sleep.

After experiencing such

disappointment, Louis was hesitant

to hope. Felix wasn't of the Quinton family by blood, but having served under Hector together, their bond was even stronger than that of brothers. Perhaps it was because the two of them were the only ones in the Quinton family who had served in the army, making their connection all the more special.

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In the end, Louis and Timothy decided to go together.

After all, their troops were stationed here and hadn't crossed the border nor entered the grassland tribes' territory. Only a hundred soldiers in teams of ten would be going in.

As expected, passing the grassland in small groups didn't draw the attention of the grassland sentries. They reached the top of Crow Mountain, and waited there. Although Crow Mountain was vast, they occupied the high ground and could see any movement from afar. They couldn't just rush down blindly, as Crow Mountain was divided between Sandoria and the grasslands, and a misstep could lead to conflict.

They knew this, so they left some people behind to keep watch and call for help if needed. Then, Louis and Timothy continued on with a dozen or so people.

Meanwhile, Rafael and his group had already reached the base of Crow Mountain. Once they crossed it, they would be on the grassland. They were only a small group of people entering the grassland, which wouldn't attract the attention of the grassland tribes. Also, Victor would surely not dare to follow.

They had been running without a break. Rafael managed to endure, but the others were struggling. They were so tired that their legs were shaking.

Moreover, a few had been injured during the rescue. Thomas could still walk at first, though he was slow and needed some support. But eventually, he had to be carried.

Although Rafael was not injured, he had exhausted much of his inner force during the skirmish with the garrison troops at Sandoria's border city and had yet to recover.

Except for Everett, everyone was exhausted. They needed a brief rest before climbing Crow Mountain.

However, they had barely rested for a short while when Everett suddenly stood up. He closed his eyes to listen for a moment, and then said, "They're almost here. That was fast. It must be Victor's elite troops. We must ascend the mountain immediately." Rafael took out a vial of medicine, poured a few pills, and handed them to the injured to swallow.

His current concern was Lawrence. Throughout the escape, Lawrence's condition had worsened. His breathing had weakened, and his wounds showed signs of redness and pus. There was some slight improvement since his rescue, and it was thanks to Sebastian's medicine.

Rafael gently patted his face. "Lawrence, we need to move on. I'll carry you. You must hold on. Your wife is still waiting for you in the capital. You can't leave her waiting in vain."

Hearing the mention of his wife, Lawrence's eyes fluttered open slightly. He looked weakly at Rafael, and said, "I... I'm a burden..."

Seizing the opportunity while he was speaking, Rafael crushed the medicine and forced it into Lawrence's mouth. "I'll carry you. We're moving now."

Rafael hoisted Lawrence onto his back. Lawrence's tears fell on Rafael's back, his voice faint as a whisper. "If something...you have to...leave me behind." Though his consciousness was fading, he was aware of the danger. If his presence jeopardized the escape of everyone, he wouldn't find peace in death.

"Not a single person will be left

behind!" Rafael said in a low voice, turning to look at the others who were supporting each other as they walked. We're only one mountain away Once we cross this mountain, we'll reach the grasslands, and Simonton City will be right in front of us. Do you want to return to your homeland? Do you want to see the Southern Frontier territory that we've reclaimed?"

Tears welled up in their eyes. "We even dream of it!"

Rafael nodded. "Good! Let's go. Home is within sight."

Crow Mountain was high and treacherous. Unlike the mountains they had climbed before, which had dense forests and undergrowth that could be cleared, this mountain was different.

The lower slopes were manageable, but the terrain became increasingly steep as they climbed higher. Above the halfway point, the cliffs were extremely steep and smooth, with only a few stubborn trees growing from cracks in the cliffs.

There was effectively no path through this section.

The cliff was at least 330 feet high, and they needed to climb over it to continue upward. Beyond the cliff, the path would still be difficult. However, they could still cut a way through. But this cliff was the obstacle that blocked their progress.

"We have iron hooks and ropes," Tobias said.

Everett shook his head. "Those are useless. There are no protruding rocks, and the surface is so smooth that the Kooks can't grip. We'll have to scale it directly and use those small trees for leverage. But if your Lightfoot Skills aren't sufficient. Only Rafael and I can manage it."

Dylan studied the cliff face, and said, "I can do it too."

If he could leap up and grab hold of the small trees, he could use them to climb further. It would be difficult, but he believed he could do it.

Jacob was proficient in Lightfoot Skill, and added, "I can do it as well."

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There was no time to hesitate their pursuers were close behind.

Everett and Rafael exchanged a glance. Even if it was stupid and risky, there was only one method they could use flying while carrying their burdens.

Dylan and Jacob could fly on their own, but the other eleven men needed to be carried. That meant Everett and Rafael needed to do at least five or six trips back and forth. Under extreme fatigue and with their internal force severely depleted, it was a life-threatening task.

"Sir, I'm truly sorry for the trouble," Rafael said, his eyes full of remorse.

Everett sighed. "You're my only apprentice, and you've married the most troublesome girl in all of Meadow Ridge. If I don't feel for you, who will?"

Rafael wanted to say he was happy, but under his master's compassionate gaze, he swallowed his words. They would just have to carry their burdens. He knew that his master had a stubborn streak—if Everett disagreed with Rafael, the former would have made it clear. There was no more time for words. Rafael first carried Felix, while Everett took Thomas. The remaining people attended to Lawrence, and would wait for their return.

Rafael instructed Felix, "Hold on tight. Don't move except for breathing."

Felix nodded and clung tightly to Rafael's neck. Immediately, he felt herself lift off the ground, soaring toward the cliff face.

Rafael managed to grasp one of the small trees, but he couldn't rely entirely on it for support. After all, he still needed to repeat a few trips. He used his knees to brace against the cliff, searching for footholds but finding none. He shifted sideways, finding just a tiny protrusion to hold onto.

He used that leverage to climb further, but this time he had to angle to the left to grab another small tree. As he reached out, those below held their breath in fear, their hearts in their throats.

From below, the angle made it look like Rafael was dangerously close to missing his mark—but he managed to hold on.

The group's anxiety slowly began to ease as Rafael secured his hold.

Everett took a different route. In essence, it was just using a different set of small trees. No one knew how deeply their roots were planted, or if they could not withstand repeated strain. Everett's path was even more perilous, being steeper and riskier—one wrong move, and he might fall.

Scott patted his chest, and wiped the sweat from his brow. "Oh my god, this is so dangerous."

Everyone held their breath, not daring to make a sound. When Scott spoke, their tension only increased, eyes fixed on the scene with unwavering focus.

Despite the danger, Rafael and Everett managed to reach safety with their burdens.

Once Felix and Thomas were settled, Everett and Rafael slid down the cliff. Descending was relatively easy. When they reached a certain point,

t, they grasped the small trees

and slowly turned around. With a final leap, they made their way back down.

Jacob and Dylan were waiting on the ground. They would only go up after everyone else had been safely carried up.

After just one trip, Rafael and Everett were already breathless. They took a brief moment to rest before continuing.

Everett made five trips, so Rafael had to make six. The last trip was for Lawrence. He needed to be secured to Rafael's back as he was unable to hold on himself.

So, even though Everett didn't have to make another trip, he descended with Rafael for the final trip.

"You carry him up. I'll follow behind and watch your back for any issues," Everett said. Sweat soaked his back, and his hair was damp and sticking to his scalp.

"Understood!" Rafael had to bend

low for the final trip up, making it more difficult. Dylan and Jacob would accompany him. Effectively, there were three people providing protection for Rafael and Lawrence.

Those above watched with anxious anticipation. Lawrence couldn't hold Rafael on his own, and tying him up would limit Rafael's agility, making this the most dangerous trip.

Everyone held their breath as they watched Rafael leap to grab a small tree. After catching his breath, Rafael made a second leap to another tree and gripped another tree, which held steady.

The process continued with the third and fourth trees, which he could grip steadily.

However, Rafael's bent posture made the ascent extremely challenging.

When reaching for the fifth tree, his hand brushed against the tree, but he couldn't grasp it firmly. His heart

skipped a beat as he spread his

hands to brace against the cliff. This left him upright against the wall,

causing Lawrence's head to tilt

backward and Rafael to

balance.

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Everyone covered their mouths, watching in terror as the scene unfolded.

Oh god, it looked like Rafael and Lawrence would fall any minute!

At this critical juncture, Everett and Dylan rushed forward, each grabbing one of Rafael's hands. Their other hands held onto the small trees. However, the distance between them was too great for them to pull Rafael up. Additionally, the two small trees were bearing the weight of four people, which was extremely perilous.

At that moment, Thomas quickly lowered a grappling hook and rope, just long enough to reach Rafael's right hand.

Dylan exchanged a look with Rafael. As they nodded to each other, Dylan let go. Rafael quickly grasped the rope with his right hand. Then, Everett released his grip, allowing Rafael to grasp the rope with his left hand as well. With both hands holding onto the rope, it meant the people above could only pull up Rafael and Lawrence.

The rope wasn't long enough to secure to a tree above. Thomas had lowered it with one end of the hook, which was necessary. Without it, the rope would have swayed in the air and wouldn't reach Rafael's hand easily.

Without a tree to anchor the rope, Thomas and others had to rely on their own strength to pull Rafael and Lawrence up. The few who were uninjured were already exhausted. They clenched their teeth to the point of bleeding as they managed to pull Rafael and Lawrence up just shy of a yard.

Jacob made it up successfully, but Dylan and Everett dared not leave just yet. They remained on guard to protect Rafael and Lawrence, ready to intervene if the rope came loose. However, a stalemate had occurred.

The people above couldn't pull them up, and those below had no foothold. Lawrence remained unconscious, his head tilted back. If this continued, his injuries would worsen.

Thomas anxiously searched for nearby vines that might extend the rope, hoping to use them to brace against a tree trunk.

However, the vines available were thin and easily breakable. They would offer no real support.

The situation was critical. Thomas clung tightly to Tobias' waist to prevent the group from being pulled down, despite the severe injury on his back.

Ultimately, this was not a solution. They needed to get Rafael and Lawrence up, or they would exhaust all their strength. If that happened, the group above would be able to do nothing and watch helplessly as Rafael and Lawrence fell.

Above them, a group of people emerged from the dense forest. Due to the obstructing trees and underbrush, they could only faintly see the figures of the people dressed in black below. The group couldn't identify who these people were, as the numbers didn't match and it didn't seem like Rafael was among them.

The only thing the group could see was that the people dressed in black appeared to be holding onto a rope.

"Go down and check," Timothy suggested.

With a dozen men by his side, he felt confident they wouldn't be at a disadvantage even if they encountered Sandorian soldiers.

"Let's go!" Louis agreed. He could somehow sense the urgency of the situation, so it was better to investigate.

Thomas heard footsteps behind

him, and he strained to turn his head while clinging to Tobias' waist. A group of people was descending the steep mountain. When the leader of the group came into view, Thomas felt his blood rush to his head.

He shouted in disbelief, "Timothy! Timothy, help us!" Timothy was stunned.

That voice....!

Timothy hurried down the slope and saw a group of men, struggling as they pulled on a rope. The voice calling him sounded eerily familiar, but the face was unfamiliar.

"Timothy, it's me! I'm Thomas!" Thomas cried, his voice choked with emotion.

"Oh!" Timothy stumbled forward, tears streaming down his face. "Thomas... Yes, I'm here!"

"It's Thomas?" Louis exclaimed in shock. "Oh my god! It really is you!"

"Prince Rafael is below!" Thomas said through gritted teeth, refusing to loosen his grip on Tobias' waist. "Hurry, help!"

Felix clung to the rope, his back to

the new group of people who had appeared. His face was flushed with exertion, and he couldn't afford to relax even a little. Though he heard his brother, Louis' voice, he didn't dare let up or call out to him.

"Come on!" Louis shouted, and his group moved in unison. One by one, Louis and the others took over the exhausted men's positions and gripped the rope tightly.

The exhausted men collapsed onto the ground in relief, gasping for breath. They were too exhausted to even lift a hand.

With Louis and Timothy's help, Rafael and Lawrence were soon pulled up. However, they sustained scratches from the rocky cliff, which were inevitable. Rafael lay on the ground, directing them to carefully free Lawrence.

Felix buried his face in Louis' embrace, sobbing loudly. "Louis, I thought I'd never see you again!"

Louis stared in stunned silence. He had seen this tanned-faced man just now, but he had never imagined it was Felix. He never even considered it!

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Louis abruptly pushed Felix away, and scrutinized him closely. He looked different from before, but Louis recognized him.

Tears mixed with laughter on Louis' face. "You've aged, and you look so ugly now. How did you become like this?"

"Don't just focus on your reunion. Check on our other brethren," Rafael gasped, his hands trembling uncontrollably. Lawrence had been laid on the ground after being taken off Rafael's back, but he still hadn't woken up despite their attempts. Louis and Timothy looked at the eleven surviving men, tears welling up in their eyes. It was such a relief to see so many of them alive.

But Lawrence's condition was critical, and no one present had medical expertise. The only option was to continue crushing and administering the medicinal pills.

Everett was at a loss. Although he was skilled in bloodletting and purging, Lawrence's problem wasn't internal injuries. His condition was due to pus-filled wounds causing a high fever, which was very dangerous. Suddenly, a roar from below echoed in the air- "Get up there!"

Victor had arrived with his men. But given the steep cliff, it was uncertain how many of them could manage to climb up.

"This is Sandoria territory! Those who trespass shall die!"

"Let's go!" Rafael struggled to his feet. Casting a final glance at the enraged Victor below, he calmly commanded, "Let's retreat quickly."

Let Victor and his men come up. They wouldn't be able to bring up many people, anyway. After all, Rafael and his group had already uprooted most of the small trees.

"Hell Monarch!" Victor roared at him, "You Starhavens are cunning. Instead of negotiating, you resort to dirty tricks?"

Rafael responded in Sandorian, "When you and your people invaded the Southern Frontier, you didn't negotiate with us either."

He raised his hand. "Victor, may we never meet again!"

Then, Rafael straightened up and slowly started walking away. Soon, Victor's and his men's figures vanish from view.

Rafael's shoulders sagged, utterly exhausted. His arms felt like they were no longer his own, and he couldn't coordinate his legs.

Louis carried Lawrence on his back, while Timothy insisted on carrying Thomas. The latter's severe back injury had likely reopened. Thomas had truly struggled to the end before Timothy and the others arrived. They ascended the mountain, descended it, and divided into teams to cross the

grassland. The strong winds on the grassland blew away the heat and refreshed their spirits somewhat.

After crossing the grassland, they had to continue up the mountain. As they approached, they heard the soldiers' cheers. Many people surged forward, surrounding them as they cried out joyfully.

The Septimus Tetra reconnaissance team members laughed through their tears, finding the scene before them almost dreamlike. The cheering seemed to come from far away, even though it was right beside them.

Upon returning to Simonton City,

tears streamed down their faces as

soon as they entered the city. Except for the semi-conscious Lawrence, all ten of them fell to their knees on the city's ground and silently wept.

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They were finally back in the homeland they often dreamed of. They had returned, and Southern Frontier had been reclaimed as well.

It was a profound significance for them!

Even if they had to die or their bodies couldn't be returned to their families, it was worth it.

Everything they had done was worth it.

Upon hearing of Rafael's successful rescue and the return of the eleven men, Oliver immediately came to greet them.

Rafael collapsed into a chair, and his first words upon seeing Oliver were, "Send for the best military physician."

Oliver appeared particularly excited. "He'll be here soon."

He didn't know any of the eleven men present, but he approached each one and patted them on the shoulder. "Well done!"

The eleven men had once been part

of the Sinclair Army, and had served under Hector. They didn't know Oliver, and they were so exhausted that they couldn't speak a word. They could barely stand after they had sat down, and their legs trembling uncontrollably

"No need for formalities. Sit down," Oliver said with a smile. "I am proud of you all."

After saying that, Oliver instructed Louis to take good care of the men and went back to write a report. He needed to send the report to the court. It was to inform the king that under his strategic command, the Hell Monarch had been successfully retrieved, and all the hostages had been saved.

No one cared about what Oliver's report contained. Everyone's concern was focused on Lawrence's condition.

The military physician stated that Lawrence's situation was dire, and it was uncertain if he could pull through. Even if he did survive, he might never walk again due to severe fractures in his leg.

Rafael told the military physician, "Spare no expense in saving him. If you can't save him, at least alleviate his suffering and extend his life as long as possible. I'll take him back to the capital to Sebastian."

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Thomas watched Oliver's retreating figure, unsure if the man genuinely didn't recognize him or hadn't heard the others calling his name. Or perhaps Oliver was deliberately pretending not to know him. it.

Forget

Jacob was right. It was best to let go of such matters. The most pressing issue now was Lawrence's condition.

After the military physician's examination, his expression turned grave. He asked Rafael to show him the medicine pills they had given Lawrence.

Then, the military physician said, "Thanks to this medicine pill, he's still alive right now."

The military had excellent medicine for wounds. But after the military physician finished his examination, he shook his head and asked Rafael to step outside for a word.

"Marsh... I mean, Your Highness, I've done everything possible. I can keep stable for a week or more at best, but I can't promise anything. His body is in terrible shape. There isn't a single patch of healthy skin, and the infection is spreading. If you hadn't given him those top-tier pills, he wouldn't have made it this far."

"I still have some of the pills. If he continues taking it, could it extend his life by a month?"

The military physician shook his head. "No. This medicine protects the heart and vessels. It's fortunate it has lasted this long, but extending his life for a month is impossible."

Rafael frowned. "You will accompany him back to the capital. I will inform Marshal Prince."

The military physician wiped away his tears, and said, "Alright. It's truly difficult for him, and I admire his willpower. His determination is strong. He must be thinking of his family and is unwilling to give up. Most people would not have endured the suffering he has." Hearing this, Rafael felt a sharp pang in his heart.

He had spent the past few years entrenched in battles on the Southern Frontier. He had faced death repeatedly, especially in the earlier years when the skirmishes were exceptionally brutal. But back then, he had something to fight for-Melanie had promised to betroth Carissa to him. No matter what, he would return alive to marry the woman he had loved for a long time.

That belief sustained him through each challenge.

After asking the military physician to do his best, Rafael sought out Tobias and the others and asked, "Over these years, who has Lawrence mentioned the most? Who does he miss the most?"

Tobias replied, "He definitely misses

his parents. He also often talks

about his wife with a smile. He once told me they made a list together of all the things they wanted to do this lifetime. He was always going

a thousand gold coins que

on about how a man's word is worth

the sake of reclaiming the Southern Frontier, he might become someone who will break that promise. He's doing right by his kingdom, but he'll probably let his wife down."

Tobias crouched down, and covered his face with his hands. After the military physician assessed the situation, everyone felt as if a heavy stone was pressing down on them. They had hoped Lawrence would recover once they returned to

Simonton City and had access to a military physician, but the situation was far more dire than anticipated.

Rafael looked at the men, his eyes reddening. He quickly wrote a brief letter to Carissa, and sent it via carrier pigeon. In the letter, he instructed her to set aside any

pressing matters and to bring net

Lawrence's wife and Sebastian to the Southern Frontier without delay. They were to meet in Westglade, and speed was of the essence!

Rafael had brought the carrier pigeon from the capital for convenience, and it was their only means of urgent communication. Everett also had pigeons, but it was clear that only Sebastian and Lawrence's wife could be of immediate help. Sebastian would handle the medical treatment, and having Lawrence's wife by his side might bolster his will to survive. Sometimes, sheer willpower could overcome everything.

If things didn't work out, Lawrence and his wife would at least get to see each other one last time.

At present, there was no other option but to proceed this way.

The carrier pigeon could cover a thousand miles in a day, so Rafael hoped that Carissa would soon set out. Meanwhile, they needed to be ready.

He suggested that Thomas stay behind to recuperate and return to the capital when his injuries were better. However, Thomas insisted on accompanying Lawrence.

"We've been through thick and thin together for years. I won't abandon him now," Thomas said, his voice firm and eyes reddened.

Felix's voice choked with emotion as he added, "We will stay with him. Please permit us to do so, Your Highness."

Felix was injured, but not severely. It was Louis who was reluctant to let the man travel while wounded. Louis figured it was better to give Felix some time to recover before sending him on the long journey back. After all, Lawrence would likely need treatment in Westglade. "Very well, we'll go together." Rafael nodded.

However, no one felt any joy. Returning to Simonton City had been exhilarating a feeling beyond words. But after the military physician examined Lawrence and said the outlook wasn't good, their smiles vanished. They couldn't bring themselves to feel happy anymore.

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Rafael approached Oliver, requesting that the military physician accompany them. Oliver immediately agreed. After all, they had more than one military physician available.

Once Oliver's official report was sent out, all the scheming and calculations were behind him. He looked at the eleven men with a deep sense of respect. Hearing that Lawrence's condition was critical, his concern grew. Regardless of what happened, Oliver was a soldier at heart. Even though he once considered abandoning Septimus, seeing the eleven men return stirred something in him.

No one could help but admire heroes, unless those heroes threaten their own position.

But clearly, the safe return of these eleven men was partly thanks to Rafael's efforts and partly Oliver's own. After all, it was he who had sent Louis and Timothy.

Oliver also wanted to save Lawrence, and it was driven partly by his own interests. Lawrence was the Marquis of Elderglen's second son. Oliver was still in an unstable position within the military, and needed the support of influential families. However, what surprised Oliver more was that Thomas was also a Septimus Tetra reconnaissance team member.

Viola was already married off to someone else, and Oliver found himself uncertain about how to face Thomas. Perhaps it was best to pretend not to know him, as they no longer had any familial ties.

At Hell Monarch Estate, Carissa had just gone to bed when Travis pounded on the door and shouted urgently, "Cari, there's an emergency!"

Travis adhered to the etiquette of high society, and he usually avoided addressing her by name in public. He only reserved it for private moments. His nighttime visit and forceful knocking indicated that something serious had happened. Carissa hurriedly threw on a robe as Lulu opened the door. Travis held a note that he had clearly already read as he came in, and said urgently, "You need to get Sebastian and Lady Kayla right away! There's no time to lose!" Carissa was startled at Travis' words. She quickly took the note, which contained only a few brief lines.

[The rescue was successful, but Lawrence was gravely injured. Bring Sebastian and Lawrence's wife, the second madam of the Ziegler family, to Westglade immediately.]

Lawrence? Was Septimus actually Lawrence, and not Thomas?

"Rod, prepare the horses and some provisions. I'm leaving the city tonight," she instructed Travis.

Then, Carissa turned to Pearl and said, "Choose a few practical outfits for me and find my deputy commander's emblem."

Violet had been speaking with Helen, and she came over upon hearing the commotion through the wall.

"What happened? What's going on?"

Carissa immediately replied, "Vivi, you're just in time. Go to Arcane Sanctum and look for Sebastian. Tell him there's a hero gravely injured, and I need him to accompany me to Westglade. I'll go to Elderglen Estate to fetch Lady Kayla." She handed Violet the letter from the carrier pigeon, and then quickly went to change. After Violet read the note, she gasped in surprise. Then, her expression turned serious.

"I'll get Sebastian right away."

After Carissa changed, she and Lulu hurriedly left for Elderglen Estate.

"Lulu, what time is it now?"

"It's around nine," Lulu replied, her voice tinged with both anxiety and excitement.

Everyone had a sense of duty to their kingdom, and Lulu was easily moved to tears. She blinked back the tears threatening to spill over and asked, "My lady, will General Zielger be alright?"

"He will be!" Carissa answered firmly. "As long as we move quickly enough."

That was why Carissa insisted on leaving the city the same night. Every minute wasted meant more danger for Lawrence.

The Marquis of Elderglen's family was known for its strict family values. By nine in the evening, everyone in the household was already settling down for the night. The arrival of the Hell Monarch's princess consort at this hour startled everyone.

The Marquis of Elderglen's wife, Agnes, knew that Carissa had once helped her unfortunate daughter-in-law. Agnes even sent a gift with Kayla to visit Carissa to express her gratitude.

But what could be the reason for Carissa's late-night visit?

"Quickly, get changed. No time for idle chatter," the Marquis of Elderglen, Edwin Ziegler, instructed.

He was already dressed. At this hour, a visit from the Hell Monarch's princess consort deserved proper respect.

Edwin had a tall and imposing figure. He held the esteemed position of Minister of Infrastructure, a second-rank official.

The main gate of Elderlgen Estate was opened to welcome Carissa inside.

Everyone in the residence bowed to Carissa, and Agnes invited her to take a seat and ordered refreshments to be brought.

Carissa waved her hand to stop the formalities. Not seeing Kayla, she said, "I have urgent business with Lady Kayla. Please have her pack a bag and come with me to Westglade." Everyone was taken aback.

Westglade?

The Marquis of Elderglen's heir,

Julian Ziegler quickly spoke up, "Lady Carissa, my sister-in-law rarely leaves the residence since becoming a widow. Is there

something urgent that requires her to

leave

to go to Westglade, which is such a distant place? If it's not absolutely necessary for her to go, might I go instead?"

"Julian is right. Also, it's the middle of the night-"

Carissa interrupted them, "Send someone to fetch her immediately and have her pack her things. Once you've done that, I'll explain the situation." Seeing her grave expression, Edwin promptly dispatched a capable maid to help pack Kayla's belongings and bring her out.

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Once the maid left, Carissa began, "Prince Rafael went to Simonton City to negotiate with Sandoria's representatives over an informant named Septimus. Septimus is an informant who escaped after being captured by our enemy. During the Southern Frontier conflict, he continuously sent us intelligence. However, he was recently caught, and the Sandoria people are trying to exchange him for Simonton City."

As Carissa spoke, everyone's breathing grew rapid, waiting for her to continue.

"So, the king dispatched Prince Rafael to Simonton City. On the surface, it was for negotiations. In actuality, Prince Rafael would secretly attempt a rescue operation. Septimus has been rescued, and he's now in Simonton City. It has been confirmed that Septimus is actually Lawrence Ziegler, the Marquis of Elderglen's second son.

"However, his injuries are severe. Prince Rafael's message via carrier pigeon requests that Sebastian and Lady Kayla be brought along. We must leave tonight. There is no time to waste." "Oh, my God! Oh, heavens!"

Agnes trembled all over. The news that her son was not dead, but was gravely injured instead, was almost too much for her to bear. "I-I'll go too!"

Julian held his mother, and supported her in standing up. "Mom, you shouldn't go. I'll go in your place. I'll accompany my sister-in-law."

His voice was already choked with emotion.

"I will also go," Edwin said, his voice slightly trembling. He smiled, but his eyes were filled with tears. "Our son is brave and remarkable. We will go and bring him home. We must." Edwin was known to be a stoic man. He was a marquis and a dignified second-rank official. Back then, he had managed to hold back tears upon hearing the news of his son's sacrifice.

But now, he couldn't contain his tears after hearing that his son was alive. He couldn't, not even with the Hell Monarch's princess consort present and standing before him.

Carissa said, "Lord Edwin, as Minister of Infrastructure, you can't easily leave the capital. However, Lord Julian can accompany us."

Julian worked in the Ministry of Justice. He held a lower position, and could take leave without much trouble.

Julian immediately stood up. "I'll go back to pack my things now. Dad, please inform my workplace that a family emergency has happened, and I will be away."

Agnes' tears fell in a steady stream as she suddenly knelt on the floor. "Your Grace, I know you're acquainted with Sebastian. I implore you to do everything in your power to ensure he accompanies you."

Agnes knew Sebastian rarely went on such distant missions, and their standing alone might not be enough to persuade him. Therefore, she could only appeal to Carissa.

Carissa quickly helped the older woman to her feet. "Don't worry, Sebastian will definitely agree to go. Lord Lawrence was gravely injured while serving the country, and Sebastian won't just stand by and do nothing." After assisting Agnes to her feet, Carissa turned to Edwin. "We need to move quickly, so let's hurry."

"Quick, urge them to hurry up," Edwin immediately ordered.

Kayla was unaware of the full

situation. She only knew that Carissa wanted her to go to

Westglade. She knew where Westglade was. She had memorized every county and state from the capital to the Southern Frontier. She had studied those routes countless times.

Maybe it was the bond of marriage that gave her intuition, but she felt something urgent stirring within her. Without hesitation, she ordered her belongings to be packed and rushed out.

Kayla had only run so swiftly in her life once-when her husband had joined the army. Back then, she had dashed through the streets with a veil on her face, wanting to catch a glimpse of his back as he disappeared into the distance.

Now, she was running again. She knew it was for her husband, who might still be alive.

In truth, she had never fully accepted Lawrence's death because she hadn't seen his body to confirm it. Despite the years that had passed and the silence, she had held onto her belief. She just couldn't bring herself to voice it to anyone else. Such statements often brought discomfort-either empty consolations or resigned sighs.

She maintained her belief silently in her heart, even if it meant deceiving herself. Without this faith, how could she continue with life?

As Kayla entered the main hall, she saw Carissa and everyone else gazing at her with tearful eyes.

Her heart sank. It seemed that things were not as simple as she thought.

Julian was also ready and said, "Kayla is here. We should set out immediately."

Julian's wife, Tessa, stepped forward. She embraced Kayla as she cried, "Be careful on the road. Bring Lawrence home."

"Tessa!" Kayla's lips trembled. "He... He isn't dead, right?"

Carissa took Kayla's hand and said, "Let's talk while we walk."

"O-Okay!" Kayla's tears flowed continuously, but her steps did not falter. She managed to keep pace with Carissa.

Chapter 559

In the dead of night, Violet knocked on the door of the Arcane Sanctum. Sebastian lived on the second floor of the sanctum.

Sebastian had already gone to bed, and was accustomed to early bedtimes for his health. By the time Violet arrived, he had been asleep for over an hour.

Even the renowned physician had his moments of irritation. When his apprentice reported that Violet had arrived, he donned a robe and glared at Violet as he came downstairs. "You'd better have a good reason for this visit. I'm not on duty tonight."

Violet bowed in apology. "Forgive the disturbance, but Prince Rafael sent us a message via carrier pigeon. He requests that you accompany Cari to Westglade to save Lawrence Zielger."

"Lawrence Ziegler?" Sebastian hesitated momentarily before recalling the Marquis of Elderglen's second son, who was already reported dead.

Without further ado, Sebastian ordered, "Vanda, Mira, prepare the necessary supplies and come along. Bring the best medicine for wounds, the gold needles, and..."

He paused, showing a hint of reluctance, though minimal. "Bring the thousand-year-old Evergreen Root as well."

Sebastian's response to an emergency was unparalleled. He arrived at Hell Monarch Estate ahead of Carissa to await her.

Before setting out, Carissa took the carrier pigeon's note to her mother-in-law.

"Tomorrow, you must go to the palace and deliver this note to the king. Make sure to tell him our pigeon is reliable, and given the urgency of the situation, I left the city tonight."

Helen took the note and asked, "Is it really necessary? The situation is dire, but you can explain it properly when you return to the capital. You have the permit to leave the city, and you're going to save someone..." Carissa cut her off and said seriously, "It's very necessary. Listen to me, okay? Go early tomorrow morning. Don't delay even for a moment."

She turned to Gillian. "Gillian, please ensure that Mother goes to the palace tomorrow."

Gillian responded loudly, "Rest assured, Lady Carissa. Lady Helen will definitely take the carrier pigeon's note to the palace tomorrow and report to the king as you've instructed."

"Good, I'm leaving now."

Carissa trusted Gillian completely. With that, she turned and departed.

Helen was still pondering the situation. As she watched Carissa's determined figure leave, she muttered, "Carissa's so resolute, like a man."

Gillian defended Carissa, "My lady, that's called decisive action. Besides, not every man can compare to our princess consort."

"Hey!" Helen shot her a glare. "You were completely against Rafael marrying her at first. Now, it seems you're quite taken with her."

Gillian adopted a proud stance. "Anyone who goes against Lady Carissa is also going against me. I won't let them off easily." "Oh, so you've grown some backbone?" Helen remarked.

Gillian smiled. "How could I not?"

Lady Carissa is capable, so I also need to have some skills. Besides,

don't I have your support if I

short, my lady?"

Helen huffed. "I think that Carissa is just a little enchantress, pulling everyone's soul away. She's enchanted not only Rafael, but also you."

"And even you, my lady," Gillian replied with a smile. "Alright then, get some rest. You need to head to the palace early tomorrow."

Helen replied coldly, "I won't go. Let anyone who wants to go. Does she think she can boss me around?"

Gillian was unperturbed by Helen's

words. She arranged the bedding meticulously, and even had someone fetch more ice. She was sharing a room with Helen, and had a small bed of her own. Helen didn't like the heat, and enjoyed sleeping under cool blankets with ice to keep her comfortable.

"Take out the dark red gown with rose patterns. It's a new summer gown that I haven't worn yet, and I want to show it to my sister tomorrow," Helen instructed Gillian before going to sleep.

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"Understood, Lady Helen!" Gillian retrieved the outfit from the wardrobe and set it aside, ready for the morning.

Despite saying she wouldn't go, Helen mentally prioritized this task.

Carissa and her group left the city together, but they would travel in two separate groups.

Julian, Travis, and Sebastian could ride horses and would set out first.

Violet and Carissa were capable of riding horses, but they needed to accompany Kayla. Kayla was not skilled in riding, and would travel by carriage.

For Kayla, traveling at night was a new experience. She had rarely traveled far in her life, especially not to a distant place like Westglade.

She wasn't nervous, but she was worried. Carissa had explained everything to her during the carriage ride.

Kayla didn't shed another tear. If her husband could be so strong, she resolved to be strong as well.

Chapter 560

The carriage jolted over the uneven road, and the hurried pace only made the ride more grueling for Kayla. After just half an hour, Carissa noticed Kayla's face had gone pale, her hand clutching her chest as if she were about to be sick. Carissa asked, "Are you feeling nauseous from the carriage ride? Should I have the driver slow down?"

"No, don't slow down," Kayla waved her hand dismissively. "We need to go as fast as possible. I wish this horse had wings to fly us to Westglade. Don't mind how frail I look, Your Grace I can endure hardship."

"Alright, then." Carissa reached into her bag and pulled out the dried fruits Lulu had packed. Finding some ginger candies, she said, "Suck on this candy. It'll help you feel better."

"Thank you!" Kayla popped a piece into her mouth. The sweet and spicy taste spread in her mouth, somewhat alleviating her nausea.

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Meanwhile, Rafael had arranged for the carriage to be modified in Simonton City. It was now spacious enough for Lawrence to lie down comfortably. Soft padding was added to ease the pain from the bumps. The military physician sat in the carriage with him, fanning away the heat and monitoring his condition.

Oliver had provided the best horses for everyone else.

Having stayed out of sight for a while, Oliver finally came out to see them off. He avoided eye contact with Thomas, and Thomas did the same. There was almost no exchange of glances between them.

As Thomas was about to mount his horse, however, Oliver suddenly called out, "Thomas!"

Thomas turned around. "Do you need something, Marshal Prince?"

Oliver looked at Thomas' tanned, clean-shaven face, noting the absence of his former charm. He felt a pang of bitterness in his heart.

"I'm glad you're still alive."

Thomas grinned. "Thank you, Marshal Prince. Farewell."

Despite his injuries, Oliver watched Thomas swing himself onto the horse with practiced ease. The man sat upright with the poise of a soldier. Of all Oliver's brothers-in-law, Thomas was the one Oliver admired most. It was a shame that fate had severed their connection so soon.

Louis and Timothy were escorting them all the way to Westglade. Since there was no ongoing war, their extended absence was not an issue, and Oliver didn't make things difficult for them.

Considering the relatives had not

seen each other for years and once thought they would never meet again, it was only natural to want to spend as much time together as possible upon reuniting.

That was a common human sentiment.

"Farewell, Your Highness!" Oliver said, but Rafael didn't even turn his head. He simply waved his hand, and spurred his horse forward.

Everett wouldn't stay in Westglade, but would return directly to Meadow Ridge. However, the route he traveled for now was the same as Rafael and his group.

Given Lawrence's injuries, their pace was slow. Everett and Rafael rode side by side.

"It would be good if there was no war in the Southern Frontier in the future. But if there is one, it will surely be a disaster under Oliver's command," Everett remarked. Everett had a sharp eye for people, and could read them with uncanny accuracy. He had only met Oliver a handful of times, but it was enough to see through him. Whether someone was weak, strong, cowardly, or confident- Everett could tell at a glance.

Oliver didn't have the true confidence of a marshal. His confidence was merely an act, and it was obvious. Beneath his bravado, he was all bark and no bite.

Rafael said, "I know what kind of

man Oliver is he loves glory and attention. He's good at keeping up appearances, so he didn't offend people in the capital. But when it comes to taking the spotlight, he'll jump at the chance. In the military, he hasn't made any big mistakes or significant contributions, was his commanding officer

who earned the real achievements. He just followed along and picked up some merit along the way."

"He only got noticed because he stole the spotlight. Why else would the king have picked him? Besides, he's easy to control. He's not skilled enough to act recklessly. If he had real talent, he would do more and make more mistakes. That is something even idiots understand," Everett said.

Rafael glanced at Everett, and smiled. He couldn't help but admit that his master's sharp tongue could sometimes be brutal.

If Rafael pushed his horse to its limits, the group could have reached Westglade in a day. But at their current pace, it would take between three to five days to arrive.

Conveniently, it would also take four or five days for a fast rider to travel from the capital to Westglade.

The timing matched perfectly.