

The War God's Favorite by Jhonny Fox

Chapter 7

#7 The Imperial Dragon

Once he was in front of her, Cassandra looked everywhere but in his direction. She was so ashamed of the scene from just moments ago! How could he let his sister toy with her like some object! While avoiding her new master's eyes, she missed the moment he grabbed her again, lifting her like she didn't weigh a thing. Wrapping a new fur cloak around her, Kairen carried her out of the room, closely followed by Shareen.

"Did you really leave the banquet early?" she asked.

"You didn't even go," her brother growled back.

The Princess shrugged and walked ahead to open the doors to her bedroom. Cassandra had almost forgotten about the two servants having wild sex in there. They had now changed position and the man was savagely taking the young servant from behind, keeping her bent over the mattress. His movements were fast and relentless, yet the woman couldn't even cry out, her screams muffled by his hand. Her eyes were closed and her hair was a mess on her shoulders. She opened her eyes again upon hearing her mistress coming back and began to moan louder while staring at Shareen with a pleading look.

But the Princess ignored her and turned to Kairen.

"Why would I go? I'm having so much fun here. My favorite brother even brought me a little toy to entertain myself with. Well, if you'd actually leave her here..."

She said all that while looking down at Cassandra, with her feline eyes. Inside Kairen's arms, Cassandra tried to avoid the Princess's stare, already deeply embarrassed.

"You've had enough," Kairen replied coldly.

"Never! If you..."

But before Shareen could finish her sentence, several people were heard outside. Judging by the weight and metallic sounds in their steps, there were soldiers among them and when they stopped right outside, Shareen crossed her arms, visibly annoyed.

"His Highness Prince Kairen, Her Highness Princess Shareen, this lowly Imperial servant is here to inform you that your presence is requested by the Imperial Dragon."

Shareen rolled her eyes, not hiding her displeasure.

“He had to send his Imperial pains in the...”

“Your Highnesses, the Imperial Dragon insisted!” exclaimed the servant.

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.....BUNICU nu turneu around. She snapped her fingers and both servants ran out of the bedroom while another young lady came in to help her change. Very quickly she was dressed in a magnificent outfit, wearing the Imperial purple silk of her family, a large gold belt, and lots of fine jewelry. Even her black hair was now swept up into an impressive bun by two gold hairpins adorned with several gemstones.

Cassandra thought about how even her former mistress would never be able to wear such delicate and expensive items. Lyria was one of the Minister’s favorites, yet even for her, he could never get his hands on these kinds of priceless treasures. The Imperial Family was on a totally different level indeed, and Shareen was wearing those like they were mere trinkets.

Cassandra suddenly remembered that the emerald dress she was wearing herself was far above her own status. What if someone else saw her like this? Her iron collar and clothes were so mismatched, what if she was called a thief again? Thinking about this, her stomach twisted in pain from worry.

However, Kairen didn’t seem to care about any of this. He walked out of his sister’s chambers, first to meet with the group of servants and soldiers that were waiting outside. The one leading them, a humble man with the blue attire of a Palace servant, opened his eyes wide upon seeing Cassandra in the Prince’s arms.

“You... Your Highness, who is this slave?”

He was obviously at a loss for words, but Kairen dismissed it in an instant.

“Didn’t my father want to see me?”

“Certainly, Your Highness, but...”

Cassandra knew exactly what the attendant was thinking. A slave like her shouldn’t even step into the Imperial Court! The Emperor should never face slaves or lowly servants. Of those that were not nobility, only those who worked in the Imperial Palace were permitted to be in the same room as the Imperial dragon, and even for them, it was considered the greatest honor to be able to bow in his presence.

Yet, here she was, a lowly slave being carried in by a member of the Imperial Family! Cassandra had no idea how to act, but she fruitlessly tried to release herself from Kairen’s arms.

“Master, I shouldn’t come with you...”

"Why not?" growled Kairen.

"It is not...permitted."

Shareen finally came out of her chambers followed by three ladies in waiting, all wearing similar dresses to Cassandra's, the only difference being that she had the slave collar.

The Imperial servant was almost choking. How could a slave possibly argue with one of the Princes like that? She shouldn't even have been able to be so near him, let alone open her mouth with such defiance!

Shareen walked past them impatiently.

"We decide what is permitted or not. If my brother wants to come with a slave or thirty, it would serve you well to shut up," she said to the Imperial servant, with an imperious tone.

Immediately, everyone else bowed lowly.

"Y...yes, Your Highness. Please, this way."

Cassandra was baffled. How could it happen as easily as that? As they kept walking through the corridors, they saw many servants' faces. All those who bowed a second late and saw her, couldn't hide their shock, but of course, it was likely she was the only slave to ever be spotted inside the Inner Palace!

As they approached the Imperial Rooms, Cassandra was so worried that she couldn't handle it anymore. She turned to Kairen again, whispering with a pleading voice.

"Please, Master, can't I at least walk by myself? Please..."

"Last time I left you alone, you ran away."

Cassandra was taken aback. He was still angry about that? It wasn't even her choice to leave his chambers! She shook her head.

"No, Master, I swear I did not mean to. Please! I promise, I won't go anywhere. Please..."

Kairen clicked his tongue, but after a few more steps he finally stopped to let her down. Cassandra seized the occasion to swiftly put the fur cloak back onto his shoulders, getting it away from her before anyone else saw her with it.

The Third Prince gave her a skeptical look, but she made sure to stand right behind him, as close as she could without touching him. Shareen, watching the little scene unfold between the two, chuckled.

“Look, Kairen, your new pet isn’t going anywhere, and you can always have Krai chase her down if she tries anyway.”

He took a long moment before taking his eyes off Cassandra and walking with his sister again. Cassandra let out a deep sigh right after, feeling a bit relieved, and started walking behind him with her head low until someone next to her gently tapped her elbow.

One of Shareen’s ladies-in-waiting had subtly taken a few extra steps behind her mistress to be right next to Cassandra and gave her a gentle smile.

“No need to bow so low. Just do it like me,” she whispered with a smile.

Cassandra realized she was indeed bowing too low. She had naturally taken her slave posture, but it wasn’t appropriate with what she was wearing now. Was it alright to mimic the ladies-in-waiting? She

still had her collar on, so her current status was probably closer to a servant than anything else.

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But the young lady gave her an encouraging smile, making her feel a little more at ease, so Cassandra did as she suggested. This way, she wouldn’t stand out as much, and she was already hoping people would ignore her.

They finally reached a large door. Even without the gold adorning the redwood, Cassandra would have concluded it was their final destination by the loud growls coming from behind it – dragon growls.

“Emperor, this lowly servant has successfully come back with Their Highnesses Prince Kairen and Princess Shareen.”

The large doors had opened and Cassandra, without lifting her head, felt a breeze, hinting that they were heading into an open area – a very, very large one. She followed Kairen while hearing a lot of people present around them. As she stole peeks to her left and right, she realized several members of the Imperial Family were there, all accompanied by their respective courts. From the myriad of voices and sounds, she could tell at least fifty people were present.

“Finally! Kairen, what do I have to do for you to stay at my banquets? Are they too boring for you, my Son?”

Cassandra couldn’t believe she was hearing the Emperor’s voice! She was surprised; he sounded more like a doting father than an all-mighty ruler too!

“What about me, Father? Do I not get a proper welcome just because my dear little brother is here?” asked Shareen with a sulk.

“What are you talking about? You know you are the most precious gem in my eyes, Shareen! Come here, my daughter!”

The group suddenly split, with Shareen and her attendants going straight to the golden throne, while Kairen took a left. He walked to a large seat and took his place, spreading his fur coat on it. Cassandra, observing how the other servants were positioned, took a small spot a few feet behind him and knelt on the floor.

She was now partially in the shadow of his seat and had the freedom to observe the room. It was an immense, circular hall with several golden chairs, each sitting atop several steps. Like this, the Royal Family could clearly see the center of the room, where dancers were currently performing a piece no one seemed to care about. Behind each seat, servants were busy attending to their masters, handing them cups of wine or plates of food. Only the concubines were sitting down on the stairs in front of them, with a good view of the show, but no seat of their own.

“You, take this.”

A male servant handed Cassandra a glass of wine and a large plate with fruits and meat. She quickly realized she was the only one there to attend to Kairen. She took it, ignoring the pain in her wrist. Her fingers were trembling under the extra weight on her infamy, but she took a couple of steps forward and handed the cup to Kairen while he ignored the food.

When she descended back to her position, the male servant was looking at her with furious eyes.

“You idiot, slave! You were supposed to try the wine before your Master! What if there is poison in the

cup?”

Cassandra had no idea. She looked at the man, speechless, and went back to Kairen wondering if she could take the cup back. Thankfully, he hadn't drunk from it yet, but as she was about to ask, he put the cup down and showed no interest in it. She swiftly grabbed it, took a quick sip, and put it back where it was before returning again. The male servant sighed.

“Useless slave...”

“I am very sorry,” she whispered.

“Save your apology for your Master! What if he died because of an idiot slave like you? Tsk...”

While cursing her, he stepped away. Cassandra sighed. How could she possibly have known? She had never had any training on attending to the Imperial Family.

After reflecting on her mistake, she went back to listening to what was going on. As expected, only the Imperial Family spoke while the concubines whispered amongst themselves, but none seemed very happy to be there.

“Kairen, my son. Can I never keep you entertained enough that you would share a bit of your time with your father?” asked the Emperor.

“Our brother would rather spend his time with his slave,” snickered the Second Prince.

A loud growl suddenly resonated throughout the hall, and Cassandra finally understood why the servants and concubines didn't feel at ease. Next to the Second Prince's throne, what she had mistaken for a statue was actually a very alive Red Dragon. She took a quick look around; aside from the red one, two other dragons were sitting next to their masters. While one of those was caged, the other two were merely muzzled and chained, but they were still at the Imperial Family's level, and close enough to scare anyone around.