

Darkness 501

Chapter 501 - Escape Plan

As soon as Kahn realized that no matter what he did, he had no choice but to flee the Rakos Empire... his countenance turned to that of an infuriated man.

"This can't be happening! Do you know how much I've worked just to settle myself in this empire?"

I even went as far as to take on this stupid mission just for the sake of securing my future till I became a sixth stage saint!

And because of you, all my efforts have been ruined!!" shouted Kahn at Rathnaar.

"Huh? Why are you blaming me? You were going to be found out sooner or later anyway.

My soul getting bound to yours is not that serious." retorted Rathnaar.

"Not serious my ass! Before you, I at least had an option to stay inside this empire. And now... all the powers present here will be after me!

And even if I somehow managed to survive or become the emperor of this place... the other empires would still send their heroes and top saints after me.

How the hell am I supposed to take on 12 empires on my own even with the support of one?" complained Kahn with an exasperated expression.

"On top of it, this tablet is also a precious secret that they all have been looking for. So I'm basically the most wanted man in the world because of two reasons that all of them are desperately after." he rebuked the emperor.

"Tch! So dramatic. If you can't handle the situation, give me the control of your body.

I'll keep us both alive." replied Rathnaar.

"Fuck off!" said Kahn.

"I need to make a plan... that way... I will get to escape without losing anything I have here in this empire." said Kahn.

Just then, Omega spoke.

"Master, She's coming close. What do you want us to do."

As soon as he heard the words, a light bulb glowed over Kahn's head and a plan hatched in his mind.

"That bitch tried to kill me for this tablet, didn't she?"

Let her have it." said Kahn with an evil grin.

[Ronin, Ceril and Omega... here's what I want you to do.] spoke Kahn and relayed his newly hatched plan to his subordinates.]

Half an hour later... Celine Armitage appeared in this grand ancient hall while being mildly injured from all the traps and mazes she went through to reach here.

"Finally! It's mine!" said Celine with an elated expression and walked close to the tablet.

"Come forth, my descendant. I have been waiting for you."

A tyrannical and archaic voice resounded in the hall.

"Who? Who is it?" asked Celine in a frightened tone as he prepared her swords to fight.

"My name... is Rathnaar Whitlock, The First Emperor of the Rakos Empire. I see that you possess the bloodline of my family.

Tell me, child. Are you here for the Tablet of Arcana?" revealed and asked Rathnaar.

Celine quickly kneeled on the ground like an obedient subject and spoke in a terrified voice.

"Great Ancestor... I have indeed come for the tablet as the only remaining descendant of the Imperial bloodline.

I ask that you allow me to take it with myself."

"What do you mean?" asked Rathnaar.

Soon, an elaborate conversation between the first emperor and Celine began which eventually led her to reveal the fate of the Imperial family and her lies about how she wanted to rebuild the bloodline and reclaim the throne began.

After an hour of conversation, Rathnaar agreed to let her have the Tablet of Arcana and she put it inside her space ring.

However, at this very moment... there were 2 sets of eyes watching the whole thing.

[Alright, we're done here. Let's go back to the entrance.] ordered Kahn.

Another hour passed and Celine returned to the entrance and looked at Kahn's deceased figure lying in a pool of blood but the smile on her face seemed unaffected as she finally completed the mission that would decide the fate of her clan and secure her future as the biggest prodigy, the most talented swordswoman and future empress of the Rakos Empire.

But suddenly... her mind started becoming hazy and Celine felt like the world around her was turning upside down.

Thud!

Celine fainted and fell on the ground.

She woke up 20 minutes later and decided to quickly depart the final zone as she feared losing her consciousness again. There was no room for any mistakes until she arrived at her entry zone and delivered the tablet to her faction.

She left Kahn's corpse without any care and began her journey back to the door she came from.

"What a moron. I guess it is right that she should pay for killing me..." spoke Kahn who appeared from the shadows while his doppelganger on the ground disappeared.

"We have everything we need. There are still 5 days left till the expedition is officially over.

We need to make our moves before anyone finds out the truth." spoke Kahn.

ONE DAY LATER.

Kahn and the whole group exited the outer door from where they entered the forbidden region thanks to Omega's new gravity law skills which increased their speed by multiple times.

"Ronin. Make sure both of them get it on the fifth day." said Kahn and aside from Ronin, everyone else left for their warship.

Kahn then traveled back to Aesir using their warship and began the work.

Because soon, he would have no choice but to leave the Rakos Empire no matter what.

But he didn't plan to just leave like a coward who wouldn't dare to go against the people who screwed him over just because he was weak.

In the upcoming days, let it be the Verlassen fiefdom or even the entire Rakos Empire... there was going to be chaos so grand that even all the noble factions would get the biggest headache of their entire lifetime.

Although he had no choice but to leave... Kahn wasn't going to run without making a scene. Rather...

He was going to fuck over every single one of his enemies.

Chapter 502 - Necessary Measures

For the next couple of days... Kahn had been secretly hiding inside the training facility he had in his castle. And what he was doing would make someone faint just from the shock.

Ever since he came back from the forbidden region, Kahn had been constantly summoning the subordinates from the legion that he made from harvesting the bodies of the soldiers who fell in the Kaldris region and those who were massacred by Victor Apopsis in the Berawaa region which Kahn later exposed to the empire.

But unlike before... this time, it was Kahn who killed them using Omega in his human form who was his strongest subordinate now and had too many skills to massacre thousands of enemies at once.

And after he was done with more than 60 thousand subordinates he created from the harvested bodies, Kahn merged and awakened them again and again using millions of SS Rank cores.

And finally... using those bodies, he created hundreds of peak grandmasters. But after that, he started naming them all.

After that, he had Omega kill them all again.

And after they were all resurrected quickly by Kahn paying a hefty amount of resources to the system, all of them unlocked the Impartation Skill just like the generals and Omega.

But Kahn's objective didn't end here... he repeated the procedure until he was left with 40 semi-saint rank subordinates.

Unlike the generals, these were only fighter class humanoid species with proper jobs and skills. None of them were merged with any monster species so they only had skills and abilities as well as appearances of a semi-saint varying from different that one could find in the empire.

And lastly, Kahn used Ezekiel's body that they had brought with them after Celine killed him in the final region under the illusion of killing Kahn instead.

Kahn used the semi-saint mage's body and his core to merge with 10 semi-saints with magical classes such as magician, enchanters and spirit summoners.

As a result, Kahn received another Legendary rank subordinate who was comparable to the other generals in terms of levels and skill.

Kahn imparted all the suitable skills to this subordinate and named him Tobias.

And finally, the harvested bodies of the martyred soldiers he acquired as a backup plan before his expedition to the forbidden region even began had turned out to be extremely useful.

Inside Verlassen, a semi-saint was a peak of strength. And now, Kahn created 30 of his own and also a new legendary rank subordinate who was comparable to a 2nd stage saint.

This was his final force of deterrence to protect the Verlassen fiefdom from the grasp of the three factions after he left the Rakos Empire and still maintain his rule based on the plans he made.

Ronin had already succeeded in sending them private messages Kahn had prepared for his final bomb that he was going to drop on the whole Rakos empire.

The government and the military were already made of people who served him loyally or the slave contracts.

The military had commanders and officers who had pledged their loyalty to him. The three commanders who he bound by Blood-oath token had no choice but to serve him even if he were to leave.

The economy and resources of the entire fiefdom were controlled by Seven Deadly Sins under thousands of businesses, organizations and institutions.

Kahn had absolute control over this place. And now the backup plan of the backup plan he made was finally going to be useful.

Kahn then met Albestros and told him about the situation at hand... just that he left information such as him being the Hero of Darkness.

He told the old peak grandmaster rank blacksmith and artificer that the deal with the Pureblood faction has gone south and soon, not only them but the other two factions would also be hunting him. So he has no choice but to leave.

And finally, he told the old man he met in the Flavot city 2 years ago about his final plan that was going to be executed 7 days later.

"Don't worry... I'll make sure that nobody can harm you or touch you even after I'm gone." spoke Kahn.

With teary eyes... Albestros hugged Kahn.

"Just make sure you stay alive, Kahn. I don't need anything else." said Albestros as a stream of tears ran across his cheeks.

After going through all these obstacles and surviving so many problems... the young man in front of him was no longer just a partner or someone he needed.

Kahn had avenged Cynthia and Gerald, the two children of the old man who were inhumanely murdered by the noble clans.

After that, he helped the old man regain his old life before the tragedy and even helped protect his long-time friend, Prithvi Aranya, the grandmaster Alchemist's legacy.

Because of Kahn and the Bloodborne company, the name of Albestros Winston was renowned as the number one blacksmith of the entire Rakos Empire.

After he came to Verlassen fiefdom, Kahn made him the head of the Hephaestus institution which not only verified products and did the quality control... but allowed the old man to share his knowledge.

Meeting this young man 2 years ago had been a blessing to Albestros who had lost his reason to live and now... he was happier than ever.

But now... hearing that Kahn was forced to flee the empire... it had shaken the old man.

To him, although there was no blood relation...

To Albestros... Kahn was no different than his son and the only family he had now.

Even though Albestros suggested to leave with him, Kahn outright refused the old man because there were too many dangers that he didn't even have any knowledge of yet.

So someone like him who didn't want people close to him to get hurt because of something he did... Kahn wanted to leave by himself.

But before leaving... Kahn gave him a farewell gift.

"This!... I can't accept this. It's too precious." said Albestros.

"I have my means. So this should be helpful to you." said Kahn after he handed down a box with a fist-sized white glowing Orb inside.

It was the very core of the first stage saint magician, Kereberos Mor Vandereich. The traitor magician from the Vandereich clan whose core was stolen by Ronin under Kahn's commands after the Pureblood faction and all of their clans killed the traitors among them.

And now that Kahn no longer needed it to become a saint... he decided to leave it to the old man.

"Use it and become a saint. Only then you will be able to become a saint rank blacksmith after you break through your physical limits." spoke Kahn.

After a long discussion, he quietly left the palace.

Later, he met Sirius Blake, the Orc accountant whose life was completely turned around after he met Kahn during the beginning of the Emperor's Chosen competition.

The frail-looking orc was now unofficial treasurer of Seven Deadly Sins as well as managed the cabinet of government officials under Kahn's orders.

Kahn also told him about the situation in the same way like Albestros. Serious who owed too much to Kahn... a man who helped him escape poverty and give a better life to his parents who had made so many sacrifices and even starved too many times just to raise their weak-bodied child; this news shook him to his core.

If not for Kahn helping him that day and hiring Sirius to work for him as the main accountant in the Bloodborne company and later giving him control and authority over his underworld organization's monetary aspects... Sirius would still be living in misery and would never reach his full potential.

After an hour-long discussion... the orc accountant finally came to terms with the situation and swore to keep serving Kahn even after he was gone.

As for Tobias and his new platoon of semi-saints that had the same skills as Kahn and the generals that fit their levels and ranks... they were going to be the ones to do the heavy lifting.

Tobias, the new legendary rank general he created using Ezekiel's body will be left in charge of handling Verlassen as its protector and a stand-in for Kahn after he was gone.

And the army of 20 million covenant soldiers and everyone who worked in the seven deadly sins organization were to answer him from now on.

Tobias had the main task of maintaining Kahn's reign after the final plan's execution that was going to happen soon. And to root out spies from the three factions and kill their semi-saints or any forces from the shadows and maintain their absolute control until Kahn returned one day.

Verlassen fiefdom was Kahn's own territory and his best source of income and resources. So no way he was going to leave it for his enemies who planned to kill him even before he made any deal with them or found the tablet of arcana.

After making the final arrangements... Kahn quietly left Verlassen with all of the generals and Omega.

He took a deep sigh and spoke in a worried voice...

"Now... there's only one person I have left to meet."

Chapter 503 - Two Choices

In the southern region of the capital Rathna, a secret meeting was held in a castle inside of Rukon District. And this castle was owned by the side branch of the Seven Deadly Sins organization that still functioned in the capital.

A heavily guarded envoy arrived and a figure under a black veil appeared on the terrace of this castle that was isolated by various magic formations and illusion barriers.

Under the serene moonlight and mildly cold breeze, two figures appeared in front of each other.

[Ronin and Ceril, make sure no one is spying on us or knows what's happening inside the barriers.]
ordered a young man in black and gray longcoat.

And finally, this newly arrived figure removed the veil and a face of a raven-haired woman appeared.

"You!... What did you write in that letter!

'Take care of my woman'? Who the hell is your woman?!" shouted Cassandra as she started with a complaint as soon as Kahn appeared in front of her eyes.

Kahn rolled off his eyes to her complaint.

"Then what was I supposed to do? I needed to stall for time and get leverage over your clan and faction.

Otherwise, there was no guarantee that you'd still be living properly and not get sold off to someone else because your family wanted some benefits.

That was the only way I could save you." he said.

"So you didn't mean a single word of it?" asked Cassandra in a dispirited voice as she averted her eyes.

"No... I mean yes... No! I didn't mean it like that." said Kahn with a flustered expression.

"I see..."

For some reason, he felt like Cassandra was feeling more dejected instead of being furious.

It had been close to a month since he sent her off back to the Mikealson clan after they spent a night together sharing each other's lives, their fears, sadness, traumas, and reasons that made them who they were after Cassandra was forced to offer herself to Kahn because she could no longer use magic and had any use for her family or the faction.

"Cassandra, we have a problem." said Kahn.

"What problem? And how come you're back so early? Did the mission fail?" she queried.

As they both sat across two luxurious chairs... Kahn told her everything about what happened with the mission.

Other than his real identity as Hero of Darkness, he told her how he got the tablet and how Ezekiel and Celine tried to kill him.

And now that he had no choice but to leave the Rakos Empire... he came to meet her. He even told her his final plan and what was going to happen soon.

"Those bastards!! They planned to kill us even before the Emperor's Chosen competition?"

How can my parents try to send me to get the Tablet of Arcana while they knew that I'd be killed even if I somehow got it?..." spoke Cassandra who was shaken to her core.

[A direct descendent of the Lezron Mikealson's bloodline who can't use magic or has a fighting class... that's the biggest taboo of their clan.

No wonder they abandoned her.] said Rathnaar in Kahn's mind.

[System, put this old fogey in the back of the pedestal.] commanded Kahn as he didn't want to get interrupted.

And the very next second... Kahn spoke with a serious expression.

"Come with me. If you stay here, I can no longer protect you.

And after I'm gone... there's no guarantee that they won't sell you off again to someone.

Although it might seem impossible, I promise you that I'll find a way to help you get back your ability to use magic again." said Kahn as he arched forwards and held her hands in both his palms.

"I know that it may seem very dangerous at the moment because I'm not even strong enough to protect myself... but I can promise that you will never face any harm because of me.

But if you decide to stay here... no excuse would secure your future. Not in the capital and neither in my fiefdom." he elaborated.

This was the main reason why Kahn came to visit Cassandra here today. First, it was the life debt, and then it was a sense of pity he felt for her.

But now... after spending that night together with her in a similar environment like this one, when Cassandra had tried to commit suicide; there was an unexplainable bond between them.

As friends or due to a sense of inkling because of their similar lives... Kahn hadn't put a word on it. But he knew one thing for sure that he wanted to protect Cassandra out of his free will.

Which was why he couldn't just leave her at the mercy of her family, clan and the Neutral Faction again.

Hence, he came to take her with him even if it meant taking some risks because after his departure... she was only going to have a miserable life because of her current situation.

But to his words full of worry... Cassandra closed her eyes and asked in a saddened voice.

"Why?... Why do you want to go that far for me?" she asked and opened her eyes again.

"If I also disappear... it would raise too many questions and your true plan might get exposed to everyone.

And after that, the three factions will hunt you down with all their power and resources." she said in a resolute voice.

She understood what kind of risk Kahn was taking here. If she tagged along, his final plan will be seen through in the future because not all the people in the world were brainless idiots.

Soon, someone would be able to connect the dots and all of Kahn's efforts would turn useless.

From what he told her... the success of his plan would not only affect him but also the fate of the 220 million common citizens of the Verlassen fiefdom.

But he was still willing to risk it for her sake.

"Is it... is it because you feel pity towards me? Or is it because you still blame yourself for my condition?" asked Cassandra in a serious tone and shook away her hands from Kahn's grasp.

"It's... it's not like that." said Kahn as he was suddenly caught off guard.

For some reason... he couldn't find a way to explain why he wanted to do that for her. Neither to Cassandra nor himself.

"It's just... that I want to see you safe. That's all." said Kahn with a conflicted expression, failing to convince both of them at the same time.

"I see... if that's the case. Then I have my answer ready." said Cassandra as she looked Kahn straight in the eyes.

"So will you come with me?" asked Kahn in a worried tone.

To his question, Cassandra clenched her fists and a voice full of warmth and care towards the man in front of her appeared on her face and she finally declared her decision...

"No."

Chapter 504 - Reason of Refusal

Kassandra's sudden refusal to his offer surprised Kahn. It was no different than her accepting a cruel fate instead of taking a risk that came with running along with him.

"Are you out of your mind?! Your whole life will be destroyed if you stay here." yelled Kahn at Cassandra.

"I know I have gotten you mixed up in my life ever since I lost my powers but I'd still prefer to not burden you when you have many problems of your own.

If your plan is foiled, you won't even have enough time to escape. The tablet of arcana is something that empires would go to war with each other for.

If I come with you, you will always be in mortal danger." elaborated Cassandra as she described her reason for refusing.

"You don't have to risk your life for my sake. You have already done more than enough." said Cassandra in a gentle tone.

But to her reasoning, Kahn looked around in an exasperated manner and had a dumbfounded expression.

"So am I hurting your ego or something? Is accepting my help against your pride?"

And are you an omniscient God? How do you know that you'll burden me?"

Don't make me kidnap you. Just run away with me. We will figure out a way later. And once you get your ability back, then you can return if you want to." spoke Kahn in an intimidating voice.

He did not care for her stubborn feelings.

"If you want to appear righteous and strong, at least have the strength to back up your claims first.

As things stand, your situation is no different than a headless chicken." he iterated.

"Let me ask you... if I hadn't lost my powers, would you have still asked me to come along with you?" asked Cassandra with a curious gaze.

"Why would I? You'd be safe that way so it'd be an obvious choice to let you stay here." said Kahn without a second thought.

"Airshh... This guy. I expected it but still hurts to hear that." murmured Cassandra.

"Then you don't need to worry about me then. Go, leave you heartless jerk." said Cassandra with an irritated tone.

"Ummm... What?!" asked Kahn he sensed something was amiss.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

BOOM!!

A sudden burst of world energy and mana occurred and Kahn was frozen under an immense as well as leaden pressure that almost made him kneel.

"You... how?!" asked Kahn whose body was suddenly covered under a raven black and violet aura.

Somehow, the woman in front of him who couldn't even use magic and had her life destroyed because of it...

Kassandra was now... a Saint!

Utter silence ensued as Kahn kept looking at the Cassandra intensely while his bewildered expression was clear and easy to notice.

[What in the holy hell!...] thought Kahn as he was having a hard time swallowing this sudden revelation.

Kahn quickly held her hands again as soon as Cassandra lowered her saint force pressure.

[System, scan her!] he commanded.

"Huh, why are you holding my hands again?" asked Cassandra.

"Be... Because... I'm happy for you?" he said.

"This is the second time. I'm having an impression that you're just looking for an excuse." said Cassandra with a shy voice.

[Scanning completed.

The subject named Cassandra has indeed become a first stage saint and her current level is 283.

The system concludes that after the host sacrificed a part of his soul and saved Cassandra Mikealson's life...

Her soul underwent a transformation and to successfully complete this procedure, the body itself shut off the flow and access to mana and world energy.

In other words, both her soul and body were in a Hard Reboot mode so that's why the subject couldn't use her magic.] reported the system.

[The system detects that her soul is now three times stronger and brighter than before and the subject's body itself has 4 times more affinity and conduction capacity towards mana and world energy.

And the more she rises in ranks and levels, the stronger her soul and body's natural talent and affinity to mana as well as world energy will increase.] continued the system.

Kahn's eyes were wide open again as he was looking at Cassandra. The latter on the other end felt like Kahn was simply too surprised that he could not think straight anymore.

[So you mean she's just like a chosen Hero of a God now?] asked Kahn in a dumbfounded tone.

[No. But her potential has been increased by many folds.

As per the system's estimation, she will have a soul and body comparable to the host when she is at least a seventh-stage saint.

After that, she will be on the same level as any other chosen Hero summoned in this world.] replied the system.

Kahn was rooted on the spot again. Because what appeared as a crisis to Cassandra had actually turned out to be a blessing instead.

"You... why didn't you tell me since the beginning?!" asked Kahn.

"Because I wanted to see why you were so adamant about taking me with you.

Whether it was because of your guilt or you pitied me or in case you wanted to take an advantage of my situation and make me indebted to you." replied Cassandra cheekily.

"And I'm most impressed by your reasons. Even when you did not have to risk yourself by coming here to take me with you...

You chose not to abandon me like everyone else did." said Cassandra in a thankful voice.

"How did this happen?" asked Kahn.

"It was only two days ago that I suddenly felt like I could use magic again. And on top of it... I could absorb world energy much faster than my original top speed before the accident.

I quietly used one of my clan's secret chambers made specifically to contain a Saint's breakthrough.

So far, no one even knows that I've become a saint because unlike the others, I can completely erase my mana and world energy signature." revealed the Raven Sorceress.

Kahn heaved a sigh of relief and his figure slumped down on the chair.

"Do you know how worried I was? I thought you were being treated harshly just like before. That's why I came as fast as I could." spoke Kahn as he reprimanded Cassandra.

"Thank you for that. Although I wish I could come with you... It's better that we buy more time for you to safely leave the empire. And now that I can protect myself... I think it's better that you carry on with your original plan." said Cassandra as she noticed Kahn's eyes full of genuine worry.

"You do realize that there's always a chance that they will do the same thing in the future, right? What's even the point of staying here?" asked Kahn.

"I no longer care about the clan, my parents or the faction. But I have my pride as well...

After what they did to me... I have only one mission that I must complete on my own." spoke Cassandra with fiery eyes.

"And what's that?" asked Kahn curiously.

Kassandra spoke with resolute eyes as she declared her final decision...

"Revenge."

Chapter 505 - The First

After Kahn heard the words from the Raven Sorceress, a look of curiosity and also surprise appeared on his countenance.

"You're just a first stage saint, what can you do?" asked Kahn as he found her claims illogical.

"I know it will take time but I will reclaim everything that's mine, one at a time.

Now that I have seen that even my family or blood relatives can't be trusted... There's no reason for me to be thoughtful about it.

When the time is right, I will reveal my rank.

And as I rise higher in ranks as well as my importance becomes clear to my clan and faction, I will take down all those bastards by myself from the inside.

If I don't get my revenge on all those who wronged me and traded me like an object... I don't think I'll be able to live with myself and the person I will become if I let this go." she spoke in a vehement tone.

After he heard her explanation... Kahn came to accept her reason. Just like him, Cassandra had her pride and way of thinking.

After her whole life was turned upside down and every notion of belief she had about the world and her family shattered... there was bound to be bitterness in her heart.

And just like Kahn, she clearly wasn't a forgiving type of person who would let this matter go with her clan and the Neutral Faction who forced her to sell off her body just to gain get Kahn on their side.

"It's no longer about wanting to become powerful to get my parent's approval or living up to the Mikealson clan's reputation. Rather... I want to become stronger because I don't want to be at someone's mercy ever again." said Cassandra with eyes full of resolution.

Kahn nodded in approval after seeing her resolve. Because he too had the same reasons to become strong till now.

And with the transformed soul, Cassandra of now actually had the potential to quickly rise in ranks and levels unlike other saints.

The more she ranked up, the stronger her soul will become by manyfolds. Thus making her many times more powerful than others of the same rank.

Plus she can also absorb mana very faster than others since her soul and physiology now changed a lot.

She was aiming for the pinnacle for her own sake now.

"Alright. I guess that you have convinced me. But if you're forced into marriage again... you must run away." he said.

"Don't worry... I have very high standards set for my life partner now." replied the Raven Sorceress with a slight smirk.

As for Kahn, who wanted to take her with him and protect her... But now her powers returned and she even exceeded herself of the past... it was better this way because her life won't be at risk just because of his identity as the Hero of Darkness.

His battles were his own and there was no point in risking Cassandra's life just so he could have a female companion on his journey.

She now had the chance to turn her life around and live on her own terms.

And Cassandra was her own woman. She had ambitions of her own and a life she wanted to build for herself.

So Kahn obviously respected her decision to stay. Because she also did it so that his plans won't be seen through by the three noble factions until he was out of the empire.

"I guess this settles everything. I'm happy for you." said Kahn as he felt joy and relief in his heart because Cassandra regained control over her fate now.

"I need to go now. I hope you get to exact your revenge. I don't know if we will meet ever again... so this could be the last time we see each other." spoke Kahn with a somber expression.

To his words, Cassandra's face suddenly turned sullen but she tried to quickly hide it with a smile.

"Goodbye... and stay alive." said Cassandra in a stern tone that masked her unwillingness.

The dark clouds in the sky moved and bright moonlight covered their figures.

A gust of wind fluttered their clothes as a man in a black and gray longcoat had his back faced towards the woman in a black battlemage attire.

"Ah fuck..." said Kahn to himself as he suddenly stopped in his steps.

[System. Temporarily sever all connections with everyone. No one can see or sense anything from inside of me.] he ordered so Rudra and Rathnaar couldn't see or hear anything about what he was about to do.

A sense of loss suddenly hit him and finally, he understood why he came this far for Cassandra and wanted to take her with him.

He quickly turned around and looked towards the Raven Sorceress.

Shock!

But at the moment, Cassandra's figure had completely disappeared from the spot and Kahn failed to notice her presence as if she was never here in the first place.

Kahn then turned back his head as he originally was but before he could react...

Cassandra was already present behind him and without giving him a chance to speak...

She grabbed Kahn by the collar and pulled him close to her face...

Smooch!

Cassandra kissed Kahn on his lips out of nowhere without any forewarning or explanation.

She gently kissed him as if this was the last time she would have the chance to do that.

After 20 seconds, she finally let go of him and their lips parted ways.

"I'm sorry... I got carried away.

But it's also your fault for being clueless." said Cassandra with a red tinge on her cheeks.

"I'm the one who should be sorry." replied Kahn... the dumbass who finally managed to connect the dots and make sense of Cassandra's feelings throughout their conversation.

"Why?" asked Cassandra as he felt like she did something that she couldn't go back from.

"Because I'm a guy... and you're doing my part."

Said Kahn and pulled her in his embrace as both of them locked lips again, but this time... it was filled with passion.

As the cold breeze passed by, black silhouettes of a man and a woman under the bright moonlight embracing each other came to be.

For both Kahn and Cassandra... this was the night of...

The First Kiss.

Chapter 506 - True Feelings

Kassandra and Kahn embraced each other in an intense and passionate kiss as the former had her arms wound around his neck while the latter had his arms wrapped around her back.

A couple of minutes passed but both of them just did not want to let go of each other as the surge of emotions and intimacy made them relish this kiss many more times than expected.

As they finally parted their lips, an exhilarated expression appeared on both their faces.

Kassandra hugged Kahn tightly while the latter kissed her forehead.

"I have so many things to say to you. But I will keep it short." spoke the Raven Sorceress.

"Thank you... for everything.

When the world abandoned me and even my own family traded my life... you stopped me from committing suicide... if not for you, I would've died a foolish death and not see my powers coming back.

After I finally got my powers and could use magic... and when I broke through to become a saint.

The first thought in my mind wasn't about revenge or showing off to my family or those who betrayed me...

But it was to share the happiest moments of my life with you." she said with a smile on her face.

"Before your aide contacted me... I had been eagerly waiting for you to return.

I know we have been close to each other in the past two months only... but for some reason...

I feel like I have gone through a lifetime of experiences with you.

And now that I know that you also didn't forget about me or chose to leave me when things got tough for you... it feels as if you are the only person whom I can trust in this world." said Kassandra as she gazed deep into Kahn's eyes.

"And when you came back for me while knowing all the risks... I knew my feelings and judgment of your character weren't wrong.

That's why I felt dejected that you wouldn't take me with you if I didn't lose my ability...

A part of me still wants to go with you... but I must stay here and finish my goal.

But I know one thing for sure... that I like you.

I like you very very much." confessed Kassandra confidently with a blushing face.

Kahn let out a flustered smile as he found her confident approach more pleasant for some reason.

And now, it was his turn.

"First time we fought... I came to respect you because I could see all your hard work and skills.

Even then, you accepted your defeat like a true warrior.

Among all the other heirs from the noble factions I've met... you're not overly prideful or conceited as them. Unlike them, you actually had the strength and talent to back up your claims.

Then you admirably fought against that legendary monster to protect so many people.

And without thinking... you sacrificed your life for my sake." he said as he caressed her cheek.

"On that night... you reminded me a lot of myself from the past. But unlike the old me... you are much stronger mentally.

The more I came to know you... the more I came to admire and like you.

Ever since that night... I have been subconsciously worried about you and wanted to get you out of there even if it meant making enemies of others.

But now I finally realize it... all that admiration faded a long time ago.

And now... I want to protect you and care for you. I want to see you happy and now that your powers are back... I'm extremely relieved. I feel like your happiness is also mine.

Even so, you decided not to go with me to help me escape and ensure my survival.

What more do I need to know that I can trust you all the way?" confessed Kahn.

"I'm sorry... I just couldn't notice your hints because..." he said while his face was already red after getting confessed to.

"You have a trauma against women and can't find them trustworthy. I know." said Cassandra.

"I'm gonna miss you a bit." he said and kissed her forehead again.

However, Cassandra readied her fist and lightly punched Kahn in the stomach.

Now that she was a saint, the fist hit much harder.

"Just a bit?" asked Cassandra with a wicked voice.

"A lot... I'm going to miss you a lot!" replied Kahn instantly.

The woman he had come to like wasn't some delicate little girl who needed to be treated like a princess. Rather... she was the kind who led the relationship.

"I like you very much as well." said Kahn in a soft tone.

"What do you like?" asked Cassandra curiously.

"Your beautiful face." he said.

She punched him in the gut again.

"Your personality! Definitely your personality!" he replied haphazardly.

"Haha!" chuckled Cassandra and hugged him tightly again.

"I wish we had more time. We didn't even get to go on a proper date." she said as her expression turned somber.

"Me too." said Kahn as he rested her head on his chest.

Kassandra was the first woman who made his heart flutter. She then became his rival in the competition but he acknowledged her talent and hard work.

Later, she sacrificed herself to save his life without thinking about the consequences.

And after Kahn stopped her from committing suicide and spent the night talking with each other... the bond between them had deepened more than just normal friends.

It was no longer about their life debt. But rather the bond they developed that night when Kassandra and Kahn met again.

In a way... Kahn saved her from becoming like the old him as Elric and Kassandra became someone very close and also gave him closure for the mental burden he had been carrying to this day.

Kahn could feel that he no longer had trauma with women. But after gazing at the woman in his arms... he realized that it was just his bad luck that he met the wrong kind so far...

"Become the most cunning, manipulative and ruthless woman if you have to.

Don't let anyone decide your fate ever again." he said as his voice turned heavy.

"Next time I see you, you better have exceeded my expectations." said Kahn as he grasped her left cheek in his right palm with his eyes full of warmth and worry for Kassandra.

Kassandra nodded in affirmation. She knew that if she wanted her revenge, she had to change herself.

And the following moment, she had a demand of her own.

"If I ever find that you have been running around with some other woman... I will kill you myself." said Kassandra with a bright smile while emitting intense killing intent.

Kahn on the end, chuckled. Instead of finding those words possessive... he found them cute.

"And next time you return...

Make sure you come back as the strongest guy in the room." said Kassandra with a firm tone.

Kahn nodded to her words. If not for both of them being weaker... things wouldn't have become this way and neither of them would have had to make these sacrifices.

After discussing things for another hour while stealing kisses from each other again and again... both of them decided that they should record this memory.

Both used artifacts of their own and took stills as well as recordings of them together. To use them as a pleasant memory of each other.

And when the time to part their ways came...

Kahn used Lucifer and created a Void crack in front of him.

"Is that... space magic?!" asked Cassandra with a bewildered expression.

But instead of responding to her question, Kahn spoke in a resolute voice.

"Saints live more than a century, so wait at least a decade or two for me.

You're not allowed to let any other guy make your heart flutter in my absence."

To his jealous words... Cassandra casually replied.

"Don't worry... I don't think I'll find a more charming, handsome, reliable and mysterious man anytime soon." she said and winked at Kahn playfully.

"I will return one day. I will tell you everything about me then." he said while looking back at the most beautiful woman he met in both of his lives so far.

Kahn then jumped inside the void and disappeared from the place as if he never existed.

This was going to be the most memorable and happiest night of his life.

Tonight, he got confessed to for the first time. Learned how to be truthful about his feelings for someone else and overcame his trauma of women because of Cassandra.

And now... he had one more reason to return to the Rakos Empire in the future.

And finally, he bade farewell to Cassandra Mikealson aka the Raven Sorceress and also...

His first love.

Chapter 507 - Final Declaration

After Kahn was finally done with saying goodbyes to all the important people, he and the subordinates used various modes of transportation and traveled to the closest city from one of the borders of the Rakos Empire.

Currently, he had east and north sides of the empire where he could escape from. But he chose the eastern region for a particular reason.

Because this side was closest to the No Man's Land zone where even the top saints of the Rakos Empire didn't dare to venture... as for the reason why...

It was because No Man's Land was shared by the two neighboring empires at the same time. It was more of an interjection between 3 empires and the 500 kilometers of area was basically a hot warzone.

If one side invaded it or tried to attack either of the two opposing empires through this region... it would be considered a declaration of war.

At this moment, Kahn, Omega and the rest of the generals were under the disguise of common travelers and were seated in an inn while completely hiding their auras, levels as well as ranks and enjoyed the local food.

"So do all of you understand the instructions? We barely have 5 days left till my final plan is executed.

Before that, we must find a way to enter the No Man's Land undetected and without causing a single scene. Or all of our plans will be foiled." spoke Kahn in a hushed voice as their group sat on one side of the inn, away from the normal crowd filled with demi-humans and other species of the populace.

"Master... just give me 2 days. I'll find a way to cross the border." said Ronin, the spymaster among Kahn's generals.

The reason Kahn asked for this was because even with his peak space force storage he currently had... he'd be barely able to cross 200 kilometers at best using the True Dimension. And after that... he'd soon be found out by the 5th stage saints stationed at the borders of any of the three empires.

This was a mission they could not afford to fail.

5 DAYS LATER.

It was the day when the mission to get the Tablet of Arcana was supposed to officially end and who won this race among the three talented semi-saints would become clear.

And soon, if neither of them succeeded just like those who tried in the past hundred and fifty years... their place and future in their respective clans and factions would be decided based on the results.

Other than the faction whose representative actually got the tablet and got out even before the time window of the forbidden region closing came, the other two would still be on the edge of their seats.

However, while the noble factions were concerned about the results of the expedition...

A sudden recording spread across the entire Rakos Empire this very morning. And the contents of this recording shook the entire empire as well as the basic foundation of its structure.

A face of a man donned in regal gray attire appeared in front of the screens of the projection artifacts and every single village, town and city of the Verlassen fiefdom had this same recording displayed on the wide broadcasting screens.

And the man exuding authority and dominance was the most famous figure of the entire Rakos empire for the past one year.

"People of the Verlassen fiefdom as well as Rakos empire.

If you're watching this... means I, Kahn Salvatore, the sovereign of the Verlassen... am dead."

Declared Kahn in the recording right off the bat.

"This is a precautionary last recording I made for the worst-case scenario. In case my worst fears have come to reality, this last will of mine shall be spread throughout the empire and everyone will come to see it." his voice resounded in the whole empire.

Let it be households who suddenly received these artifacts on their doors or a crowded inn where some customers started playing the videos without any notice... Majority of the populated zones filled with people going about their lives quickly came across this recording.

"For the sake of gaining control over Verlassen fiefdom and its resources, you have already seen how far the three factions have gone in the past.

Let it be corruption, oppression, scams that you saw getting unveiled in the People's Court.

As well as the very recent massacre... there's no level of ruthlessness they'd not stoop to." he iterated.

"Recently, I was summoned and then put under pressure on by the government that is basically run and controlled by the people from the three factions.

They summoned me under the pretense of discussing issues related to the management of resources as well as the economy that is affected by my reign.

But for many reasons, I felt that there seemed to be an ulterior motive devised by these factions." he explained.

"If I'm not wrong... soon, they would declare some preposterous and obtuse news about me either being a traitor sent by one of the enemy empires or a corrupt sovereign who killed innocent people to cover my wrongdoings.

I'm certain that they'd even go as far as saying that I fled the empire or ran some underworld criminal organization.

And that I planned and made slaves out of government officials and criminals to do my bidding. That I manipulated the resources of the fiefdom to fill my personal needs.

I won't even be surprised if they called me the reincarnation of the devil himself." he said jokingly.

"I don't know which faction would go as far as kill me but if you're watching this... means it could be any of them or maybe all three of them." he spoke in a serious tone.

"So in case I die... I have already made arrangements for that scenario.

From here on... I declare Verlassen as an autonomous fiefdom under my last right as its sovereign.

The government running the fiefdom shall be self-sustaining and people should be able to vote for the officials and leaders from now on.

There shall be complete transparency of where the funds and resources of the government are used and those records should become accessible to any normal citizen of the fiefdom.

The army and every governmental as well as economic institution will have their own authority and would be independent of any input or influence from the government of the Rakos Empire.

The rules of trading and commerce shall be declared soon by the government of the fiefdom and the commanders will have the access to use the full military forces." said Kahn in an authoritative tone, befitting of a sovereign.

"In case any of the factions try to overthrow the government, I ask that the military and government of the fiefdom to take arms against them.

And citizens should not accept whatever reason they may give because the one who tries to take over Verlassen..." spoke Kahn as he ended his speech in the recording that echoed in the entire Rakos Empire.

"Are also the ones behind my death."

Chapter 508 - Screwing Over

After the recording of Kahn's final words and his last will spread in the entire Rakos empire, the public outrage against the three rose to the peak.

Whether it was the Verlassen fiefdom or the rest of the empire... to them, Kahn Salvatore was someone born amongst them. With his hard work and unyielding will, he rose in power and strength and righteously ruled over the people of his fiefdom and made their lives better.

He was a hero to many after his recent deeds with the People's Court and how he got rid of the monster waves that killed millions of innocent people every year.

On top of it, the Demi-Human faction's recent massacre of 20 thousand soldiers just to besmirch Kahn's name had already ignited the flame of hatred towards these noble factions who saw their lives as nothing but livestock.

And now... their icon and champion of the commoners was killed by these very factions just because they coveted the fiefdom and its resources.

This was the final nail in the coffin and now...

The entire empire was filled with public outrage and mass riots. No matter which faction one belonged to, all the noble clans, their businesses, their properties and headquarters faced thousands and millions of people either protesting against them or damaging their belongings.

It didn't even take a day and the three noble factions that were comprised of thousands of influential clans and enterprises had no choice but to put their defenses up against the angry mob.

It didn't matter how strong were these clans or how powerful individuals they had.

When the common citizens lost their voice of reason, the scrutiny and wrath could not be handled by the wealthy and powerful.

Although things didn't go as far as people killing each other or mortally harming others... the fear and discrimination they faced was more than enough to break their hold over the empire.

Anyone who was part of or even remotely connected to the three noble which included 80% of all the noble clans in the empire were no exception to this.

With this single recording, Kahn had shaken the very foundation of the empire itself and now, the aftereffects would be detrimental to these factions, all three of which planned to kill him after he got the tablet of arcana.

Money, authority, influence, positions in the government, control over the military as well as

Now that he was leaving, there was no reason to be thoughtful about any former partnerships with the Pureblood faction or an inside deal with the Neutral faction. This way, Kahn had screwed over all 3 of them.

Although Kahn couldn't kill them because he was weak... he still made them pay with a century's reputation, wealth and legacy they had on this empire.

Meanwhile, on that very night... both the Demi-Human and Pureblood faction received two secret recordings that shook them once again.

One of the recordings showed Celine Armitage, the chosen representative of the Neutral faction killing Ezekiel Nabi by stabbing through his heart while the semi-saint mage was chained and gagged.

And the second one was what made them jump from their seats...

Celine finding the Tablet of Arcana inside the ancient ruins as well as her talking with the remnant soul of Rathnaar appeared in front of them.

And lastly, the first emperor granting her the ownership of the tablet and her taking it inside of her space ring was crystal clear to the thousands of clan leaders and faction members that had gathered in their respective headquarters to talk about the issue related to Kahn's recording.

And as both the factions watched this recording with their leaders present... three things became very clear to them.

That Celine had the Tablet of Arcana.

She killed both Ezekiel and Kahn inside the forbidden region.

And Kahn knowingly fucked them up over in case he didn't manage to come out of it alive.

However... none of them knew about the real truth at all.

That it was Kahn mimicking Rathnaar's voice when Celine appeared in the last hall.

Right after Rathnaar made a soul-pact with Kahn which bound the first emperor's soul with his own and eventually, the tablet became only accessible to Kahn because only Rathnaar had the ability to control it.

Although they stood on odd terms with each other, it didn't change the fact that Kahn was dragged into a perilous situation.

So being the cunning guy Kahn was... he decided to use Celine, the halfbreed demonkin girl who killed Ezekiel while thinking it was Kahn was the perfect scapegoat.

After she returned to the entrance where she presumably killed Kahn, the latter was hiding in the shadows and used Lucid Reality on her again.

As a result, Celine fainted on the spot under the Lucid Reality skill effect while Kahn took out the tablet from her space ring and hid in the shadows until she woke up.

So Celine was under the impression that she still had the tablet and departed from the forbidden region in a hurry.

These two recordings were exactly what Kahn told Ronin to deliver to the 'two of them' after he exited the forbidden region.

This way, Demi-Human and Pureblood factions would target both Celine and the Neutral faction for the Tablet of Arcana.

As for why he sent the recording to the once 'has been' top noble faction called the Demi-Human faction?

Because Kahn knew that once his final recording that implicated all the noble factions for his death came out...

The desperate Demi-Human faction that paid a great price for messing with Kahn and massacring those innocent soldiers would be pushed into a corner.

And just as he expected... to avoid the public wrath again and avoiding the suspicions of being the ones who killed Kahn Salvatore in the name of revenge...

The next day, the Demi-Human faction used all of their connections and networks to spread the first recording of Celine killing Ezekiel.

And on top of it... they spread another rumor throughout the empire. That the one to actually kill Kahn...

Was the Neutral Faction.

Chapter 509 - Paying Price

After the recordings of Celine Armitage killing Ezekiel Nabi of the Nabi clan, one of the two most powerful and influential clans of the Pureblood faction was released... another rumor about Neutral faction being the one to kill Kahn Salvatore as well was spread across the whole Rakos Empire.

In the eyes of the public, these two cases seemed completely unrelated to each other... but Demi-Human faction was spreading this rumor with added spices to it for three main reasons.

One, to remove the suspicion of them being involved in the death of the Kahn Salvatore who had a bad history with them.

Two, to use this opportunity to infuriate the Nabi clan to act against the Armitage Clan of the neutral faction since their clan heir and the grandson of the clan leader was killed by the heiress of this Demonkin clan.

Three, to put fuel into the fire and force the Pureblood faction to act along with them since one of their clan's prestige was on the line.

But little did they know, that Kahn had sent the same two recordings to the Pureblood faction as well.

He already knew that the Demi-Human faction would be forced to reveal the recording to protect their already ruined name otherwise they will have no place in the empire.

And by doing so, even if the Pureblood faction tried to keep the matters secret between them, they'd be forced to act against the Neutral faction as well.

That was the main reason he sent the recordings to both sides.

On top of it, they both now knew that the Neutral faction had the tablet of arcana. So obviously, both the factions and their seventh stage saint leaders would use this opportunity to pressure them.

And now... there was a war brewing between these three factions that was definitely going to affect their futures.

Meanwhile in the Pureblood faction headquarters...

A very loud and heated discussion was happening among the faction council as well as all the members who were leaders of their respective clans and forces.

Kahn's recording already royally fucked them over and majority of them had gone through a lot of trouble. It was one thing if just one faction was affected like the incident with the Demi-Human faction.

But now... let it be the normal traders, employees or any local business... none of them wanted to work along with anyone associated with noble clans and the three factions.

This time, no brute force or some army of soldiers was going to help them because as things stood...

The elites of the society who ruled over the poor and helpless citizens of the empire now had the whole empire's population standing against them.

Everyone who was infuriated and thought that the factions crossed the one line they shouldn't have, cut off all ties with them.

Even the government officials were receiving death threats, the military soldiers who protected the borders had refused to help these forces to maintain order since the incident with the Berawaa region in Verlassen fiefdom and the policies Kahn created for the families of the martyrs were still etched in their minds.

"That's it!! I don't care about your bullshit lies anymore!

The Nabi clan has already declared war with your Armitage clan!

It won't be long before the Pureblood faction itself gets mixed up in it. Do you have any idea how many people will die if we fight against both factions?

Just tell us, where is the Tablet of Arcana?!" shouted Stalin Joseif, the Tigerkin faction leader of the Neutral faction.

Just an hour ago, they received a recording from their spies inside both the opposing sides. And it showed Celine talking with Rathnaar's soul and taking the Tablet with her.

The three factions already knew that the way to use the tablet of arcana was to extract Rathnaar's soul and control it to obtain the secret of how to become a Demi-God and also use the tablet to make a breakthrough.

But suddenly... the Armitage clan said that they didn't have it. According to Celine, she got the tablet from the final barrier but when she returned, it wasn't with her.

"She's being questioned by the clan leader himself. Please give us some time." spoke one of the Armitage clan's representatives.

Inside a cold cell under the main family castle of the Armitage clan... was a young woman tied in chains.

Celine Armitage, the heiress of the clan who betrayed Kahn in the final region...

Was now in a completely sorry state. Her battered and bruised body was currently enduring intense torture and agonizing pain at the hands of her own clansmen.

Her body was riddled with wounds and multiple lacerations and her once beautiful face was now swollen black after being hit too many times.

"Arrhhhh!!!" wailed Celine loudly.

Cough!

Cough!

She coughed out blood as a small knife was pierced in her thighs and one of the people carrying out the torture punched her in the gut.

Step!

Step!

A purple demonkin man, donned in regal red robes walked in.

"Has she talked yet?" asked the man.

"No lord clan leader. She keeps denying it." replied one of the demonkins.

"Father! Ple... Please stop this!

I don't know what I've done wrong! But please spare me!" spoke Celine while her mouth kept coughing blood while her eyes were full of tears.

"Tell me... where did you hide the tablet?" asked her father.

"I don't know where it is! It was with me when I escaped the forbidden zone.

But it suddenly disappeared when I came to hand it over to our clan's elders." spoke Celine with a distraught and sullen look.

She had lost a lot of blood so her appearance had turned very ghastly.

"Let me ask you then... did you kill any of the other two?" asked the clan leader.

"Yes! I killed Kahn Salvatore!" she quickly replied to solidify her story since by now, it'd be clear that he died in the forbidden zone.

"Lies! You have been lying to us all the time!" shouted her father in an enraged tone.

And the next moment, he activated a projection artifact they received just a few minutes ago.

And a recording hovered on a holographic screen above the artifact.

It was the video of Celine killing Ezekiel, not Kahn.

And then her talking with Rathnaar's soul and getting the tablet with an exhilarated expression on her face.

"You selfish runt! Did you plan to keep the tablet for yourself?! Do you know how much trouble we're in?!"

Because of you, the Nabi clan is preparing for a full-on war with us!

The faction leader is furious with me and the Mikealson clan is pressuring us to give the tablet to the faction council." he yelled at his daughter.

Her admitting killing Kahn and not Ezekiel already threw away her credibility because of which, even her father thought that she was lying to keep the tablet for herself.

If she did not reveal the truth... Celine and their entire clan were doomed.

At this moment, while the whole empire was in chaos... Kahn with a changed appearance was casually sipping tea in a high-end restaurant and looked outside in the direction of the border.

"Master... it's done. It's time for us to leave." spoke Ronin who suddenly appeared out of thin air.

At this moment, other than Albestros, Sirius, Tobias and Cassandra... no one knew that Kahn was still alive.

Kahn spoke with a content voice as everything was going according to his plans.

"Alright then... it's about time we finally leave this empire."

Chapter 510 - The Judgement Day

The very next day, Ronin and Kahn disguised themselves as the spies of the Rakos empire after the former stole their identities, gathered personal information as well as their squadron IDs, secret passwords among the group and copied their appearances using the Metamorphosis ability.

This was a group that excelled in invading the territory of the enemy empires, the elites of the elites when it came to spying. And Ronin had already captured them to take their place so they could use their identities to reach closer to the No Man's Land.

Kahn then used dimension void skill to create a void crack and traveled to the very center of the No Man's Land without getting detected by any of the sides.

All he saw was dense and forested regions, mountainous valleys with remains of some ancient civilization that might have lived in this region thousands of years ago.

Him and the subordinates quickly got rid of regional monsters and created a safe zone of 50 kilometers for themselves.

Since a breakthrough into a new realm was going to cause a very big commotion, Kahn needed a safe place where he would not be disturbed in any way.

Then they found a desolate cave big enough to live comfortably for a few days.

But right when Kahn was about to start his ascension to the new realm of power...

[Hey kid... you're crippling your future.] spoke Rathnaar in Kahn's mind.

"What do you mean?" asked Kahn.

[A normal breakthrough like this is easy. But it will hinder your body's potential while rising to higher ranks.

Why do you think the highest stage people can achieve these days is a Seventh or Eighth stage saint?

It's because they're making a fundamental mistake during each rank-up.] elaborated the first emperor.

"And what mistake is that?" asked Kahn with a puzzled expression.

[Not compressing and condensing their mana and world energy till they have twice the amount to make a second breakthrough.] he said.

"But doesn't that take decades? I don't have that much time. And I don't have any means to help me compress that much mana and world energy inside my body without getting killed in process." spoke Kahn in a refusal.

"You do. Why do you think everyone is after the Tablet of Arcana?

The Chamber of Exaltation can do exactly that." revealed the first emperor.

"If you follow my technique for every single rank up, the quality of your strength, physical and magical abilities & skills, mana as well as world energy reserves will be doubled than everyone else.

Perhaps that Mikealson clan girl will have a way to bypass that because she now has a soul with the same properties as that of a chosen Hero. But you...

Your playing field is different from hers. The people you will be facing are the chosen Heroes themselves.] iterated Rathnaar.

"What the hell are you trying to suggest, old man?"

If this is one of your tricks to get control over my body, then forget about it. You will never be able to do it." replied Kahn in a serious tone.

[What I mean is... why do you want to play the game on even terms? Why not have double the strength of your enemies while they think that you're weak?] asked Rathnaar in a coy tone.

"Stop spouting nonsense and get to the point!" reprimanded Kahn.

[I know a way to help you compress and multiply your mana and world energy reserves as well as improve your physiology so that even reaching a Demi-God rank wouldn't be impossible.] revealed the emperor.

"And why would you do that for me?" asked Kahn in a suspicious tone.

[Isn't it obvious? You're too weak even if you become a saint. The other heroes also have more divine abilities than you as you told me before.

On top of it... you don't even have your divine weapon in hands.

It doesn't matter how many lifesaving skills you have or abilities that give you an advantage over an enemy. Remember this one thing if you want to survive in a battle...] said Rathnaar and continued in a tyrannical voice.

[No matter how strong a defense, a stronger offense will always shatter it.]

Declared the Emperor as he brought Kahn to realize something important. That he was acting complacent because he wasn't currently in danger.

"So what do you propose?" asked Kahn.

[I will give you access to the Chamber of Exaltation. And I will teach you how to improve the quality of your physique, bloodline and innate talent.] spoke Rathnaar in a kingly voice.

"And what do you want in return?"

[Nothing. You surviving longer is beneficial to me as well.

What's the point of making a soul-pact if you die before even becoming a peak saint?

Consider this me protecting my vessel and ensuring my future.] said Rathnaar.

"And why are you under the impression that I'll trust your word?" asked Kahn.

[Because you know that it must be done if you want to survive.

You cannot afford the luxury to be ignorant or look down upon others with backing and resources.

As for me taking over your body... I will do that when I get a proper opportunity.

So what do you say, kid?] spoke Rathnaar without hiding his intentions.

After an hour of discussion and weighing pros and cons... Kahn decided to go with Rathnaar's suggestion.

He took out the Tablet of Arcana and put all the subordinates on a guard duty to protect the 50 kilometers radius in all directions.

ONE MONTH LATER.

In the world of Vantrea which was inhabited by empires and regions as big as a continent on their own, over a dozen enormous and highly populated sanctuaries, churches and monasteries suddenly rumbled.

Clang!

Clatter!

The statues of the gods and goddesses that were worshiped by billions of people of different species and races suddenly shook and the Popes as well as other official spokespersons of these gods were shocked!

Soon, a meeting to exchange the most important issue in the world was held between these representatives and the respective emperors of their empires.

And all of them had only one topic to discuss.

"The new Hero of Darkness has already arrived in the world!" exclaimed an Elven pope.

"We must find him or her! The new chosen one of God of Darkness is the final key!

If we don't act now, the other empires will find that person first and we will be at a great disadvantage." spoke the Elven Emperor.

There was an empire that served God of Nature.

Similar scenes happened in the other empires of the world that received the divine message from their respective Gods.

As for the two empires closest to Rakos Empire... their rulers had a complicated expression because the signal they received was from No Man's Land. A place where their forces couldn't enter just because they willed it.

At this very moment, a few hundred thousand kilometers away from Rakos Empire... was a kingdom run by a particular species.

In the main castle of their King... a silver-haired man with stark-white skin was seated on a black throne with his eyes closed.

Suddenly, he felt a sense of foreboding and quickly opened his eyes that glowed red.

His body suddenly turned into a blood-red mist and in just a few seconds, he appeared on the tallest tower of this pitch-black castle.

A chilling breeze under the bright moonlight fluttered the regal robes of this vampire clad in black and green attire made for a sovereign.

His waist-length hair danced along with the cold breeze of this tranquil night and he spoke with a grim tone.

"So they sent another one. With this... all the chosen Heroes have arrived in this world.

I need to find the new Hero of Darkness before anyone else gets him.

Let's see if he is worthy to follow the footsteps of his predecessor." spoke this vampire who seemed to be a 9th stage saint himself.

"If he is a fool just like the other summoned heroes..." he said and continued in a grim tone.

"Then I will have no choice but to kill him."

At this exact moment... A 10 kilometers area in a particular region was suddenly encapsulated by a pitch-black and red aura that suddenly spread across this entire mountainous region out of nowhere.

BOOOOOM!!!

The mountain from where this chaotic and destructive aura spread from, exploded and its rubble spread across the nearly 2 kilometers radius.

A massive burst of mana and world energy akin to a nuclear bomb explosion appeared and the whole 5 kilometer of radius was destroyed and turned into smithereens.

Nearby 10 kilometers of ground shattered, mountain peaks were pulverized, and thousands of crevices formed as shockwaves after shockwaves of this insurmountable aura caused utter destruction.

At the center of this pure destructive force and explosion was a figure of a man in a black and gray regal attire of a sovereign.

This man finally opened his eyes as nothing but only a look of absolute power and dominance appeared on his face.

Just then, the system notified him in his mind...