

# The War God's Favorite by Jhonny Fox

## Chapter 14

#14 The Rain Tribe

"Cassandra?"

She slowly awoke to the sound of Nebora's voice. The servant was crouching down next to her by the bedside.

"It's past dinner time. Do you want to eat something?"

Cassandra frowned and slowly sat up, holding the bed sheets to cover her naked body. She looked around, the fur cloak was neatly folded and laid at the foot of the bed and several candles were lit, illuminating the room in the pitch black evening. He was gone.

"Is it very late?"

"No, but the night falls early here. His Highness left two hours ago," said Nebora.

"Where to?"

"Probably to see the Army of The East. He usually goes to see his men as soon as he gets here."

Cassandra blushed, she was obviously the reason he hadn't gone right away this time. Nebora cleared her throat, a bit embarrassed for a few seconds. Looking down, her cheeks were already red, and she whispered.

"I...I wanted to apologize. You know, about...earlier. I was a bitch to you. A jealous bitch, and I... realized I... Well, that it was stupid. I'm sorry."

It was obvious she was sincere and embarrassed. Cassandra smiled gently.

"Apology accepted. To be fair, I can't really blame you. I am a slave, and also in a... weird position."

A slave who wore a red dress. Thinking about it, Cassandra was still naked. She looked around for her dress, but it was nowhere to be seen. When she looked under the sheets, Nebora understood and handed her a new, white dress.

"Your dress was... um, soiled, so we took it to clean, sorry. I don't think we have any other red dresses. You can wear that nightgown for now, I guess. It's mine."

“Oh...thanks.”

Cassandra felt a bit flustered. How many times had she changed clothes today? She took the nightgown from Nebora. The knee length dress was simple and white, knitted in a thicker fabric than what she was used to, but it was agreeably warm considering the cold here.

“You’re welcome. But you should really ask His Highness for more clothes. You can’t have only one outfit, it’ll be a pain to wash every day.”

“I don’t know if I’m in a position to...”

Nebora rolled her eyes and got up, speaking before Cassandra finished her sentence.

“You’re a concubine. Trust me, even the servants here have around ten outfits to change into. Don’t bring up the slave thing, he obviously doesn’t give a damn about that. His Highness is very rich, so just ask for it!”

Cassandra nodded as she thought about it. Indeed, she couldn’t walk around naked or borrow Nebora’s clothes all the time. As she started to braid her messy hair, Nebora took a step back, showing her a little plate full of food.

“Oh, are you hungry? I brought this up just in case. Everyone else already ate, but I figured you might have been too...busy to get a bite. His Highness ate before leaving, but you were still asleep.”

“Thanks...”

Indeed, after all that intense activity, she was hungry. It was still so new to her, to be able to eat without begging or having to hide. Instead, she could enjoy plates full of fresh food, just for her. Cassandra started eating some of the little pieces of cheese and fruit as Nebora joined her, sitting on the floor next to the bed.

“How many servants are there?”

“There’s six of us in the Castle, plus two more for the stables.”

“That’s it?” asked Cassandra, surprised.

From the size of the Castle, she had thought there would be at least a hundred people here! Nebora shrugged.

“Well, you’ve seen how it is. Everything is pretty much empty, and there is only the Prince to take care of, so...”

“What? What about his entourage or other concubines?”

Nebora almost choked on the cube of cheese she was eating, and turned to Cassandra with surprised

eyes.

“What are you talking about? You’re the only one!”

Cassandra was speechless. The only one? She had figured a Prince like him would have at least a dozen concubines! Maybe even a wife... After all, wasn’t one of the Princes infamous for having a harem of over two hundred? But, to think a man like the War God actually had none...

“Well, to be honest, it’s not like you’re the first one.”

.

“What do you mean?”

Nebora smirked.

“The Emperor and two of his brothers have tried offering him concubines before. But His Highness didn’t like them. He killed them. Well, to be precise, he killed three and his dragon killed the others.”

Cassandra stood, completely speechless. He actually dared to kill someone sent by the Emperor himself? What kind of man would do that! Was she just lucky to have survived until now? She wasn’t sent by anyone from the Imperial Family though. Cassandra suddenly remembered Sharen’s words to keep herself alive. Did that mean she actually suspected Kairen could kill her as well? That was really too frightening to think about.

“Don’t worry,” said Nebora. “I don’t think you’re anything like those women, you know. Actually, two of them even tried to kill him.”

“What?”

“Well, some say they went crazy, but a lot of people think they had orders to kill the War God. It’s not like the Imperial Family is a very warm household, you know. Everyone knows some of the Princes are just dying to take the Golden Throne.”

Cassandra had noticed that too, at the banquet and the arena. It was obvious the siblings, Princes and Princesses, didn’t like each other much. Some didn’t even bother to hide their hatred for one another. The rivalry had been just barely contained, probably because of the Emperor’s presence...

"Anyways, all that is quite far from us. If anything happens, it will most likely be at the Capital. Nothing happens around here," sighed Nebora.

"Would you give me a tour?"

Cassandra's sudden question seemed to surprise her. She hesitated, eating some grapes while Cassandra grabbed the fur cloak. –

"Now?"

"His Highness won't be back for the night, will he?"

"No, he usually leaves for a few days when he goes to see his men... I'm just saying, it's pretty boring out here."

"I just feel like seeing more of the Castle, and I've slept too much already."

She wasn't really lying, but Cassandra's real reason was that she actually felt pretty uncomfortable and alone in the gigantic bed. Nebora sitting on the floor next to her made her feel a bit awkward, too.

Standing

up, she noticed how cold this room actually was, and wrapped the fur cloak around her shoulders. Nebora, too, was wearing a large wool shawl that went all the way down to her thighs. She stood up at the same time as Cassandra, but frowned, and pointed at her chest that wasn't covered.

"You may want to hide that a bit."

Cassandra

looked down, wondering if the cleavage of the dress may have been too much. Her dress wasn't the problem though. Instead, she noticed a dozen deep, red marks scattered on her neck and between her breasts. She blushed deeply and covered them instantly. They were obviously hickeys! How could the Prince have left so many without her even noticing? It was too embarrassing! 6

Nebora chuckled at her.

"Well, at least it seems His Highness had a good time..."

"Stop it!" exclaimed Cassandra, embarrassed to death. "Can we just go, please?"

Nebora took a second to stop laughing, and grabbed a few more cheese cubes and grapes for them to nibble along the way.

"Alright, alright, let's go."

The two women left the bedroom, each carrying a candle to light the way. It was a very quiet and cold night. Cassandra thought this Castle would have been a bit frightening to explore by herself.

As Nebora had said, despite its size, most of the Onyx Castle was empty and desolate. A few rooms had old furniture covered in dust, but most were completely empty. There were also some that the two women found locked and couldn't open. In total, they walked down six floors to get to the main one. The different floors were separated by quite a lot of height, too. The rooms were so scattered and far apart, that when they finally returned to the kitchen a couple of hours later, they had only managed to see half of the Castle. 2

"His Highness only uses the top floor, and sometimes, the one below is used for guests, but that's not very common. Aside from that, every one lives on the first floor. We only really see him for meal times, and when he comes and goes." 2

Nebora went to grab cups to make some hot tea to warm themselves.

"How long have you lived here?"

"I moved to the village near the Castle when I was fourteen. I grew up in the countryside, but I hated field work. There wasn't anything else to do, so one of my brothers and I eventually left to find work elsewhere. Patricia recruited me around the same time as my brother got into His Highness' army."

"I've heard a lot about the Army of The East."

+

1

Nebora smiled.

"Of course, they are the best army in the Empire; thanks to the War God. They became notorious after defeating the Eastern Republic and the Barbarian Tribes a few years ago. My brother was lucky to be a part of it then."

Cassandra noticed how happy she seemed when talking about her brother. She couldn't help but smile too. Nebora took a sip of her tea.

"Do you have siblings too?"

Her eyes immediately became a bit sad as she looked down at her cup.

"I had a younger sister... But she was sold too, years ago. I tried to look for her, but I couldn't find anything about what happened to her or who she was sold to."

"So you...weren't born a slave?"

Cassandra shook her head.

"I was born in the south, in the Rain Tribe."

"Never heard of it."

"You probably wouldn't have. The name disappeared many years ago. Every last one of us was hunted down."

Nebora was shocked.

"What do you mean?"

"My tribe lived to the south of this Empire, near the Riverlands. We were one of many tribes who coexisted there together, in a territory between the Dragon Empire and the Eastern Republic. We knew a war was going on between them, but we were living in a very difficult area. It was mostly dominated by swamps and heavy rain. We never thought we would get involved in the conflict."

Nebora frowned.

"What happened?"

"I was only nine years old back then so I don't know all the details, but at some point, someone suspected the tribes were smuggling weapons and information to the other side. Our Chief was captured and tortured...He couldn't say what he didn't know, and was killed. After that, they decided it would be better to just wipe us all out. To them, we were a nameless tribe of savages, a risk they didn't want to take. It was over in one night."

Nebora was speechless. It was disheartening to think a whole population had been killed over a conflict they hadn't had any part in. Yet, Cassandra was quite calm as she spoke. It was as if she was just telling a tale. But it wasn't a tale; it was her story.

She sighed and took another sip.

"How did you survive?"

"They didn't actually kill everyone...They killed all of the adults and most of the boys. The rest of the boys, and the young girls under twelve, were sold to slave

merchants. I was brought to this Empire and sold to my first Master a few days after."

She didn't ask anything else. Nebora was reflecting on how she had acted earlier, that childish tantrum of hers. About her being a slave? If she had been unlucky, she could have ended up like Cassandra. Losing her whole family and then being sold like merchandise. Yet, she had been the immature one, while a young woman who had already experienced so much tragedy was so calm and collected in front of her. How could she be so reckless and immature given the harsh world they live in?

Suddenly, a scream resonated through the kitchen as a young girl in a nightgown came running in, straight into Nebora's arms.

"A spider! There is a spider in my room again!"

"Again? Did you clean your room this week, Bina?"

"I did, I definitely did!"

The girl, who looked no older than fourteen or fifteen, was almost crying, completely panicked. She hid her face in Nebora's chest, tightly gripping onto her arm like a safety blanket.

"She is very scared of spiders," explained Nebora with a sigh. "We always get a few around this time of year..."

"Where is her room?" Cassandra asked while getting up.

Nebora frowned as she watched Cassandra look through the trash from that morning.

"The first one on the left... What are you doing?"

Cassandra had gathered some fruit peels, and showed them to Nebora. They were all citrus peels.

"Spiders hate these. If you rub it against your doors and windows they won't come in."

"Really?"

Bina had turned her head, hearing a new person, and looked at Cassandra. She was stunned by the young girl's eyes. One was brown, the other was blue, but the girl was only focused on the citrus peels in Cassandra's hands.

“Yes. I use this trick all the time so I never get any spiders. You can keep some chestnuts in your room too; that also works well.”

“Alright, let’s go test that theory and chase out that eight-legged monster while we’re at it,” sighed Nebora, getting up. “And after that, everyone to bed. I’m tired!”