

The War God's Favorite by Jenny Fox Chapter 126

#126 The Chains

Cassandra couldn't see the extent of the injury she had just caused. All she had was Vrehan, staggering back while holding his face and scream. His hands were literally covered in blood. Sharpened by Kairen, Phetra's dagger had become a murderous weapon against her brother.

Cassandra didn't have much time to contemplate what she had done, though. She kept trying to push the rocks above her leg, desperate to move and get out of her. Her throat was painful, she kept coughing and crying as the dust was making an absolute nightmare out of the scene. Moreover, she could hear the furious growls of dragons battling somewhere above her. With Glahad free, the two dragons had just taken the fight into the Throne Room, causing more damage every time they threw each other against the walls. Even the roof was starting to creak dangerously above their heads. Cassandra had briefly seen it sealed when she had walked in, but how much longer would that hold? Was that Vrehan's precaution against another Dragon's attack?

"Cassandra!"

She heard Shareen scream her name, but she felt horribly far in this cloud of dust. Cassandra tried to answer back, horribly coughing. She glanced back, and Vrehan was wiping the blood off his face. He was going to get back at her any minute now, and Cassandra was still trapped. Missandra lying half-dead underneath here, she was desperate to free herself. That rock on her leg was horribly massive, and nowhere near anything she could lift with her current strength. Cassandra coughed again, trying to clear her throat again.

"Kairen!" She called.

"He won't save you! I'm going to kill you, and watch him weep in front of your dead body!" Yelled Vrehan, from somewhere behind her.

Cassandra glared at him, holding that dagger as her last line of defense. Weak or not, she was not going to let that monster approach her without

defending herself all she could. She was ready to fight him off using everything she could and she had. Vrehan staggered, and as he lowered his hand from his face, she could see the horrible line running through his face, one of his eyes blocked by the blood. Just like his dragon, Cassandra had somewhat blinded one of his eyes with that same dagger.

He still had one, though, and was coming right at her. She shivered. She couldn't die here, not when Kairen was this close! She kept calling his name and screaming, but all she could hear as an answer were the clamors of men all around fighting, and even louder, the dragons wrestling. Another ruckus imploded from another side of the room, and a wall exploded, throwing more dust and rocks into the mix. This was a complete war scene.

“Cassandra!”

Finally!

Cassandra turned her head, and in the middle of the fog, Kairen's familiar silhouette appeared. She could have cried in relief from this sight if she wasn't already too teary from all the dust. He ran to her and, as soon as he spotted his brother standing behind Cassandra, threw out his fist. She heard the violent chock of a jaw broken above her head, and Vrehan's guttural sound. The second brother screamed in pain, and turned around, running away and disappearing into the cloud of dust. If Cassandra hadn't been at his feet, Kairen would have gone to finish him off. U However, the War God didn't hesitate a second and crouched down, grabbing the humongous rock stuck on her leg. Frowning, he took a couple of seconds to focus and gather his strength before finally lifting it. Cassandra moved quickly to retrieve her leg, despite the pain. Her ankle was twisted or broken, horribly painful. Right after that, she meant to say something, but Kairen's lips found hers. (2

This was the oddest time and place for a kiss, but they couldn't stop. In those few long seconds, they just needed it. A wild, passionate, intense kiss to sum up how much they had been dying to see each other again.

Cassandra felt her whole body warm up again as if it had been in slumber since they parted, and her heart stopped. She put a hand on his raspy cheek. She would have hugged his whole body, kissed all of his skin, and caressed his hair for hours if she could. Finally, finally. Her War God was there, her one, only man. Kairen's large hand on her neck was all she needed. This warm, intense touch that told her she was finally safe, even in this wretched place.

However, those seconds were short-lived. As another part of the wall exploded somewhere behind them, they had to part lips as Kairen moved to shield the two sisters. Cassandra was deafened by a Dragon's screech for a few seconds. She couldn't see anything past a few steps.

"Glahad..." She said, her eyes meeting Kairen.

"He's losing. Vrehan's firstborn's dragon arrived."

Cassandra's face lost its blood. Glahad couldn't fight two dragons by himself! She struggled to get back on her feet, Kairen helping her, but her mind was still preoccupied.

"Krai?"

"Still outside. Fighting Lephys'."

The situation was horrible. With Dragons fighting all over the Palace, it was a complete mess around. Cassandra crouched down to grab her younger sister, but Kairen was faster. Grabbing Missandra, he put her on his shoulder under Cassandra's panicked eyes. Was her younger sister going to survive this? She was barely alive already...

Kairen!"

They both turned around to follow Shareen's voice. Just like them, Shareen was more fighting her way into the dusty mist than battling any soldier now. She had made a few more victims on her way in, but it took them a few more seconds to reunite, as they needed to stop and crouch down regularly to avoid debris fall and dragon claws.

"Mie! She alive?" Asked the Princess.

"Barely. We have to get out of there..."

Shareen nodded, but her eyes were above, on the two dragons fighting. Her eyes suddenly opened wide in horror, and something red and dark suddenly splattered all around them. It smelled horrible, and was warm, giving Cassandra no doubt about what this thing was. She panicked and turned around, trying to catch a glimpse of the fight, but all she could spot were shadows of two dragons fighting furiously.

“Glahad...”

“Yeah, the old one is not going to last much longer,” sighed Shareen, shaking her head. “Come on, let’s get out of here.”

Without exchanging a word, the siblings exchanged Missandra’s body, Shareen carrying the young girl effortlessly while Kairen grabbed Cassandra to carry her. She didn’t oppose him: with her injured ankle, she had been the one to slow him down, and the Imperial Prince and Princess could get out much faster than her.

As they struggled to get out of the room, Cassandra tried to look around for Vrehan or Lephys. She was scared one of them was going to come out at any moment and attack them from behind. Moreover, she was worried about Glahad. The Imperial Dragon wouldn’t have gotten into this fight if it wasn’t for her, and it was dying. It was its blood she had on her dress right now, on top of hers.

“Here!”

Shareen had found some opening on the wall, more like a breach where more rocks had fallen off from. They climbed a couple of rocks to finally get themselves into the open air, and breathe better. Kairen let Cassandra down, though he wasn’t letting go, his arm around her waist, ready to shield her at any given moment. In Shareen’s arms, Missandra was still inanimate and livid as death. All of this was too much.

“Kairen!”

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Blood splattered her face, and when she rose her eyes up, Kairen was on top of her, making the grimace of someone who’s suffering horribly. She heard a Dragon’s growl, and the Prince suddenly pushed her further away from him.

“Kairen!” She screamed.

The Prince was suddenly grabbed back inside, under the two women’s horrified eyes. Shareen hesitated a second before putting Missandra down. Kairen had no weapon left, and a gigantic red dragon had just dragged

him back inside this hellish room like a mere puppet. Her brother was going to die.

Before they even exchanged a word, Cassandra handed Shareen her dagger, and she ran back inside. Cassandra had another objective, though, and no time to complete it. Getting back on her feet, silently praying for Kairen to be alright, she started dragging Missandra further away. They had to get far enough for her younger sister to be safe, and moreover, they had somehow gotten back into the Lake's garden. That part of the Throne room's wall had gotten them right there, which was an unexpected chance for them.

"Cassandra! Missandra!"

Cassandra turned her head and saw Anour running to them. His eyes were wide open in horror upon the sight of Missandra's state, and he fell on his knee before them.

"What... what happened...?" He muttered.

Cassandra had no time for her questions.

"Get her out of here!" She yelled while running away.

She didn't have time to verify if Anour was going to follow her instructions. Kairen was back inside, his sister too, and both of them were completely unharmed to face a furious Dragon! Moreover, that injury he had suffered before being dragged back inside... Cassandra had seen too much blood today, she couldn't allow any more. I

She wasn't a fighter, but she could find a way to get them some support. She glanced up, at the chains still blocking the way into this garden for Dragons from the outside. She could hear Krai's furious growls from the outside, but the black dragon had no way in. Cassandra had to get rid of those damn chains.

"Krai! Krai!" She called, yelling all of her lungs out.

She didn't know how he could always find her, but she just knew he would. She heard his growls and kept running. What was happening on the other side? She was unable to run fast enough with her injured leg, but her steps were getting her to the Lake, as fast as she could endure.

More growlings came from inside the Throne Room's opening, but she couldn't look back. Cassandra was silently crying, unable to hold it, and breathing erratically. She was tired, in horrible pain and terrified, but she had to keep going. She needed to do anything she could to help them... Suddenly, a silver creature flashed in front of her, agitating its little wings.

“Kian!”

The baby dragon had somehow managed to escape the mess of the Throne Room to fly to her, though his scales had much dust on them. He flipped his wings and landed next to Cassandra, emitting some little worried high pitched sounds, looking at her and the throne room. She nodded.

“I know. I know...”

She didn't have the strength to say more. The young woman slowly made her way to the lake, fighting the tiredness of her own body, that was about to collapse. Finally, she made it to the Lake and fell forward. Down on her knees, she fought against the dizziness and took a deep breath. Kian walked up to her side, tilting his head. Cassandra nodded.

“How about you... help me call your dad?”

She had no idea if the baby dragon had understood her, but he suddenly flipped his wings and took off. Kian was very small compared to any adult dragon, and tiny enough to squeeze himself through the metallic net above them. Cassandra heard him growling and chirping, probably trying to grab Krai's attention. She had no idea what was going on for the Black Dragon, but she really needed him to come down and help his master now. However, he couldn't do that unless he could get past Vrehan's traps first. Cassandra laid down next to the lake, extending her arm into the water. This felt strangely good, the freshwater running on her arm, washing the dirt and the blood away. She closed her eyes for a second, yet fighting not to give in to the darkness. She had to hold on, a bit longer. The fight was not over.

Suddenly, above her, she heard the furious but familiar growl of the

black dragon. Cassandra opened her eyes back up just as his shadow flew over her. He furiously attacked the fence, but just then, she saw some gigantic metallic arrows flying his way. Probably Vrehan's traps. Krai had to fly away again, dodging them as they kept firing. The black dragon growled furiously and started spitting fire too. Cassandra frowned and shielded herself. Though he was meters and meters above her, she could feel the scorching heat of his fire where she was. This was terrifying. No wonder no dragon ever did that within the Imperial Palace. They would have decimated the whole building and everyone around in seconds...

However, right after that, Cassandra froze, her eyes stuck across the other end of the lake. Another dragon had just appeared, growling at her and coming slowly. He was smaller than Krai, but this one was under the net, unrestrained, and menacing. Just from his size and purple color, she knew which it was.

"You damn bitch..." Hissed Lephys' voice behind her. "This time, I'm going to finish you off!"

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#127 The Battle Cry

Cassandra had seen enough horrors for one day, and yet it seemed like all this nightmare was far from over. Just when an adult, purple Dragon was slowly walking her way, she heard its master's voice coming from right behind her. Cassandra rolled in the grass, just in time to avoid the sword that stabbed the soil next to her cheek. She glared at Lephys. She hated that man perhaps even more than Vrehan if that was possible. His face was deformed by anger, and he had blood running from his temple to his chin. Cassandra had no idea if he had been injured in the explosion of the wall, by one of the Dragons or because of the siblings, but she thought he deserved more suffering than that. The sight of that monster pushing her sister's defenseless body down the stairs was something she wasn't going to forget.

“You damn bitch... No more Kairen or Dragons to protect you,” he hissed. “I’m going to get rid of you once and for you.”

Strangely, Cassandra answered his words by a chuckle.

Maybe she was too tired of all of this, but she laughed nervously at his words. Cassandra knew she might be about to die, but after everything she had already gone through in the last few hours, it was at the very back of her mind. She had just seen her lover being dragged back inside the Throne Room by a furious dragon, she had no idea if her baby was safe, and this Empire was about to be overthrown by a mad man. She just was witnessing too much for one day. Having Lephys appear now was like a nightmare’s new twist.

“Stop laughing you crazy woman!”

Cassandra’s nervous laugh wasn’t that long, but she had no strength to get back up. She was beyond exhausted. Lephys’ furious expression was what kept her up, though. That was another monster that needed to disappear. When he rose his sword again, she got ready, and using all of her strength, she rose her arm to splatter him with water, and some mud and small rocks she had grabbed. That attack took him by surprise, and he groaned, having gotten some in his eyes. Cassandra’s reflexes came back the second she realized she had a chance. Ignoring the pain, she actually grabbed his sword by its blade and kicked him in the flank.

The fifth Prince wasn’t a fighter. That kind of move wouldn’t have worked with Kairen or Vrehan, but Lephys was surprised by her sudden kick and made the mistake to lessen his grip on his weapon for a second. Cassandra took that opportunity, and sent the weapon flying, having it fall into the lake. She knew she hadn’t time to turn it around and use it herself, but at least she could get rid of it.

His eyes red of all the dirt he had gotten in, Lephys fell on his flank, but he got quickly on all fours to wrestle Cassandra. He was even more furious that she had even managed to pull this kind of trick on him, and made him lose his sword so easily. He rose his hand and slapped her

furiously. Cassandra felt the pain resonate through her whole body, and her cheek burned. Lephys chuckled from hearing her in pain, and quickly got back on his knees to pin her down, and slap her more. It wasn't just about killing her now. He wanted this woman to suffer, for the humiliation she had just caused him. His eyes hurt, she had just made a fool of him, and he hadn't forgotten she had stabbed him either. He kept slapping her furiously, yet not putting as much strength that it would have her pass out. He wanted her to suffer some more before he killed her.

* You damn bitch. You're nothing but a useless woman! You think you can hurt me! You think you can touch me! You slut! You're just a damn, wicked bitch! A witch! A rotten slave!"

With each sentence came a new slap, and Cassandra couldn't even pass out. Her whole face was burning, and she could feel the taste of her own blood in her mouth. She tried to struggle, push him away, but no matter what, Lephys was a healthy young man, stronger than her. She could only raise her arms to try and protect herself, but even so, he was having fun hitting her wherever he could. She felt his slaps turn into fists when he started knocking her arms, yet she endured it. She held on to the thought that she had gone through worse, that she had to make it through for her baby. For Kassian.

"You're so weak! You think you can play strong? Do you think you can survive this? You're just weak, useless!"

Cassandra's eyes turned towards the Lake, and the purple dragon that was coming their way. She could hear Krai's furious growls above, as he was wrestling with the chains on the roof, and the soldiers trying to injure him with whatever weapons Vrehan had gotten ready. Cassandra had to do something. No one was coming to save her, she had to move and help Krai instead. If the Dragon could access the Palace, Kairen would have a better chance.

That's all she needed to focus on right now.

She purposely let Lephys have his fun beating her some more, but she

was thinking. She knew what to do, she hadn't gotten closer to the Lake by mistake. Protecting her face as she could, she took a deep breath.

"Sometimes it's not about strength," she whispered in her native tongue. "It's about courage."

"What are you saying, woman!"

Just when he had stopped to try and understand her words, Cassandra used both of her hands, with her joined fingers, to punch him in his jaw. It wasn't that strong, but it was surprising. Lephys let out another painful groan, holding his jaw with a shocked expression.

Cassandra then turned towards the Lake, and started chanting, as loud as she could, in her native tongue.

"What are you..."

He had expected her to try and run away, to crawl maybe, but this woman was singing loudly, something he couldn't understand. For a few seconds, the fifth Prince got worried, but then, he understood. She was just crazy. He laughed, finding this way too pathetic.

"What are you trying to do, witch? Ask the fish for help? Is that all you can do?"

Yet, Cassandra ignored him, and kept chanting, loudly, her eyes closed. Lephys stopped laughing and frowned. What was this, anyway? It looked like her song from the Celebrations, with that same strange language, but this one had... Something scary about it. It didn't look like a prayer, more like a... battle cry. A chill went down his spine, and for a full minute, he wasn't so sure. Her singing had him worried, yet he couldn't understand why. He couldn't be afraid of a weak woman's singing!

Cassandra stubbornly kept going, her arms still protecting her face, her voice getting deeper and louder. The fifth Prince was torn. While he didn't want to be afraid of that woman, he still couldn't ignore this very uneasy feeling growing, as if something dangerous was about to happen.

"...stop," he muttered. "Stop that!"

"Hisiren da altere, bato... Ya men guerra, ten guerra... Alra mien shin da, almere, li shin, li shin... Oh, God of Water, rise for your daughters, rise

for those they murdered, rise for your daughters' blood..."

Cassandra kept going, uttering her words loudly and fast, her song echoing all around them. Lephys found himself staring at the surface of the lake with that worried feeling that wouldn't go away. There was something wrong going on, something about to happen. However, the surface of the Lake was very quiet and calm, and he couldn't understand why he was finding himself so worried about some stupid woman's singing.

"You foolish woman... You're going to die, this time! I'll..."

Lephys rose his hand, but just as he did, something suddenly flew out of the water. A large shadow covered them, and for a second, the Prince thought a bridge had appeared above. However, it wasn't a bridge. It was a humongous, reptilian body. It was just so big that it easily overshadowed them before touching the ground on the other side. Like a gigantic snake, it came out of the water, very slowly. More and more of this reptilian body came out, seeming endless. Lephys was completely frozen, thinking he might be hallucinating this. Yet, what he first took for a giant snake kept coming out of the water, and its long body crawled on the grass, circling them in its rings. Its small but palmed front paws landed in the grass very close, making him realize this wasn't a giant snake.

Suddenly, a head bigger than any dragon's head he had seen turned to him. The young man didn't even dare to lower his arm, completely frozen. He was just shaking, horrified. Not even Glahad was this big, and this Creature's head was awfully close. It seemed trapped with them under the grid on the roof, with just enough space. The Creature looked very calm, but even the purple dragon looked worried and retreated slowly. Everything but what was going on in the Throne Room got horribly silent around them. Lephys was still holding his arm high up, ready to hit Cassandra, but with that thing watching him, he didn't dare move a finger. He could tell those white eyes were fixated right on him.

Under him, Cassandra had stopped chanting, but unlike the fifth Prince, she wasn't scared to move. She pushed him away from her, and crawled away, laying her body into the water. It had a terribly good cooling effect on her painful cheeks, and she let the water wash away the dirt and blood on her arms for a few seconds. Above her, she heard Krai growl again, and it made her re-open her eyes. Cassandra knew she still had to move. She turned around, got back on all fours, and slowly stood up.

Just when she staggered and thought she was about to fall, a sturdy scaled body appeared in front of her. She chuckled and leaned against the Water God's body to stand up properly. She turned towards the Creature's head and smiled at him. It was strange how calm the Creature was, and how he made. Cassandra feel so much calmer. too. Yet, this fight wasn't over. Next to her, Lephys still had his arm held up, he still hadn't dared to move. He looked funny like this, but he was glaring at her.

"You damn witch..." He hissed.

Cassandra ignored him, turning his head up. Krai was still blocked up there. She took a deep breath, and turned towards the Water God, addressing him in her native tongue.

Lephys couldn't understand any of the words she uttered, but he was speechless when it actually made the gigantic Creature move. Under his eyes, the water Dragon slowly extended his body up, until he reached the chains. With his little claws and his fangs, he started pulling on the grid. While they had barely moved under Krai's attacks, the long metallic chains couldn't resist the Water God's strength for long. They heard the stones they had been fixated on creaking horribly, and a portion of the roof crumbled, leaving one side of the roof open.

Krai flew in immediately, with a furious growl. He was injured, two arrows having pierced him under his left-wing, but that didn't even seem to slow him one bit. Compared to the calm Water Dragon, the black one came in like a big raging hurricane. Krai jumped on Lephys' dragon, all fangs out, and the two of them started fighting furiously. While he had

stood still in front of the Water God, the purple dragon couldn't lay down while being attacked, and the two dragons started fighting furiously.

That battle scene seemed to wake Lephys up.

"No!" He screamed.

The difference in strength was obvious between the two. While his dragon had been safe under the chained roof, he was now completely at the mercy of Krai, despite his attempts to fight the black dragon off. For a few seconds, it looked like an easy win for the black dragon, who was so much bigger than his younger brother.

However, Lephys' furious eyes turned elsewhere.

"Come out, you cowards!" He yelled.

Cassandra turned towards the shadows he was yelling at, from one of the Palace's corridors. What was he planning now...? One after another, she saw multiple pairs of little eyes lighting up. She shivered, understanding slowly what was going on. Young dragons lined up in the shadows.

Lephys was calling out his sons' dragons to help him.

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#128 The Born and Unborn

Rather than scared, Cassandra immediately found herself furious. That coward was forcing his children's dragons to fight for him! She turned to him, just when the little dragons started appearing in the garden, one after another.

"Stop that," she said.

Lephys laughed, but it was a crazy laugh.

"Oh no, you damn witch. Just you wait until they rip you apart!"

"They are all going to die," Cassandra retorted. "They are too young! They can't win and you already know that. You're sending those dragons to their deaths!"

"I don't care, as long as I make it!" He yelled.

Lephys suddenly got back on his feet and started running in another

direction, away from the fight. Cassandra's anger rose again. That man was the vilest creature and a coward at that. Not only was he running from this battle to save himself, but he was also basically throwing his sons' dragons to be killed for it!

Cassandra exchanged a glance with the Creature, but just like the Rain Tribe's people, the Water God was not a fighter. He had answered to her call as she begged him, but what now? She couldn't ask him to kill young dragons either, she hated the idea of having to sacrifice innocent creatures. Cassandra may be angry, but she kept a clear mind about this situation. Those poor little ones were following Lephys' orders, maybe not even of their own will. Some of them were probably barely older than Kian... Half a dozen of those little dragons appeared on the grass, all coming in different sizes and shapes. She could tell how young they ought to be, and it just made it all worse.

Just then, Kian flew back to her too, landing on the grass in front of Cassandra and growling furiously at his peers, warning them to leave her alone. The difference in size didn't impress the baby dragon one bit. The young Dragons weren't afraid of Kian either, but they were hesitating on coming close, with Cassandra standing against a portion of the Water God's body. Each of them kept growling and sending glances towards the Water God. They were all much taller than Kian, but most were not even half an adult's size. Cassandra was even feeling sorry for those. Trying to approach her with cautious steps, they growled while also sending worried glances towards the Water God.

"Stay away," she warned them, using her mother tongue.

Either they had understood or were scared, the little dragons either stopped coming closer or started growling more furiously. Strangely, the smaller ones seemed to be the most eager to fight. Was it because they were influenced to follow their father's orders even more? Cassandra glanced across the lake, where Krai and the purple dragon were still actively fighting and growling at each other.

She turned her eyes towards Lephys. He had barely made it half-way towards the corridors, but he wasn't too far yet. Cassandra tried to think quickly, and, soon, found a solution, she ran towards the net of chains that had fallen from the roof. A large portion of it had been ripped down, where Krai had gotten it, but one of its ends was still hanging above the walls, stretched above Lephys' head. Cassandra's eyes followed his steps. The Prince was running like crazy in the garden and didn't hear anything of her struggle. Cassandra grabbed some of the heavy chains a few steps away from her and started pulling on it. It was horribly heavy, chains made to keep a dragon away, not for a woman alone to pull. Glancing over his shoulder, Lephys saw her pull like crazy, and looked up at the chains that weren't even moving. He slowed down to see her struggle, thinking he was far enough and laughed again.

"You crazy woman! Those chains were put up there with the strength of several men! Do you think you can do anything? You're weak, useless!" Right at this moment, Cassandra stopped pulling, glaring at the Prince. He realized his mistake a second too late. Had he kept running, he may have made it. Yet, he had stopped while he was still underneath those chains, giving

Cassandra time to turn towards the Water God.

"Alteske," she said.

Lephys' eyes opened wide in horror, as the Water God raised his claw and brutally pulled on the chains. This time, the walls above him crumbled right away. With a horrible scream, the Prince had the chains fall over him, followed by big chunks of the wall. His scream died under all the rocks that buried him alive. Cassandra heard him scream long after the rocks had stopped falling, telling her he was still alive, but suffering miserably.

On the other side of the like, the Purple Dragon felt his master's demise, as it started screeching horribly. Krai took his chance to jump on him. They had fought fiercely, and despite the difference in size, the black Dragon had some worrying injuries on him. Cassandra was worried about

him and even more so about his master, but it looked like Krai would get rid of his opponent soon.

Her attention was grabbed elsewhere. Why she wasn't looking, some of the young dragons had run to the pile of rocks covering Lephys, but two of them were still growling at Kian. The little Silver Dragon was growling just as fiercely as his dad, set on defending Cassandra. Though they were still small and young for dragons, those two could bite off her hand at once, and Cassandra didn't want to risk it.

“Kian!”

The baby dragon retreated slowly to her as she called him, but Cassandra still couldn't leave him be injured. The two younger dragons started running after him, and Cassandra was scared something would happen to him.

“Kian, in the water!” She said while retreating towards the Water God. The little dragon, running like a silver bolt in the grass, suddenly jumped in the air, using his little wing to go and fly above the lake. The two bigger dragons followed him easily, especially as he was flying away from the Water God they feared. However, they were not done with him. One of them suddenly threw fire at him, and though he dodged it, Cassandra's heart went cold.

Kian wasn't yet in danger. He glanced back at his peers, and suddenly, disappeared in the water. The two young dragons were confused for a minute, flying above the lake and trying to spot him in the water. They couldn't follow him inside. They were not made to go underwater, unlike the Water God or Kian. Hence, when the Silver dragon reappeared, jumping out of the water, he completely took them by surprise, and furiously bit one of their wings before diving back in. Cassandra couldn't keep herself from smiling proudly. He was learning fast how to use his unique abilities. 1

On the other side of the lake, though, Krai wasn't done with his fight. Maybe his master's state had brought despair over the purple Dragon, but he wasn't giving up. He didn't let the black dragon win, and instead, the

two of them exchanged injury after injury. 1

It couldn't last this way. The more Krai was injured, the less he could help Kairen, and the War God was still trapped inside, the image of him furiously grabbed back inside minutes ago was printed in Cassandra's mind. She had to do something. She turned to the Water God, but he was here to help her, not injure the other dragons!

Their eyes met, and for some long seconds, she didn't dare say anything. It was a horrible feeling. The Water God was not one to fight. The mythic creature all her tribe's song had talked about was a God of Love, not war. It was obvious his whole body wasn't even made for a fight, and he probably couldn't even breathe fire. Somehow, he was like her. Not a fighter, and not someone to kill. Her kind wasn't like that. Once again, Cassandra felt utterly powerless. What could she do? Her eyes went to the opening in which Kairen had disappeared, and she could still hear ruckus inside, there was no proof her lover was surviving this battle.

"Lys, you bastard of a snake!" Suddenly yelled a voice behind her. (2
Cassandra turned around and, with shock, saw Opheus running across the garden, his weapon in hand. The fourth Prince! She had almost forgotten about him, with everything that had happened. Moreover, right as he ran towards her, another giant shadow appeared above them. Phe, the White Dragon! Without waiting for a second longer, the fourth Prince's dragon flew inside through the opening she had created earlier and started attacking

the purple dragon too, relieving a bit of Krai's burden. The black Dragon stumbled aside, blood flowing on his flank. He was still furious and growling, but obviously in need of that little break too. After a few seconds of rest, the two of them jumped on Lys, the purple Dragon again, with the clear intent to finish him off. They were both bigger and stronger, and this time, the purple dragon was completely defeated.

Bitten furiously at the throat by Krai, dragged on his back, the purple dragon died in a horrible screech of pain. That sound was unbearable to hear. Cassandra shuddered, unable to look that way.

Meanwhile, Opheus finally reached her, just when Cassandra fell on her knee. Though the fourth Prince gently held her shoulder as she almost collapsed, Opheus had his eyes riveted on the Water God, in shock. The peaceful Creature was looking down at him, strangely calm compared to everything going on around them.

‘What the... What is that... thing...’

‘I don’t have time to explain!’ Exclaimed Cassandra, grabbing his clothing, panicked. “Have you seen my sister?”

“Y-Yes. I met Anour on the way, he was carrying her out, he told me what happened. Lady Kareen, she went to hide with your child. But Cassandra, we have a bigger problem.”

“What?”

‘Phemera,’ he said. “The girl... That woman we took out of the cell, it really is Vrehan’s younger sister. Your sister made her talk, she told us everything. That bastard had been impregnating his younger sister like a cow to try and breed more powerful Dragons!” 2

“W...what?”

...More dragons? Cassandra went horribly pale. She suddenly remembered Phetra’s words. Vrehan’s secret, why he couldn’t kill Phetra yet.

“Vrehan doesn’t only have two sons, he’s got more dragons stocked somewhere!”

Cassandra’s heart went cold. More dragons? Her eyes went to Krai, still staggering and trying to lick his injuries. Next to him, Phe was fine, but the white dragon had gotten an injury on its shoulder too. Meanwhile, Kian just jumped out of the water, running on the grass as the other two young dragons that had targeted him were struggling to swim their way off the water, their wings completely destroyed by the silver dragon’s repeated attacks.

Cassandra couldn’t rejoice in the slightest. They only had three to help them, plus a baby one that had hatched only a week ago, how could they fight more? How could have Vrehan even gathered more dragons! She

turned to Opheus, her energy ignited by panic alone.

“How many? Where?”

“She didn’t know where her sons and their dragons were taken! Vrehan hid their sons and their dragons, and he even killed the girls before they were born!”

...That explained the abortion potion they had caught their younger sister buy at the market. Cassandra felt like throwing up. Vrehan was even more of a monster than she had fathomed, and she was even more bent on defeating him. If a man like him got on the throne, it was truly going to be the end of this Empire...

“We need to find him or where he hides his sons’ dragons,” she whispered.

“I thought he was fighting Kairen inside!” Exclaimed Opheus, pointing at the opening.

Cassandra shook her head, getting back on her feet.

“No... No, Vrehan fled in the confusion, only his men and his dragon are still there... He probably went to get his sons dragons, then... Who knows how big they are...”

“We have to find them, then!”

Cassandra nodded, but how? She saw Krai and Phe running towards them from the other side of the Lake, joined by Kian. She had to think, quick. How could she find the young dragons, inside this wretched Palace? It was so big! She looked around, and her eyes fell on the Lake. She turned towards the Water God, who seemed to be patiently waiting for her to ask. She let out a long sigh.

“Cassandra...?” Called Opheus, confused.

“I know what to do, but... You may want to take cover,” she whispered.

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#129 The White Dragon

The fourth Prince was utterly confused. He had only truly known

Cassandra for a few hours, it seemed, yet that trail-looking woman was shattering all of his expectations one by one. He couldn't understand. There was a giant snake-like dragon-like creature basically wrapped around her, and he had no idea what that creature was, or more importantly, why it seemed to obey the young concubine. He glanced towards the side, as Krai and Phe were walking around the lake to come to them. Moreover, she had basically almost managed to kill Lephys by herself.

Cassandra turned to the Water God and spoke to it in that strange foreign tongue of hers. Meanwhile, the scream of pains of Lephys could still be heard, and Opheus kept his hand on his sword. If he was still alive, he could still heal. He was ready for his fifth brother to come back at any moment...

Strangely, he was actually a bit more concerned about whatever the young concubine was about to do. She looked like she had gone through hell, really. She was covered in so much blood and dirt, not much of her skin was so white anymore. Her hair was all over the place, and her dress had even been ripped in several places. Not to mention her ankle which had taken a horrid dark purple color. Krai and Phe finally reached them. Both dragons were covered in their siblings' blood. Krai was limping a bit as he came to Cassandra, and lowered his head to sniff the baby dragon that had just jumped out of the water. The young concubine didn't have much time for him, as she struggled to get to the lake. A bit at a loss on what to do, Opheus helped her, though he was frowning.

"What are you going to do...?"

"Look for them... The Water God will help me."

He still had no idea what she was actually about to do, but seeing how sure she was, he didn't dare protest and only nodded. Cassandra slowly got into the water, followed by the baby dragon, who looked excited about going back into the lake. For Opheus, it was also his first time seeing a dragon actually enjoy himself in the water...

Once Cassandra had half of her body immersed in the water, to Opheus'

surprise, the gigantic Dragon decided to follow her back inside the Lake. The fourth Prince stumbled back, almost falling on his own dragon, as the snake like creature rolled it's long body back inside the water. It was a strangely silent and imposing creature. Only Kian was overexcited, swimming and jumping around in the water like a pound fish. Even Krai looked confused. The Black Dragon had it's front paws in the water, looking at the young Concubine and his offspring yet not following them as they got deeper inside. (

They got into the water in seconds, but it felt like long minutes to Opheus. He had hidden Phemera with Anour and the younger sister, Anour having found his way around the Palace to protect them, but he wasn't feeling good about any of this. First, no one could ignore the horrible sounds of the battle still raging inside the Hall. He could easily recognize the furious growls of Glahad and Vrehan's dragon, Vhan, still furiously fighting inside. If the Golden dragon hadn't already won, it wasn't a good sign at all...

His attention was caught closer to them, as Lephys kept blaring under all of his rocks. His sons' dragons were struggling to get him out of there, but it was a question of minutes. The fourth Prince frowned. Those damn little pests!

"Phe," he called.

The white dragon immediately turned towards the little ones, growling. He only caught the attention of a few of the young dragons, but he started going their way anyway. Opheus was making a dark expression too. Cassandra may be too nice and gentle to kill the young dragons, but he wasn't the same; All the siblings had grown side by side with death. He knew exactly what to do.

Still growling, the white dragon started climbing on the little mountain of rocks, and suddenly jumped on the first younger dragon, killing it with one bite. Lephys was buried deep underneath, but Opheus had no intention to bother digging his younger brother out to finish him. The truth was, he'd rather not dirty his own hands. Instead, it was satisfying

enough to have the weight of Phe climbing on the rocks add to his suffering. With a bit of luck, that would finally crush him to death. Meanwhile, Cassandra had finally swum to the middle of the lake. Even if swimming was easier for her, the amount of pain her body had endured already made every muscle ache. Yet, she had to hold on, for Kairen's sake. He was fighting his own fight inside that Hall, she knew it. She had to fight her own meanwhile. The young woman took a deep breath and dived. Kian and the Water God followed her under the surface. She actually grabbed one of the Water God's horns as he swam next to her. The Creature didn't seem to mind, and took her deeper in.

Once she felt like she was deep enough, Cassandra closed her eyes, and, with her mouth closed, started singing. It was a song she never thought she'd used someday, that wasn't made of lyrics. At best, it was only some long sounds, like a siren of some sort. However, it used the deeper layers of her voice, ones that echoed in the water. Sure enough, The Water Dragon quickly reacted to it. The Creature started making deep sounds, echoing Cassandra's. There was no comparison. Its voice was much deeper and much, much louder. Soon enough, it started resonating all through the lake, sending gigantic sound waves throughout the lake. Her eyes still closed; Cassandra had to stay focused to listen to the echo. She had never done such a thing before, she had only witnessed it, when she was much, much younger.

Years and years ago, she remembered watching the members of her tribe, diving in the water and all together, using their voices to find where the wood of their shacks was getting weaker, where the fish was, where to dive to hunt. It was a skill she had never practiced herself, but she remembered it well enough, apparently. She could feel her own heartbeat, slowing down as if to let her listen.

She could feel the water around her shaking. Cassandra had suspected the Water God's voice would be louder, much louder. She would even have trouble staying where she was, if it wasn't for her holding on to one of its horns. Next to her, Kian seemed rather amused by the situation, chasing

the large air bubbles that left the Creature, swimming to follow the echo waves.

On the surface, things weren't as calm.

To Opheus' surprise, the surroundings of the Lake had started trembling shortly after the young concubine had disappeared underwater. While he wanted to trust her and that creature she had summoned Gods knew how, it started to worry a little as the whole ground under him began shaking. One could tell the epicenter of those strange waves that shook the whole area came from the Lake, and Opheus began to worry.

Before he could call her out, though, a huge portion of the roof, a few meters away, crumbled down. It had already been fragilized by the earlier struggle of the iron net being torn down, but now, all the walls around were trembling. Is that what she meant by taking cover? Taking cover looked rather deadly at the moment!

The White Dragon was still absorbed by his little hunt in the rocks. The smaller dragons had quickly understood that their survival was linked to whichever hole they could squeeze themselves in. While he had caught the biggest and killed them already, the smaller ones had managed to crawl under the rocks and hide themselves, though they could still hear them growling and struggling.

However, there wasn't any time to play, as the whole garden was dangerously shaking. After another heavy shake, the White Dragon finally jumped down his little playground, and went to his master. Phe extended one of his wings over Opheus' head, growling at the shaky walls around them. Krai, too, was growling, but the black dragon wouldn't leave the border of the Lake, his ruby eyes fixated on the surface. Opheus frowned, feeling the whole Palace tremble. What was this crazy girl doing now! How long could she hold underwater anyway? After everything that had happened that day, he felt like he owed to help keep her stay alive, but there was truly nothing he could do when she was going on a swim with some oversized snake! 2

To his surprise, the little dragon suddenly jumped out of the water, and

flew with a long chirp to Krai, happily reuniting with his parent. Right after him, Cassandra suddenly emerged from the water, struggling to swim. Opheus ran to help her get out of there. She was drenched, and though it had most of the blood and dirt washed away, her dress was weighing heavily.

“Are you alright?” Asked the fourth Prince, glancing at her, completely confused. “What was that?”

*It’s the Echo, a technique used by my people to... locate things. Anyway, I know where they are.”

“You do?”

“I located several younger dragons, somewhere south-west to here, in a very large building, something like a round one...”

Their eyes lightened up at the same moment, as they both realized what that building was.

“...The Arena,” whispered Cassandra, astonished.

“Of course. He needed somewhere big enough to put all the dragons, with what he needed to trap them. That damn rat Vrehan went to free all his little bastards from the Arena!”

The question was, how many Dragons were they talking about?

Cassandra felt a shudder going down her spine.. She turned towards the Great Hall, where the fight was still raging. The truth was, her heart was begging her to go there and help Kairen fight off the red Dragon.

However, she knew she’d be useless in there. Shareen was already inside to help him, and Cassandra would be nothing but a hindrance...

Suddenly, just as she hesitated, a part of the wall she was watching burst out, and something violently flew their way.

For a second, she thought she was going to die like this, killed by this humongous projectile. However, Opheus jumped on her, and a shadow immediately covered them. Cassandra closed her eyes by reflex, and a horrible uproar burst around them. It felt like a bomb had just exploded behind them. The two of them were projected on the ground, and

Cassandra felt some of her injuries get worse.

“Phe! Glahad!”

Nothing could have awoken her up more efficiently. Cassandra opened her eyes, and some blood dripped on her cheek. A Dragon’s thick, warm, and dark blood. ‘She struggled to sit up, and realized the large shadow over them was one of Phe’s wings. The White Dragon had jumped in the last minute to protect them, taking most of the hit. Cassandra crawled to get out of there, and finally see what was going on. Opheus had been quicker to get out of there. The fourth Prince helped her up, but the two of them had to face the horrible scene.

Glahad had been violently ejected of the Great Hall, and the Golden Dragon was covered in blood, his body landed next to the lake.

Cassandra felt her heart go horribly called. Glahad had really been defeated. Had he gotten weaker because of his master’s disappearance? The old Dragon was breathing with difficulty, and Kian was the first to run to him, with worried little squeaks. Meanwhile, Cassandra turned to Phe. The poor White Dragon had protected them, but he had collided violently with Glahad for that, and gotten injured. One of his wings was horribly ripped open, bleeding and broken in several parts. Opheus looked devastated, running to his dragon to comfort the poor Creature. Meanwhile, Krai growled and ran to Cassandra’s side. His growls were directed at the ruckus that was still going on inside. Cassandra shivered. Glahad defeated, it meant Kairen and Shareen were alone to fight the Red Dragon. Vrehan was really going to win this if she didn’t act quickly. She turned to Krai, grabbing one of his horns.

“Krai, we have to go to the Arena,” she said. “Quick...”

She hoped Kairen could hold on a bit longer with Shareen’s help, but for now, she really needed Krai. Neither Phe nor Glahad were in a state to fly anymore, and she wouldn’t make it to the arena by herself.

The Black Dragon growled furiously, and Cassandra climbed on his back. He took off immediately, headed south east.

“Cassandra!” Yelled Opheus as she was already off the ground.

“Stay with them, I’ll be back!”

The Fourth Prince watched the Concubine go, with a heavy heart. She was really going to do this on her own? He grimaced and turned to Phe, who was already getting back on his feet. The white Dragon may have been in no condition to fly, but he could still attack. Opheus, too, grabbed his weapon, and headed for the pile of rocks.

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#130 The Monstrosities

It felt strange, to fly back to the place where everything had changed for her.

Cassandra could feel her nervousness rise as the black dragon flew towards the Imperial Arena. Was she scared to go back? Did she hate this place? Surely a bit of both. It didn’t bring back good memories, except for the minute she had met Kairen. However, before that, there was death. The many, many people whose death she had witnessed. She could remember it all too well. Dozens of slaves, running all directions and being violently killed by the six imperial dragons.

Six Dragons, six Princes. Among them, the only one who had sealed her fate, Kairen. She still couldn’t really understand the forces that had saved her life that day. Was his feelings for her really something that strong that Krai had felt it before his master even had set his eyes on Cassandra? It sounded like something out of an ancient tale, and yet... For Cassandra, that was all it had taken to end years and years of suffering. She had wanted to die in that arena. Not for those people’s pleasure, just because being killed by a legendary beast was one way to end an insignificant existence.

“Come on, Krai,” she whispered.

She couldn’t ignore all the blood on the black scales. Though he seemed fine flying, the black dragon wasn’t as strong or as powerful as usual. He

was tired from his fight, with Lephys' dragon and the soldiers outside. How could those dragons considered as gods by her people simply be seen as weapons by the Empire... ?

Not only was she dreading going to the Arena, Cassandra had also left a part of her heart back inside the Palace. Kairen was still fighting, by the sounds, they heard coming from inside the Hall. At least, she hung on to that hope. That the furious dragon growls were proof that neither was dead yet. She had no idea how long could a War God withstand against a dragon, and she was even scared to think about it. At least Princess Shareen was with him...

Krai finally arrived above the Arena. Strangely, maybe because she was seeing it from above, that arena felt smaller than when she had come here, over a year ago now. Cassandra's nervousness increased again as he started going down. She was basically unharmed, except for the adult Dragon that accompanied her.

They landed softly in the middle of the arena, and Cassandra had to take a deep breath to chase the memories resurfacing. She kept her hand on Krai's warm scales, bringing her some comfort. She truly hated this place, but she was sure the young dragons were there. Why had Vrehan subjected his own sister to this? What justified such a despicable, immoral thing has to rape his own blood... ?

A sudden movement caught her attention on the left, and Krai started growling as well. One of the heavy doors that led to the cells opened, revealing two dragons.

Cassandra gasped. Those didn't look like the usual dragons, though.

More like creatures come out of a mix between a nightmare and a horrible mistake. The first one had half of its head missing, as if it had been melted down, and breathed heavily, it's maw open and drooling. It was walking awkwardly, his front paws having a noticeable difference in size. The neck had a strange shape as well, and the scales were missing in some spots, exposing some horrible, brownish flesh. The second one

wasn't any better. It was the fattest yet shortest dragon Cassandra had ever seen, and its wings were obviously too small to support its weight. It had a strange arched back too, like a hunchback. Both dragons didn't even come close to the beauty of a proper dragon-like Krai or the Water God. Those looked like they had come out of a children's bad drawing of a dragon.

"What are those..." She whispered.

"Aren't they amazing?" chuckled a voice behind the dragons.

Cassandra stepped back. Vrehan appeared in the shadows, coming out slowly.

His face bore the horrible injury she had inflicted him earlier, the flesh still ripped open in the middle of his face. It wasn't bleeding anymore, but the reddish scales were obviously struggling to appear on such an irregular

surface. The Second Prince looked like a reptile was trying to take over his face, and his left eye was behaving strangely too as if it couldn't fix itself on one point. He was almost as scary as the monsters he had created.

"You're... crazy," she whispered.

It seemed like he had heard her because he broke into a burst of mad laughter that echoed throughout the Arena. Cassandra frowned, completely lost by his crazy behavior. Next to her, Krai curled up around the young concubine, arching his back and growling in a warning for the two monsters not to approach them. The scary thing was, no matter how horrible they were to look at, those two things were still rather big. They had nothing to compare to the little ones Cassandra had kept off before. Those dragons were about half or a third of Krai's size, and unlike the black dragon, they looked... up for a fight.

She glared at Vrehan. The second Prince was slowly walking her way, his mouth distorted with what should have been a smile.

"You... the witch of some lost, meaningless tribe... You really should have died in this arena. Isn't this ironic? We are about to set things straight. You'll finally be dead as you should have been, and my brother

will go back to being childless.

Cassandra saw red at those words. The mere thought of that man touching one hair of her baby's head was enough to turn this gentle woman into the fiercest of warriors. She was never going to step back, as long as she could stand between him and Kassian.

Meanwhile, the dragons kept growling at each other, and Cassandra couldn't help but glance at them again.

"How could you do such a thing... She hissed. "To your own sister..."

"My sisters?" He laughed. Do you know what my sisters are? My sisters are nothing but mistakes. They are useless things unless they serve me. That's right, even slaves are more useful than those things you call my sisters.'

"How can you say such things... about your own family..."

"My family? The only woman that ever mattered was my mother, and even she was a crazy, crazy bitch of a kind. The only thing she did good in her life was keeping me alive. She gave birth to three daughters, and she loathed each. But for me? I was her son. Her only boy, the one she had to protect at all costs to ensure her own survival."

Cassandra suddenly remembered Shareen's words. Their mother was a former prostitute... Phetra had gotten furious when Shareen had reminded her of that fact.

The prince kept talking, coming closer and closer to him. He looked like he was strangely calm, or in some sort of trance. He had never been so scary to Cassandra. She wanted to run away, to not be trapped here with him. Yet, she knew she couldn't. There was no one else left to hold him back from going to the Palace, or to Kassian. Opheus' dragon was injured, and Cassandra knew he wouldn't be able to match up to his older brother. He had to take care of Lephys, first. Kairen and Shareen were still stuck with the red dragon, and she hoped Anour was protecting Missandra, lady Kareen, Kassian and even the poor Phemera. It felt like the end. Finally, this feud was coming to an end. All the hatred that had stayed concealed was coming all out in the open, all the brothers taking

sides and fighting each other.

“What was it all worth, all this?” Said Cassandra, glancing at the monster dragons. “Your sisters, your children, even your father... Sacrificing everyone simply to become Emperor?”

The second prince laughed.

“To become Emperor? To survive! My crazy mother went through hell for me to survive! Every single day, I had to see it. She killed servants that tried to harm me. She begged my father for attention, acting like the whore she was just in the tiny hope he’d give her another chance to gift him a son. My father was the worst of them all... you think I used my sisters? That man used my mother as a pawn, a mere toy between him and his favorite woman.”

Cassandra frowned.

She had mentioned it... Lady Kareen had talked about something like this. How the Emperor got closer to other women, even got engaged to them to try and get her attention. Cassandra had never thought twice about that. “She was nothing but a toy he could toss aside whenever he could. My mother was constantly begging, dying for a second of attention, making herself the most pitiable woman. She cried more than any woman can cry, she screamed, she begged endlessly. She was such an annoying thing to see. She was a crazy, crazy bitch... A useless bitch.”

Cassandra was shocked.

She had never thought being a concubine was easy. She knew how hard some of them fought to get the Emperor’s attention. How some killed and got killed. Cassandra was well aware of how lucky she had been, in this nest of snakes, and she had also always kept in mind those women were mostly fighting for their survival. She had never thought about how one woman could actually lose her sanity over this... Lose herself.

“Can you believe, she was actually stupid enough to love that man you call my father? She believed his lies, she was ready to do anything for him. ...She taught me one thing, one thing only. I had to survive, I had to become his only son. I had to become the Emperor, and she’d do

anything for me. My mother dirtied her hands more than anyone, and she taught me everything I needed to know. It was quite fun, sometimes. When she wasn't completely crazy, she wasn't so dumb!"

Cassandra wanted to puke at each sentence he said. Deep in her heart, she understood. How a woman could have lost herself in her attempt to get the Emperor all to herself. How she could have gotten absolutely insane with jealousy and paranoia... and took her children down with her. Vrehan wasn't born a monster, he had been purely created by his mother's madness. She could hear it in his voice. He wasn't crazy. He was just a child born out of resentment and hatred.

"It was so easy, once you understand the rules of the Palace, you know. It was a game, for me. Kill, but don't get caught. My mother let me kill the servants that displeased me, or she'd do it herself. She hated my sisters so much... She killed two of them herself, and the others quickly understood if they weren't useful to me, they might as well be dead too." Their mother had killed... her own daughters?

"It was such fun... If I ordered it, my sisters killed anyone. I was already the Emperor of my own palace, and they were my servants. Phetra was the smartest one... She always did whatever I asked, so I kept her around. She even ordered the others, understanding what I wanted before I wanted it myself. It was fun, seeing them thrive to keep me satisfied."

Vrehan looked at the two horrors next to him, suddenly frowning.

"I thought I'd be father's favorite in no time... Sephir was going to die anyway, and the others were meaningless idiots. ...I had forgotten about Kairen."

Cassandra suddenly realized. Lady Kareen had kept her children away from the Imperial Palace to keep them safe. After what had happened to her oldest children and to the young Kairen, it was a wise decision.

However, it meant they had mostly grown away from their siblings... out of Vrehan's sight.

The Second Prince's eyes got darker, reliving some memories he obviously didn't appreciate.

“I knew the one woman my mother hated most was Kareen... The one woman my father loved. My mother killed her eldest, but she killed my mother back. I was... at a loss. I couldn't understand that woman couldn't be killed like my mother was after she had killed my mother openly. Plus, it wasn't enough, that bitch still had managed to have more children, and another son! That was the one woman I couldn't get to kill. If our Father discovered I killed one of Kareen's, I knew I would die. It was the one game I couldn't play without risking my own life...”

So the Emperor's love for Kareen had saved them some time after all. After Vrehan's mother's death, the young murderer had understood he couldn't kill his siblings and get away with it. Shareen and Kairen were protected, more so than their other siblings. Cassandra couldn't even begin to understand what monstrosities had taken place behind closed doors at that time. The monsters their mothers had created, all for their survival or greed... for one man.

Suddenly, Vrehan shook his head.

“So I understood. I had to find a way to be better than him. To have the strongest dragon, the most children. I needed to be the best Prince... The one my father would have no choice but to choose!”