

Darkness 411

Chapter 411 - The Final Decision

After Kahn finally managed to kill the Caladrius with his meticulous planning as he made it use its final card and delivered the Dimensional Cut thanks to his most powerful divine ability... he heaved a sigh of relief.

But instead of following his usual routine of absorbing the ability and skills of the legendary rank monster as he does every time... Kahn had different priorities at the moment.

The main reason being it would take him half a day just to complete the process and he didn't have that much time on hand as there was someone who needed immediate help.

Thud!!

Crack!!

Both Oliver and Blackwall woke up from their forced slumber and Kahn ordered the titan general to pull out the deceased Caladrius from the pitfall including its head.

As for Oliver, he commanded him to go back and bring back their warship that was 25 kilometers away, waiting for them to return.

Kahn then returned to the cave where Armin was still healing Cassandra with the best of his abilities. Her sweaty forehead and palms indicated that her body was under some sort of distressed situation while her aura seemed much weaker than before.

"Master... I can feel her soul and life force diminishing at a fast pace. Even my healing skills aren't working.

She doesn't have much time left." spoke Armin while his hands full of green glowing aura were moving over her body as he tried to heal her damaged soul.

"How much time does she have?" asked Kahn who stood behind them with a solemn expression.

"At best... she will live for 8 hours. Because she is a semi-saint, her soul was already stronger than normal people. But the damage she received was also many times more because of it.

I thought she'd have a day to live but minutes ago... her life force started dwindling quickly." replied Armin.

"Means there's a chance that we won't even have 8 hours." spoke Kahn with a somber voice.

Armin nodded in response, not denying the possibility.

Soon, their warship arrived and Kahn boarded it along with Armin. He left Oliver and Blackwall who already returned to their human forms in charge of bringing more warships and carrying the ginormous body of the Caladrius to the capital Aesir.

An hour later, they all returned to Kaldris, the site of the battle where the legendary rank monster attacked and had too many dead bodies of the fallen soldier.

Omega and Ronin had come this morning and brought all the war relief supplies and reinforcements as Kahn commanded before departing Aesir.

And now, Armin and Kahn had brought Cassandra into a mansion owned under Kahn's name that was close to the military outpost.

In the past hour alone, Cassandra's aura had dimmed by half.

"Master... tell me your final decision. The procedure can not wait for long. Her life force is diminishing rapidly.

If we wait... it will make things harder, even for me." said Armin.

Kahn who still had a conflicted expression spoke as he looked at Cassandra who seemed to be in physical agony despite being unconscious.

"I guess the saying is right..." he said and continued.

"The hardest choices require the strongest wills."

Spoke Kahn and gave a determined look to Armin.

"I will do it."

10 MINUTES LATER.

Kahn now slept beside Cassandra and intertwined his left palm's fingers with hers.

Not because he wanted to do the 'indecent handholding' but because Armin told him to do so.

"System, give me Armin's current stats." ordered Kahn while the Healer subordinate was preparing for the procedure.

[Following are the statistics, abilities & skills of the subordinate named Armin :

Name : Armin

Species : Heshen (Variant Hermit)

Job : The Pathfinder (Legendary Class)

Rank : High Lord

Level : 152

Strength : 2903

Agility : 1281

Dexterity : 5039

Defense : 2738

Mana : 9104

Following are the Physical abilities & skills :

Flora & Fauna (A Rank) (Passive) :

Allows the subordinate to make an innate telepathic connection with Plant & Animal lifeforms. The subordinate can command such lifeforms through his will.

Following are the Magical abilities & skills :

Atonement (S Rank) (Active) :

The subordinate can remove 3 status ailments & debuffs at once from allies present in 800 meter radius.

The range of the ability will rise with an increase in levels and rank.

Restoration (SS Rank) (Active) :

Allows the subordinate to heal allies to their previous physical state one minute ago.

Note : This skill does not work on deceased allies.

Guardian Spectre (S Rank) (Active) :

The subordinate can grant 2 times physical attack and defense buff to all the allies in a 900 meters radius using mana threads.

Chain Heal (S Rank) (Active) :

The subordinate can heal up to 26 allies at once in a 500 meter radius.

Elixir of Life (SSS Rank) (Active) :

Allows the subordinates to instantly regenerate 80% of a single ally's health and physical wounds.

Brewing (S Rank) (Passive) :

The subordinate has received an innate sense of understanding of the effects of herbs and medicines.

This ability may help in fastening the Alchemy procedure.

Infusion (S Rank) (Passive) :

Allows the subordinate to mix different elements in Potions and Medicines, giving the special elemental attributes.

Cell Control (SS Rank) (Active) :

The subordinate can control the bodies of any plant life or wood elemental monsters.

Resurrection (SAINT RANK) (Active) :

Allows the subordinates to bring back any ally or individual after the short time of their death.

Note : The Host is an exclusion to this ability as all the subordinates will die after the host has died.

The Resurrection procedure will require 10,000 A Rank mana cores or ores to successfully resurrect an ally in their peak state.

The higher ranked the target is, the more and high ranked source of mana will be needed.

Soul Reformation (LEGENDARY RANK) (Active) :

The subordinate can heal the damage done to anyone's soul over time and even make it stronger by two times.] replied the system.

"Are you ready master? This will hurt like hell." spoke Armin as he gave a serious gaze to Kahn.

Kahn nodded in response and spoke in affirmation.

"I am. After all... I always pay my debts."

Chapter 412 - Repaying Debt

Kahn now lay besides Cassandra whose condition seemed to be worsening with each passing hour. And after a reminded from Armin about the procedure being painful... Kahn braced himself for the agony he was about to go through soon.

There were two main reasons why Kahn made this decision to save Cassandra even at the cost of sacrificing a portion of his soul.

One of them being regardless of her reasons... the fact remained that Cassandra had indeed saved Kahn's life.

Because even if he had somehow managed to live after getting hit with that soul attack from Caladrius... he'd either faint or be in a helpless state where the legendary monster could simply kill him with any of its wind elemental skill.

Even Armin would not have been able to protect him in that state because Blackwall and Oliver had already fainted and he himself had no offensive skills or hiding skills to protect Kahn.

If not for Cassandra protecting him in that last moment with the protection barrier which was many times stronger and defensive compared to any barrier Kahn could cast himself as he was an Intermediate Rank magician as well... he managed to live and also fight back after he survived from that devastating skill.

Unlike some morons thinking that he was acting like a Simp... Any reasonable person with a self-consciousness would be able to see that he was actually repaying a life debt.

If he didn't do anything for the person who saved him from a certain death knowing that there was a way... Would Kahn be able to even call himself a man?

The second reason was pretty obvious. If she died... the wrath of the Mikealson Clan, the three noble factions defaming him throughout the empire would be extremely hard to deal with.

Although he had managed to kill of the Caladrius to quell the anger of the people and avenge the fallen soldiers of the military border... this would also raise unnecessary questions.

Because no semi-saint had ever managed to kill a legendary rank monster in the thousand years since the empire was formed. And Kahn didn't want to attract too much attention to this topic as it'd entail him revealing too many of his secrets he didn't want anyone to know.

Just then, Armin spoke as he placed few artifacts and runestones around them.

"Master, you will be in a weakened state for few days. And as I extract a portion of your soul... it will be unbearable.

So you will have to endure it no matter what. Because if we fail... your soul will be damaged just like her. Although you won't die... but the price to pay for it won't be cheap." warned Armin again.

"Begin." spoke Kahn and took a deep breath.

The following second, Armin moved behind the bed and placed his palms on both Kahn and Cassandra's heads.

Clink!

Clatter!

A large burst of green aura emitted from his body and shook the room. And that very aura then covered Kahn and Cassandra at the same time.

Crack! Crack!

BOOM!!

Kahn's black and red aura suddenly erupted out of his body and so did Cassandra's purple aura.

Kahn suddenly felt like his blood was being sucked out as his skin started becoming dry.

Crack!

Multiple cracks formed over skin regardless the part of the body and Kahn's felt like he had turned into a hard wooden tree that was completely dried up.

"Arrrrgghhh!!!" wailed Kahn and clenched his teeth.

At this moment, he felt like dying hundred deaths with each passing moment while thousands of spikes pierced through every inch of his body.

His breathing fastened and his body trembled in immeasurable pain.

"Aaaaahhhhhhh!!!" he screamed as his head felt like a massive hammer dropped on him and crushed his brain.

Just like Armin forewarned, extracting a part of someone's soul was a very excruciatingly painful method.

While Kahn kept wailing in agony... Blood started leaking out of his eyes and mouth. Soon, his ears started bleeding as well as if his inner organs had stopped functioning and burst inside his body.

"Arkkwhhh!" Kahn started choking on his blood.

He quickly spat out a chunk of it but still did not let go of Cassandra's hand.

Thanks to the SS rank Rapid Regeneration skill that he got from the Mountain Titan... he was healing very quickly as well.

However, that did not help in subsiding the agonizing pain in any way.

And as the procedure continued... Kahn roared and shouted like a madman inside the room but he was still enduring it despite all the pain.

Kahn was going through hell at this moment with his sheer will alone.

1 HOUR LATER.

After Kahn enduring this pain mind-wrecking agony for a full hour... Armin finally managed to take a balloon shaped bright white light with a faint blue tinge out of Kahn's body and using his green aura as his intangible hands... he covered Cassandra under it.

Kahn, who still held her hand felt like all of his energy was being passed from his body to Cassandra through their palms.

And under Armin's green aura... the blinding white light was completely absorbed by Cassandra's unconscious body.

"Phew! It is done..." said Armin as he looked at Kahn with an expression of relief.

However, his expression turned ashes the very next moment.

Kahn's sweaty and exhausted figure... had already fainted.

2 DAYS LATER.

"Waahh!!!"

Kahn, who now lay in his own bedroom suddenly jolted and finally woke up.

"My lord! You're awake!"

Ronin, who had been keeping on a guard and protecting Kahn spoke with a shocked expression.

"Ahh...." Kahn grabbed his head that felt like it would explode any minute.

"What are we doing here?" asked Kahn as he tried to regain his senses.

"We're back in Aesir. It has been two days since you fainted. We brought you here after taking care of everything at the Kaldris border." replied Ronin obediently.

Kahn's eyes suddenly widened as he asked...

"Where is she?!"

Ronin slightly bowed and replied in a gentle tone.

"We brought her here in secret with us as well. Currently, no one knows about her whereabouts.

The Mikealson Clan's envoy will reach here tomorrow.

She woke up yesterday evening. Armin is looking after her." he said. But the next second, his expression turned grim.

"Master... you should know that none of us are happy with your decision.

We know that you fancy her but going this far and risking your life to save that woman was simply too much!" yelled Ronin at Kahn.

Kahn simply rolled his eyes and replied with a poker face...

"Fuck off!"

Chapter 413 - The Answer

Kahn glared at Ronin in annoyance as he was misunderstood by the general who assumed that Kahn made the choice because of his so-called and nonexistent 'feelings' for Cassandra.

"I had my reasons. Just tell me where she is." he ordered.

"Ah... the first thing you asked for waking up is about her whereabouts and condition instead of worrying about yourself.

How am I in the wrong?" asked Ronin as she shrugged his arms.

"Do you want to die?" asked Kahn in response as he gave a deathly stare to Ronin.

"She's on the 3rd floor." replied Ronin who had a very ominous feeling at the moment.

After getting refreshed.. Kahn walked down and entered a grand bedroom right below his own on the third floor of his castle.

Creak....

He opened the door and entered inside.

Armin was still diligently healing while Cassandra in the bed, barely had the strength to move.

"How are you feeling?" asked Kahn as he sat on the bed beside her.

"Ah... you came. I thought you were in danger as well." said Cassandra as she let out a sigh of relief and tried to get up.

"Tell me... what happened? How am I still alive?"

I felt like she was about to die before I fainted." she queried with an exhausted voice.

Kahn on the other end... felt a sense of relief.

"Thanks to you... I survived and took down that monster you had already injured.

You can say that we were extremely lucky to come out alive." he replied.

Kahn willingly chose to hide the truth as he responded to the Raven Sorceress.

Because her well-being mattered more than making her indebted to him for the rest of her life.

Grasp!

"Thank you. I'm alive because of you." spoke Cassandra as she suddenly grabbed Kahn's hand.

"Don't mention it." he said and scratched his head.

This was the first time in his new life that a woman voluntarily held his hand.

Otherwise, all the women he had come to meet so far either needed saving or tried to kill him.

And given the mindset he had in this life... he ended up beating the hell out of them most of the time.

However, he could feel that there was nothing but genuine thankfulness in Cassandra's words.

Kahn then lightly smiled and covered her palm under his own as he gently spoke.

"I was only repaying a debt."

Kahn's expression then turned curious...

"Tell me something... why did you choose to save me back then?"

You also have the mage class thanks to your ancient rank job... so I'm certain you felt the danger even before the monster attacked with that golden orb skill." he queried.

"That... I don't know what came over me. I was already too close before I could react and when it used that skill..."

I just felt like protecting you in that last moment and reacted without a second thought." replied Cassandra as her raven hair fluttered gently as a strong breeze entered the room.

Kahn on the other end felt satisfied after hearing her answer.

Because there was no hidden agenda or any dubious strategy... Cassandra acted based on her instincts.

This was enough for him to understand that she was genuinely a good and kindhearted person when it counted.

"I guess my opinion of you has increased more than before.

Thank you... I mean it." said Kahn as he gave a thankful nod to Cassandra.

[Master... She's putting up a brave act. She was crying the whole night after waking up.

For someone named Isaac.] Armin said in Kahn's mind.

Kahn suddenly remembered the night of the attack and Cassandra's furious demeanor back then.

He quickly remembered about the 3rd heir of the Mikealson Clan.

"Get rest. Your clan's envoy is coming soon.

You have a funeral to attend." he said in a solemn tone.

Kassandra's face then turned crestfallen as she was reminded again about her younger cousin who fell in the battle against the Caladrius.

Her expression turned heavy but she did not speak a word as teardrops formed in her eyes.

[Master... Although we managed to save her.. The mana inside her body is already waning. Soon she will be unable to sense or use magic altogether.] said Armin in Kahn's mind as he continued to heal her body with his skills.

[There's nothing we can do now. Not everything in life goes as we planned.

She might think that it was because of the monster or maybe even regret her decision of saving me instead of herself in the future.

I have repaid my debt by saving her life because she saved mine.

As for the consequences... those are the battles of her own.] responded Kahn telepathically.

Just when Kahn was about to let go of Cassandra... the system suddenly gave a notification.

[Soul Link formed between the host and the individual named Cassandra Mikealson!]

Shocked! Dumbfounded!

Kahn was rooted on the spot as soon as he heard this sudden announcement by the system.

His eyes were wide open as if he heard something impossible out of the blue.

"Are you okay?" asked Cassandra as she noticed this sudden change in his expression.

"Ah, nothing. I just remembered something important. I need to go now..."

Take some rest. I'll see you again." spoke Kahn and quickly left the room.

He returned to his royal bedroom on the 4th floor of the castle.

[System.. Explain what the fuck was that?!] he ordered.

[System has noticed that there is now an innate connection between the host and Cassandra Mikealson.

The root cause of this soul link is undetectable as of now since the soul link has been established just a few minutes ago.

However, the system can detect one thing for certain.] reported the system.

[What is it?] asked Kahn with a worried expression.

[Host will be able to feel the presence of the target with Soul Link in a 10,000 kilometer radius regardless of his location or any form of magical barrier.] replied the system.

Bewildered!

Another mind-blowing revelation hit Kahn in the gut and rendered him incapable of thinking straight.

"What kind of nonsense is this?! Are you trying to say that...." spoke Kahn as his entire body was covered in goosebumps.

For the first time... he shivered in fear while not being in danger. Kahn then asked in a jittery voice...

"Kassandra just became my... soulmate?"

Chapter 414 - Dealing with the Aftermath

Kahn had a terrified expression on his face after the system revealed the key information that sent chills down his spine. The consequences of saving Kassandra's life as a form of repaying his debt to her had come back to bite him in the ass real quick.

Feeling someone's presence over the range of ten thousand kilometers?

That was the most absurd thing he ever heard in this new life. Even fictional romance novels did not dare to go that far.

[The host sure has a wild imagination.] suddenly the system spoke in his mind.

"Eh? Then what does it mean?" he asked curiously.

[Although all the conditions and effects are not clear for the time being.

The system is certain that neither the host nor Kassandra Mikealson will be affected adversely.

And neither will their minds or personalities be affected because of this Soul Link.

As for the aftereffects... only time will tell.] replied the system.

"Phew! Almost scared me right there." spoke Kahn as he heaved a sigh of relief.

"Thank goodness. I felt like my worst fears had come true." said Kahn and lay down on the bed.

"Let's never do that again... ever!" he spoke to himself after the supposed calamity turned out to be nonexistent.

Because Kahn did not want to take responsibility or develop feelings for Cassandra out of nowhere just because he shared a part of his soul to repay her for saving his life.

Although the procedure they used was beyond any form of physical intimacy... he just did not want the responsibility and get entangled in something troublesome.

Developing romantic feelings for a woman?

He already suffered because of it in the previous life and had absolutely no intentions of doing so in the new one even now.

Although he had a very good impression and only admiration for Cassandra after their encounters till this point... it wasn't to an extent where he would overcome his past life trauma just for the sake of it without a natural progression or reason.

He refused to be the protagonist of those romance and harem novels just so the readers could feel the rush of dopamine or get off.

And as soon as the system informed him about the current situation regarding the soul link... a giant boulder was lifted off of his chest.

Although many things were still unanswered... Kahn accepted and came to terms with his current predicament with Cassandra.

"Master, we have places to be." spoke Ronin who suddenly appeared behind Kahn.

For the next 10 minutes, Ronin explained how they dealt with the situation over the Kaldris border and what kind of measures were taken after the battle ended.

And without a surprise... the whole situation had reached the ears of all the native citizens of Verlassen fiefdom. And to bury unnecessary rumors and avoid mass hysteria...

The generals themselves announced the happenings of the legendary monster attack and that Kahn was currently healing from his injuries. And soon he was going to make a public announcement addressing the whole incident and the aftermath.

"Well done. Although it must have caused temporary panic among the public, it was still better than our enemies and opportunistic people spreading wrong rumors and misinformation to gain any advantage in their favor." said Kahn as he too agreed with the collective decision of the generals.

"Since the Mikealson Clan's envoy will come tomorrow, we better do it quickly lest they come blaming me for the death of their 3rd heir." commanded Kahn.

In the noon, using the broadcasting news network Kahn had created that reported the daily happenings and incidents throughout the fiefdom to the common populace... Ronin had all the official channels spread the news about the public announcement that will be held in the evening.

After the sunset... most of the citizens had amassed over thousands of the large broadcasting screens established in all the important squares of cities, towns and villages of the fiefdom.

All of them were eager to hear the word of their benevolent sovereign who brought drastic changes in their lives for the better in just 3 months since his reign started.

After the preliminary announcement, the majority of the population was already worried about Kahn's health since he was already a savior in their eyes.

And finally, Kahn in his usual gray royal clothes appeared on the broadcasting screens throughout the Verlassen fiefdom.

"Yeaahh!!"

"He's alive!!"

"All hail the Sovereign!!"

Millions of people loudly screamed and chanted with happiness as soon as Kahn in good health was revealed to them.

Although the current Kahn was at level 157 after the whole soul transfusion procedure and his body was in a weakened state... he was healthy enough to hold off a public broadcast.

However, the expression on Kahn's face wasn't of a victorious warrior but of someone who was in pain and sorrow.

"People of Verlassen fiefdom... I, Kahn Salvatore, your sovereign...

Would like to apologize to all the citizens." spoke Kahn and did a ninety-degree bow in front of the whole fiefdom.

His dejected and remorseful expression had caught everyone off guard and quickly, a pin-drop silence ensued among the masses spread throughout the eight thousand kilometers of the fiefdom.

"I was heavily injured and needed time to heal. That is why I couldn't share the bad news with all of you earlier as I wanted." he said with a crestfallen look.

"Three days ago, the main military headquarter of the Kaldris region border was attacked by a Legendary Rank monster during the night.

And although I am standing in front of you while looking completely fine... my heart and soul is in great turmoil.

What I'm about to tell you is neither aspiring nor entertaining. But it is the truth that all of you deserve to know.

I have already promised all of you that my reign will be honest and transparent. So I shall keep delivering upon that promise.

Today.... I have a story to tell you." said Kahn with a heavy tone.

In the following moment, his expression turned to that of defeat and loss as if he underwent an insufferable situation. He continued as small tears dropped over his cheek...

"A story of Bravery and Sacrifice."

Chapter 415 - Bravery and Sacrifice

In front of the entire population of the Verlassen fiefdom, Kahn's image appeared on the screens spread in all the cities and towns. His dejected and somber expression had already turned the atmosphere dreary in all the crowded places.

"Three days ago, at late night... a legendary rank monster suddenly attacked the main military headquarters at the border of the Kaldris region out of the blue.

We believe that it was actually the regional overlord of the hotspot of the annual monster tide. And it attacked the headquarters with the intention to invade the inner populated cities and inhabited lands by the people in the Kaldris region.

However, the 1 million soldiers stationed at this border equipped with all the war-related gears such as weaponry, flying ships, magic cannons and fighter class profession responded to the situation very quickly and created a defensive formation that stopped the legendary beast from entering any further." he explained.

"However... A legendary rank monster is not something even a semi-saint can win against.

So before Commander Cassandra Mikealson was alerted about the situation... a lot of the soldiers who understood the gravity of the situation and instead of waiting for a command and letting the monster invade the populated regions; they attacked and engaged it in a battle right away." he iterated the happenings of the night of the battle.

"Soon after Commander Mikealson reached the site, she sent a distress transmission to the capital where I was informed about the situation.

And given the distance between the capital and Kaldris region, it took us nearly 4 hours to send reinforcements and relief supplies." spoke Kahn and took a deep breath.

"In the meantime, despite being outmatched in every aspect... commander Cassandra herself fought bravely without a care for her life and blocked the enemy that was many times stronger than her.

Nevertheless... even those great numbers were not enough to gain victory.

As of today... we have confirmed that there are total hundred thousand and ninety four casualties." said Kahn in a heavy tone.

Gasp!

Gasp!

Millions of people gasped in surprise as they heard the total death count.

Normal people never had their lives centered on war or the military so they were not used to hearing so many people dying in just a few hours.

Another chatter started among the masses but Kahn abruptly interjected as he continued the speech.

"Before I even arrived at the site... any had already fallen, thousands of warships were wrecked and more than three hundred thousand soldiers had been injured.

But even so... our military force did not waver and kept fighting on the front and tried to repel the invader even if they knew that it would spell only their doom.

Our brave soldiers displayed their mettle and stood their ground firmly even if it meant sacrificing their lives.

In front of an imminent death... they embraced the danger and held off against the enemy." he said in a solemn tone.

"After my arrival... I and commander Cassandra joined hands together and to avoid more casualties, both of us led it back to the inner regions by provoking the enemy with our constant attack.

And after we reached forested terrain... The rest of the battle was fought between only 3 of us." he elaborated.

"Thanks to commander Cassandra's unique and amazing skills, we managed to trap and weaken it easily. And after that, we both managed to injure it to a great extent.

But just when we thought that victory was at our hands...

It used its life-saving skills." he said and heaved a sigh.

"During that decisive moment... commander Cassandra chose to protect me instead of herself and was severely injured." Kahn let out a crestfallen expression but carried on.

"After I too was heavily injured and barely had any strength left... I managed to land a killing blow and finish off the main perpetrator of this battle." he explained.

However, there was no joyous smile on his countenance.

"Commander Cassandra has managed to survive through her critical condition and is now in a recovery phase.

As for the intruder..." spoke Kahn and the following second... the focus of all the projection artifacts turned from him to the open ground behind Kahn's castle.

Shocked!

Bewildered!

The entire population of the fiefdom watching this broadcast was shocked to their core.

Because behind the castle... was a ginormous figure that was even bigger than the 200 meter tall castle itself laid on the ground and was currently surrounded by thousands of soldiers and flying ships.

This white-feathered creature that dwarfed even Kahn's enormous castle in height with a detached head that was 50 meters tall in itself appeared in front of the entire population.

The ginormous Caladrius who caused the mayhem and killed so many of the soldiers was now displayed to the masses.

"As you can see... this was the monster I was talking about. This creature is comparable to a Saint rank individual in terms of strength and fighting prowess.

So if someone is still under the impression that we were weak and failed to properly handle the situation...

Know that if this monster who could use wind elemental skills strong enough to shred tall buildings and even my castle in a single attack had invaded the cities... the death count would be in millions.

Although I was the one who landed the finishing blow... none of this would be even possible in the first place if not for the soldiers at the border.

And at this moment... the normal citizens are safe and alive only because of the Bravery and the Sacrifice made by the soldiers of our fiefdom.

So I hope that you will properly understand and commend our fallen heroes who gave their lives for your sake." said Kahn in an authoritative tone as he patronized the citizens.

His speech left not just the normal populace but even all the soldiers situated in different regions and military outposts feeling overwhelmed.

However... every single one of them had come to understand that their sovereign, Kahn Salvatore...

Was a true leader who actually cared about the lives of the Soldiers of the fiefdom.

Chapter 416 - The Reparations

Kahn's charismatic figure was now displayed in front of citizens and soldiers of the Verlassen fiefdom alike. And as his announcement regarding the happenings of the battle at the Kaldris region came to an end... majority came to realize the bravery and sacrifice of the warriors who protected their lives.

However... his commending speech had evoked many emotions in the minds of the millions of soldiers stationed at the borders of the six hotspot regions where they had been risking their lives for decades.

Because it was the first time in the past two hundred years that any person in authority had ever applauded or made the knowledge of their heroic acts well known to the masses.

The government before his reign had never even bothered to pay for wages on time or provided them with suitable gears and many knew of the truth about how little did their deaths mattered to those who controlled the old Verlassen mountain range.

Kahn's speech finally made them feel appreciated... made them feel that they too mattered.

"As for the families of the dead soldiers who have lost an important member... mostly the ones whom their future depended on..." he said.

"I am establishing a new system where the capable and suitable member of the family will be helped to get a job in various government sectors. They will be trained and educated regarding those professions and positions if they choose to.

And there will be no partiality based on age group or gender." declared Kahn out of a sudden.

"It was already revealed in the People's Court about how the funds allotted to the families of the deceased soldiers went into the pockets of the corrupted officials instead.

If our soldiers can't even perform their duties knowing that their families won't be looked after their deaths... how will they be able to face the enemy on the front while the people these soldiers are trying to protect are left in the hands of uncertain fate?" he iterated.

"Some people who have never seen or been in a war or lost a comrade act as if they are better for not choosing the path of dying for our motherland.

But let me remind everyone that you're entitled to have such opinions and delusions of being nobler... is because there's this very soldier that you criticize is risking his or her life at the borders.

It's not the soldiers... but the whole empire that's failing to protect our future.

I can not talk about the rest of the Rakos Empire... but in my reign..

I will make sure that no soldiers has to worry about the family they left behind or their future in case they die serving the Verlassen fiefdom." declared Kahn.

After his speech ended... those who had the notions of the soldiers being weak or the military not having enough strength were forced to shut up their mouths.

Because the gigantic body of the Legendary rank monster was more than enough to make a statement. A being that was comparable to a legitimate Saint had caused the deaths of so many people.

And even the two strongest semi-saints of the entire empire like Kahn and Cassandra barely managed to kill it while getting gravely injured.

So for the first time in the history of this part of the Rakos Empire... people had come to know the real truth and the dangerous life led by the soldiers who fought to protect the lives of the common citizens.

Just by bringing this another harsh truth to them... Kahn, who had already become their true leader gave them a sense of assurance that he will always rule righteously.

The forty-seven million soldiers of the fiefdom who had their eyes glued to the broadcasting screens had a different outlook on this announcement compared to the normal citizens.

For the first time... someone had addressed losing a comrade in war, the sacrifice they made and how they had to worry about the families left behind.

And his new system of looking after the families of the martyrs was something they never even thought of.

A small compensation in the form of money was never enough to give their families a sustainable life. But with this new system, they could at least be relieved.

At the present moment... Kahn had proved himself to be a reliable, competent and honorable sovereign in their eyes.

He not only protected the lives of the people... but he also killed the enemy who killed so many of their fellow comrades.

And him establishing this new system throughout the fiefdom was something they were not even capable of thinking of.

To them... Kahn had now become a ruler worth dying for.

After Kahn's public announcement ended and the night came... he now sat on his black and golden throne in the main throne hall of the castle.

YAWN!

"How was I?" asked Kahn to Ronin as he yawned.

"If I didn't know any better... even I would be moved by your speech." said Ronin as he praised Kahn's acting skills.

"Gosh... I'm not that heartless you know.

I do feel empathy towards the dead soldiers... but I have too many people to look after and I can't be everywhere at the same time. Plus, it's just something unavoidable at this point. I can protect what I can and won't meddle in if I can't change the outcome." spoke Kahn as he leaned back to rest.

"Now I understand why everyone tries to bury the truth to keep their power." he said.

Due to the weakened state, his body felt like he was drowning underwater but he had no choice regarding the public announcement.

"Still... the reparations you've offered aren't small. And the new system you've declared will give you full support from the military as well.

After all, controlling the officers and strong people is a different thing than having soldiers to fight for you in a war willingly." said Ronin.

Kahn then nodded and ordered...

"Create more than 200 million copies of the recordings of today's announcement and spread it across the Rakos Empire using our money and connections. Don't hold back."

"This is going to cause chaos among the military of the rest of the empire. Even they will try to force the government to make a system such as this and force their hand.

Don't you think we already have enough enemies, master?" asked Ronin.

"Think big, Ronin. This isn't just about me creating a good image in front of the citizens.

We're sowing the seeds in the minds of the people. The plants that sprout will help us in the future. After all..." spoke Kahn with a charming yet sinister smile.

"I'm the rightful Emperor of the Rakos Empire."

Chapter 417 - Crumbling World

Kahn now dozed off in his royal bedroom while he had a carefree expression after recent events. The past 3 days had been very crucial for him in many ways. Although the circumstances were against him in many ways and he had to deal with the matter carefully... he succeeded thanks to his wit and acting skills again.

Kahn knew that public outrage would occur if he tried to bury the incident of the Caladrius attack or cover up the number of deceased during the battle would only help his enemies that still served the three noble factions.

Instead of letting them use this chaos against him. Kahn made use of this adversity instead.

That is why... after the generals announced Kahn personally addressing the issue as means to control damage... he decided to elevate the whole scenario from just a normal report about the incident and turned it into an emotional speech that touched the hearts of citizens and military soldiers alike.

He acted like an emotional ruler who was devastated by the tragedy and turned the opinion of the public in his favor before even someone added the fuel to the fire.

He turned this calamity into a golden opportunity to show that he can actually protect the people and is strong enough to kill even a legendary rank monster.

And by spreading the recordings throughout the whole empire, he wanted to subconsciously make people and soldiers yearn to have a sovereign like him in their regions as well.

Having a ruler like Kahn, for whom their lives mattered... along with his transparency and the new system that he'd soon establish was extremely alluring and desirable to all the soldiers of the empire.

This was going to spark another chaos in the empire soon. But it was something he too wanted to see happening.

Although Kahn currently had no plans to become the emperor... it was just a shot in the dark. And if it ever came to it.. This incident might as well turn out beneficial to him instead.

This was the textbook method of getting in people's heads using emotions such as anger, hate, empathy and love practiced by many politicians.

Only smart people could see through that act but luckily for him... whether it was Earth or Vantrea. Both worlds were full of stupid and braindead people either way who believed in whatever was told to them.

So when life threw lemons at him... he decided to make lemonade.

THE NEXT MORNING.

After having a line of servants serving him and the generals morning breakfast along with their guest Cassandra... Kahn and the group were escorted to the open grounds of his 10 kilometer wide estate.

A warship with the sigil of the Mikealson Clan had come this very morning. Their main objective being picking Cassandra who half recovered from her previous state.

After completing the formalities and greetings with the people in charge of the envoy... Kahn ordered the generals to escort the people and offer some refreshments while surrounded by many watchful eyes.

As for himself... he escorted Cassandra to the main garden and they both had some space to talk.

"How are you feeling now?" asked Kahn.

"Good enough to get by. I will need more time I think." replied Cassandra as she still seemed exhausted.

"I see. Well... I'm sorry for your loss.

And I've already reported to your clan's envoy how big of a part you played or how you mortally wounded it to avenge your cousin.

No one is going to blame you for it. So it'd be best if you didn't let it weigh down on your mind." he spoke.

Kahn understood that although Cassandra seemed to be acting okay... unlike a loner like himself; she was someone with a family and friends. So she was naturally heartbroken but chose to not show her pain in front of a stranger like him.

And he did not intend to pry.

"I guess this is the last time we will be seeing each other. I hope you have a great life ahead." spoke Kahn in an honest tone as they both slowly walked into the wide garden full of mesmerizing greenery and fragrant flowers.

Kassandra's ears perked as her intuition kicked in.

"Why do you sound as if you're going to die soon?" she asked with a curious gaze.

"It's nothing serious. Just that it feels like we didn't get enough time to talk properly." said Kahn as he averted his eyes.

"Hey... you're acting weird all of a sudden." said Cassandra with a suspicious gaze.

But unlike her... Kahn already knew what was going to happen soon.

The once most talented and the no. 1 prodigy of the Rakos Empire was going to lose even her ability to use magic. Soon, her rank and all of her skills were going to disappear as the mana inside her body completely disappeared.

By Armin's estimation... it would take at least a couple of months and then the Raven Sorceress whom he too had come to admire would be nothing but a thing of the past in this world where only one's strength mattered.

Although he knew about it... Kahn just couldn't tell the truth about how he saved her in order to repay her because Kahn was alive at this moment due to her actions.

Even if she would get to live... the price she had to pay was as good as being paraplegic for the rest of her life.

Kahn didn't want to be the one to crumble her world right after she had lost a close family member.

The slow walk he was sharing with her at this moment would probably be the last time they'd meet as nothing but a tragic fate awaited Cassandra. A fate that none of them could change even if they wanted to.

As the afternoon came, Kahn bid farewell to Cassandra...

The woman who made his heart flutter for the first time. The woman who saved his life without thinking about her own just because she felt like it was the right thing to do.

And because of the cruel fate; soon she was going to watch...

Her world fall apart.

Chapter 418 - New Ranker

Kahn watched Cassandra depart while being surrounded by thousands of soldiers and hundreds of royal guards. This was probably the last time he would ever see her because he was aware that without the ability to use magic... her life was going to change for the worse.

Yet there was nothing he could do to help. He had already played a part in at least keeping her alive. The thorny path that awaited her now was something she'd have to walk on alone.

As the evening came... Kahn sent his orders to the Covenant Army. To remove the ginormous body of the Caladrius that still hadn't started decaying given the fact that it was a legendary rank creature that lay behind his castle.

Following his orders, 2 warships came and a couple of thousand covenant soldiers that were comprised of criminals such as rapists, murderers and all kinds of heinous crimes; but now served as Kahn's slaves, tied down the body of this creature that could kill all of them with its aura alone.

The massive 200 meters tall warships that had the width of a kilometer on their own had hundreds of metallic cables hooked in that tied down the corpse of the monster. And the sky around the capital Aesir gave all the citizens a glimpse of the enormous creature that caused the deaths of so many people.

Those who previously doubted its existence saw Caladrius with their own eyes and everyone was reminded of Kahn's overwhelming speech again.

A hundred kilometers away from Aesir, in a mountain region, the warships finally dropped the legendary creature on the ground along with the massive head that was tied to its body.

Kahn then ordered over eight thousand soldiers to surround the 5 kilometers region in all four directions and sent all of them away.

Flap!

Flap!

"Given the price I had to pay... this bastard better give me some god-tier abilities." said Kahn as he put both hands over the cut-down neck of this gigantic creature.

"Absorb!"

After 5 hours, Kahn was finally done with Ability Absorption divine ability doing its work.

"System, report." commanded Kahn.

[Congratulations to the host for acquiring the following abilities & skills :

Stormbringer (SSS Rank) (Active) :

Allows the host to control the wind pressure in 1 kilometer radius and create storms filled with wind elemental blades.

Note : This ability requires a tremendous amount of world energy. The host is currently too weak to use this skill.

The host must become a saint rank being first.

Sky Overlord (SSS Rank) (Passive) :

Gives the host a 300% boost while using any flying skill or levitating in the air.

A constant supply of world energy is required for this ability to come under effect.

The host must become a Saint to enable this ability.

Caladrius Wings (SSS Rank) (Active) :

Allows the host to use physical wings to take a flight and improve his speed over time up to two times.

Note : The host's current physique is too small and weak to handle the wingspan.

The host must become a saint rank being and use a transformation skill to use this ability.

Soul Distortion (Saint Rank) (Active) :

Allows the host to create a soul-damaging burst attack with a range of 1 kilometer.

All the targets will have their souls damaged. Other than the subordinates, everyone else will be affected by this skill regardless of their relationship with the host.

The host is advised to use this skill cautiously.

Note : An enormous amount of world energy is required to use this skill. The host must become a 2nd stage saint to use this ability.

Activation time required : 1 hour.

Congratulations to the host.

Bladestorm, Windblade, Sky Lord abilities have been upgraded to SSS Rank and the host has received a 100% damage output buff in all wind elemental spells and attack skills.

Bloodline : Godbeast Roc

Current bloodline purity : 37%] reported the system.

Kahn on the other end had nothing but a poker face.

"Thank you and no thank you!" he exclaimed.

All these abilities were simply too demanding. And as of now.. He couldn't even use a single one of them.

Although he understood the reason, it was still too unbearable given all the expectations he had.

All of these skills were too powerful and would benefit him in a large-scale battle if he ever had the occasion of fighting an army of hundred thousand enemies himself.

And with the potential they had after he leveled up and so did these skills... he'd be no different than an air force squadron himself.

"Why the fuck can't I get a flying skill?" asked Kahn in an exasperated tone.

Because the recent encounter with the Mountain Titan and the Caladrius monster had shown him the biggest demerit he had at this point.

He didn't have a single flying skill he could use in a battle. And waiting to become a Saint first was a luxury he couldn't afford given the future expeditions he had to do in upcoming months.

[Because the host's current body can not handle the wingspan. It's simply too big. and this bloodline. The host will need to become a saint and this physical ability will automatically activate.] reminded the system again.

However, the biggest benefit he received for now is that all the wind elemental skills rose by 2 to 3 ranks and most of them became SSS Rank themselves.

"Ugh... thank you for the harsh reminder again." said Kahn in an annoyed tone.

"I guess I have no choice but to wait." he said.

"Alright then. Come out." spoke Kahn and suddenly, a general with two black wings jumped out of his shadow.

The reason why he brought this general in his shadow was because he didn't want anyone to link the disappearance of this ginormous body with this subordinate of his.

The black-winged and brown-haired archer general knelt in front of Kahn with a content expression as he too was finally getting a rank up after a long time.

"Let's hope you're much luckier than me..." said Kahn and spoke the general's name with a grin...

"Oliver."

Chapter 419 - Unbelievable Evolution

Kahn now stood in front of the enormous body of the Caladrius monster and decided that it was about time Oliver, who had flying skills after his previous evolution needed another rank up. And given the type of flying monster Caladrius was... Kahn had high expectations.

"Awaken." commanded Kahn and ordered the system to start the synthesis procedure.

And after 5 hours of wait... the results were finally out.

But as soon as the divine ability was done with its job... the entire 3 kilometers of space froze under insurmountable pressure.

Kahn, who was baffled after this sudden occurrence, was also frozen on the spot under the horrifying and tyrannical pressure made of World Energy as if Kahn was facing a legit saint.

[System, what's happening? This doesn't happen when I'm ranking up a subordinate.] queried Kahn.

[The host has experienced this phenomenon before. It occurs only when a subordinate breaks the threshold of a species restriction and evolves into a higher form during the synthesis procedure. The last time this happened was...] reported the system but before it could even complete the sentence...

"When I created Rudra!" spoke Kahn with an awestruck and flabbergasted expression.

Thunderclap!

Thunderclap!

Without even giving Kahn a moment to digest the fact... a heavy and extremely overbearing pressure was released that even made Kahn, the master of this resultant creature fall on his knees.

A dense cloud surrounded by ear-deafening lightning strikes and whirling storms came to be and Kahn himself was flung high in the air till he landed half a kilometer away.

Thud!

Thud!

SCREECH!!!

A heaven-shattering screech filled the 5 kilometers radius and Kahn, who was the closest to this creature felt like he had already gone deaf.

Soon, the storm faded and a 500 meters tall gigantic bird creature with a head that looked like a more fiercer and primordial version of an eagle, 6 massive black eyes, three on each side and talons as big as a tall tower came to be.

Its massive yellow claws and the piercing beak gave this gigantic creature that was even bigger and had a wider wingspan of one and a half kilometers stood like an overbearing king of the skies.

Strong gales and crackling lightning ran over its completely brown ginormous body filled with large feathers and the creature gave Kahn a fierce gaze as if it was looking down on its own master just like Rudra, the variant Basilisk once did.

"What... what the hell is this? How can such a creature exist?" asked Kahn in a bewildered voice.

[Congratulations to the host. Subordinate named Oliver has merged two different bloodlines and evolved into a superior variant species called Thunderbird.

Species bloodline Effects :

Oliver can generate powerful claps of thunder with a flap of his wings. The beak of a Thunderbird subordinate can shoot out bolts of lightning at will. He is also capable of summoning huge storms and typhoons, capable of annihilating cities with its forceful and high-pressure wind attacks and stray bolts of lightning.

Following are the statistics for the subordinate named Oliver :

Name : Oliver

Species : Thunderbird (Variant Garuda)

Job : Tempest Archer (Legendary Class)

Rank : Legendary Rank

Level : 238

Strength : 6730

Agility : 10293

Dexterity : 9035

Defense : 5731

Mana : 5472

Following are the newly acquired abilities and skills :

Stormbringer (SSS Rank)

Caladrius Wings (SSS Rank)

Soul Distortion (Saint Rank)

Sky Lord & Sky Overlord skills have merged and created an upgraded skill named Sky Emperor.

Sky Emperor (Saint Rank) (Passive) :

The subordinate holds control over the wind element and magic within a 5 kilometers radius. All the wind elemental attacks and spells can be controlled and negated by the subordinate regardless of the caster being an ally or a foe.

Subordinate now has a 300% innate boost in all flying skills.

Following are the upgraded Physical skills & abilities :

Jetstream (SSS Rank) (Active) :

Allows the subordinate to create air pressure in a 1 kilometer area to propel himself in the air with high-pressure wind.

Thunderbird Wings (SSS Rank) (Passive) :

Gives the subordinate a 400% buff in speed and agility while flying. The maneuver speed during flight increased by 200%.

Horus Eye (SSS Rank) (Passive) :

The subordinates can sense and locate everything within a 20 kilometer radius while flying. All the minute details will be clear and visible to the user.

Guardian of the Squadron (SSS Rank) (Passive) :

All flying allies within 10 kilometer radius of the subordinate will receive 80% increases in speed and maneuverability. Allies capable of flight will receive a 60% increase in attack damage while attacking from the air.

Following are the Magical skills & abilities :

Arrowstorm (SSS Rank) (Active) :

Allows the subordinates to create five hundred mana arrows, each one being 10 meters in height and shoot in multiple directions. All the arrows can be individually controlled by the subordinate.

Descent of the Sun (SSS Rank) (Active) :

Subordinate receives 450% Attack buff and magical skill damage during noontime. The more time under the sun spent by the user, the more increase in attack damage.

Note : All of the listed abilities can be upgraded with rise in levels and rank of the subordinate.

All archery skills of the subordinate have been ranked by 2 ranks after the evolutions and their effectiveness, attack damage output and range have been increased by 3 times thanks to the subordinate invoking a Legendary Class called the Tempest Archer.] reported the system.

"Blood hell... not just one but two Saint Rank skills?" said Kahn with a bewildered expression.

Because even Armin and Blackwall only had one Saint rank skill even now. But Oliver straight up had two of them.

As if this legendary Caladrius monster was created for the very purpose of giving such a huge upgrade in ranks and abilities to Oliver... the result of the synthesis was completely unexpected.

Oliver's Garuda Bloodline mixed with the Godbeast Roc bloodline and created a whole new different version called the Thunderbird.

And based on the abilities and skills he had...

If he were to fight Caladrius in a one-on-one battle... Oliver would definitely be the victor because of the many buffs skills he already had thanks to his Tempest Archer class that he could use even in his Thunderbird form.

Kahn quickly came to one truthful conclusion after understanding the gravity of the situation. Whether he wanted to believe it or not; Oliver after his evolution had the potential...

To surpass even the Godbeasts!

Chapter 420 - Sky Emperor

In front of a gigantic general whose most of the body was surrounded by strong gales, sharp windblades and raging lightning run amok, Kahn stood speechless while still being in awe after looking at Oliver's new Legendary rank form.

The thundering sound echoed in the 5 kilometers radius and even the covenant soldiers who had surrounded the forested region felt an ominous aura coming from the inner region where they dropped off the legendary rank Caladrius as per Kahn's orders.

Meanwhile, Kahn was still contemplating the amazing abilities and skill boost Oliver received after the evolution.

Just the old abilities that were now upgraded to SSS Rank were more than enough for Oliver to become a force to be reckoned with that even a saint of the same stage would have to worry against in a one-on-one battle.

But apart from that... Oliver inherited all of the abilities of the Caladrius, the monster that almost killed Kahn for sure if not for Cassandra saving him at the last moment.

And Oliver had the Sky Lord as well as Sky Overlord abilities merged to form the Sky Emperor passive skill.

A legit saint rank skill that made him a horrifying opponent in an open ground battle.

Because not only did he have plenty of AoE attacks of his own that were more than enough to decimate an entire city or an army...

The 4 times boost in flying speed and maneuverability, 2 times buff in attack damage output in all wind elemental skills and spells he could use in both forms thanks to the evolution was too big.

And lastly, the two times increase in total range in all of his archery and wind elemental skills gave him the ability to even shoot an enemy to death from 3 kilometers away. A feature Kahn hadn't even imagined to be possible but became true thanks to the Tempest Archer legendary rank class.

And Oliver also had the Soul Distortion saint rank skill. The very skill that destroyed Cassandra's life and forced Kahn to sacrifice a part of his soul. Even a 2nd stage saint would not survive against that attack in his current state.

The more his levels rose, the stronger opponents he'd be able to kill with that skill in the future. And most importantly, Kahn could even use it to fatally wound even the other heroes of the gods if they were ever put in a clash.

On one side, Armin had the Soul Reformation saint rank skill that could heal the damage done to someone's soul while Oliver had the Soul Distortion that destroyed one's soul from the inside. So Kahn basically had control over both sides of the coin.

And although the Tempest Archer wasn't an ancient rank job like Blackwall's Abyss Knight job after the evolution, it was still the most amazing job when it came to long range fighter professions as it too would increase with Oliver's levels and rank in the future.

The way he saw it... it was an absolute win-win situation for him.

At this point... even Kahn felt like he didn't need any flying skills. Because Oliver was big enough to carry over a hundred people on his back and fly as fast as a fighter jet.

And given the massive size and his wingspan that was half times wider than the Caladrius... Oliver was now a natural calamity himself.

"At this rate... he can at least fly at two thousand kilometers per hour speed and maybe even 12 kilometers top altitude after the upgrade.

And since most of his skills will rise in effective range and output as he levels up more... I feel like I've created a monster with a potential to surpass even the Godbeast Roc." concluded Kahn after giving it a complete thought.

Because Oliver can even kill a second stage saint just like Blackwall and Rudra at this point. And Kahn now had two

"And now I will never have to worry about a flying enemy or even an army of warships until I become a saint myself.

This is many times better than I expected." spoke Kahn with a joyous smile.

Because even if Kahn had gotten those skills.. He didn't think it would've caused such a great transformation or have that much attack range or damage output.

"Oi, take a human form. You're drawing too much attention." commanded Kahn.

The ginormous Thunderbird that had most of its body surrounded by lightning storms quickly started reducing its size and in just 30 seconds... a humanoid winged creature stood in front of Kahn.

However, unlike before the evolution... Oliver's new appearance had changed drastically.

"What the hell... System, why isn't he looking like a human?" asked Kahn as he gazed at Oliver's new appearance.

A 3 meter tall half bird-half human with two large brown wings on his back with the head of an eagle-like creature with claws on his hands and talons as it's hindlegs now stood in front of Kahn.

[Because the prominent bloodline of the new species Thunderbird is simply too powerful.

Unlike the subordinate Blackwall, who only possessed an evolved Minotaur bloodline, the subordinate Oliver was already a creature with a superior variant species.

And after mixing with the Godbeast Roc bloodline... the new species Thunderbird is something that has the potential to be on the same level as the three Primordial monster bloodlines if evolved and ranked up properly.] reported the system.

"Airshhh... that's not helpful. It will be troublesome to explain his new appearance to other people and those who already work under him in the fiefdom.

Plus Albestros knows him well as well." said Kahn in an irritated tone.

Because no way would many people just by this sudden change in appearance and size.

But the next second however, Oliver interjected.

"Master. I'm okay with this. I do not wish to take human form from now on anyway."

The general who now looked like a Hawkman had a resolute gaze in his now yellow eyes.

"Why?" asked Kahn curiously.

"Because that is the..." said Oliver with a prideful tone as he revealed his reason.

"Will of the Heaven."