

## Under The Oak Tree

### *Under the Oak Tree, Chapter 9 – Damsel in Distress (1)*

“Even a native like me knows the importance of marriage vows. I can’t believe that a noble lady like you ignored it thoroughly.” He fired back at her in confusion.

“What do you mean, ignore?”

“What the hell do you call it? You married me and you completely ignored your duties so casually. Don’t expect me to put up with such an attitude in the future!”

She opened her mouth in astonishment. How could he make such accusation? The day after their wedding, he left without saying a word!

“I-I didn’t know. You d-didn’t tell me....” He seemed unimpressed with her defense, so she added, “I-I never ignored, uh, no! Oh, rather...I’ve been waiting....”

“Don’t mess with me! You’ve stayed at your father’s castle for the past three years, even though you’re called Mrs. Calypse. You just chose to remain in your father’s luxurious castle, despite knowing I had to leave my estate right after the wedding!”

He snorted loudly.

“However, I seem to understand. No aristocratic woman in the world will give up her high position and protect her husband’s house, who may return as a corpse.”

Max run out of strength to answer, deeply embarrassed by his accusation that she couldn’t refute a word. This man was just saying things he couldn’t understand.

But she couldn’t let this go. This marriage, she was determined to save at all cost. So, she said,

“Your, your house, how do I know about it? Where is it? Anything. You did not say anything!”

“Don’t play innocent! I did everything I could to get you to come and stay in my estate before I left for the army. When I die, you were supposed to inherit the estate that I was managing! The duke’s daughter may have no concern to me, but it was an important asset which you left it completely unattended.”

Anger was evident in his face. It didn’t seem like he was faking a lie. He has no reason to deceive her in the first place anyway. Max could only swallow nervously.

“I, uh, I didn’t know...Not a bit....”

“My men said you refused to leave.” He spoke bitterly to which Max bowed her head in shame.

“Don’t bother acting sorry so suddenly. I’ve known what you think of me for the last three years.” Riftan had always been aware of how everyone looked down on his status—a knight in the mercy of his superiors.

And he was convinced that Maximillian felt just the same towards him.

””” ”

“D\*\*n it, why are you suddenly talking this time? Do you think I’ll beat you up if you don’t?”

“I am sorry. I really, really didn’t know. When I woke up after our night to-together, you’re already gone. I, uh, I didn’t hear any parting words from you.”

Riftan squinted his eyes at her; trying with all his might to see if she was indeed telling the truth. All the while, like a lamb to be slaughtered, Max waited for his next words; her heart beating rapidly against her chest. At the next moment, much to her surprise, the man spat out in a slightly softened tone.

“Even if I didn’t instruct you, you should have left for my estate. It is the natural duty of a married woman to spearhead her husband’s house. This marriage might seem so small to you, but to me, it isn’t.”

Max found no possible contradiction to what he said. Though she did not treat their marriage as trivial as what he was insinuating, it was true that she didn’t take it so seriously and had only wanted to follow her father’s orders.

How come he took the marriage at heart? Their marriage was, after all, only an inevitable ‘sacrifice’ for the sake of the Cross family.

“What if you were pregnant?”

“Pregnant?!” Max, who was lost in her own thoughts, looked up at him nervously.

“That night, I certainly fulfilled my duty enough. Isn’t pregnancy a possible story?” The sarcasm that dripped from his mouth drained all colors from her face. Their intimate moment remained a painful and shameful memory to her.

Even though she knew that the deed was for the purpose of establishing their marriage, she still felt uneasy whenever the memories of that night resurfaced to her mind.

*But he was making such light remarks as if it were no big deal to him!* Max trembled in fear. However, her sudden change of demeanor didn't escape Riftan's notice, and he once again, felt agitated at her reaction.

He struck the wall with a loud bang.

“D\*\*n it, don't look like that! Like it's horrible to have my child!”

Max could only shiver in fear at his outburst. In the next second, far from his previous display of ire, Riftan assumed a calm state and became eerily silent... With quick movements, he suddenly put his hand on the carriage door, using it as a leverage, and jumped out of the running vehicle. Max screamed in surprise.

“Sir! An ogre has been sighted!” one of his men cried from outside.

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