

The War God's Favorite by Jhonny Fox

Chapter 12

#12 The Slave Concubine

Cassandra followed the old woman, feeling unsure. Kairen had gone off elsewhere without telling her what she was supposed to do in the Castle.

Walking at a quick pace, Patrina took her to a large kitchen where two other women were working. They both turned their heads when they saw her coming, surprised.

"A new head? And a slave, too?" asked a tall woman with long brown hair.

"His Highness brought her from the Palace," said Patrina, not stopping.

Cassandra walked right behind her, only glancing briefly at the other women. The tall one didn't seem to care much about her as she shrugged and went back to her chores. The second one, who was sitting on the side cutting fruit, gave her a gentle smile as their eyes met. She was a redhead with freckles all over her face.

"Come in here."

Patrina took her to a little room off to the side of the kitchen. It looked like a storage room, with baskets of vegetables and dried meats lined up along one side. Along the other, there were all kinds of fabrics piled up on a shelf; Patrina headed that way.

"It's a lot hotter in the Capital than it is here, you'll want to change into something warmer. You..."

She suddenly went quiet. Cassandra had started taking the fur coat off her shoulders. Patrina, surprised, stared at the red dress for a few seconds before

regaining her composure.

"You are... the Master's concubine?"

"Yes," admitted Cassandra, blushing a bit.

Patrina sighed.

"And a slave... You should have told me sooner! Really, what was the Master thinking? I don't know if I have anything proper to dress you!" (2)

"Anything is fine!" said Cassandra suddenly. "I really don't mind the dress."

"No, no. There are rules. A slave concubine... I don't even know what I can give you that would be appropriate. Why hasn't this come off yet?"

She was hinting at Cassandra's slave collar; but those collars didn't come off easily. Cassandra shook her head, feeling a bit helpless.

"His Highness doesn't have my slave contract..."

Patrina sighed.

"I see. It can't be helped then. Oh whatever, I guess we'll have to work with it. Let me think... I can't have you doing any hard labor..."

Cassandra felt really odd about the whole situation. Slaves were usually made to do the worst and hardest jobs but, because of her dual status as the Prince's concubine, she couldn't do anything that might injure herself. She also couldn't do anything that would get her too dirty or be too close to male

servants. But doing nothing while other servants around her worked wouldn't be appropriate either since she was still a slave too. It really was quite complicated!

"Let's do this. You will work inside the Castle only, and serve His Highness whenever necessary. We will find where you can help eventually, it's not like we ever run out of things to do. Let's see what he decides about your bedroom later. Oh here, try putting this one on."

Patrina had taken out a long, thick wool tunic. The white, sleeveless frock fit over her red dress, ensuring her concubine attire would still be visible.

"My bedroom?"

"Yes, I can't have you sleep in the stables and smell like a horse! We have servant rooms too. So, I'll prepare you one just in case, but His Highness might have you sleep in one of the empty rooms upstairs."

Cassandra remembered the shape of the Castle from her arrival, like a mountain of towers and grey stone; it did, indeed, seem very large. But despite its size, Cassandra had only seen a handful of workers so far. With all those rooms and so few workers... She suddenly wondered how many concubines Kairen actually had here and felt a little pinch in her heart. Could this be jealousy or sadness at the thought that he might have had other favorites? How silly...
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"You're so skinny, all bones! Put this belt on, too, maybe you'll look like something. There we go."

Indeed, the thin leather belt added some structure to her ensemble, showing off her thin waist. Cassandra felt more properly dressed in this, something better suited for the cold weather. She quickly did

her long braid over and arranged it in a bun so that she could work without it getting in the way.

Patrina nodded, looking satisfied.

"Looks good. I suppose we can always make you other outfits later, if need be."

Cassandra felt this was more than enough already. She had worn the same overused slave dress for years. Just being able to change into something new and clean felt like a blessing! The silk and wool felt great on her skin, too and warmed her up.

Patrina grabbed a basket of fruits on her way out as Cassandra followed.

"We'll give you a tour later. For now, the Master just came back, so we have to cook his dinner. You'll help us."

"What should I do?"

"You can wash those vegetables first."

Cassandra nodded as they returned to the kitchen. The two servant women raised their heads upon seeing them.

"Madam, we are running out of... What is that?!"

Completely speechless, the taller woman pointed at Cassandra's dress, unable to hide her shock. Patrina rolled her eyes and walked over to the large counter.

"That's how it is."

"She can't be a concubine!"

This time around, the woman didn't hide her anger and disgust. She didn't even look at Cassandra, only at the red dress, her eyes burning with obvious jealousy. Patrina clicked her tongue and slapped her hand on the table.

"Enough! Nebora, stop shouting and get back to work!" D

Cassandra didn't dare move with that woman still glaring at her. The other servant, who looked a bit younger than Nebora, walked over and took her hand.

"Here, I'll show you the water system."

Cassandra was only too happy to ignore Nebora's seething anger. Ignoring her colleague, the redhead guided her to a large sink and acted as if nothing was out of the ordinary.

"You just have to roll this over a few times, and the water will flow. Careful though, it's very cold. We need to make sure to use it several times a day so it doesn't freeze."

"Thank you. I think I've used this type before."

"Really? Good then! I was wondering if the Palace's systems might be more advanced. Anyway, you can just wash these off for now and I'll cut them. alright?"

Cassandra nodded.

"Thank you very much," she whispered.

The young woman smiled.

"You're welcome, we don't get to see new faces often, so... I'm Marian, by the way."

"Cassandra."

"Oh, you have a name? And it's pretty, too! Alright Cassandra, you can start with those then. Let's hurry up, Patrina gets grumpy when we are slow."

Compared to Nebora's attitude, Marian was more outgoing, she at least smiled at Cassandra, too, which made her feel better. It would be hard if she couldn't get along with anyone here... The redhead

turned out to be quite clumsy. She almost cut herself several times while handling the vegetables, mostly because she kept chatting at the same time. Cassandra felt anxious every time she watched her use the knife. So much so, she was careful to only give her one vegetable at a time and keep an eye on her movements. Patrina too, kept telling Marian to focus, despite being busy herself with baking bread.

As the chores went on, Cassandra was surprised to only see a handful of servants walking around. Why was no one else busy at this time of day? The four women worked until the meal for the Prince was ready, but that was pretty much it.

Patrina put the silver tray into Cassandra's hands.

"Here. You can take it upstairs to the Prince's chambers."

"That's my job!" Nebora yelled suddenly.

Cassandra was exhausted by the woman's attitude. Since she had been there, Nebora had continuously shown annoyance towards her. She glared and complained the entire time. What kind of childishness was this?

"Enough, Nebora," Patrina sighed. "Cassandra will give the Master his meal. She is his concubine and therefore has more rights than you..."

"More rights? She is just a damn slave! Have you seen her collar? She shouldn't even be touching his food! I am the one who brings meals to His Highness!"

As offended as she felt by the comment, Cassandra was more annoyed by Nebora's yelling and childish attitude. Even if she was jealous or had something against slaves, her whole charade was too much!

Cassandra pushed the tray of food into Nebora's hands without warning. Surprised, the woman grabbed it just in time for it not to fall.

"Go ahead, take it."

"Cassandra.." started Patrina, but she shook her head.

"She can take it up to His Highness if she wants to so much. I don't want to argue over something so silly."

Cassandra's tempered tone greatly contrasted with Nebora's attitude, making her sound twice as petty, especially now that she actually had the tray in her hands. But that didn't calm her down. Annoyed by Cassandra's display, Nebora threw the tray on the table with a bang. One of the plates fell, shattering loudly and tossing some of the bread on the floor. She started yelling, not even looking at the food.

"Who the hell do you think you are?! You are not to make deci..."

But before she could end the sentence, Cassandra slapped her. 12

A heavy silence fell over the kitchen as three pairs of eyes looked at her in total shock. Even Patrina had no idea how to react. Nebora put a hand on her burning cheek, trying hard to process what just happened. She was looking at Cassandra as if she was some kind of monster.

"I don't care if you don't have any respect for me," Cassandra stated. "But at the very least, you should learn to have some respect for the food, and the people who spent time preparing it, for His Highness!" 2

Walking past her shocked colleague, Cassandra crouched down to pick up the bread and put it back on the counter, cutting off the parts that had touched the floor. Nebora looked shaken by her words. Her anger had somewhat disappeared and was replaced by a visible red hue on her cheeks.

"It... It... It's just some bread..."

"It's His Highness' bread," corrected Cassandra. "I have seen people whipped and killed for a lot less than dropping their Master's food." 2

Once again, she spoke very calmly, while Nebora finally seemed embarrassed by her actions. As she continued picking up the broken pieces of plate, she suddenly cut her finger on one of the shards. Marian hurried to help her pick the rest up. When they were done, Cassandra handed it all to Marian and picked up the tray again. She headed for the stairs, but stopped in front of Nebora, who was in her way.

"Some people are starving and would do anything to get some bread," she said to Nebora. "Patrina spent a long time making this, too. So, if you want to bring this to His Highness, you are responsible for it the entire way. Do you want to take it or not?"

Taken aback by her question, Nebora looked at Cassandra and saw that she was asking seriously, without a hint of anger or hatred towards her. That made her feel even worse, and she shook her head while looking down, completely remorseful and embarrassed.

"Alright. Then you can lead the way for me, I don't know where to go."

Again, Nebora was rendered speechless. After the scene from earlier, was Cassandra still completely willing to let her come along? Unable to utter a word, she nodded awkwardly and turned around leading the way to the stairs as Cassandra followed behind her with the tray.

Still standing in the kitchen, Patrina and Marian were speechless.