

D. of Pride 831

Chapter 831- Battle For The Capital (3)

They had been on a losing end since the start of the war. The only reason he and Duke Montford were able to last this long was because the enemy had been unserious in their previous attempts.

That's how they were barely able to stand their ground against the enemy this long. And even then, they had to sacrifice a hell of a lot just to maintain the standstill. A result like that was nothing to be proud of.

"I see, don't worry. Everything will be solved once we defeat the forces of Blackthorn and take the capital back".

Duke Redcrest who had been drooping his head from shame, suddenly raised it at that declaration from Cynthia. She did not say 'if they were defeated' but 'once they were defeated'.

Duke Redcrest could not sense any hesitation or uncertainty in those words of hers. Every word that she spoke, carried absolute confidence.

Looking at her overflowing with boldness and positivity, he couldn't help but wonder where she was getting her confidence from. Indeed the army that she brought with her, was impressive and compared to his own, they were at a higher level.

Duke Redcrest was not devaluing his army or the ones brought by the other nobles. In fact, that was his honest opinion. What was abnormal was the strength of the army that Cynthai raised.

Typically, the standards of the soldiers were around the level that he brought with him. Veterans and Elites were far and few between. In no case was it like the army of the princess where he could see many veterans, elites and powerhouses to the point where he couldn't even count all of them.

In fact, he felt like the number of strong individuals in her army would even match up to the whole of the kingdom's guild alone. However, the enemy that they were fighting was no ordinary opponent either.

To be able to conquer all the other regions of Ellesmere with an unstoppable momentum, the enemy was sure to possess forces equal to or more power than Her Highness. No matter how he thought, he

believed that defeating Blackthorn at this point would be an uphill battle and they would need numerous miracles to work on their side just to stand a chance.

It was for this reason that Cynthia's words and confidence confused him. The latter could also see the doubt in his eyes; nevertheless, she did not explain and simply kept her mouth shut on this matter.

After Cynthia and Duke Redcrest finished discussing a few important matters, their two armies started marching again. The sight of such a grand and large army naturally drew attention from everyone and given the enemy's network and modus operandi, everyone in the army believed that they would be attacked soon or at least some kind of trap would be laid for them.

However, to their surprise, the journey to the capital was an uneventful one with nothing of particular sort happening.

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And so after ten days of march, the army of Ellesmere stood before the gates of their capital and stared at their enemy. At the forefront, stood Cynthia as she gazed at her homeplace. Scorched black and devastated, the place looked nothing alike from her memories.

Whether it be buildings, walls, streets or anything, it was demolished to the point of being unrecognisable. The desolation filled capital was also a mark of display of how fiercely the forces of the kingdom had fought.

Although they were ultimately defeated, signs of their fierce struggle could still be seen everywhere in the city. Cynthia's eyes glossed over as memories of this beautiful metropolis before its fall, flooded into her mind.

"Princess are you alright?" the guard captain Alvara came over and asked.

"Yeah, nothing can shake me at this point" Taking a deep breath, she spoke. Then she turned towards her friend and asked "How about you?".

Just like how this place held many memories for her, Alvara who was born in the capital similarly held many memories, both good and bad. "Yeah, I was just reminded of my brother a little. I wonder if he would be proud of me if he saw that I survived and came back to take the capital back from the enemies".

As the Knight captain of the royal family, her brother Cyrus stayed behind in the capital and fended off the enemy till his last breath. She could still remember the figure of his broad back as he led a group of knights to protect the citizens of the capital.

That reliable back of his felt like he would be able to shoulder even if the sky collapsed. While all the nobles ran taking off their powerful subordinates with them, Cyrus was the only one who protected the weak citizens while covering their retreat.

In the last hours, he even sent her and the princess away with his subordinates guarding while he remained behind. His loyalty to the kingdom was unquestioned. If there was anyone who deserved to be called the captain of the knights it was perhaps only her brother.

He viewed his duty so seriously that even the last words that he spoke to her before sending her away were not some filial love but instead responsibilities for his duty and the love he had for this kingdom.

Of course, Alvara knew that it was not because her brother did not love her on the contrary it was because he loved her that he couldn't see the place she was born in to be taken over by the foreign invaders.

And so, after experiencing numerous events along the way, she was finally back here today to take the capital back from the enemy. Alvara wondered if her brother would be proud of her.

While the two people in the front were busy reminiscing about the old times, across from them, figures appeared on top of the wall one after another. Wearing dark grey gears of exceptional quality, marked with the insignia of a blood red sword, they were elite fighters of the kingdom of Blackthorn.

"Tainted Knights" Cynthia and the others narrowed their eyes immediately recognising the enemy's identity. After fighting them for so long, they were aware of the forces of the kingdom of Balckthron.

Clad in dark grey armour and wielding corrupted blades, they strike fear in their opponents just by their mere presence. The tainted Knight Unit was one of the core and elite forces of the kingdom of Blackthorn.

There were also other units like the Hellfire Artillery Corps— corps that was made of all mages who specialise in devastating large area attack magic. Their enchanted staffs unleash torrents of powerful magic like hellfire on enemies, cities and fortified positions alike.

Master of siege warfare, they reduce enemy defences to rubble, paving the way for the Blackthorn ground forces.

And then there was also the Enslaved Legion— Legion comprising of those captured and subjugated in conquered territories. The Enslaved Legion is a grim testament to Blackthorn's conquest.

Forced into service under the threat of brutal punishment, these reluctant soldiers fight on the front lines. While lacking in morale, they are numerous, and the kingdom uses them as expendable pawns to wear down enemy forces.

Nevertheless, the true elite force of the kingdom Blackthorn was still their Tainted Knight legion without any doubt.

All the nobles on Cynthia's side had grim faces as they saw dark grey figures slowly rising on the opposite side. As the two sides glared at each other in a weird stalemate, there was finally some movement from the opposite side.

A deep and loud sound resounded across the entire domain and in grand and impressive fashion, a couple of figures slowly walked out and stood on top of the wall.

Leading the group, was a middle aged man with a fairly handsome face. His sharp expression, chiselled face and slight creases on the forehead gave everyone the feeling that he was a veteran of the war.

Decked in impressive looking military garb with numerous accolades sewn to his clothes, the man was none other than the highest authority present in the capital at this moment. The general and the commander in chief of the forces of Blackthorn.

When he came out, immediately numerous eyes were drawn towards him. Some had utmost respect for him while some held fear and reverence and some hatred. Especially the gazes from Cynthia's side, all held indescribable emotions of hatred and animosity towards him.

With regards to being subjected to all kinds of glares, there was not even the slightest bit of change in the expression of the general. In fact, as he stood there glancing at the opposing army, it was as if he was soaking in all that malevolent energy.

Behind him stood a man with a pot round belly and a short figure. He was none other than Marshall Cavalier, the man directly responsible for the fall of their kingdom.

Although the general is the overall commander in chief of the forces of Blackthorn, unless absolutely necessary he does not step into the field. It is Marshall Cavalier who handles the battles and is always present in the field.

When the nobles on Cynthia's side saw the pot bellied man, their resentment and enmity increased up a notch.

"Haha" Being used to these kinds of stares, Marshall Cavalier simply laughed in the face of it. His eyes faced the distant Cynthia and the other nobles as he grinned.

An eerie silence descended onto the battlefield and the air was thick with the scent of gunpowder.

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All it needed was a slight spark and the battle would immediately erupt. With the leaders of both sides now facing each other, the tension was so heavy that it was palpable.

GULP... it was unknown where the sound came from but it was most likely from the side of the nobles. It appeared that these soldiers who have been drafted into the army by the nobles, were unable to take the pressure and thus started cowering a little.

Cynthia could also see the morale collapsing on the soldiers of the other armies. The forces of Blackthorn had that kind of deterrence. However, Just as she was about to say something to raise their morals up, her eyes were once again drawn towards the top of the wall.

There she could see that the enemy forces were up to something.

On top of the wall, while still keeping his eyes on opposing forces, the general extended his hand and ordered in a low voice.

"Raise it"...

"Yes" the soldiers nodded and started becoming busy.

Soon, a commotion erupted on the highest bastion of the wall and in front of countless numbers of eyes, a flag was hoisted up on the pole. The flag was big and thanks to being hoisted on the highest part of the wall, the flag could be seen from extremely far away distances.

WAVE... as the flag waved with the breeze and appeared in front of everyone's sight, immediately numerous faces became ugly. Brows knitted and body trembling with anger, it was obvious one side was enraged.

"Hehe" Marshall Cavalier gave a gloating smile. He knew that the enemy would be making that kind of expression after all, the flag that was hoisted so boldly and assertively on the walls of the capital of the kingdom of Ellsemere, did not belong to the kingdom.

Instead, the flag marked by a crimson sword on a field of gold represented the Kingdom of Blackthorn. To hoist the flag of a foreign nation on their soil, what's more, on their capital no less, was the greatest form of disrespect for the people and for that kingdom.

It could no longer be seen as just a provocative gesture and was tantamount to a direct challenge to their kingdom's autonomy. From Balckthron's side, it was an indication to start the battle and let everyone know the might of their kingdom.

"Your Highness, please give the command" Mounted on his horse, Duke Redrest's eyes blazed with rage as he saw that disrespectful gesture. He immediately pulled his horse and asked for permission to engage in war.

"No" Nevertheless, the answer he got was a clear no. Cynthia glanced at the distant flag with cold and callous eyes, her body was also slightly trembling from all the pent up rage she felt.

Yet she did not lose her reasoning. She understood very well that the enemy was trying to lure them in. Once inside, who knows what kind of traps they had set up for them?

At this point, victory and defeat rested solely on this battle. One mistake and everything she had been planning for to this day and all her efforts would go down the drain. Which is why, she needed to decide on their action after careful consideration.

Cynthia turned towards Annette who was riding on another Banemoose beside her and asked—

"Is it really going to play out just like we planned?" her voice carried concern.

"Your Highness does not need to worry. Even though the forces of Blackthorn are strong, the ones who are going to win at the end will still be us. You just need to command the army, things will play out just like we planned" Annette reassured with a mysterious smile on her face.

Not far away from them, listening to their conversation was Duke Redcrest. He frowned when he heard the woman words. Even with their impressive lineup, there was no guarantee that they could win.

Where was this woman getting her confidence to say all that? As he sized up the woman next to Cynthia, he realised that whether it be in terms of beauty or demeanour, the former did not lose out to the latter.

In fact, she possessed her own charms that made her more beautiful in her own way. Who was this woman and why did he not have any information related to her?

He quickly called out one of his subordinates who was responsible for keeping all the intel and asked him about the background of the woman. When he received no answer, he became even more stunned.

At the forefront of the army, Cynthia raised her hands and finally gave the command.

"Attack"...

Immediately, the soldiers riding on Banemoose charged forward, followed by the infantry and the heavy armour unit. There was no strategy involved for the first battle, and was a full frontal siege.

After giving the command to the army, Cynthia placed her attention on top of the wall where the General and Marshall Cavalier stood. If she were to believe Annette's words, the next action that the enemy would take...

On top of the walls, when Cavalier saw the princess' army madly rushing towards the wall without any strategy, he sneered.

"Fools, you are just running towards your death. Let me show you the might of Blackthorn and how stupid it was for you to underestimate us. Hellfire Artillery Unit get ready to fire once the enemy enters your range".

At this moment, the linup of Tainted Knights slowly stepped aside, giving way for thousands of figures wearing bright crimson robes, to step forward.

As they appeared, the mana in the entire domain started raging and boiling. Evidently, the phenomenon was stirred by the combined presence of these thousands of figures.

To be able to stir the mana around them with just their presence, only a mage could casue this kind of commotion. What's more, not just any ordinary mage could do that, but a powerful mage who had surpassed level 400.

"Hehe" Marshall Cavalier laughed feeling their powerful aura congregate in the surrounding. His eyes looked at the onrushing army as a twisted pleasure surfaced on them.

The thousands of powerful mages who specialise in destructive magic, was their elite Hellfire Atrillery Unit and also one of their ace in the hole. With them on their side, no matter how large of an army the kingdom raised, their numbers would mean nothing and be reduced to ashes in the face of their overwhelming magic.

Whoosh... the thousands of mages raised their blackish grey staff and started conjuring their magic, causing the very mana in the surroundings to vaguely congregate towards them.

With so many powerful mages casting their magic together, one could imagine the kind of effect it had on the surroundings. Even from the faraway distance that they were the nobles of the kingdom could feel the disturbance in the mana.

Needless to say, the movements made by their opponent didn't go unnoticed by them. However, by the time they realised what was going and saw that absurd number of mages, it was already too late.

Their army had already entered the range of these mages. Despair filled the faces of these nobles as they thought that were going to incur devastating losses even before they reached the walls of the capital.

The enemy turned out to be far more powerful than they had imagined. It was not like the nobles were unaware of the elite Hellfire Artillery Unit that the kingdom of Blackthorn possessed.

The powerful magic that had razed the capital and all its surrounding regions until it was scorched black, was the work of the Hellfire Artillery Unit. They still remembered the intel they received on the fall of the capital and the other regions.

At that time they thought that the intel was exaggerated. After all, how could one kingdom possess so many mages not to mention that many high level ones.

They were further led to believe the information was nonsense since in all the successive scuffles with the forces of Blackthorn, only a small number of mages that one could count on their hands, showed up on the battlefield.

At that time, they even thought that the other nobles were cowards and timid to surrender to the enemy so soon. However, given from the looks of things now, it seemed that the intel they received way back was true.

No, it was not entirely correct either as the number of mages that they saw on top of the walls today, clearly far surpassed the numbers that was written on the intel.

Clearly, the kingdom of Blackthorn had hidden their strength even on the day when they captured the capital. Today they finally showed some of their powerful cards and where their unwavering arrogance came from.

Hellfire Artillery Unit- containing thousands of elite mages... this was just one of the forces of Blackthorn, who knows how many more cards they had up their sleeve. Even Cynthia was somewhat surprised as she saw the grand lineup of mages on top of the wall.

Though, unlike the other nobles beside her, she was clearly aware that the enemy possessed such a powerful unit. That being said, seeing them with her own eyes and feeling their powerful magic take shape, it was still a surprising sight for her.

For a single kingdom to possess so many mages and that too in just one unit, no wonder the Kingdom of Balckthorn was able to sweep through the armies of their kingdom and establish their might.

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It turned out that the Kingdom of Blackthorn were this powerful. Even in their most glorious days, the Kingdom of Ellesmere never had this kind of impressive lineup of forces. That being said...

"You are underestimating us severely if you think just your Hellfire Artillery Unit will be able to stop us" Cynthia Spoke to herself.

On top of the walls, all kinds of intermediate tier destructive magic took shape. Most of the magic was of the attribute of flames with some lightning, earth and gale attributes mixed in. All of these magic were AOE and filled with destructive power.

The threatening ripples that they gave off could be felt from far and wide. Naturally, the charging soldiers could also feel it. Anxiety and panic rose in the hearts of many soldiers as they looked towards their backlines in concern.

Will it really work? Many of them had the same thought when they were briefed about the strategy a few hours ago. However, when it really came down it, they couldn't help but question it.

Needless to say, the ones to falter at this point, were the soldiers from the noble's army. The military from Cynthia's side had no such doubts in their minds as they continued to charge towards the wall with a fierce momentum.

Finally, as the soldiers entered their range, the mages on top of the walls finally let loose their magic.

Swoosh... Swoosh... Swoosh... Like arrows being shot from the bow, the magic streaked through the sky and rained down on the onrushing army.

BOOM... BOOM... BOOM... large explosions appeared everywhere, towering pillars of rock fell down like meteors, Lightning wreaked havoc and tornadoes generated wild winds. In that very instant, the land was turned upside down by the powerful large area magic of the mages.

Just like the name of their unit, the battlefield was instantly turned into a Hellfire.

"Hahaha" Standing on top of the wall and looking down at the chaotic battlefield, Marshall Cavalier issued a loud laugh. His laugh was so unrestrained that, even the fats on his necks jiggled from all those movements.

"Look at them...dying like ants. Haha, I wonder how many of them will survive after that. That lass dares to disrespect our kingdom and reject my good intentions. Let's see what kind of face she will make once she sees her being annihilated right before the war even begins"

From his point of view, now that the Hellfire Artillery unit had started their bombardment, the large army that the princess raised would soon be turned into nothing. He wanted to see how long that princess could keep her arrogance.

He was just wondering how he would torture and play with her once this whole farce was over when suddenly his face froze and his expression hardened. His powerful senses quickly picked out numerous lifeforce still fighting resolutely under the bombardment of the magic.

Finally, after all the magic from the Hellfire Artillery Unit finished raining, the dust settled down and one could clearly see the devastation that was brought for by that powerful magic.

Large craters dotted the ground everywhere you looked, scars ran through the ground like enormous gullies, and sparks of lightning scorched the ground black. Looking at the condition of the battlefield, it didn't look like anyone could survive after being subjected to that.

However, to everyone's surprise, the figures of the soldiers rushed past the dust and granules as they still charged towards the wall, their momentum unabated.

"What was going on? How could they survive the bombardment from the Hellfire Artillery unit?" Marshall Cavalier spoke out loud unable to believe the scene.

The magic from just now should have wiped them out. However, looking at things, it didn't look like even one of them died from that hellish magic.

How was that possible?

Up on the bastion, the general too narrowed his eyes as he saw the scene. His eyes looked uneasy as he stared at the distant calm and collected princess.

"It doesn't matter how they survived, it might just be a stroke of luck. Continue with the bombardment, let's see how long they can survive"

Seeing the army inching closer, Marshall Cavalier gave his next command. However, unlike the first time, the mages did not immediately start conjuring their magic.

"What's wrong? I said attack?" He repeated. Nonetheless, the mages did not comply.

"Your lordship, large area magic magic takes a lot of toll on our body. It is impossible to fire them continuously, we need a few minutes of break to restore some of our mana and mental energy" One of the mages, who was appointed the commander of the unit, replied.

Hearing the other party's words, Marshall Cavalier grits his teeth in an ugly fashion. He had forgotten about that fact. Usually, when he used the elite unit, he made them switch between those who conjured large Aoe magic and those who cast single target magic.

That way, the Hellfire Artillery Unit can fire nonstop without tiring down like how they are right now. However, due to the fact that he wanted to teach that lass a lesson, he ordered all the mages to cast Large Aoe magic causing a large gap to appear in their lineup.

"Dammit, fine then. Continue firing once your mana recovers" Saying that, he placed his attention back on the battlefield. The army of the opposing force was increasingly getting closer.

He snorted "Don't think that Hellfire artillery unit is the only unit we have. Since our mages need time, there is plenty of way to achieve that. I won't let any of you get close to the walls".

Marshall Cavalier raised his hands towards the knights maintaining the gates and commanded "Open the gate, bring out the Enslaved legion".

On his orders, the group of knights hurriedly operated the winch and lowered the gate. Once the heavy metal gate was fully opened, a large number of figures rushed out from it.

Clanging noise of chains continuously rang out from them as they walked. One could see that, all the figures that came out of the gate, were tightly bound by metal collars and chains like slaves.

Attired in worn and tattered clothes, they presented a stark difference from the gleaming and well maintained armours of the tainted knight and hellfire artillery unit. The difference in their appearance also marked the difference in their status.

After all, unlike the other units which were nurtured and trained by Blackthorn using tons of their resources, the Enslaved legion comprised of war slaves and those subjugated in the conquered territories.

The kingdom did not spend any resources to acquire them and as far as they were concerned, they were just expendables. Meat shields that the Blackthorn can just use and discard after their usefulness was over.

When the Enslaved Legion emerged out of the gates, the movement naturally didn't go unnoticed by Cynthia and the others. When they saw the numerous figures come out of the gate in tattered clothes and chains, immediately their expression became ugly and they burned with fury.

The reason being... all of the people who were used as slaves, were either former veteran soldiers of their kingdom, reputed nobles or adventurers. The sight of them obeying the orders of the enemy while tightly bound by chains was a hard sight to digest.

Naturally, they felt anger and resentment towards Blackthorn who were subjugating their people to such cruel treatment.

These former veteran soldiers, nobles and adventurers, were not ordinary people, they would rather die than submit to the enemy. For them to behave like that, one could see from their faces that was etched with a mix of despair and exhaustion that the kingdom of Blackthorn had subjected them to cruel torture to break their spirits.

Their uniforms, once a mark of their pride, were now threadbare and stained, evidence of the abuse and cruelty that they had endured.

As the Enslaved legion comprising of tens of thousands of war slaves emerged out of the gate and stood before the army of the kingdom, an unnatural atmosphere descended onto the battlefield.

Looks of hesitation appeared on the faces of the onrushing army and their momentum even seemed to falter as they saw the figures that were standing against them.

The people of their own kingdom stood opposing them, how could it not affect their morals?

"Hehehe... Enslaved Legion attack" Marshall Cavalier gave a loud laugh seeing the wavering morals of the opposing army. His plan of pitting people with their own side, seemed to have worked.

At his signal, the bodies of the enslaved people of Ellesmere trembled intensely. Their bodies moved without their control and clashed against the onrushing army.

When the best sides collided, the momentum of the latter instantly came to a stop. Blades clashed against blades, and skills against skills. Even though the Enslaved Legion of Blackthorn were only decked out in broken and damaged equipments, these people were still once the veteran soldiers of this kingdom.

Thus even though their purpose was being used as mere meat shields, they were no ordinary meat shields but human shields with high levels and damage soaking potential. Therefore, it was no surprise that they were able to stall the princess' army even while being at a severe numerical disadvantage.

At the backlines when Cynthia saw this scene, she immediately issued an order. "My Soldiers, do not falter. This is another of the enemy's dirty tricks, they want to play with your mind. Do not be deceived, the ones facing you are no longer the citizens of the kingdom, but enemies that you must cull down"

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"Don't you feel rage, doesn't your blood boil in anger when you see them in such a miserable state? If you want to rescue them, if you want to redeem them from their current plight, then you must wield your weapon. That would be the greatest salvation and honour for them, to die in your hands. That way, they would depart as a fellow soldier of this soil".

Her words, laden with a sense of duty and a call to honour, were like a surge of energy injected into a machine that was running low on power.

The effect was palpable. The soldiers, initially struck by the disheartening sight of the Enslaved Legion, found renewed strength and purpose. It was as if Cynthia's words had reforged their determination, turning the initial shock into righteous anger.

The soldiers, momentarily shaken, now stood tall, their eyes reflecting not only the fire of battle but also a commitment to liberate those who had been unjustly shackled.

What's there to be hesitant about, weren't they already briefed about something like this happening? Cynthia's words had not only reinvigorated their morale but had also transformed their perception of the situation.

The Enslaved Legion might be powerful; however, one could see the reflection of the toll of enslavement on their bodies. Exhaustion, resignation, and, in some cases, the haunted look of those who had experienced unimaginable suffering.

It was one thing if they were in full strength but in a condition where they were physically exhausted and severely outnumbered, there was no way, they would be able to hold out against the elite Army that Cynthia raised from the tower town and mountmend.

One after another, they fell to the blades of their fellow countrymen. The scene might look very cruel; however, there was no other choice. Cynthia's face remained impassive as she saw the blood and bodies of the former soldiers of her kingdom slowly stain the ground red.

If the enemy thought that just this would be enough to stop them, then they were severely mistaken. The enemy's ploy to demoralize them had backfired; instead, it became a catalyst for a surge of unified determination.

On top of the wall, Marshall Cavalier saw the scene with a solemn expression on his face. He thought that the princess's army would be more demoralised after seeing the former soldiers of their kingdom like that. However, who knew that they would quickly shed away their hesitation? That lass had once again foiled his plan.

"Hmph, useless piece of trash, they can't even handle some so simple" he clicked his tongue. His eyes looked over at the Hellfire Artillery Unit who had recovered their mana and a gloating smile once again appeared on his face.

"Be that may, I never thought that I could just stop your army with just the enslaved legion. As useless as they might be, they have at least completed their job as human shields. Now, let me see if you can survive this"

Saying that, he extended his hands and swiped it down. Immediately, the thousands of mages in the walls, pulled their staffs out as they started casting. Powerful waves of mana emitted out of them as their magic slowly took shape.

Mighty intermediate tier AOE magic dropped on the battlefield like rain once again, causing extreme devastation and changing the topography of the land.

'This time for sure the princess's army won't survive' Just as this thought arrived on the Marshall, he was once again shocked to see the army standing on the ground perfectly fine with not even a single injury much less any casualty.

What was going on? If the first time he attributed them surviving due to miraculous luck, then what about this time? Over on the bastion, the general slowly narrowed his eyes as a knowing glint flashed over them.

"Interesting, seems like the princess does have the foundation to be so arrogant. Good, this will be an interesting war".

As he spoke, his eyes looked at the woman beside the princess. Over at the base of the wall, the kingdom's army finally pushed the enslaved legion back and managed to reach the gates.

"Hmph, I don't know what kind of trick you using, but don't think that our kingdom of Blackthorn only has the Hellfire Artillery Unit. Tainted Knights, get in position. The enemy has reached the wall, don't let any of them breach through the gate"

On his commands, knights wearing dark grey armours that released peculiar energy, stepped forward. At this moment, they formed three wings, each wing comprised more than twenty five thousand knights.

As they received the order, they lifted their shields and charged towards the onrushing army thus stopping their momentum. Although their number was lower than the combined army of the

princess, Duke Redcrest and several of the nobles, one must see the individual level of these Tainted Knights and the quality of the gears they were wearing.

Each of these tainted knights, even the lowest ranking squires were all above level 350, much less needs to be said above those high ranking knight captain and knight commanders who were all above 400.

The Tainted Knights Unit was one of the elite forces of Blackthorn and their strengths and level represented the investment the kingdom had put into raising them. Needless to say, there was no comparison between them and the Enslaved Legion.

As if meeting a steel board, the accelerating momentum of the kingdom's army finally came to a stop when these elite knights, stepped on the battlefield.

"Tainted Knights, you are the elite units of the Second Army under His Majesty, Lord Gladion. Show the opposing army the fierceness of Blackthorn and make them regret ever challenging us"

On Marshall Cavalier's assertive and arrogance filled words, the tainted knights gave a loud roar. Their weapons shone with a greyish black glint as they swung them towards the kingdom army. Immediately, numerous casualties appeared on the princess's side.

"Your Highness, the Tainted Knights have finally stepped in. Currently, our frontlines are suffering great casualties"

Over at the backlines where Cynthia was, Annette promptly informed. Her eyes that glimmered with a spirit light, seemed to be able to penetrate through the wall and gaze at extremely far distances.

"It cannot be helped, we already knew this would happen the moment the Tainted Knights stepped onto the battlefield. Nevertheless, no matter how powerful they are they are in the end still humans. Continue sending bodies towards them, once they are exhausted, we will send our elites"

Cynthia spoke those callous words without batting an eye. She was aware of the principle that 'One cannot win the war if they weren't prepared to make sacrifices and throw away a part of their humanity'.

The forces of the kingdom of Blackthorn were extremely powerful, from the beginning she was prepared to suffer large casualties on her side. She knew that these soldiers who respected and followed her, would end up dying on this cruel battlefield.

That being said, she was not entirely callous, as could be seen from the formation that their army was rushing inside the gate. Most of the people spearheading the charge, comprised of soldiers from the nobles and duke's army.

As for the soldiers from her own army, they were tactically placed in a way where they wouldn't have to take the brunt of the power of the tainted knights head on. They could wait for the other soldiers to tire the other party out before engaging with the enemy.

As for the adventurers of the tower town who had plenty of experience under their belt, they knew when to take advantage of the situation to proceed and retreat. They acted in a team and took action decisively.

Cynthia left them to their own station and gave them the authority to make their own decision.

"How goes the preparation on Blake's side?" She questioned. Annette looked at the distant mountain range and commented "They are ready and are waiting for your orders".

"In that case, tell them to start the operation. Let's show the enemy the might of the kingdom".

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Over at the wall, Marshall Cavalier wore an extremely delighted expression on his face as he saw the number of soldiers being culled by the Tainted Knights. Standing true to their rigid and training, each of them were powerful enough to overwhelm numerous soldiers.

What's more, with the aid of the special weapons and armour given to them, they were even more powerful. How do the ordinary soldiers of the kingdom compare to their Tainted Knights?

Marshall Cavalier arched his body back and laughed, relishing in this bloodbath when...

"Cavalier... how many times have I told you not to underestimate the enemy?" the general's cold voice filled with silent anger, suddenly doused his parade.

He looked at the former and asked with some dread "What's wrong General? We have complete control over the battlefield. The enemy can only use their numbers against us, and once even that runs out, they will be just sitting ducks waiting to be butchered. At this point, nothing that they can do can turn this around"

Marshall Cavalier laughed, he could already see the ending and the miserable expression of that lass once they crushed her army.

"Do you really think that? If so, then turn your head towards the top of the walls". What was there to see on top of the walls? The place should be surrounded by their forces. Although he thought that in his mind, he nevertheless obeyed the general's command and turned his attention towards the top of the walls.

Chapter 835- Battle For The Capital (7)

Obedying the general's command, Marshall cavalier turned his attention towards the top of the walls only for his expression to drastically change and become completely gobsmacked the next second.

What?!! What was this? What just happened here?

Reflected in his eyes were numerous corpses of the mages from the Hellfire Artillery Unit. Blood made a pool under their bodies and slowly flowed down through the walls. Who killed them? Just as this question arrived on his mind, his eyes immediately flashed and went towards a particular direction where he sensed numerous powerful auras quietly surging.

He saw teams of what looked like adventurers climb up the walls and hastily cull down the mages using various skills and techniques. That was not all, he could see multiple fluctuations in the air, evidence of the stealth skill used by the assassins.

When di the enemy...

"Just because the enemy was unable to break through the defence of the tainted Knights, you became conceited and forgot about the fact that the enemy also possesses elite units. You stationed all the tainted knights towards the gates, leaving the Hellfire Artillery Unit who have just expended

a ton of mana, Vulnerable. Naturally, any enemy with sharp eyes would not let go of this opportunity".

The general remarked in a calm manner; however, those who knew the man, would know the general was far more intimidating when he calm like that.

With cold trepidation running through his back, Marshall Cavalier, bowed his head and urgently apologised.

"Hmph, since it is a blunder you made, naturally, you will be the one to rectify it" The general snorted and placed his attention somewhere else on the battlefield. At this moment, numerous battles have broken all over the base of the wall.

"Yes," Cavalier nodded and looked at the numerous corpses of the Hellfire Mage Unit. His heart ached when he saw them lying on the wall, dead.

It needs to be mentioned that raising each of these elite mages was not an easy task even for their kingdom of Blackthorn. Each of these mages was a huge investment from the perspective of Blackthorn.

The death of even one would represent a loss of enormous resources not to mention this many at once. Needless to say, Marshall Cavalier's eyes turned red when he saw this scene. The one who was responsible for this blunder was him as such, when they returned back to the kingdom he would have to answer to the king.

"Bastards, it seems like you all really intend to piss me off. Be it then, do you think you are the only ones who possess an Elite Assassin unit?"

He gave a vicious smirk as he looked at the princess in the distance. After which, he furiously commanded, "Dread Reaper's Brigade... it's time for your mission".

At his command, immediately numerous figures wearing pitch black robes and covering their faces with masks, materialised. Looking at them one would be able to draw similarities between them and the assassin who visited Cynthia a couple of days ago.

They were the elite assassin unit of Blackthorn, the Dread Reaper's Brigade. Additionally, they were a hidden division whose existence was only known by His Majesty the King and a few high ranking officials of Blackthorn.

"What is your command, Marshall" Numbering in the hundreds, the assassins bowed their head and asked for command.

The latter immediately pointed to the battlefield below "Do you see those smart asses hiding within the enemy army? They are the culprits responsible for the casualties of many of our mages from the Hellfire Artillery Unit. Your mission is to bring me their heads".

His words contained violent anger and murderous intent. Clearly, he had forgotten about keeping his façade of a smiling face. The Dread Reaper's Brigade nodded their heads and disappeared into tiny black particles.

"Let's see how you respond to that" Marshall Cavalier sneered as he glanced at Cynthia. The latter sensed his gaze and a moment later, she narrowed her eyes. Thanks to the powerful beast soul within her, she could clearly sense the presence of those elite assassins even though they had disappeared from one's vision.

"So the Blackthorn has finally used another of their trump cards huh" From the way she muttered that and her relaxed face, it seemed that the appearance of the Dread Reaper's Brigade did not cause any surprise to her.

And in actuality, so was the case. Ordinary people only knew about the Tainted Knight Unit and a little bit about the Hellfire Artillery Unit. However, aside from those two units that the forces of Blackthorn deliberately showcased, Cynthia was aware of the other elite division that the kingdom of Blackthorn kept a secret from the outsiders.

The Dread Reaper's Brigade was one of them. Of course, the reason why she knew all this information was all thanks to the people Simon sent to aid her. If not for them, she would have been unable to come this far.

In any case, the reason why the appearance of the elite assassin unit did not faze her, was because she already had measures prepared and had already briefed her army about it. Thanks to that, they were able to promptly respond to the hidden attacks from the members of these elite units.

As could be seen on the battlefield, the teams of adventurers from the tower town were the first to respond to these hidden enemies and engage with them. Having a plethora of experience under their belt, the Dread Reaper's Brigade might be a headache for other ordinary members of the army.

However, for the elite adventurers of the tower, they were no threat. In fact, they were used to dealing with enemies far more powerful, trickier and difficult to deal with than these assassins.

As such, when the Dread Reaper's Brigade tried to ambush, they were swiftly intercepted and a fierce clash erupted out.

"This!! How in the world?" On top of the wall, when Marshall Cavalier saw this scene he was once again astounded. It was one thing that the enemy was able to respond to their hellfire Artillery Unit, after all, they had flashed such a unit quite boldly and grandly.

However, the Dread Reaper's Brigade was a covert division of their second army and shouldn't have been known by anyone. Yet from the way the enemy swiftly reacted, it seemed that they were already aware of this unit.

What kind of nonsense was this? For the first time in this long drawn out war, Marshall Cavalier was the one who suffered a drawback.

"They are reading you like the back of their palms" The general commented seemingly seeing through the same thing.

"This can't be... they are merely a third grade country. How can they see through my plan?"

For a short moment, Marshall Cavalier was at a loss. However, it didn't seem like fate planned to give him any time as a subordinate came running towards him.

"Lord Cavalier, an Air Engine is approaching from the northwestern corner. Judging from the flag they are flying it belongs to the princess of the kingdom. What are your orders".

The subordinate reported, he was none other than the assassin who was sent to give a message to Cynthia. His face was covered with a mask and his expression could be seen. Though there was something different about him, something that wasn't there before.

Hearing the words of the subordinate, Cavalier's expression turned even uglier. He had led the force of the Blackthorn in numerous battles and never once did he feel this kind of stifling feeling where he felt he was being pushed on backfoot at every turn.

This foreign feeling that he was not used to made him feel extremely uneasy. Nevertheless, as someone who had climbed to the ranks of Marshall Cavalier knew how to conceal his emotions.

"Hmph" he snorted and replied "What's there to panic about? It's just one Air Engine. Drown them with our Skyfire Corps" Skyfire Corps, another formidable unit of the forces of the kingdom of Blackthorn.

Specialising in aerial combat and magical warfare, this unit comprised of highly trained knights and skilled mages. This elite corps operates from air engines equipped with powerful mana cannons and are responsible for maintaining air superiority in the skies and raining destruction on the enemy.

Equipped with advanced magic cannons and other state of the art weapons, the Skyfire Corps was another formidable and covert division of their second army.

So what if the enemy possessed an Air Engine? What a joke, their Skyfire Corps possessed dozens of medium grade Air Engines. Not only that, the members of this corps undergo rigorous training to master both traditional combat techniques and advanced magical abilities.

They are adept at manoeuvring their airships with precision, utilizing the element of surprise to gain the upper hand in battle. Additionally, their mastery of mana cannons allows them to unleash devastating magical attacks on ground targets and enemy air engines alike.

As one of the premier aerial divisions of the second army, the Skyfire Corps enjoys a reputation of unmatched firepower and unit that strikes fear into the hearts of the enemy, within the Kingdom of Blackthorn.

Naturally, Marshall Cavalier did not take a single Air Engine from the enemy side too seriously. However, after suffering so many drawbacks at the hands of that princess, he did not dare to take the kingdom's army lightly.

Which is why, he directly ordered the entire corps to fly up and shoot down the enemy. If not, he would have liked to keep the existence of the Skyfire Corps a secret decisive card. Nonetheless, it didn't seem like he had much leeway in this situation.

Chapter 836- Battle For The Capital (8)

Marshall Cavalier gave the orders for the Skyfire Unit to take flight and engage the enemy Air Engine. The assassin left to carry out the orders; however, he soon returned not much afterwards.

"Lord Cavalier"... "Hm?! What is it? Why did you return? Didn't I tell you to convey my orders to the Skyfire Corps?" Marshall Cavalier questioned. His eyes became solemn after he saw the subordinate breach his command.

The assassin trembled under that pressure; nevertheless, he still reported "About that, there is a problem"...

"What is it now?" it was just one thing after another.

"The Skyfire Corps.. they.. they have been completely annihilated" The assassin gave his report after much consideration.

"Huh?" Marshall Cavalier blinked his eyes, his brain failing to comprehend what was just said. "What did you say?" thinking that he might have heard wrong, he asked again.

"The Skyfire Corps... they have been eradicated. All the air engines have been destroyed..." right before he could complete his sentence, a hand grabbed him and pulled him above the ground.

"What do you mean that the Skyfire corps has been annihilated? They are our hidden card and have been stationed at the heart of our camp. How could an enemy sneak up there" Marshall Cavalier snarled as he lifted the assassin with his powerful.

"I-I don't know. When I went there to relay your orders, I saw the destroyed parts of the Air engine laying around and the corpses of the Skyfire unit on the ground" the assassin replied amidst his choked breaths.

BANG... Marshall Cavalier threw the subordinate and turned his back to look at the centre of their camp. The centre of their camp was still all silent and peaceful with not even a hint of any disturbance or commotion to be sensed.

What was going on? The Air Engines seem fine. Straining his eyes, he also saw the dozens of Air Engines from their kingdom still parked in the place they were in. Looking at the scene, they was no signs of the Skyfire Coprs being annihilated.

So why did his subordinate tell him that? Did he lie?

"Cavalier!! Careful behind you!!"

Just as those questions arrived on his mind, he heard the hurried warning from the general at the bastion not far away from him. At the same time, alarm bells rang in his head as cold killing intent locked onto him.

His senses honed from numerous battles, warned him of the incoming danger. Immediately, without turning around, Marshall Cavalier circulated the mana inside his body and activated [Mana Armour].

However, he was still a step too late. A cold blade flashed and a dagger pierced through his heart before the [mana Armour] could completely materialise.

Puff... Marshall Cavalier threw out a mouthful of blood and looked at the greyish black energy protruding from his chest. There was a faint extremely familiar miasma coming from it. This miasma was something unique to their kingdom of Balckthorn and only soldiers of their kingdom were allowed to wield it.

"You Traitor..." He spoke with a pained voice and hurriedly separated his body from the blade. That miasma had the effect to drain one's life force as such it was extremely dangerous.

In response, the figure that attacked him, used his other blade to stab him. This time, their target was his neck.

"Don't you dare underestimate me"

BANG... Marshall Cavalier roared and released his energy. The power released out of his body was like a berserk gale, fierce and overwhelming as it blasted the air around him and caused the attacker to hurriedly dodge away.

Clang... pulling the blade out of his back and throwing it on the ground, he turned towards the traitor who attacked him and glared at him with a venomous expression.

"You bastard, so you were the informant who was working for the enemy?!!" he cursed at the black robed figure wearing the mask. Needless to say, the person who attacked him was his subordinate the assassin.

Seeing that the assassin was silent and was not speaking anything, it pissed Cavalier even more.

"Say something dammit. Why did you betray us and join that lass? What benefit could she have provided you for you to point your blades at your own superior? Give me your answer before I kill you"

Faint greyish black miasma mixed with pale blue mana surged out of his body like a storm, creating a powerful air pressure. Nevertheless, even in the face of such a power difference, the assassin did not mutter anything and quietly clenched the dagger in his hand.

Nobody could see the weird glimmer that was covering his eyes. The next second, the assassin rushed forward and disappeared into tiny black particles.

"Bastard it seems like the enemy has completely won you over. In that case, once I defeat you, I will search your mind imprint myself" saying that Marshall Cavalier grimaced and stomped forward.

Immediately the ground shook and a shockwave spread around with him as the centre. BANG... the air towards his right fluctuated and a black figure was ruthlessly blown back. The assassin rolled on the ground, creating a long bloody ditch before coming to a stop.

"kuh" Just as he was about to get up, Marshall Cavalier appeared behind him and ruthlessly stomped his feet down.

"I want to know why would a dog that has been raised and bred by Blackthorn suddenly bite the hand that has raised it. Tell me" cracking noises of bones breaking could be heard continuously as the pressure under the foot increased.

"There is no point in doing this Cavalier. You should know how the Dread Reaper's Brigade is created. The mind imprint placed on them allows them to forever be loyal to Blackthorn. For a high

ranking member of that brigade to suddenly betray us, could only mean that either his mind imprint was removed or he is under the influence of someone else"

The general spoke, his eyes contained cold light as he observed the assassin. As the general of the second army, he was of course aware of some of the secrets of Blackthorn and knew how the elite forces of their army were created.

Which is why, he knew that the assassin did not betray them. No, he was incapable of doing so in the first place. The mind imprint on all the soldiers of Blackthorn manages all the information they know.

As such, even if the enemy wants to, they won't be able to change their mind and cause them to betray Blackthorn as they did. In this regard, all the elite units of Blackthorn were like robots, built only to follow commands.

For someone like them to betray Blackthorn, meant that either their mind imprint was removed or that they were under the influence of someone. Someone that could remove or worse influence someone even while under the mind imprint placed by that being, even the general felt a tinge of uneasiness.

"Tsk" Marshall cavalier clicked his tongue, and stopped the needless interrogation. Now that he was calm, he understood very well that there was no point in his action.

Just as he was about to finish off the assassin, he saw the latter smile from his cracked mask. The next instant, a loud bang rang off in the distance followed by a savage shockwave that swept off all around the capital.

Puzzled by that sudden loud noise, both the general and Marshall turned their heads around only for their eyes to widen in shock the next instant. A huge debris cloud rose as high as a few hundred feet towards the sky and looked just like a mushroom cloud.

It covered a large distance and was devastating enough to shatter the very land. As unexpected as the blast was, it wasn't the reason why the general and the Marshall were so shocked.

"Isn't that area where the Skyfire cops were stationed?" the general asked his eyes visibly shaken.

Marshall Cavalier nodded his head, equally astonished. If that blast came from the area where the Skyfire Corps, there could only be one meaning. Just as the worst case scenario appeared in their mind, from the corner of their eyes they noticed that the assassin was suddenly bleeding from all of his seven orifices.

The mask covering his identity broke apart and a bright light erupted out of his eyes. The light only appeared for a fraction of a second before disappearing, following which the body of the assassin started inflating in a rather bizarre way.

His muscles puffed, veins bulged and soon he became just like a bloated disfigured balloon.

"Self destruct?! Cavalier quickly get away from there" The general who was the first one to react to the assassin unusualness, hurriedly cautioned. Taking caution, Cavalier promptly tried to distance himself; however, he was a step too late.

Following the previous loud blast, another resounding explosion occurred on top of the city walls. The forces of the kingdom of Balckthron and even the army of the kingdom they were fighting, all separated a portion of their attention to observe the top of the walls.

While those on the know, sneered as they saw the plan unfolding exactly as they were briefed about. Outside the walls, in the distance, Annette slowly straightened her glasses as a faint sneer also appeared on her face at this moment.

"The Air Engine has reached the skies of the capital. It looks like Sir Theodre and Miss Mayebll were able to successfully compltel the their mission" Cynthia commented not noticing the unusual behaviour on the woman next to her.

"It appears so, now that they have casued chaos among the ransk of the enemy, they should be soon joining us" Annette added.

Chapter 837- Knight Captain

The mission Theodore, Maybell and their group was given was to infiltrate the ranks of the enemy and report all about their action, strategies and hidden cards. If possible, destroy a few.

Since a large explosion noise erupted out, it was an indication that they had completed their mission.

"Now that the enemy has lost one of their trump cards, they won't sit still. The higher ups of their forces are sure to show their faces. Let's head there too, at that time we will have to join the battle"

Cynthia ordered and started heading inside with her group. Back on top of the wall, a miserable figure shot and rolled heavily against the ground while leaving a deep ditch behind. Only after the figure rolled for dozens of meters, did they finally come to a stop.

"Bastard!!"

After a couple of seconds, that figure which had implanted itself deep into the ground, came out with a furious roar. When the surrounding tainted knights saw who it was, their eyes immediately widened in surprise and disbelief.

That is because the figure whose entire hair was burned, skin scarred and clothes tattered and who made quite the sorry figure, was none other than Marshall Cavalier, the second most powerful figure who commanded the entirety of the second army.

At this moment, he looked extremely haggard and exhausted, as if he just suffered a grave damage.

What was going on? Why did the marshall look like that and who did this to him? Countless people had the same question. Needless to say, the current appearance of the Marshall was enough to shock all of the force of Blackthorn and falter their morals.

"Bastard, I will kill that lass" Cavalier cursed once again as powerful mana erupted out of his body. His form looked like he was just about to rush out and clash with the princess.

"Calm down, Cavalier. It is too soon for you to join the battle" The general appeared beside him with a flash and stopped him.

"Hold on for a little while, when the time comes you can naturally take your revenge. That said, it sure is a surprise that she was able to corner us this far. I guess her earlier challenge to us wasn't without reason. To think that she was able to play you like a fiddle, I guess she does possess some extraordinariness"

The general smirked. Even though everything seemed like it had gone wrong and their side was pushed on the backfoot, the smile on his face was yet to fade.

"Hmph, she only knows how to use crafty little schemes like this. In a head on battle between our armies, no matter how shrewd she is, she will still lose. Once we send our elites, this deadlock will quickly overturn. At that time, I will make that lass pay for everything"

Marshall Cavalier spoke while making a bitter expression and reeling in pain. The matter this time had put a large blotch on his career and would reflect poorly when they returned back to Blackthorn triumphantly.

At that time, His Majesty might even call him into his audience chamber and ask him for the reason for his failure. If the former deemed him useless, they might even strip him of his position and make him a tainted soldier just like the others.

Just the thought of being refined into a cold unfeeling warrior that only followed commands, sent shivers down his spine. No matter what, he has to wash his slate clean by achieving victory in this war.

"So you are finally willing to use that huh"

In front of the unsurprised eyes of the general, Cavalier took a small cylindrical pipe from his space ring. The next second, he extended it towards the sky and pulled on the string attached to its lower end.

Immediately, a light broke out of the mouth of the pipe and raced towards the sky following which, it burst apart in a splendid and magnificent display of fireworks.

"Hmoh, little tricks can only take you so far. In front of overwhelming power, everything is useless. Tainted Knight Commanders, it's time for you to take the field and show our enemies the true terror of fighting against a tainted knight"

On his signal, several figures broke out of the neighbouring buildings and appeared in front of the tainted knight legion. Decked in greyish black gears, the quality of which far surpassed the other tainted knight soldiers, the figures that appeared clearly gave off a different atmosphere.

It was not just their appearance, but even the aura they gave off far outclassed the average tainted knights. If one were to consider the tainted knight legion as an incomplete product then the ones standing in front of them right now, was the complete product.

Anyone could see that they were different. Once the tainted knight commanders appeared, they unsheathed their ominous looking blades and immediately erupted with their skills. Quickly, they overwhelmed the opposing army and firmly stopped their advance.

SHIING... With every swing of their blades, numerous bodies would be culled down, shocking and causing fear to spread amongst the kingdom's army.

"Hehe, look at that. The opponent isn't anything special" Marshall Cavalier laughed. He shouted out his orders and the Tainted commanders immediately started a killing frenzy.

Not only that, but on his command they also rushed forth and encircled the wall, completely trapping the army. With the appearance of the Tainted commanders, the flow quickly shifted towards the side of Blackthorn.

They suppressed the princess' army with their powerful strength and brought death wherever they unleashed their strength. The number of casualties quickly started piling up and the morale of the army started faltering.

The change could also be observed in the kingdom's camp where all the nobles were. At this moment, all their faces were ashen and distorted in an ugly fashion. The appearance of this new trump card from the enemy was quite a bit surprising.

However, the reason why their facial expression was twisted in such an unsightly and grotesque manner was that some of the figures among the tainted commanders weren't unfamiliar to them.

In fact, they were quite familiar with a few of them as their reputation had once shaken the kingdom.

"H-How... How can he of all people stand on the side of the enemy. This is impossible" ...

"No, we might be seeing things. That person only looks like that guy. He will never side with the enemy" ...

"Are you guys all blind? Open your eyes wide. There is no way he is an impostor. That strength and skill with the sword, only one man in the kingdom possessed it"

The nobles fiercely discussed among themselves to the point where they even started cursing and shouting at each other. Clearly, from their behaviour it could be assumed that the scene in front of them was not natural.

They who looked at the greyish black figures who appeared to have changed the tide of the battle, numerous expressions flashed past their faces. Shocked, disbelief, anger, confusion, all kinds of emotions appeared; nevertheless, the emotion that was the most prevalent on their faces was confusion.

Why would it not after all, the greyish black figures that appeared after that signal from the Marshall looked extremely familiar. In fact, quite a few of them belonged from the kingdom and had quite a reputation.

Among them, the one who stole their attention was naturally the figure that was the most eye catching of them all. Short curly hair the colour of chestnut, hazel eyes, sharp eyebrows and a perfectly carved facial contour.

The man looked like the very definition of what a knight should look like. His tall stature coupled with his lean and defined physique allowed him to perform all kinds of movements. The man who at this moment culling the soldiers of their army was none other than the Knight Captain of the Royal Guards, the man whose legendary feats still rang out around the kingdom, Cyrus Skyler.

For a guy like that who was basically like the pillar of their faith and support, the person who they thought had died defending the capital, to turn towards the enemy's side. Naturally the observing nobles would be confused, enraged and in disbelief.

The nobles weren't the only ones who noticed Cyrus' appearance. Cynthia and her group who had reached the city gates, also noticed him.

"How can this be?" the former's eyes were widened in shock as she saw that familiar figure culling down the soldiers of their army and standing against them.

That figure which had once given them a great amount of assurance and dependability when they were young, was now standing before them as an enemy. Even Cynthia who had encased her heart with layers of ice, couldn't help but be shaken when she saw the figure of Cyrus. Her eyes stared at the man for a couple of seconds before it turned towards her friend beside her.

If even she was like this after seeing him, then Alvara who was directly related to this man, would be unable to control her emotions. Just as she had thought, the moment Alvara saw Cyrus, her body stopped as if she had suddenly been frozen and her eyes which had been sharp and cold until now just like a blade, suddenly turned glossy.

Tears welled over at the corner of her eyes and before long, they slid down her smooth fair cheeks.

"Big Brother..." finally unable to hold down her emotions, her lips parted and she uttered those words that she yearned for.

Chapter 838- Knight Captain (2)

The man who was her big brother and her only family after the death of their parents, the one who raised, pampered and trained her. The man who was like a big brother and father to her... only she knew the pain she felt when he insisted on staying behind while he stayed behind and protected them from the enemies.

At that moment, she wanted to tell him to come with them; however, in the end, she couldn't after she saw the light of resolution in his eyes. He had determined to himself to fight the enemy till his last breath.

Seeing him once again appear in front of her eyes, how could she hold herself back? Immediately, she tugged the Banemoose under her and raced towards him. However, before she could get any closer, Cynthia raced along and blocked her path.

"Calm down Alvara, that person... no matter how similar they look, he is not your big brother" A look of struggle flashed past her eyes as she said those words.

When Alvara heard those words, her eyes held traces of fury as she replied back. "Wha... how can you say that princess? He is Cyrus Skyler, my brother. How can you fail to recognise the man who has been protecting the royal family so many years?"

It was not like they hadn't fought before. However, those quarrels were long in the past when they were young. After they grew up there was seldom any moment where they disagreed with each other on some points much less argued like that.

Today was one of these rare moments. Facing the harsh words of the obviously enraged Alvara, Cynthia did not get mad instead a look of compassion and empathy appeared on her face.

As someone who had also lost her family, she knew very well what her friend was going through. The sea of emotions that was raging inside her and the resentment she must be going through right now. It was precisely because she understood that she didn't want her friend to lose her path.

"Look at him, even if the body is the same as the knight captain, he is no longer the same person. The person I respect the most, your big brother would rather die than stand in our way. Did your emotions blind you completely for you not to be able to see that? Your brother, Cyrus Syler is gone" Cynthia held Alvara's shoulders and gave her a strong jolt.

Finally, as if her words went through the latter, the turbulence in her eyes dissipated and she hurriedly collected herself.

"Please excuse my earlier outburst, princess. I did not mean the words I just said earlier, I was simply not myself"

The first thing Alvara did after regaining her clarity was apologise to the princess who was also her close friend. Then she turned her eyes towards the interior of the city where she saw the figure of her brother.

It was just as Cynthia had said, her brother did not seem like himself. Not only did he look extremely pale with sunken eyes and dark circles, but his face also looked craggy and weather beaten as if they had gone through some kind of terrible experience.

On top of that, those eyes which he used to glance at others, no longer retained the same life as they did before and looked lost and grey just like a dead person.

Most of all, Cyrus Skyler, her brother and the knight captain would never stand against the soldier of his own kingdom. The person in front of her was no longer her brother but a different being completely.

"Alvara are you alright?" At this moment, Burg, Marba and her other companions also caught up with her. They raised their heads and looked at their friend with concern.

"That person..." Burg opened his mouth to say something but Alvara already perceived what he was going to say and smiled. "I know, that person is not my brother".

Seeing her finally come to terms with herself, all of them quietly sighed a breath of relief. Honestly, more than the appearance of the the Kinght Captain, they were more worried about their friend.

"I sense the faint aura similar to the tainted knights on the body of the Knight captain" Cynthia commented, observing the new tainted knight soldiers with her eyes that had transformed into a pure white lion eyes.

A wild and ancient aura emanated out of her body and the changes slowly started spreading from her eyes to all of her body.

"Those bastards, they must have done something to Sir Cyrus. I will definitely not forgive them for desecrating his honour like that" Burg muttered as killing intent surged from his body.

As one of the knights of the royal family, he had the honour of receiving guidance from the Knight Captain. Since then, he considered the latter his teacher. It was not only him, everyone including Cynthia had received some form of guidance from the knight captain when they were young. Naturally, seeing him like this pissed all of them.

"The soldiers on the front won't be able to stop them. The adventurers are also being held back by the Dread Reaper's Brigade. It looks like we can't sit still and have to intervene"

18:01

Spoke the old assassin, Brett. As a veteran adventurer previously, he was able to see the situation in the battleground much more clearly than the others.

Burg and the others nodded their heads. They were about to make their moves, when Annette waved her hand to stop them.

"There is no need for you guys to intervene yet. The Air Engine has reached the optimal height, soon it will be raining hell over there. Leave it to Blake and his team. And besides, Theodore, Maybell and her group are also there. If the situation seems like it will go out of control, we will naturally intervene".

Annette's words were reasonable and was well thought out. They naturally had no qualms following it. Besides, she had been in charge of their tactics and strategies since before the war started.

Her numerous strategies that brought them victory every single time, gained their trust over time.

BOOOM... over at the battlefield, a resounding boom sounded out for the umpteenth time. While Cynthia and her group watched over from the distance, the Air Engine finally reached the battlefield.

Following which, one barrel after another fell from the sky. The moment they landed on the ground, they would explode in a powerful blast.

BOOM... BOOMM... following the first barrel, more and more explosions took place in the chaotic battlefield. Miserable screams and howls of agony continuously rang out from inside the flames, producing numerous scorched figures.

With each deafening explosion, billowing clouds of smoke and flames erupted into the air, casting a hellish glow over the scene below. The concussive force of the blasts was immense, knocking soldiers off their feet and hurling them through the air like ragdolls.

The ground trembled beneath their feet, threatening to swallow them whole as the relentless onslaught of explosions continued unabated.

The already chaotic battlefield became even more chaotic. The screams of the wounded and dying pierced the air, mingling with the crackling of flames and the roar of detonations creating an ominous cacophony.

Through the haze of smoke and fire, Cynthia and her group watched with bated breaths as the devastation unfolded before their eyes. Needless to say, the agonising screams and the charred bodies twisted by the merciless onslaught were from the Blackthorn's side.

Not a single soldier from their kingdom of Ellsemere was caught up in it. With the appearance of the Air Engine and the barrels that were filled with overloaded core stones dropping from the sky, the flow of the tide which had turned towards the Blackthorn's side, flipped over once again.

The battlefield had been transformed into a nightmarish landscape of destruction and despair, where death lurked at every turn. With gritted teeth and steely determination, Cynthia, Alvara and her group saw barrels of core stones down the figure of Cyrus Skyler.

BOOOOM... in the next second flames that reached hundreds of feet towards the sky, engulfed the figure of the Knight captain within.

Clench... Alvara slowly clenched her fists, her body trembled and her eyes became red from all the pent up emotions that surged within her heart. Nevertheless, with an unshakable resolve she took a deep breath and suppressed all of it down.

"Don't worry we won't let his sacrifice go to vain. We will definitely take the kingdom back from the enemies"

Cynthia commented from beside her. She vowed to press on, leading her comrades into the heart of the battlefield that was currently raging with inferno.

Over at the sky, inside the Air Engine. A man whistled out as she saw the pillars of flames rising high to the sky from the land. Looking from up here, it looked like a volcano was raging as it quickly spewed out hot geysers of flames.

"Although it's wasteful and my heart burns when using them like this, the devastating power they release really feels great. It feels like dropping the judgement of god from the sky"

The man laughed, he was none other than Wyot. Beside him were Blake, Frida and the others. Currently, they were overloading the core stones inside these barrels and throwing them down on the enemy. A tactic that they had already practised and tried against Castledor. And given its previous success, they had integrated this tactic into their strategy.

Chapter 839- Knight Captain (3)

"As expected of Her Highness, only someone like her would be able to splurge core stones like this"

Using core stones as bombs, even they had to admit that the power of all these core stones packed in a single barrel was enough to even give them horrors. Their hearts heavy with shock and dread at the sight of such wanton destruction.

The power of the bombs was undeniable, their impact leaving behind a landscape of desolation and despair. As they saw the previously terrifying Tainted Knights unit turn into scorched bodies, even they felt their scalps tingle.

"This was the last of it. From the looks of it, the core stones were able to deal some significant damage to the enemy's lineup. However, it is unlikely that it will be able to finish off those new Tainted knights. We need to also join the battle, let's go"

Blake looked down. On his command, all of them dropped down from the Air Engine, except for a few mages responsible for flying it.

As Blake and the others plummeted towards the capital, each of them used their own abilities to slow down their fall.

BANG... raising a cloud of dirt, they landed on the ground and stood in front of the kingdom's army.

"We will handle it from here. You guys are not their match, swiftly pull back" Blake ordered taking the charge.

At this moment, numerous other individuals who were hiding themselves within the lineup of soldiers, also showed themselves as they stood beside Blake and the others. All of them wore gears of excellent quality and varying colours and shapes.

The insignia they wore on their garbs were also different and came in all kinds of patterns. From this one could tell that these large groups of people all belonged to different factions. What's more, given their auras, they weren't weak either and gave off powerful fluctuations that made them shudder deep down in their hearts.

Who could this group of high level people be other than the adventurers of the tower town? Right now, they have stopped hiding and proceeded with the strategy they were briefed about by Her Highness, the princess.

"Hahaha, Blake you should leave this to our Sword and Shield guild. We will ensure that the princess achieves a flawless victory against these thieves" A man with piercing eyes and a big build, spoke.

"What is the vice guild master of the Sword and Shield saying? Obviously, you should leave this to our Sword of Darkness Guild. The enemy's lineup is strong, it is only appropriate for us to handle it since we owe her highness quite a bit"

Following the big built man, another man stepped forward. This one was a head shorter than the vice guild leader of the sword and Shield guild. However, the peculiar aura that surrounded his body, told others that he couldn't be underestimated.

"Is the second head of the Sword of Darkness guild implying that we are unable to deal with the enemies? In that case, why not let us show you if we are capable or not"...

"That's right, we also have a great debt to repay to the princess. Why don't you all step back and let my Starling Guild handle this"..

After the first two people, more and more vice guild masters and second heads of their guild, stepped forward to engage with the tainted commanders. All of them were brimming with energy and excitement, a stark contrast to the other hellish and gloomy atmosphere of the war.

"These people.. it looks like adventurers really are a bunch of groups who aren't able to sense the atmosphere. Competing at a moment like this" the elite soldiers under Cynthia, laughed as they saw this scene.

After travelling long and and far with these people they were now somewhat familiar with each other. Thus they knew that if there was anyone among their army who could stop the group of new tainted soldiers it was this merry group of adventurers who came from the tower town.

Over at the area where the enemy lineup was, Marshall's Cavalier expression was extremely ugly and twisted when he saw the scene in front of him.

Reflected in his eyes was the raging crimson inferno that covered the land where their forces were. As far as his eyes could see, he saw charred black corpses, wailing knights, miserable screams of the Hellfire Artillery Unit and their disorderly formation.

If one had to say it, this was a completely new sight for Cavalier after all, ever since rising up to the position of Marshall in the second army and taking control of its forces, this was the first time in many battles that he saw their forces in a disadvantage like this. Naturally, he was unable to react to this new development.

Seeing the former like this, the General sighed and for the first time, made his move. "Cavalier, you are hereby relieved of your duties. I shall now command the second army myself. You are to standby and recover your strength and aid the tainted commanders when needed"

Saying so, the General stepped forward and appeared in the sky above the battlefield. Bright greyish black mana wings spread from his back and extended for more than ten feet. After which, they gave a forceful flap and the inferno raging in the land was immediately swept away.

Like a typhoon it quickly doused the pillars of flames, saving those tainted knights and mages who were about to be caught up in it. All it took was a flap from his wings to quench the flames that erupted from the hundreds of overloaded core stones.

From this, one could tell how powerful the general was.

The moment his figure appeared in the sky, he instantly drew all attention towards him. Those ominous wings retracted back into his body in front of the numerous gazing eyes as the General slowly landed on the ground.

"Haha, I have to say, I didn't expect you all to be able to push us this far. The second army that I command is already in disarray with numerous casualties lying around. This alone is enough to prove your ability"

"Marshall Cavalier did not take you seriously and thus suffered a great defeat under your hands. However, I won't make the same mistake. You have proven that you need to be taken seriously as such, I officially declare the start of the real war"

His words empowered by his mana transmitted across the entire battlefield. Immediately, numerous shadowy figures gathered around him. There were tainted commanders, Elite assassins from the Dread Reaper's Brigade and even high ranking mages who never showed their faces among the Hellfire Artillery Unit.

At this moment all of them gathered around the general, their number was not even the least bit lower than the elite adventurers who had been hiding and showed their faces right now.

However, that was not all, after the debris and dust clouds from the battlefield settled down, the previous tainted knights who had been besieged by the barrels full of core stones also showed their appearances at this moment and marched forward.

Even those tainted commanders who had been drowned by the explosions earlier, showed their appearances.

Seeing how little they were affected by that powerful bombing it seemed that it didn't do much damage to them.

"Knight Captain..." Burg and the others looked at the commanding presence who strove at the forefront of the tainted commander unit and spoke. Their eyes contained a deep respect and fear for this person.

Despite being bombarded by powerful attacks, the knight captain stood still like a mountain. His muscles had been charred black and half of his skeletal face was exposed. However, the powerful aura he gave off was yet to diminish a little.

While all their attention was on the knight captain, Alvara suddenly unsheathed her sword drawing the attention of Cynthia and the others.

"I cannot allow them to disrespect the honour of my brother anymore" She pointed it at the man standing in front of the tainted commanders and spoke. After which she turned towards Cynthia and asked—

"You Highness, please allow me to engage with the enemy commander. As his blood relative and sister, it is my duty to see the Knight captain off".

The princess looked at her friend and saw the resolve in her eyes. That resolve that burned quietly within her like a raging fire and was simply impossible to quench.

Seeing her like that, Cynthia took a deep and slowly nodded her head. Just as she was about to give her orders, she saw Burg, Marba and the others similarly turn towards her and ask her for permission to engage the knight captain.

"What?!! Why... why are you all... there is no need for you all to risk your lives. This is a family matter, as his little sister, it is my duty to send him off and stop him from being used by the enemy anymore"

Alvara spoke startled by the fact that Burg and the others wanted to join in.

"Haha, what are you saying, Guard Captain? This is not just your personal family matter. Each of us has received training from the knight Captian and we consider him a family too. It pains our hearts as much as yours to see him being used like that. As such, it is our duty too to stop him from killing the people of his own kingdom that he gave his life for to protect" Burg explained, giving a bitter smile.

The others also nodded their heads at those words.

Chapter 840- Knight Captain (4)

"But... But fighting him is very dangerous. I don't know what the Blackthorn did to him; however, his skills are still the same and haven't lost their edge" Alvara was concerned that her brother might hurt her comrades.

"Of course, how could fighting the strongest knight captain in the entire kingdom not be filled with dangers? I would expect no less from a man of his calibre. However, guard captain won't it be dangerous for you too? And as a big brother, do you think Sir Cyrus would want to see you hurt?"

At Burg's question, Alvara gently bit own her lips with nothing to retort.

"We are coming too. We will make sure that you are able to send Sir Cyrus off. And besides, the knight captain might be strong; however, haven't we gone through our fair share of battles? We are no longer the people we used to be. We have become a lot stronger during this time".

Silence filled the place as Alvara looked at her teammates. The emotions flashing through their eyes were something that only people who had gone through life and death together would understand.

As Burg had said, if it was the previous them, then perhaps they would have stood no chance against the knight captain. However, they have changed significantly over the last year.

Not only have they crawled out of their way in certain death situations, they have fought numerous bloody battles that almost killed them. Their levels have increased significantly and their skill have sharpened. They were no longer the weak guards who couldn't even protect the princess.

"Aren't you all forgetting about something? You might be knights and mages employed by the royal family. However, after you came to my Serene Palace guild, you swore your allegiance to me. That is to say, you all are no longer royal knights but my personal guards. Isn't it natural that you ask for my opinion first before you go on deciding all that?"

From the side, Cynthia spoke. Her beautiful crescent eyebrows were arched in an arc at this moment. Immediately, the boisterous group turned silent and turned towards Cynthia, their eyes pleading.

Seeing them like this, the latter sighed. Her eyebrows relaxed and a beautiful helpless smile appeared on her face.

"It is as Burg said, Sir Cyrus is someone we all respect and have received guidance from. There is no way I will see the honour of the most bravest and strongest knight captain of the royal family to be desecrated by the enemies like that. Alvara, you will lead my personal guards and personal see to Sir Knight captain. He had served this kingdom enough, make it so that he is able to rest in peace"...

"Yes"

Burg and the other roared. following which, they made their way towards the front of the army.

At this moment, with the appearance of the general, the chaotic war had suddenly come to a standstill. However, this standstill didn't last long and was soon shattered when the General gave the signal.

Immediately, solid grey energy realised in droves out of the tainted commander as they roared and trebled intensely. Their roar sounded just like the roar of a feral beast who had been kept in captivity all this time, and was suddenly released.

The kind of aura they released, immediately terrorised most of the weak level soldiers. The next second, with a snap that cracked the ground, they shot towards the kingdom's army and started butchering like crazy.

They were just like hungry wolves who had snuck into a pen full of cattle. Of course, the wolves were the tainted commanders.

None of the soldiers could block a tainted commander. In a matter of few seconds, the tide had turned in the favour of the kingdom of Blackthorn. Thus the war began in the truest sense.

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"Hoh!!"

Standing high up in the sky, the general glanced at the situation on the battlefield. His eyes narrowed slightly when it brushed past the area where he saw a certain group of people stop the tainted commanders.

"Would you look at that, the Princess' army does have some skilled soldiers. Hmph, so that's where they were hiding".

The place he was looking at, happens to be the area where the pressure of the tainted commander was the slightest as a large of people had stepped forward to stop them. It was the adventurers from the tower town.

"Haha, these Tainted soldiers are not bad, not bad at all. They are a good target for levelling up"

On one corner of the battlefield, a vice guildmaster raised his sword and spoke. His blade was drenched red and numerous bodies lay in front of him and his teammates.

"Haha, you are right, they are good targets for levelling. Listen up everyone! For now, kill as many as you can, this is our chance"

It was not only that vice guild master, but other vice heads and bosses of their guilds, who were going on a killing spree also shouted the same.

Not far away, looking at them Blake couldn't help but shake his head. Those fools, they really didn't know how to read the mood. He sighed, turned towards his teammates and said with a smile.

"If everyone's ready, let's join in the fun".

Right afterwards, he and his team also charge towards the enemy. They fought with the many tainted commanders and stopped them in their tracks. Individually, all of the adventurers here were at least all above level 400.

Plus with their excellent coordination with their team that had been forged after fighting numerous monsters and life and death battles, they were easily able to stop the Tainted commanders.

Although the number of the tainted commanders was slightly higher than them, they who were already used to fighting in a disadvantageous situation, did not back down.

Looking at the situation from the sky, the general snorted. Just when he was about to take action, his eyes were involuntarily drawn towards another part of the battlefield where he saw a group of people valiantly stop the Tainted commanders.

Although this group was far less in number than the adventurers of the tower town, they were nonetheless still able to hold their own.

"Hmm? Isn't that one of the perfected tainted commander whose body was able to easily handle the erosion? To think that even a perfect tainted commander would be stopped, things have really started going awry"

The General's expression fluctuated as he looked at the scene below. His eyes contained surprise that wasn't there even when he glanced at the adventurers stopping the tainted commanders on the other side of the battlefield.

The reason for that was because this side had one factor that the other side didn't, namely the Perfect Tainted commanders.

Perfect tainted commander— there might just be a single difference in the name; however, this single difference represented a vast gulf. The difference between a Perfect Tainted Commander and a regular one was like night and day, and the general knew it all too well.

While both shared the same title, the distinction lay in the depths of their power and the resilience of their bodies. Truth be told, a normal tainted commander cannot be considered a perfect product.

A Perfect Tainted Commander was a rarity, an anomaly even among the tainted knights. Unlike their counterparts, their bodies had undergone a transformation so profound that it defied the limitations of conventional tainted knights.

During the tainted baptism, where most soldiers would experience a weakening of their physical form as their bodies struggled to integrate the external powers, only a body that remained unyielding and did not reject the external power, can be said to be the perfect product.

This body that had been fortified by the taint, imbued them with strength and vitality beyond compare. Every fibre of their being resonated with the evil energies coursing through their veins, granting them unique prowess on the battlefield.

But it wasn't just their physical attributes that set them apart; it was their sheer mastery over their previous skills. While other tainted commanders struggled to control their powers, often succumbing to the chaotic influence of the taint, the Perfect Tainted Commander wielded their abilities with precision and finesse.

Not only do their levels do not deteriorate, but they still retain the skills they mastered over their life. Needless to say, a warrior who became a perfect tainted commander was a force to reckon with.

In the eyes of the general, the presence of a Perfect Tainted Commander on the battlefield changed the equation entirely. Its power that left nought but destruction in its wake should be able to overwhelm the army of the kingdom.

No matter what unconventional tactics or schemes the princess used, in front of the brute force that the perfect tainted commander represented, all their struggle would be rendered moot.

Yet seeing that seemingly rare and perfected Tainted commander being stopped in its tracks, the general was naturally surprised. He knew who this person who was turned into a tainted commander was.

Not long after the army of the kingdom of Ellesmere fell, this man along with a small group of knights, stood behind to defend the capital. Naturally, that valiant figure who managed to cull down a significant number of their forces and even caused him and Marshall Cavalier to interfere at the end.

It was only then that this knight was put down. There was no way the general would forget about this figure whose body was so compatible with the tainted energy that the other tainted commanders could not even hold a candle against him.