

Darkness 531

Chapter 531 - The Company

Kahn and the gang walked inside this huge headquarters that was spread over 7 kilometers of the vicinity and had too many sections such as visitations, receptions for the particular types of orders and many buildings solely created for forging the types of equipment.

Over a year ago, Kahn also dealt in the weapon manufacturing industry so he knew what kind of top-notch technology and forging machines were placed here just from a single glance.

This time, Omega took the lead as the leader and inquired at the grand reception.

"I'm here to meet Master Oakenshield. I would like to hire him for a commission of weapons and armors." spoke Omega.

"Ummm... currently, master Oakenshield isn't taking any commissions." responded the woman at reception who had the body of a hippopotamus.

"Why? Our order won't be small and we have more than enough to even pay extra if master Oakenshield takes our order.

I'm talking billions." said Omega as he tried to persuade the reception lady.

Sigh! The speed was too fast, and with a swoosh, Wang Xuan was pulled into the whirlpool, like a little crucian carp that had been hooked and was violently pulled out of the water.

Instead of getting excited... the hippo-kin woman sighed helplessly.

"Oh, what's gonna happen next. We'll be taking commissions from street beggars?" she grumbled.

"Follow me." she said and casually walked towards the inner rooms for VIP customers.

[Doesn't something strike you as odd here?] asked Blackwall to others.

[Yes. Compared to the other two places we visited before, there are barely 2 thousand people here while those buildings had more than 20 thousand people.

The source of this content is [. c o m]

And the security here is very lax as if they intentionally left it open for the thieves to come in.] said Oliver.

[My guess is that something bad has happened here. Wasn't this place supposed to be an arms forging company of one of the top 5 blacksmiths of the entire Vulcan empire? If you dare to fish against him like this, no matter if it's a strange thing on a mobile phone or that ferocious giant fish, you'll have to pay the price.

But now it looks more like an abandoned house.] spoke Ronin.

And finally, the receptionist lady brought them to the VIP.

But before they even took their seats...

Clang!

The noise of someone throwing off a table reached their ears.

"You fucking traitors! You're jumping ships as soon as things got a bit hard?!"

Is that all our partnership of two decades meant to you?! A fish is mocking him!

Alex and Morty... if you want to null the contract, you'll have to pay the penalty first." a loud voice of an old and grumpy dwarf reached their ears.

Thud!

"We'd rather pay 10 trillion for a penalty than stick with you.

This is all your fault. So don't you dare put the blame on us." spoke a lionkin as he angrily kicked the door and exited the main office.

Following him was a zebra-kin donned in the green attire of a businessman.

"You and that big mouth of yours has created a big mess. Don't drag us in the mud with you." said the Zebra-man.

Facepalm! Then, it was noisys and motionless, instead of reviving here, it chose to disguise it.

Kahn facepalmed himself as he had a sense of Deja Vu.

"Someone is really running out of creativity these days." he said and looked towards the duo of Lion and Zebra called Alex and Morty.

"Great... now that's the last of our biggest dealers.

We're doomed." spoke the hippopotamus.

"Gloria, bring them in." a hoarse voice of an old man resounded in the hall.

Tap! Tap!

"Great... another trouble." spoke Kahn as he sensed a group of people coming towards the main office with an aura filled with rage. If ones piece of sword energy can't solve the problem, then take a few more pieces. Wang Xuan is going to kill it.

Soon, over 20 dwarves walked in a group. And the one to lead them was the most lavishly dressed old dwarf.

All these dwarves were only 2 feet in height, so to Kahn's group, they appeared like kindergarten students.

"Come out, Oakenshield!" spoke the dwarf.

Step!

Step!

"Ah... I must be dreaming. What the hell are you doing here..."

Wait! What's the meaning of this?!" spoke the old dwarf who just walked out of his office.

"We're sorry, master. But he offered to take us in his company... and all of us accepted the deal." spoke a young dwarf who seemed like a seasoned blacksmith based on the shape of his palms and ripped arms.

"You damn rodents! I could accept others betraying me... but all of you too?!" spoke this old dwarf with disbelief as if the ground beneath him shattered.

"And who do you think came to ask me first?" asked the other old dwarf in a coy tone.

"To lead them all into joining you... no, that can't be..." spoke the former as his words stopped midway.

Step!

Step!

Suddenly, a young dwarf who previously stood at the end of this group walked forth and came out into their sight.

"I'm sorry, master. It was my initiative to join the Armikbaar company.

You have lived your life in glory and gained a lot of reputation in the past five decades. But for us... we can't risk our lives and our careers because of your mistake.

Besides, Master Tawerik has promised to make us his personal pupils already.

I hope you understand our situation as well." spoke the young dwarf.

To his words... the former old dwarf seemed heartbroken as if he experienced the biggest betrayal of his life. Yet he tried to control his grief and anger.

"To think that I once thought of you as my best pupil and even planned to groom you into becoming my successor..."

Listen, Helsi... you have greatly disappointed me.

Now I feel like even a stray cat would be worth raising than teaching a snake like you." he said with a crestfallen expression.

Suddenly... the young dwarf's expression turned furious...

"Stray cat?! You're really losing it, you old bastard! Did you really think that all my achievements came from you?!"

You are the one who caused the whole company's downfall and you're blaming me for changing sides?" he asked.

"Hahaha! Even your top pupil has forsaken you, Oakenshield.

Don't worry... I'll train him better than you. So you may as well commit suicide without any regrets." spoke master Tawerik.

"Hmph! You and that buffoon? Hell, I can even pick a random human from the street and teach him till he becomes the best blacksmith in the empire.

You two have nothing on me." rebuked master Oakenshield.

"Bold claims! You dare bet your entire reputation and this company on it?!" challenged the latter.

"Why the hell not?! You think I'm scared? I can pick anyone and do it." spoke master Oakenshield.

He then looked around the hall where over 40 people were seated and over 9 of them were humans.

"Anyone here want to become my pupil?" he asked in a tyrannical tone.

However, a grim silence ensued as no one spoke a word.

"See... everyone knows you're already doomed. Who the hell in their right mind would want to become your student after what you did?!" spoke master Tawerik.

Gasp!

Gasp!

Multiple gasps were heard as everyone suddenly noticed a hand lifted up and they all gazed at this courageous figure who dared to accept this offer.

The one to suddenly raise his hand and accept this offer was...

Kahn.

Chapter 532 - Unlucky Fate

The heated argument between master Oakenshield and master Tawerik, two of the most prestigious and accomplished blacksmiths of the entire Vulcan empire took a sudden turn as they challenged each other and the former ended up declaring that he could even train a human and make him one of the most talented blacksmiths of the new generation.

And after that daring declaration... Kahn suddenly raised his hand as soon as the opportunity to become the disciple of this master blacksmith arose.

[Boy, what are you doing? You want to get dragged into some industrial espionage?] asked Rathnaar.

[Whatever it is... do you think I'll get another godsend opportunity to become a disciple of a top blacksmith in the empire?

Whatever little problems this company has... I can get rid of them later.] replied Kahn as he was catching the opportunity at hand before he lost it.

"Ha ha ha! A human dares to compete against a dwarf in smithing? I guess that's to be expected from someone belonging to that mentally retarded species." spoke master Tawerik as he insulted Kahn.

[Master, should I rip his tongue out?] asked Jugram.

[Calm down, boys. Things are turning out in our favor on their own.] he commanded.

"You there, human! Don't fall for his words. He has a tendency to ruin things because he can't control his anger. If you get mixed up in this matter... you will have a miserable life." said Helsi.

"Ha! Courageous words coming from a traitor. Don't tell me you're already afraid?" taunted Oakenshield.

"What?! You think I'm afraid? You know what... let's have it your way!" spoke Helsi in an enraged tone.

"Do you dare sign a contract then, Oakenshield?"

"I'm afraid a hot-headed coward like you will back away from his words." spoke master Tawerik who was dressed in red robes.

"You think I'm scared because things have become a little hard for me?"

"I can make a legendary rank weapon in my sleep, you bald bastard."

"If you want a contract, then let's do it!" replied Oakenshield.

Soon, they pulled out contracts from their space rings and signed them quickly.

Kahn on the other end, was stupefied.

[Are all dwarves this hot-headed?

They're making decisions in the spur of the moment.] he asked himself.

"Ummm... let's not go that far, shall we?" spoke Kahn as he felt like things were getting out of hand.

"Shut up! Nobody asked you!" spoke Oakenshield and suddenly, an orange aura was released from his body.

[2nd stage saint!] exclaimed Kahn, Omega and the six generals in their minds.

"Come here, human." said Tawerik and released a green saint force.

Both of them pulled Kahn towards them and signed the contracts.

[Master! We should retreat!] said Omega.

[Wait! If we try to do that... we will have to reveal our ranks as well. Plus I don't think you'll find human saints in this empire.

We can't afford to have a conflict here or my identity could be at risk.] he said and stopped his crew from interfering.

Instead of resisting, Kahn signed the contract to keep his identity concealed and also hoped that he would be able to gain something worthwhile out of their little conflict.

And with this... the contract was signed and date of a year later was set for their challenge.

Things happened so fast that even Kahn was having a hard time accepting the fact that he suddenly got a Saint Blacksmith as his teacher.

Master Oakenshield then entered his office and sat on his chair across the table.

He pulled a jar of booze and gulped it down in a single go. After a few minutes... his head that was fuming flames of rage finally calmed down and he closed his eyes with a content smile on his face.

Minutes after adjusting his breathing, he opened his eyes and spoke...

"What the fuck was I thinking?!!!" bellowed the saint blacksmith loudly.

His voice was so loud that it echoed in the entire company building.

"Stupid! Moron! Imbecile!!" said the old dwarf and slapped himself again and again as he started admonishing his own self.

Kahn and the crew could hear everything in the 10 kilometers range easily if they focused a bit so all of them heard his self-deprecating remarks.

"Fucking balls of fire!! Why didn't I control myself?"

"I'm doomed! I'm so doomed!" said Oakenshield and he banged his head on the wall.

He was regretting his actions from earlier because he was angry as everything was going bad for him recently.

And after his pupils and his most favorite disciple also decided to betray him because of what happened a few weeks ago...

He completely lost his mind and made that contract because his pride was challenged and his reputation was at stake.

Knock!

Knock!

Just then, Gloria knocked on the door.

"Master Oakenshield... your disciple would like to see you." said the reception lady.

"What disciple?! Didn't you see how those runts chose to join Tawerik?" he asked.

"Um... I mean your new disciple." she said with a smile.

Clap!

Oakenshield grasped his head in annoyance as he remembered the fact that he just took a random nobody and said he'd teach him.

On top of it... he was a human. A species at the bottom of the food chain in this empire and also with the least talent for blacksmithing and forging.

"Ah... tell him to forget about it. Say that I will take the fall. I'm not going to teach him anything, so no need to waste my time." said the old gray-haired dwarf.

In the evening... he finally left his office and started walking towards the inner hallway of the building.

Tap!

Tap!

Suddenly, a set of footsteps were heard and he saw a familiar figure.

Step!

Step!

Oakenshield then sped up as if he wanted to avoid this person.

The figure following him started walking fast as well.

Step!

Step!

Oakenshield then walked even faster.

Step!

Step!

The figure behind him also started walking faster.

Sprint!

The old dwarf then started sprinting with his tiny little feet.

The figure in black also started sprinting behind him.

"What?!" shouted the old blacksmith.

To his query, Kahn... the man in black and gray longcoat spoke vehemently.

"Disciple is here to follow your orders... Master!"

People pay their hard-earned money to read this novel and I owe it to them that I deliver on what was promised regardless of my physical or mental health (because Professionals have standards.).

But I will need a few more days for recovery until my left shoulder and waist aren't going through this excruciating pain and I'm able to walk again. (Currently eating painkillers 4 times a day.)

Chapter 533 - The Pestering

The saint blacksmith was speechless after Kahn suddenly called him Master out of the blue. Although he knew that the contract he made in the fit of anger had messed up things greatly for him... he didn't actually expect this human to stick around and treat this whole charade seriously.

"What do you mean? I'm not taking you in as my disciple.

Don't take what happened seriously. Be on your way and stop lurking here." said the old dwarf.

"I too signed the contract because you pulled me into this. Are you running away from the responsibility, master Oakenshield?" asked Kahn in a provoking voice.

BOOM!!

The very next moment, the second stage dwarf released his threatening saint pressure that spread across the entire building.

Everyone who was still inside the building was frozen on the spot and an insurmountable aura full of killing intent radiated from Master Oakenshield's body.

"Just because I'm going through a rough patch doesn't mean any random passersby can talk down on me." he said in a grim tone that was enough to give anyone a foreboding of certain death.

"Unlike others of my race, I don't have anything against the human species.

But that doesn't mean I have to treat you any differently than anyone else.

So leave before I stop being nice." threatened the old blacksmith.

However, the very next second...

BOOM!!

A black and red aura suddenly exploded from Kahn's body and easily overthrew this dense aura as Kahn activated the War Dominance blessing.

After his rank-up, War Dominance was at stage 8. Enough to allow Kahn to easily withstand the aura of a 3rd stage saint so overthrowing this one from a 2nd stage saint wasn't a problem in the slightest.

Suddenly... Oakenshield's eyes were also left wide open.

"You... you're a saint?!" he asked in a bewildered tone.

"Yes, I am." replied Kahn in a calm tone.

"How?! Since when can humans in the Vulcan empire become a saint?!"

The only two human saints in the whole empire are Princess Venessa and Hero of Fire. One is a Fireborne while the other is a summoned hero of our god!

How come there's another one?" he asked again and again.

The reason why Kahn chose to reveal his rank here was for two reasons.

One... if he revealed that he was a saint, the old blacksmith will be less reluctant to teach him. Because he had the potential to become a saint rank blacksmith himself as he already met one of the conditions.

Two... other than the empire's ruling authorities and the church of Hetrax, nobody from the common population had any idea about God of Darkness or who the hell was Hero of Darkness either.

This matter was already a top-secret among the main rulers of the empires of Vantrea. So telling the old dwarf in front of him had a far too low risk of this information being leaked.

"Does it matter? Since I'm a saint... shouldn't that make things easier for you to teach me?" he asked.

"Teach you? Although it makes a lot of things easier. But tell me something honestly..." spoke the old dwarf and continued with a somber expression.

"Have you ever held a hammer in your hands?" he queried.

"No."

"Then have you ever tried to make a weapon?" asked the master again.

"No." replied Kahn in a carefree tone.

"Do you ever know how high you need to heat an iron ingot before you use it for forging?"

"No." spoke Kahn truthfully.

"Do you know what's smelting?"

"Yes." he replied with a charming smile.

"Do you know what quenching and soldering is?" asked the dwarf again.

"Yes."

"But have you ever done that?"

"No."

"Then why the hell are you trying to get mixed into this?!" exclaimed the old dwarf.

"Because I want to learn from the best." spoke Kahn as he tried to butter up the old dwarf.

However, the old blacksmith's expression turned grim.

"I already said I'll take the fall. And I'm not gonna make a futile effort and waste my time teaching you how to hold a hammer.

Besides, it's me who's reputation and company is at risk.

Just run away... whatever your name is." spoke master Oakenshield as he realized that using force against this human wasn't going to work out.

"It's Kahn Salvatore, master." replied Kahn.

"Who the hell is your master?!"

Stop pestering me, boy.

I've lived more than a hundred and fifty years. I already know who is built for blacksmithing and who is not.

It's not like I can teach you and make you a saint blacksmith even in a decade either." spoke the old master in an irritated tone.

"Try me." challenged Kahn as he came to realize one fact about this old man, that when provoked... he loses his sound of reason.

"Don't you dare boy! If I do take you in as my disciple... I'll make you live inside a hellish nightmare.

Besides, my old students betrayed and joined my biggest competitor just this afternoon.

Do you think I'll ever trust someone else with my knowledge and techniques? Stop wasting both of our time." spoke the renowned dwarf.

"Wanna make a contract about it then?

You have to teach me and I can't leave your tutelage for one year until I'm done facing that Helsi guy." asked Kahn in a coy tone.

So far, his method of reeling in this old man was working.

"Ha ha ha! Good... since I'm going to need someone to let out my frustration, it's good to see that someone is willing to make a sacrifice on their own volition." he said and gave Kahn a fierce look.

"But you should know this... being a blacksmith doesn't come free. You'll have to pay me a huge amount of money to learn from me." spoke the saint blacksmith.

"How much?" asked Kahn.

To his question, the old man only showed him two-finger of his right hand.

"2 Billion?!" asked Kahn with a shocked tone.

The old dwarf shook his head.

"Don't tell me... two trillion?! Are you insane?!" said Kahn.

To his query... the old man kept smiling and spoke with a wicked smile as he revealed the price of the tuition fees.

"Twenty Trillion."

Chapter 534 - The Commission

Kahn was flabbergasted as soon as he heard the exorbitant price that the old blacksmith demanded. Just to teach him blacksmithing skills and weapon forging... the old man was asking for 20 trillion from the get-go.

"Are you trying to rob me?! Who do you think I am? The emperor?!" exclaimed Kahn.

"Take it or leave it!" spoke Oakenshield.

[He's knowingly telling you that price. So that it'd deter you from tagging along here.

Rest is up to you boy.

Unlike us... you can learn multiple jobs and weapons because of those blessings from the War Deity.

So it's your decision regarding your future.] spoke Rathnaar in Kahn's mind.

[System, will it be possible for me to learn and even breakthrough to saint rank blacksmith?] asked Kahn to the system.

[Given the host's current rank and physiology... the system affirms that the host can learn any job and their skills up to saint rank easily.] informed the system.

Kahn's face twitched on the spot and almost wanted to punch the old dwarf in front of him.

"Deal!" spoke Kahn reluctantly.

"Oho... you're incredibly wealthy for a human.

Aren't you afraid that I might rob you here, human?" asked the old dwarf.

Swoosh!

Swoosh!

Swoosh!

In the next second, seven figures suddenly appeared on the spot.

"We'd like to see you try that, master Oakenshield." spoke Omega as all of them let out their auras one by one.

Enough to pressure the old dwarf and freeze him on the spot.

Because although only Omega was comparable to a legit 2nd stage saint... all of them had the strength to easily fight a 2nd stage saint and even stand against a 3rd stage saint. The former could even fight a 4th stage saint at his maximum capacity.

And now, they had surrounded the old dwarf.

"You... who are you people?!" exclaimed the old blacksmith as he noticed the killing intent in their eyes.

Although he was a second stage saint... he wasn't a warrior but a pure blacksmith.

"Well, to be honest, master Oakenshield...

We're not from around here. The main reason why I even came to your company was to place a commission for weapons and armors.

Even though I got mixed up in your affairs, which is partly my fault... I still need your services." explained Kahn as he gave the old dwarf some vague information than making him feel threatened.

But before the old dwarf could ask any questions about his background... Kahn summoned something out of his space ring.

Thud!!

A massive two meter black nail, part of a beast's claw was plunged into the floor by Kahn.

"What... what the hell is this?" asked Oakenshield.

"You're the expert. You should know better." said Kahn in a mocking tone.

The old dwarf quickly pulled some goggles out of his ring and started examining this massive black nail.

"Dragon!! That's a dragon's claw! How did you get your hands on one?"

And the dragon clearly was a mythical rank one based on the durability and aura it's emitting.

I can easily make a legendary rank weapon from it!" exclaimed the old dwarf as his eyes gleamed in shock and then excitement.

"I'd rather not reveal that." said Kahn.

"And besides..." he then continued in a smug tone.

"I have more." he said with a grin.

To his revelation... the old dwarf didn't show any surprise but then signaled him to follow behind.

2 minutes later, all of them reached below the deepest part of the building and there was a vast hall filled with giant forging equipment. This place was 2 kilometers in overall perimeter and filled with machines that even Kahn hadn't seen before.

"This is a place where I personally forge weapons and armors. There aren't many people who have seen it." said Oakenshield and pointed towards a 500 meter wide open space.

Kahn understood the signal and the very next second... he pulled out more giant dragon claws, bones, fangs, horns and hide that quickly filled the space.

These were the exact remains from the body of the guardian dragon that he couldn't completely absorb. And all the parts came from only half of the body of the mythical rank dragon who was 1 kilometer in height alone.

Shiver!

Shock!

The old blacksmith suddenly shivered and fell on the floor as his entire body was covered in goosebumps.

"You... you're some empire's prince, aren't you?!" he asked Kahn in a befuddled tone.

"Something like that." replied Kahn with a smirk.

Although he wasn't a legit prince... he was a sovereign of a fiefdom. Even a prince didn't have the amount of power he held in Verlassen until they became the emperor themselves. So Kahn didn't bother hiding that part.

And the more misunderstanding the old blacksmith had about his background, the better for him.

"So... what can you make with this?" he asked.

"What do you want me to make with this? I can basically make everything with it!"

Weapons, armors, knives, arrows and even clothes with that hide.

You even have an entire horn of a dragon. That's the sturdiest part of its body.

A weapon with that can easily overpower another legendary rank weapon." replied the dwarven saint.

Kahn was overjoyed after hearing this response from the saint blacksmith.

"Then I have another question. If I were to give you some other materials and already made armors and weapons...

Will you be able to reforge them using the dragon's body parts?" he queried.

"Of course, who in the seven hells do you think I am?

As long as you give me good materials, I can make you anything and reforge any shoddy equipment you have." said the blacksmith in a prideful tone.

"Then how about this... " said Kahn and the next moment...

BOOM!!

A loud noise filled the underground forge as Kahn's body was covered in a black and red demonic armor that emitted blistering heat and had small veins of magma running through it.

And in his right hand... a red vein patterned black greatsword appeared.

This time... the saint blacksmith was too stunned to speak after he saw Kahn suddenly equipping Drakos Armor and Lucifer that had risen to Legendary Rank after he became a saint.

The old blacksmith then asked in a jittery voice as he quickly examined the armor and the sword...

"What kind of monster made this?!"

Chapter 535 - Monster Blacksmith

Kahn and the crew had a curious gaze because as soon as he summoned the Drakos Armor and Lucifer to show them to the old dwarven saint blacksmith... the first thing that came out of his mouth was asking which monster made these.

The main reason why came to this section of the capital first was to have a saint rank blacksmith reforge all of his weapons, gears and Drakos Armor & Lucifer using the dragon's parts.

And the sense of urgency he felt was because of the fact that was brought to his attention by Rathnaar himself.

That he had no divine weapon. And even with the potential... his current armor and sword was not even qualified to stand against a divine weapon of a chosen Hero for long.

And hence... using a legitimate dragon's body parts to either create a new set or reforge the current one was his best available option.

Kahn was even willing to pay a hefty sum for it but he was curious if the old one still had a chance so he displayed it to Oakenshield to quench his curiosity.

"What do you mean? Are they bad?" he asked the old blacksmith.

"Bad? If this is 'bad' then I don't know what 'good' is.

This is a perfect combination of blacksmithing and artificing. Something extremely hard to achieve in our trade.

I would even go as far as to say crazy things such as both of them look like the work of the same person.

There's perfect synergy between the armor and all the runes and engravings hidden on it.

And you can summon it at will means someone also performed a Blood-binding ritual on it." revealed the old blacksmith as he explained his reasons and why he called it work of a monster.

"I can feel that the only thing that stopped the blacksmith was the lack of high quality materials and his or her limited rank.

This looks like a legendary rank armor even though it's only made from a magma drake's body. But I see that it has a potential to become even higher grade in the future.

Seriously, who made this?!" exclaimed and asked again.

But before Kahn could reply, Omega in his normal human form pulled out his katana... Raijin.

"What about this?" he asked.

"This... That's Invimarak's tusk!

It's extremely hard to even process and make a perfect curved blade out of it." said the saint blacksmith.

He then carefully touched the runes and red engravings on the blade that glowed by themselves.

"And these engravings and runes... it's a work of at least a peak grandmaster artificer.

In the whole Vulcan Empire... there are only 11 peak grandmaster artificer Elves who are proficient in such work.

But there's always a risk of the weapon not reaching its maximum potential because the artificers lack knowledge and understanding of the forging techniques for that particular weapon.

Just making some magic formations on a weapon doesn't help. The width, density, length, base material and their properties... You have to balance every single aspect properly." he iterated.

One by one, everyone else started showing them their equipments and armors that Albestros Winston, the top and peak grandmaster blacksmith of the Rakos empire made himself.

They even showed him how their armors change their colors and he could summon both their clothes and weapons at will.

Kahn then told him about the Pendragon Formation and its effects.

"All of these are pure works of art. This type of work is much more refined than any peak grandmaster rank blacksmith can make in our empire.

That Pendragon Formation is very hard to make because all the involved armors need to be of the same base material and only one artificer can work on all of them to connect them magically.

Most of the dwarves excel only in making a strong and incredibly durable weaponry. But they lack the knowledge and control to perfectly balance these runes and magic formation engravings that can enhance the overall strength of the end product greatly.

Unless you are a saint rank blacksmith yourself... you can't match them properly.

Tell me, who the hell made these incredible armors and weapons?" asked the old dwarf.

Kahn and the company were too shocked. Although they already knew how talented and genius of a blacksmith old man Albestros was... but they never understood the gravity of the situation.

It took a legit saint blacksmith to praise the old man's work for them to realize this fact that they were living with a once in a century level of talented blacksmith from the past two years.

And the most surprising fact was that Albestros wasn't even a saint rank blacksmith yet. Just imagining how big of a monster he would become after breaking through that rank gave them goosebumps.

"Would you believe me if I told you that a human, who is half your age made it?" said Kahn.

"You're lying!! That's impossible!

This work even puts some saint rank dwarven blacksmiths to shame." said master Oakenshield.

"I would like to meet that human." he demanded.

"Like I said, we're not from here. And that's why, I came to see you." refused Kahn.

Revealing his origin or even Albestros' identity here was a no-go for him.

"So what do you say? Will you take the commission as well?" asked Kahn.

"Bloody yes! This is the first time I'm getting a chance to work with a mythical rank dragon's body parts in my life.

The last time I worked with draconian species materials was 60 years ago and back then, it was only a Wyvern.

This will probably become my life's best work." spoke the old dwarf with enthusiasm.

"Then how about you reforge them for all of us?" asked Kahn as he deactivated the armor and the sword.

"Sure. But know that it will cost you a lot of money as well." replied the old blacksmith.

"How much?" queried Kahn.

"20 trillion." replied Oakenshield.

"Are you fucking with me?!" shouted Kahn.

"20 trillion just for reforging 7 armor sets and weapons..." he said in an exasperated voice.

But the following moment... Master Oakenshield shook his head again and spoke with a tone full of wisdom...

"20 trillion... For one set."

Chapter 536 - Instant Regret

Everyone from his crew was left speechless as they heard the outrageous price again. But this time... the same price was revealed by this old and hateful saint blacksmith, who seemed like Kahn's great grandfather in terms of greed for money.

But his greed was so big that he was charging this high amount only for one set of armor, clothes and weapons. And since there were seven of them... it would mean they needed to pay 140 trillion harlen.

"You're trying to rip us off, old man!" shouted Ceril.

"You know what... I'll go to someone else." declared Kahn.

He too felt like this was a total scam.

"Good luck with that. They'll charge you even more and none can guarantee the quality of the work like I do." spoke master Oakenshield as if he didn't care.

[That's not a bluff, boy. He's a real deal.

I have known some saint rank dwarf blacksmiths in my time as well.

There are two things they don't lie about as it's taboo for their race and profession.

One... they don't lie about their capabilities as a blacksmith.

Two... their promise to deliver upon the final product.] spoke Rathnaar in his mind.

"What's so special about your case then?" asked Kahn in an irritated tone.

"You think working with a dragon's body parts is a joke? It takes tens of hours just to get them at the right temperature and start forging.

On top of it, I will need to reforge them without ruining the previously engraved runes and formations while adding in my own ones to improve the quality.

It takes months for a single set. And there are seven of them." explained the old dwarf.

"How much time will you need then?" asked Kahn curiously.

"Given the amount and the processing speed since it's a legitimate dragon... at least one year till I'm done with all of your weapons, clothes and armors.

Because they're already made with an Invimarak's body... It will take much longer since I will have to carefully mix the dragon's body parts and maintain perfect balance.

But trust me... the quality will be far better than any other legendary rank weapons and armors you can find." he affirmed.

"Hell, even the imperial clan's legendary rank weapons won't be comparable if you're at the same level. That I can assure with my pride as saint blacksmith." declared the old second stage saint.

"And about that thing with becoming my disciple... I won't charge you for that if you're willing to sign a contract with me." he proposed.

[What do you all think? Will it be worth it?] he asked the opinion of others.

[It's not like we can get a meeting with any saint blacksmith easily. And they certainly won't make your their disciple either, master] said Ronin.

[Besides... this man's company is in peril. We can use it to our advantage later.] said Jugram

[As for the armors and weapons... we only need 14 trillion harlens to pay for them to be made. That much can be easily arranged by robbing another auction house.

He seems to know his stuff since he recognized all of old man Albestros' work and how he made them just with a single glance.] said Ceril.

[Yes... he is indeed worthy of his name.

I vote for yes.] said Omega.

Soon, the rest also chimed in and they reached a collective consensus.

"Fine. But I'll pay you 20 trillion with each set you make. And the quality should be top-notch. Or our contract is nulled." said Kahn as he presented his own terms.

But without any hesitation... Oakenshield agreed to sign both the commission and apprenticeship contract with Kahn. And now...

Their fates were connected till the next year.

Although he was reluctant... Kahn still signed the contract.

Because he just realized that in the future, he had to forge his own weapons and armors by himself. Having someone else do it cost too much money that would be enough to feed villages for months.

In a way... this was a necessary investment for his upcoming future. Something he might regret if he chose to let go of just for some chummy change.

"Alright then... now that everything is settled; can you tell us what happened this noon?" asked Kahn and even the other subordinates also perked their ears.

An hour passed and the old blacksmith told them exactly what happened a couple of weeks ago and why even his students and old friends betrayed him.

But to his sad story... not a single one of the listeners felt any empathy towards him or felt like he was truly wronged.

Suddenly... Kahn's eyes turned furious and he shouted.

"You deceived me, you old bastard!!

Give me those contracts! I'm gonna tear them off!" he said and almost jumped on the old dwarf, ready to rip him apart in two.

Omega and Ronin pulled Kahn and stopped him from attacking.

"He he... is that how you talk with your master?"

Remember the contract?

You or neither of your associates can harm me as I'm your teacher and you're my student." said Oakenshield with a smug smile.

"Fuck! How can you be so old but be so dumb and impatient?!"

Out of all people you had to provoke... You messed with the very kind you shouldn't have!" said Kahn with a tone full of regret.

Because now they all understood why everyone was jumping ship and leaving this old rascal and cunning as well as an impatient old dwarf with anger issues.

That why even his most trusted pupil chose to betray him.

[Why is my luck always so bad?

What kind of sick sadist bastard is writing my story?!] complained Kahn as he cursed himself and whoever put him in such a helpless situation.

Because his current situation was the one thing Kahn wanted to avoid the most.

Kahn tried to avoid a well but fell from a cliff instead.

The saint blacksmith was ruined because someone insulted his weapons and works a couple of weeks ago in a banquet between the top nobles and figures of the Vulcan empire.

And given the type of hot-headed person this old saint blacksmith was...

He openly said that it wasn't his weapons and armors that were at fault. Rather the person who didn't have the skills and strength to properly use them.

And the one he openly insulted in a fit of rage in front of all the top powers and influential figures was the...

Second Prince of the Vulcan empire.

Chapter 537 - Expert Opinion

Kahn was having nothing but regrets after finding the truth about the matter that happened with the old dwarf saint blacksmith.

No matter how they looked at it... they were caught off in the crosshairs between the 2nd imperial prince and this lying and conniving bastard of a dwarf who intentionally hid all that information till Kahn was done with signing off their contracts and made a deal.

If it was just some local tycoon or some overlord of this region... he and his people were fully capable of dealing with those types of people and unlike the Rukon District from Rathna, they were now far experienced enough to not leave a single clue behind.

But an imperial prince... and that too was when everyone was aware of the situation about what happened between the two parties during the banquet held for the nobles.

Kahn was certain that if there weren't too many people watching, the second prince would've simply had Oakenshield killed on the spot.

And anyone with their sanity intact would make that decision of jumping the ship since it was the obvious choice in order to survive against the wrath of the prince of the empire.

And now... because of his eagerness and greed for the armors and weapons made from the guardian dragon's body... Kahn made a hasty decision and got himself mixed into the very kind of matters he wanted to avoid at all cost.

He really hit his own foot with an axe.

[Tch! What are you so worried about? It's not even a big deal.] spoke Rathnaar.

[Oh really? Wasn't it you who said that I should go with the deal?] asked Kahn in a sarcastic tone.

[Don't worry. I know a way to get out of this situation easily.] replied Rathnaar.

[How?] asked Kahn with a curious tone.

[It's simple... we take out the second prince.] he replied.

Facepalm!

Kahn facepalmed himself as if he was done with his quota of bullshit ideas for the day.

Master Oakenshield, who was sitting in front of their group raised an eyebrow as he was unaware of Kahn's inner conversation and wondered what caused this reaction.

[Do you have any idea? We're nobodies here! How the hell are we going to do that?

And why the hell would I go that far? The whole empire will be after me!] he yelled inside.

[Who the hell do you think I am, boy?

I fought against empires and their chosen heroes by myself.

You may have some good and cunning plans but I am the one with much more experience here.

This situation of yours... although very problematic... can still be reversed.] stated Rathnaar in a carefree tone.

[How?]

[Become the Resistance.]

[What do you mean?] asked Kahn.

[In a fight, you know that one side is weak while the other side is the best.

Who do you think will win?] asked the peak saint.

[The best.] responded Kahn.

[But who do you want to win?] asked the first emperor again.

[The weak.] replied Kahn without a second thought.

[See. That's the concept behind it. People are thrilled and want to see the underdog win.

The second prince is the oppressor. So spread the news about it and also your competition against the Helsi guy.

And you will become the Resistance.] elaborated Rathnaar.

But Kahn rolled his eyes in annoyance.

[Are you insane?! This is an imperial rule. Do you think anyone would dare to go against the imperial prince?

No underworld organizations would help you do the job.

People's sentiments here won't work because even with public outrage, no one is going to do shit because that's straight-up execution.

It's nothing like Rakos Empire here. The Imperial clan is the true ruler and their word is the absolute law.] rebuked Kahn.

[That's just the beginning.

He's an imperial prince, right?

So who do you think will be his biggest enemies and who would benefit the most?] asked Rathnaar in a wicked voice.

Kahn suddenly raised his eyebrows as he came to realize the key factor of Rathnaar questions.

It wasn't them who had much to lose. But the second Imperial prince himself.

[See, if you play your cards right... not only will you get out of this situation... the old dwarf will have a lot of attention as well as backers lining up.

If anything were to happen to you... the blame would fall on the 2nd prince. Forget targeting you... that guy will have to send his people to protect you.

And it will also help you create a better cover-up for your story.] said Rathnaar and soon, he told Kahn how to retain his gains and also overturn the situation in his favor.

[That's how I dealt with many uprisings and enemy empires who attacked us.] spoke the first emperor.

Kahn and everyone else agreed with his plans as all of them were in awe after listening to a true expert.

"Tell me your name, shameless master." said Kahn as he looked at the old dwarf with the eyes of a predator.

"Throak Oakenshield. And address me properly, human. I'm your teacher now." spoke the old dwarf.

"Bah, teacher my ass. Listen... let's negotiate our deal again." said Kahn and in the following ten minutes, he told him their plan.

"Think about it. It can get rid of all of your problems. Get back your reputation. Hell, it can get you even stronger backers and allies in the process." he iterated in a coy tone.

"But in return... you will tear off those contracts we signed. And you will have to do the commission for free for armors and weapons for all of us. I can even wait for a year." negotiated Kahn.

"And why would I do that?" asked Throk in a discontent voice.

To his query, Kahn let out a devilish smirk and spoke in a benign voice...

"Because fucking over the top authorities of an empire..." spoke Kahn and bragged with a charming smile.

"I'm an expert in that."

Chapter 538 - Making Friends

Kahn already pitched in his idea and now even bragged about himself to reel in the old dwarf who previously screwed them over.

"You think I can't do that myself?" retorted the saint dwarf.

"Oh really? Do you think anyone will risk their lives for you?"

Look around, liar master.

Your company is doomed. You have no supporters and you certainly don't have a single person who would fight for your sake if you were to be found dead tomorrow." spoke Kahn.

BANG!

He banged his fist on the table in between them and continued in an intimidating tone.

"I'm your only hope now. Otherwise, you're so done.

Soon, you won't even have a place to stay in the entire Vulcan empire.

Do you want to die a death of a beggar or agree to my new terms and reclaim everything you lost?" provoked Kahn.

"So you're going to teach me and you're going to make all of our armors. And you're going to help me create a perfect background in this empire." he said.

At the same time, Kahn made a query to the system.

[Can it be done?]

[Yes.] replied the system.

"In my case... you're going to make all kinds of weapons with the dragon's body parts. All for free!" he spoke in a tyrannical tone.

Because sword was one thing... he needed to learn different weapons and fighting techniques as well. And he clearly didn't have time to waste on making them one by one or going through an arc progression of some novel to get them made one by one or look for some ancient ruins to find a godly weapon by luck.

That sort of stuff didn't work in real life. So Kahn wanted to max out his gains at the same time during this negotiation.

"What for?! Aren't you just a swordsman?"

Hell, even teaching you blacksmithing skills is already like climbing a mountain. If not for me being a saint rank dwarf and knowing the secret technique of our trade... I wouldn't have even taken you as my disciple." retorted the dwarf.

"That's none of your business. You do your part and I do mine." said Kahn as he gave an overbearing look to the old dwarf.

"If you refuse, I can just watch from the sidelines and act like a victim as well. Many people saw how you forcefully pulled me into signing that duel of blacksmiths thing.

With those witnesses, you'll lose whatever reputation you built in all those decades.

And also, no one will ever believe that I'm a saint even if you try to tell someone else.

You simply have no choices at this point." one after another, Kahn hit him with threats and facts.

"In return, we will protect you. From local enemies as well as those sent by the imperial prince.

We will help you run your company since you have lost all your suppliers and distributors.

In other words, This isn't a master and disciple relationship. Rather that of partners." said Kahn as he was done with finally relaying his new terms.

"Now think carefully and make a wise choice.

Or there's no coming back from this." he said and soon, all of them left the office.

For the next couple of hours, Throk Oakenshield kept thinking about Kahn's plans.

And one thing he came to see was that although he was a saint... he couldn't even achieve the first phase of the plans on his own since he was only a blacksmith and not a fighter class individual.

And the way things stood... he didn't have a single person on his side. So like Kahn said... whatever decision he made...

Would be the turning point of his life.

As for Kahn himself... Although it looked like he was going to get entangled in unnecessary trouble as he did with the three noble factions in the Rakos empire... there were still too many things to gain from taking this risk.

Because at the end of the day... there wasn't any other saint blacksmith dwarf in the whole Vulcan empire who was going through the same ordeal. And forget making a deal or teaching him the blacksmithing skills... no one would even welcome him through their front door.

Him being a human was a great issue as well. Because in the end, he always used his weapons and armors in his human form. Even if he were to change his species and go to some other blacksmith... they'd still have to make his weapons and armors based on the form of the species he took.

Hence he visited this place instead of going to others before things turned the way they were now.

But with Rathnaar's ingenious plan... he was still going to get everything he wanted.

And this time... he wasn't even going to enter the battlefield but use someone else as his weapon.

2 hours later, they all returned to the old blacksmith's office and sat on the seats across the table.

"So what's your decision?" asked Kahn.

To his question, the old blacksmith asked a question in return.

"Can you guarantee it will work? How are you going to do it without revealing your identity?"

We can not have anything leading back to us." spoke Throk.

"Leave that to us. Even if we were to fail the first phase, nothing could be tracked and lead to us." replied Ronin who sat behind Kahn.

Sigh!

Throk then let out a sigh and then pulled something out of his drawer.

Tear!

He tore off all the contracts that they previously made.

And given how both parties needed each other... There were no more contracts signed but only a verbal pact was made.

Kahn then went over some of the details of the first phase of the plan and spoke.

"All right boys... we're not going to waste any time on this.

Instead of making enemies... We will be making some friends instead." he declared.

"After all, an enemy of an enemy is a friend." he said with a wicked smile.

"And the people we will be befriending will be..." spoke Kahn and revealed the names of the biggest enemies of the second prince and the very people who were going to become both their swords and shields.

"The First prince & the Third princess."

Chapter 539 - Silent Visit

10 DAYS LATER

In one of the inner sections of the capital Arkensan was a massive villa surrounded by thousands of soldiers of the imperial clan, where a secret meeting was being held in a large hall that included some of the top figures of the empire.

But suddenly, the entire room was covered in a pitch-black domain out of nowhere and all the attendees were pulled inside it out of nowhere.

Shing!!

An unbearably oppressive aura was exerted on these people... some of who were saints up to 2nd stage saints at best.

But no one except one person managed to stay awake while everyone else fainted on the spot.

A second stage saint Fireborne, who was not targeted by this aura pulled out a battleaxe and was ready to attack as he quickly understood that they were under attack.

Click!

But before he could move... a longblade-style sword appeared over his neck.

Soon, multiple figures in red hoods and a black mask appeared in front of this fireborne who had bright red hair, two glowing red horns coming out from the back of his head and a humanoid physique.

"You dare attack me, the first prince of the Vulcan empire?! Do you have a deathwish?!" exclaimed the first prince, Hector HoS Sigfreed in a furious voice.

The hooded figure who had his blade over Hector's neck quickly pulled away his sword and kneeled as well.

But before he could ask any questions...

The figures in front of him quickly kneeled.

"My apologies, imperial prince. Please know that we're from your side.

We had to hijack this meeting because it was the perfect way to meet you without raising the suspicions of those who are monitoring you." spoke the person who was in the center of this group.

From his voice, anyone could tell that it was an old person behind the mask.

"This does not justify you breaking into my villa. Give me a reason why I shouldn't have all of you executed for this crime?" asked Hector in a grim tone.

He was a second stage saint and around 35 years old. But his appearance was that of an experienced warrior.

"Please listen to us, your highness. We're not your enemies. We're here to provide you with some important information.

It could not wait so we had to make this abrupt move and use this method to isolate you from the outside world and warn you about an opportunity." spoke the old individual.

"What kind of information?" asked Hector as he was instantly back in command.

"An information... to take down the second imperial prince." said this old person behind the mask.

Soon, they presented him with the information about what happened between Throk and the second prince two weeks ago.

But the information was buried by the prince by having all the people sign a contract of secrecy. No one was an exception to this. But knowing it was a member of the imperial family, everyone kept their mouths shut even now.

So other than Throk and the people who were present at that banquet... nobody else knew.

"How did you find out about this then?" asked Hector.

"There are many people who serve you, my prince. We just decided to show up today because time was of the essence and we had to start the first phase of the grand plan." responded the old person with a respectful tone towards the prince.

"What grand plan?" asked Hector in a curious voice.

"To make you the next emperor, my prince."

"And why would you do that?" asked Hector without any surprise on his face.

"You may be unaware of our existence, your highness. But there are too many people who support you from the Imperial clan as well as outside.

In our eyes, you're a true fireborne and the only one with the qualities of an Emperor. Someone worthy to support and follow unlike that egomaniac second prince and the halfbreed princess." revealed the leader of the red-clothed intruders.

"Just that we can't reveal our identity for your own safety. It will also risk you if anyone found that we were connected to you." he explained.

"How can I trust you? You are all behind masks." he said in a commanding tone.

"Well, if we were enemies... having you killed here when no one could interfere wouldn't be any problem for us." said this leader and soon, he started explaining the elaborate plan on how to take down the 2nd imperial prince and defame him to the point that he would be kicked out of the race to the throne and might even lose his identity as a member of the imperial family.

"Think about it. Most importantly... it would make her highness, the first queen and your mother the happiest person." spoke this leader at the end of their conversation.

As soon as those words reached his ears... the first prince was rooted on the spot.

Kahn said those words and hit the nail.

Because one thing they had gathered in the past 10 days by infiltrating their ranks, placing his assassins in hundreds of people around the first prince, as well as his mother's clan under Rathnaar's orders, led to them gaining crucial information about the first prince.

That he didn't have a good relationship with his father, the current Emperor since childhood. And the emperor only married his mother to gain the support of their clan of firebornes, which was one of the 6 main clans.

But years later, for some reason... he married another woman from another clan. And a couple of years later... he married a human woman, who was a princess of a friendly empire to maintain a good relationship with them.

But later... he cut off all ties with his mother and then stopped talking with him as well since he was but a child.

In those decades... his mother was the only one who cared for him. So now, she was the most important part of his life.

He listened to everything she said and always sought her approval. So in conclusion...

That the first prince was actually...

The Momma's Boy.

Chapter 540 - Hidden Spies

The first prince was a victim of not receiving proper attention from his father while growing up. There were some years that he hadn't even seen him face to face. And since his childhood, he only had his mother as someone who gave him moral support.

This, he ended up being too much cared for as she doted on her son endlessly. Which most mothers did when they had to raise a child.

But that excessive love had shaped the first prince into becoming someone who lost his sound of reason when things involved his mother.

And Kahn was going to use this fact to his advantage to cement his proposal with the first prince.

"We need to use this opportunity before the third princess gets her hands on this information as well." spoke Kahn in the voice of an old person.

"How do you Venessa has access to this information?" asked Hector in a suspicious tone.

"She has her spies mixed in the second prince's side." revealed Kahn.

"How do you know that?" asked the first prince again.

"Because we already tracked one of her spies in your group as well." he revealed.

"What kind of nonsense are you spouting?!" shouted Hector as he couldn't believe one of his own people being a traitor.

Clap!

Clap!

Bring him in.

Kahn clapped twice and soon, a three meter tall body of Blackwall under the same set of red clothes and hood along with the black mask appeared.

But in his hands, was a chained and gagged figure whose face was hidden under a sack.

"Who?" asked Hector.

Blackwall then pulled off the sack and revealed another fireborne man around the same age as Hector.

"Elmo!..." exclaimed Hector with a shocked expression.

"You should see this, your highness." spoke Kahn and activated a recording artifact.

Soon, the holographic scene of Elmo directly reporting the routine and recent plans of the first prince to Venessa ran in the middle of the hall.

In that recording, Venessa also called him an incapable runt who can't do anything without his mother telling him.

BOOM!!

"I trusted you since we were in the royal academy. How can you betray me, you bastard?!" shouted Hector as his eyes were fumed with rage.

"I won't talk, no matter how much you torture me. As for you Hector... even a street thug is a better leader than you." said Elmo whose face was all battered up.

As those words reached his ears... The first prince was completely infuriated.

"What do you want me to do about this rat, your highness?" asked Kahn in an obedient tone.

"Give me your sword." said Hector and looked towards Omega who was kneeling under the disguise.

"Yes, my imperial highness."

Omega said and gave him his sword while bowing respectfully.

Slash!

The prince cuts off Elmo's head without a second thought in a fit of rage. After finding out that one of his decade-long friends was actually a spy sent by Venessa.

Ronin, who was kneeling behind Kahn then got up and pulled the body in his space ring. Ceril cast off the restoration spell and cleared the site, leaving no trace or single blood splatter.

Dozens of minutes passed and Hector finally calmed himself down.

He was now certain that these people who vehemently kneeled in front of him and even revealed a traitor among his ranks were indeed loyal to him.

But in reality... this Elmo was indeed one of Venessa's people who had infiltrated the side of the first prince since who knew when.

Kahn and the company found out about him through the assassins he sent in the shadows which eventually led them to get their hands on this secret information.

However... they did not have an innocent person killed just for the sake of their plans.

Because just now... the Elmo that the first prince just killed now was only an illusion.

Without even realizing it... the first prince was under the effect of an illusion spell cast by Ceril who was mixed in between the people kneeling on the ground.

The traitor was real and so was the recording. Just that they already informed Elmo about being found out. Saying that they were people who supported the princess.

They also handed him a note that he was to hand over to Venessa.

And since the first prince wasn't going to see Elmo in his life ever again anyway... they used this spell by the necromancer general who was comparable to a saint rank magician himself.

So they put on this grand show in order to make Hector end up trusting them. And not have unnecessary doubts about their origins.

Because a lie was more believable when there was some truth mixed in it.

"We must go, your highness. There are many eyes on you. No one can know that we've made contact with you." said Kahn.

"Wait! Who are the ones backing me? You can at least tell me that much, right?" asked Hector.

"I shouldn't, your highness. This is for your own safety in case any one of us is ever caught.

You shouldn't risk your fate or our great empire's future for foot soldiers like us.

Alas, there's always time for everything. So maybe one day... we will have no reason to hide our faces from you." said Kahn in a worshipping tone.

Hector was suddenly moved by this old person's voice and felt that he indeed had a great burden to carry on his shoulder like so many people believed him.

Kahn then told him about their next move and how they were going to provide him with evidence that he'd need to take out the second prince.

Before he was about to depart... Hector spoke to Kahn.

"You can create a domain. Means you're at least a 5th stage saint.

You're old but still show great respect to me.

I will repay your loyalty one day." said Hector in a magnanimous tone since he was made to feel so special after a very long time.

"When will I see you again?" asked Hector.

Kahn then bowed respectfully and spoke in a zealous tone.

"When you become the Crown Prince."